

The Hebrew Corner

Towers were very important structures in biblical times, as they were essential for the protection of a city from attack. The Hebrew word for tower is migdol (מִגְדֹּל, mihg-DAHL). In 2 Chronicles 26:9, 10, an account of the towers built by King Uzziah is given:

“Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. Also he built towers in the desert ...”

Towers were used to view approaching soldiers of armies, as described in Isaiah 21:5-9:

“Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. For this hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed: And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights: And behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.”

Towers could also be used for armies to shoot weapons down from. The following passage, 2 Chronicles 26:15, illustrates this use by King Uzziah's army:

“And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal ...”

Towers could be a source of pride and arrogance. The Tower of Babel came about due to the arrogance and conceit of the people of Shinar, who were of one language, as indicated in Genesis 11:1-4:

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

Their fear of being scattered, ironically, became reality because of the tower they built, as God confused their language so that they could not understand one another, and they then were scattered over the face of the earth.

The watchmen of each tower needed to be vigilant and on guard, as they were responsible for warning the people of their city of impending danger. Watchman in Hebrew is zopheh (צֹפֵה, tsoh-FEH). In the book of Ezekiel, we see this term used in a broader sense, in which the prophet Ezekiel is being instructed by God to be a watchman for all the people of Israel to warn them to turn away from their evil deeds (Ezekiel 3:17-19):

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

So we see that a watchman bears a heavy responsibility before God. This is a responsibility that extends to people in positions of power, as shown in Hebrews 13:17:

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

However, without the guidance of the Lord, the watchman cannot effectively carry out his responsibility, as Psalm 127:1 instructs:

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

May we all be effective watchmen for our families, for our communities, and for our nation, by keeping focused on God through the study of his word and through prayer.