

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 11-Chapter Six (Ezekiel 6:1-14-7:1-4)

Executive Summary

The biblical text of Ezekiel, specifically chapters 6 and 7:1-4, details a series of divine commands and demonstrative prophecies intended to warn the Israelite exiles of an impending, certain judgment upon Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Under the direction of the LORD, Ezekiel utilizes "sign acts"—demonstrative prophecies—to illustrate the severity of a coming siege characterized by famine, plague, and the sword. The primary catalyst for this divine wrath is the nation's "abominations" and persistent idolatry, particularly the use of "high places." The ultimate purpose of this desolation is pedagogical and revelatory: through the destruction of their idols and the physical punishment of the people, the nation—and the surviving remnant—will attain an intimate, experiential knowledge that "I am the LORD."

I. The Four Demonstrative Prophecies

God commanded Ezekiel to perform specific actions to serve as visual warnings to the exiles regarding the fate of those remaining in Israel and Judah.

Prophecy	Primary Message	Intended Impact/Symbolism
First	The coming siege of Israel and Judah.	Underscored the certainty of judgment (likely represented by the ropes on Ezekiel).
Second	The impact of the siege on the inhabitants.	Forecasted a severe famine that would devastate the population.
Third	The method and distribution of death.	Used the cutting and scattering of hair to show how the population would be divided by plague, sword, and scattering.
Fourth	The total end and destruction of the land.	Highlighted the reasoning (abominations) and the purpose (knowing the LORD) of the final destruction.

II. Judgment Against the Land: The Mountains of Israel

In Ezekiel 6:1-3, the LORD commands the prophet to "set [his] face toward the mountains of Israel." This command is not merely rhetorical; it serves as a demonstration to the exiles of the physical judgment coming to the entire region, including the hills, ravines, and valleys.

The Destruction of the "High Places" ('*bāmâ*)

A central focus of the judgment is the "high places"—elevated areas used for ceremonial rites and idolatrous worship.

- **Definition:** These were sites where Israel established poles, altars, and sanctuaries for false deities.
- **Frequency:** The term occurs 102 times in Hebrew Scriptures and six times within the book of Ezekiel.
- **Divine Response:** God vowed to destroy these high places, smash incense altars, and make the slain fall directly in front of the idols they petitioned. This act serves to prove the impotence of the idols and the supremacy of the LORD.

III. The Nature of the Offense: Harlotry and Abominations

The source context provides deep linguistic analysis of the terms used to describe Israel's betrayal of the Mosaic covenant.

Adultery and "Harlot" ('*zānâ*)

The LORD describes Israel's "adulterous hearts" and "eyes which played the harlot after their idols."

- **Context:** The term refers to a woman who performs intercourse for money.
- **Usage:** Ezekiel uses this term more than any other book in the Hebrew Scriptures (23 of its 93 occurrences).
- **Theological Significance:** Because Israel entered a covenant with a "jealous God" (as outlined in Exodus 34:14-16), their pursuit of false deities is characterized as spiritual prostitution.

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"Abominations" ('tô 'ēbâ)

The judgment is a direct response to the "evil abominations" of the house of Israel.

- **Definition:** Derived from the root meaning "to loathe" or "loathsome."
- **Frequency:** Occurs 43 times in Ezekiel, the most of any book in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- **Context:** These abominations included violence and immorality promoted by idol worship, which God noted was occasionally worse than that of the Gentile nations.

IV. The Threefold Judgment: Sword, Famine, and Plague

God instructed Ezekiel to "clap your hand" and "stamp your foot" while proclaiming a measured, orderly judgment. The population was to be destroyed in three specific ways, as illustrated by the "Third Prophecy" involving the prophet's hair:

1. **Plague (Pestilence):** Affecting those "far off."
2. **The Sword (War):** Affecting those "near."
3. **Famine:** Affecting those "remaining" and "besieged."

The 1/3 Distribution Model

Action with Hair	Corresponding Fate of Israelites
1/3 Burned in the fire	Death by plague or famine in Jerusalem.
1/3 Struck with a sword	Falling by the sword in the city.
1/3 Scattered to the wind	Falling scattered/exiled; some pursued by the sword.
Portions tied to robes	Represents the preserved remnant.

V. The Remnant and the Purpose of Disaster

Despite the "intense physical punishment," the LORD promised to leave a remnant—those who escape the sword and are scattered among the nations.

- **The Psychological Shift:** While in captivity, the remnant will "remember" the LORD and "loathe themselves" for the evils and abominations they committed.
- **Historical Precedents:** The document cites Daniel (who sought God through prayer and fasting regarding the desolations of Jerusalem) and Nehemiah (who confessed the sins of his people and his father's house) as examples of this remembrance and confession in exile.
- **The Repeated Refrain:** Throughout Chapter 6, the phrase "Then they will know that I am the LORD" occurs four times. This underscores that the primary objective of the judgment is the restoration of the intimate knowledge of the true God.

VI. Geographic Specifics: Diblah vs. Riblah

In Ezekiel 6:14, God promises to make the land "more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah."

- **Linguistic Note:** "Diblah" appears only once in the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically in this passage.
- **Probable Correction:** It is likely a typographical error for Riblah, a location on the eastern boundary of Israel.
- **Historical Significance of Riblah:** As noted in Jeremiah 52:26-27, Riblah was the location where the King of Babylon struck down the leaders of Judah and led the people away into exile. It represents a place of execution and the beginning of dispossession.

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VII. Conclusion

The messaging given to Ezekiel is a stark warning of the "end" coming upon the "four corners of the land." God's judgment is described as being without pity or sparing, administered strictly "according to your ways." The total desolation of the land and the death of the idolaters serve as a final, undeniable proof of the LORD's identity and His refusal to endure the doctrine of idols.