

"Singers, Cymbals, Alamothe, and Sheminith"

1 Chronicles 15:11-22 (NIV):

¹¹"Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. ¹²He said to them, 'You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. ¹³It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.' ¹⁴So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁵And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.

¹⁶David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

¹⁷So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berechiah; and from their brothers the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah; ¹⁸and with them their brothers next in rank: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, the gatekeepers.

¹⁹The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals; ²⁰Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to alamothe, ²¹and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azariah were to play the harps, directing according to sheminith. ²²Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it."

Consider:

The occasion was the planning for the return of the ark of God to Jerusalem. King David appointed priests from the Levitical families to be in charge of moving the ark according to God's instructions. David also instructed the priests to appoint singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments.

Notice the number and varied array of musical instruments that were appointed to join the singers for worship: cymbals (three musicians assigned, see v. 19), lyres according to alamothe (eight musicians assigned, see v. 20), and harps according to sheminith (six musicians assigned, see v.21).

"Alamothe" refers to the treble vocal range, such as young women's voices. The term, 'alamothe,' also appears in the instructions for singing Psalm 46. Thus, these lyres were tuned in a high range. "Sheminith" is a more obscure term, and can refer to an instrument of eight strings, or

possibly an "octave" instrument. 'Sheminith' appears in the instructions for singing Psalms 6 and 12. Harps according to sheminith were tuned in a lower range.

The point is that God, through David and the Levitical priests, appointed musicians and a variety of instruments to accompany singers in worship. Musical accompaniment is to be varied in instrumentation, and it is to be joyful.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to serve you as singers and musicians. Thank you for the variety of musical instruments that you have inspired mankind to make. Help us to use our voices and these musical instruments joyfully to praise and honor you. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

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