

# SYMBOLIC ACTION AS PROPHECY

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## CULTURAL INSIGHT

Many prophets in the Old Testament used symbolic actions to make their prophetic points. Examples of this can be found in the narratives about the prophets as well as in the literary prophetic books. These nonverbal prophecies presented powerful symbols for the prophets' ancient Israelite and Judahite audience, although they can seem very strange to our modern perspective. The following examples illustrate how Old Testament prophets used symbolic actions.

Ahab's prophet Zedekiah made a set of iron horns when he said that Jehovah promised Ahab He would push the Syrians (or Aramaeans, in Hebrew; 1 Kings 22:11). Jeremiah purchased property in his home city of Anathoth as a symbolic gesture that Judah would return from exile (Jeremiah 32:7–12). Isaiah walked naked and barefoot around the city of Jerusalem for three years as a sign of how the Neo-Assyrian Empire would treat its captives (Isaiah 20:1–3). Hosea remarried his unfaithful wife as symbolic action that Jehovah would not reject Israel despite its lack of covenant faithfulness (Hosea 3:1–5). Ezekiel performed many symbolic actions as prophecy. Several appear in a row just in Ezekiel 4. At one point, he lay on his side for 390 days for the sins of the Kingdom of Israel and then switched sides for 40 days for the Kingdom of Judah (Ezekiel 4:5–9). These examples clearly show how the Lord tailors His prophetic messages to the needs of the people at the time (see 2 Nephi 31:3).

### ***Related verses***

1 Kings 11:29–31

1 Kings 22:11

Jeremiah 13:1–11  
Jeremiah 19:1–13  
Jeremiah 28:1–11  
Jeremiah 43:8–13  
Ezekiel 4:1–17  
Ezekiel 5:1–12  
Ezekiel 24:14–19  
Hosea 1  
Hosea 3:1–5

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