

The 24 Priestly Courses

Solomon Initiated the 24 Priestly Courses in 951 B.C.E.

Solomon *initiated* the 24 Priestly Courses according to David's orders beginning with Course 1 – Jehoiarib on the weekly Sabbath on Yom Teruah on New Moon 7 in 951 B.C.E. [1 Tishri = Sabbath, September 23, 951 B.C.E. (1374336) = Day 1 / Month 7] It can be deduced that Solomon *initiated* the 24 Priestly Courses on a weekly Sabbath, a New Moon and a High Sabbath on the first day of Year 12 of his reign on Day 1 / Month 7 in 951 B.C.E.

Figure 1: Priestly Course 1 (951 B.C.E.)



Solomon initiated the 24 Priestly Courses starting with Course 1 – Jehoiarib on New Moon 7 in 951 B.C.E. at the dedication of the First Temple as David commanded in 2 Chronicles 8:12-14.

At this time the Levitical priests were divided into shifts operating on a rotation basis. These rotations are referred to as the *priestly divisions* or the *sacerdotal courses*. The 24 Priestly Courses began a little more than 10 months after major construction on the First Temple was completed in Month 8 in Year 11 of Solomon in 952 B.C.E. according to 1 Kings 6:38.

1 Kings 6:38 *And in the eleventh year [of Solomon], in the month Bul, which is the eighth month [Month 8], was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.*

The account in 2 Chronicles 8:12-14 says that Solomon *initiated* the 24 Priestly Courses as his father David had commanded.

2 Chronicles 8:12-14 ¹² *For [in 951 B.C.E.] Solomon offered burnt offerings to יהוה on the altar of יהוה which he had built before the vestibule,* ¹³ *according to the daily rate, offering according to the commandment of Moses, for the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the three appointed yearly Feasts – the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Tabernacles.* ¹⁴ *And, according to the order of David his father, he [on Yom Teruah in 951 B.C.E.] appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, the Levites for their duties (to*



praise and serve before the priests) as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers by their divisions at each gate; for so **David the man of Elohim had commanded.**

According to **1 Kings 8:2** and **2 Chronicles 5:3**, all the men of **Israel** assembled for the **Feast of Sukkot** which lasts for **7 days** beginning on **Day 15 / Month 7**. However, before the **Feast of Sukkot** began, they placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Set Apart Place on **Yom Kippur** on **Day 10 / Month 7** in **951 B.C.E.**

1 Kings 8:1-13 ¹ Now **Solomon** assembled the elders of **Israel** and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of **Israel**, to King **Solomon** in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of יהוה from the City of **David**, which is Zion. ² **Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with King Solomon at the Feast [of Sukkot] in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month.** ³ So all the elders of **Israel** came, and the priests took up the ark. ⁴ Then they brought up the ark of יהוה, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the set apart furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. ⁵ Also King **Solomon**, and all the congregation of **Israel** who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. ⁶ **Then [on Yom Kippur on Day 10 / Month 7] the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of יהוה to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Set Apart Place, under the wings of the cherubim.** ⁷ For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. ⁸ The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the set apart place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. ⁹ Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when יהוה made a covenant with the children of **Israel**, when they came out of the land of **Egypt**. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the set apart place, that the cloud filled the house of יהוה, ¹¹ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the esteem of יהוה filled the house of יהוה. ¹² Then **Solomon** spoke: “יהוה said He would dwell in the dark cloud. ¹³ I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in throughout the **Age [of Instruction].**”

2 Chronicles 5:1-14 ¹ So all the work that **Solomon** had done for the house of יהוה was finished; and **Solomon** brought in the things which his father **David** had dedicated: the silver and the gold and all the furnishings. And he put them in the treasuries of the house of Elohim. ² Now **Solomon** assembled the elders of **Israel** and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of **Israel**, in Jerusalem, that they might bring the ark of the covenant of יהוה up from the City of **David**, which is Zion. ³ **Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with the king at the Feast [of Sukkot], which was in the seventh month.** ⁴ So all the elders of **Israel** came, and the Levites took up the ark. ⁵ Then they brought up the ark, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the set apart furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. ⁶ Also King **Solomon**, and all the congregation of **Israel** who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. ⁷ **Then [on Yom Kippur on Day 10 / Month 7] the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of יהוה to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Set Apart Place, under the wings of the cherubim.** ⁸ For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. ⁹ The poles extended so that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen from the set apart place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. ¹⁰ Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets



which Moses put there at Horeb, when יהוה made a covenant with the children of **Israel**, when they had come out of **Egypt**.¹¹ And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Set Apart Place (for all the priests who were present had set themselves apart, without keeping to their divisions),¹² and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets –¹³ indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking יהוה, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised יהוה, saying: “For He is good, For His mercy endures throughout the ages [**World that Was, Present Age, Age of Desolation, Age of Instruction, Age of the Messiah, Age of Life, World to Come**],” that the house, the house of יהוה, was filled with a cloud,¹⁴ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the esteem of יהוה filled the house of Elohim.

Solomon Initiated the 24 Priestly Courses on New Moon 7

Jack Finegan has noted that the festivities probably began on **New Moon 7** on **Day 1 / Month 7**.

Jack Finegan At the dedication of **Solomon’s** temple there were many sacrifices and the priests were active; the date was “in the month of Ethanim [the earlier name for Tishri, Table 12], which is the seventh month” (1 Kings 8:2), and the beginning of the festivities was probably on the first day of the month [Day 1 / Month 7] because it was on the eighth day [Day 22 / Month 7] (1 Kings 8:66) that the people were finally sent away at the end.

Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, 243.

Solomon likely *initiated* the **24 Priestly Courses** with **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** on **Yom Teruah** on **Day 1 / Month 7** in **951 B.C.E.** [**1 Tishri = Sabbath, September 23, 951 B.C.E. (1374336) = Day 1 / Month 7**]

The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Most Set Apart Place of the First Temple **10 days** later on **Yom Kippur** as this was the one day of the year this chamber was to be entered. [**10 Tishri = Monday, October 2, 951 B.C.E. (1374345) = Day 10 / Month 7**]

David Devised the 24 Priestly Courses Before he Died

At the time **Solomon initiated** the **24 Priestly Courses** in **951 B.C.E.**, the Levitical Priesthood had already been around for **485 years**. According to Hebrew tradition, Moses instituted **8 Priestly Courses**, Samuel instituted **16 Priestly Courses**, and **David** increased them to **24 Priestly Courses**.

Taanith 27A R. Hama b. Guria said in the name of Rab: Moses instituted for **Israel eight** Mishmaroth, **four** from [the family of] **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** and **four** from [the family of] **Ithamar**; Samuel came and increased them to **sixteen**; **David** came and increased them to **twenty-four**. Rabbi Dr. I Epstein, Translator, The Babylonian Talmud, The Soncino Press Ltd., New York, 1990.

Jack Finegan **David** organized sixteen descendants of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** and eight descendants of **Ithamar** as the heads of **twenty-four** divisions of priests, the choice being by lot (1 Chronicles 24:3-19). Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, 237.



The Levitical priests carried out all the daily functions of the temple. One of the daily tasks was to offer the *morning sacrifice* which was performed just *after sunrise* and the *evening sacrifice* which was performed *between the evenings* which refers to the period of evening *twilight* just *after sunset*.

Exodus 29:38-39 ³⁸ “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. ³⁹ One lamb you shall offer *in the morning*, and the other lamb you shall offer *at twilight*.”

David Ordained that the 24 Priestly Courses Would Minister for 8 Days From Sabbath to Sabbath

The **24 Priestly Courses** *changed shifts* after both the daily sacrifice and the incense offering were concluded and the “priestly blessing” had been delivered to the **Israelites** assembled in the temple. **Josephus** informs us that it was **David** who ordained each course should minister eight days from **Sabbath to Sabbath**.

Josephus, Antiquities 7 / 365 [**David**] divided them [the Levites] also into courses: and when he had separated the priests from them, he found of these priests **twenty-four courses**, **sixteen** of the house of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)**, and **eight** of that of **Ithamar**; and he ordained that each course should minister to Elohim eight days, from **Sabbath to Sabbath**.

William Whiston, The Works of Josephus, p. 208.

A Scriptural example of this *shift change* can be seen from this account in the time of **Jehoiada I (c.837-812)**.

2 Chronicles 23:8 *So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada I (c.837-812) the priest commanded. And each man took his men who were to be on duty on the Sabbath, with those who were going off duty on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada I (c.837-812) the priest had not dismissed the divisions.*

The 24 Priestly Courses Operated on a Continuous 168 Day Cycle

All **24 Priestly Courses** were on duty for the **Festivals** of **Passover**, **Shavuot** and **Sukkot**. Scholars have proposed several different theories to explain the rotations of the **24 Priestly Courses**. Some have proposed that **Course 1** was always on duty for **Yom Teruah** on **New Moon 7**, while others have proposed that **Course 1** was always on duty for **New Moon 1**. Then there are variations on these schemes where the courses *skip a week three times a year* since all of the **24 Priestly Courses** were on duty for **Passover**, **Shavuot** and **Sukkot**.

If any of these scenarios were implemented for the **24 Priestly Courses**, then certain **courses** would work *two weeks* a year while other **courses** would work *three weeks* a year and this arrangement would *not have been equitable* according to the Torah which said that all of the Levites should have *equal portions to eat*.

Deuteronomy 18:6-8 ⁶ “So if a Levite comes from any of your gates, from where he dwells among all **Israel**, and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which יהוה chooses, ⁷ then he may serve in the name of יהוה his Elohim as all his brethren the Levites do, who stand there before יהוה. ⁸ They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance.”

Therefore, it is *certain* that the **24 Priestly Courses** operated on a *continuous 168 day cycle*. **Daniel Gregg** has *correctly* noted that any *inequitable* arrangement would *not have been legal according to the Torah*.



Daniel Gregg The point is that every Levitical Priest must be given equal access to the benefits of serving at the Sanctuary, **and all those benefits must be divided up equally. If someone says to a priest that he can serve two weeks a year, and to the other priests that they may serve three weeks a year, then the directive is not legal.** For it causes some priests to eat unlike their brothers. And the importance of a job at the Sanctuary is underscored by the details of the curse on **Eli's** family (**1 Samuel 2:36**). <www.torahtimes.org/articles/machloqet_cohanim.html>
Daniel Gregg, "The Inception of the Priestly Divisions," Last modified on 01/19/2015.

David Devised the 24 Priestly Courses With the High Priests Zadok II (c.994-961) and Ahimelech II (c.982-966)

The **24 Priestly Courses** were actually *devised* by **David** in **962 B.C.E.** about **11 years** before they were *initiated* by his son **Solomon** in **951 B.C.E.** For **1 Chronicles 24:3-19** says **David created** the **24 Priestly Courses** along with **Zadok II (c.994-961)** and **Ahimelech II (c.982-966)**. **16 Courses** were chosen from the descendants of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** and **8 Courses** from the descendants of **Ithamar**.

1 Chronicles 24:3-19 ³ Then **David with Zadok II (c.994-961)** of the sons of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)**, and **Ahimelech II (c.982-966)** of the sons of **Ithamar**, divided them according to the schedule of their service. ⁴ There were more leaders found of the sons of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** than of the sons of **Ithamar**, and thus they were divided. Among the sons of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** were **sixteen heads** of their fathers' houses, and **eight heads** of their fathers' houses among the sons of **Ithamar**. ⁵ Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of Elohim, from the sons of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** and from the sons of **Ithamar**. ⁶ And the scribe, **Shemaiah** the son of **Nethanel**, one of the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, **Zadok II (c.994-961)** the priest, **Ahimelech II (c.982-966)** the son of **Abiathar I (c.1003-982)**, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the priests and Levites, one father's house taken for **Eleazar I (1398-1379)** and one for **Ithamar**. ⁷ Now the first lot fell to **Jehoiarib**, the second to **Jedaiah**, ⁸ the third to **Harim**, the fourth to **Seorim**, ⁹ the fifth to **Malchijah**, the sixth to **Mijamin**, ¹⁰ the seventh to **Hakkoz**, the eighth to **Abijah**, ¹¹ the ninth to **Jeshua**, the tenth to **Shecaniah**, ¹² the eleventh to **Eliashib**, the twelfth to **Jakim**, ¹³ the thirteenth to **Huppah**, the fourteenth to **Jeshebeab**, ¹⁴ the fifteenth to **Bilgah**, the sixteenth to **Immer**, ¹⁵ the seventeenth to **Hezir**, the eighteenth to **Happizzez**, ¹⁶ the nineteenth to **Pethahiah**, the twentieth to **Jehezekel**, ¹⁷ the twenty-first to **Jachin**, the twenty-second to **Gamul**, ¹⁸ the twenty-third to **Delaiah**, the twenty-fourth to **Maaziah**. ¹⁹ This was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of יהוה according to their ordinance by the hand of **Aaron (1436-1398)** their father, as יהוה Elohim of **Israel** had commanded him.

The **24 Priestly Courses** were chosen in **962 B.C.E.** shortly before **David** died. **Seder Olam Rabbah** says that in the *last year* **David** instituted the classes of priests and Levites and wrote the rules for the Temple. This was deduced from the account in **1 Chronicles 26:31** which in context dates to the *last year* of **David** in **962 B.C.E.**

1 Chronicles 26:31 Among the Hebronites, **Jerijah** was head of the Hebronites according to his genealogy of the fathers. In the *fortieth year* of the reign of **David** they were sought, and there were found among them capable men at **Jazer of Gilead**.



Ahimelech II (c.982-966) the son of **Abiathar I (c.1003-982)** was with **David** when the **24 Priestly Courses** were chosen [1 **Chronicles 24:6**]. It was **Ahimelech II's (c.982-966)** son **Abiathar II (966-961)** who stayed with the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion in **966 B.C.E.**, and at this time **Abiathar II (966-961)** and **Zadok II (c.994-961)** seemed to be operating in the office of High Priests together [2 **Samuel 15:24-35**]. So the **24 Priestly Courses** were created when **Ahimelech II (c.982-966)** was still alive but when his son **Abiathar II (966-961)** was High Priest with **Zadok II (c.994-961)** in **962 B.C.E.**

Course 1 – Jehoiarib Was on Duty when the First Temple Burned in 593 B.C.E.

The **Creation Calendar** indicates that **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** would have been on duty when the First Temple burned in **Month 5** in **593 B.C.E.** The Scriptures give two dates for the destruction of the First Temple. The account in **2 Kings 25:8** says the First Temple burned on **Day 7 / Month 5**. [7 **Av = Wednesday, August 2, 593 B.C.E. (1505044) = Day 7 / Month 5**]

2 Kings 25:8 *And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king **Nebuchadnezzar II (612-569)** king of **Babylon**, came **Nebuzaradan**, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of **Babylon**, to Jerusalem.*

The account in **Jeremiah 52:12-13** says the First Temple burned on **Day 10 / Month 5**. [10 **Av = Sabbath, August 5, 593 B.C.E. (1505047) = Day 10 / Month 5**]

Figure 2: Priestly Course 1 (593 B.C.E.)

Day	Sabbath
Shi-shi Friday sunset until Saturday sunset	Sha-bat Friday sunset until Saturday sunset
	3
	1
	Shabbat Chazon Masei
Jul 593 B.C.E. sunset to Jul 593 B.C.E. sunset Julian: 1,505,039	28 Jul 593 B.C.E. sunset to 29 Jul 593 B.C.E. sunset Julian: 1,505,040

The First Temple burned between **Day 7-10** of **Month 5** in **593 B.C.E.**, according to the account in **2 Kings 25:8-9** and **Jeremiah 52:12-13**. **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** was on duty at this time according to **Arachin 11B**.

Jeremiah 52:12-13 ¹² *Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King **Nebuchadnezzar II (612-569)** king of **Babylon**), **Nebuzaradan**, the captain of the guard, who served the king of **Babylon**, came to Jerusalem. ¹³ He burned the house of יהוה and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.*

The dates of **Day 7 / Month 5** in **2 Kings 25:8** and **Day 10 / Month 5** in **Jeremiah 52:12-13** are reconciled in **Taanith 29A**.



Taanith 29A On the **seventh** [Day 7 / Month 5] the heathens entered the Temple and ate therein and desecrated it throughout the seventh and eighth of Av [Day 8 / Month 5] and towards dusk of the ninth [Day 9 / Month 5] they set fire to it and it continued to burn the whole of that day. Rabbi Dr. I Epstein, (Translator). The Babylonian Talmud, The Soncino Press Ltd., New York, 1990.

Interestingly, the Talmud in **Arachin 11B** confirms that **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** was on duty when the First Temple burned on the **Fast of the Fifth Month** on **Day 9 / Month 5** in **593 B.C.E.** [9 Av = Friday, August 4, 593 B.C.E. (1505046) = Day 9 / Month 5]

Arachin 11B Come and hear: **R. Jose** [Jose ben Halafta] said, Good things are brought about on a good [auspicious] day, and evil ones on a bad one. It is said, The day on which **the first Temple was destroyed was the ninth of Ab** [Day 9 / Month 5], and it was at the going out of the **Sabbath**, and at the end of the **Seventh Year**. **The [priestly] guard was that of Jehoiarib**, the priests and Levites were standing on their platform singing the song. What song was it? **And He has brought upon them their iniquity, and will cut them off in their evil** [Psalm 94:23]. They had no time to complete [the psalm with] ‘יהוה our Elohim will cut them off’, before the enemies came and overwhelmed them.

Rabbi Dr. I Epstein, (Translator). The Babylonian Talmud, The Soncino Press Ltd., New York, 1990.

This record in **Arachin 11B** constitutes evidence that the **24 Priestly Courses** ran in a continuous cycle of **168 days** (24 Courses x 7 days per course) from the time **Solomon initiated** them on **Day 1 / Month 7** in **951 B.C.E.** until the First Temple was destroyed on **Day 10 / Month 5** in **593 B.C.E.** Even after the **Judeans** were taken in the **Babylonian Captivity**, the Levites appear to have kept the count for the **24 Priestly Courses**.

It is necessary at this point to clarify that the account in **Arachin 11B** makes convoluted statements concerning when the First Temple and Second Temple fell. **Arachin 11B correctly** records that the Second Temple burned on the same date as the First Temple on the **Fast of Month 5** on **Day 9 / Month 5**.

The First Temple burned on the **Fast of Month 5** on **Day 9 / Month 5** on **Yom Shi-shi** on the *sixth day of the week* in **593 B.C.E.** [9 Av = Friday, August 4, 593 B.C.E. (1505046) = Day 9 / Month 5]

The Second Temple burned on the **Fast of Month 5** on **Day 9 / Month 5** on **Yom Ri-shon** on the *first day of the week* in **70 C.E.** [9 Av = Sunday, August 5, 70 C.E. (1746842) = Day 9 / Month 5]

However, the Talmud in **Arachin 11B incorrectly** records that both temples fell in a **Sabbatical Year**. Only the Second Temple fell in a **Sabbatical Year**.

The First Temple fell on the **Fast of Month 5** in **Year 2** of **Shemittah Cycle 475** in **Jubilee Cycle 68** since the creation.

The Second Temple fell on the **Fast of Month 5** in **Year 7** of **Shemittah Cycle 567** in **Jubilee Cycle 81** since the creation.

The Talmud in **Arachin 11B correctly** records that both temples burned at the going out of the **Sabbath**.

Jeremiah said in **Jeremiah 52:12-13** that the First Temple burned at the going out of the **Sabbath** on **Day 10 / Month 5** on **Sha-bat** on the *seventh day* of the week in **593 B.C.E.** [10 Av = Sabbath, August 5, 593 B.C.E. (1505047) = Day 10 / Month 5]



Josephus said in **Wars 6 / 220-235** that the Second Temple burned at the going out of the **Sabbath** on **Day 8 / Month 5** on **Sha-bat** on the *seventh day* of the week in **70 C.E.** [**8 Av = Sabbath, August 4, 70 C.E. (1746841) = Day 8 / Month 5**]

Josephus, Wars 6 / 220 & 232-233 ²²⁰ And now two of the legions had completed their banks on the **eighth day of the Month Lous** [**Ab / Month 5**]. Whereupon **Titus (79-81)** gave orders that the battering-rams should be brought and set over against the western edifice of the inner temple ... ²³² and now the soldiers had already put fire to the gates, and the silver that was over them quickly carried the flames to the wood that was within it, whence it spread itself all on the sudden, and caught hold of the cloisters. ²³³ Upon the **Judeans** seeing this fire all about them, their spirits sunk, together with their bodies, and they were under such astonishment, that not one of them made any haste, either to defend himself or to quench the fire, but they stood as mute spectators of it only. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*, pp. 738-739.

In the Temple Service a Specific Psalm was Sung on Each Day of the Week

In the temple service: **Psalm 24** was sung on **Yom Ri-shon** on the *first day* of the week; **Psalm 48** was sung on **Yom She-ni** on the *second day* of the week; **Psalm 82** was sung on **Yom Shli-shi** on the *third day* of the week; **Psalm 94** was sung on **Yom Re-vi-i** on the *fourth day* of the week; **Psalm 81** was sung on **Yom Ham-i-shi** on the *fifth day* of the week; **Psalm 93** was sung on **Yom Shi-shi** on the *sixth day* of the week; and **Psalm 92** was sung on **Sha-bat** on the *seventh day* of the week.

The Talmud in **Arachin 11B** *correctly* records that the Levitical choir was singing **Psalm 94:23** “*He will cut them off in their evil*” on **Yom Re-vi-i** the fourth day of the week on **Day 7 / Month 5** in **593 B.C.E.** when **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** was on duty when the First Temple fell. [**7 Av = Wednesday, August 2, 593 B.C.E. (1505044) = Day 7 / Month 5**]

The Second Temple was Completed in Year 6 of Artaxerxes I (465-424)

According to **Ezra 7:6-9**, it was after the Second Temple was finished that Ezra discreetly left **Babylon** to go to Jerusalem on **New Moon 1** in **458 B.C.E.** in Year 7 of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)**. [**1 Nisan = Sabbath, April 8, 458 B.C.E. (1554236) = Day 1 / Month 1**]

Ezra 7:1-10 ¹ Now after these things, in the reign of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** king of **Persia**, **Ezra the son of Seraiah I (c.593-591)**, the son of **Azariah V (c.767-746)**, the son of **Hilkiah II (c.782-767)**, ² the son of **Shallum (c.797-782)**, the son of **Zadok I (c.1161-1140)**, the son of **Ahitub I (c.1182-1161)**, ³ the son of **Amariah I (c.1203-1182)**, the son of **Azariah I (c.1224-1203)**, the son of **Meraioth I (c.1245-1224)**, ⁴ the son of **Zerahiah (c.1266-1245)**, the son of **Uzzi (c.1287-1266)**, the son of **Bukki (c.1308-1287)**, ⁵ the son of **Abishua (c.1329-1308)**, the son of **Phinehas (c.1379-1329)**, the son of **Eleazar I (1398-1379)**, the son of **Aaron (1436-1398)** the chief priest – ⁶ **this Ezra came up from Babylon**; and he was a skilled scribe in the Torah of Moses, which יהוה Elohim of **Israel** had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of יהוה his Elohim upon him. ⁷ Some of the children of **Israel**, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the **seventh year of King Artaxerxes I (465-424)**. ⁸ And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the **seventh year of the king**. ⁹ On the **first day of the first month** he began his journey from



Babylon, and on the **first day of the fifth month** he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his Elohim upon him.¹⁰ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Torah of יהיה, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in **Israel**.

Ezra arrived in Jerusalem on **New Moon 5** in **458 B.C.E.** in **Year 7** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)**. [**1 Av = Friday, August 4, 458 B.C.E. (1554354) = Day 1 / Month 5**]

4 Priestly Courses Returned to Jerusalem and Reconstituted into 24 Priestly Courses

It is evident from **Ezra 2:36-39** that of the **24 Priestly Courses** which existed at the end of the First Temple Period, only **4 Priestly Courses** returned in **458 B.C.E.**

Ezra 2:1 Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom **Nebuchadnezzar II (612-569)** the king of **Babylon** had carried away to **Babylon**, and who returned to Jerusalem and **Judah**, everyone to his own city.

Ezra 2:36-39³⁶ The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of **Jeshua [Course 9]**, nine hundred and seventy-three;³⁷ the sons of **Immer [Course 16]**, one thousand and fifty-two;³⁸ the sons of **Pashhur [Course 5]**, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven;³⁹ the sons of **Harim, [Course 3]** one thousand and seventeen.

The **4 Priestly Courses** who returned were **Course 9 – Jeshua**, **Course 16 – Immer**, **Course 5 – Malchijah**, and **Course 3 – Harim**. It appears that only one branch of **Malchijah's** family returned from **Babylon**, as **Pashhur** in **Ezra 2:38** appears to refer to **Pashhur** of **Nehemiah 11:12** who was a descendent of **Malchijah**.

Nehemiah 11:12 Their brethren who did the work of the house were eight hundred and twenty-two; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of **Pashhur**, the son of **Malchijah**...

According to **Ezra 6:18**, these **four priestly family lines reconstituted themselves** into the **24 Priestly Divisions** in order to equitably divide the tasks of performing the temple service.

Ezra 6:18 They assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over the service of Elohim in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

The Second Temple was Dedicated in Year 8 of Artaxerxes I (465-424)

In **Antiquities 11 / 107**, Josephus says the Second Temple was dedicated on **Day 23 / Month 12**. [**23 Adar = Sunday, March 9, 456 B.C.E. (1554937) = Day 23 / Month 12**]

Josephus, Antiquities 11 / 107-108¹⁰⁷ And in the **ninth year** of the reign of **Darius (465-424)**, on the **twenty-third day of the twelfth month**, which is by us called **Adar**, but by the **Macedonians Dystrus**, the priests and Levites, and the other multitude of the **Israelites**, offered sacrifices, as the renovation of their former prosperity after their captivity, and because they had now the temple rebuilt, **a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve kids of the goats, according to the number of their tribes** (for so many are the tribes of the **Israelites**); and this last for the sins of every tribe. **The priests also and the Levites**, set the porters at every gate according to the laws of Moses. The **Judeans** also built the cloisters of the inner temple that were round about the temple itself. William Whiston, The Works of Josephus, p. 293.



Josephus *incorrectly* said that the Second Temple was dedicated in **Year 9** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)**, when it actually was dedicated at the very end of **Year 8** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** exactly **8 days before Year 9** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** began. Although the date of the dedication of the Second Temple is *not* given in Scripture, the ceremony is mentioned in **Ezra 6:16-17**.

Ezra 6:16-17 ¹⁶ Then the children of **Israel**, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, **celebrated the dedication of this house of Elohim with joy.** ¹⁷ And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of Elohim, **one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.**

Course 1 – Jehoiarib Was on Duty at the Second Temple Dedication in 456 B.C.E.

Figure 3: Priestly Course 1 (456 B.C.E.)



The Second Temple Period appears to have begun with **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** which came on duty on **Day 22 / Month 12** in **456 B.C.E.** Josephus said in **Antiquities 11 / 107-108** that the temple was dedicated and sacrifices were offered the next day on **Day 23 / Month 12**.

The **Creation Calendar** shows that **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** came on duty on **Day 22 / Month 12** in **Year 8** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** in the *spring* of **456 B.C.E.** exactly **1 day before** the dedication. [**22 Adar = Sabbath, March 8, 456 B.C.E. (1554936) = Day 22 / Month 12**]

The Passover After the Dedication was in Year 9 of Artaxerxes I (465-424)

According to **Ezra 6:19**, the **Passover** was kept in Jerusalem on **Day 14 / Month 1**. [**14 Nisan = Sabbath, March 29, 456 B.C.E. (1554957) = Day 14 / Month 1**]

Ezra 6:19-22 ¹⁹ And the descendants of the captivity kept the **Passover** on the **fourteenth day of the first month.** ²⁰ For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean. And they slaughtered the **Passover** lambs for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. ²¹ Then the children of **Israel** who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the **יהוה Elohim of Israel.** ²² And they kept the **Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days** with joy; for **יהוה** made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of **Assyria [Cyrus Darius Artaxerxes I (465-424) of Persia** who controlled **Assyria** at the time] toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of Elohim, the Elohim of **Israel.**



According to **Ezra 6:22**, the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** was kept for **seven days** from **Day 15 / Month 1** until **Day 21 / Month 1**. [**15 Nisan = Sunday, March 30, 456 B.C.E. (1554958) = Day 15 / Month 1**] - [**21 Nisan = Sabbath, April 5, 456 B.C.E. (1554964) = Day 21 / Month 1**]

Josephus *correctly* indicates in **Antiquities 11 / 109-110** that the first **Passover** and **Unleavened Bread** that were observed after the dedication of the Second Temple occurred in **Year 9** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)**.

Josephus, Antiquities 11 / 109-110 ¹⁰⁹ And as the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** was at hand, in the first month, which, according to the **Macedonians** is called *Xanthicus*, but according to us *Nisan* [**Month 1**], all the people ran together out of the villages to the city and celebrated the festival, having purified themselves, with their wives and children, according to the law of their country; ¹¹⁰ and they offered the sacrifice which was called the **Passover**, on the fourteenth day of the same month, and feasted **seven days**, and spared no cost, but offered whole burnt offerings to Elohim, and performed sacrifices of thanksgiving, because Elohim had led them again to the land of their fathers, and to the laws there to belonging, and had rendered the mind of the king of **Persia** favorable to them. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*, p. 293.

It Was Only 10 Years after the **Passover** in Year 9 of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** That the **Judeans** Were in Great Distress in Year 19 of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)**

According to **Nehemiah 1:1-7**, it was about **10 years** later in **Month 9** of **Year 19** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** in **446 B.C.E.**, in *Nehemiah's twentieth year of service to the king* since the **accession** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** in **465 B.C.E.**, that the children of **Israel** were in *great distress* for not keeping the commandments, statutes and ordinances of Elohim.

Nehemiah 1:1-7 ¹ *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev [Month 9], in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,* ² *that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Judeans who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.* ³ *And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."* ⁴ *So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the Elohim of heaven.* ⁵ *And I said: "I pray, יהוה Elohim of heaven, Oh great and awesome Elohim, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,* ⁶ *please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.* ⁷ *We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.*

As the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates were burned, the temple service obviously ceased and the **24 Priestly Courses** were not able to perform their duty for some time. According to **Nehemiah 2:1-8**, it was about **3 months** later in **Month 1** of **Year 20** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** in **445 B.C.E.** that a decree was made for the **Judeans** to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the gates, the palace and the temple.



Nehemiah 2:1-8 ¹ And it came to pass in the month of **Nisan [Month 1]**, in the **twentieth year of King Artaxerxes I (464-424)**, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. ² Therefore the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.” So I became dreadfully afraid, ³ and said to the king, “May the king live throughout the ages [**Present Age, Age of Instruction, Age of the Messiah, Age of Life, World to Come**]! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?” ⁴ Then the king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the Elohim of heaven. ⁵ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to **Judah**, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” ⁶ Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. ⁷ Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to **Judah**, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my Elohim upon me.

According to **Nehemiah 6:15**, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls in **52 days** finishing on **Day 25 / Month 6** in **445 B.C.E.** [**25 Elul = Tuesday, September 2, 445 B.C.E. (1559132) = Day 25 / Month 6**]

Nehemiah 6:15 So the wall was finished on the **twenty-fifth day of Elul [Month 6]**, in **fifty-two days**.

The **Levites were appointed** at this time according to **Nehemiah 7:1-2**.

Nehemiah 7:1-2 ¹ Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and **the Levites had been appointed**, ² that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared Elohim more than many.

Course 1 – Jehoiarib Was on Duty at the Wall Dedication in 445 B.C.E.

Figure 4: Priestly Course 1 (445 B.C.E.)



Nehemiah finished rebuilding the walls on **Day 25 / Month 6** in **445 B.C.E.** according to **Nehemiah 6:15**. **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** would have begun their shift on **Day 29 / Month 6** and would have been on hand for the dedication of the wall on **Day 1 / Month 7** in **445 B.C.E.**



The **Creation Calendar** shows that **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** would have begun their shift on **Sabbath** on **Day 29 / Month 6** in **Year 20** of **Artaxerxes I (465-424)** in **445 B.C.E.** [**29 Elul = Sabbath, September 6, 445 B.C.E. (1559136) = Day 29 / Month 6**]

Course 1 – Jehoiarib would have been on duty at the dedication of the wall on **New Moon 7** in **445 B.C.E.** [**1 Tishri = Monday, September 8, 445 B.C.E. (1559138) = Day 1 / Month 7**] For according to **Nehemiah 12:34** and **Nehemiah 12:41**, the wall was dedicated on **Yom Teruah** on the **Day of Trumpets** on **New Moon 7**, exactly **6 days** after the walls were finished.

Nehemiah 12:27-43 ²⁷ Now at the **dedication of the wall** of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. ²⁸ And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, ²⁹ from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem. ³⁰ Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall. ³¹ So I brought the leaders of **Judah** up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. ³² After them went Hoshaiiah and half of the leaders of **Judah**, ³³ and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, ³⁵ and some of the priests' sons **with trumpets** – Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, ³⁶ and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of **David** the man of Elohim. And Ezra the scribe went before them. ³⁷ By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of **David**, as far as the Water Gate eastward. ³⁸ The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall, ³⁹ and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison. ⁴⁰ So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of Elohim, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me; ⁴¹ and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, **with trumpets**; ⁴² also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. ⁴³ Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for Elohim had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.

The Levites ministered at this time according to **Nehemiah 12:44-47**.

Nehemiah 12:44-47 ⁴⁴ And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for **Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered**. ⁴⁵ Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their Elohim and the charge of the purification, according to the command of **David** and **Solomon** his son. ⁴⁶ For in the days of **David** and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to Elohim. ⁴⁷ In the days of **Zerubbabel** and in the days of **Nehemiah** all **Israel** gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each



day. They also consecrated set apart things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of **Aaron (1436-1398)**.

The Levitical Priesthood Determined a Priest's Duties by a Lottery System

By the time the First Temple was dedicated under **Solomon** in **951 B.C.E.**, the Levitical Priesthood was highly evolved and carried out its duties with great diligence and equity.

Chaim Richman The *kohanim* who were responsible for the daily service in the Set Apart Temple were divided into **24 separate shifts** made up of men who hailed from all parts of the land. The duration of each shift's duties was for **one week**, when they would be entirely responsible for all of the daily functions in the Temple. Rather like military reservists, each priest would be expected to perform his obligatory period of service in the Temple. The shifts were further divided into six clans, or family branches, each serving for one day, but on the **Sabbath** all six clans worked together.

All wanted the opportunity to conduct the services of Elohim but these were only a specific number of daily tasks, and it was impossible for everyone to attend to these at once. In order to give each priest an equal opportunity to officiate, **special lotteries were held each day and the members of the family clan who were serving that day would participate in this drawing. Four separate drawings were held daily** and thus the courtyard was filled with the priests a number of times throughout the day.

... The **first of the daily lotteries** determined which priest would carry out the removal of the ashes from the altar, around which all the service of Elohim was centered, including the **Passover** sacrifice, the bringing of the firstfruits on **Shavuot** and the rejoicing with *lulav* branches on **Sukkot** ... Following the raking of the ashes, the next task was to bring new wood up to the altar for the large fire. After both the large arrangement and the smaller one for incense had been lit, the priests descended from the altar and returned to the Chamber of Hewn Stone for the second lottery.

Returning to the Chamber of Hewn Stone after the wood piles had been arranged atop the altar, the priests once again gathered for the **second daily lottery**. This drawing would determine the distribution of a number of various assignments pertaining to the sacrifice and offering of the *tamid*, the daily sacrifice: which priest would slaughter the sacrifice; who would collect its blood and dash it upon the altar; who would remove the excess ash from the inner (golden) incense altar within the Sanctuary; who would attend to the wicks of the menorah, cleansing the cups of the used oil and ash; which six priests would bring the parts of the sacrifice to the altar's ramp; who would bring the fine flour for the accompanying meal offering up to the altar; who would bring up the High Priest's meal offering; and who would pour the wine libation.

Immediately following the lottery, the priests chosen to remove the ashes from the incense altar and to attend to the menorah prepared themselves and the vessels required to carry out their respective services. These vessels were a golden basket which held 2 ½ *kavim* (about 5 ½ liters); an oil container, shaped like a large wine goblet and also fashioned of gold; and two keys. They gave these keys to the Levite gatekeeper on duty; the Levites were entrusted with guarding all the temple gates. The Levite who was appointed to open the sanctuary took these keys from the



priests and, opening the small door to the right, entered first into an antechamber and then into the area of the Sanctuary itself. Reaching the great gates, he removed the door-bolt and the locks and opened wide the gates.

The act of opening the Sanctuary gates had great significance, for the morning *tamid* sacrifice could not be prepared for offering upon the altar until they had been opened. In fact, the priest who had been assigned to this task would not commence until *he actually heard the sound of the great gates opening*. The overseer then declared to the priests: “Let one go up to a high place in the Temple, to see whether the time has arrived to offer the morning sacrifice!” If the night had indeed begun to wane, the watchman cried out “*Barkai! The day has dawned!*” Then the priests waited for the second announcement when he in the high place would call out, “The entire eastern horizon is illuminated.” Once the eastern sky began to lighten, one of those down below called up to his colleague: “Does the glow extend all the way to Hebron?”

If the watchman answered “Yes,” the proper time had come for offering the *tamid* daily sacrifice, and the gates of the Sanctuary were opened. The overseer instructed the priests who would be in attendance, “Bring a lamb from the Chamber of Lambs!” At all times a minimum of six animals previously checked and certified as blemish-free were kept for the daily sacrifices.

... After both the daily sacrifice and the incense offering were concluded, the priests would raise their hands and deliver the “priestly blessing” upon the congregation of **Israel** assembled in the Set Apart Temple. On the **Sabbath**, an extra blessing was added, with which the outgoing shift of priests greeted the incoming one: “May He who causes His Name to dwell in this House, cause love, brotherhood, peace and friendship to dwell among you.”

The **third lottery** was unique. **This was held to determine who would have a chance to officiate at the incense offering, which, according to Judean tradition, was the most acceptable part of the Temple service in Elohim’s eyes**; it was influential in subduing evil, and its characteristic quality aided in amplifying the aspect of Elohim’s mercy and benevolence in the world.

... The **fourth daily lottery** was held in participation of all priests to determine who would bring the parts of the sacrifice from the altar’s ramp up to the top, where the sacrifices were consumed on the altar’s fire. Chaim Richman, *A House of Prayer for All Nations*, The Temple Institute and Carta, Jerusalem, 1997, Adapted Excerpts from pp. 12-15.

The Angel Gabriel Appeared to Zachariah During **Course 8 – Abijah** in 4 B.C.E.

Zachariah was on duty during the **Course 8 – Abijah** in the spring of **4 B.C.E.** and it was at this time that he encountered the angel Gabriel immediately before his wife Elizabeth conceived a son who would be named John the Immerser. The conception and birth of John the Immerser is intimately linked with the conception and birth of יהושע Messiah. Therefore, the chronology concerning the **Course 8 – Abijah** in the *spring* of **4 B.C.E.** must dovetail perfectly with the birth of יהושע Messiah in the *autumn* of **3 B.C.E.**

Luke 1:5-23 ⁵ *There was in the days of Herod [the Great (37-1)], the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zachariah, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron (1436-1398), and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before Elohim, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of יהוה blameless. ⁷ But they had no child,*



because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.⁸ So it was, that **while he was serving as priest before Elohim in the order of his division,**⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of יהוה.¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.¹¹ Then an angel of יהוה appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.¹² And when Zachariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zachariah, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of יהוה, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Set Apart Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of **Israel** to יהוה their Elohim.¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for יהוה.”¹⁸ And Zachariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”¹⁹ And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of Elohim, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.²⁰ But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.”²¹ And the people waited for Zachariah, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple.²² But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.²³ So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

The **Creation Calendar** confirms that **Course 8 – Abijah** was on duty from **Day 21 / Month 3 to Day 28 / Month 3** in 4 B.C.E. [21 Sivan = Sabbath, June 16, 4 B.C.E. (1720129) = Day 21 / Month 3] - [28 Sivan = Sabbath, June 23, 4 B.C.E. (1720136) = Day 28 / Month 3]

Figure 5: Priestly Course 8 (4 B.C.E.)



Zachariah drew the lot to burn incense in the Second Temple on **Day 21 / Month 3** in 4 B.C.E. when Gabriel told him he would have a son named John. Zachariah was from **Course 8 – Abijah** according to **Luke 1:5**.

Zachariah returned home on **Day 29 / Month 3** after the **Sabbath** was over. [29 Sivan = Sunday, June 24, 4 B.C.E. (1720137) = Day 29 / Month 3] John was likely conceived the next day on the **summer solstice** on **New Moon 4**. [1 Tammuz = Monday, June 25, 4 B.C.E. (1720138) = Day 1 / Month 4]



John was likely born **266 days** later on **New Moon 1** in **3 B.C.E.** [**1 Nisan, Monday, March 18, 3 B.C.E. (1720404) = Day 1 / Month 1**] This was exactly **6 months** to the day before יהושע Messiah was born on **New Moon 7** in **3 B.C.E.**, the date proposed by **Dr. Ernest L. Martin.** [**1 Tishri = Thursday, September 12, 3 B.C.E. (1720582) = Day 1 / Month 7**] From the testimony in **Luke 1:5-23**, it appears the **24 Priestly Courses** ran in a continuous **168 day cycle** until the end of the Second Temple Period in **70 C.E.**

Zachariah and his son John the Immerser belonged to **Course 8 – Abijah**. The number *eight* signifies new beginnings and the *completion of the covenant*. It was during **Course 8 – Abijah** that the angel Gabriel told Zachariah that he would have a son named John who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children – towards the *covenant*.

Every week begins on the *eighth day* after **seven days** are completed. There were *eight people* who survived the flood because Noah was in *covenant* with יהוה. There are *eight notes* in a perfect octave. **Israelite** boys are circumcised on the *eighth day* as a sign of the *covenant* in their flesh. **Shemini Atzeret** on **Day 22 / Month 7** is the *eighth day* assembly and the last day in the **Festival Cycle** representing the *completion* of the *covenant*.

In the **7000 Year Plan of Elohim**, the *final completion* of the *covenant* will occur in the *eighth millennium* when perfect justice occurs in **The World to Come** after **seven millennial days** have expired.

John the Immerser was Commissioned as a Levitical Priest in the Second Temple During **Course 8 – Abijah** in 28 C.E.

John the Immerser became eligible for the Levitical Priesthood when he was **30 years** old on **New Moon 1** in **28 C.E.** [**1 Nisan, Wednesday, March 17, 28 C.E. (1731361) = Day 1 / Month 1**] John the Immerser was *in the wilderness* until the day of his *commissioning* in **Israel**.

Luke 1:80 *So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he lived in the wilderness until the day of his commissioning in Israel.*

Daniel Gregg In **Luke 1:80**, it says, “and he was in the wilderness until the day of his ordination.” The **Greek** word used here is **αναδειξεως**. It means a **commissioning or installation**. <www.torahtimes.org/articles/birth_of_messiah.html>
Daniel Gregg, “When was Messiah Born,” Last modified on 03/21/2015.

Luke 1:80 refers to John the Immerser’s *commissioning as a Levitical priest* and he was **30 years old** at this time, as Levitical priests were only eligible to serve when they were **30-50 years** of age.

Numbers 4:1-3 ¹ Then יהוה spoke to Moses and **Aaron (1436-1398)**, saying: ² “Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers’ house, ³ from **thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old**, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.”

When John declared that יהושע was the **Lamb of Elohim** in **John 1:29** and **John 1:36**, it had a certain meaning to those who heard it. For a sacrifice to Elohim was only *acceptable* after it had been inspected and certified as such by a Levitical priest.

Leviticus 22:20-25 ²⁰ “Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. ²¹ And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to יהוה, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, **it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be**



no defect in it. ²² Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to יהוה, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to יהוה. ²³ Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. ²⁴ ‘You shall not offer to יהוה what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land. ²⁵ Nor from a foreigner’s hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your Elohim, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.’”

According to **Luke 1:80**, John the Immerser was *in the wilderness* until the day of his commissioning in **Israel**. From the Apostle John’s testimony in **John 1:28**, it is evident that John the Immerser was *in Bethabara beyond the Jordan* when he immersed יהושע Messiah on the **Sabbath** on **Day 27 / Month 12** in 28 C.E. [**27 Adar = Sabbath, March 13, 28 C.E. (1731357) = Day 27 / Month 12**]

Figure 6: Priestly Course 8 (28 C.E.)



John the Immerser was **30 years** old when according to **Luke 1:80** he was commissioned as a Levitical priest on **Day 25 / Month 1** during **Course 8 – Abijah** in the Second Temple. According to **Acts 13:25**, John finished his course on **Day 3 / Month 2** in 28 C.E.

John 1:19-28 ¹⁹ Now this is the testimony of John [the Immerser], when the **Judeans** sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem [on **Yom Shi-shi** the sixth day of the week on **Day 26 / Month 12** in 28 C.E.] to ask him [John the Immerser], “Who are you?” ²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” ²² Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” ²³ He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of יהוה,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” ²⁴ Now those who were sent were from the **Pharisees**. ²⁵ And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you immerse if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ²⁶ John answered them, saying, “I immerse with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷ **It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.**” ²⁸ These things were done *in Bethabara beyond the Jordan*, where John was immersing.

It was just **4 days after** he immersed יהושע Messiah at **Bethabara** that John the Immerser became **30 years** of age on **New Moon 1** in 28 C.E. [**1 Nisan, Wednesday, March 17, 28 C.E. (1731361) = Day 1 / Month 1**] יהושע was at the **Marriage at Cana** with His disciples on the very evening that John the Immerser became **30 years of age**.



The Daily Sacrifice Failed in the Second Temple on the **Fast of Month 4** in 70 C.E.
As **Course 4 – Seorim** was Finishing and **Course 5 – Malchijah** was to Begin

Figure 7: Priestly Course 5 (70 C.E.)



The daily sacrifice was suspended on **Day 17 / Month 4** in 70 C.E. according to Josephus in **Wars 6 / 93-94** and **Arachin 11B**. This was the last day of **Course 4 – Seorim** and the first day of **Course 5 – Malchijah**.

According to Josephus and the **Arachin 11B**, the Second Temple burned, the continual sacrifice ceased on the **Fast of Month 4** on **Day 17 / Month 4** in 70 C.E. [**17 Tammuz = Sabbath, July 14, 70 C.E. (1746820) = Day 17 / Month 4**] Thus, while **Course 1 – Jehoiarib** was on duty when the First Temple burned in 593 B.C.E., **Course 4 – Seorim** was finishing and **Course 5 – Malchijah** was scheduled to begin when the daily sacrifice was suspended on the **Fast of Month 4** in 70 C.E.

Josephus, Wars 6 / 93-94 ⁹³ And now **Titus (79-81)** gave orders to his soldiers that were with him to dig up the foundations of the tower of Antonia, and make him a ready passage for his army to come up; ⁹⁴ while he himself had Josephus brought to him (for he had been informed that on that very day, which was the **seventeenth day of Panemus [Day 17 / Month 4]**, the sacrifice called “the Daily Sacrifice” had failed, and had not been offered to Elohim for want of men to offer it, and that the people were grievously troubled at it).

William Whiston, The Works of Josephus, p. 731.

Arachin 11B The same happened the second time [the second Sanctuary’s destruction]. Now what need was there for song? Would you say that it was on account of the [daily] burnt-offering? But that could not be, for on the **seventeenth of Tammuz [Day 17 / Month 4]** the continual sacrifice had been abolished ... The song of the day was: The earth is Yahweh’s and the fullness thereof, ²⁶... Ps. XXIV, 1. [Psalm 24:1] This is the song for Sunday [**Yom Ri-shon**]; every day had its song definitely arranged.

Rabbi Dr. I Epstein, (Translator). The Babylonian Talmud, The Soncino Press Ltd., New York, 1990.

Arachin 11B correctly records that **Psalm 24** was being sung on **Day 17 / Month 4** on **Yom Ri-shon** on the **first day** of the week in 70 C.E. [**17 Tammuz = Sabbath, July 14, 70 C.E. (1746820) = Day 17 / Month 4**]

Arachin 11B contains evidence that the **seven day sequence has never been broken**. For **Psalm 94:23**, “He has brought upon them their iniquity and will cut them off in their evil,” would have been sung on **Day 7 / Month 5** on **Yom Re-vi-i** on the **fourth day** of the week in 593 B.C.E. And **Psalm 24:1**, “The earth is



Yahweh's and the fullness thereof," would have been sung on **Day 9 / Month 5** on **Yom Ri-shon** on the *first day* of the week in **70 C.E.** יהוה Elohim has a covenant with the day and the night.

Jeremiah 33:20-22 ²⁰ "This is what יהוה says: If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that they are not daily and nightly in their season, ²¹ then My covenant may also be broken with **David** My servant, so that he should not have a Son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites the priests, My servants. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the progeny of **David** My servant, and the Levites who serve Me."

Likewise, the testimony in **Luke 1:5-23** constitutes evidence that the **24 Priestly Courses** were *observed faithfully* until **4 B.C.E.** as the chronology concerning the **Course 8 – Abijah** in the *spring* of **4 B.C.E.** dovetails perfectly with the birth of יהושע Messiah in the *autumn* of **3 B.C.E.** Zachariah from **Course 8 – Abijah** was on duty from **Day 21 / Month 3** to **Day 28 / Month 3** in **4 B.C.E.**

Zachariah returned home on **Day 29 / Month 3** after the **Sabbath** was over. John was likely conceived on **New Moon 4** and born **266 days** later on **New Moon 1** in **3 B.C.E.** exactly **6 months** to the day before יהושע Messiah was born on **New Moon 7** in **3 B.C.E.**

There is no valid reason to doubt that the **24 Priestly Courses** ran on a **168 day cycle (24 Courses x 7 days)** from the time that **Solomon initiated** them on **New Moon 7** in **951 B.C.E.** until the daily sacrifice failed on the **Fast of Month 4** in **70 C.E.** The **24 Priestly Courses** ran for a total of **2217 complete cycles** until they ended in the **2218th** cycle. They were *observed faithfully* for **1019 years, 10 months, 17 days.**

