

27.12 Dedication of the Wall (Nehemiah 12:27–47; Psalm 30; 147–150)

✓ “*Check*” it out. An 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 needed materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Lego® blocks or other toy building blocks to demonstrate the relative thickness of Jerusalem’s wall
- One or more pairs of pot lids to be used as cymbals if the teacher doesn’t have cymbals
- A real shofar (ram’s horn) (optional)

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.

- *to dedicate*: to set something or someone apart for a godly purpose. It is somewhat like the word *to covenant* in that it is like promising to use oneself or a thing for God.
- *to purify*: to make clean or holy

Scripture: (ESV)

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. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; 29 also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

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. 32 And after them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah, 33 and [seven men] . . . 35 and certain of the priests’ sons with trumpets: Zechariah . . . 36 and his relatives, [eight men] . . . with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. 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.

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, 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. 40 So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; 41 and the priests [seven men] . . . with trumpets; 42 and [eight men]. . . . And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.

Introduction/Review:

A year had passed since Jerusalem's wall had been completed. During that year the people had set up the gates, had organized government and worship, had listened for days to the Law of God being read to them, had celebrated the feast of tabernacles, had repented of their sins, and had signed a covenant of obedience. Some had moved from the countryside to the city of Jerusalem.

Story:

Facts about the wall

In today's story we learn something about the wall around Jerusalem that we might not have known before. If you are like me, you probably think a city wall would be about two or three feet thick. {Demonstrate that measurement with your hands.} However, city walls were much thicker than that. ✓In fact, the wall around Jerusalem might have been between eight and fifteen feet thick,¹ three to five times wider than we had previously thought.

Another thing we need to note about the wall was that it was not all on level ground as it might be around a city on a plain. No, for Jerusalem had two hills. One higher hill was located in northern Jerusalem, the area where the Temple was. A lower hill was located in the southern part of the city. Between the two hills was a valley. Therefore, the wall followed the lay of the land, rising and falling with the hills and valleys.

Preparation to dedicate the wall

As we begin today's Bible story, we learn that it was time to dedicate the wall to God.² Why would the Jews want to dedicate the wall? Well, since the Jews had built the wall to protect Jerusalem and knew that only God is the final Protector, ✓they wanted to give the wall to God, showing their devotion to and dependence on Him in this special dedication celebration. Jerusalem, after all, was called the "holy city." If it was holy, it must be dedicated to its true King—God.

Music. Celebrations take preparation. An important part of this celebration had to be the music. David had invented musical instruments to be used in the worship of God. He had organized the musicians so that music could be heard "continually"—at all the set times of sacrifices and feasts. But the singers were scattered in towns around Jerusalem. Remember, the tithes and first fruits were supposed to supply for the needs of these and other Levites, but the general population was not too consistent about giving those tithes and first fruits. Therefore, Levites lived outside the city where they could grow food for themselves.

Now that the dedication was being planned, Jerusalem's rulers went out to gather all the singers to Jerusalem. ✓I imagine those Levite singers needed to practice for this big event! Their music included cymbals, psalteries, and harps as well as voices.

We all know what cymbals are. [Show cymbals from your rhythm band instrument collection or two pot lids.] A psaltery, however, is a stringed instrument, sort of like a lap harp that can be bowed or plucked. [Teacher, here are internet sites to see a psaltery being plucked and being bowed: [Baritone Bowed Psaltery \(plucked\)](#) and [Ema Playing Bowed Psaltery - YouTube](#).] The player plays the psaltery right next to the pins whether he plucks or bows the strings. If the player plucks the strings, he does it with a stick about 2–3 inches long that is thinner than a pencil. Notice that the psaltery's strings are strung over a box.

[Teacher, show the picture of a harp and the picture of the psaltery.] Can you see the difference between a psaltery and a harp? The strings of a harp are attached to a frame that does not have a box under it.

The Levites also played trumpets. Sometimes the word *trumpets* in the Bible means those that were made of silver. [Teacher show picture of metal trumpet.] At other times, the word *trumpet* means the shofar made from a ram's horn. [Teacher, show picture of or a real shofar.] The Hebrew word for *trumpet* in this passage is the metal kind of trumpet.

Purification. While the musicians were in their final hours of practice, the priests and the other Levites were also preparing for their part in the dedication of the wall. The Bible states that they purified

themselves. In the book of Numbers, God's instructions said Levites were to purify themselves by bathing, by shaving all the hair off their bodies, and by washing their clothes. ✓Whether they had to do all of that in this case, I don't know. Perhaps they merely sprinkled water on themselves to indicate purifying.

After purifying themselves, the priests and Levites purified the people, ✓perhaps by symbolically sprinkling water on them. Then the priests and Levites purified the gates and the wall, again, ✓with sprinkled water.

Procession on the wall

The day of dedication arrived. All of the people, including wives, children, priests, and rulers, gathered near the dung gate [locate]. Nehemiah divided all the princes and priests into two large groups. Ezra the scribe was to lead one of the large groups of men, and Nehemiah was to follow the other large group of men. Guess where Nehemiah had them stand. He had them stand on the wall! Remember, it was ✓probably about ten or more feet wide, so several men could stand on it at one time. (That's a whole lot more weight than the little fox Tobiah had said the wall could not support.) ✓No doubt, stairs or ladders gave access to the top of the wall.

This is what they did next: Ezra led his group toward the north of the city on top of the west wall, and Nehemiah followed his group northward on top of the eastern wall. The common people ✓probably walked with one company or the other, walking on the ground, inside or outside the wall. As they walked, the trumpets blared, the harps and psalteries gave forth their sweet tones, the singers sang loudly, and all, either with instruments or with voices, gave thanks to the Lord.

As the wall-walkers reached the northern end of the city, they ascended the higher hill on steps in the wall. Finally, the two large companies of rulers and priests met between the sheep gate and the prison gate [locate]. The Temple was located in this place. What a good place to stop!

Jubilation for the wall

Getting down from the wall, the priests offered "great sacrifices" that day. Everyone was joyful, rejoicing with loud thanksgivings unto the God of Jerusalem. God made the men rejoice. God made the wives and children rejoice. People were so happy and exuberant with their shouts of joy that their voices could be heard a long way off. This was a great day!

Some Bible scholars think that Psalms 147–150, the last four psalms of the book of Psalms were written for or on this occasion.³ These last four psalms are some of the most praise-filled ones in the whole book—like one final burst of praise.

Listen to some of Psalm 150 and imagine those Levites and priests up on the wall, praising God with their voices and instruments. [Teacher, this passage is found below in large print. Have students read if you wish.] "Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!"

When they had signed the covenant, the people had promised God they would take care of the Levites and singers and priests. Now at the dedication of the walls, they organized to be sure the promise was kept. They set up rooms around the Temple for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes so that they would have a central place to gather these things and from which to give to God's servants. Being thus supplied with their needs, the singers and other Temple servants were able to devote their time to the jobs for which David had instructed them.

Thus, all the days of the governors Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, Israel gave to the Levites and priests what they needed.

³

¹This statement is found in various internet sources not referenced here.

²John Gill says this event is traditionally celebrated on August 7.

³John Gill thinks Psalm 30 was recited.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
“[S]prinkling the *water of purifying* (or of *separation*, as it is called, Num 19 9) on *themselves* and the *people*, the walls and the gates [is] a type of the blood of Christ, with which our consciences being *purged from dead works*, we become fit to *serve the living God* (Heb 9 14)” ([Nehemiah 12 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\)](#)).
- We should dedicate ourselves to God and His will.
- We should rejoice in the Lord and in the power of His might.
- We should purify ourselves, staying away from sin.

Activities:

- Play dough: cymbals, harps, psalteries, trumpets—silver and ram’s horn
- Snack: Bugles® corn snacks
- Sing with rhythm-band instruments “The Joy of the Lord Is My Strength,” “Praise Him . . . All Ye Little Children,” “The Doxology,” “All Creatures of Our God and King,” and other songs of praise to God.
- Play “Follow the Leader” with rhythm-band instruments being played by some students while other students sing a joyful song like “The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength.”
- Review questions: (Game: This game is not recommended in all situations; knowing your group, use discretion. Somewhat imitating the purification process, the teacher will spray one squirt of fine mist of water toward the back of a student who answers a question correctly. An alternative game is to have the student give a little cheer of joy like “Yippee!” when he or she answers a question correctly.)
 1. Describe the ups and downs of the city of Jerusalem. [Two hills, one in the south and the other in the north, were in the city with a valley between.]
 2. What does *to dedicate* mean? [To set something or someone apart for a godly purpose; to promise to use oneself or a thing for God.]
 3. Name one of the instruments played at the dedication of the wall. [Cymbals, psalteries, trumpets, and harps.]
 4. Fill in the blank. The priests and Levites _____ themselves by sprinkling water. [Purified.]
 5. In what specific place did the procession/parade walk? [On Jerusalem’s wall.]
 6. What was the mood of the people as they dedicated the wall? [Joyful.]

Memory Verse[s]:

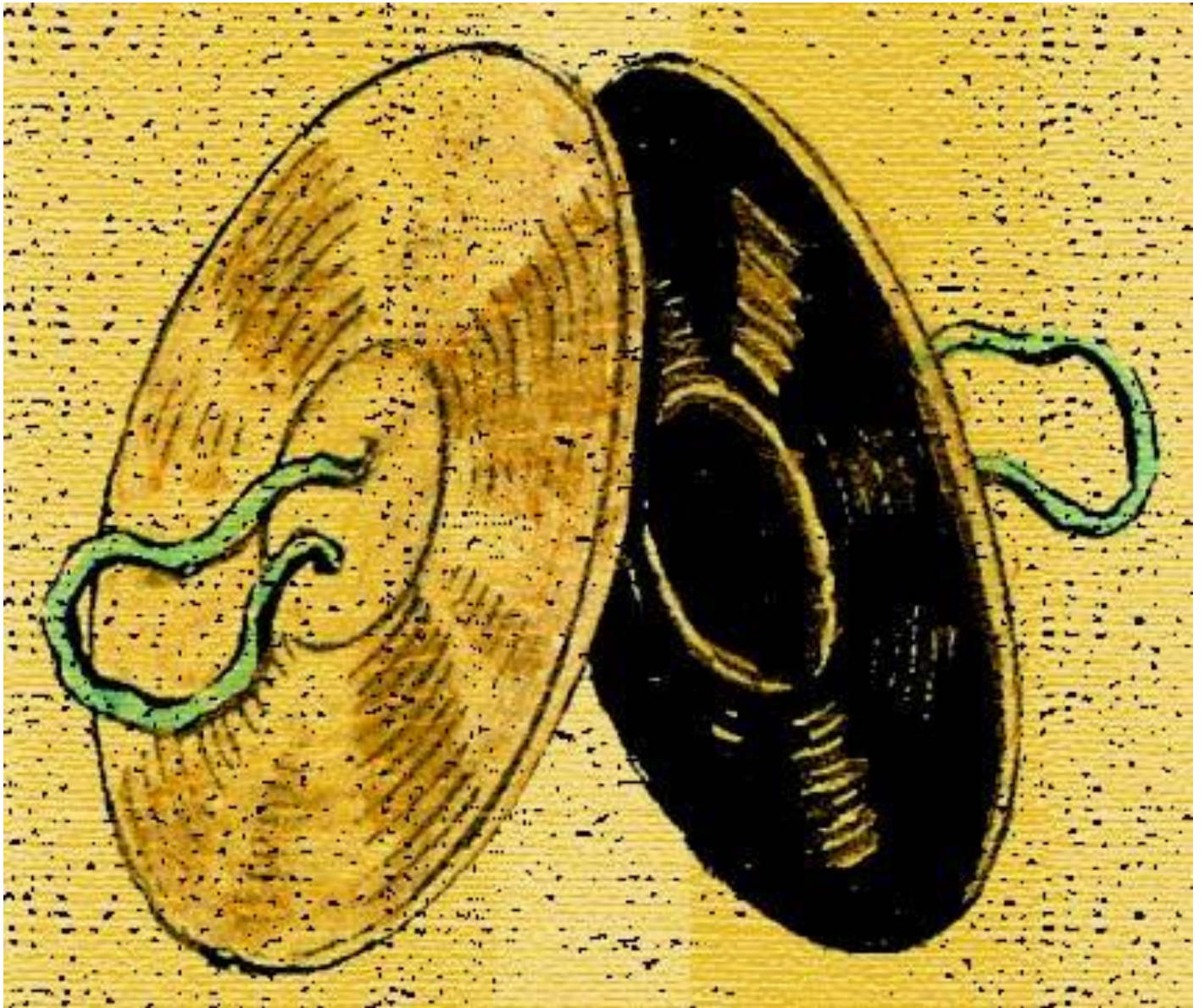
- Psalm 147:1: “Praise the LORD! For *it is* good to sing praises to our God; For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.”

Handwork: Make a wall, using these instructions (from DLTK’s Kids):

- Print on card stock or glue the paper wall template pieces found at end of this lesson onto cardboard (you can use old cereal boxes, poster board or the backings off of construction paper pads). Color. Once glue is dry, cut out template pieces. Cut a slit along the dark 2 lines on the edges of each template piece. Slide the slits together to form the wall. Glue the verse on the wall.

to dedicate

to purify



Cymbals (<http://www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/ancient-cymbals.html>)



A contemporary psaltery (<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977163889>)



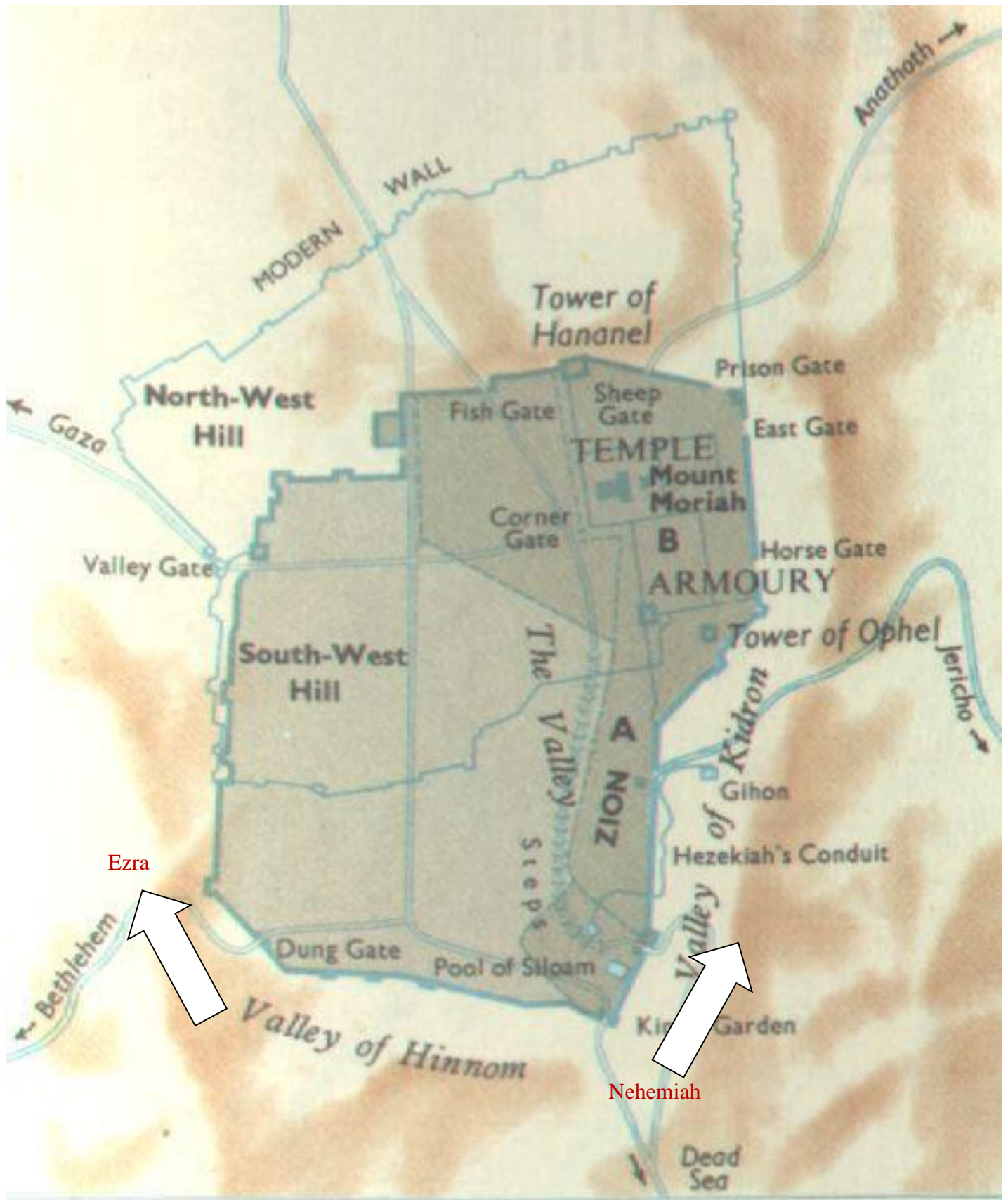
Harp (<http://www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/ancient-harp.html>)

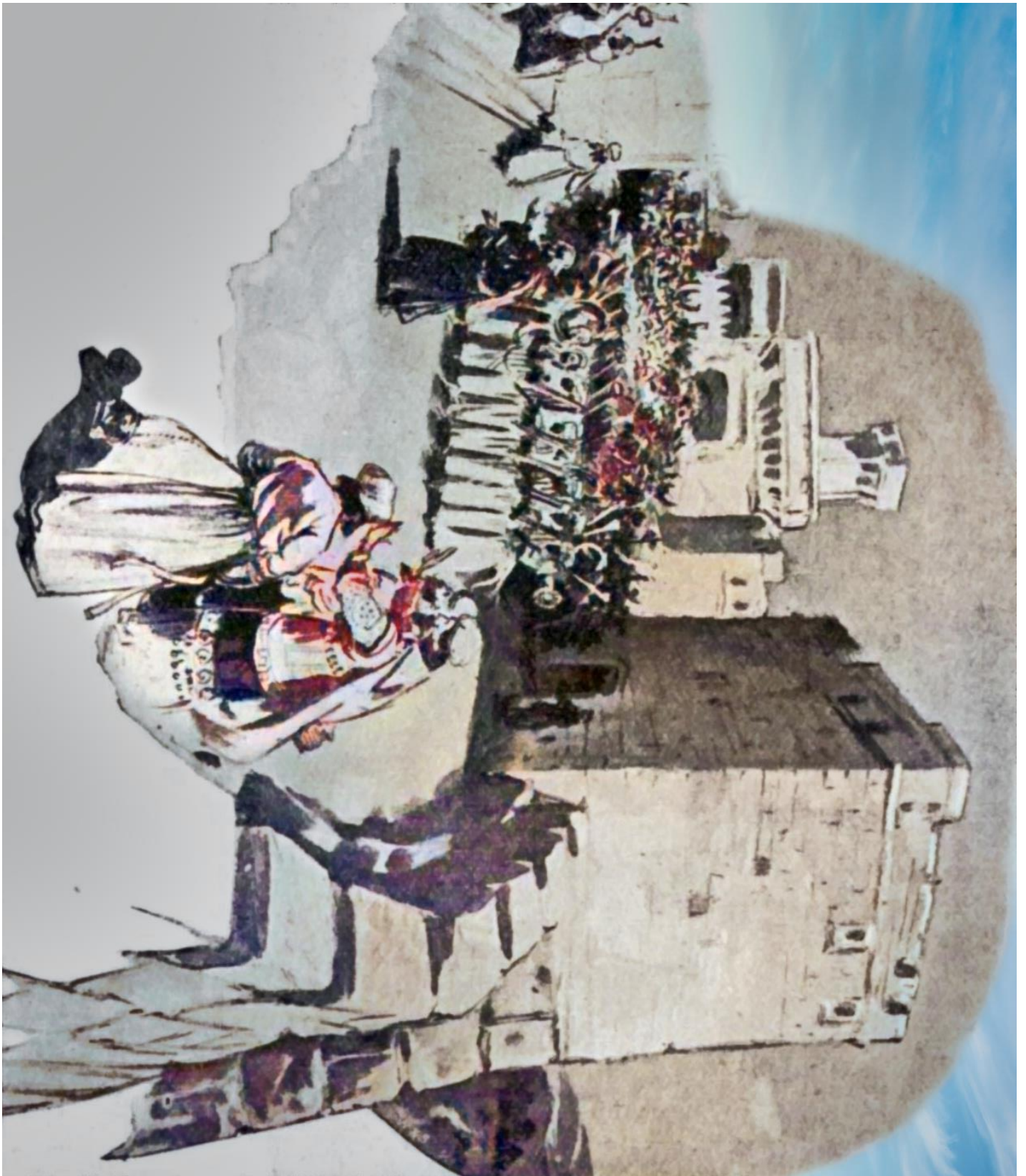


Silver trumpets ([jewish men playing silver trumpets - Search Images](#))

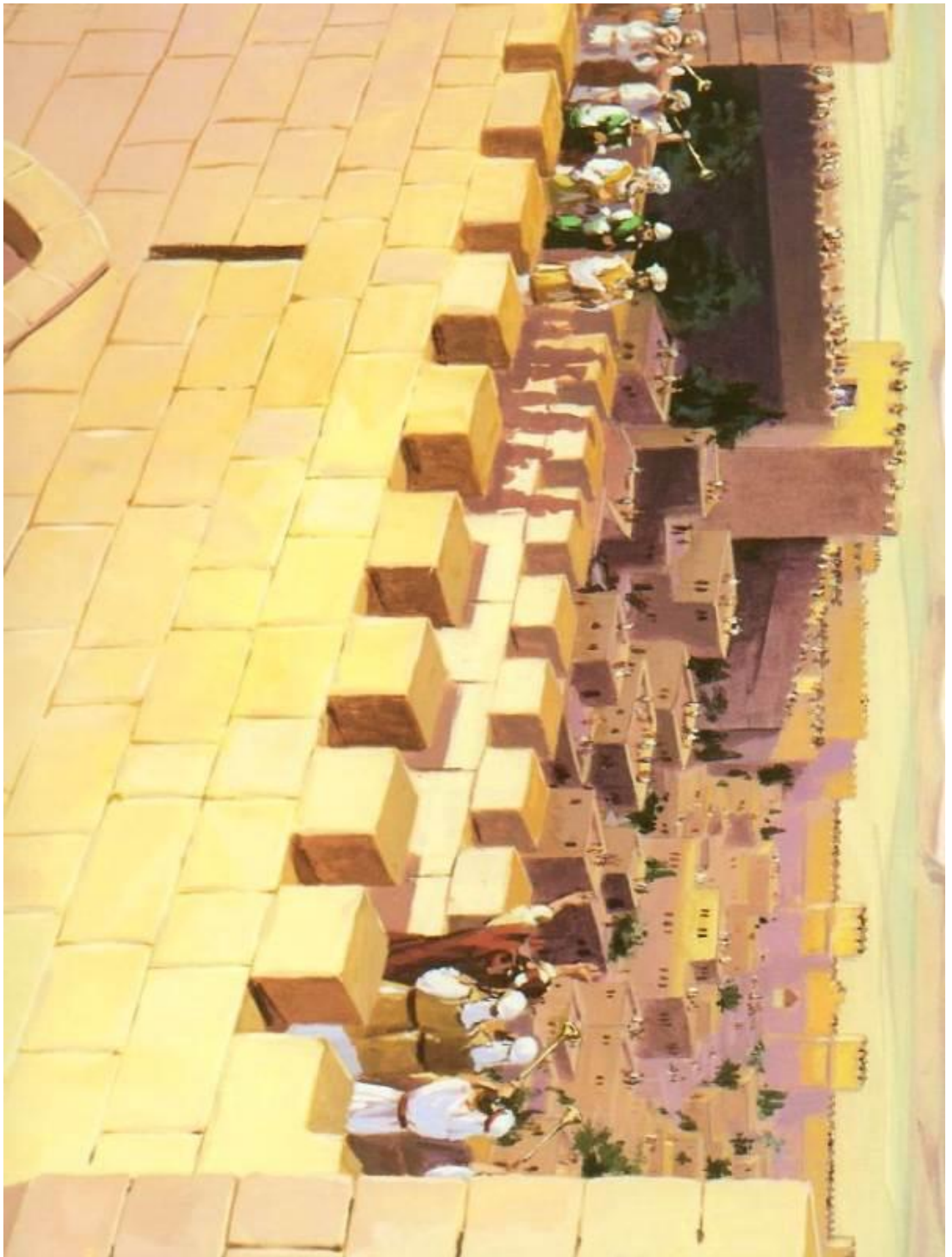


A shofar ([jewish man playing shofar - Search Images](#))





[dedication of nehemiah's wall trumpeters - Search Images](#)



[dedication of nehemiah's wall trumpeters - Search Images](#)

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent
greatness! Praise Him with the sound
of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the lute and harp!

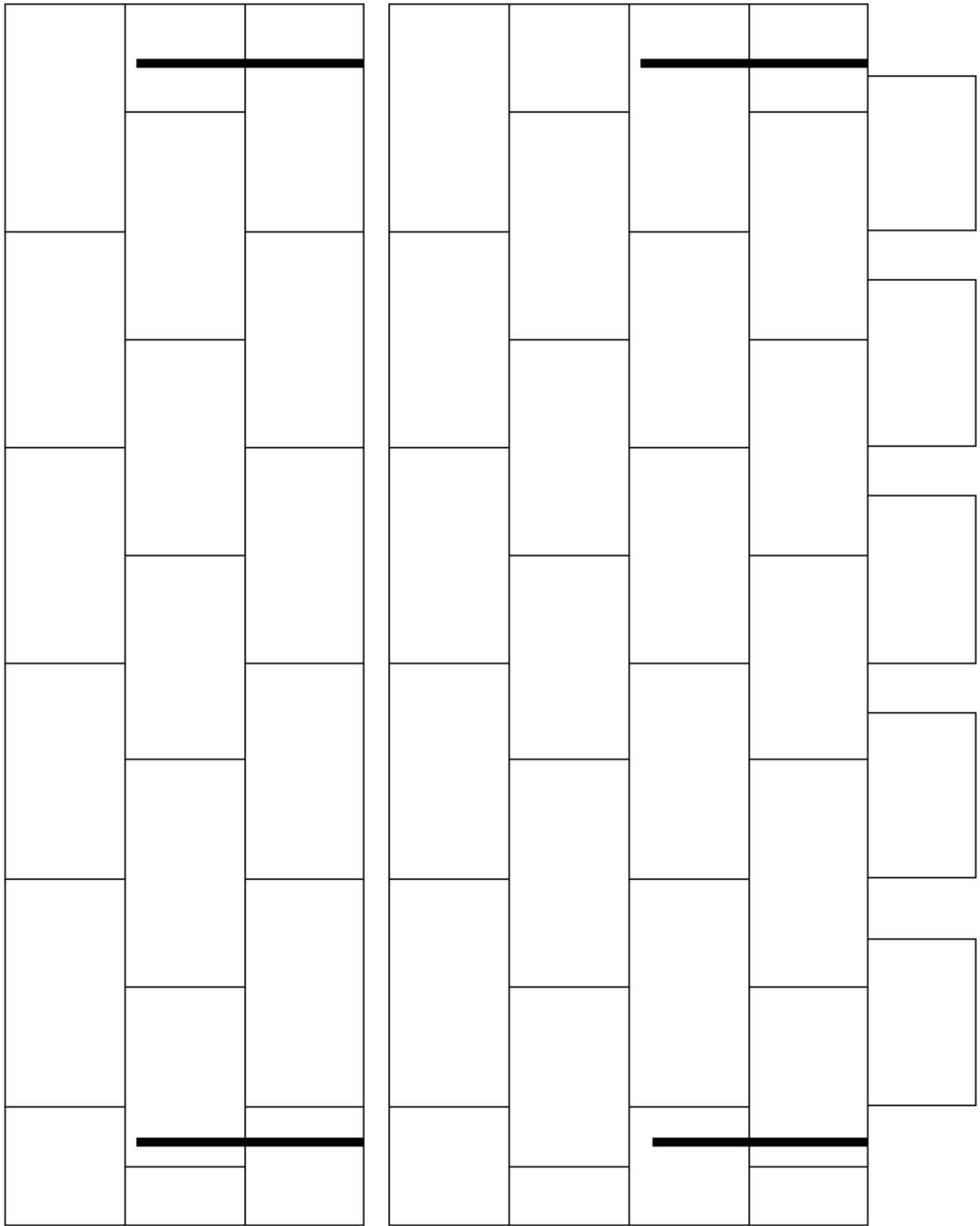
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;

Praise Him with stringed instruments
and flutes! Praise Him with loud
cymbals;

Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

Let everything that has breath praise
the Lord.

Praise the Lord!



<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/birthday/mcastle.html>

Psalm 147:1

“Praise the LORD! For *it is* good to sing praises to our God; For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.”