Ezekiel 6

The Mountains of Israel: Idols Broken, a Remnant Remembers

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Israel filled God's mountains with altars to other gods, and God promised to fill those altars with the bones of the worshipers. The idols couldn't save anyone. But in exile a remnant would remember Him, see how deeply their unfaithfulness had wounded Him, and hate the sin they once loved. Through judgment and through mercy, they would know that He is the LORD.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 6 (KJV), MARKED

▲ **Gold** God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
⚠ **Rose** Sin / warning
★ **Violet** Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

[1]And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

[2]Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

[3]And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and ▲ I will destroy your high places.

[4]And ⚠ your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

[5]And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel before their idols; and ⚠ I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

[6]In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

[7]And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

[8]★ Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

[9]And ★ they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because ▲ I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and ★ they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

[10]And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that ▲ I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

[11]Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, ⚠ Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall ⚠ by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

[12]He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: ▲ thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

[13]Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

[14]So will ▲ I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Marked in the text

- **v2** set thy face toward the mountains of Israel
- **v3** hear the word of the Lord GOD
- **v3** ▲ I will destroy your high places
- **v4** ⚠ your altars shall be desolate
- **v4** idols *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** ⚠ I will cast down your slain men before your idols

- **v5** ⚠ I will scatter your bones round about your altars
- **v6** ⚠ your idols may be broken and cease
- **v7** ⇄ know that I am the LORD *(every occurrence)*
- **v8** ★ Yet will I leave a remnant
- **v9** ★ they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations
- **v9** ▲ I am broken with their whorish heart
- **v9** ⚠ their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols
- **v9** ★ they shall lothe themselves
- **v10** ▲ I have not said in vain
- **v11** ▮ Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot
- **v11** ⚠ Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel
- **v11** ⚠ by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence
- **v12** ▲ thus will I accomplish my fury upon them
- **v13** ◷ upon every high hill
- **v13** ◷ under every green tree
- **v13** ⚠ sweet savour to all their idols
- **v14** ▲ I stretch out my hand upon them
- **v14** ◷ the wilderness toward Diblath

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 6:9 (KJV)

9 And ★ they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because ▲ I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their ⇄ idols: and ★ they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

Setting

A new message begins: "And the word of the LORD came to me saying" (v1). Ezekiel is still in Babylon among the exiles, in the years before Jerusalem's fall (about 593–592 BC; compare 1:2 and 8:1). Chapters 4–5 aimed at the city of Jerusalem; now God turns Ezekiel's face to the countryside — the hills and valleys of the land where Israel worshiped idols on every hilltop. Here, for the first time in the book, comes the phrase Ezekiel will repeat for the rest of his ministry: "you will know that I am the LORD" (v7).

Structure

- vv1–3 — **against the mountains:** "set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them" (v2). God addresses mountains, hills, ravines and valleys: "I will destroy your high places" (v3).
- vv4–7 — **altars and bones:** "your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols" (v4). "I will scatter your bones around your altars" (v5). Every city laid waste, every idol broken, "your works may be blotted out" (v6). "You will know that I am the LORD" (v7).
- vv8–10 — **the remnant remembers:** "I will leave a remnant" (v8). "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations" (v9) — "how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols" (v9). "They will

loathe themselves in their own sight" (v9). They will know the LORD, and that "I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them" (v10).

- vv11–12 — **the lament:** "Clap your hand, stamp your foot," and say, "Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel" (v11) — they will fall by sword, famine and plague. Far or near or besieged, no one escapes (v12). "Thus will I spend My wrath on them" (v12).
- vv13–14 — **among their idols:** the slain lie among their idols "on every high hill," "under every green tree," and under every leafy oak — "the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols" (v13). "I will stretch out My hand against them" and make the land "more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah" (v14).

Repeated words

know that I am the LORD (vv7, 10, 13, 14); idols (vv4, 5, 6, 9, 13); altars (vv4, 5, 6, 13); sword (vv3, 8, 11, 12); slain (vv4, 7, 13); desolate (vv4, 6, 14); high places (vv3, 6); abominations (vv9, 11); famine / plague (vv11, 12).

Contrasts

Mountains of Israel, God's land (v2) ⟷ high places of idols on every hill (vv3, 13). "Soothing aroma" offered to idols (v13) ⟷ the stench of corpses before those idols (vv4–5). Their adulterous hearts (v9) ⟷ God's hurt heart (v9). Slain among the idols (v7) ⟷ a remnant that escapes (v8). Idolaters who forgot God ⟷ exiles who "remember Me among the nations" (v9). Loathing God's ways ⟷ loathing themselves (v9).

Chapter theme (my words)

Israel filled God's mountains with altars to other gods, and God promised to fill those altars with the bones of the worshipers. The idols couldn't save anyone. But in exile a remnant would remember Him, see how deeply their unfaithfulness had wounded Him, and hate the sin they once loved. Through judgment and through mercy, they would know that He is the LORD.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 6:3 (KJV)

3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, ▮ hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and ▲ I will destroy your high places.

Against the mountains (vv1–3)

Ezekiel prophesies to the landscape itself. The "high places" were hilltop shrines left over from Canaanite religion — Baal and Asherah worship that Israel never fully removed (1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 17:9–11). Block, in Guzik, says the word could mean "any open cultic installation, regardless of location," though "hilltops often served as sites on which cultic rituals were performed." Josiah had torn many down (2 Kgs 23:8–14), but after his death they came back. Wright, in Guzik, notes the ravines and valleys held the same kind of worship, even child sacrifice — the valley of Hinnom was one such place (Jer 7:31).

Bones before the idols (vv4–7)

God's punishment fits the crime. The people loved their altars; their corpses would lie in front of them. Bones defiled a holy place (2 Kgs 23:14, 16), so the idols would be polluted by their own worshipers' remains. Block, in Guzik: "this oracle announces that the time has come for Yahweh to clean house." Ezekiel's usual word for idols, *gillulim*, sounds like the word for dung used in 4:12–15 — many commentators hear a deliberate insult in it: "dung-gods."

"You will know that I am the LORD" (v7)

This is Ezekiel's signature phrase. Guzik notes this is its first use, and Smith, in Guzik, says it "occurs some sixty times in the book." In this chapter alone it appears four times (vv7, 10, 13, 14). God's goal in judgment is not just punishment but revelation: when everything else falls, people learn who He really is.

The remnant remembers (vv8–10)

Here the hope breaks through — the few hairs of 5:3 explained. God will leave survivors among the nations, and they will remember Him. Poole, in Guzik: they "shall consider and return, and seek me in their affliction." What they remember is striking: "how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts" (v9). The Hebrew verb (*shabar*) literally means "broken." Morgan, in Guzik: "God is represented as broken." The holy God is not a cold judge. Idolatry is adultery against a faithful Husband, and it wounds Him (compare Hos 1–3; 11:8; Eph 4:30). When the remnant sees that, they "loathe themselves" — Trapp, in Guzik: they "shall bleed inwardly, and blush outwardly." Poole notes that true repentance turns from all the abominations, not just some. Guzik traces a progression: remembrance, repentance, then restored relationship.

Clap and stamp (vv11–12)

Ezekiel is told to make a scene — hand and foot — to arrest attention and lament Israel's evil. Some read the gesture as scorn at the sin; most see grief and alarm. Feinberg, in Guzik, comments on the three judgments of sword, famine and plague. Verse 12 closes every exit: the far-off die of plague, the near fall by the sword, and those left in the besieged city starve. "Thus will I spend My wrath on them."

From the wilderness to Diblah (vv13–14)

"Every high hill" and "every green tree" is the standard description of idolatry everywhere (Deut 12:2; Jer 2:20). The "soothing aroma" — a phrase used of offerings pleasing to God (Lev 1:9) — had been given to idols. "Diblah" is otherwise unknown. Some manuscripts read "Riblah," and Vawter and Hoppe, in Guzik, explain the difference as a scribal mix-up of the letters *d* and *r*, which look alike in Hebrew. Wiersbe, in Guzik, reads it as a north–south sweep — from the southern desert to Riblah in the north, like "from Dan to Beersheba." Riblah is where Nebuchadnezzar later judged Zedekiah and the leaders of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:6–7, 20–21). Poole: "God striketh hard when he stretcheth out his hand."

Word study (Hebrew)

- **mountains — *har* (H2022):** mountain, hill country.
- **high places — *bamah* (H1116):** an elevated place; a hilltop shrine.
- **altars — *mizbeach* (H4196):** a place of sacrifice.
- **incense altars — *chamman* (H2553):** sun-pillars or incense stands of pagan worship.
- **idols — *gillul* (H1544):** idols, literally things rolled — a contemptuous word, Ezekiel's favorite for idols.
- **slain — *chalal* (H2491):** pierced, fatally wounded.

- **leave a remnant — *yathar* (H3498):** to leave over, cause to remain.
- **escape — *palit* (H6412):** a fugitive, survivor.
- **remember — *zakar* (H2142):** to call to mind, bring back to remembrance.
- **hurt — *shabar* (H7665):** to break, shatter, crush.
- **adulterous / played the harlot — *zanah* (H2181):** to commit fornication, be unfaithful.
- **loathe — *qut* (H6962):** to loathe, feel disgust.
- **in vain — *chinnam* (H2600):** for nothing, without cause.
- **know — *yada* (H3045):** to know by experience.
- **desolate — *shamem* (H8074):** to be desolate, appalled.
- **Diblah — *Diblah* (H1689):** a place name; possibly Riblah.

Cross-references

Lev 1:9; Lev 26:30; Deut 12:2–3; 1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 17:9–11; 2 Kgs 23:8–16; 2 Kgs 25:6–7; Jer 2:20; Jer 3:6; Jer 7:31; Ezek 5:3; Ezek 20:43; Ezek 36:31; Hos 2:13–16; Hos 11:8; Luke 15:17–20; 2 Cor 7:10–11; Eph 4:30; 1 John 5:21.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 6:11 (KJV)

11 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

Command to obey — "set your face."

God told Ezekiel to set his face against the places where idols stood. I need to set my face against the high places in my own life — the spots, the screens, the people and patterns where I keep going back to what replaces God. Josiah tore them down, and they came back when nobody kept watch. I'll name mine and keep watch.

Sin to confess — an adulterous heart

God doesn't call idolatry a mistake; He calls it adultery, and He says it broke Him (v9). I've given my love and trust to other things while saying I belong to Him. I'll confess it as betrayal of a Husband who has been faithful to me, not just as a rule I broke.

Warning to heed — the idol can't save you

The worshipers died in front of their altars, and the idols did nothing. Every man I've walked with in addiction knows that place: the thing you worshiped is right there when you hit bottom, and it can't lift you. Whatever I'm bowing to will be standing there useless on the day I need help.

Promise to trust — "I will leave a remnant."

In exile, far from home, the survivors would "remember Me among the nations" (v9). For the man in a cell or a treatment bed, far from where he thought his life would be — that is often exactly where God brings us to our senses (Luke 15:17). Remembering Him is the beginning of coming home, and He has not forgotten you.

Example to follow — the remnant's repentance

They didn't just regret the consequences; they loathed the sin itself, all of it (v9). Godly sorrow leads to repentance without regret (2 Cor 7:10). I want that kind of honesty — not managing my image, but hating what hurt God.

Worship

You are the LORD — the only God, who will not share Your glory with idols. Your heart can be grieved by our unfaithfulness, and still You leave a remnant and call us to remember You. Everything else will fall, and You will still be the LORD.

Prayer

LORD, forgive my adulterous heart. Show me my high places and give me courage to tear them down and keep them down. When I am far from home, make me remember You. Give the men I serve a godly sorrow that leads them back to You, and let all of us know, by Your mercy and not only by Your judgment, that You are the LORD. Amen.