

Isaiah's walking completely naked and barefoot for three years was a visible sign that symbolized the utter humiliation that awaited Egypt and Ethiopia at the hands of the king of Assyria.

The uncovered buttocks of these captives would also be to the shame of the nations that depended on Egypt for deliverance, including Israel. One is reminded of King David's faith, "Human help is worthless. With God, we shall do valiantly."

The Lord told Jeremiah to buy himself a linen loincloth to wear and then bury it in a cleft of the rock near the Euphrates River. After many days, he dug up the garment as instructed and found it was completely rotted and ruined.

This was to demonstrate that by stubbornly following their own desires and worshipping foreign gods the people had become just as useless.

In a similar fashion, God commanded Ezekiel to perform a series of symbolic acts, predicting the coming destruction of Jerusalem and devastation of its inhabitants.

One of them included laying siege to the city inscribed on a clay brick and lying down on his side for a certain number of days with arm bared.

The Prophet's daily food was to be bread made from "wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt," carefully weighed out and consumed at fixed times. His liquid was to be water only, drunk also by measure and at fixed times.

The Lord added that he was to prepare the barley cake in the sight of all, and on human dung, explaining, "This is the way the people of Israel shall eat their bread, unclean, among the nations to which I drive them."

At this instruction, Ezekiel raises an objection, insisting that from his youth he had never defiled himself by eating anything polluted. In response, the Lord relents and allows him to use cow's dung instead.

Some commentators see this as a lesson that some things are often negotiable with the Father and that He will not insist we do anything beyond our ability to endure.

Others, however, believe He had ulterior motives. The baking of the bread in such a manner would be absolutely repulsive to the Israelites, much as God was repulsed by their defilement.

Ezekiel was also instructed to take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave his hair and beard, burning some and scattering the rest in all directions, symbolizing Jerusalem's desolation and scattering among the nations.

Jesus Himself performed many compelling symbolic acts to demonstrate what He was seeking to convey, as did His Disciples. Writing with His finger on the ground, washing the Apostles' feet, and the celebration of Holy Communion are among the more popular.

Others of the most frequently referenced include the way Agabus showed Paul what would befall him in Jerusalem, and how Peter understood he should not call profane what God had made clean.