

# Ezekiel 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

## Analysis

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**For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.** God specifies the duration and meaning of Ezekiel's suffering—390 days representing years of Israel's accumulated guilt. The formula "each day for a year" (yom la-shanah, יוֹם לְשָׁנָה) appears elsewhere in Scripture (Numbers 14:34), establishing prophetic time symbolism where literal days represent extended periods.

The 390 years likely span from the divided kingdom (931 BC when Jeroboam led Israel's rebellion) through the exile period, though exact calculation remains debated among scholars. The key theological point transcends precise chronology: Israel's sin wasn't momentary lapse but sustained, generational rebellion requiring proportionate judgment. The Hebrew avon (אָוֹן, "iniquity") denotes guilt and punishment together—sin carries intrinsic consequences.

This verse reveals divine bookkeeping—God counts every year of covenant unfaithfulness. Sin accumulates, and accumulated sin demands comprehensive judgment. Yet even here, grace appears: God limits the period of bearing iniquity rather than decreeing permanent judgment. This anticipates the gospel truth that Christ bore a definite, sufficient penalty for sin (Hebrews 10:12-14), not eternal, ongoing punishment. His finished work fully satisfied divine justice.

## Historical Context

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The northern kingdom of Israel persisted in idolatry throughout its existence (931-722 BC), with every king described as doing evil and perpetuating Jeroboam's sin of establishing golden calf worship at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33). Despite prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, Israel refused to repent, leading to Assyrian conquest and exile.

Even after Israel's fall, their guilt remained unresolved. The ten northern tribes disappeared into Assyrian captivity, their destiny uncertain. Ezekiel, ministering 130+ years after Israel's exile, still addresses their accumulated iniquity, showing that sin's consequences persist across generations until properly addressed through repentance and divine forgiveness.

The exiles in Babylon needed to understand their current suffering within this broader historical context. Their captivity wasn't isolated event but culmination of centuries of covenant violations by both Israel and Judah. Only recognizing the depth and duration of their corporate sin could produce the thorough repentance necessary for restoration.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does the accumulation of sin over generations teach us about corporate responsibility and consequences?
2. What does God's precise accounting of Israel's years of iniquity reveal about His justice and memory?
3. How does Christ bearing our sins 'once for all' (Hebrews 10:10) contrast with Ezekiel's temporary symbolic bearing?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאֲנִי	נָתַתִּי	אֶת	לְךָ	שָׁנֵי	עוֹן
H589	<b>For I have laid</b>	H0	H853	<b>upon thee the years</b>	<b>of their iniquity</b>
	H5414			H8141	H5771
לְמִסְפַּר	יּוֹם	שְׁלֹשׁ	יּוֹם	וּתְשַׁע	יּוֹם
<b>according to the number</b>	<b>days</b>	<b>three</b>	<b>hundred</b>	<b>and ninety</b>	<b>days</b>
H4557	H3117	H7969	H3967	H8673	H3117
וְנָשָׂא אֶת	עוֹן	בֵּית	יִשְׂרָאֵל:		
<b>so shalt thou bear</b>	<b>of their iniquity</b>	<b>of the house</b>	<b>of Israel</b>		
H5375	H5771	H1004	H3478		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Numbers 14:34** (Parallel theme): After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

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