

# Nehemiah 12:27-13:3

- The book of Nehemiah returns to the first person with information coming from the personal memoirs of Nehemiah.
  - The last we heard this first-person voice of Nehemiah is 7:5
  - Nehemiah is spoken of in the third-person in 8:9; 10:1 and 12:26.

Nehemiah 12:27 – “**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.**”

935 [e] la-hă·bî-’ām להביאם to bring them Prep-l   V-Hifil-Inf   3mp	4725 [e] mə-qô-w-mô-tām, מקומתם their places N-mpc   3mp	3605 [e] mik-kāl מכל- in all Prep-m   N-msc	3881 [e] hal-wî-yim הלויים the Levites Art   N-proper-mp	853 [e] 'et- את- - DirObjM	1245 [e] biq-šū בקשו they sought out V-Piel-Perf-3cp	3389 [e] ye-rū-šā·lim, ירושלם of Jerusalem N-proper-fs	2346 [e] hō-w-mat חומת of the wall N-fsc	2598 [e] ū·ba·hă·nuk·kat ובחגגת And at the dedication Conj-w, Prep-b   N-fsc
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"And at the HANUKKAT (Hanukkah)"  
meaning "dedication" or "consecration"

4700 [e] mə-šil·ta·yim מצלתים [with] cymbals N-cd	7892 [e] ū·bə-šîr, ובשיר and singing Conj-w, Prep-b   N-ms	8426 [e] ū·bə·tō·w·dō·wî ובתודות and both with thanksgivings Conj-w, Prep-b   N-fp	8057 [e] wə-šim·hah ושמחה and with gladness Conj-w   N-fs	2598 [e] hă·nuk·kah חגגה the dedication N-fs	6213 [e] la·’ā·sōt לעשות to celebrate Prep-l   V-Qal-Inf	3389 [e] lî·rū·šā·lim; לירושלם to Jerusalem Prep-l   N-proper-fs
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3658 [e] ū·bə·kin·nō·rō·wî. ובכנרות and harps Conj-w, Prep-b   N-mp	5035 [e] ne·bā·lîm נבלים and stringed instruments N-mp
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- “dedication” – **וּבְחֻגְגַת** – /ū·bă·hă·nuk·kat/ – *hanukkah* – “dedication”, “consecration”
  - וּבְחֻגְגַת** = “and the dedication”
    - וּ = “and”
    - בְּ = “the”
    - חֻגְגַת = “dedication” or “consecration”
  - Other “dedication” events:
    - 1 Kings 8 – dedication of the temple by Solomon
    - Ezra 6:16 – dedication of the temple by Zerubbabel
    - 1 Maccabees 4:52-59 and 2 Maccabees 1:18 – rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus on Kislev 25, 165 BC (December 8) after it was recaptured from the Seleucids
- Musical instruments
  - “cymbals” – *mesiltayim* – /mə·šil·ta·yim/ -
    - “Bronze cymbals” have been found in excavations at Hazor, Beth-Shemesh, Tell
    -

- iii. Abu-Hawam, Megiddo and Achzib dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the eighth century B.C. They are **shaped like plates with a central hollow boss** and they sometimes have a metal thumb loop. Their average **diameter is about four-and-one-half inches**. The Jewish historian Josephus notes that “the cymbals were broad and large instruments and were made of brass” (Antiquities, XII. 3).  
(Source:



See more images and details here - <https://www.alexanderancientart.com/1085.php>

<https://www.biblia.work/sermons/musicalinstruments-in-old-testament-worship/> )

- b. “**stringed instruments**” or “harps”- *nebalim* – /nə·bā·lîm/ -
- i. This was a stringed instrument made of **strings of varying lengths to create the sound of different notes**
  - ii. “It is thought to have been a stringed instrument because of a statement of Josephus. He wrote that it “had **12 musical notes** and was played upon by the fingers” (Antiquities XII. 3). By way of elimination, the most probably interpretation is the harp. Other possibilities, though, are the cittern and the lyre. Some scholars believe that an instrument depicted on several Bar-Kokhba coins (ca. A.D. 132-135) is a nevel. It has a wide sound box and vertical arms made of horn. One unusual feature of the instrument is that it has a small sound box above the main one.”
- c. “**harps**” or “lyres” – *kinnorot* – /ū·bə·kîn·nō·rō·wʔ/ -
- i. A stringed instrument with **strings of the same length but of different diameters and tensions**.
  - ii. The Sea of Galilee is shaped like a “harp” or a “lyre” which comes from the Hebrew word *kinnorot*, thus the Sea of Galilee is often called the Sea of Kinneret on maps.

- iii. “The kinnor, was perhaps the most common of the three. It is a stringed instrument in the lyre family, having a body and two unequal arms, joined together by an oblique yoke. This is the instrument which David played before Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). Many pictorial representations of the kinnor have been found throughout the Near East. The earliest is that on a wall painting at Beni Hassan, Egypt, dating to the 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Here, the instrument is being held by a Semite tribesman entering Egypt from Asia. The earliest representation found in Palestine is on a carved ivory plaque from Megiddo dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Also from Megiddo is a Philistine jug (11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) showing a lyre-player walking between animals. From the ninth century B.C. comes a rather crude sketch of a seated figure playing a lyre, found on a large pottery jar at Kuntilet Ajrud in Northern Sinai (see Bible and Spade, Autumn 1976, pp. 125-127). Probably the most famous depiction is that of three Judean captives from Lachish playing their lyres as they are being led into captivity by the Assyrians in 701 B.C., as shown in the relief found in Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh.



I took this photo in 2018 at the British Museum of the famous depiction of three Judean captives from Lachish playing their lyres (Hebrew: *kinnorot*) as they are being led into captivity by the Assyrians in 701 B.C. This relief was found in Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh.

12:28 – **And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites;**

1. Netophah was a town near Bethlehem

12:29 – **also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem.**

1. Gilgal (Beth-gilgal) is likely the town near Jericho

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

1. Purification and preparation:
  - a. The priests
  - b. The Levites
  - c. The people
  - d. The gates
  - e. The walls
2. The purification was for the cleaning and reclaiming of a person or a thing for the Lord and the purpose of the Lord's.

12:31 – **Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate.**

8147 [e]	5975 [e]	2346 [e]	5921 [e]	3063 [e]	8269 [e]	853 [e]	5927 [e]
šə-té	wā-'a-'ā-mî-dāh	la-hō-w-māh;	mé-'al	yə-hū-dāh,	śā-ré	'et-	wā-'a-'ā-leh
שְׁתֵּי	וַאֲעִיִּדָהּ	לְחוֹמָהּ	מֵעַל	יְהוּדָה	שָׂרֵי	אֶת-	וַאֲעִלָּהּ 31
two	and appointed	on the wall	on	of Judah	the leaders	-	So I brought up
Number-fdc	Conj-w   V-Hifil-Conseclmperf-1cs   3fs	Prep-l, Art   N-fs	Prep-m	N-proper-ms	N-mpc	DirObjM	Conj-w   V-Hifil-Conseclmperf-1cs
							תּוֹדוֹת - <i>towdot</i> = "thanksgivings" plural
							תּוֹדָה - <i>todah</i> = "thanksgiving" from <i>yadah</i> "to throw, cast"
830 [e]	8179 [e]	2346 [e]	5921 [e]	3225 [e]	8418 [e]	1419 [e]	8426 [e]
hā-'aš-pōt.	lə-ša-'ar	la-hō-w-māh,	mé-'al	lay-yā-mîn	we-ṭa-hā-lu-kōt	ge-dō-w-lōt	tō-w-dōt
הָאֲשָׁפֹת:	לְשַׁעַר	לְחוֹמָהּ	מֵעַל	לְיָמִין	וְתַהֲלִיכְתָּ	גְּדוֹלָתָּ	תּוֹדוֹת
the Refuse	toward Gate	on the wall	on	to the right hand	and [One] went	large	thanksgiving [choirs]
Art   N-ms	Prep-l   N-msc	Prep-l, Art   N-fs	Prep-m	Prep-l, Art   N-fs	Conj-w   N-fp	Adj-fp	N-fp

1. "choirs" is the word *towdot* which is the plural form of *toda* which means "thanksgiving"
2. Psalm 48 may fit this occasion. The last three verses of Psalm 48:  
*"Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever."* – Psalm 48:12-14
3. "To the right" – *layyamin* – לְיָמִין means
  - a. לְ = "lay" – "to the"
  - b. יָמִין = *yameen* – "right hand"
    - i. The literal meaning is only understood from the Semitic orientation which was always facing east.
    - ii. Thus, even though to us the procession went out the gate facing west and turned to their LEFT, the Semitic orientation would have been from the same position,

but speaking as if (as always) they were orientated as if facing east. Thus, they went RIGHT.

iii. The ESV translation avoids all this and simply says, "They went south."

12:32 – And after them went Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah,

12:33-35 – and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 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;

1. Each choir was made up of:
  - a. seven priests blowing trumpets
  - Levites playing the musical instruments:
    - i. Cymbals
    - ii. Harps
    - iii. Lyres

12:36 – 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.

12:37 – 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.

12:38 – The other choir 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,

5921 [e]	5971 [e]	2677 [e]	310 [e]	589 [e]	4136 [e]	1980 [e]	8145 [e]	8426 [e]
mê·'al	hā·'ām	wa·hā·ṣî	'a·hā·re·hā;	wa·'ā·nî	le·mō·wl	ha·hō·w·le·ket	haš·šê·nîṭ	we·hat·tō·w·dah
מעל	העם	וחצי	אחריה	ואני	למזול	ההולכת	השנית	והתודה
on	of the people	and with half	behind them	and I [was]	the opposite [way]	went	the second	And thanksgiving [choir]
Prep-m	Art   N-ms	Conj-w   N-msc	Prep   3fs	Conj-w   Pro-1cs	Prep-l	Art   V-Qal-Prtcpl-fs	Art   Number-ofs	Conj-w, Art   N-fs

מול - mol = "front" or "in front of"

7342 [e]	2346 [e]	5704 [e]	8574 [e]	4026 [e]	5921 [e]	2346 [e]
hā·re·hā·bāh.	ha·hō·w·mah	we·'ad	hat·tan·nū·rîm,	le·mig·dal	mê·'al	le·ha·hō·w·mah,
הרחבה	החומה	ועד	התנורים	למגדל	מעל	להחומה
Broad	the Wall	and as far as	of the Ovens	going past the Tower	upon	on the wall
Art   Adj-fs	Art   N-fs	Conj-w   Prep	Art   N-cp	Prep-l   N-msc	Prep-m	Prep-l, Art   N-fs

12:39 – and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard.

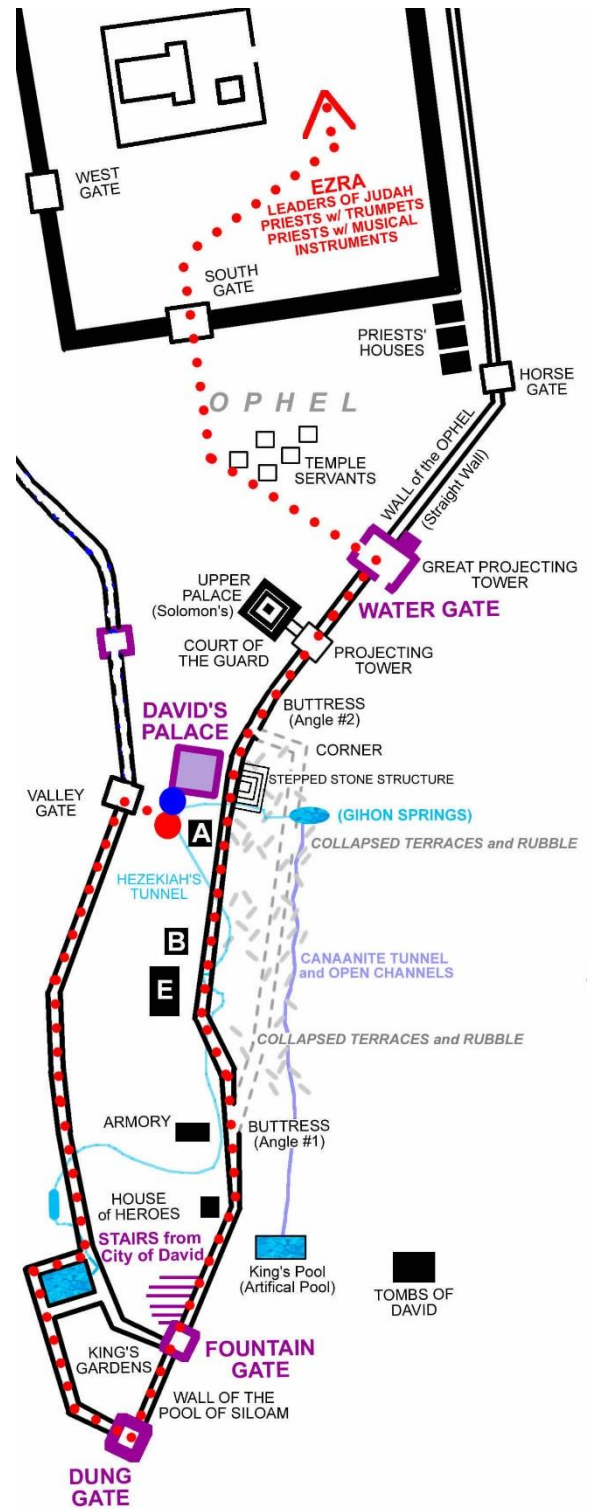
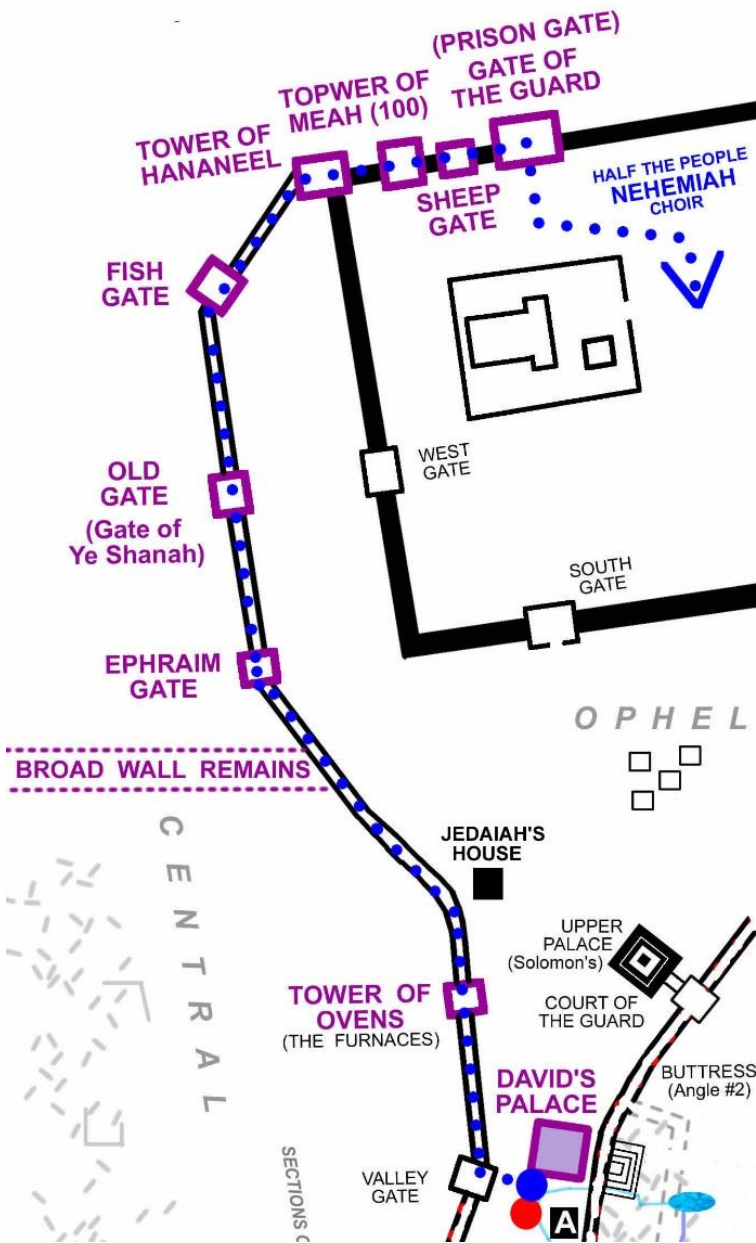
12:40 – So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me;

12:41 – and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;

12:42 – and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader.

12:43 – 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

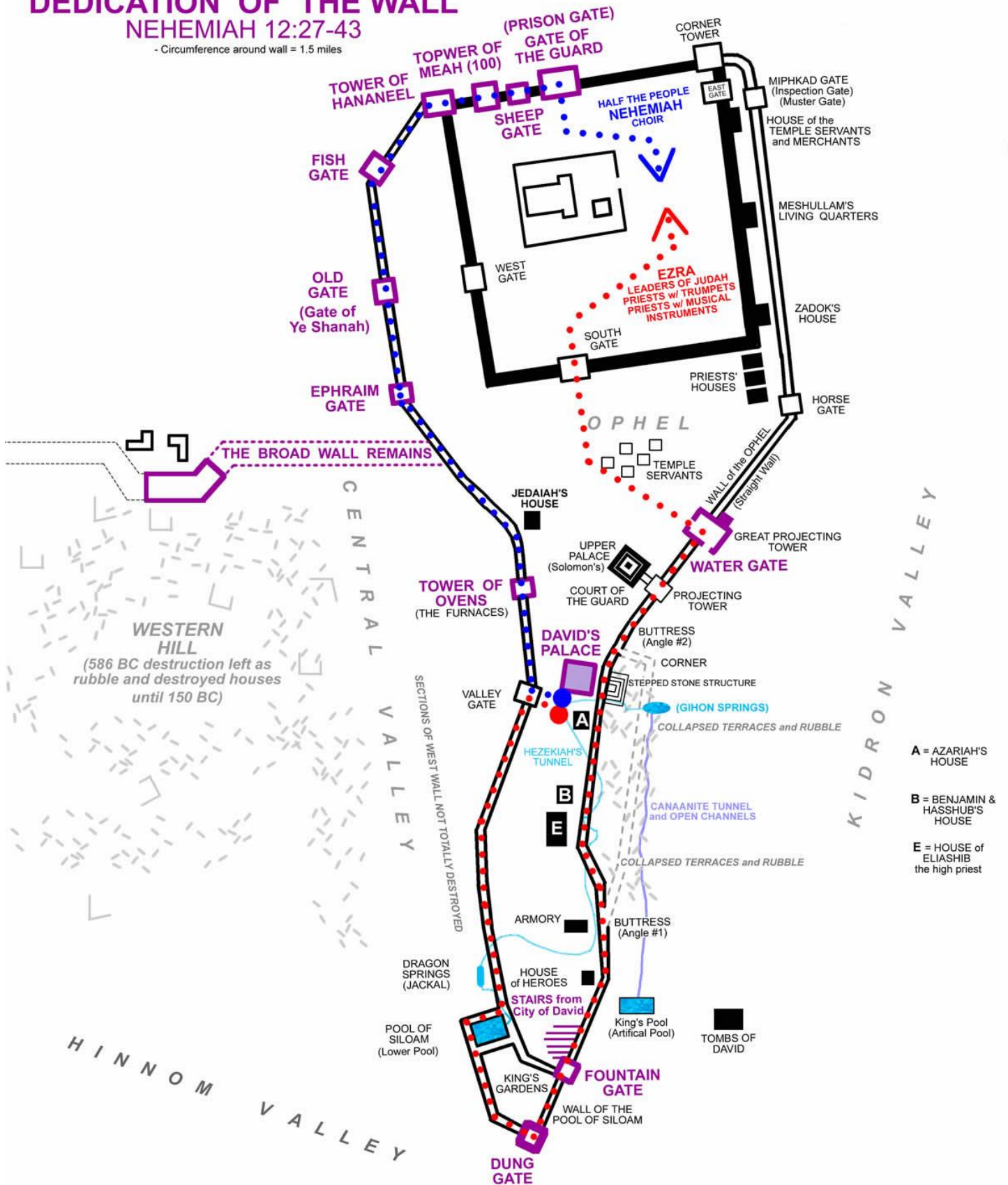
1. "Joy" is mentioned 5x in these verses.



# DEDICATION OF THE WALL

## NEHEMIAH 12:27-43

- Circumference around wall = 1.5 miles



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.

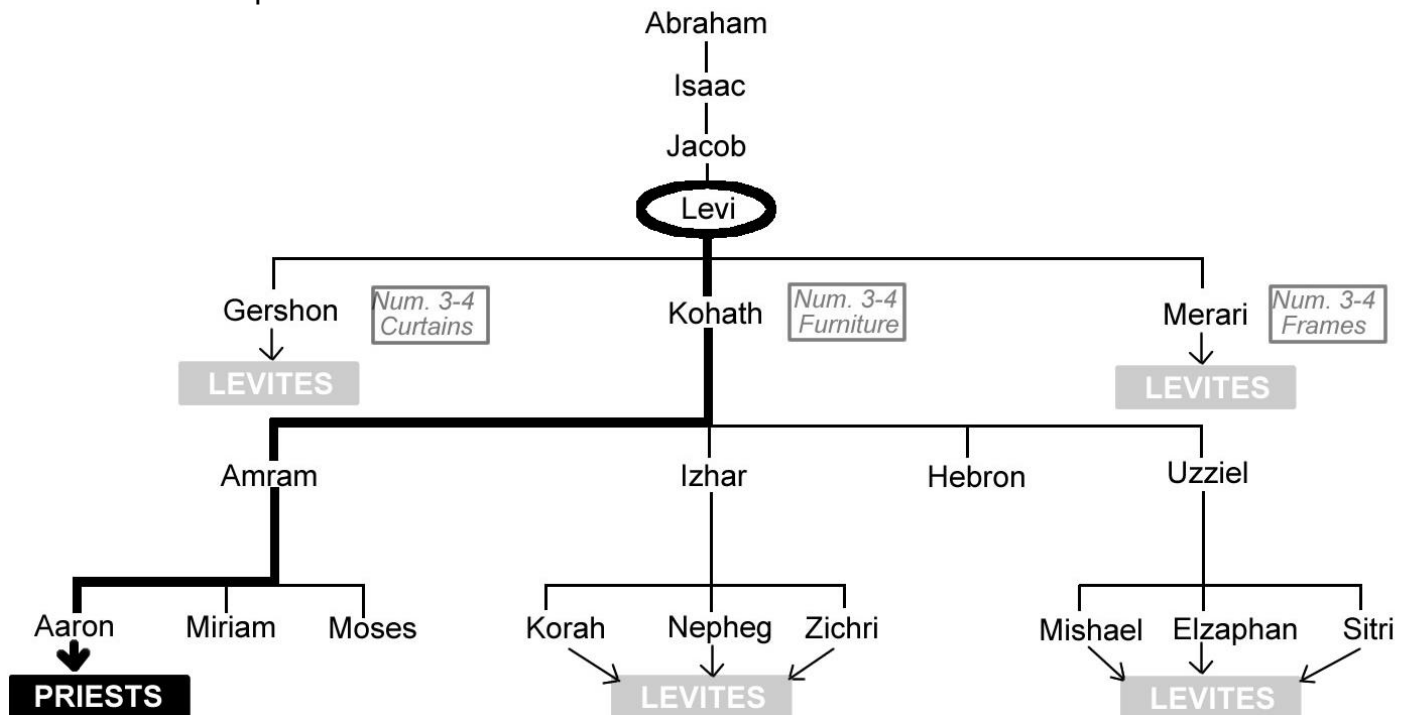
1. Organization of collecting and storing along with the distribution of the tithe and offerings was resumed
2. Levites went out to collect in the rural areas.
3. By chapter 13 the situation had reverted backward.

12:45 – And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon.

1. The history, organization and practice of David and Solomon are available and understood which means there were written records, families and traditions that date back to 1000 BC.

12:46 – For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

1. Asaph from the time of David was one of the founders of one of the three musical guilds.
  - a. Asaph was from the line of Gershon



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; and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.

13:1 – On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God,

1. “On that day” indicates the same day as 12:43 which was the same day as the Dedication of the wall.
2. “Book of Moses” – the portion referred to hear that they read is Deuteronomy 23:3-6 which is clearly reflected in 13:1-2. Again, history and text are available to the Jews from 1400 BC here in 444 BC. This content is 1,000 years old, and not some recent creation by the scribes – *“No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord.”*



*Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.*

*But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you.*

*You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.”*

3. The public reading of Scripture has shaped the thinking of this people several times in the book of Nehemiah:
  - a. 8:1
  - b. 8:13
  - c. 9:3

**13:2 – for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing.**

1. The portion of Scripture is Numbers 22-24 concerning Balaam and the Moabites.

**13:3 – As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.**



**Psalm 147 may have been written and sung at this time of the dedication:**

1 For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

2 **The Lord builds up Jerusalem;**

**he gathers the outcasts of Israel.**

3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

6 The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!

8 He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;

he makes grass grow on the hills.

9 He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

11 but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

13 **For he strengthens the bars of your gates;**

**he blesses your children within you.**

14 He makes peace in your borders;

he fills you with the finest of the wheat.

15 He sends out his command to the earth;

his word runs swiftly.

16 He gives snow like wool;

he scatters frost like ashes.

17 He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs;

who can stand before his cold?

18 He sends out his word, and melts them;

he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

19 He declares his word to Jacob,

his statutes and rules to Israel.

20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation;

they do not know his rules.

Praise the Lord!



Standing on the north wall of Jerusalem while walking around today's Old City of Jerusalem on top of the city walls.