

**Shayla:** Who are the six men in Ezekiel 9?

**Midrash:**

The word “executioners” is also used in 2 Kings of the Temple guards. Anyone who thought about desecrating the Temple (which was a capital crime) would have to go by these fearsome men who had “license to kill”. These guards in Ezekiel however, seem to be supernatural in nature.

Their actions remind me of Yahweh’s Angel who killed an untold number of Egyptian firstborn males,<sup>1</sup> 70,000 in response to David’s census<sup>2</sup> and a further 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.<sup>3</sup> If you take the six plus the scribe (thus fully seven characters involved in the execution process) it reminds me of the judging angels in Revelation.<sup>4</sup>

It’s interesting that they stood beside the bronze altar of burnt offerings rather than the golden altar of incense (v.2). That means that when they were about to be tasked with killing, they stood beside the altar where the sacrifices to the Lord were slain.

The “mark” that the scribe puts on the foreheads of the people (v.4) is the Hebrew letter tav which in ancient times looked like an x. The only other time this word occurs is in Job 31:35 where Job alludes to its use as a signature on a legal document that puts him in line for a hearing from Yahweh Shaphat (God our Judge<sup>5</sup>).

We only seal that which we wish to preserve and I take great comfort that even in the midst of His wrath, the Lord God remembers to preserve His people. He takes care of His people before He “takes care” of His enemies.<sup>6</sup>

Compare the following passages:

- **Ezekiel 9:6 HCSB** Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, as well as the *older* women and little children, but do not come near anyone who has the mark. Now begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.
- **Revelation 7:2-3 HCSB** Then I saw another angel rise up from the east, who had the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were empowered to harm the earth and the sea: **(3)** "Don't harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the slaves of our God on their foreheads."
- **Revelation 9:4 HCSB** They were told not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green plant, or any tree, but only people who do not have God's seal on their foreheads.

In verse 6 the executioners were told to begin at Hashem’s sanctuary and work out from there. That judgment begins with the House of the Lord; with the people who claim to be His; is confirmed in the New Covenant.

- **1 Peter 4:17-18 HCSB** For the time has come for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? **(18) And if the righteous is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?**

The events leading up to this passage, described in chapter 8, seem to be grounded in history, for specific charges were laid and specific people were named. Ezekiel served as prophet around 593-573 BC. He and Obadiah were likely contemporaries. So, I think this is probably referring to Zedekiah’s disastrous war with Babylon which in 586 BC led to the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian Captivity.<sup>7</sup>

However, there are many parallels to end-time events, sufficient for me to suspect that there are elements of a “near-far” prophecy. In my judgment, these are angels tasked to bring about the slaughter of the idolatrous people described in chapter 8. The fact that the weapons are war clubs (rather than plague or pestilence), makes me think that God either supernaturally killed them as He did the Assyrians or He used the agency of the Babylonian troops.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12:23

<sup>2</sup> 2 Samuel 24

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 19:35

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 8:2, 6-9:1, 13; 11:15

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 18:25; Psalm 7:18; 96:13; Isaiah 33:22

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 31:20; Isaiah 26:20-21

<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings 24:20-25:10