

1 CHRONICLES 25 1-8 AND THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN ISRAELITE LITURGY: AN ANCIENT MODEL FOR MODERN WORSHIPPERS

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Introduction

1 Chronicles 25:1-8 happens at the peaking of the Davidic Kingdom transitioning towards the Solomonic reign.¹ This pericope leans on the earlier appointment and organization of the Temple services by King David in prevision of the building of the Jerusalem Temple.² The appointment and organization of the Temple musicians by David marks a critical step in Israel's liturgy as it associates music with Temple worship in an unusual way.³

¹1 Chronicles 6:32 traces this event between the Davidic erection of a "place for the tabernacle, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem."

²See 1 Chronicles 22:1-8.

³Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 235. He qualifies the playing of musical instruments under the

It is the purpose of this study to arrive at the best possible understanding of the role of music in Israel's liturgy. The endeavor will be to address questions such as the form and purpose of Temple music in Israel's liturgy. Who were the people involved? How did they perform? What types of instruments were used? And finally, what is the theological message and application for the contemporary worshipper of Yahweh?¹

Background of 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

The organization of the Levitical worshippers is preceded by the bringing back of the Ark from Kirjath Jearim to Jerusalem via "the house of Obed-Edom" and its placing in the Tabernacle (1 Chr 13-16), the Covenant between God and David (1 Chr 17), the consolidation of the Davidic kingdom via various conquests (1 Chr 18-20), a census of Israel and Judah (1 Chr 21), the launching of the preparations for the building of the Temple (1 Chr 22), and the division of priests and Levites (1 Chr 23-24).² Following

king's direction as "unusual in Israelite prophecy."

¹Questions on authorship, date, and genre are beyond the scope of this paper.

²Peter R. Ackroyd, *I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah Introduction and Commentary*, Torch Bible Commentary (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), 5, traces the background of 1 Chr 25 as follows: "(1) the downfall of Saul – 10:1-14; (2) the supremacy of David – 11:1-12:40; (3) the ark I – 13:1-14; (4) David's renown – 14:1-17; (5) the ark II – 15:1-16:43; (6) the house of God and the house of

the organization of the Levitical worshippers we have the organization of the gatekeepers (1 Chr 26), the organization of the army, tribe leaders, and state officials (1 Chr 27). Also, Solomon builds the Temple. And finally, Solomon is anointed king in Jerusalem (1 Chr 28-29).

Literary Analysis

οἱ ἄρχοντες της δυνάμεως in 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

There is strong agreement and minimal discrepancies between the LXX and the BHS for 1 Chronicles 25:1-8. In 1 Chronicles 25:1, both versions ascribe the appointment of the Temple musicians to King David with the assistance of “the captains of the army.” The Greek for “the captains of the army” is οἱ ἄρχοντες της δυνάμεως and its Hebrew counterpart is שָׂרֵי הַצִּבָּא have been variously interpreted by scholars. Some interpret it as “the commanders of the army” (Klein), others as “the officials of the hosts” (Keil), still others translate it as “the officials of Israel” (Curtis and Madsen). The contention lies on whether to apply the expression to the army, to the princes of the people or to the Levites of Israel. Technically, both renditions are possible. Though some may see compatibility between army and selection of Temple musicians,¹ it will be very difficult to explain why the

David – 17:1-27; (7) David’s wars – 18:1-20:8; (8) the choice of the Temple site – 21:1-22:1; (9) preparations for the Temple – 22:2-23:1; (10) the officials of the Temple and kingdom – 23:2-27:4.”

¹See for example Knoppers, 846.

army should take part in the selection of Temple musicians. Also, due to the fact that the pericope deals with Temple worship, the most likely understanding would be “officials of Israel” referring to the “chiefs of the leaders of the service” occurring in 1 Chr 24:6.¹

Worth noting here is the fact that the Greek οἱ ἄρχοντες της δυνάμεως occurs only twice in the Old Testament. First in 2 Kgs 9:5, it is used with reference to the anointing of Jehu as the next king of Israel by a son of the prophets sent by Elisha the prophet. Interestingly, the “captains of the army” are found by the prophet’s servant “sitting.” Detached from the rest of the soldiers, Jehu is anointed in “an inner room” (2 Kgs 9:2). Hence, though present, none of the captains of the army personally partook in the anointing of Jehu as the next King of Israel. Also, in 2 Kgs 25:23-26, the “captains of the armies” are mentioned as fleeing to Egypt in fear of Babylonian reprisals after the murder of Gedaliah, governor of Judah by Elishama at Mizpah. It can be safely inferred here that the Greek construction οἱ ἄρχοντες της δυνάμεως never appears in the context of worship nor in any consecration service.

In addition, the Old Testament shows several occurrence of the χονστρυχτιον ἄρχοντας της δυνάμεως or “captain of the army.” In 2 Sam 24:4 and 1 Chr 21:2, the “captains o

¹“1 Chronicles,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976.), 194.

the army” or “leaders of the people” are portrayed receiving instruction from King David to make an against-God’s will census of the children of Israel and Judah. In 1 Kgs 21:2, the “commanders of the army” are recorded “eating and dancing” together with the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest after sacrificing “oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance” in order to celebrate the insurgency of Adonijah as king in David’s stead. In 2 Chr 16:4, the captains of the Syrian armies are described as attacking Israel at the demand of King Asa of Judah. In 2 Chr 33:11, the captains of the Assyrian armies are documented taking wicked king Manasseh captive to Babylon.

In 2 Chr 33:14, repented and restored king Manasseh is booked setting military captains to guard the fortified cities of Judah. Also, the singular form ἄρχοντος της δυνάμεως clocks in only once in the Old Testament in 2 Kgs 25:19. There, the captain of Judah’s army is taken captive to Babylon and killed with other officials. Interestingly, the construction also appears in the books of Judith and Maccabees.

In Judith 14:19, the captains of the Assyrian armies are recorded terror stricken before Israel after the presumed murder of Holofernes by Judith. Also, in Maccabees 5:56, the captains of Israel’s army are said to have been slaughtered in consequence of self-based heroism because they did not belong to the people through whom God delivers His children. The textual evidence tend to favor a translation

of ἄρχοντες της δυνάμεως in 1 Chr 25:1 as “leaders of the Levites”¹ as also alluded to in 1 Chr 15:16.

ἐσθησεν and the Task of David and the Levites in 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

1 Chronicles 25:1 presents the task of David and the leaders of the Levites as setting apart the Temple musicians. The Greek verb used here is ἑσθησεν from ἑσθημι which basically means to appoint somebody to something, to establish or to set up.² Though grammatically correct, this verb lacks the Hebraic sacredness of the endeavor. The Hebrew verb used is בָּרַל and connotes something made sacred by separation from the common. In addition, knowing

¹This conclusion concords with John Arthur Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, The New American Commentary (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 176. C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, *The Books of the Chronicles*, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 269, are of a different point of view when they rightfully posit that “abC yrv denotes the “leaders of the army or the chiefs of Israel” and not “princes of Levite host.” For them, these were “princes of Israel.” Though this understanding is grammatically correct, it poses a genuine theological challenge due to the fact that, as demonstrated earlier by the text, captains of the army are never mentioned close to consecration services in the Old Testament. Unless we take the construction in 1 Chr 25:1 as hapax legomenon, the best rendition should be “leaders of the Levites.”

²J. Lust, with E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, part I A–I, with the collaboration of G. Chamberlain, (1992), s.v. “ἑσθημι.”

that Levites had already been historically set apart by God (Exod 28:1), it can be inferred that their apartness is more functional than anything else. In other words, the setting apart of the Temple musicians was mainly a specialization in function. Noteworthy are the facts that 1 Chr 23; 24 and 26 deal with the dividing of the Levites in various services of the Temple.

Aside from the Temple musicians, there were the divisions of those who looked “after the work of the house of the Lord,” the officers, the judges, gatekeepers (1 Chr 23:4-5). It must also be pointed out that *ʾִסְתָּמִי* may also mean to arrange or to validate. These definitions add understanding to David’s action in appointing the Temple musicians. In fact, whereas the arrangement connotes order and organization, the validation connotes authority.

In appointing the Temple musicians, David and the Officers stamped Temple musicians with organization and conferred them both congregational and national authority for the Temple music in Israel. Hence, there was no room for improvisation or amateurism in the Davidic Temple music because the Temple musicians were consecrated professionals who had the authority and responsibility to lead out the congregation into worship.¹

¹Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles an Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 233, states that “the Levitical musicians ... encouraged the people to worship God with conviction, harmony, and vitality.”

1 Chronicles 25:1 identifies the function of the Temple musicians as “prophesying.” Such an association of sacred music and prophecy is remarkable indeed. The LXX uses the Greek participle τοὺς ἀποφθεγγομένους. The derived verb is ἀποφθέγγομαι which may mean “to utter,” “to speak,” or “to prophesy.”¹ The Temple musicians can be referred to as the “prophesying ones” functioning as cultic prophets. The BHS confirms this fact by its use of the articulate Hebrew verb **הִנְבְּאִים**; which means “the prophesiers.” The Davidic Temple musicians functioned as prophets.

The Temple Instruments in 1 Chronicles 25: 1-8

Noteworthy is the fact that the Temple musicians used musical instruments in their office. The LXX mentions three instruments; two stringed instruments – κινύραις (lyre) and νάβλαις (harp) and one percussion instrument – κυμβάλοις (cymbals). The corresponding Hebrew terminologies in the BHS are **כנור** (lyre), **נבל** (harp), and **מצלת** (cymbals).² According to this verse, the Hebrew Temple musicians used two types of instruments: stringed instruments for the melody and percussion instruments for the beat.³ Hence

¹See Lust, Part I A-I, “ἀποφθέγγομαι.”

²Ibid, “κινύραις,” “νάβλαις,” and “κυμβάλοις.”

³For a comprehensive discussion on the Israelite musical instruments see “Musical Instruments of Ancient Hebrews,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 29-42.

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melody and beat formed the basis of Temple music in Israel worship. Caution is here necessary. It is understood that the beat of Israelite Temple music was “more soft and subdued than that of the nations around them.”¹

The aforementioned three instruments appear together in their plural form in the same verse nine times in the Old Testament – 2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 13:8; 1 Chr 15:16; 1 Chr 15:28; 1 Chr 16:5; 2 Chr 5:12; and 2 Chr 29:25. In the first eight instances, they appear in the context of the carrying and the placing of the Ark of the Covenant by David in Jerusalem. In the last instances, these instruments are connected to the restoration of Temple Worship by King Hezekiah. Some key features are worth noting here.

First, the involvement of the king, the priesthood, and the people in each of these instances implies that the entire nation of Israel took part in the musical service. Then, the mention of singing in some of these instances suggests that the Levites combined vocal music with instrumental music in the Temple worship. Also, the idea that priests blew the trumpets and Levites played the instruments suggests that Israelite Temple music was a Levitical and not a priestly prerogative.² This distinction in function between the

¹Wolfgang H. M. Stefani, *The Language of Praise: What the Bible Says About Music*, of *Here We Stand*, ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005), 443.

²See for example 1 Chr 15:24 and 1 Chr 16:6. Also, C. F. Keil with F. Delitzsch, *I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*,
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Levitical musicians, prophets and the Priestly sacrificial order makes it clear that, even though Levites were cultic prophets, there existed some separation between the prophetic office and the priestly ministry.

So far, the study has demonstrated that the combination of vocal and instrumental music mainly by the Levitical guild of Temple worshipers served the purpose of prophesying in the Temple worship.¹

Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 271, are of the view that horns or trumpets were not played by the Levites during Temple worship.

¹The relationship between the music and the prophesying is yet to be settled. J. Barton Payne, "1, 2 Chronicles," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein and Richard P. Polcyn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 480, acknowledges that "the musical instruments accompanied the prophetic activity, but the Hebrew could also be construed to mean that the playing of the musical instruments was itself an act of prophesying." Such a view shows itself debatable since prophesying involves speech which mere instrumental music cannot produce. It is most likely that music served as solely as the background for the Levitical cultic prophetic activity perhaps as a heart opener to more easily incrust God's words in the worshippers.

The Functional Structure of Temple Musicians in 1 Chronicles 25: 1-8

1 Chronicles 25:2-6 outlines the structure and functions of the guilds of Temple musicians. The Table 1 below is a summary of this organization chart.

Table 1 Structure of the Temple Musicians in 1 Chronicles 25

Verse	Family Heads	Sons	Function
2	Asaph	Zaccur, Joseph, Nethanaiah, Asharelah	"prophesied according to the order of the king"
3	Jeduthun	Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, Mattithiah,	"prophesied with the harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord"
4-5	Heman	Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth	"the king's seer in the words of God to exalt his horn."
6	The King		Chief Administrator and Overseer

Three families were selected as Temple musicians directed by their respective family heads. Hence the leadership of the Israelite Temple music was not only chiefly a Levitical affair but also a family or hereditary business¹

¹Knoppers, 848, is of the view that "the material in this

that was representative of the larger tribe of Levi.¹ Also, the aforementioned organization chart shows that “music was of the highest importance in Israelite worship.”² Two facts attest to this conclusion.

First, the three Temple musical guilds are directly under the authority of the king. Also, the Greek constructions for ἐχόμενοι τοῦ βασιλέως “according to the order of the king” [1 Chr 25:2] and ἐκόμενα τοῦ βασιλέως “under the authority of the king” [1 Chr 25:6] both occur only once in the Bible and are directly applied to the Temple musicians.³ Of all the Temple officials – officers, judges, gatekeepers, priests, and musicians, none was so closely under the direct control of the king. The king served as a Chief Administrator and Overseer of Temple music and prophecy. A possible

chapter presupposes that cultic appointments could be transmitted within families for several generations.”

¹Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. I, *Genesis–Song of Solomon* (Chicago: Moody Press, [1981]), 566, demonstrates that “Asaph was related to the tribe of Gershon, Heman to that of Kohath, and Ethan-Jeduthun to that of Merari; thus, the musicians represented all branches of Levi.”

²See Selman, 233.

³In this case, both Greek constructions ἐχόμενοι τοῦ βασιλέως and ἐκόμενα τοῦ βασιλέως may be here referenced as *haphaxei*. However, its counterpart Hebrew עַל־יְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ occurs thrice in the Bible – 2 Kgs 13:16; 1 Chr 25:2, 6. Noticeably, the Hebrew construct is mentioned in Prophet Elisha's final encounter with king Joash; which is also a prophet-king context.

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corollary for this fact is the idea that Israelite Temple music and prophecy expression had only controlled freedom. In other words, Israel's Temple music and worship was a king-controlled highly organized¹ activity. Hence, the final authority for Temple music in Israel rested on the king and not on the musicians.²

In addition, the Temple musicians' recorded function is to prophesy [1 Chr 25:2, 3]. The Asaph family is referred to as prophesying, the Jeduthun family as prophesying "with a harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord," and the Heman family as "the king's seer in the words of God, to exalt his horn." Hence, prophecy was the purpose of Israelite Temple music. If as Knoppers, 848, states "the link between prophecy and song is well established," then the nature of that link is still ambiguous. For example, Selman, 58, captures this sentiment when he states that "musical praise maintained a form of prophecy" without defining that form. He rather suggests two options to explain the link between Israelite Temple music and prophecy. He considered that the Levites

¹Knoppers, 848, says "If the Levites prepare the sacrifices (23:28-29) and the priests offer the sacrifices (23:13, 31), the singers praise Yahweh while such sacrifices are being offered (23:30-31)."

²Ibid, 849, 851, affirms that the Temple musicians were "accountable to royal authority" since the "king appointed and sustained them." Klein, 483, also says that the Temple musicians were "appointed by royal decree." Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Chronicles*, The Bible Speaks Today, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 105, calls this a freedom "within a framework."

prophesied either by supplying “messages direct from God in the manner of the classical prophets,” or through their praises, they prophesied as they “proclaimed God’s word with God’s authority.”¹ Also, Payne, 480, says “the musical instruments accompanied the prophetic activity, but the Hebrew could also be construed to mean that the playing of the musical instruments was itself an act of prophesying.”

Thompson, 177, attempts another explanation when he says that “through the ministry and music of the Levites, God revealed his will to the people, and the people gave thanks and praise to him.” Hence, the Israelite Temple musicians served either as worship leaders or as cultic prophets. Noteworthy is the fact that “classical prophets” are recorded mostly detached from Temple worship and to a great extent independent from the King’s court.

For example, Elijah, Elisha for the Old Testament and John the Baptist in the New Testament are examples of such independent classical prophets who could fearlessly rebuke both clergy and state without fear of any censorship. Thus, since classical prophets functioned independently and cultic prophets functioned under the King’s direction, it can be safely concluded that both offices were not exactly similar; the first being uncensored, the second king-controlled.²

¹See Selman, 235.

²Referring to the cultic prophets, Ackroyd, 84, suggests a “looser sense of divine inspiration” that “may point to some procedure by which the playing of music in worship was seen to

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It is the view of this paper that, since Kings David and Solomon, planner and builder of the Temple, are respectively recorded to be expert musician, and excellent poet, one of their key role as worship administrator was at least to cross-check the quality of the music and messages produced by the Levites, or to suggest songs and messages to be composed and arranged by the Temple musicians.

This fact may be confirmed by the regular mention of David (Pss 5; 6; 7; 8; 12; 14; 15; 16; 17; etc.) or Solomon (Ps 72) composing songs in the Psalms for the Director of music. Hence, may be due to time factor, the King served as the author and censor; while the Temple musicians were sometimes authors,¹ and always the composers and arrangers of the songs. A glance through these Psalms reveals that most of the time, Temple music captured the individual religious experience and spiritual sentiments of the composers.² Hence, Temple music was not only about prophecy.

2 Chronicles 5-6 proves insightful in this regard. After the completion of the building of the Solomonic Temple (5:1),

be related to the revealing of the divine word.”

¹As recorded in Ps 73, Asaph was also an author as well as a composer and arranger of Temple music.

²For example, Ps 5 is David's prayer for guidance, Ps 6 is David's prayer in distress, Ps 7 is David's prayer for deliverance, Ps 51 is David's prayer for repentance, Ps 72 is Solomon's affirmation of the glory and universality of the Messiah's reign, Ps 73 is Asaph's theological discomfort before the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the just, etc.

the priests and the Levites carry the Ark of the Covenant and all the furnishings up to the Temple (5:5), the priest carry the Ark of the Covenant into and come out of the Most Holy place (5:7, 11), and then the Levitical singers praise and thank the Lord with instruments of music (5:12-13). As they praised the Lord “the glory of the Lord filled the house of God” (5:14), then King Solomon makes a speech and a dedicatory prayer for the Temple.

From the aforementioned recap, it can be said that through music and praises, the Israelite Temple musicians prepared the hearts of the people and the Temple for the manifestation of the presence of God. Also in this case, the king not the high priest was the central figure and final authority of the ceremony. This is a confirmation to the fact that Israelite Temple worship was king-controlled. Finally, the Levitical musicians are reported repetitiously singing the goodness and everlasting mercy of the Lord (5:13; 7:6) sometimes together with the entire Israelite congregation (7:3).

Women Among Temple Musicians?

Interestingly, 1 Chronicles 25:5 makes mention of the fact that God gave Heman “three daughters.” Such an insertion appears awkward in this text since the Temple musician heads are numbered with their sons and the daughters seem to have no direct participative role assigned to them from the text. Noteworthy is the fact that there are a few OT mentions of

women's direct and active participation in Israelite worship. For instance, women are mentioned playing drums (Exod 15:20; Judg 11:34; Ps 68:25).

Hence, to find women among the Temple musicians would not be surprising. As it has been said, "the mention of his [Heman's] three daughters reminds us of the lack of discrimination in OT worship, where women shared fully in the musical services."¹ The two last verses of the pericope under scrutiny deal the first with the numbering and the second with the organization of the Temple musicians for Temple worship.

Numbers, Figures and Temple Music

1 Chronicles 25:7 introduces the number of the Temple musicians as "two hundred and eighty-eight"² brethren "instructed in the songs of the Lord ... skillful." The LXX word for number here is the Greek ἀριθμός³ which denotes "sum, census, or amount."⁴ The practice of numbering was very common in ancient Israel. For example, among numerous occurrences, the Bible records the prophetic numbering of

¹See Payne, 425.

²Knoppers, 851, sees this number as reflecting "twelve singers for each of the twenty-four courses" that "anticipates the detailed list that follows (vv. 9-31).

³The Hebrew counterpart for ἀριθμός is מספר connotes the same.

⁴See Lust, 61.

his descendants by Abraham (Gen 15:5), the collection of the Manna “according to the number of persons ... in each tent,” (Exod 16:16), the sifting by numbering of the Israelite combatants by Gideon (Judg 7:5-6), the numbering of the army by King Jehoshaphat in times of prosperity (2 Chr 17:12-19), etc.

A key feature of most of these numberings is the fact that they were purposefully done with the goal of regulation and resource management for responsibility and accountability. The same principle can be said to have steered the numbering of the Temple musicians in 1 Chronicles 25:7.

Thus, the two hundred and eighty-eight Temple musicians were selected, set apart, consecrated, controlled, and numbered, in a highly structured way for the purpose of prophesying and praising the Lord in responsibility and with accountability.¹ In other words, Temple musicians functioned responsibly and acted accountably.

¹Such a conclusion can be backed by the fact that the Temple musicians functioned “under the authority of the King” (1 Chr 25:6).

Temple Music Curriculum in 1 Chronicles 25: 1-8

Interestingly, the 288 Temple musicians are said to have been δεδιδαγμένοι ᾄδειν κυρίῳ that is “instructed in the songs of the Lord.” Lust, 113, gives the Greek *dida,skw* the other meaning of “communicate skills.” Two major features can be drawn here. Firstly, the Temple music curriculum was both theoretical and practical. This verse suggests that not only were the Temple musicians gifted, talented, and consecrated, but they were also skillfully trained professionals.

At this stage, the Israelite Temple music can be said to have migrated from amateurism to professionalism reaching the levels of an Art and a Science. Secondly, central to the Israelite Temple music was the theme of the Lord. Israelite Temple music was manifestly solely made for the glory of the Lord and left no room for self-exaltation. In other words, the Israelite Temple music was founded on God’s word and purposed for God’s glory alone. The Israelite Temple music was expected to be both theologically and musically sound. Hence, the message and the music were to be adequately interwoven with none impeding on the other.¹ This view is

¹W. H. Bennet, “The Books of Chronicles,” *The Expositor’s Bible* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, no date), 441-442, has this to say “The Chronicler’s sense of the religious value of music is largely that of a devout worshipper, who is led to set forth for the benefit of others a truth which is the fruit of his own experience. This experience is not confined to trained musicians; indeed, a scientific knowledge of the art may sometimes interfere with its devotional influence. Criticism may take the place of worship; and the hearer, instead of yielding to the sacred suggestions of hymn

confirmed by the following statement.

“Only 288 who were divided by lot into twenty-four classes, each numbering twelve persons, were thoroughly skilled in singing and playing, and the scholars were so distributed to them that each class received an equal number of them, whom they had to educate and train. These, then, were probably trained up for and employed in the Temple music according to their progress in their education, so that the εφημερία which had at any time charge of the service consisted not only of the twelve skilled musicians, but also of a number of scholars who assisted in singing and playing under their direction.”¹

Worth noting is the idea that the selected Temple musicians were “skillful” [NKJV, NAS, RSV], “cunning” [KJV], “skilled” [NIV], “teachers” [DRA]. The Greek used here for skillful is the participle συνίων. Its Hebrew counterpart is בִּין. Both terminologies carry the basic meaning of understanding, insight, intelligence, discernment,

or anthem, may be distracted by his æsthetic judgment as to the merits of the composition and the skill shown by its rendering. In the same way critical appreciation of voice, elocution, literary style, and intellectual power does not always conduce to edification from a sermon. ... By the very absence of any great scientific knowledge of music may leave the spirit open to the spell which sacred music is intended to exercise.”

¹C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsh, *The Books of the Chronicles*, Commentary on the Old Testament, Trans. Andrew Harper (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 273.

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or expertise.¹ This idea clocks in the same way in 2 Chr 34:12 where under the reformation of King Josiah, Levites are portrayed as being “skillful with instruments of music.” The underlying understanding here is that, the Israelite Temple musicians used their hearts and minds to the utmost in composing, arranging and performing.

While it appears true that the Temple musicians’ ministry “was accomplished under divine inspiration,”² It is also true that the inspiration of the Temple musicians filtered through their human minds. In other words, the cultic prophets of the Israelite Temple followed the “word-thought” inspiration paradigm.³

1 Chronicles 25:8 concludes⁴ the studied pericope with the duty-ward organization of the Temple musicians by the casting of lots “the teacher with the student.” Such a structuring presupposes the existence of a well defined curriculum and a form of certification to sanction the end

¹See Lust, 458, for Greek and Holladay for Hebrew.

²Claude F. Mariotti, “First and Second Chronicles,” *Mercer Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 341.

³Christian Ekoto, *class notes for NTST Greek Exegesis*, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, October 2010.

⁴Though some like Klein, 475, structure vv. 1-6 as the first part and see verses 7 and 8 as introductory to the second part, for technical purposes, this paper unfolds with the understanding that verse 8 is the conclusion of the first part that starts in verse 1.

of studies. Hence, the Temple musicians can be said to have functioned like a formal school with regular classes and assignments. Also, the dividing of the work by duty implies that there was a detailed plan for service in worship through songs that was charted and followed probably to insure a smooth and responsible Temple worship service.

The construction “cast lots” clocks in twenty-one times in the Bible of which seventeen occur in the Old Testament and only four in the New Testament.⁵ Lev 16:8 is the first Bible mention of casting lots between the two goats during the Day of Atonement by Aaron as High Priest.

Three times the expression is mentioned in the book of Joshua referring to the division of the remaining land to the seven landless tribes by Joshua (Josh 18:6, 8, 10). Once 1 Samuel 14:42 mentions the casting of lot suggested by King Saul between him and his son Jonathan.

Four times the books of Chronicles allude to casting lots between Levitical families (24:31), Temple musicians (25:8), the gatekeepers (26:13, 14). Nehemiah 10:34 records the casting of lots “among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for bringing the wood offering into the house of” God. Nehemiah 11:1 displays the casting of lots to separate among the population the tenth who will dwell in Jerusalem

⁵There are other grammatical forms referring to of this expression in the biblical Canon. Because of time constraints, this study will limit itself solely with the analysis of this precise construction as it appears in the Canon.

with “the leaders of the people” and the nine-tenths who should occupy the “other cities.” Psalm 22:18 is a prophecy about the casting of lots of Christ’s garments at the cross. Joel 3:3 mentions God’s judgment of the nations for casting lots upon His people. Obadiah 1:11 refers to God’s judgment of Edom for her passivity when “foreigners entered” the gates of Jacob and “cast lots for Jerusalem.”

Twice in Jonah 1:7 is the casting of lots mentioned to determine the one responsible for the upcoming shipwreck; “and the lot fell on Jonah.” Nahum 3:10 is the last Old Testament mention of the expression “cast lots” and it refers to the “honorable men” of the judgment of the wicked city of Nineveh. Finally, the New Testament mentions the casting of lots four times only in the Gospels (Matt 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24) exclusively as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ps 22:18 on the dividing of Christ’s garments by His Roman executioners.

The previous analysis shows that to “cast lots” was not a practice foreign to Israel and ANE cultures but rather a divinely approved custom almost always involving the religious and kingly leadership. In addition, the act of casting lots applied either to men as kings, priests, Levites, prophets or the common people, to nations like Israel, animals like goats, cities like Nineveh, or to things like Christ’s garments on the cross. Finally, the practice of lots casting always intended segregation between entities belonging to the same family for a specific purpose. In the case of the Temple

musicians in 1 Chr 25:8, the lots are cast “for their duty.”¹ After being separated by tribe, by function, by ministry, the Temple musicians are now divided by duty.²

The Greek for duty is ἐφημεριω and it refers to the “Temple duties” weekly shared among the twenty four classes of priests.³ The Hebrew equivalent is מִשְׁמֶרֶת and may stand for “guard, watch, charge, function,” “service” or “duty.”⁴ The Temple musicians also divided their service in time. In other words, after being separated by tribe, by function, by ministry, and by duty, the Temple musicians are now divided according to time; each group serving for one week. Such an organization certainly made room for share of responsibility,

¹Klein, 483, identifies a twofold purpose for the casting of lots in 1 Chr 25:8 namely “to determine the order of the rotation of the watches or period of service,” and “to determine the makeup of singers of mixed ages and mixed musical achievement levels.”

²The OT records the separation of the tribe of Levi from the other tribes of Israel (Deut 10:8), the separation of Levites from among the Priests (Num 3:6), and the separation of Temple musician Levites from other Levitical orders (1 Chr 25:1) like the gatekeepers for example (1 Chr 26).

³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), trans. And adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (1979), s.v. “ἐφημερίᾱ.” See also Lust, 192.

⁴William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), based upon the lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (2000), s. v. “מִשְׁמֶרֶת.”

enough time for rehearsals and learning, and surely provided for an enjoyable and colorful variety in Temple music. No or little room was left for boredom, monopoly, improvisation in Temple music. Caution is here necessary. The “orderly thoroughness” of the Temple music was not void of spontaneous controlled prophetic manifestations.¹

Temple Music Expertise and Apprenticeship in 1 Chronicles 25: 1-8

1 Chronicles 25:8 ends with the categorization of those in duty. The text points to them as “the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student.” The Greek for “the small as well as the great” is κατὰ τὸν μικρὸν κατὰ τὸν μέγαν. Its Hebrew equivalent is כקטן כגדל.

The aforementioned construction clocks in only twice elsewhere in the Scriptures. First, in Deuteronomy 1:17 in the context of Moses’ reminder of his previous selection of tribal leaders to ease the administration of Israel. More specifically, Deut 1:17 uses the expression “the small and the great” with reference to the equity expected from the judges in judging the matters of Israel. Noteworthy here is the fact that smallness or greatness had to do with social standards. Also, 1 Chronicles 26:13 makes mention of “the small as well as the great” with reference to the age-discrimination-free

¹Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Chronicles*, The Bible Speaks Today, ed. J. A. Motyer, Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987, 105.

casting of lots for the Temple Gatekeepers subsequent to that of the Temple musicians. From the previous analysis, shows that the expression “the small as well as the great” applies exclusively to the Israelite judiciary or cultic leadership and connotes a discrimination-free exercise of duty. In the case of 1 Chronicles 25:8, it may then be inferred that the Temple musicians were to be assigned duty without any discrimination provided the musicians passed through the filtering process of selection and ordination to the Temple music ministry.

In other words, the schedule for the duty of the Temple musicians was to be made in all equity and without any discrimination. In addition, the Greek construction *τελείων καὶ μαθητῶν* “the teacher with the learner” is a non verbal Bible hapax legomenon clause directly adjacent to “the small and the great.” Such a syntactical closeness suggests a parallelism between the two expressions. In other words, the small refer to the learners and the great allude to the teacher. Hence, Israelite Temple music ministry implied a teacher-student interactive methodology. 1 Chronicles 25:8 “indicates the existence of an instructional system for the music.”¹ A direct implication here may be that the training and performing in Israelite Temple music was done by precept and mostly by example.

Interestingly, the Greek *τὸν τελείων* and may basically

¹See Ackroyd, 85.

mean “the perfect ones” or “the scholars.”¹ Consequently, the Temple music instructors were those accomplished musicians having attained a high level of expertise in music. For example, Chenaiah the “music master” (1 Chr 15:27) and “leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music because he was skillful” (1 Chr 15:22). Also, the Greek τὸν μανθανόντων may be literally understood as “the ones learning through instruction, inquiry, experience” or “the ones achieving comprehension.”²

Therefore, the Temple music students were expected to be inquisitive in their learning process. In this fashion, whereas the responsibility of leadership of Temple music rested not upon unlearned amateurs but upon carefully selected, consecrated, skilled, and well trained professional scholars; they needed to have at heart to bequeath their knowledge, expertise and skills to carefully selected, consecrated, skillful, eager to learn, and well trained younger generations.

Theology and Message of 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

1 Chronicles 25:1-8 may be ascribed a fourfold theological import in the form of Israelite Temple music, its purpose, actors, instruments, and manner. In its form, the Israelite Temple music was sharply structured combining both vocal

¹See Lust, s.v. “τέλω.”

²Timothy Friberg, with Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: 2000, 253.

and instrumental music. The skillful arrangement of string instrument and cymbals suggests that melody and rhythm formed the bedrock of Israelite Temple music. There's no doubt to the fact that "the Chronicler has both vocal and instrumental music in mind."¹ Hence, the worship of God favors the skillful use of both voice and instruments.²

Also, the purpose of the Israelite Temple music was to serve as a plinth for thanksgiving and praise to God via the proclamation of God's word in prophesying in the frame of the sacrificial Messianic expectation since "through the ministry and music of the Levites, God revealed his will to the people, and the people gave thanks and praise to him."³ Also, the Israelite Temple musicians were to lead out the congregation in this exercise under the direction of the king as the highest authority in the Kingdom. Consequently, "the importance of music in worship should never be underestimated or disregarded by the people of God"⁴ and

¹See Payne, 480.

²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6, vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 439, states, "In our camp meetings there should be singing and instrumental music. Musical instruments were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshippers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest. [...] We are not to oppose the use of instruments of music in our work."

³See Thompson, 177.

⁴See Payne, 424.

must be focused on the sacrificial death of the promised Messiah.¹

Again, the seriousness put in the selection, consecration, organization, and instruction of the Israelite Temple musicians may serve as a biblical ground to consider the necessity of the institution of skillful, consecrated, and controlled elite of musicians to lead out God's people in an orderly and adequate worship pattern.² In other words, sacred music should never be left to the whims of amateurism and individual tastes.

In addition, the service of the Israelite Temple musicians was done in a weekly pattern coupled with responsible accountability and the training-oriented blending of the expert with the learner. This manner of service of the Israelite Temple musicians suggests a well planned systematic form of worship in which preparation is the rule and spontaneity the exception.

Other Bible Allusions to Israelite Temple musicians

1 Chronicles 6:31-48 equally alludes to the appointment of the Israelite Temple musicians from a different perspective. They are basically appointed by David to minister in song

¹It will be subsequently demonstrated that Temple musicians often performed during the time of the sacrifice in the Temple.

²It is a goal for this paper to trigger a greater interest in a more elaborate structure of music and worship in the Church both locally and globally.

“before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting” prior to the erection of the Solomonic Temple (1 Chr 6:31-33). Then, a threefold list of genetic lines is given by the Chronicler as show by Table 2 below.

Table 2 Family Trees of the Music Leaders in the Israelite Temple

1 Chronicles 6:31-47		
Heman	Asaph	Ethan
Israel – Levi – Kohath – Izhar – Korah – Ebiasaph – Assir – Tahath – Zephaniah – Azariah – Joel – Elkanah – Amasai – Mahath – Elkanah – Zuph – Toah – Eliel – Jeroham – Elkanah – Samuel – Joel – Heman “the singer” (1 Chr 6:33)	<i>Implied</i> – Levi – Gershon – Jahath – Shimei – Zimmah – Ethan – Adaiah – Zerah – Ethni – Malchijah – Baaseiah – Shimea – Berachiah – Asaph “who stood at his [<i>Heman</i> ’s] right side” (1 Chr 6:39)	<i>Implied</i> – Levi – Merari – Mushi – Mahli – Shamer – Bani – Amzi – Hilkiah – Amaziah – Hashabiah – Malluch – Abdi – Kishi – Ethan “on the left hand” (1 Chr 6:44)

The previous Table highlights Heman’s prominence over Asaph and Ethan. Heman stands out with the most illustrious family line. First, Heman is the only one whose genealogy is directly connected to Israel. Also, he is the only one mentions direct grandson of Samuel, the prophet who anointed the first two kings of Israel. In addition, Asaph and Ethan are said to be standing the first at his right and the second at his left hand (1 Chr 6:39, 44). Again, Heman is the only one directly identified as “the singer” (1 Chr 6:33;

1 Chr 15:19). Interestingly, whereas Heman is portrayed as the singer, “Asaph and Ethan, were to sound the cymbals of bronze” (1 Chr 15:19).¹ Noteworthy here is the fact that he shares the title of “the king’s seer” (1 Chr 25:5) together with Asaph (2 Chr 29:30) and Jeduthun (2 Chr 35:15). It may be here deduced that Heman and his descendants were the hierarchical leaders of the Temple musicians mainly playing the role of choristers.²

2 Chronicles 29:25-30 highlights the key role played by Temple musician during the revival and reformation process under the leadership of King Hezekiah. “When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began” (2 Chr 29:27). Hence, the office of Temple musicians can be said to have the atoning sacrifice as its foundation, focus, and theme. It is a remarkable feature that the theme of the Levitical musicians was exclusively gratitude for the goodness and enduring mercy of the Lord (1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; Ezra 3:10-11).

In other words, the essence of Temple music was exclusively to point out the atoning sacrifice symbolizing the

¹Asaph and Jeduthun are never directly alluded to as singers. Only Asaph’s sons are referred to as singers (2 Chr 5:12; 35:15; Ezra 2:41; Neh 7:44).

²That such a hierarchy existed among the Israelite Temple musicians is confirmed by the fact that there were “brethren of the second rank” (1 Chr 15:17) appointed with Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun in the episode of the return of the Ark to Jerusalem under the leadership of King David.

expected Messiah of Israel. Thus, the Israelite Temple music was Messianic in tone.

Summary and Conclusion

1 Chronicles 25:1-8 shows minimal discrepancy and much commonality between the LXX and the BHS. That Israelite Temple music coated the highest import both congregationally and nationally is ascertained by the fact that the Temple musicians were appointed under the supervision of the highest civil and religious authority and served directly under the control of the King. Again, Temple music in Israel was both instrumental and vocal.

Wind and string instruments combined with voice in a beat and melody pattern for the worship style. In addition, Israelite Temple music bore the stamp of sacredness because selected Levites were appointed as the ones in charge of it. The fact that Levites and not Priests were appointed to the office of Temple music helped maintain a kind of separation between the prophetic office and the priestly ministry.

The purpose of Temple music was to glorify God through prophecy. The main theme of Temple music was God's goodness and mercy towards His people as symbolized by the sacrificial system of Israelite economy. A sub theme of Temple music in Israel was the individual religious experience and spiritual sentiments of the composers. Finally, Israelite Temple music was well structured, organized, instructional, with the musicians baring responsible accountability towards

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the king for quality and theology. As the experts taught their students, both groups led out the congregation in praising Yahweh for His goodness and mercy thus participating in the maintaining of the flame of faith among God's people.