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## Nehemiah 12.

(2019)

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## Nehemiah 12.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

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In 445 B.C. the Persian King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah, an Israelite who was a trusted official written permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah went with the third wave of returning Jewish exiles. There was intense opposition from other people in the land, and disunity within Jerusalem. Despite the strong opposition, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls and overcame many threats. He served twice as governor and did what God had put in his heart (Neh. 2:12) (Neh. 7:5), and found that the joy of the LORD was his strength (Neh. 8:10). For an overview of the entire book see the title: "Overview of the Book of Nehemiah" (at the beginning of the index to Nehemiah).

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### THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

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The chapter begins by stating that the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, and that the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. It then gives a list of the names of those who lived in Jerusalem, and a list of those who lived in the towns of Judah

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### NOTE

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**Focus of this Chapter:** for information concerning the vast number of names mentioned in this chapter the reader will need to do their own research, for the focus of this study is not upon the names of those mentioned and their history etc., but upon points of interest and of significance.

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### CHIEF PRIESTS WHO CAME UP WITH ZERUBBABEL

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#### NEHEMIAH 12:1-7

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- **Nehemiah 12:1-6:** <sup>1</sup> These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>2</sup> Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, <sup>3</sup> Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, <sup>4</sup> Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, <sup>5</sup> Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, <sup>6</sup> Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>7</sup> Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

**Introduction:** verses one to nine covers the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel in the first return from Babylon to Jerusalem.

**Shealtiel:** (or Salathiel).

**Ezra:** this maybe a different man from Ezra the faithful priest and scribe and patriotic leader who came up with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem, and later returned to Babylon and after some time, returned again to Jerusalem. If he was the same man, he would now have lived a very long life, which if so, would no doubt be due to his faithfulness and the blessing of God on his life.

**Jeremiah:** not Jeremiah the prophet, since it cannot be thought that he lived so long that he survived beyond the captivity and onward.

**The chief of the priests:** the chief of the priests; the heads of the twenty-four courses that David appointed by divine direction, (1 Chron. 24), but here are twenty-two, and in (Neh. 12:12) only twenty, the reason for this difference may be because two of the twenty-four courses were

extinct in Babylon, and two of the persons here named, (v2-5,) Hattush and Maadiah, may be omitted in the account of the later generations (Neh. 12:12) because they had no offspring.

**The chief of the priests:** which were restored after their return from their seventy-year captivity, but not according to the original twenty-four courses that the priests instituted by David (1 Chron. 24) because none of the lists mentioned here are complete. Following maybe three reasons for this:

- Some of the twenty-four courses were either extinct in Babylon or did not return.
- Hattush and Maadiah may be omitted because they had no sons.
- Two of the twenty-four courses may have become extinct in Babylon, since none belonging to them are reported as having returned.
- Zerubbabel and Joshua had established these courses as close as they possibly could to the original order.

**And of their brothers:** (v7) referring to the priests, who were with them the days of Jeshua, who at the time of the return from captivity was the high-priest.

**Shealtiel and Jeshua:** went up from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. Jeshua was the first high priest after the captivity and Shealtiel a prince. The names of the priests are given in the following verse (also the six verses after it):

- of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>2</sup> Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, <sup>3</sup> Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, <sup>4</sup> Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, <sup>5</sup> Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, <sup>6</sup> Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>7</sup> Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

**Abijah:** was one of the ancestors of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5).

**Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah:** these chief of priests were next in dignity to the high priests and of those who were of the offspring of Aaron.

**SNAP SHOT:** faithful believers during the Old Testament and believers of the New Testament and onward owe a great a debt to godly ministers who at great cost to themselves have spoken to us the word of God.

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## LEVITES WHO CAME UP WITH ZERUBBAL

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### NEHEMIAH 12:8-23

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- **Nehemiah 12:8-23:** <sup>8</sup> And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. <sup>9</sup> And Bakbukiah and Unni and their brothers stood opposite them in the service. <sup>10</sup> And Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, <sup>11</sup> Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua. <sup>12</sup> And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' houses: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; <sup>13</sup> of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; <sup>14</sup> of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; <sup>15</sup> of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; <sup>16</sup> of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; <sup>17</sup> of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; <sup>18</sup> of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; <sup>19</sup> of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; <sup>20</sup> of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; <sup>21</sup> of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel. <sup>22</sup> In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the Levites were recorded as heads of fathers' houses; so too were the priests in the reign of Darius the Persian. <sup>23</sup> As for the sons of Levi, their heads of fathers' houses were written in the Book of the Chronicles until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.

**NOTE:** for information concerning the vast number of names mentioned in this chapter the reader will need to do their own research, for the focus of this study is not upon the names of those mentioned and their history etc., but upon points of interest and of significance.

**Written in the book of the Chronicles:** (v23) referring to the public annals or registers, in which the genealogies of the various families were recorded by the Jews with great exactness. This shows that the practice of keeping a record of public events in the state archives was continued after the return from Israel's seventy-year Babylonian captivity, at least to the time of Johanan, the son (i.e., the grandson) of Eliasbib.

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## CHIEF OF THE LEVITES WHO CAME UP WITH ZERUBBAL

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### NEHEMIAH 12:24

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- **Nehemiah 12:24:** And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch (ward over against ward in KJV).

**The chief of the Levites:** the account resumes with the Levites, and gives a list of the surviving officers of the temple, many names being the same as in earlier times.

**Watch by watch (ward over against ward in KJV):** meaning, one after another and each one in their course, to praise and to give thanks to the LORD, which they performed by turns according to the commandment and courses, that David had commanded.

- Moreover four thousand *were* porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, *said David*, to praise *therewith*.<sup>6</sup> And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, *namely*, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (1 Chronicles 23:5-6).

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## GATEKEEPERS WHO CAME UP WITH ZERUBBAL

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### NEHEMIAH 12:25-26

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- **Nehemiah 12:25-26:** Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard (porters keeping the ward in KJV) at the storehouses of the gates.<sup>26</sup> These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra, the priest and scribe.

In the following verses only four families of gatekeepers are mentioned.

- The gatekeepers were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their kinsmen (Shallum was the chief); (1 Chron. 9:17).
- The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south. (1 Chron. 9:24).
- For the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted to be over the chambers and the treasures of the house of God. (1 Chron. 9:26).

However, in the following three verses six families of gatekeepers are mentioned.

- The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138. (Neh. 7:45).
- The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, in all 139. (Ezra. 2:42).
- Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard. (Neh. 12:25).

It appears from the following verses that the temple had four chief gates, fronting the chief points, north, south, east and west, and two minor gates.

- And they cast lots by fathers' houses, small and great alike, for their gates. <sup>14</sup> The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a shrewd counselor, and his lot came out for the north. <sup>15</sup> Obed-edom's came out for the south, and to his sons was allotted the gatehouse. <sup>16</sup> For Shuppim and Hosah it came out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth on the road that goes up. Watch corresponded to watch. <sup>17</sup> On the east there were six each day, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, as well as two and two at the gatehouse. <sup>18</sup> And for the colonnade on the west there were four at the road and two at the colonnade. <sup>19</sup> These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the sons of Merari. (1 Chron. 26:14-19).

**Seraiah Jehozadak and Jeshua:** Saraiah (a high priest) was the father of Jehozadak (a high priest in Babylon). When the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to take Judah and Jerusalem into exile, Jehozadak was taken with them. (1 Chron. 6:14-15). Jeshua: was the son of Jehozadak (Jozadak in Ezra 3:2 and Ezra 10:18) and a grandson of Seraiah. Jeshua was probably born in Babylon, where his father Jehozadak had been taken. He was the first high priest after the Babylon captivity (B.C. 536) in the days of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

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## THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

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### NEHEMIAH 12:27-29

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- **Nehemiah 12:27-29:** And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. <sup>28</sup> And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; <sup>29</sup> also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem.

**The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem:** This ceremony of dedicating the wall and gates of the city was an act of godliness on the part of Nehemiah. It was to thank God for having enabled them to bring the building of the wall to a successful completion, especially since it was the city and place that He had chosen for them and contained the temple that had been blessed by the manifestation of His presence.

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**NOTE:** it is not because the people of Israel are holy that Jerusalem is called the Holy City, but because:

- It is the place and city God chose.
- It is the city God chose to put His name upon.
- It contained God's Temple that had been blessed by the manifestation of God's presence.

This dedication of the wall takes in the whole city. It consisted in a ceremonial march, in which the leading authorities, accompanied by the Levitical singers summoned from all parts of the country, and a vast multitude of people, marched in procession round the city walls. At various points they would pause at intervals to unite in praise, thanksgiving and prayer, for the continual blessing on the holy city. Based upon the following verses it is very likely this dedication was accompanied by everyone dedicating their houses, and after completing the march around the walls and arriving in the courts of the temple they offered sacrifices along with loud praises and thanksgiving to God for giving them victory and triumph over their enemies. Perhaps something similar to what the following verses speak of that they had done in past history.

- Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, 'Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. (Deut. 20:5).
- Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 8:63).

- They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. (Ezra 6:17).
- I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. (Psalm 30:1).

**They sought the Levites:** out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to guide the celebration of the day and to give thanks with instrumental instruments, cymbals, harps and lyres (v27) and with singing songs of praise and giving thankfulness in prayer according to the pattern of times past.

- David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. (1 Chron. 15:16).

Considering all the malice of their enemies that plotted against them to prevent the building of the wall, especially in such a short a time, it is likely they may have sung the following psalm.

- I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.<sup>2</sup> O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.<sup>3</sup> O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.<sup>4</sup> Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.<sup>5</sup> For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.<sup>6</sup> As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."<sup>7</sup> By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.<sup>8</sup> To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:<sup>9</sup> "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"<sup>10</sup> Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!"<sup>11</sup> You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,<sup>12</sup> that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever! (Psalm 30:1-12).

Though this is a cry and prayer of David, it can be applied to all people of similar circumstances.

**The singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem:** (v29) to be near the temple and on hand for the service of God and to do their duty when required.

**SNAP SHOT:** in the same way that the people of Israel dedicated their houses to the Lord, we likewise we must dedicate our bodies to the Lord for they are the temple of God.

- Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (1 Cor. 6:19).

All believers should devote themselves to God's honour and to His service, for it is by God's grace we are chosen and saved for eternal glory and everlasting happiness.

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## PRIESTS AND LEVITES PURIFY THEMSELVES

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### NEHEMIAH 12:30

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- **Nehemiah 12:30:** And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

Before the priests and Levites offered God praise and thanksgiving they were to purify themselves from sin. In numbers chapter eight we read that they were cleansed by washings their clothes and offering a sacrifice. (Num 8:21). After Moses had brought the Levites before the LORD, and the people of Israel had laid their hands on the Levites and Aaron had offered them before the LORD, they were to then:

- Lay their hands on the heads of two bulls, and offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD to make atonement for the Levites.<sup>13</sup> And set the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and offer them as a wave offering to the LORD.<sup>14</sup> “To separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, for the Levites were the LORD’S. (Numbers 8:12-14).
- The Levites purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes, and Aaron offered them as a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. (Num. 8:21).

**Levites purified themselves:** we do not know exactly how this purification was performed, it may have included one or a mixture of the following:

- Using the ashes of a red heifer spoken of in Numbers chapter nineteen that were kept for the water of impurity for a sin offering for the congregation of the people of Israel. (v9). The people could use this water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer to cleanse themselves from sin and uncleanness. (v11-12). Those who were unclean were to take some of the ashes of the red heifer (v2) and add fresh water to it in a vessel. (v17) and then a clean person sprinkled the water upon the unclean (v17-18).

Bathing themselves ceremonially, washing their clothes and abstaining from sexual activity spoken of in the following verses:

- The LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. (Exod. 19:10).
- He who burns them (the skin, flesh and dung of the bull and goat for a sin offering) shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. (Lev. 16:28).
- Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them.<sup>7</sup> Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them, and let them go with a razor over all their body, and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves. (Numbers 8:6-8).

It is also possible they followed the pattern of Hezekiah when he offered sacrifices for the purification of Israel’s national sins and atonement.

- King Hezekiah gathered the officials of the city and brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats up to the temple for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. The priests slaughtered the bulls, the rams and the lambs on the altar and threw their blood against the altar. Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, after which the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. (2 Chron. 29:20-24).

**Purification of the gates and walls:** purifying these symbolised removing defilements from the path of the sacred procession. The process of purification may have followed the pattern used for houses and spoken of in the following verses:

- For the cleansing of the house he (the priest) shall take two small birds, with cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop,<sup>50</sup> and shall kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water<sup>51</sup> and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the scarlet yarn, along with the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed and in the fresh water and sprinkle the house seven times.<sup>52</sup> Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and with the fresh water and with the live bird and with the cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn.<sup>53</sup> And he shall let the live bird go out of the city into the open country. So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.” (Leviticus 14:49-53).
- Or possibly used some of the blood or water from the above sacrifices.

Regardless of what form the purification of all things took, it symbolised that the Holy City of God was now seen in a new light and perhaps the idea that now once again they were living in the hope that the Kingdom of God was now present among them, spoken of in the following Scriptures (and others similar):



- All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. <sup>28</sup> For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. (Psalms 22:27-28).
- God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. (Psalms 47:8).
- To overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. (Haggai 2:22).

It could be said that they were putting new garments on Jerusalem

- Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. (Isaiah 52:1).

There is no doubt a purified Jerusalem filled with devoted faithful priests and believers would be the beginning of great things as God acted on their behalf as long as it remained pure. In a sense it could be said Jerusalem was reborn.

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## THE FIRST GREAT CHOIR/COMPANY

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### NEHEMIAH 12:31

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- **Nehemiah 12:31:** Then I brought the leaders (the princes in KJV) of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks (two great *companies of them that gave thanks* in KJV), One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. <sup>32</sup> And after them went Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah, <sup>33</sup> and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, <sup>35</sup> and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph; <sup>36</sup> and his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. <sup>37</sup> At the Fountain Gate they went up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

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**Leaders (princes in KJV)** refers to authorities and chief men amongst the two companies. These verses and the following verses show that the leaders, the priests, the Levites and the singers were mingled together in this vast company.

**Upon the wall:** the wall was broad as many walls built to protect cities were built for the following reasons:

- Multitudes could easily walk upon it, especially in times of celebration such as this.
- In times of attack vast numbers of soldiers could stand upon it to defend the city.

**TWO COMPANIES:** the two great choirs/companies consisted of a mixture of leaders, priests, singers and musicians (v31-37), this is why some Bibles refer to them as choirs and others as companies. After the great company/choir of leading authorities, accompanied by the Levitical priests, singers and musicians had ascended the wall and stood together on its western face, near the Jaffa Gate, looking eastward toward the city and temple, they were divided into two companies to give thanks, one on the right and one on the left in the following manner.

1. The group on the right, being the southern choir/company began their march around the southern wall.
2. The choir/company on the left (spoken of in the following verses) began their march around the northern wall.

Both groups marched until they met on the eastern wall, between the water and the prison gates. (v38-39). The first choir/company marched to the south toward the Dung Gate (v31), the words, "after them went



Hoshaiah," means after Ezra the scribe (v36) began to march the first choir/company, being Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah, Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, Hanani, and certain sons of the priests' followed after him with trumpets and musical instruments of David. They marched to the Fountain Gate, walked up the stairs of the city of David (up the hill of Zion) to the city of David and onto the Water Gate on the east.

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## THE SECOND GREAT CHOIR/COMPANY

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### NEHEMIAH 12:38-39

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- **Nehemiah 12:38-30:** The other choir (company in KJV) of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, <sup>39</sup> and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah (the old gate in KJV), and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred (tower of Meah in KJV), to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard (prison gate in KJV).

The second choir/company of those who gave thanks, does not mean they were the only group that gave thanks, but that they are the second after the first group to march and give thanks. The statement, with half of the people, simply means the original group that stood together on the wall, were now split in two and this is the second half of the original group that stood together.

**Outline and overview of the march:** rather than describe the march around the city in meticulous detail, the following is an outline and overview of the march. Both companies started from the corner of the first and second wall. Before beginning to march in their opposite directions they praised God and gave thanks. They then proceeded in opposite directions on the wall around the city.

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**The first group:** being the southern choir/company consisting of a mixture of leaders, priests,' singers and musicians (v31-37) lead by Ezra walked to the right and marched around the southern wall toward the dung gate. (v31-36)

**The second group:** also consisting of a mixture of leaders, priests,' singers and musicians (v31-37) went left and walked around the northern wall in the opposite direction toward the other side of the city around the northern wall with Nehemiah walking behind them (v38).

When both groups had completed their circuit around the wall, they would have arrived at a space facing the temple where they would have stood and waited. Once they were all together, they would have marched into the courts of the temple. The following verses show that once they were standing in the courts of the temple, they sang songs of praise and offered great sacrifices and rejoiced with great joy. (40-43). For information concerning the gates see the title:

- The Walls, Towers and Gates of Jerusalem (at the end of this document).

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## BOTH CHOIRS STOOD IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

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### NEHEMIAH 12:40-43

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- **Nehemiah 12:40-43:** So both choirs (two companies in KJV) of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; <sup>41</sup> and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; <sup>42</sup> and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and

Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. <sup>43</sup> And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

When these two choirs (two companies in KJV) began their march there was a mixture of leaders, priests, singers and musicians (v31-37), this is why some Bibles refer to them as choirs and others as companies, now at the end of their march they are all standing together with Nehemiah, their wives and their children. This vast group is now standing at the House of God, meaning at the outer court of the temple to unite to offer praise, sacrifices and prayers of thanksgiving for God's great blessing on the Holy City. Since this was a festival of celebration the priests and the people would have feasted on many of the sacrifices. Verse forty-three is full of great joy on account of the wall being fully completed which gave the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the temple far greater security and safety from enemies.

**The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away:** (v43) how beautiful is this festival day of celebration, not only were men involved, but also women and children sang Hosannas of praise, while the priests blew trumpets and the singers sang and played on their musical instruments. The overwhelming feeling of joy was raised to such a high level of enthusiasm that the joy of Jerusalem was heard far off. This could mean either of the following:

- Their loud voices and musical instruments were heard a great distance far away.
- The fame and grandeur of this celebration was spread to nations, cities, villages, towns and countries great distances from Jerusalem.

Personally, I suspect both of these would apply

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## MEN APPOINTED OVER STOREROOMS

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### NEHEMIAH 12:44

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- **Nehemiah 12:44:** On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered.

On that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced with great joy (v43), men were appointed over the storerooms to collect, the donations and offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, required by the Law, for the priests and the Levites according to what their fields produced. After the people had given the firstfruits of all their land produced, they were then required to tithe (give ten percent) of what remained.

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## THE SERVICE OF PURIFICATION

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### NEHEMIAH 12:45-46

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- **Nehemiah 12:45-46:** And they (the men appointed over the storerooms) (v44) performed the service (ward in KJV) of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers (porters in KJV), according to the command of David and his son Solomon. <sup>46</sup> For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors (chief in KJV) of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The service of purification refers to:

- Taking care that no unclean person or thing should enter into the House or Courts of the LORD.

- Making sure the singers sang as they were appointed in their courses and in this way, they would keep the service of the LORD in its proper order and manner.
- Having the gatekeepers (porters in KJV) keeping the temple from being defiled from any unclean person or thing.

By adhering to these things, they would be keeping the service of purification. The men appointed over the storerooms, the singers and the gatekeepers kept the service (ward in KJV) of purification, meaning they took care that no unclean person would enter within the boundaries of the sacred building. The following verse shows that this was the official duty of the gatekeepers (porters in KJV)

- Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. <sup>19</sup> He stationed the gatekeepers (porters in KJV) at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. (2 Chronicles. 23:19).

The following verse shows that the singers were also over the work of the House of God.

- The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the work of the house of God. (Neh. 11:22).

The statement, "the singers, over the work of the house of God," primarily means they were to take care of the work of God concerning the choirs, the music, the musicians, the singers, the writing of the songs and rosters for who would be singing and at what ceremonies, days and festivals etc., it is certain that the oversight amongst them were also responsible to make sure that no unclean person or thing was amongst them when they performed on their holy days, and at feasts and festivals, and in this way they would also be keeping the service of purification.

**According to the commandment of David, and Solomon:** the following verse shows that Aaron had established who was to serve in the House of the LORD and their duties.

- These (sons of Aaron and the Levites) had as their appointed duty in their service to come into the house of the LORD according to the procedure established for them by Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him. (1 Chron. 24:19).

And the following verse shows that David and chiefs of the service set apart certain musicians.

- David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals. (1 Chron. 25:1).

The verses following verses (1 Chron. 25:1) go on to say that the duties of those who did the work for the service was to prophesy with the lyre, harps and cymbals in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD under the direction of the king. (1 Chron. 25:2-5). The songs of praise and thanksgiving that they sung, that bear the names of David and Asaph, were written under divine inspiration and are recorded in the book of Psalms.

**For in the days of David:** there were appointed directors (chief of the singers in KJV), to oversee all things concerning the duty of the singers and musicians.

- Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah, sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. (1 Chron. 25:2).
- For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers (chief of the singers in KJV), and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. (Neh. 12:46).

This verse gives the reason why the Levites, musicians and the singers at this great joyful festival accurately performed their duty and service, for from the time of David there were chief men and overseers of the singers whose duty it was to instruct and guide the musicians and singers in their service and see that they were free from any form of uncleanness before they performed in the sacred feasts, festivals and celebrations.

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## ALL ISRAEL GAVE PRAISE

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### NEHEMIAH 12:47

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- **Nehemiah 12:47:** And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers (porters in KJV) and they set apart that which was for the Levites; (sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites in KJV) and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.

**Levites and tithes:** the people set apart the first-fruits and tithes (ten percent) and gave them to the Levites. Likewise, the Levites took a tithe from the tithe the people gave them and gave it to the priests (the tithe of tithes), and in this way the people and the Levites faithfully paid what was required of them by the law of God.

- Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, ‘When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. (Num. 18:26).

**Sanctified holy things unto the Levites in KJV:** (v47) meaning the people paid their tithes regularly to the Levites, and the Levites paid the tithe of the tithes to the priests, as explained above.

**In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah:** the intention here is to compare the religious passion and faithfulness during the days of Nehemiah with the faithfulness and passion during Zerubbabel’s time as described by Ezra in the following verses:

- And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. (Ezra 6:16).
- And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel. (Ezra 6:22).

During the time of Zerubbabel, the people passionately worked together to rebuild the Temple of the LORD, likewise, during Nehemiah’s time the people with the same passion and zeal worked together to build the wall of Jerusalem. While these two men governed, the people, the Levites and musicians, singers and gatekeepers were paid their dues, and the people faithfully kept the feasts. Mentioning the names of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah together implies that the intermediate period between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah had been a time that lacked these things.

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## THE WALL, TOWERS AND GATES OF JERUSALEM

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### THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

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**The entire wall:** following are the measurements of the wall to the nearest metre (today). The length of the wall is 4,000 meters (4 kilometres), the average height is 12 meters and the average thickness is 2.5 meters. The wall contains 34 watchtowers and seven main gates open for traffic, with two minor gates reopened by archaeologists.

**Great broad wall:** (v38) was a specific area on the wall made for some reason or another, wider than the rest of the wall) (Neh. 3:8).

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## THE TOWERS

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### TOWER OF THE OVENS (FURNACES)

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The tower of the ovens (furnaces in KJV) (Neh. 12:38) was a tower in the wall of Jerusalem, close to the Corner Gate, restored by Nehemiah. It probably received its name because there were baking ovens nearby.

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### TOWER OF THE HUNDRED (MEAH IN KJV) ALSO HANANEEL

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The tower of Hananeel (or Hananel (meaning God is gracious), is a tower in the wall of Jerusalem adjoining the Tower of Meah (also called the tower of Hammeah and the Tower of the Hundred). probably near the north east corner, not far from the Sheep Gate. (Mentioned in Neh. 3:1) (Neh. 12:39). How it got its name is unknown.

It was restored by Nehemiah (Neh. 3:1)(Neh. 12:39), its name may have been derived from one of the following:

- The height of the tower (perhaps a 100 cubits).
- The number of its steps (maybe 100).
- The number of soldiers in its garrison (perhaps a 100 troops).

Based on the following verses it may have been part of the temple fortress:

- A letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me. (Neh. 2:8).

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## THE GATES

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### FISH GATE

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The Fish Gate (Neh. 12:39) was a gate on the east wall, just west of the Gihon spring, where men gathered to sell fish. It was one of the main entrances into Jerusalem.

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### GATE OF EPHRAIM

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The Gate of Ephraim (v39) this gate led to where the tribe of Ephraim formerly dwelt. It is not mentioned in the repairing of the wall and gates, so it had probably remained mostly intact. It was an entrance to Jerusalem located 400 cubits (about 183 metres) from the Corner Gate (2 Kings 14:13).

- Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for four hundred cubits, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. (2 Kings 14:13).

In Nehemiah's time the city square at the Ephraim Gate was one of the sites where booths for the celebration of the feast of tabernacles were set up. (Neh.8:16).

- So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. (Neh. 8:16).

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## GATE OF THE GUARD (PRISON GATE)

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The Gate of the Guard (prison gate in KJV) (v39) is only mentioned in (Neh. 12: 39) as a gate in the wall of Jerusalem, probably located south of the temple, near the Court of the Guard and the royal palace (Neh. 3 : 25), with the water-gate on its left. Both gates were near the king's palace and the temple. It maybe identical with the Miphkad (Muster) Gate.

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## GATE OF YESHANAH (THE OLD GATE IN KJV)

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The Gate of Yeshanah (Jesanah) (Neh. 12:39) many Bibles translate it, the old gate. Joiada and Meshullam laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts and its bars. (Neh. 3:6). Pinpointing its exact location is difficult because an exhaustive excavation, is impossible due to the fact the present city of Jerusalem is inhabited, even archaeologists are unable to determine precisely the site of the gates, or trace an exact outline of the walls. The specific purpose for this gate is unknown, unlike the Sheep and Fish Gates, but it was in a convenient place for all to enter and leave the city.

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## SHEEP GATE

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The sheep gate (Neh. 12:39) was on the north side of the temple in Jerusalem (Neh. 3:1). It got its name from the fact it was the best way into the city for sheep to be driven for the sacrifices. The following verse shows that the gate was near the pool of Bethesda.

- Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. (John 5:2).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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