

~MUSIC (1203)

.. History

.. How Extensive Was The Musical Staff At The Temple In Jerusalem?

.. Instrumental Music

.. Vocal Music

.. Nature Of Biblical Music

- One of the gifts of God by which man can render praise and thanksgiving to his Creator as well as give expression to his emotions, his sorrows and joys.
- Especially has singing been prominent in the worship of Yehowah God, but instrumental music, too, has played a vital role. It has served not only to accompany the vocalists but also to complement their singing.
- So it is not surprising that references to both vocal and instrumental music abound in the Bible from beginning to end, in association with true worship and otherwise.
- And the name of his brother was Jubal. He proved to be the founder of all those who handle the harp and the pipe. (Genesis 4:21)
- Why did you have to run away secretly and outwit me and not tell me, that I might send you away with rejoicing and with songs, with tambourine and with harp? (Genesis 31:27)
- Further, David and the chiefs of the service groups separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the ones prophesying with the harps, with the stringed instruments and with the cymbals. And from their number the official men for their service came to be. (1 Chronicles 25:1)
- And the sound of singers who accompany themselves on the harp and of musicians and of flutists and of trumpeters will never be heard in you again, and no craftsman of any trade will ever be found in you again, and no sound of a millstone will ever be heard in you again. (Revelation 18:22)

.. History

- The Bible's first reference to **music** is before the Flood, in the seventh generation following Adam. Jubal proved to be **the founder of all those who handle the harp and the pipe**. This may describe the invention of the first musical instruments or perhaps even the establishment of some kind of **musical** profession.
- And the name of his brother was Jubal. He proved to be the founder of all those who handle the harp and the pipe. (**Genesis 4:21**)
- In patriarchal times **music** seems to have been an integral part of life, judging from Laban's desire to give Jacob and his own daughters a musical farewell.
- Why did you have to run away secretly and outwit me and not tell me, that I might send you away with rejoicing and with songs, with tambourine and with harp? (**Genesis 31:27**)
- Song and instrumental accompaniment marked the celebration of the deliverance at the Red Sea and the victorious returns from battle of Jephthah, David, and Saul.
- And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, proceeded to take a tambourine in her hand, and all the women began going out with her with tambourines and in dances. (**Exodus 15:20**)
- And Miriam kept responding to the men; Sing to Yehowah, for he has become highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has pitched into the sea. (**Exodus 15:21**)
- Finally Jephthah came to Mizpah to his home, and, look! His daughter coming out to meet him with tambourine playing and dancing! Now she was absolutely the only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. (**Judges 11:34**)
- And it came about that at their coming in, when David returned from striking the Philistines down, the women began coming out from all the cities of Israel with song and dances to meet Saul the king, with tambourines, with rejoicing and with lutes. (**1 Samuel 18:6**)
- And the women that were celebrating kept responding and saying; Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands. (**1 Samuel 18:7**)

- On each of the two occasions that were involved in transporting the Ark to Jerusalem, vocalists and instrumentalists were present.
- And David and all Israel were celebrating before the true God with full power and with songs and with harps and with stringed instruments and with tambourines and with cymbals and with trumpets. (1 Chronicles 13:8)
- David now said to the chiefs of the Levites to station their brothers the singers with the instruments of song, stringed instruments and harps and cymbals, playing aloud to cause a sound of rejoicing to arise. (1 Chronicles 15:16)
- In the later years of David's life, Yehowah, through his prophets Nathan and Gad, directed the establishment of the **music** organization for the sanctuary.
- And David himself had grown old and satisfied with days, and so he made Solomon his son king over Israel. (1 Chronicles 23:1)
- And he proceeded to gather all the princes of Israel and the priests and the Levites. (1 Chronicles 23:2)
- Accordingly the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years upward, and their number, head by head of them, able-bodied man by able-bodied man, came to be thirty-eight thousand. (1 Chronicles 23:3)
- Of these for acting as supervisors over the work of the house of Yehowah there were twenty-four thousand, and as officers and judges six thousand. (1 Chronicles 23:4)
- And four thousand gatekeepers and four thousand givers of praise to Yehowah on the instruments that David said; I have made for giving praise. (1 Chronicles 23:5)
- Meantime, he had the Levites stationed at the house of Yehowah, with cymbals, with stringed instruments and with harps, by the commandment of David and of Gad the king's visionary and of Nathan the prophet, for it was by the hand of Yehowah that the commandment was by means of his prophets. (2 Chronicles 29:25)

- So the Levites kept standing with the instruments of David, and also the priests with the trumpets. ([2 Chronicles 29:26](#))
- The **music** organization begun by David was fully realized at Solomon's temple. The grandeur and magnitude of the **music** at the dedication of the temple can be appreciated from the fact that the trumpeters alone numbered 120.
- And the Levites that were singers belonging to all of them, namely, to Asaph, to Heman, to Jeduthun and to their sons and to their brothers clothed in fine fabric with cymbals and with stringed instruments and harps, were standing to the east of the altar and along with them priests to the number of a hundred and twenty sounding the trumpets. ([2 Chronicles 5:12](#))
- And it came about that as soon as the trumpeters and the singers were as one in causing one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yehowah, and as soon as they lifted up the sound with the trumpets and with the cymbals and with the instruments of song and with praising Yehowah, for he is good, for to time indefinite is his loving-kindness, the house itself was filled with a cloud, the very house of Yehowah. ([2 Chronicles 5:13](#))
- But as the nation grew lax in its faithfulness to Yehowah, all features of true worship suffered, including the **music**. However, when Kings Hezekiah and Josiah instituted their reforms, as well as when the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile, efforts were made to reestablish the arrangement of **music** that Yehowah had indicated he desired.
- Meantime, he had the Levites stationed at the house of Yehowah, with cymbals, with stringed instruments and with harps, by the commandment of David and of Gad the king's visionary and of Nathan the prophet, for it was by the hand of Yehowah that the commandment was by means of his prophets. ([2 Chronicles 29:25](#))
- So the Levites kept standing with the instruments of David, and also the priests with the trumpets. ([2 Chronicles 29:26](#))
- Then Hezekiah said to offer up the burnt sacrifice on the altar, and at the time that the burnt offering started, the song of Yehowah started and also the trumpets, even under the direction of the instruments of David the king of Israel. ([2 Chronicles](#)

29:27)

- **And all the congregation were bowing down while the song was resounding and the trumpets were blaring, all this until the burnt offering was finished. (2 Chronicles 29:28)**
- **And the singers the sons of Asaph were at their office according to the commandment of David and of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun the visionary of the king, and the gatekeepers were at the different gates. There was no need for them to turn aside from their service, because their brothers the Levites themselves prepared for them. (2 Chronicles 35:15)**
- **When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Yehowah, then the priests in official clothing, with the trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph, with the cymbals, stood up to praise Yehowah according to the direction of David the king of Israel. (Ezra 3:10)**
- **Later, when Nehemiah inaugurated the wall of Jerusalem, the Levite singers, with full instrumental accompaniment, contributed greatly to the joy of the occasion.**
- **And at the inauguration of the wall of Jerusalem they looked for the Levites, to bring them out of all their places to Jerusalem to carry on an inauguration and a rejoicing even with thanksgivings and with song, cymbals and stringed instruments and with harps. (Nehemiah 12:27)**
- **And the sons of the singers proceeded to gather themselves even from the District, from all around Jerusalem and from the settlements of the Netophathites. (Nehemiah 12:28)**
- **And from Beth-gilgal and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for there were settlements that the singers had built for themselves all around Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 12:29)**
- **And the priests and the Levites proceeded to cleanse themselves and cleanse the people and the gates and the wall. (Nehemiah 12:30)**
- **Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall. Further, I appointed two large thanksgiving choirs and processions, and the one was walking to the right upon the wall to the Gate of the**

Ash-heaps. ([Nehemiah 12:31](#))

- And Hoshaiah and half of the princes of Judah began to walk behind them. ([Nehemiah 12:32](#))
- Also Azariah, Ezra and Meshullam. ([Nehemiah 12:33](#))
- Judah and Benjamin and Shemaiah and Jeremiah. ([Nehemiah 12:34](#))
- Also of the sons of the priests with the 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 12:35](#))
- And his brothers Shemaiah and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel and Judah, Hanani, with the instruments of song of David the man of the true God, and Ezra the copyist before them. ([Nehemiah 12:36](#))
- And at the Fountain Gate and straight ahead of them they went up on the Stairway of the City of David by the ascent of the wall above the House of David and clear to the Water Gate to the east. ([Nehemiah 12:37](#))
- And the other thanksgiving choir was walking in front, and I after it, also half of the people, upon the wall up over the Tower of the Bake Ovens and on to the Broad Wall. ([Nehemiah 12:38](#))
- And up over the Gate of Ephraim and on to the Gate of the Old City and clear to the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of Meah and on to the Sheep Gate, and they came to a stand at the Gate of the Guard. ([Nehemiah 12:39](#))
- At length the two thanksgiving choirs came to a stand at the house of the true God, also I and half of the deputy rulers with me. ([Nehemiah 12:40](#))
- And the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, Hananiah with the trumpets. ([Nehemiah 12:41](#))
- And Maaseiah and Shemaiah, and Eleazar and Uzzi and Jehohanan and Malchijah and Elam and Ezer. And the singers with Izrahiah the overseer kept making themselves heard.

(Nehemiah 12:42)

- While the Scriptures say nothing more about **music** in connection with temple worship after Nehemiah's time, other records, such as the Talmud, tell of music being used there until the destruction of Jerusalem in **70 C.E.**

• How Extensive Was The Musical Staff At The Temple In Jerusalem?

- In conjunction with the preparations for Yehowah's temple, David set aside 4,000 Levites for **musical** service.
- Of these for acting as supervisors over the work of the house of Yehowah there were twenty-four thousand, and as officers and judges six thousand. (**1 Chronicles 23:4**)
- And four thousand gatekeepers and four thousand givers of praise to Yehowah on the instruments that David said; I have made for giving praise. (**1 Chronicles 23:5**)
- Of these, 288 were trained in **song** to Yehowah, all experts.
- And the number of them together with their brothers trained in song to Yehowah, all experts, came to be two hundred and eighty-eight. (**1 Chronicles 25:7**)
- The whole arrangement was under the direction of three accomplished **musicians**, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, apparently also named Ethan.
- Since each of these men was a descendant of one of Levi's three sons, Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, respectively, the three chief Levite families were thus represented in the temple **music** organization.
- The sons of Levi were Gershom, Kohath and Merari. (**1 Chronicles 6:16**)
- And these were the ones to whom David gave positions for the direction of the singing at the house of Yehowah after the Ark had a resting-place. (**1 Chronicles 6:31**)
- And they came to be ministers in the singing before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting until Solomon built the house of Yehowah in Jerusalem, and they kept attending upon their

service according to their commission. (**1 Chronicles 6:32**)

- And these were those in attendance and also their sons. Of the sons of the Kohathites Heman the singer, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel. (**1 Chronicles 6:33**)
- As for his brother Asaph, who was attending at his right, Asaph was the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea. (**1 Chronicles 6:39**)
- The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchijah. (**1 Chronicles 6:40**)
- The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah. (**1 Chronicles 6:41**)
- The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei. (**1 Chronicles 6:42**)
- The son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi. (**1 Chronicles 6:43**)
- As regards the sons of Merari their brothers on the left hand, there was Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch. (**1 Chronicles 6:44**)
- Further, David and the chiefs of the service groups separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the ones prophesying with the harps, with the stringed instruments and with the cymbals. And from their number the official men for their service came to be. (**1 Chronicles 25:1**)
- Of the sons of Asaph, Zaccur and Joseph and Nethaniah and Asharelah, the sons of Asaph under the control of Asaph the one prophesying under the control of the king. (**1 Chronicles 25:2**)
- Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun, Gedaliah and Zeri and Jeshaiiah, and Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six, under the control of their father Jeduthun, who was prophesying with the harp for thanking and praising Yehowah. (**1 Chronicles 25:3**)
- Of Heman, the sons of Heman, Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. (**1 Chronicles 25:4**)

- All these were sons of Heman, a visionary of the king in the things of the true God to raise up his horn, thus the true God proceeded to give Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. (1 Chronicles 25:5)
- All these were under the control of their father in song at the house of Yehowah, with cymbals, stringed instruments and harps for the service of the house of the true God. Under the control of the king were Asaph and Jeduthun and Heman. (1 Chronicles 25:6)
- The sons of these three men totaled 24, all of whom were among the aforementioned 288 skilled musicians. Each son was appointed by lot to be the head of one division of musicians. Under his direction were 11 more experts, selected from his own sons as well as other Levites. In this manner the 288 $((1 + 11) \times 24) = 288$ expert Levite musicians, like the priests, were separated into 24 courses.
- If all the remaining 3,712 learners were thus divided, it would average about 155 more men to each of the 24 divisions, meaning there were about 13 Levites in various stages of musical education and training to each expert.
- Further, David and the chiefs of the service groups separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the ones prophesying with the harps, with the stringed instruments and with the cymbals. And from their number the official men for their service came to be. (1 Chronicles 25:1)
- Of the sons of Asaph, Zaccur and Joseph and Nethaniah and Asharelah, the sons of Asaph under the control of Asaph the one prophesying under the control of the king. (1 Chronicles 25:2)
- Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun, Gedaliah and Zeri and Jeshaiiah, and Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six, under the control of their father Jeduthun, who was prophesying with the harp for thanking and praising Yehowah. (1 Chronicles 25:3)
- Of Heman: the sons of Heman, Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. (1 Chronicles 25:4)

- All these were sons of Heman, a visionary of the king in the things of the true God to raise up his horn, thus the true God proceeded to give Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. (**1 Chronicles 25:5**)
- All these were under the control of their father in song at the house of Yehowah, with cymbals, stringed instruments and harps for the service of the house of the true God. Under the control of the king were Asaph and Jeduthun and Heman. (**1 Chronicles 25:6**)
- And the number of them together with their brothers trained in song to Yehowah, all experts, came to be two hundred and eighty-eight. (**1 Chronicles 25:7**)
- So they cast lots as to the things to be taken care of, the little being just the same as the great, the expert along with the learner. (**1 Chronicles 25:8**)
- And the lot proceeded to come out: the first belonging to Asaph for Joseph, for Gedaliah the second he and his brothers and his sons were twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:9**)
- The third for Zaccur, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:10**)
- The fourth for Izri, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:11**)
- The fifth for Nethaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:12**)
- The sixth for Bukkiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:13**)
- The seventh for Jesharelah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:14**)
- The eighth for Jeshaiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:15**)
- The ninth for Mattaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:16**)

- The tenth for Shimei, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:17**)
- The eleventh for Azarel, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:18**)
- The twelfth for Hashabiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:19**)
- For the thirteenth, Shubael, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:20**)
- For the fourteenth, Mattithiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:21**)
- For the fifteenth, for Jeremoth, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:22**)
- For the sixteenth, for Hananiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:23**)
- For the seventeenth, for Joshbekashah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:24**)
- For the eighteenth, for Hanani, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:25**)
- For the nineteenth, for Mallothi, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:26**)
- For the twentieth, for Eliathah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:27**)
- For the twenty-first, for Hothir, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:28**)
- For the twenty-second, for Giddalti, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:29**)
- For the twenty-third, for Mahazioth, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:30**)
- For the twenty-fourth, for Romamti-ezer, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:31**)

- Since the trumpeters were priests, they would be in addition to the Levite **musicians**.
- And the Levites that were singers belonging to all of them, namely, to Asaph, to Heman, to Jeduthun and to their sons and to their brothers clothed in fine fabric with cymbals and with stringed instruments and harps, were standing to the east of the altar and along with them priests to the number of a hundred and twenty sounding the trumpets. (**2 Chronicles 5:12**)
- And Aaron's sons, the priests, should blow on the trumpets, and the use of them must serve as a statute for you men to time indefinite during your generations. (**Numbers 10:8**)

·· Instrumental Music

- The Bible gives very little information concerning the shape or construction of the more than a dozen different **musical** instruments that it mentions.
- Hence, most scholars draw heavily on what archaeologists have discovered about the instruments used by contemporary surrounding nations.
- However, this may not always be a reliable guide, since it appears that Israel excelled in **music** in comparison with her neighbors. Additionally, some have linked various instruments of Scripture to instruments used in modern times in the Middle East, which are supposed to have an ancient background. This, too, is conjectural.
- The **musical** instruments of the Bible may be classified as follows:

String; harp, lute, zither.

Wind; bagpipe, flute, horn, pipe, trumpet. (possibly) nehiloth.

Percussion; cymbals, sistrum, tambourine.

See individual articles on the above instruments for further information.

- There is no reason to believe that the **musical** instruments of Israel were crude in design, construction, or sound production. The Bible notes that the harps and stringed instruments for temple use were of the choicest imported algum wood, the trumpets of silver.

- **And Hiram's fleet of ships that carried gold from Ophir also brought from Ophir timbers of alnum trees in very great amount and precious stones.**
- **And Hiram's fleet of ships that carried gold from Ophir also brought from Ophir timbers of alnum trees in very great amount and precious stones. (1 Kings 10:11)**
- **And the king proceeded to make out of the timbers of the alnum trees supports for the house of Yehowah and for the house of the king, and also harps and stringed instruments for the singers. Timbers of alnum trees like this have not come in nor have they been seen down to this day. (1 Kings 10:12)**
- **Make for yourself two trumpets of silver. You will make them of hammered work, and they must be at your service for convening the assembly and for breaking up the camps. (Numbers 10:2)**
- **Undoubtedly, in the manufacture of the temple instruments, the most skilled craftsmen were employed.**
- **Both the Scriptures and non-Biblical manuscripts dating from before the Common Era testify to the quality of the instruments as well as the competence of the Israelite musicians.**
- **The Dead Sea Scrolls state that a number of trumpets were assigned various complicated signals to be executed as with one mouth.**
- **This would require not only skilled musicians but also instruments so constructed that the pitch might be regulated in order to bring them all into tune with one another.**
- **Freedom from dissonance is indicated by the inspired account of the music at the inauguration of Solomon's temple. The one hundred and twenty trumpeters and the singers were as one in causing one sound to be heard.**
- **And the Levites that were singers belonging to all of them, namely, to Asaph, to Heman, to Jeduthun and to their sons and to their brothers clothed in fine fabric with cymbals and with stringed instruments and harps, were standing to the east of the altar and along with them priests to the number of a hundred and twenty sounding the trumpets. (2 Chronicles 5:12)**

- And it came about that as soon as the trumpeters and the singers were as one in causing one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yehowah, and as soon as they lifted up the sound with the trumpets and with the cymbals and with the instruments of song and with praising Yehowah, for he is good, for to time indefinite is his loving-kindness, the house itself was filled with a cloud, the very house of Yehowah. ([2 Chronicles 5:13](#))
- The Bible lists but four instruments as definitely being in the temple orchestra, trumpets, harps, stringed instruments, [Hebrew, *neva-lim'*](#), and cymbals.
- While this may not seem to be a complete orchestra by modern standards, it was never intended to be a symphony orchestra, but only to provide accompaniment for the singing at the temple. Such a combination of instruments would serve this purpose excellently.
- Meantime, he had the Levites stationed at the house of Yehowah, with cymbals, with stringed instruments and with harps, by the commandment of David and of Gad the king's visionary and of Nathan the prophet, for it was by the hand of Yehowah that the commandment was by means of his prophets. ([2 Chronicles 29:25](#))
- So the Levites kept standing with the instruments of David, and also the priests with the trumpets. ([2 Chronicles 29:26](#))
- And at the inauguration of the wall of Jerusalem they looked for the Levites, to bring them out of all their places to Jerusalem to carry on an inauguration and a rejoicing even with thanksgivings and with song, cymbals and stringed instruments and with harps. ([Nehemiah 12:27](#))
- And the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, Hananiah with the trumpets. ([Nehemiah 12:41](#))
- And Maaseiah and Shemaiah, and Eleazar and Uzzi and Jehohanan and Malchijah and Elam and Ezer. And the singers with Izrahiah the overseer kept making themselves heard. ([Nehemiah 12:42](#))
- As to the times when the sacred instruments performed, the Scriptures enumerate the following in connection with the trumpets;

In the day of your rejoicing and in your festal seasons and at the commencements of your months, you must blow on the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your communion sacrifices.

- **And in the day of your rejoicing and in your festal seasons and at the commencements of your months, you must blow on the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your communion sacrifices, and their use must serve as a memorial for you before your God. I am Yehowah your God. (Numbers 10:10)**
- **After the temple **music** organization was established, it is likely that the rest of the instruments joined the trumpets on these and other special occasions.**
- **This conclusion, as well as the **musical** procedure followed, seems to be indicated by the order of events described as taking place when sacred services were revived by King Hezekiah after he had cleansed the temple.**
- **Then Hezekiah said to offer up the burnt sacrifice on the altar, and at the time that the burnt offering started, the song of Yehowah started and also the trumpets, even under the direction of the instruments of David the king of Israel. (2 Chronicles 29:27)**
- **And all the congregation were bowing down while the song was resounding and the trumpets were blaring, all this until the burnt offering was finished. (2 Chronicles 29:28)**
- **The trumpets being under the direction of the instruments of David seems to denote that the trumpeters played in such a manner as to complement the other instruments rather than to overshadow them. The position of the entire body of **musicians** was to the east of the altar.**
- **And the Levites that were singers belonging to all of them, namely, to Asaph, to Heman, to Jeduthun and to their sons and to their brothers clothed in fine fabric with cymbals and with stringed instruments and harps, were standing to the east of the altar and along with them priests to the number of a hundred and twenty sounding the trumpets. (2 Chronicles 5:12)**

.. Vocal Music

- The singers at the temple were Levite males. Nowhere do the Scriptures speak of female vocalists at the temple.
- I accumulated also silver and gold for myself, and property peculiar to kings and the jurisdictional districts. I made male singers and female singers for myself and the exquisite delights of the sons of mankind, a lady, even ladies. ([Ecclesiastes 2:8](#))
- Clearly indicates that they were not present in the chorus. The fact that women were prohibited from even entering certain areas of the temple would seem to preclude their occupying any official position there.
- And the Levites that were singers belonging to all of them, namely, to Asaph, to Heman, to Jeduthun and to their sons and to their brothers clothed in fine fabric with cymbals and with stringed instruments and harps, were standing to the east of the altar and along with them priests to the number of a hundred and twenty sounding the trumpets. ([2 Chronicles 5:12](#))
- For it is to the dining halls that the sons of Israel and the sons of the Levites should bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil, and there is where the utensils of the sanctuary and the priests that were ministering, and the gatekeepers and the singers are, and we should not neglect the house of our God. ([Nehemiah 10:39](#))
- And at the inauguration of the wall of Jerusalem they looked for the Levites, to bring them out of all their places to Jerusalem to carry on an inauguration and a rejoicing even with thanksgivings and with song, cymbals and stringed instruments and with harps. ([Nehemiah 12:27](#))
- And the sons of the singers proceeded to gather themselves even from the District, from all around Jerusalem and from the settlements of the Netophathites. ([Nehemiah 12:28](#))
- And from Beth-gilgal and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for there were settlements that the singers had built for themselves all around Jerusalem. ([Nehemiah 12:29](#))
- Considerable importance was attached to the singing at the temple. This is evident from the many Scriptural references to the singers as well as from the fact that they were set free from duty

common to other Levites in order to devote themselves wholly to their service.

- **And these were the singers, the heads of the fathers of the Levites in the dining rooms, those set free from duty, for by day and by night it was their responsibility to be in the work. (1 Chronicles 9:33)**
- **Their continuance as a special group of Levites is emphasized by their being listed separately among those returning from Babylon.**
- **The Levites, the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, seventy-four. (Ezra 2:40)**
- **The singers, the sons of Asaph, a hundred and twenty-eight. (Ezra 2:41)**
- **Even the authority of the Persian king Artaxerxes, or Longimanus, was brought to bear in their behalf, exempting them, along with other special groups, from tax, tribute, and toll.**
- **And to you men it is being made known that, as respects any of the priests and the Levites, the **musicians**, the doorkeepers, the Nethinim, and the workers of this house of God, no tax, tribute or toll is allowed to be imposed upon them. (Ezra 7:24)**
- **Later, the king commanded that there was to be a fixed provision for the singers as each day required. Although Artaxerxes is credited with this order, most likely it was issued by Ezra on the basis of the power granted to him by Artaxerxes.**
- **For there was a commandment of the king in behalf of them, and there was a fixed provision for the singers as each day required. (Nehemiah 11:23)**
- **And whatever it seems good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, according to the will of your God, you men will do. (Ezra 7:18)**
- **And the vessels that are being given to you for the service of the house of your God deliver in full before God at Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:19)**
- **And the rest of the necessities of the house of your God that it**

- devolves upon you to give, you will give out of the king's house of treasures. ([Ezra 7:20](#))
- And by me myself, Artaxerxes the king, an order has been put through to all the treasurers that are beyond the River, that everything that Ezra the priest, the copyist of the Law of the God of the heavens, requests of you men it will be done promptly. ([Ezra 7:21](#))
 - Even to a hundred talents of silver and a hundred cor measures of wheat and a hundred bath measures of wine and a hundred bath measures of oil, and salt without limit. ([Ezra 7:22](#))
 - Let all that is by the order of the God of the heavens be done with zeal for the house of the God of the heavens, that there may occur no wrath against the king's realm and his sons. ([Ezra 7:23](#))
 - And to you men it is being made known that, as respects any of the priests and the Levites, the **musicians**, the doorkeepers, the Nethinim, and the workers of this house of God, no tax, tribute or toll is allowed to be imposed upon them. ([Ezra 7:24](#))
 - And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand appoint magistrates and judges that they may continually judge all the people that are beyond the River, even all those knowing the laws of your God, and anyone that has not known them you men will instruct. ([Ezra 7:25](#))
 - And as for everyone that does not become a doer of the Law of your God and the Law of the king, let judgment be promptly executed upon him, whether for death or for banishment, or for money fine or for imprisonment. ([Ezra 7:26](#))
 - Thus, it is understandable that, although the singers were all Levites, the Bible makes reference to them as a special body, speaking of the singers and the Levites.
 - And it came about that, as soon as the wall had been rebuilt, I at once set up the doors. Then there were appointed the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites. ([Nehemiah 7:1](#))
 - And I got to find out that the very portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers doing the work went running off, each one to his own field. ([Nehemiah](#)

13:10)

- **Apart from temple worship, other singers, men and women, are spoken of in Scripture. Examples of these are the male and female singers maintained by Solomon in his court, also, about 200 singers of both sexes who, in addition to the Levite **musicians**, returned from Babylon.**
- **I accumulated also silver and gold for myself, and property peculiar to kings and the jurisdictional districts. I made male singers and female singers for myself and the exquisite delights of the sons of mankind, a lady, even ladies. (**Ecclesiastes 2:8**)**
- **Apart from their men slaves and their slave girls, these being seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven, and they had two hundred male singers and female singers. (**Ezra 2:65**)**
- **Apart from their men slaves and their slave girls, these being seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven, and they had two hundred and forty-five male singers and female singers. (**Nehemiah 7:67**)**
- **These non-Levite singers, common in Israel, were employed not only to enhance various festive occasions but also to chant dirges in times of sorrow.**
- **I am eighty years old today. Could I discern between good and bad, or could your servant taste what I ate and what I drank, or could I listen anymore to the voice of male and female singers? So why should your servant become a burden anymore to my lord the king? (**2 Samuel 19:35**)**
- **And Jeremiah began to chant over Josiah, and all the male singers and female singers keep talking about Josiah in their dirges down till today, and they have them set as a regulation over Israel, and there they are written among the dirges. (**2 Chronicles 35:25**)**
- **This is what Yehowah of armies has said; Behave with understanding, you people, and call the dirge-chanting women, that they may come, and send even to the skilled women, that they may come. (**Jeremiah 9:17**)**
- **But hear, O you women, the word of Yehowah, and may your ear**

take the word of his mouth. Then teach your daughters a lamentation, and each woman her companion a dirge. (**Jeremiah 9:20**)

- The custom of hiring professional **musicians** at times of joy and of sadness appears to have continued into the time when Jesus was on earth.
- With whom shall I compare this generation? It is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who cry out to their playmates. (**Matthew 11:16**)
- Saying; We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief. (**Matthew 11:17**)
- Although not as prominent as in the Hebrew Scriptures, **music** is not ignored or overlooked in the **Christian Greek Scriptures**. Instrumental **music** in connection with true worship is mentioned only in a figurative sense in the Greek Scriptures.
- And I heard a sound out of heaven as the sound of many waters and as the sound of loud thunder, and the sound that I heard was as of singers who accompany themselves on the harp playing on their harps. (**Revelation 14:2**)
- Yet singing seems to have been quite common among God's servants. Jesus and his apostles sang praises after the Lord's Evening Meal.
- Finally, after **singing praises**, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (**Mark 14:26**)
- Luke tells of Paul and Silas **singing** when in prison, and Paul's encouragement to fellow believers was to sing **songs of praise** to Yehowah.
- But about the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and **praising God** with **song**, yes, the prisoners were hearing them. (**Acts of Apostles 16:25**)
- Also, do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit. (**Ephesians 5:18**)
- Speaking to yourselves with **psalms** and **praises to God** and

- spiritual songs, singing and accompanying yourselves with **music** in your hearts to Yehowah. (**Ephesians 5:19**)
- Let the word of the Christ reside in you richly in all wisdom. Keep on teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, praises to God, **spiritual songs** with graciousness, **singing** in your hearts to Yehowah. (**Colossians 3:16**)
 - **Paul's statement at;**
 - What is to be done, then? I will pray with the gift of the spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praise with the gift of the spirit, but I will also **sing praise** with my mind. (**1 Corinthians 14:15**)
 - Concerning **singing** appears to indicate that it was a regular feature of Christian worship. In recording his inspired vision, John tells of various heavenly creatures **singing** to God and Christ.
 - And when he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls that were full of incense, and the incense means the prayers of the holy ones. (**Revelation 5:8**)
 - And they sing a new song, saying; You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (**Revelation 5:9**)
 - And you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth. (**Revelation 5:10**)
 - And they are **singing** as if a **new song** before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one was able to master that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been bought from the earth. (**Revelation 14:3**)
 - And I saw what seemed to be a glassy sea mingled with fire, and those who come off victorious from the wild beast and from its image and from the number of its name standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. (**Revelation 15:2**)
 - And they are singing the song of Moses the slave of God and the

song of the Lamb, saying; Great and wonderful are your works, Yehowah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. (**Revelation 15:3**)

- Who will not really fear you, Yehowah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal? For all the nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous decrees have been made manifest. (**Revelation 15:4**)

• Nature Of Biblical Music

- The Israelites higher plane of morality and their superior literature, as exemplified by the poetry and prose of the Hebrew Scriptures, suggest that the **music** of ancient Israel most likely transcended that of her contemporaries.
- Certainly the inspiration for the **music** of Israel was far loftier than that of neighboring nations. Of interest is an Assyrian bas-relief in which King Sennacherib is represented as demanding that King Hezekiah pay him as tribute both male and female **musicians**. [**Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, edited by J. Pritchard, 1974, p. 288]
- It has long been held by some that Hebrew **music** was all melody, without harmony. However, the prominence alone of the harp and other stringed instruments in Israel weighs heavily against this assumption.
- It is almost inconceivable that a **musician** would play a multi-stringed instrument and fail to notice that a combination of certain tones was quite pleasing or that a specific series of notes as in an arpeggio produced a pleasant sound.
- An informed source on the history of music, **Curt Sachs**, states: **The deep-rooted prejudice that harmony and polyphony, two or more musical parts or voices combined, have been a prerogative of the medieval and modern West does not hold water.**
- He goes on to say that even among primitive cultures there are many examples of music running in fifths, fourths, thirds as well as in octaves, and that among these peoples, including certain Pygmy tribes, there was a development of overlapping antiphony, alternate singing by two divisions of vocalists, into regular canon singing.

- Based on worldwide research Sachs presents the conclusion that the choruses and orchestras connected with the Temple in Jerusalem suggest a high standard of musical education, skill, and knowledge.
- He continues: It is important to realize that the ancient Western Orient had a music quite different from what historians of the Nineteenth Century conceded it.
- Though we do not know how that ancient music sounded, we have sufficient evidence of its power, dignity, and mastership. [The Rise of Music in the Ancient World: East and West, 1943, pp. 48,101,102]
- The Scriptures intimate a similar conclusion. For instance, over 30 times the expression; To, or for the director, NW, AT, appears in the superscriptions of the Psalms. (Psalms 11, and others) Other translations read, choirmaster, Kx, JB, Mo, RS, Chief Musician, AS, KJ, Le, Ro, and Bandmaster Fn.
- The Hebrew term seems to refer to one who in some way gave direction to the execution of the song, in arranging it, in rehearsing and training the Levite singers, or in its official performance.
- Perhaps the chief one of each of the 24 courses of sanctuary musicians is being addressed, or it may have been another one of the accomplished musicians, since the record says that they were to act as directors.
- And Mattithiah and Eliphelehu and Mikneiah and Obed-edom and Jeiel and Azariah with harps tuned to Sheminith, to act as directors. (1 Chronicles 15:21)
- Further, David and the chiefs of the service groups separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the ones prophesying with the harps, with the stringed instruments and with the cymbals. And from their number the official men for their service came to be. (1 Chronicles 25:1)
- And the number of them together with their brothers trained in song to Yehowah, all experts, came to be two hundred and eighty-eight. (1 Chronicles 25:7)
- So they cast lots as to the things to be taken care of, the little being just the same as the great, the expert along with the learner. (1 Chronicles 25:8)

- And the lot proceeded to come out, the first belonging to Asaph for Joseph, for Gedaliah the second, he and his brothers and his sons were twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:9**)
- The third for Zaccur, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:10**)
- The fourth for Izri, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:11**)
- The fifth for Nethaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:12**)
- The sixth for Bukkiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:13**)
- The seventh for Jesharelah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:14**)
- The eighth for Jeshaiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:15**)
- The ninth for Mattaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:16**)
- The tenth for Shimei, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:17**)
- The eleventh for Azarel, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:18**)
- The twelfth for Hashabiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:19**)
- For the thirteenth, Shubael, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:20**)
- For the fourteenth, Mattithiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:21**)
- For the fifteenth, for Jeremoth, his sons and his brothers, twelve. (**1 Chronicles 25:22**)

- For the sixteenth, for Hananiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:23](#))
- For the seventeenth, for Joshbekashah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:24](#))
- For the eighteenth, for Hanani, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:25](#))
- For the nineteenth, for Mallothi, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:26](#))
- For the twentieth, for Eliathah, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:27](#))
- For the twenty-first, for Hothir, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:28](#))
- For the twenty-second, for Giddalti, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:29](#))
- For the twenty-third, for Mahazioth, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:30](#))
- For the twenty-fourth, for Romamti-ezer, his sons and his brothers, twelve. ([1 Chronicles 25:31](#))
- In some 20 other Psalms the superscriptions are even more specific in their reference to the **directors**. To the **director** on stringed instruments. To the **director** on the lower octave, and so on. ([Psalms 4,12](#)), and others. Additionally, there are Scriptural references to the heads of the singers, to the experts, and to the learners. All of this testifies to a high standard of **music**.
- For in the days of David and Asaph in bygone time there were heads of the singers and the song of praise and thanksgivings to God. ([Nehemiah 12:46](#))
- And the number of them together with their brothers trained in song to Yehowah, all experts, came to be two hundred and eighty-eight. ([1 Chronicles 25:7](#))
- So they cast lots as to the things to be taken care of, the little being just the same as the great, the expert along with the

learner. ([1 Chronicles 25:8](#))

See Also SHEMINITH

- Much of the group **singing** in Israel appears to have been antiphonal, either two half choruses alternating in singing parallel lines, or a soloist and an answering chorus alternating. In the Scriptures this apparently is referred to as responding.
- And Miriam kept responding to the men; **Sing** to Yehowah, for he has become highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has pitched into the sea. ([Exodus 15:21](#))
- And it came about that at their coming in, when David returned from striking the Philistines down, the women began coming out from all the cities of Israel with song and dances to meet Saul the king, with tambourines, with rejoicing and with lutes. ([1 Samuel 18:6](#))
- And the women that were celebrating kept responding and saying; Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands. ([1 Samuel 18:7](#))
- This type of singing is indicated by the very way some of the psalms are written, such as ([Psalms Chapter 136](#)). The description of the two large thanksgiving choirs in Nehemiah's time and of their part in the inauguration of the wall of Jerusalem implies that they **sang** in this style.

See Also SONG

- **Chanting** might be said to be halfway between **singing** and speaking. In pitch it is rather monotonous and repetitious, with the emphasis being on rhythm.
- While **chanting** continues to be quite popular in some of the world's leading religions, its use in the Bible appears to be limited to dirges, as in the case of David **chanting** a **dirge** over the deaths of his friend Jonathan and of King Saul.
- And David proceeded to chant this **dirge** over Saul and Jonathan his son. ([2 Samuel 1:17](#))
- And Jeremiah began to chant over Josiah, and all the male

singers and female singers keep talking about Josiah in their dirges down till today, and they have them set as a regulation over Israel, and there they are written among the dirges. (**2 Chronicles 35:25**)

- And for you in their lamentation they will certainly lift up a dirge and chant over you; Who is like Tyre, like her that has been brought to silence in the midst of the sea? (**Ezekiel 27:32**)
- This is a **dirge**, and people will certainly chant it. Even the daughters of the nations will chant it, over Egypt and over all its crowd they will chant it, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah. (**Ezekiel 32:16**)
- Only in a dirge or lamentation would the chanting style be preferable to either the melody of **music** or the modulation and oral emphasis of pure speech.

See Also DIRGE