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July 27, 2001

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Nehemiah

Nehemiah's Prayer

1 These are the words of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was the son of Hacaliah: I, Nehemiah, was in the capital city of Susa in the month of Kislev. This was in the 20th year* that Artaxerxes was king. **2** While I was in Susa, one of my brothers named Hanani and some other men came from Judah. I asked them about the Jews living there. These were the Jews that had escaped captivity and still lived in Judah. And I also asked them about the city of Jerusalem.

3 Hanani and the men with him said, "Nehemiah, those Jews that escaped captivity and are in the land of Judah are in much trouble. Those people are having many problems and are full of shame. Why? Because the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

4 When I heard those things about the people of Jerusalem and about the wall, I was very upset. I sat down and cried. I was very sad. I fasted* and prayed to the God of Heaven for several days. **5** Then I prayed this prayer:

Lord, God of Heaven, you are the great and powerful God. You are the God who keeps his agreement of love with people that love you and obey your commands.

6 Please open your eyes and ears and listen to the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night. I am praying for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we people of Israel have done against you. I am

confessing that I have sinned against you and that the other people in my father's family have sinned against you. **7** We people of Israel have been very bad to you. We have not obeyed the commands, teachings, and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 Please remember the teaching you gave your servant Moses. You said to him, "If you people of Israel are not faithful, I will force you to be scattered among the other nations. **9** But if you people of Israel come back to me and obey my commands, then this is what I will do: Even if your people have been forced to leave their homes and go to the ends of the earth, I will gather them from there. And I will bring them back to the place I have chosen to put my name."

10 The people of Israel are your servants and your people. You used your great power and rescued those people.

11 So Lord, please listen to my prayer. I am your servant. And please listen to the prayers of your servants that want to show respect for your name. Lord, you know I am the king's wine servant.* So please help me today. Help me as I ask the king for help. Give me success and help me to be pleasing to the king.

The King Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

2 In the month of Nisan in the 20th year* of King Artaxerxes, some wine was brought to the king. I took the wine and gave it to the

wine servant A very important job. This official was always close to the king and tasted the king's wine to make sure no one was trying to poison the king.

Nisan ... 20th year This was March-April, 443 B.C.

Kislev ... 20th year This was about December, 444 B.C.

fast(ed) To live without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.

king. I had never been sad when I was with the king, but now I was sad. ²So the king asked me, “Are you sick? Why do you look sad? I think your heart is full of sadness.”

Then I was very much afraid. ³But even though I was afraid, I said to the king, “May the king live forever! I am sad because the city where my ancestors* are buried lies in ruins. And the gates of that city have been destroyed by fire.”

⁴Then the king said to me, “What do you want me to do?”

Before I answered, I prayed to the God of Heaven. ⁵Then I answered the king, “If it would please the king, and if I have been good to you, please send me to [Jerusalem,] the city in Judah where my ancestors* are buried. I want to go there and build that city again.”

⁶The queen was sitting next to the king. The king and queen asked me, “How long will your trip take? When will you get back here?”

The king was happy to send me, so I gave him a certain time. ⁷I also said to the king, “If it would please the king to do something else for me, let me ask. Please give me some letters to show the governors of the area west of the Euphrates River. I need these letters so those governors will give me permission to pass safely through their lands on my way to Judah. ⁸I also need lumber for the heavy wooden beams for the gates, the walls, the walls around the temple,* and my house. So I need a letter from you to Asaph. Asaph is in charge of your forests.”

The king gave me the letters and everything I asked for. The king did that because God was kind to me.

⁹So I went to the governors of the area west of the Euphrates River. I gave those governors the letters from the king. The king had also sent army officers and soldiers on horses with me. ¹⁰Sanballat and Tobiah were two men that heard about what I was doing. They were very upset and angry that someone had come to help the people of Israel.

Sanballat was from Horon and Tobiah is an Ammonite official.

Nehemiah Inspects Walls of Jerusalem

^{11–12}I went to Jerusalem and stayed there three days. Then at night I started out with a few men. I had not said anything to anyone about what God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no horses with me except the horse I was riding. ¹³While it was dark I went out through the Valley Gate. I rode toward the Dragon Well and the Gate of the Ash Piles. I was inspecting the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down. And the gates in the wall that had been burned with fire. ¹⁴Then I rode on toward the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool. But as I got close, I could see there was not enough room for my horse to get through. ¹⁵So I went up the valley in the dark, inspecting the wall. Finally, I turned back and went back in through the Valley Gate. ¹⁶The officials and important people of Israel didn’t know where I had gone. They didn’t know what I was doing. I had not yet said anything to the Jews, the priests, the king’s family, the officials, or any of the other people that would be doing the work.

¹⁷Then I said to all those people, “You can see the trouble we have here: Jerusalem is a pile of ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let’s build the wall of Jerusalem again. Then we won’t be ashamed any more.”

¹⁸I also told those people that God had been kind to me. I told them the things the king had said to me. Then those people answered, “Let’s start to work, now!” So we began this good work. ¹⁹But Sanballat from Horon, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard that we were building again. They made fun of us in a very ugly way. They said, “What are you doing? Are you turning against the king?”

²⁰But this is what I said to those men: “The God of Heaven will help us succeed. We are God’s servants and we will build this city again. And you can’t help us in this work. None of your family lived here in Jerusalem. You don’t own any of this land. You have no right to be in this place!”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

Builders of the Wall

3 The name of the high priest was Eliashib. Eliashib and his brothers the priests went to work and built the Sheep Gate. They prayed and made that gate holy to the Lord. They set its doors in place in the wall. Those priests worked on the wall of Jerusalem as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. They prayed and made their work holy to the Lord.

²The men from Jericho built the wall next to the priests. And Zaccur son of a man named Imri built the wall next to the men of Jericho.

³The sons of a man named Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They set the beams in place. They put doors on the building. Then they put the locks and bolts on the doors.

⁴Meremoth son of Uriah fixed the next section of the wall. (Uriah was the son of Hakkoz.)

Meshullam son of Berekiah fixed the next section of the wall. (Berekiah was the son of Meshezabel.)

Zadok son of Baana fixed the next section of the wall.

⁵The men from Tekoa fixed the next section of the wall. But the leaders from Tekoa refused to work for [Nehemiah] their governor.

⁶Joiada and Meshullam fixed the Old Gate. Joiada is the son of Paseah and Meshullam is the son of Besodeiah. They set the beams in place. They put the doors on the hinges. Then they put the locks and bolts on the doors.

⁷The men from Gibeon and Mizpah fixed the next section of the wall. A man named Melatiah from Gibeon and a man named Jadon from Meronoth did the work. Gibeon and Meronoth are places that are controlled by the governors of the area west of the Euphrates River.

⁸Uzziel son of Harhaiah fixed the next section of the wall. Uzziel was a goldsmith.* Hananiah was one of the perfume makers. Those men built and fixed Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

⁹Rephaiah son of Hur fixed the next section of the wall. Rephaiah was the governor of half of Jerusalem.

¹⁰Jedaiah son of Harumaph fixed the next section of the wall. Jedaiah fixed the wall next to his own house. Hattush son of Hashabneiah fixed the next section. ¹¹Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab fixed the next section. Those men also fixed Oven Tower.

¹²Shallum son of Hallohesh fixed the next section of the wall. His daughters helped him. Shallum was the governor of the other half of Jerusalem.

¹³The Valley Gate was fixed by a man named Hanun and the people that live in the town of Zanoah. Those people built the Valley Gate. They put the doors on their hinges. Then they put the locks and bolts on the doors. They also fixed 500 yards* of the wall. They worked on the wall all the way to the Gate of Ash Piles.

¹⁴Malkijah son of Recab fixed the Gate of Ash Piles. Malkijah was the governor of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He fixed that gate. He put the doors on the hinges. Then he put the locks and bolts on the doors.

¹⁵Shallun son of Col-Hozeh fixed the Fountain Gate. Shallun was the governor of the district of Mizpah. He fixed that gate and put a roof over it. He put the doors on the hinges. Then he put the locks and bolts on the doors. Shallun also fixed the wall of the Pool of Siloam that is next to the King's Garden. He fixed the wall all the way to the steps that go down from the City of David.*

¹⁶Nehemiah son of Azbuk fixed the next section. This Nehemiah was the governor of half the district of Beth Zur. He made repairs up to a place that is across from the tombs of David. And he worked as far as the man-made pool and the House of Heroes.

¹⁷The men from the family group of Levi fixed the next section. Those men from Levi worked under Rehum son of Bani. Hashabiah fixed the next section. Hashabiah was

500 yards Literally, "1,000 cubits."

City of David The southeast and oldest part of the city of Jerusalem.

goldsmith A person that makes things from gold.

governor of half the district of Keilah. He made repairs for his own district.

¹⁸Their brothers fixed the next section. They worked under Binnui son of Henadad. Binnui was the governor of the other half of the district of Keilah.

¹⁹Ezer son of Jeshua fixed the next section. Ezer was governor of Mizpah. He fixed the section of wall from the room for weapons to the corner of the wall. ²⁰Baruch son of Zabbai fixed the next section. Baruch worked very hard and fixed the section of wall from the corner to the entrance to the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, fixed the next section of wall from the entrance to Eliashib's house to the end of that house. ²²The next section of walls was fixed by the priests that lived in that area.*

²³Benjamin and Hasshub fixed the wall in front of their own house. And Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, fixed the wall next to his house.

²⁴Binnui son of Henadad fixed the section of wall from Azariah's house to the bend in the wall and then to the corner.

²⁵Palal son of Uzai worked across from the bend in the wall near the tower. This is the tower at the king's upper house. That is near the courtyard of the king's guard. Pedaiah son of Parosh worked next to Palal.

²⁶The temple servants lived on Ophel Hill. They fixed the next section all the way to the east side of the Water Gate and the tower near it.

²⁷The men from Tekoa fixed the rest of that section from the big tower all the way to the Ophel wall.

²⁸The priests fixed the section over the Horse Gate. Each priest fixed the wall in front of his own house. ²⁹Zadok son of Immer fixed the section in front of his house. Shemaiah son of Shecaniah fixed the next section. Shemaiah was the guard of the East Gate.

³⁰Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun son of Zalaph fixed the rest of that section of wall. (Hanun was Zalaph's sixth son.)

Meshullam son of Berekiah fixed the section in front of his house. ³¹Malkijah fixed the next

section of wall all the way to the houses of the temple servants and the businessmen. That is across from the Inspection Gate. Malkijah fixed the section all the way to the room over the corner of the wall. Malkijah was a goldsmith.* ³²The goldsmiths and the businessmen fixed the section of wall between the room over the corner to the Sheep Gate.

Sanballat and Tobiah

4 Sanballat heard that we were building the wall of Jerusalem. He became very angry and upset. He started making fun of the Jews. ²Sanballat talked with his friends and the army at Samaria. He said, "What are these weak Jews doing? Do they think we will leave them alone? Do they think they will offer sacrifices?*" Maybe they think they can finish building in only one day. They can't bring stones back to life from these piles of trash and dirt. These are just piles of ashes and dirt!"

³Tobiah the Ammonite was with Sanballat. Tobiah said, "What do these Jews think they are building? If even a small fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

⁴Nehemiah prayed to God. He said, "Our God, listen to our prayer. Those men hate us. Sanballat and Tobiah are insulting us. Make those bad things happen to them. Make them ashamed, like people taken away as prisoners. ⁵Don't take away their guilt or forgive the sins they have done in your sight. They have insulted and discouraged the builders."

⁶We built the wall of Jerusalem. We built the wall all the way around the city. But it was only half as tall as it should be. We did this much because the people worked with all their heart.

⁷But Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the men from Ashdod were very angry. They heard that the people continued working on the walls of Jerusalem. They heard the people were fixing the holes in the wall. ⁸So all those men got together and made plans against Jerusalem. They planned to stir up trouble against Jerusalem. They

goldsmith A person that makes things from gold.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually, it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

that area Or possibly, "the Jordan Valley."

planned to come and fight against the city. ⁹But we prayed to our God. And we put guards on the walls to watch day and night so we could be ready to meet those men.

¹⁰And so at that time, the people of Judah said, “The workers are becoming tired. There is too much dirt and trash in the way. We can’t continue to build the wall. ¹¹And our enemies are saying, ‘Before the Jews know it or see us, we will be right there among them. We will kill them and that will stop the work.’”

¹²Then the Jews living among our enemies came and said this to us ten times, ‘Our enemies are all around us. They are everywhere we turn.’”

¹³So I put some of the people behind the lowest places along the wall. And I put them by the holes in the wall. I put families together, with their swords, spears, and bows. ¹⁴I looked the whole situation over. Then I stood up and spoke to the important families, the officials, and the rest of the people. I said, “Don’t be afraid of our enemies. Remember our Master. The Lord is great and powerful! You must fight for your brothers, your sons, and your daughters! You must fight for your wives and your homes!”

¹⁵Then our enemies heard that we knew about their plans. They knew that God ruined their plans. So we all went back to work on the wall. Each person went back to his own place and did his part. ¹⁶From that day on, half of my men worked on the wall. The other half of my men were on guard, ready with spears, shields, bows, and armor. The army officers stood behind all the people of Judah that were building the wall. ¹⁷The builders and their helpers had their tools in one hand and a weapon in the other hand. ¹⁸Each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. The man that blew the trumpet to warn the people stayed next to me. ¹⁹Then I spoke to the leading families, the officials, and the rest of the people. I said, “This is a very big job and we are spread out along the wall. We are far from one another. ²⁰So, if you hear the trumpet, run to that place. We will all meet together there, and God will fight for us!”

²¹So we continued to work on the wall of Jerusalem, and half the men held spears. We

worked from the first light of the morning till the stars came out at night.

²²At that time I also said this to the people: “Every builder and his helper must stay inside Jerusalem at night. Then they can be guards at night and workers during the day.” ²³So none of us took off our clothes—not me, not my brothers, not my men, and not the guards. Each of us had our weapon ready at all times, even when we went to get water.

Nehemiah Helps the Poor People

5 Many of the [poor] people began to complain against their Jewish brothers. ²Some of them were saying, “We have many children. We must get some grain if we are going to eat and stay alive!”

³Other people were saying, “This is a time of famine.* We are having to mortgage* our fields, vineyards, and homes to get grain.

⁴And still other people were saying, “We have to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. But we can’t afford to pay, so we are having to borrow money to pay the tax. ⁵[Look at those rich people!] We are as good as they are. Our sons are as good as their sons. But we will have to sell our sons and daughters as slaves. Some of us have already had to sell our daughters as slaves! There is nothing we can do! We already lost our fields and vineyards! Other people own them now!”

⁶When I heard their complaints, I became very angry. ⁷I calmed myself down and then I went to the rich families and the officials. I told them, “You are forcing your own people to pay interest on the money you loan them! [You must stop doing that!] Then I called for all the people to meet together. ⁸And I said to those people, “Our Jewish brothers were sold as slaves to people in other countries. We did our best to buy them back and make them free. And now, you are selling them like slaves again!”

famine A time when there is not enough rain for crops to grow. People and animals die without enough food or water.

mortgage A way to borrow money. People use things, land, or houses as a promise to pay their loan. If they fail to pay the loan, then the lender can take their property.

Those rich people and officials kept quiet. They could not find anything to say. ⁹So I continued speaking. I said, “What you people are doing is not right! You know that you should fear and respect God. You should not do the shameful things other people do! ¹⁰My men, my brothers, and I are also lending money and grain to the people. But let’s stop forcing them to pay interest on those loans! ¹¹You must give their fields, vineyards, olive fields, and houses back to them, right now! And you must give back the interest you charged them! You charged them one per cent for the money, grain, new wine, and oil that you loaned them. _└You must give that back to them!┘

¹²Then the rich people and the officials said, “We will give it back. And we won’t demand anything more from them. Nehemiah, we will do as you say.”

Then I called the priests. I made the rich people and the officials promise to God that they would do what they said. ¹³Then I shook out the folds of my clothes. I said, “God will do the same thing to every person that doesn’t keep his promise. God will shake them out of their houses and they will lose everything they worked for! That person will lose everything!”

I finished saying these things and all those people agreed. They all said, “Amen!” And they praised the Lord. And so the people did as they had promised.

¹⁴And also, during the whole time that I was appointed to be governor in the land of Judah, neither I nor my brothers ate the food that was allowed for the governor. _└I never forced the people to pay those taxes to buy my food.┘ I was governor from the 20th year until the 32nd year that Artaxerxes was king.* I was governor of Judah for twelve years. ¹⁵But the governors that ruled before me made life hard for the people. Those governors forced every person to pay 1 pound* of silver. They also made those people give them food and wine. The leaders under those governors also ruled over the people _└and made life even harder.┘ But I respected and feared God, so I didn’t do

things like that. ¹⁶I worked hard at building the wall of Jerusalem. All my men gathered there to work on the wall. We didn’t take any land from anyone!

¹⁷Also, I regularly fed 150 Jews that were always welcome at my table. And I fed the people that came to us from the nations around us. ¹⁸Every day I fixed this much food for the people that ate at my table: one cow, six good sheep, and different kinds of birds. And every ten days all kinds of wine were brought to my table. Yet, I never demanded the food that was allowed for the governor. _└I never forced the people to pay those taxes to pay for my food.┘ I knew that the work the people were doing was very hard. ¹⁹God, remember all the good I have done for these people.

More Problems

6 Then Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and our other enemies heard that I had built the wall. We fixed all the holes in the wall. But we had not yet put the doors in the gates. ²So Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come Nehemiah, let’s meet together. We can meet in the town of Kephirim on the plain of Ono.” But they were planning to hurt me.

³So I sent messengers to them with this answer: “I am doing important work, so I can’t come down. I don’t want the work to stop just so I can come down and meet with you.”

⁴Sanballat and Geshem sent the same message to me four times. And I sent back the same answer to them each time. ⁵Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his helper to me with the same message. And he had a letter in his hand that was not sealed. ⁶This is what that letter said: “There is a rumor going around. People are talking about it everywhere. And, by the way, Geshem says it is true. People are saying that you and the Jews are planning to turn against the king. That is why you are building the wall of Jerusalem. People are also saying that you will be the new king of the Jews. ⁷And the rumor is that you have chosen prophets to announce this about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’

20th year ... king This was from 444–432 B.C.
1 pound Literally, “40 shekels.”

“Now I warn you, Nehemiah, King Artaxerxes will hear about this. So come, let’s meet and talk about this together.”

⁸So I sent this answer back to Sanballat: “Nothing you are saying is happening. You are just making all that up in your own head.”

⁹Our enemies were only trying to make us afraid. They are thinking to themselves, “The Jews will be afraid and too weak to keep on working. Then the wall won’t be finished.”

But I prayed, “God, make me strong.”

¹⁰One day I went to the house of a man named Shemaiah son of Delaiah. Delaiah was the son of Mehetabel. Shemaiah had to stay in his house. Shemaiah said,

“Nehemiah, let’s meet in God’s temple.*
Let’s go inside the Holy Place*
and lock the doors.
Men are coming to kill you.
Tonight they are coming to kill you.”

¹¹But I said to Shemaiah, “Should a man like me run away? You know that an ordinary man like me can’t go into the Holy Place without being put to death! I won’t go!”

¹²I knew that God had not sent Shemaiah. I knew that he had preached against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him to do that. ¹³They hired Shemaiah to scare me and make me sin [by going into that part of the temple]. They were planning those bad things against me so they could embarrass me.

¹⁴God, please remember Tobiah and Sanballat. Remember the bad things they have done. Also remember the woman prophet Noadiah and the other prophets that have been trying to scare me.

The Wall Is Finished

¹⁵So the wall of Jerusalem was finished on the 25th day of the month of Elul.* It had taken 52 days to finish building the wall. ¹⁶Then all our enemies heard that we had completed the wall. And all the nations around us saw that it was finished. So they

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

Holy Place Literally, “palace.” Only priests were allowed to go into this part of the temple.

Elul This was August-September, 443 B.C.

lost their courage. Why? Because they understood that this work had been done with the help of our God.

¹⁷Also, in those days after the wall had been completed, the rich people of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah. And Tobiah was answering their letters. ¹⁸They sent those letters because many people in Judah had promised to be loyal to him. The reason for this is because Tobiah was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah. And Tobiah’s son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam. Meshullam is the son of Berekiah. ¹⁹And in the past, those people had made a special promise to Tobiah. So those people kept telling me how good Tobiah was. And they kept telling Tobiah about the things I was doing. Tobiah kept sending me letters to make me afraid.

⁷So, we finished building the wall. Then we put the doors in the gates. Then we chose the men that would guard the gates. And we chose the men to sing in the temple* and help the priests. ²Next, I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem. I chose another man named Hananiah to be the commander of the fort. I picked Hanani because he was a very honest man and he feared God more than most men do. ³Then I said to Hanani and Hananiah, “Each day you must wait until the sun has been up for several hours before you open the gates of Jerusalem. And you must shut and lock the gates before the sun goes down. Also choose people that live in Jerusalem as guards. Put some of those people at special places to guard the city. And put the other people near their own houses.”

The List of Captives That Returned

⁴Now the city was large and there was plenty of room. But there were few people in it and the houses had not yet been built again. ⁵So my God put it in my heart to have all the people meet together. I called together all the important people, the officials, and the common people. I did this so I could make a list of all the families. I found the family lists* of the people that had been the first to

family lists See Ezra 2.

return from captivity. This is what I found written there:

⁶These are the people of the province that came back from captivity. In the past, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took these people as prisoners to Babylon. These people came back to Jerusalem and Judah. Each person went to his own town. ⁷These people returned with Zerubbabel*: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah. This is the list of names and numbers of men from Israel that came back:

8	The descendants* of Parosh	2,172
9	the descendants of Shephatiah	372
10	the descendants of Arah	652
11	the descendants of Pahath Moab of the family line of Jeshua and Joab	2,818
12	the descendants of Elam	1,254
13	the descendants of Zattu	845
14	the descendants of Zaccai	760
15	the descendants of Binnui	648
16	the descendants of Bebai	628
17	the descendants of Azgad	2,322
18	the descendants of Adonikam	667
19	the descendants of Bigvai	2,067
20	the descendants of Adin	655
21	the descendants of Ater through the family of Hezekiah	98
22	the descendants of Hashum	328
23	the descendants of Bezai	324
24	the descendants of Hariph	112
25	the descendants of Gibeon	95
26	from the towns of Bethlehem and Netophah	188
27	from the town of Anathoth	128
28	from the town of Beth Azmaveth	42
29	from the towns of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth	743
30	from the towns of Ramah and Geba	621
31	from the town of Micmash	122
32	from the towns of Bethel and Ai	123
33	from the other town of Nebo	52
34	from the other town of Elam	1,254
35	from the town of Harim	320

36	from the town of Jericho	345
37	from the towns of Lod, Hadid, and Ono	721
38	from the town of Senaah	3,930

³⁹These are the priests:

	The descendants* of Jedaiah through the family of Jeshua	973
40	the descendants of Immer	1,052
41	the descendants of Pashhur	1,247
42	the descendants of Harim	1,017

⁴³These are the people from the family group of Levi:

	The descendants* of Jeshua through Kadmiel through the family of Hodeiah*	74
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⁴⁴These are the singers:

	The descendants* of Asaph	148
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⁴⁵These are the gatekeepers:

	The descendants* of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai	138
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⁴⁶These are the special temple servants:

	The descendants* of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,	
47	Keros, Sia, Padon,	
48	Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmal,	
49	Hanan, Giddel, Gaher,	
50	Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,	
51	Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,	
52	Besai, Meunim, Nephussim,	
53	Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,	
54	Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,	
55	Barkos, Sisera, Temah,	
56	Neziah and Hatipha.	

⁵⁷These are the descendants* of the servants of Solomon:

	Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,	
58	Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,	
59	Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth Hazzebaim, and Amon.	
60	The temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants	392

Zerubbabel He is also called Sheshbazzar.

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.

Hodeiah Or, "Hodaviah."

⁶¹Some people came to Jerusalem from these towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer. But these people could not prove that their families really came from the people of Israel:

⁶² The descendants* of Delaiah, Tobiah
and Nekoda 642

⁶³From the family of priests there were the descendants* of:

Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai
(If a man married a daughter of Barzillai from Gilead, that man was counted as a descendant of Barzillai.)

⁶⁴These people searched for their family histories, but they could not find them. They could not prove that their ancestors* were priests, so they could serve as priests. Their names were not included in the list of priests. ⁶⁵The governor ordered these people not eat any of the most holy food. They could not eat any of this food until the [high] priest could use the Urim and Thummim* to ask God what to do.

⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷All together, there were 42,360 people in the group that came back. This is not counting their 7,337 men and women servants. They also had 245 men and women singers with them. ⁶⁸⁻⁶⁹They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁷⁰Some of the family leaders gave money to support the work. The governor gave 19 pounds* of gold to the treasury. He also gave 50 bowls and 530 pieces of clothing for the priests. ⁷¹The family leaders gave 375 pounds* of gold to the treasury to support the work. And they also gave 1 1/3 tons* of silver. ⁷²And all together the other people gave 375 pounds*

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.
ancestors Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.
Urim and Thummim Special stones kept in the Judgment Pouch and used by the high priest to ask for an answer from God.

19 pounds Literally, "1,000 drachmas."
375 pounds Literally, "20,000 drachmas."
1 1/3 tons Literally, "2,200 minas."
375 pounds Literally, "20,000 drachmas."

of gold, 1 1/3 tons* of silver, and 67 pieces of clothing for the priests.

⁷³So, the priests, the people from the family group of Levi, the gatekeepers, the singers, and the temple servants settled down in their own towns. And all the other people of Israel settled down in their own towns. And by the seventh month* of the year all the people of Israel had settled down in their own towns.

Ezra Reads the Law

8 So all the people of Israel met together in the seventh month* of the year. They were together and in agreement just as if they were one man. They all met together in the open place in front of the Water Gate. All those people asked Ezra the teacher to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses. That is the Law that the Lord had given to the people of Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before those people that had met together. This was on the first day of the month.* It was the seventh month of the year. At that meeting were men and women, and anyone old enough to listen and understand. ³Ezra read in a loud voice from the Book of the Law from early morning until noon. Ezra was facing the open place that was in front of the Water Gate. He read to all the men and women, and to everyone old enough to listen and understand. All the people listened carefully and paid attention to the Book of the Law.

⁴Ezra stood on a high wooden stage. It had been built just for this special time. On Ezra's right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. And on Ezra's left side stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

⁵So Ezra opened the book. All the people could see Ezra because he was standing above them on the high stage. And as Ezra opened the Book of the Law, all the people stood up. ⁶Ezra praised the Lord, the great God. And all the people held up their hands and said,

1 1/3 tons Literally, "2,000 minas."
seventh month That is, September-October.
first day of the month This was a special day of worship. The people met together and shared a fellowship meal.

“Amen! Amen!” Then all the people bowed down and put their faces low to the ground and they worshiped the Lord.

⁷These men from the family group of Levi taught the people about the Law as they were all standing there. Those Levites were: Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah. ⁸Those Levites read the Book of the Law of God. They made it easy to understand, and explained what it meant. They did this so the people could understand what was being read.

⁹Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher, and the men from the Levites that were teaching the people spoke. They said, “Today is a special day* to the Lord your God. Don’t be sad and cry.” They said that because all the people had begun to cry as they were listening to the messages of God in the Law.

¹⁰Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy the good food and sweet drinks. And give some food and drinks to those people that didn’t prepare any food. Today is a special day to the Lord. Don’t be sad! Why? Because the joy of the Lord will make you strong.”

¹¹The men from the family group of Levi helped the people to calm down. They said, “Be quiet, calm down, this is a special day. Don’t be sad.”

¹²Then all the people went to eat the special meal. They shared their food and drinks. They were very happy and celebrated that special day. They finally understood the lessons from the Lord that the teachers had been trying to teach them.

¹³Then on the second day of the month,* the leaders of all the families went to meet with Ezra, the priests, and the Levites. They all gathered around Ezra the teacher to study the words of the Law.

special day The first and second days of each month were special days of worship. The people met together and shared a fellowship meal.

second day of the month The first and second days of each month were special days of worship. The people met together and shared a fellowship meal.

seventh month That is, September-October.

^{14–15}They studied and found these commands in the Law. The Lord gave this command to the people through Moses: In the seventh month* of the year, the people of Israel must go to Jerusalem to celebrate a special holiday. They must live in temporary shelters. And the people are supposed to go through all of their towns and Jerusalem and say these things: “Go out into the hill country and get branches from different kinds of olive trees. Get branches from myrtle trees, palm trees, and shade trees. Use those branches to make temporary shelters. Do what the Law says.”

¹⁶So the people went out and got those tree branches. Then they built temporary shelters for themselves. They built shelters on their own roofs and in their own yards. And they built shelters in the temple* yard, in the open place near the Water Gate, and near Ephraim Gate. ¹⁷The whole group of the people of Israel that had come back from captivity built shelters. They lived in the shelters they had built. Since the days of Joshua son of Nun up until that day, the people of Israel had not celebrated the Festival of Shelters like this. Everyone was very happy!

¹⁸Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law every day of the festival. Ezra read the Law to them from the first day of the festival to the last day. The people of Israel celebrated the festival for seven days. Then on the eighth day the people met together for a special meeting, like the Law says.

The People of Israel Confess Their Sins

9 Then on the 24th day of that same month, the people of Israel gathered together for a day of fasting.* They wore clothes of sadness and put ashes on their heads to show they were sad and upset. ²Those people that were true Israelites separated themselves from foreigners. The Israelites stood in the temple and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors.* ³They stood there for about three

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

fast(ing) To live without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

hours, and the people read the Book of the Law of the Lord their God. Then for three more hours they confessed their sins and bowed down to worship the Lord their God.

⁴Then these Levites stood on the stairs: Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani. They called out to the Lord their God with loud voices. ⁵Then these Levites spoke again: Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah. They said: “Stand up and praise the Lord your God!”

God has always lived!
And God will live forever!
People should praise your glorious name!
May your name be lifted above all
blessing and praise!

- ⁶ You are God!
Lord, only you are God!
You made the sky!
You made the highest heavens,
and everything in them!
You made the earth,
and everything on it!
You made the seas,
and everything in them!
You give life to everything!
And all the heavenly angels
bow down and worship you!
- ⁷ You are the Lord God.
You chose Abram.
You led him from Ur in Babylonia.
You changed his name to Abraham.
- ⁸ You saw he was true and loyal to you.
And you made an agreement with him.
You promised to give him the land of
the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites,
the Perizzites, Jebusites, and
Girgashites.
But you promised to give that land to
Abraham’s descendants.*
And you kept your promise!
Why? Because you are good!
- ⁹ You saw our ancestors* suffering in
Egypt.

descendants A person’s children and all of their future families.
ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

- And you heard them call for help
by the Red Sea.
- ¹⁰ You showed the miracles to Pharaoh.
You did amazing things to his officials
and his people.
You knew that the Egyptians thought
they were better than our ancestors.
But you proved how great you are!
And they remember that even today!
- ¹¹ You split the Red Sea in front of them.
And they walked through on dry land!
The Egyptian soldiers were chasing them.
But you threw that enemy into the sea.
And they sank like a rock into the sea.
- ¹² With the tall cloud, you led them by day.
And at night you used the column of fire.
That is the way you lit their path,
and showed them where to go.
- ¹³ Then you came down to Mount Sinai.
You spoke to them from heaven.
You gave them good laws.
You gave them true teachings.
You gave them laws and commands that
were very good!
- ¹⁴ You told them about your special day of
rest—the Sabbath.
You used your servant Moses to give
them commands, laws, and teachings.
- ¹⁵ They were hungry,
so you gave them food from heaven.
They were thirsty,
so you gave them water from a rock.
And you told them,
‘Come, take this land.’
You used your power,
and took the land for them!
- ¹⁶ But those people, our ancestors,*
became proud.
They became stubborn.
They refused to obey your commands.
- ¹⁷ They refused to listen.
They forgot the amazing things you did
with them!
They became stubborn.
They decided to return to Egypt
and became slaves again!
- But you are a forgiving God!
You are kind and full of mercy.
You are patient and full of love.
So you didn’t leave them!

- 18 You didn't leave them even when
they made golden calves and said,
 'These are the gods
 that led us out of Egypt!'
- 19 You are very kind!
 So you didn't leave them in the desert.
You didn't take the tall cloud
 away from them by day.
You continued to lead them.
You didn't take the column of fire
 away from them at night.
You continued to light their path
 and show them which way to go.
- 20 You gave them your good Spirit
 to make them wise.
You gave them manna for food.
You gave them water for their thirst.
- 21 You took care of them for 40 years!
They had all they needed in the desert.
 Their clothes didn't wear out.
 And their feet didn't swell and hurt.
- 22 Lord, you gave them kingdoms and
 nations.
And you gave them faraway places
 where few people live.
They got the land of Sihon,
 king of Heshbon.
They got the land of Og,
 king of Bashan.
- 23 You made their descendants*
 as many as the stars in the sky.
You brought them to the land
 you promised to give their ancestors.*
 They went in and took that land.
- 24 Those children took the land.
They defeated the Canaanites living there.
 You let them defeat those people!
 You let them do whatever they wanted
 to those nations, people, and kings!
- 25 They defeated powerful cities.
 They took the fertile land.
They got houses filled with good things.
 They got wells that were already dug.
They got vineyards, olive trees, and plenty
 of fruit trees!
- They ate until they were full and fat.
They enjoyed all the wonderful things
 you gave them.
- 26 And then they turned against you!
 They threw away your teachings!
 They killed your prophets.
Those prophets warned the people.
They tried to bring them back to you.
 But our ancestors* did terrible things
 against you!
- 27 So you let their enemies have them.
The enemy caused them much trouble.
When trouble came,
 our ancestors called to you for help.
 And in heaven, you heard them.
You are very kind.
 So you sent people to save them.
 And those people rescued them from
 their enemies.
- 28 Then, as soon as our ancestors* were
 rested,
 they started doing terrible things again!
So you let the enemy defeat them
 and punish them.
They called to you for help,
 and in heaven you heard them
 and helped them.
You are so kind!
 That happened so many times!
- 29 You warned them.
 You told them to come back.
But they were too proud.
 They refused to listen to your
 commands.
If people obey your laws,
 then they will truly live!
But our ancestors* broke your laws.
They were stubborn.
 They turned their backs on you.
 They refused to listen.
- 30 You were very patient with our ancestors.
 You let them mistreat you for many
 years.
You warned them with your Spirit.
 You sent the prophets to warn them.
But our ancestors* didn't listen.
 So you gave them to people in other
 countries.

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.

ancestors Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

31 But you are so kind!
 You didn't destroy them completely.
 You didn't leave them.
 You are such a kind and merciful God!

32 Our God, you are the great God,
 the awesome, powerful soldier!
 And you are kind and loyal!
 You keep your agreement!
 We have had many troubles.
 And our troubles are important to you!
 Bad things happened to all our people,
 and to our kings and leaders,
 and to our priests and prophets.
 Those terrible things have happened
 from the days of the king of Assyria
 until today!

33 But God, you were right
 about everything that happens to us.
 You were right.
 And we were wrong.

34 Our kings, leaders, priests, and ancestors
 did not obey your law.
 They didn't listen to your commands.
 They ignored your warnings.

35 Our ancestors didn't serve you
 even when they were living
 in their own kingdom,
 They didn't stop doing evil things.
 They enjoyed all the wonderful things
 you gave them.
 They enjoyed the rich land
 and they had plenty of room,
 but they didn't stop their evil ways.

36 And now, we are slaves.
 We are slaves in this land,
 the land you gave our ancestors
 so they could enjoy its fruit and
 all the good things that grow here.

37 The harvest is big in this land.
 But we sinned, so that harvest
 goes to the kings you put over us.
 Those kings control us and our cattle.
 They do anything they want.
 We are in a lot of trouble.

38 Because of all of these things,
 we are making an agreement
 that can't be changed.
 We are putting this agreement in writing.

Our leaders, Levites, and priests
 are signing their names
 on this agreement
 and sealing it with a seal.*

10 These are the names on the sealed agreement: Nehemiah the governor. Nehemiah was the son of Hacaliah. Zedekiah, ²Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah, ⁴Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, ⁵Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the names of the priests that put their names on the sealed agreement.

⁹And these are the Levites that put their names on the sealed agreement: Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui from the family of Henadad, Kadmiel, ¹⁰and their brothers: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ¹¹Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹²Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

¹⁴And these are the names of the leaders that put their names on the sealed agreement: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, ¹⁵Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ¹⁶Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ¹⁷Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, ¹⁸Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ¹⁹Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, ²⁰Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, ²¹Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ²²Pelatia, Hanan, Anaiyah, ²³Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, ²⁴Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ²⁵Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, ²⁶Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, ²⁷Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

^{28–29}So, all these people now make this special promise to God. And they all ask for bad things to happen if they don't keep their promise. All these people promise to follow the Law of God. That Law of God was given to us through Moses his servant. These people promise to carefully obey all the commands, rules, and teachings of the Lord our God. Now, these are the people that are making this promise: The rest of the people—the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants, and all the people of Israel that separated themselves from the people living around

seal(s) Small stones or rings with special shapes that could be used like a rubber stamp. When pressed into wet clay or hot wax, they left a special mark that was like a signature.

them. They have separated themselves to obey God's law. And also all their wives and all their sons and daughters that are able to listen and understand. All these people joined their brothers and the important people to accept for themselves the promise to obey God's Law. And they accepted the curse that asks for bad things to happen to them if they don't obey God's Law.

³⁰"We promise not to let our daughters marry the people living around us. And we promise not to let our sons marry their daughters.

³¹"We promise not to work on the Sabbath day. If the people living around us bring grain or other things to sell on the Sabbath, we won't buy those things on that special day or on any other holiday. Every seventh year,* we won't plant or work the land. And every seventh year, we will cancel every debt that other people owe to us.

³²"We will accept the responsibility for obeying the commands to take care of God's temple.* We will give 1/3 shekel* [of silver] each year to support the temple service to honor our God. ³³This money will pay for the special bread that the priests put on the table in the temple. It will pay for the daily grain offerings and burnt offerings. It will pay for the offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moon* festivals, and other special meetings. It will pay for the holy offerings and for the sin offerings that make the people of Israel pure.* It will pay for any work needed on the temple of our God.

³⁴"We—the priests, the Levites, and the people—have thrown lots.* Why? To decide when each of our families is to bring a gift of wood to the temple of our God at certain times each year. The wood is to burn on the

altar of the Lord our God. We must do that just as it is written in the Law.

³⁵"We also accept the responsibility of bringing the firstfruits from our crops and from every fruit tree. We will bring that fruit to the Lord's temple* each year.

³⁶"Just as it is also written in the Law, this is what we will do: We will bring our firstborn sons, and the firstborn cows, sheep, and goats. We will bring those firstborn to the temple of our God. We will bring them to the priests that are serving there.

³⁷"And we will also bring to the storage rooms of the Lord's temple,* to the priests, these things: The first of our ground meal, the first of our grain offerings, the firstfruit from all our trees, and first part from our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tenth of our crops to the Levites. Why? Because the Levites collect these things in all the towns where we work. ³⁸A priest from the family of Aaron must be with the Levites when they receive those crops. And then the Levites must bring those crops to the temple of our God. Then they will put them in the storerooms of the temple treasury. ³⁹The people of Israel and the Levites must bring their gifts to the storerooms. They are to bring their gifts of grain, new wine, and oil. All the things for the temple are kept in those storerooms. And that is where the priests that are on duty stay. And also the singers and gatekeepers stay there.

"We all promise that we will take care of the temple of our God!"

New People Move into Jerusalem

1 Now the leaders of the people of Israel moved into the city of Jerusalem. The other people of Israel had to decide who else would move into the city. So they threw lots,* and one out of every ten people had to live in Jerusalem, the holy city. The other nine people could live in their own home towns. ²Some people volunteered to live in Jerusalem. The other people thanked and blessed them for volunteering.

³Here are the leaders of the provinces that lived in Jerusalem. (Some of the people of Israel, priests, Levites, temple servants, and descendants of Solomon's servants lived in

seventh year See Ex. 23:10, 11.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

1/3 shekel This was probably a coin at this time, but 1 shekel is 2/5 ounce (11.5g).

New Moon This was the first day of the Hebrew month. There were special meetings on these days to worship God.

make ... pure Or, "make atonement." The Hebrew word means "to cover or erase a person's sins."

lots Sticks, stones, or pieces of bone used like dice for making decisions. See Prov. 16:33.

the towns of Judah. Each person lived on his own land in the different towns. ⁴And other people from the families of Judah and Benjamin lived in the city of Jerusalem.)

These are the descendants* of Judah that moved into Jerusalem: Athaiah son of Uziah (Uziah was the son of Zechariah, who was the son of Amariah, who was the son of Shephatiah, who was the son of Mahalalel, who was a descendant of Perez) ⁵and Maaseiah son of Baruch, (Baruch was the son of Col-Hozeh, who was the son of Hazaiah, who was the son of Adaiah, who was the son of Joiarib, who was the son of Zechariah, who was a descendant of Shelah). ⁶The number of Perez's descendants living in Jerusalem was 468. All of them were brave men.

⁷These are the descendants* of Benjamin that moved into Jerusalem: Sallu son of Meshullam (Meshullam was the son of Joed, who was the son of Pedaiah, who was the son of Kolaiah, who was the son of Maaseiah, who was the son of Ithiel, who was the son of Jeshaiiah), ⁸and those that followed Jeshaiiah were Gabbai and Sallai. All together there were 928 men. ⁹Joel son of Zicri was in charge of them. And Judah son of Hassenuah was in charge of the Second District of the city of Jerusalem.

¹⁰These are the priests that moved into Jerusalem: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jakin, ¹¹and Seraiah son of Hilkiah (Hilkiah was the son of Meshullam, who was the son of Zadok, who was the son of Meraioth, who was the son of Ahitub, who was the supervisor in the temple of God), ¹²and 822 men of their brothers that did the work for the temple, and Adaiah son of Jeroham (Jeroham was the son of Pelaliah, who was the son of Amzi, who was the son of Zechariah, who was the son of Pashhur, who was the son of Malkijah), ¹³and 242 men that were Malkijah's brothers (These men were leaders of their families), Amashsai son of Azarel (Azarel was the son of Ahzai, who was the son of Meshillemoth, who was the son of Immer), ¹⁴and 128 of Immer's brothers.

(These men were brave soldiers. The officer over them was Zabdiel son of Haggadolim.)

¹⁵These are the Levites that moved into Jerusalem: Shemaiah son of Hasshub (Hasshub was the son of Azrikam, who was the son of Hashabiah, who was the son of Bunni), ¹⁶Shabbethai and Jozabad (These two men were leaders of the Levites. They were in charge of the outside work of God's temple), ¹⁷Mattaniah (Mattaniah was the son of Mica, who was the son of Zabdi, who was the son of Asaph, who was the choir director. Asaph led the people in singing songs of praise and prayer), Bakbukiah (Bakbukiah was the second in charge over his brothers), and Abda son of Shammua, (Shammua was the son of Galal, who was the son of Jeduthun). ¹⁸So, there were 284 Levites that moved into Jerusalem, the holy city.

¹⁹These are the gatekeepers that moved into Jerusalem: Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their brothers. They watched and guarded the gates of the city.

²⁰The other people of Israel, and the other priests and Levites, lived in all the towns of Judah. Each person lived on the land that his ancestors had owned. ²¹The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of those temple servants.

²²The officer over the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi. Uzzi was the son of Bani (Bani was the son of Hashabiah, who was the son of Mattaniah, who was the son of Mica). Uzzi was a descendant of Asaph. Asaph's descendants were the singers that were responsible for the service in God's temple. ²³The singers obeyed orders from the king. Those orders from the king told the singers what to do from day to day. ²⁴The man that told the people what the king wanted done was named Pethahiah. (Pethahiah was the son of Meshezabel, who was one of the descendants of Zerah. Zerah was Judah's son.)

²⁵The people of Judah lived in these towns: In Kiriath Arba and the small towns around it, in Dibon and the small towns around it, in Jekabzeel and the small towns around it, ²⁶and in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet, ²⁷in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and the small towns around it, ²⁸and in Ziklag, in Meconah

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.

and the small towns around it, ²⁹and in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, ³⁰and in Zanoah and Adullam and the small towns around them, in Lachish and the fields around it, and in Azekah and the small towns around it. So the people of Judah were living all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

³¹The descendants* of the family of Benjamin from Geba lived in Micmash, Aija, Bethel and the small towns around it, ³²in Anathoth, Nob and Ananiah, ³³in Hazor, Ramah and Gittaim, ³⁴in Hadid, Zeboim, and Neballat, ³⁵in Lod and Ono, and in the Valley of the Craftsmen. ³⁶Some of the groups of the people from the family of Levi moved to the land of Benjamin.

Priests and Levites

12 These are the priests and Levites that came back to the land of Judah. They came back with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua. This is a list of their names: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ²Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, ³Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, ⁴Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, ⁵Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, ⁶Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and Jedaiah. These men were the leaders of the priests and their relatives in the days of Jeshua.

⁸The Levites were: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah. These men, with Mattaniah's relatives, were in charge of the songs of praise to God. ⁹Bakbukiah and Unni were the relatives of those Levites. These two men stood across from them in the services. ¹⁰Jeshua was the father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada. ¹¹Joiada was the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

¹²In the days of Joiakim, these men were the leaders of the families of priests:

The leader of Seraiah's family was Meraiah.

The leader of Jeremiah's family was Hananiah.

- ¹³ The leader of Ezra's family was Meshullam.
The leader of Amariah's family was Jehohanan.
- ¹⁴ The leader of Malluch's family was Jonathan.
The leader of Shecaniah's family was Joseph.
- ¹⁵ The leader of Harim's family was Adna.
The leader of Meremoth's family was Helkai.
- ¹⁶ The leader of Iddo's family was Zechariah.
The leader of Ginnethon's family was Meshullam.
- ¹⁷ The leader of Abijah's family was Zicri.
The leader of Miniamin's and Maadiah's families was Piltai.
- ¹⁸ The leader of Bilgah's family was Shammua.
The leader of Shemaiah's family was Jehonathan.
- ¹⁹ The leader of Joiarib's family was Mattenai.
The leader of Jedaiah's family was Uzzi.
- ²⁰ The leader of Sallu's family was Kallai.
The leader of Amok's family was Eber.
- ²¹ The leader of Hilkiyah's family was Hashabiah.
The leader of Jedaiah's family was Nethanel.

²²The names of the leaders of the families of the Levites and the priests in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were written down during the rule of Darius the Persian king. ²³The family leaders among the descendants* of the family of Levi and up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were written in the history book. ²⁴And these were the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, and their brothers. Their brothers stood across from them to sing praise and honor to God. One group

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answered the other group. That is what was commanded by David the man of God.

²⁵The gatekeepers that guarded the storerooms next to the gates were: Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub. ²⁶Those gatekeepers served in the days of Joiakim. Joiakim was the son of Jeshua, who was the son of Jozadak. And those gatekeepers also served in the days of Nehemiah the governor and in the days of Ezra the priest and teacher.

Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem

²⁷The people dedicated the wall of Jerusalem. They brought all the Levites to Jerusalem. The Levites came from the towns they lived in. They came to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. The Levites came to sing songs of praise and thanks to God. They played their cymbals,* harps, and lyres.*

^{28–29}And all the singers also came to Jerusalem. Those singers came from the towns all around Jerusalem. They came from the town of Netophah, from Beth Gilgal, Geba, and Azmaveth. The singers had built small towns for themselves in the area around Jerusalem.

³⁰So, the priests and Levites made themselves pure in a ceremony. Then they also made the people, the gates, and the wall of Jerusalem pure in a ceremony.

³¹I told the leaders of Judah to go up and stand on top of the wall. I also chose two large singing groups to give thanks to God. One group was to start going up on top of the wall on the right side, toward the Ash Pile Gate. ³²Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah followed those singers. ³³Also following them were Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. ³⁵And some of the priests with trumpets also followed them up to the wall. Also Zechariah followed them. (Zechariah was the son of Jonathan, who was the son of Shemaiah, who was the son of Mattaniah, who was the son of Micaiah, who was the son of Zaccur, who was the son of Asaph.) ³⁶There were also Asaph's

brothers, who were Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They had the musical instruments that David, man of God, had made. Ezra the teacher led the group of people that were there to dedicate the wall. ³⁷They went to the Fountain Gate. They walked up the stairs all the way to the City of David.* They were on top of the city wall. They walked over the house of David and went toward the Water Gate.

³⁸The second group of singers started out in the other direction, to the left. I followed them as they went up to the top of the wall. Half of the people also followed them. They went past the Tower of Ovens to the Broad Wall. ³⁹Then they went over these gates: the Gate of Ephraim, the Old Gate, and the Fish Gate. And they went over the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred. They went as far as the Sheep Gate. They stopped at the Guard Gate. ⁴⁰Then the two singing groups went to their places in God's temple.* And I stood in my place. And half the officials stood in their places in the temple. ⁴¹Then these priests stood in their places: Eliakim, Maaseiah, Mijamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. Those priests had their trumpets with them. ⁴²Then these priests stood in their places in the temple: Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer.

Then two singing groups began singing with Jezrahiah leading them. ⁴³So, on that special day, the priests offered many sacrifices.* Everyone was very happy. God had made everyone happy. Even the women and children were excited and happy. People far away could hear the happy sounds coming from Jerusalem.

⁴⁴Men were chosen to be in charge of the storerooms on that day. People brought their firstfruits and a tenth of their crops. So the men in charge put those things in the storerooms. The Jewish people were very happy about the priests and Levites on duty. So they brought many things to be put in the

City of David The southeastern and oldest part of the city of Jerusalem.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually, it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

cymbals A pair of metal platters that are hit against each other to make a loud sound.

lyres An instrument with several strings, like a harp.

storerooms. ⁴⁵The priests and Levites did their work for their God. They did the ceremonies that made people pure. And the singers and gatekeepers did their part. They did everything that David and Solomon had commanded. ⁴⁶(Long ago, in the days of David, Asaph had been the director. And he had many songs of praise and thanks to God.)

⁴⁷So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all the people of Israel gave every day to support the singers and gatekeepers. The people also set aside the money for the other Levites. And the Levites set aside the money for the descendants* of Aaron (*the priests*).

Nehemiah's Last Commands

13 On that day, the Book of Moses was read out loud so all the people could hear. They found this law written in the Book of Moses: No Ammonite person and no Moabite person would be permitted to join in the meetings with God. ²That law was written because those people didn't give the people of Israel food and water. And those people had paid Balaam to say a curse* against the people of Israel. But our God changed that curse and made it a blessing for us. ³So when the people of Israel heard that law, they obeyed it. They separated themselves from the people that were descendants* of foreigners.

⁴⁻⁵But, before that happened, Eliashib had given a room in the temple* to Tobiah. Eliashib was the priest in charge of the storerooms in God's temple. And Eliashib was a close friend of Tobiah. That room had been used for storing the grain offerings, incense, and the temple dishes and things. They also kept the tenth of grain, new wine, and oil for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers in that room. And they also kept the gifts for the priests in that room. But Eliashib gave that room to Tobiah.

⁶I was not in Jerusalem while all of this was happening. I had gone back to the king of Babylon. I went back to Babylon in the 32nd year that Artaxerxes was king of Babylon.*

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.

curse To ask for bad things to happen to someone.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

32nd year ... Babylon That is, 432 B.C.

Later, I asked the king for permission to go back to Jerusalem. ⁷So I came back to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem I heard about the sad thing that Eliashib had done. Eliashib had given Tobiah a room in the temple* of our God! ⁸I was very angry about what Eliashib had done. So I threw all of Tobiah's things out of the room. ⁹I gave commands for those rooms to be made pure and clean. Then I put the temple dishes and things, the grain offerings, and the incense back into those rooms.

¹⁰I also heard that the people had not given the Levites their share. So the Levites and singers had gone back to work in their own fields. ¹¹So I told the officials that they were wrong. I asked them, "Why didn't you take care of God's temple*?" Then I called all Levites together. I told them to go back to their places and duties in the temple. ¹²Then, everyone in Judah brought their tenth of grain, new wine, and oil to the temple. Those things were put into the storerooms.

¹³I put these men in charge of the storerooms: Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the teacher, and a Levite named Pedaiah. And I made Hanan son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, their helper. I knew I could trust these men. They were responsible for giving the supplies to their relatives.

¹⁴God, please remember me for these things I have done. And don't forget all I have faithfully done for the temple of my God and for its services.

¹⁵In those days in Judah, I saw people working on the Sabbath* day. I saw people pressing grapes to make wine. I saw people bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys. I saw people carrying grapes, figs, and all kinds of things in the city. They were bringing all these things into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them about this. I told them they must not sell food on the Sabbath day.

¹⁶There were some men from the city of Tyre living in Jerusalem. Those men were bringing fish and all kinds of things into Jerusalem and selling them on the Sabbath* day. And the Jews were buying those things.

Sabbath Saturday, a special day of rest and worship for Jews.

¹⁷I told the important people of Judah that they were wrong. I said to those important people, “You are doing a very bad thing. You are ruining the Sabbath. You are making the Sabbath day like it was any other day. ¹⁸You know that your ancestors* did the same things. That is why our God brought all the troubles and disaster to us and to this city. Now you people are making it so more of these bad things will happen to Israel. Why? Because you are ruining the Sabbath day and making it like it is not an important day.”

¹⁹So, this is what I did: Every Friday evening, just before dark, I commanded the gatekeepers to shut and lock the gates to Jerusalem. They were not to be opened until the Sabbath* day was over. I put some of my own men at the gates. Those men were commanded to make sure that no load was brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.

²⁰One or two times businessmen and merchants* had to stay the night outside Jerusalem. ²¹But I warned those businessmen and merchants. I said to them, “Don’t stay the night in front of the wall. If you do that again, I will arrest you.” So from that time on they didn’t come on the Sabbath* day to sell their things.

²²Then I commanded the Levites to make themselves pure. After they did that, they were to go and guard the gates. This was done to make sure the Sabbath* day was kept a holy day.

God, please remember me for doing these things. Be kind to me and show me your great love!

²³In those days I also noticed that some Jewish men had married women from the countries of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

²⁴And half of the children from those marriages didn’t know how to speak the Jewish language. Those children spoke the language of Ashdod, Ammon, or Moab. ²⁵So I told those men that they were wrong. I said bad things to them. I hit some of those men, and I pulled out their hair. I forced them to make a promise in God’s name. I said to them, “You must not marry the daughters of those people. Don’t let the daughters of those foreign people marry your sons. And don’t let your daughters marry the sons of those foreign people. ²⁶You know that marriages like this caused Solomon to sin. In all the many nations, there was not a king as great as Solomon. God loved Solomon. And God made Solomon king over the whole nation of Israel. But even Solomon was made to sin because of foreign women. ²⁷And now, we hear that you also are doing this terrible sin. You are not being true to God. You are marrying foreign women.”

²⁸Joiada was the son of Eliashib the high priest. One of Joiada’s sons was a son-in-law of Sanballat from Horon. I forced that man to leave this place. I forced him to run away.

²⁹My God, punish those people. They made the priesthood unclean. They treated it like it was not important. They did not obey the agreement that you made with the priests and Levites. ³⁰So I made the priests and Levites clean and pure. I took away all the foreigners and the strange things they taught. And I gave the Levites and priests their own duties and responsibilities. ³¹And I made sure that people will bring gifts of wood and firstfruits at the right times.

My God, remember me for doing these good things.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Sabbath Saturday, a special day of rest and worship for Jews.

merchants A person who earns his living by buying and selling things.