
NEHEMIAH 12: 1 Now these are the priests and the Levites who went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

Account of the priests and Levites that come up with Zerubbabel, Neh 12:1-7. Of the Levites, Neh 12:8-21. The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Neh 12:22-26. Of the dedication of the wall, and its ceremonies, vv. 27-43. Different officers appointed, Neh 12:44-47.

Verse 1

Now these are the priests - Not the whole, but the chief of them, as we are informed, Neh 12:7, Neh 12:22, Neh 12:23, and Neh 12:24. The Septuagint omit Neh 12:3, except the word Shechaniah; as also Neh 12:4, Neh 12:5, Neh 12:6, Neh 12:9, Neh 12:37, Neh 12:38, Neh 12:39, Neh 12:40, and Neh 12:41. The Arabic omits the first twenty-six verses, and Neh 12:29. Mention is made of Ezra in this verse; and he is generally allowed to be that Ezra whose book the reader has already passed over, and who came to Jerusalem in the time of Cyrus, with Zerubbabel. If this were the same, he must have been at this time upward of a hundred years of age: and this case is not improbable, as an especial providence might preserve such a very useful man beyond the ordinary age of men. See what has been said on the case of Nehemiah, Neh 1:1 (note).

NEHEMIAH 12: 2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

NEHEMIAH 12: 3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

NEHEMIAH 12: 4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,

NEHEMIAH 12: 5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

NEHEMIAH 12: 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah.

NEHEMIAH 12: 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

Verse 7

The chief of the priests - They were twenty-four orders or courses in number, all subordinate to each other; as established by David, 1Chr 24:18. And these orders or courses were continued till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. See Calmet.

NEHEMIAH 12: 8 Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who was over the thanksgiving, he and his brothers.

Verse 8

Over the thanksgiving - The principal singers: See on Neh 11:17 (note).

NEHEMIAH 12: 9 Also Bakbukiah and Unno, their brothers, were over against them according to their offices.

NEHEMIAH 12: 10 Jeshua became the father of Joiakim, and Joiakim became the father of Eliashib, and Eliashib became the father of Joiada,

NEHEMIAH 12: 11 and Joiada became the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan became the father of Jaddua.

NEHEMIAH 12: 12 In the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' households: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;

NEHEMIAH 12: 13 of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;

NEHEMIAH 12: 14 of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;

NEHEMIAH 12: 15 of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;

NEHEMIAH 12: 16 of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;

NEHEMIAH 12: 17 of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;

NEHEMIAH 12: 18 of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;

NEHEMIAH 12: 19 and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;

NEHEMIAH 12: 20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;

NEHEMIAH 12: 21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

NEHEMIAH 12: 22 As for the Levites, in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, there were recorded the heads of fathers' households; also the priests, in the reign of Darius the Persian.

Verse 22

Jaddua - This was probably the high priest who went in his pontifical robes, accompanied by his brethren, to meet Alexander the Great, when he was advancing towards Jerusalem, with the purpose to destroy it, after having conquered Tyre and Gaza. Alexander was so struck with the appearance of the priest, that he forbore all hostilities against Jerusalem, prostrated himself before Jaddua, worshipped the Lord at the temple, and granted many privileges to the Jews. See Josephus, Ant. lib. xi., c. 3, and Prideaux's Connections, lib. 7, p. 695.

To the reign of Darius the Persian - Calmet maintains that this must have been Darius Codomanus, who was defeated by Alexander the Great: but Archbishop Usher understands it of Darius Nothus, in whose reign he thinks Jaddua was born, who was high priest under Darius Codomanus.

NEHEMIAH 12: 23 The sons of Levi, heads of fathers' households, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.

Verse 23

The book of the chronicles - This is not the book of Chronicles which we have now, no such list being found in it; but some other book or register, which is lost.

NEHEMIAH 12: 24 The chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers over against them, to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch next to watch.

NEHEMIAH 12: 25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the watch at the storehouses of the gates.

Verse 25

The thresholds of the gates - Some understand this of a sort of porticoes at the gates, and are puzzled about it, because they find no mention of porticoes elsewhere: but why may we not suppose these to resemble our watch-boxes or some temporary moveable shelters for those who took care of the gates? That there must have been some such conveniences, common sense dictates.

NEHEMIAH 12: 26 These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest the scribe.

NEHEMIAH 12: 27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with giving thanks, and with singing, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and with harps.

Verse 27

At the dedication of the wall - They sent for the Levites from all quarters, that this dedication might be as solemn and majestic as possible; and it is likely that this was done as soon as convenient after the walls were finished. The dedication seems to have consisted in processions of the most eminent persons around the walls, and thanksgivings to God, who had enabled them to bring the work to so happy a conclusion: and no doubt to all this were added a particular consecration of the city to God, and the most earnest invocation that he would take it under his guardian care, and defend it and its inhabitants against all their enemies.

The ancients consecrated their cities to the gods, and the very walls were considered as sacred. Ovid gives us an account of the ceremonies used in laying the foundations of the walls of the city of Rome, by Romulus. After having consulted together who should give name to the city, and have the direction of the wall by which it was necessary to surround it, they agreed to let the case be decided by the flight of birds. One brother went to the top of the Mons Palatinus, the other to that of Mount Aventine. Romulus saw twelve birds, Remus saw but six; the former, therefore, according to agreement, took the command. The poet thus describes the ceremonies used on the occasion: -

Apta dies legitur, qua moenia signet aratro;

Sacra Palis suberant; inde movetur opus.

Fossa fit ad solidum: fruges jaciuntur in ima.
 Et de vicino terra petita solo
 Fossa repletur humo, plenaque imponitur ara;
 Et novus accenso finditur igne focus.
 Inde, premens stivam, designat moenia sulco;
 Alba jugum niveo cum bove vacca tulit.
 Vox tuit haec regis; Condenti Jupiter urbem,
 Et genitor Mavors, Vestaque mater ades:
 Quosque pium est adhibere deos, advertite cuncti:
 Auspicibus vobis hoc mihi surgat opus.
 Longa sit huic aetas, dominaeque potentia terrae:
 Sitque sub hac oriens occiduusque dies! Ille precabatur.

Ovid, Fast. lib. iv., ver. 819. "A proper day is chosen in which he may mark out the walls with the plough: the festival of Pales was at hand when the work was begun. A ditch is dug down to the solid clay, into which they cast the fruits of the season; and bring earth from the neighboring ground, with which they fill up the trench; and on it build an altar, by whose flames the newly made hearth is cleft asunder. Then Romulus, seizing the plough, which a white heifer yoked with a snowy bull drew along, marked out the walls with a furrow. And thus spoke the king: 'O Jupiter, and Father Mars, with Matron Vesta, prosper me in founding this city! And all ye gods, approach, whomsoever it is right to invoke! Under your auspices may the work arise; may it endure for countless ages, and be the mistress of the world; and may the East and the West be under its control!' Thus he prayed."

The above is a literal version, and the account is not a little curious.

NEHEMIAH 12: 28 The sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites;

NEHEMIAH 12: 29 also from Beth Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had built them villages around Jerusalem.

Verse 29

From the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth - Or, from Beth-Gilgal; a village erected in the place where the Israelites encamped after they had, under the direction of Joshua, passed over Jordan.

NEHEMIAH 12: 30 The priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

Verse 30

The priests and the Levites purified themselves - This consisted in washings, abstinence from wine, and other matters, which, on all other occasions, were lawful. And as to the purifying of the gates and the walls, nothing was requisite but to remove all filth from the former, and all rubbish that might have been laid against the latter.

NEHEMIAH 12: 31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah on the wall, and appointed two great companies who gave thanks and went in procession. One went on the right hand on the wall toward the dung gate;

Verse 31

Then I brought up the princes - Perhaps this verse should be read thus: "Then I caused the princes of Judah to go upon the wall, and appointed two great choirs, [to sing praises], and two processions, one on the right hand, etc.

The following seems to have been the order of the procession: he divided the priests, the Levites, the magistrates, and the people into two companies; each company to go round one half of the wall. They began at the dung gate, one party going to the right and the other to the left, till they met at the great space opposite to the temple, where they all offered many sacrifices to God, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy; shouting so that the noise was heard a great way off.

NEHEMIAH 12: 32 and after them went Hoshai, and half of the princes of Judah,

NEHEMIAH 12: 33 and Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,

NEHEMIAH 12: 34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

NEHEMIAH 12: 35 and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph;

NEHEMIAH 12: 36 and his brothers, Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and Ezra the scribe was before them.

NEHEMIAH 12: 37 By the spring gate, and straight before them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, even to the water gate eastward.

NEHEMIAH 12: 38 The other company of those who gave thanks went to meet them, and I after them, with the half of the people, on the wall, above the tower of the furnaces, even to the broad wall,

Verse 38

The broad wall - What part this was, we know not: it might have been a place designed for a public promenade, or a parade for assembling the troops or guard of the temple.

NEHEMIAH 12: 39 and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the old gate, and by the fish gate, and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of Hammeah, even to the sheep gate: and they stood still in the gate of the guard.

NEHEMIAH 12: 40 So stood the two companies of those who gave thanks in God's house, and I, and the half of the rulers with me;

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

NEHEMIAH 12: 42 and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer.

NEHEMIAH 12: 43 They offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

NEHEMIAH 12: 44 On that day were men appointed over the rooms for the treasures, for the wave offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them, according to the fields of the cities, the portions appointed by the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites who waited.

NEHEMIAH 12: 45 They performed the duty of their God, and the duty of the purification, and so did the singers and the porters, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son.

NEHEMIAH 12: 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

NEHEMIAH 12: 47 All Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, as every day required: and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.

Verse 47

All Israel - gave the portions of the singers - The singers and the porters were supported by the people at large; and each of these had their portions served out to them daily.

And they sanctified - unto the Levites - The things which were provided for sacred uses were delivered by the people to the Levites, and the Levites presented them to the priests.

The children of Aaron - This may refer principally to the tithes which the people brought to the Levites; the tithe or tenth of which the Levites gave to the priests. The presenting these tithes is termed sanctifying them; that is, dedicating them to those sacred or ecclesiastical uses for which they were designed: this is a very general meaning of the word sanctify in Scripture.