



Biblical Bread from Ezekiel 4:9

In the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, the prophet Ezekiel who lived in the 6th Century BC describes a plan to withstand a siege of Jerusalem. The survival bread was to be made with a mixture of grains and legumes, which today is recognized as creating a nutritionally valuable basic food. Such bread contains complementary proteins from the grains and legumes, a good supply of carbohydrate for energy and all the necessary vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and unique fiber from the whole grains, for proper assimilation and use of that carbohydrate.

The proportions of the six grains and legumes for his survival bread are not given by Ezekiel, so we can feel free to interpret these as we please. For authenticity we can choose Middle Eastern grains and legumes. But Middle Eastern grains like durum-wheat and emmer are not always available in American grocery stores, and there are other kinds of lentils and beans available instead. Substitutions are therefore often used, such as Kamut® (Khorasan) wheat for durum wheat, spelt wheat for emmer wheat, and white American beans for garbanzo beans.

The form of the bread was to be as a barley cake, and that too seems to be something we can freely interpret. Or, we can consider that Ezekiel would have wanted to make the contemporary style of bread, from freshly ground grain. Some modern breads in the Middle East are believed to have ancient origins: the Arabic pocket bread and especially the thin, round, single layered barley bread known to the Bedouins as *fatir* and made with freshly ground grains. This *fatir* is baked on a *sajj*, which is a large round and slightly domed metal plate that is heated over a fire. The ancient and modern Bedouin *fatir* matches Ezekiel's directive that "thou shalt eat it as barley cakes".

Few of the published Ezekiel bread recipes mention use of a sourdough leavening, which would have always been working during the elapsed time between mixing and finally baking the bread. The sourdough source would have been the residual dough in the mixing bowl constantly left from the previous batch. Modern

Middle Eastern flatbreads are generally made with refined wheat flour and baking powder, or commercial yeast. Reasonably, breads in Ezekiel's time would have been made with freshly ground whole grain flour from various local grains, and sourdough leavening.

It would be possible to make up this recipe without using the sourdough, and still giving the dough all the rest times indicated. However, the sourdough provides protection against the growth of molds during the long rest times, it also provides flavor and is especially healthful since the sourdough acidity allows the natural enzymes in wheat to release minerals such as iron, zinc and phosphorus from all the grains and legumes.

This recipe was tried out with durum wheat, spelt, hull-less barley, garbanzo beans, French lentils and millet, as shown in the photo above. The result was a surprisingly delicious bread with an unexpected savory fruitiness, that could be ideally served with soft cheese, salads, richly flavored Middle Eastern accompaniments, such as hummus, or simply as the bread to eat with dinner.

References

The Holy Bible, Ezekiel 4:9

Wikipedia, Ezekiel: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezekiel>

Flatbreads & Flavors, Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid, William Morrow & Co, Inc., New York, 1995. *Bedouin Barley Bread*, pp. 212-213.

Arabic Bread Production, Kenneth J. Quail, American Association of Cereal Chemists, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1996. *Saaj*, p.19.



Recipe for Biblical Bread from Ezekiel 4:9

The dough is made up stiff so that it holds its shape when rolled out very thinly. The amount of water to use varies according to the mixture of grains and legumes used. It is

advisable to start with a smaller amount of water, and if the dough is too stiff to work, after the dough has risen for the first time, then more water can be added at that stage as needed.

Oven baked Arabic pocket breads can be made with this same dough, by rolling out only until an eighth to a quarter inch thick, and baking a little longer.

Grain & Legume Ingredients:

Ezekiel 4:9 Grains & legumes	Middle Eastern grains & legumes	Alternative grains and legumes	Percent in mixture, total 100 grams	Total 250 grams	Total 500 grams
Wheat	Durum wheat	Kamut® or Khorasan wheat	50	125	250
Barley	Hull-less barley	Hull-less barley	5	12.5	25
Beans	Garbanzo beans	Cannellini beans	5	12.5	25
Lentils	Green Lentils	Brown lentils	5	12.5	25
Millet	Pearl Millet	Proso Millet	5	12.5	25
Fitches	Emmer	Spelt	30	75	150

Total ingredients:

Ingredient	Bakers per cent	250 grams flour basis (Amount for 4 large or 8 small flatbreads) Grams	500 grams flour basis (Amount for 8 large or 16 small flatbreads) Grams
Grain & Legume mix as flour	100	250	500
Enzyme active malted wheat or barley* (optional)	1	2.5	5
Olive oil	4	10	20
Salt	1.5	3.8	7.5
Water to make a stiff dough	65	162.5	325
Sourdough starter*	10	25	50

* Recipes for making these can be found at www.wholegrainconnection.org in the Recipe section.

Method

[] Make a mixture of chosen grains and legumes and grind the mixture into sufficient flour.

[] Add flour to a mixing bowl followed by the enzyme active malt, and mix well.

[] Work the olive oil into the flour with a fork until completely mixed in. *Alternatively mix flour and olive oil using a food processor.*

[] Separately weigh the salt into a jug, followed by the water and the sourdough starter. Mix well.

[] Add the water mixture to the flour mixture. Mix until completely combined and a fairly cohesive but fairly stiff dough ball can be formed.

[] Fist the dough down into the bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic film, or a moist cloth, to prevent the dough surface from drying out. Leave to rise to double in volume. *This will take 3-6 hours at 90°F or 6-12 hours at 72°F.*

[] With water-moist hands, turn out the dough onto a smooth surface and knead briefly until smooth and cohesive. Form into a ball. Divide as follows: *4-8 portions from dough based on 250 grams of flour, and 8-16 portions from dough based on 500grams of flour. Portions for small flatbreads will weigh approximately 56 grams, and for larger flatbreads 113 grams.* Round each portion and leave to rest for approximately 20 minutes under a moist cloth or plastic sheet.

[] Shape each flatbread, by rolling out on a hardwood surface until very thin. Turn over frequently while rolling out until as thin as possible without tearing. *Note that the rolling out is done with the aid of a dough scraper to occasionally assist in the turning over of each dough piece. No flour is used on the board.*

[] Leave the shaped flatbreads to rest between two cloths for 1-2 hours before baking.

[] Preheat oven at maximum temperature (550°F) with pizza stone or oven tiles in place. Or, prepare to bake flatbreads on a hot griddle (450°F).

[] *For optimal softness of the breads, they are baked at as high a temperature as possible, for the shortest time possible. Ideally this will be under one minute, but often the oven or griddle cannot be maintained at the highest temperature, and the baking time is closer to 2 minutes. The breads are baked by the time that the blistering of the surface reaches a maximum.*

When the breads have been baked, the softness can be maintained by immediately placing them into a basket lined with a large cloth that can also be used to cover them. The cloth can be moist to promote extra softness in the flatbreads. Serve the flatbreads soon after baking, from this basket.

Cool breads can be stored in a closed container. The softness can sometimes be revived by steaming. In general these breads are intended to be eaten when freshly made.

Oven baking

Use an oven peel to shove the breads into the oven for baking, and to remove them when baked. Generally there is no need to turn the breads over.

Griddle baking

Bake the breads briefly on each side before allowing them to blister and finish baking on the griddle.