Zechariah - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 624. Separation of the Sexes

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Zechariah 12:12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart.

According to the Jewish custom, not only did the men and women dwell in separate apartments, but they also worshiped separately. In this text, the trouble that is to come upon the land is so great that every family shall be in mourning, the men mourning by themselves, and the women in like manner lamenting together.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 623. Heavy Stones

Zechariah 12:3. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces.

Jerome supposes an allusion here to a custom common in Judea in his day, and which he thinks was known in the time of Zechariah. The young men were in the habit of lifting heavy stones for exercise, and for a display of strength. They lifted them to various heights, according to the weight of the stones and their own strength: to the knees, the breast, the top of the head, and even above the head, at arms' length. Jerusalem is declared by the prophets to be such a "burdensome stone" that whosoever should undertake to lift it would be destroyed by its weight.

Most commentators have followed Jerome's interpretation, though some prefer to think that the reference is made merely to a heavy stone used in building.