

1 Chronicles 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who hitherto waited in the king's gate eastward: they were porters in the companies of the children of Levi.

Analysis

Who hitherto waited in the king's gate eastward—this identifies Levitical gatekeepers' specific post at the **king's gate** (שער-המלך sha'ar hammelekh), the eastern entrance to the temple mount. In ancient Near Eastern culture, gatekeepers held strategic security roles, controlling access to sacred/royal precincts, collecting revenues, and serving as information hubs. The phrase **hitherto** (עד-הנה ad-hannah, 'until now') suggests continuity from pre-exilic practice: post-exilic gatekeepers maintained the same posts their ancestors held before Babylonian destruction.

They were porters in the companies of the children of Levi (שְׂעִירִים לְמַחְנֹות בְּנֵי־) the term **companies** (מַחְנֹות machanot, literally 'camps') recalls wilderness wanderings when Levites camped around the tabernacle in military formation (Numbers 1-3). The language deliberately archaizes temple service, connecting Second Temple ritual to Mosaic origins—the post-exilic community isn't innovating but restoring authentic ancient practice.

The **eastern** gate held special significance: it faced the rising sun, the direction from which God's glory entered Solomon's temple (Ezekiel 43:1-5) and from which Ezekiel prophesied God's glory would return (Ezekiel 43:4). Gatekeepers at this portal literally stood watch for God's return, a posture of eschatological expectation. Symbolically, they prefigure Christians 'watching and waiting' for Christ's return from the east (Matthew 24:27, 42).

Historical Context

The gatekeepers' role developed from tabernacle guards (Numbers 3:38) through Davidic reorganization (1 Chronicles 26) to Second Temple service (Ezra 2:42; Nehemiah 11:19). The 'king's gate' (likely the eastern/Golden Gate) served as primary access point to the temple mount's royal sector. After Babylonian destruction (586 BC), this gate's restoration symbolized renewed divine-human encounter. Ezekiel's vision of the permanently shut eastern gate (Ezekiel 44:1-2) may refer to the outer wall's gate, not this inner temple court gate, or represent eschatological reality awaiting Messiah's return.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the gatekeepers' 'watching' posture at the eastern gate inform Christian vigilance for Christ's return from the east?
2. What does the continuity of gatekeeping posts 'hitherto' teach about the importance of maintaining faithful service even through catastrophic interruptions like exile?

Interlinear Text

בֵּשׁ עָרָה בְּנָה וְעָד

H5704

H2008

gate

H8179

בְּקָר לְגָ

H4428

Who hitherto waited in the king's

בְּמִזְבֵּחַ מִזְבֵּחַ

eastward

H1992

H4217

לְמִתְחָנֶן וְתַ

בְּנֵי

לְזִוְּנִים

they were porters

in the companies

of the children

of Levi

H7778

H4264

H1121

H3878

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