

25.01 Back to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1–70; 3:1–13; Nehemiah 7:5–72; 12:1–26; Psalms 87; 84; 107; 66; 129)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.
- cymbals (small ones are good)
- Teacher, you may wish to put up a bulletin board to go with the lessons on Ezra and Nehemiah. One used by this author and roughly laid out on the floor is found at the end of this lesson.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *rubble*: heaps of junk—stones (large and small), dirt, ashes
- *Feast of Tabernacles* or *of Booths*: A week-long feast in which Israel gave thanks to the Lord. Part of the celebration was to live in temporary shelters made from branches. Celebrating this feast was like camping out for a week and was a great time of fun as well as of thanksgiving.
- *timber*: material, especially wood, used for construction
- *foundation*: The solid-ground part of a building that holds it in place. It’s the most important part of a building. Remember the song about the wise man and the foolish man? “The wise man built his house upon a rock. . . . The foolish man built his house upon the sand. . . . The rains came down, and the floods came up. . . . The house on the rock stood firm. . . . The house on the sand went smash.”
- *Levites*: People from the tribe/family of Levi, the same tribe as Moses and Aaron. Israel’s priests came from this family, and other Levites were to help in the Temple and encourage true worship of God. Levites also served as builders and soldiers and singers.

Scripture: (NKJV; Nehemiah 7 and 12, virtually the same as Ezra 2, are not printed here, nor are the psalms.)

Ezra 2:1 Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. 2 They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispal, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel: . . . 64 The whole assembly together was 42,360, v65 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers. 66 Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, v67 their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720.

68 Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. 69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priests’ garments.

70 Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns.

3:1 When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

4 And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, 5 and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord. 6 From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. 7 So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

8 Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. 9 And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

Introduction/Review:

Jeremiah had prophesied that the Jews would return to Jerusalem from Babylon within seventy years. Cyrus, who conquered Babylon, decreed that the Jews could go back to Jerusalem. He returned to them the Temple vessels stolen by Nebuchadnezzar, and he said he'd help pay for the foundation of the Temple.

After learning recently about one of the most exciting miracles of the Bible, Daniel protected from lions, we will return in our next lessons to common, ordinary life. Well, maybe it wasn't so common or ordinary.

Story:

Returning

Have you ever moved from one house to another? If you have, you know how much work and excitement it is. Moving to a different town is more difficult, and moving to a different country is even harder. How about moving a thousand miles by walking with camels and donkeys to carry your possessions?

When King Cyrus had commanded that the city of Jerusalem and its Temple be rebuilt, 49,697 people eagerly moved back to Judah, their homeland. Horses, 736 of them; 245 mules; 435 camels; and 6,020 donkeys carried their belongings. That would be about one animal for every seven people. I imagine it took several animals just to take the 5,400 Temple vessels.

This was not an easy move. ✓The trip took four months, which would be equal to all of June, July, August, and September; it would be like walking all of summer vacation plus a month and a half.

Rebuilding

Houses

I can't imagine the dismay of the people when they finally arrived at Jerusalem. Seventy years earlier Nebuchadnezzar had broken down and burned the city walls and all the buildings, including the houses and the Temple. Now as the people looked at their formerly glorious capital city, all they saw was heaps of rubble.

This destruction was throughout the other cities and towns and villages of Judah. Those who did not live in Jerusalem also found their old hometowns crumbled to the ground.

The first thing to do, of course, was to find some way to live in these forsaken places. The returnees had to rebuild houses for themselves. ✓This task might have taken two or three months.

However, in the seventh month, all the people from all over Judah gathered together in Jerusalem. The Bible doesn't say that a messenger went to gather them; so ✓perhaps God Himself caused all these people to come as a body to Jerusalem.

Jeshua was the high priest, and Zerubbabel was the chief prince among them. It was time to start working on God's House, the Temple. The first item to rebuild was—well, what do you think was the first and most important thing to build in the Temple? It was the altar in the outer court.

Altar

Why did Jeshua and Zerubbabel want to build the altar first? This was where they offered sacrifices and worshiped the Lord God. Long ago, God, through Moses, had commanded them to offer sacrifices every morning and evening and at many other set times throughout the year; the altar needed to be set up.

It was the time of year for the Feast of Tabernacles; so they celebrated this feast with all its required sacrifices and lived in temporary shelters made out of tree branches for a whole week as God had said to do. They continually offered the sacrifices that God had commanded. Being back in their own land, they intended to worship their great God as He had instructed.

Planning

Doing a top-notch job of building something as great as God's Temple takes a lot of preparation. Materials must be gathered, and the work force must be organized. All the Levites who were at least twenty years old were needed to do the work of supervising and ✓building.

Getting materials, especially timber, required some heavy-duty labor. This was an interesting process: Men in Lebanon [locate these places] cut down cedar and pine trees and hacked off their branches. Others hauled the logs from Lebanon to Tyre at the sea. From Tyre they floated those logs on rafts to Joppa. From Joppa men hauled the timber to Jerusalem. This transport of logs was done exactly as Solomon had accomplished it for the first Temple.

Of course, none of this could have succeeded without money. Some of the returning leaders were able to donate a fair amount of money for this Temple project. The gold they gave had the value of 61,000 Persian coins, which was about \$77,440 in the United States today. The 5,000 minas of silver would have been about \$39,672 today.¹ Thus, the total amount donated was over \$100,000, more precisely, \$117,112.

Planning and preparing and gathering materials took two years. Finally, work on the Temple could begin. The first thing to do was to lay the foundation.

Rejoicing and weeping

✓We do not know how long it took to build the foundation, but when it was finished, you can be sure the people were excited and happy. What a celebration they had! The priests wore their beautiful robes and blew trumpets. Others played cymbals.

Two hundred Levite singers had returned from Babylon. Their sole job was to make music to the Lord. First one group of them played and sang. Then another group played and sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord because "He is good, for His mercy lasts forever!"

All the people shouted when they praised the Lord because after seventy-plus years, the foundation of the house of the Lord had been laid. God's Temple was starting to be rebuilt!

But the reverberating sound was not just jubilation. If one listened carefully, he or she could hear—what

was it? The sound of great weeping? Why would people be crying on such a happy occasion? The older folks, those who had seen Solomon’s Temple, were terribly dismayed. It was clear to them that this new Temple ✓ would not even come close to being as marvelous as the first Temple had been.

The young people who had not seen the former Temple, however, were ecstatic and shouted with all their might because the foundation was laid. The shouts, both of weeping and of rejoicing, were so loud that one could hear them far away.

¹It is difficult to know money values in ancient times. However, John Gill comments, “[A]ccording to Bishop Cumberland they [Persian coins called darics] were of the value of twenty shillings and four pence of our money, and so came to upwards of 61,000 pounds” ([Ezra 2:69 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)). Using Gill’s amount and a money converter, the gold—61,000 British pounds—would equal \$77,440 in the U. S. A. in 2024. For the silver valuation, Gill states, “[A]n Hebrew ‘mina’, or pound, being of our money seven pounds, ten shillings, according to Brerewood, amounted to 31,250 pounds” ([Ezra 2:69 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)). This converts to \$39,672 in 2024.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
The Temple being built by Zerubbabel and Jeshua would one day become the Temple where Jesus would present Himself as the Messiah.
- Worship the Lord in the way He tells you to do it. That includes gathering with God’s people at church on the Lord’s Day.
- Serve the Lord with gladness and diligence.

Activities:

- Play dough: altar; logs; foundation; trumpet; cymbals
- Snack: Bugles[®] chips
- Sing “The Wise Man and the Foolish Man.” Emphasize the stanza, “So build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” The song sheet may be found at C:\www\server\timelesstruths\library\music\T\The_Wise_Man_and_the_Foolish_Man\The_Wise_Man_and_the_Foolish_Man.sib (hymnary.org).
- Sing “Building Up the Temple” found below (*Salvation Songs for Children*, Number 4, p. 61).
- Sing “Give Thanks unto the Lord” responsively—one group (A) sings the first “Give thanks unto the Lord”; the second group (B) repeats as shown by these letters in the song sheet found below.
- Play-act the scene of rejoicing and weeping loudly when the Temple foundation was laid.
- Let the students shout and sing with cymbals, “Praise God and give thanks to the Lord because He is good; for His mercy lasts forever!”
- Watch “Zerubbabel and Jeshua Returning Home to Rebuild the House,” a well-done video found at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). Click “Stories,” and scroll more than halfway down the page.
- Review questions: (Game: Get thirteen wooden blocks or large toy building blocks so that students may build a very short wall by adding a block for each correct answer.)
 1. Roughly how many people returned to Judah from Babylon? [Almost fifty thousand.]
 2. What was the name of the prince who returned? Hint: His name starts with a Z. [Zerubbabel.]

3. What was the name of the priest who returned? Hint: His name starts with a *J*. [Jeshua.]
4. What did Jerusalem and the other towns look like when the people arrived? [Broken down; ruined; burned; full of rubble.]
5. What was the first item the people set up in Jerusalem? [The altar.]
6. What feast did the people celebrate when the altar was set up? [Feast of Tabernacles/Booths.]
7. Describe how the logs got from Lebanon to Jerusalem. [Cut down in Lebanon; hauled to Tyre at the sea; floated to Joppa; hauled to Jerusalem.]
8. Fill in the blank. The men who built and supervised were _____ who were 20 years old or more. Hint: It's one of the vocabulary words. [Levites.]
9. What was the first job in building the actual Temple? [Lay the foundation.]
10. What is a foundation? [The solid-ground part of a building that holds it in place.]
11. Why did lots of people rejoice when the foundation was laid? [Because God's Temple was being built.]
12. Why did lots of people weep when the foundation was laid? [Because they could see the new Temple would not be as great as Solomon's Temple.]
13. Which people wept, young or old? [Old.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Psalm 107:1, 7, 8: "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. . . . He led them forth by the right way, That they might go to a city for a dwelling place. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

Handwork:

- Make cymbals or noise-makers. For each set of cymbals, use two jar lids (baby-food, regular jar lids, or perhaps frozen juice lids) and two 4-inch lengths of elastic. With a hammer and nail, puncture the middle of each lid. Thread doubled elastic through the hole and tie a knot at the end. Be sure to hammer down sharp edges. Decorate the lids. Check out these videos for other ways to make cymbals:
[cymbals made from jar lids craft - Search Images \(bing.com\)](#)
[Homemade Instruments - Cymbals Craft For Kids \(activityvillage.co.uk\)](#)

rubble

**Feast of Tabernacles or
of Booths**

timber

foundation

Levites

49,697

୧୧୧୧୧୧୧୧୧୧୧୧

736

ଠ-୧-୧

horses

245

ଠ-୧-୧

mules

435

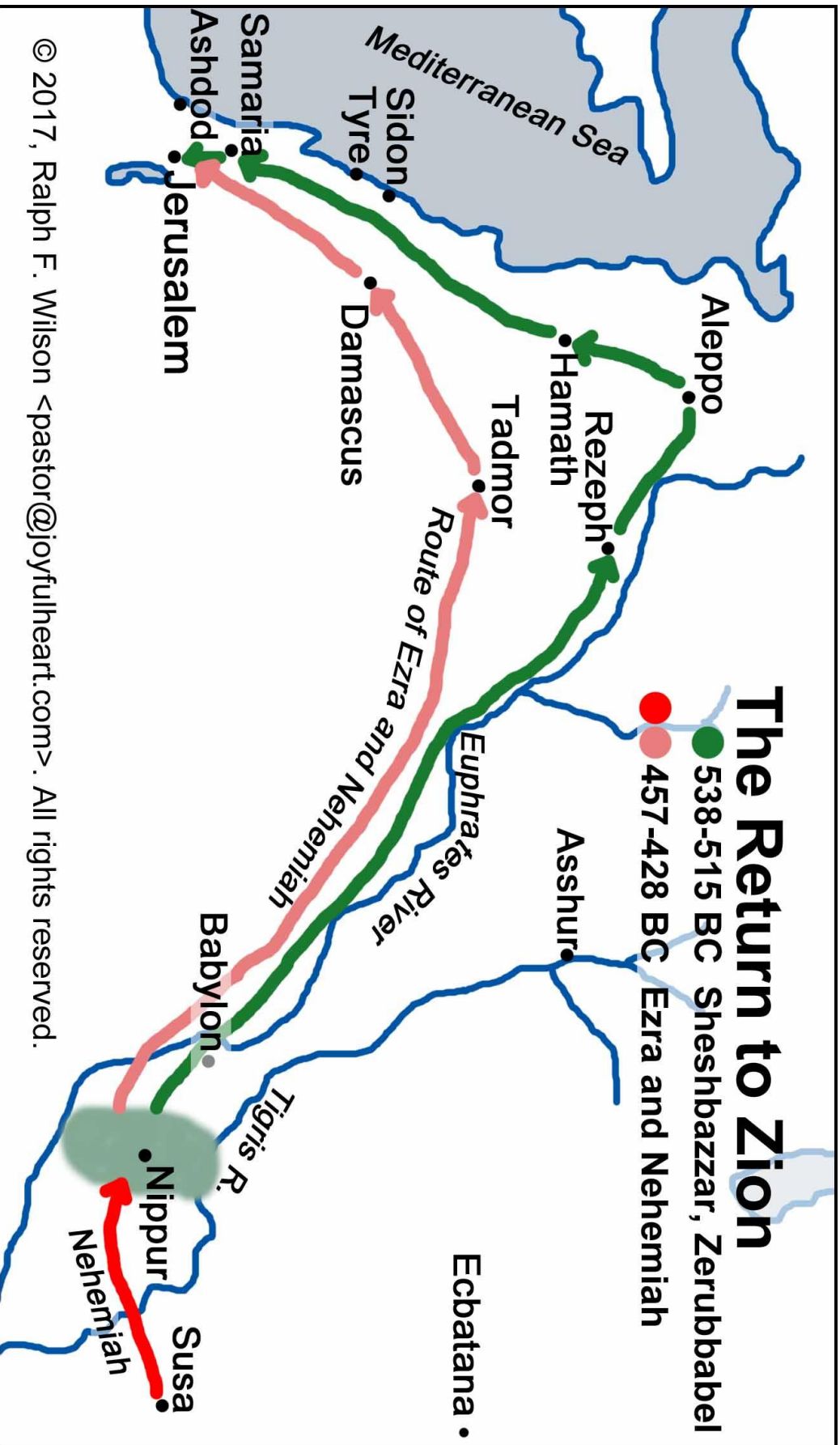
ଠ-୧-୧

camels

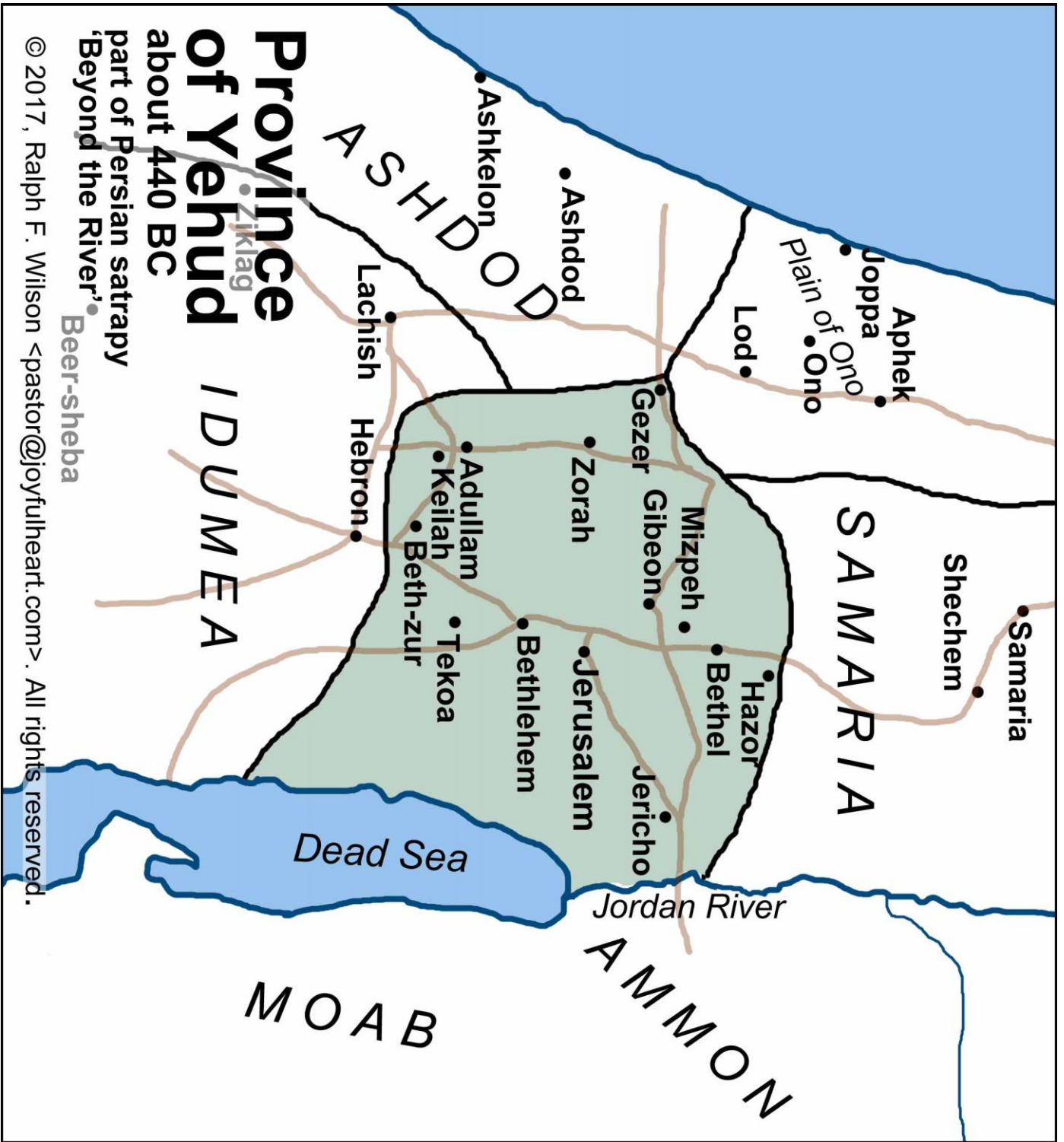
6,020

ଠ-୧-୧

donkeys



© 2017, Ralph F. Wilson <pastor@joyfulheart.com>. All rights reserved.



© 2017, Ralph F. Wilson <pastor@joyfulheart.com>. All rights reserved.

province-of-yehud-2423x2243x300.jpg (2423x2243) (jesuswalk.com)



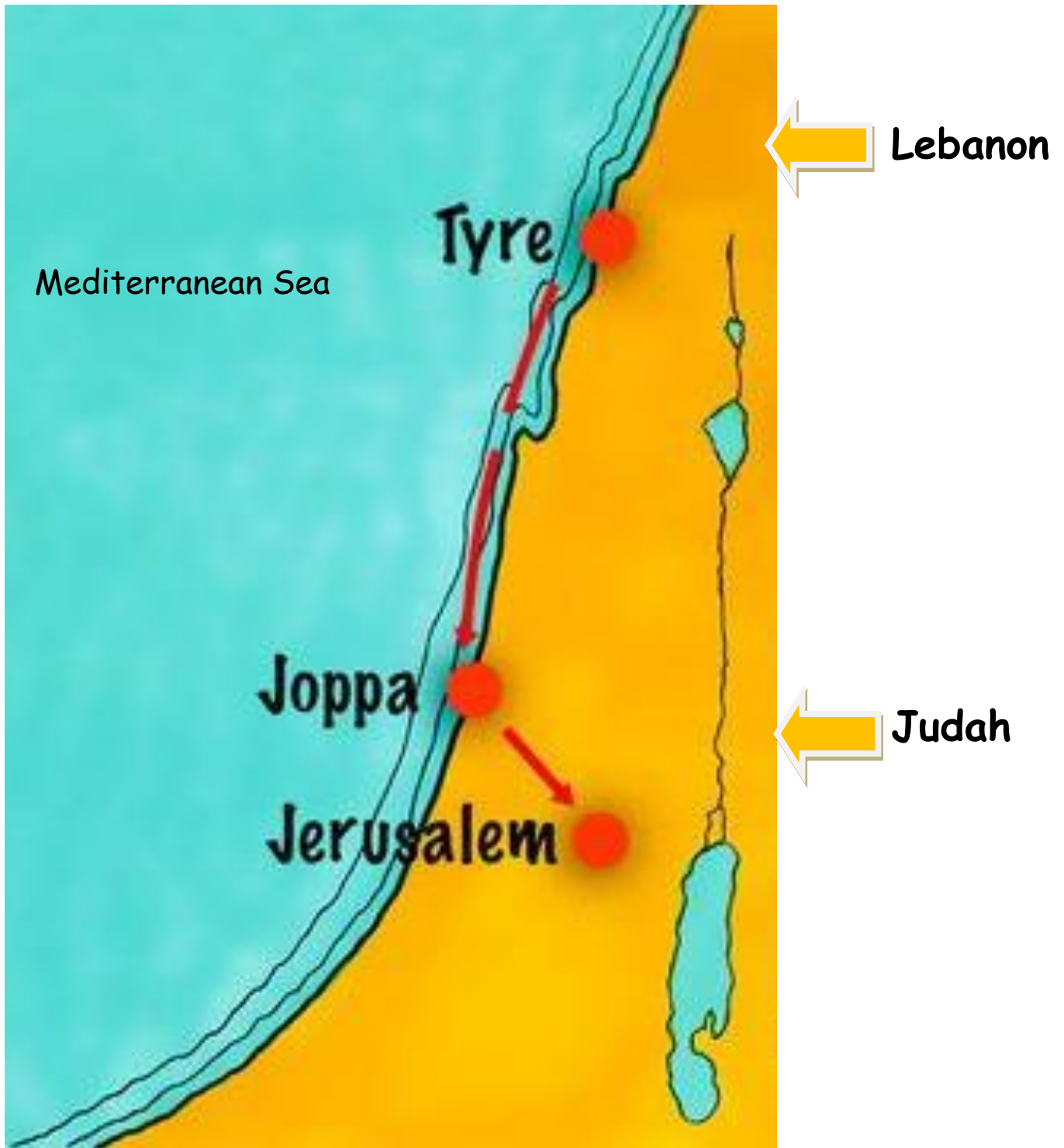
The mound of a former town (unknown source)



[TZAV \(command\) - Aleph Tav Scriptures](#)



https://www.google.com/search?q=feast+of+tabernacles&rlz=1T4ACAW_enUS479US479&source=Inms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjnsYyylIHQAhVLYGMKHUouAcQQ_AUICCGb&biw=1238&bih=578#imgcr=LYjOZH1raKv3LM%3A



The People Gave—

Ancient Money

Today's U.S. Dollars

61,000 gold Persian coins

about \$77,440

5,000 minas of silver

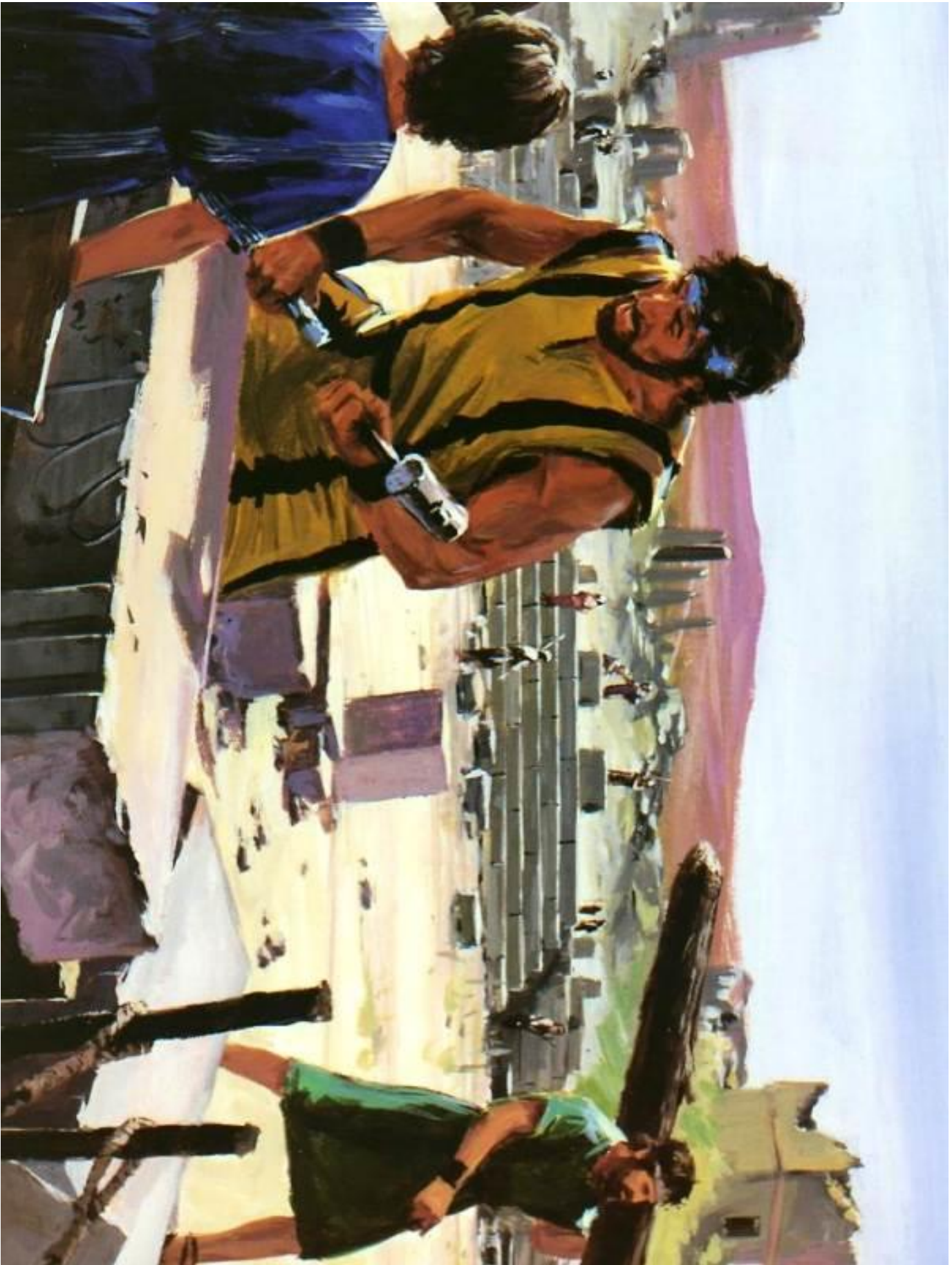
\$39,672

total amount donated

\$117,112



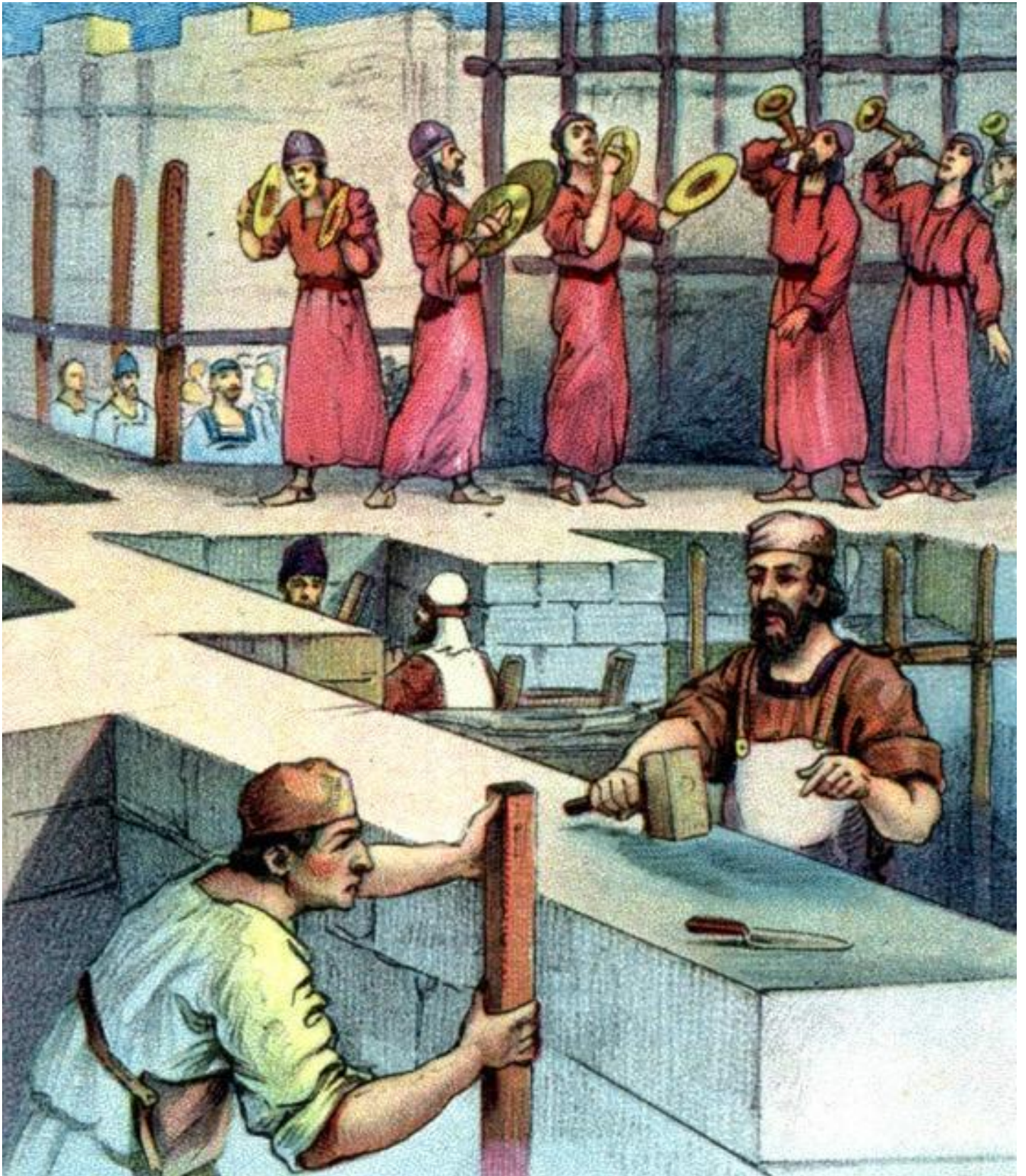
Modern foundation (unknown source)



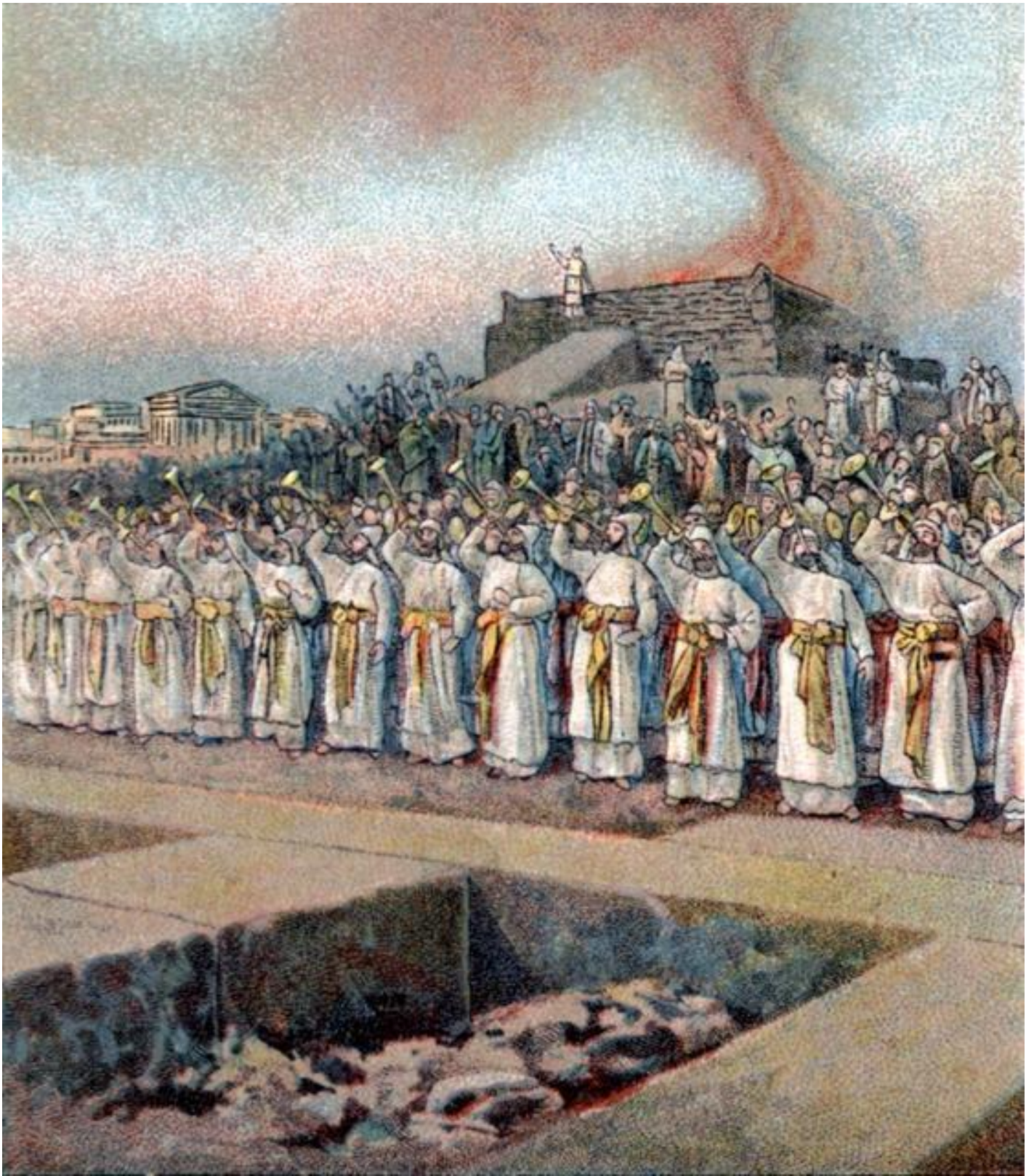




(unknown source)



(unknown source)



BUILDING UP THE TEMPLE

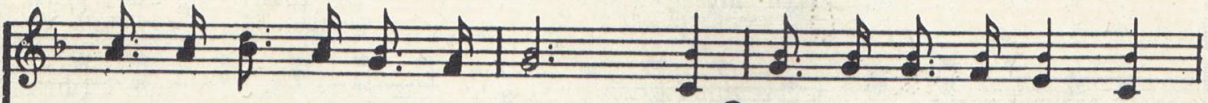
J. M.

J. OWEN LONG



We're ^① build-ing up the Tem - ple, ^① build-ing up the Tem - ple, ^② Build-ing

Melody in large notes



up the Tem - ple of the Lord; Say, ^③ broth-er, will you help us?



^④ Sis-ter, will you help us? ^② Build-ing up the Tem-ple of the Lord. Lord.



Copyright 1950 by H. D. Loes in *Sing, Boys and Girls!* J. Owen Long, owner. Used by permission.

MOTIONS: ^①Place hand over hand, ascending. ^②Point up. ^③Point to a boy. ^④To a girl.

Give Thanks unto the Lord

The musical score is written on two staves in G major (one sharp) and common time. The first staff contains the first two phrases of the song, with labels 'A' and 'B' above the notes. The second staff continues the melody, with labels 'A' and 'B' above the notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

A Give thanks un-to the Lord; B Give thanks un-to the Lord. A And call up-on His Name; and B
call up - on His name. A For He is good; B for He is good.

Sing responsively: A sings first phrase; B sings second phrase, etc. Both A and B may sing, "For He is good; For He is good" together.



Bulletin board idea for Ezra and Nehemiah