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Language: English

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PDF generated on 2017-07-07 from source files dated 2017-07-07.

9417f999-1fb5-525b-a123-d5d84a7f35e1

ISBN: 978-1-5313-1294-7

## Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a Jew, but he held an important position in Persia. He was faithful in his service to the Persian king. But one day Nehemiah heard about how the wall around Jerusalem was falling apart. He began to worry about his people, the Jews now living in Judah. He wanted to help them. And Nehemiah was just the kind of leader God uses for such hard times.

Nehemiah asked the king and queen of Persia to let him go to Jerusalem. They had such great respect for him that all they asked was how long he would be gone. Nehemiah had been very successful in Persia. But there would be a huge challenge waiting for him in Jerusalem. He was not a prophet or a priest. He was a community leader. But Nehemiah's community in Jerusalem was falling apart, just like the wall around their city.

Nehemiah returned to the poor Jewish community in Jerusalem. He organized the people, and they began rebuilding the wall around the city. But they still had trouble. Some of the groups living around Jerusalem hated the Jews. They did not like the idea of Nehemiah putting up the walls of the city again. They did all they could to stop him. But God had given Nehemiah great ability. No one could keep him from doing what God wanted. He was successful in Jerusalem, just as he had been in Persia. Under his leadership, the people rebuilt their wall in 52 days!

After the wall was built, Nehemiah continued to lead his people. He made a plan to fill the city with people again. He placed guards at the city gates. He called on Levites to serve in the Temple. And he chose many other officials. As the governor of Judah, he also made good changes outside the city.

The book of Nehemiah finishes the story that started in the book of Ezra. In fact, Ezra plays a leading part in chapter 8 of Nehemiah. Both of these leaders had important roles in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. But their roles were different. Ezra led the people of Jerusalem in worship and taught them the Scriptures. Nehemiah was the one who rebuilt the walls and made the city a safe place to live. He did much to improve the lives of his people. And he helped to make the Temple the centre of Jewish life again. All of this made Jerusalem a better place for Ezra to do his part as a religious leader and teacher of the Law.

In the book of Nehemiah, this great leader...

Rebuilds the wall around Jerusalem (1:1 – 7:73)

Reorganizes the Jewish people (8:1 – 10:39)

Moves new people into Jerusalem and tells all the Israelites how to live (11:1 – 13:31)

### Nehemiah's Prayer

**1** These are the words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

I, Nehemiah, was in the capital city of Susa in the month of Kislev. This was in the twentieth year\* that Artaxerxes was

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\*1:1 *Kislev ... twentieth year* This was about December, 444 BC.

king. While I was in Susa, <sup>2</sup>one of my brothers named Hanani and some other men came from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had escaped captivity and still lived in Judah. I also asked them about the city of Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>They answered, “Nehemiah, the Jews who escaped captivity and are in the land of Judah are having all kinds of trouble. And they feel ashamed when people see the wall of Jerusalem still in ruins and the gates destroyed by fire.”

<sup>4</sup>When I heard this about the people of Jerusalem and about the wall, I sat down and cried. I was very sad. I fasted and prayed to the God of heaven for several days. <sup>5</sup>Then I prayed:

“LORD, God of heaven, you are the great and powerful God. You are the God who keeps his agreement of love with people who love you and obey your commands.

<sup>6</sup>“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 Israelites. I confess the sins we Israelites 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. <sup>7</sup>We Israelites have treated you very badly. We have not obeyed the commands, rules and laws you gave your servant Moses.

<sup>8</sup>“Please remember the teaching you gave your servant Moses. You said to him, ‘If you Israelites are not faithful, I will scatter you among the other nations.’ <sup>9</sup>But if you come back to me and obey my commands, 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.

<sup>10</sup>“The Israelites are your servants and your people. You used your great power and rescued them.

<sup>11</sup>So, Lord, please listen to my prayer. And listen to the prayers of all your other servants who are happy to honour you. Help me today as I ask the king for help. Make him pleased with me so that he will be kind and give me what I ask for.”

At that time I was the king’s assistant in charge of his wine.<sup>†</sup>

### The King Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

**2** In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year<sup>‡</sup> of King Artaxerxes, some wine was brought to the king. I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never before been sad when I was with him, but now I was sad. <sup>2</sup>So the king asked me, “Are you sick? Why do you look sad? I think your heart is full of sadness.”

Then I was very afraid. <sup>3</sup>But 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.”

<sup>4</sup>Then the king said to me, “What do you want me to do?”

Before I answered, I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>Then 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

<sup>†</sup>1:11 *assistant ... wine* This important official was always close to the king. He prepared and tasted the king’s wine to make sure it was safe to drink.

<sup>‡</sup>2:1 *twentieth year* That is, 443 BC.

ancestors are buried. I want to go there and rebuild that city.”

<sup>6</sup>The king and the queen who was sitting next to him 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. <sup>7</sup>I 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 for the governors of the area west of the Euphrates River. I need them so that the governors will give me permission to pass safely through their lands on my way to Judah. <sup>8</sup>I also need timber for the heavy wooden beams for the gates around the fortress of the Temple, for the city wall and for my house. So I need a letter from you to Asaph, who is in charge of your forests.”

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

<sup>9</sup>So I went to the governors of the area west of the Euphrates River and gave them the letters from the king. The king had also sent army officers and soldiers on horses with me. <sup>10</sup>Sanballat from Horon and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about what I was doing. They were very upset and angry that someone had come to help the Israelites.

### Nehemiah Inspects the Walls of Jerusalem

<sup>11</sup>I went to Jerusalem and stayed there three days. <sup>12</sup>Then at night I started out with a few men. I had not said anything to anyone about what my God had put on my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no horses with me except the horse I was riding. <sup>13</sup>While it was dark I went out through the Valley Gate. I rode towards the Dragon Well and the Ash Pile Gate.

I was inspecting the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and the gates in the wall that had been burned with fire. <sup>14</sup>Then I rode on towards the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool. As I got close, I could see there was not enough room for my horse to get through. <sup>15</sup>So I went up the valley in the dark, inspecting the wall. Finally, I turned back and went back in through the Valley Gate. <sup>16</sup>None of the city officials knew where I had gone. They didn’t know what I was doing. I had not yet said anything to any of the other Jews—the priests, the leaders, the officials, or any of the others who would be doing the work.

<sup>17</sup>Then I said to them, “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 rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Then we will not be ashamed any more.”

<sup>18</sup>I also told them that my God had been kind to me. I told them what the king had said to me. Then they answered, “Let’s start to work, now!” So we began this good work. <sup>19</sup>But Sanballat from Horon, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard that we were building again. They insulted us and laughed at us. They said, “What are you doing? Are you turning against the king?”

<sup>20</sup>But this is what I said to them: “The God of heaven will help us succeed. We are God’s servants, and we will rebuild this city. You cannot help us in this work because none of your family lived here in Jerusalem. You don’t own any of this land, and you have no right to be in this place.”

### Builders of the Wall

**3** The high priest Eliashib and the priests who served with him began rebuilding the wall. First, they built the

Sheep Gate. They prayed to dedicate this entrance to God. Then they put the gates in place. They worked on the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. They prayed to dedicate all this work to God.

<sup>2</sup>The 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.

<sup>3</sup>The sons of a man named Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They set the beams and the gates in place on the wall. Then they put the locks and bolts on the gates.

<sup>4</sup>Meremoth son of Uriah repaired the next section of the wall. (Uriah was the son of Hakkoz.)

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

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

<sup>5</sup>The men from Tekoa repaired the next section of the wall, but the leaders from Tekoa refused to work for Nehemiah their governor.

<sup>6</sup>Joiada and Meshullam repaired the Old Gate. Joiada is the son of Paseah, and Meshullam is the son of Besodeiah. They set the beams in place. They set the gates on the hinges. Then they put the locks and bolts on the gates.

<sup>7</sup>The men from Gibeon and Mizpah repaired the next section of the wall. Melatiah from Gibeon and 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.

<sup>8</sup>Uzziel son of Harhaiah repaired the next section of the wall. Uzziel was a goldsmith. Hananiah was one of the perfume makers. These men built and re-

paired Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

<sup>9</sup>Rephaiah son of Hur repaired the next section of the wall. Rephaiah was the governor of half of Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>Jedaiah son of Harumaph repaired the next section of the wall. Jedaiah repaired the wall next to his own house. Hattush son of Hashabneiah repaired the next section. <sup>11</sup>Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired the next section. They also repaired Oven Tower.

<sup>12</sup>Shallum son of Hallohesh repaired the next section of the wall. His daughters helped him. Shallum was the governor of the other half of Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the people who live in the town of Zanoah. They repaired the Valley Gate. They set the gates on their hinges. Then they put the locks and bolts on the gates. They also repaired 440 metres<sup>†</sup> of the wall. They worked on the wall all the way to the Ash Pile Gate.

<sup>14</sup>Malkijah son of Recab repaired the Ash Pile Gate. Malkijah was the governor of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He set the gates on the hinges. Then he put the locks and bolts on the gates.

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

<sup>16</sup>Nehemiah son of Azbuk repaired the next section. This Nehemiah was the governor of half the district of Beth Zur. He made repairs up to a place that is

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<sup>†</sup>3:13 **440 metres** Literally, "1000 cubits".

across from the tombs of David. And he worked as far as the man-made pool and the House of Heroes.

<sup>17</sup> The men from the tribe of Levi repaired the next section. They worked under Rehum son of Bani. Hashabiah repaired the next section. Hashabiah was governor of half the district of Keilah. He made repairs for his own district.

<sup>18</sup> Their brothers repaired the next section. They worked under Binnui son of Henadad. Binnui was the governor of the other half of the district of Keilah.

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

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin and Hasshub repaired the wall in front of their own house. And Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, repaired the wall next to his house.

<sup>24</sup> Binnui son of Henadad repaired the section of wall from Azariah's house to the bend in the wall and then to the corner.

<sup>25</sup> Palal 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.

<sup>26</sup> The Temple servants lived on Ophel Hill. They repaired the next section all

the way to the east side of the Water Gate and the tower near it.

<sup>27</sup> The men from Tekoa repaired the rest of that section from the big tower all the way to the Ophel wall.

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

<sup>30</sup> Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun son of Zalaph repaired the rest of that section of wall. (Hanun was Zalaph's sixth son.)

Meshullam son of Berekiah repaired the section in front of his house. <sup>31</sup> Malkijah repaired the next section of wall all the way to the houses of the Temple servants and the merchants. That is across from the Inspection Gate. Malkijah repaired the section all the way to the room over the corner of the wall. Malkijah was a goldsmith. <sup>32</sup> The goldsmiths and the merchants repaired the section of wall from that corner to the Sheep Gate.

### Sanballat and Tobiah

**4** When Sanballat heard that we were building the wall of Jerusalem, he was very angry and upset. He started making fun of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> Sanballat was with his friends and the Samaritan army. He said to them, "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 a day! Do they think they can dig those burnt stones out of the piles of ashes and make them good as new?"

<sup>§</sup>3:22 *that area* Or possibly, "the Jordan Valley".

<sup>3</sup>Tobiah the Ammonite was with Sanballat. Tobiah said, “Look at what they’re building! Is that a wall? If even a little fox climbed up on it, the stones would fall down!”

<sup>4</sup>Nehemiah prayed, “Our God, listen to our prayer. These men hate us. They are insulting us. Make the bad things they are wishing for us happen to them. Make them suffer the shame we have had by being taken away as captives. <sup>5</sup>Don’t cover up their guilt or forget the sins they have done. Their insults have discouraged the builders.”

<sup>6</sup>We continued to rebuild the wall. Before long, it was halfway up all the way around the city. We were able to do this much because the people worked with all their heart.

<sup>7</sup>But Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men from Ashdod were very angry. They had heard that the people were continuing to work on the walls of Jerusalem. They had heard that the people were repairing the holes in the wall. <sup>8</sup>So all these men got together and made plans to stir up trouble against Jerusalem. They planned to come and fight against the city. <sup>9</sup>But we prayed to our God. And we put guards on the walls to watch for the enemy day and night.

<sup>10</sup>During this time, the people of Judah began to complain. They said, “The workers are becoming tired. There is too much dirt and rubbish in the way. How can we go on building this wall?” <sup>11</sup>And our enemies were 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.”

<sup>12</sup>Then the Jews living among our enemies came and warned us again and again. They said, “They are going to attack us from every side!”

<sup>13</sup>So 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. <sup>14</sup>After looking over everything, I stood up and spoke to the leaders, the officials and the rest of the people. I said, “Don’t be afraid of our enemies. Remember the Lord, who is great and powerful! You must fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters! You must fight for your wives and your homes!”

<sup>15</sup>Then our enemies heard that we knew what they were planning. They knew that God had ruined their plans. So we all went back to work on the wall. Everyone went back to their own place and did their part. <sup>16</sup>From that day on, only half of my men worked on the wall. The other half of them were on guard, ready with spears, shields, bows and armour. The army officers stood behind all the people of Judah <sup>17</sup>who were building the wall. Their helpers had their tools in one hand and a weapon in the other hand. <sup>18</sup>Each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. The man whose job was to blow the trumpet to warn the people stayed next to me. <sup>19</sup>Then I spoke to the leaders, the officials and the rest of the people. I said, “This is a very big job, and we are spread out along the wall. This puts us far away from each other. <sup>20</sup>So if you hear the warning trumpet, run to where the sound is coming from. We will all meet there together, and our God will fight for us!”

<sup>21</sup>So we continued to work on the wall of Jerusalem, with half the men holding spears. We worked from the first light of the morning until the stars came out at night.

<sup>22</sup>At 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.”<sup>23</sup> So none of us took off our clothes—not me, not my brothers, not my men and not the guards. Each of us had our weapons ready at all times, even when we went to get water.

### Nehemiah Helps the Poor

**5** Many of the poor people began to complain against their fellow Jews.<sup>2</sup> Some of them were saying, “We have large families. We must get more grain if we are going to have enough to eat and stay alive.”

<sup>3</sup> Other people were saying, “This famine is forcing us to risk our fields, vineyards and homes to get loans for grain.”

<sup>4</sup> And still other people were saying, “We have to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. But we cannot afford it, so we have to borrow money to pay the tax.”<sup>5</sup> We are as good as the others. 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 have already lost our fields and vineyards. Other people own them now.”

<sup>6</sup> When I heard their complaints, I was very angry.<sup>7</sup> After I calmed myself down, I went to the leaders 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.<sup>8</sup> I said to them, “Our fellow Jews 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!”

The rich people and officials kept quiet. They had no answer.<sup>9</sup> So I continued speaking. I said, “What you people are doing is not right! You know that you should fear and respect our God. You should not do the shameful things other people do!”<sup>10</sup> I have been lending money and grain to the people, and my relatives and workers have done the same. But let’s stop forcing them to pay interest on these loans.<sup>11</sup> You must give their fields, vineyards, olive fields and houses back to them right now! And you must give back the interest you charged them—the one percent for the money, grain, new wine and oil that you lent them.”

<sup>12</sup> Then the leaders and the officials said, “We will give it back and not 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.<sup>13</sup> Then I shook out the folds of my clothes. I said, “God will do the same thing to everyone, if you do not keep your promise. God will shake you out of your houses, and you will lose everything you have worked for!”

When I finished, all the people agreed. They all said, “Amen” and praised the LORD. So the people did as they had promised.

<sup>14</sup> I was governor of the land of Judah for twelve years—from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was king.\*\* During all that time, my relatives and I never accepted the food that the governor has the right to demand from the people.<sup>15</sup> But the governors who ruled before me made life hard for the people. They made the

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\*\*5:14 *the twentieth year ... king* This was from 444-432 BC.

people give them enough food and wine for every day, in addition to 40 coins<sup>††</sup> of silver. The leaders under these governors also ruled over the people and made life even harder. But I respected and feared God, so I did not do things like that. <sup>16</sup> I 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.

<sup>17</sup> Also, I regularly fed 150 Jews who were always welcome at my table, and I fed those who came to us from the nations around us. <sup>18</sup> Every day I prepared this much food for the people who ate at my table: one ox, six good sheep and different kinds of birds. Every ten days all kinds of wine were brought to my table. But I never demanded that they give me the food that was allowed for the governor. I knew that the work the people were doing was very hard. <sup>19</sup> My God, 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 repaired all the holes in the wall, but we had not yet set the gates in place. <sup>2</sup> So 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.

<sup>3</sup> So I sent messengers to them with this answer: "I am doing important work, so I cannot come down. I don't want the work to stop just so I can come down and meet with you."

<sup>4</sup> Sanballat and Geshem sent the same message to me four times, and I sent the same answer back to them each time.

<sup>5</sup> The fifth time Sanballat sent his helper to me with the same message. And in his hand, he had a letter that was not sealed.

<sup>6</sup> This is what the letter said:

"There is a rumour 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. This is why you are building the wall of Jerusalem. People are also saying that you will be the new king of the Jews. <sup>7</sup> And the rumour is that you have chosen prophets to announce in Jerusalem: "There is a king in Judah!"

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

<sup>8</sup> So I sent this answer back to Sanballat: "Nothing you are saying is happening. You are just making all that up in your own head."

<sup>9</sup> Our enemies were only trying to make us afraid. They were thinking to themselves, "The Jews will be afraid and too weak to keep on working. Then the wall will not be finished."

But I prayed, "God, make me strong."

<sup>10</sup> One day I went to the house of a man named Shemaiah son of Delaiah. Delaiah was the son of Mehetabel. She-maiah had to stay in his house. He said, "Nehemiah, let's meet in God's Temple. Let's go inside the Holy Place<sup>‡‡</sup> and lock the doors.

Men are coming to kill you.

<sup>††</sup>5:15 **40 coins** Literally, "40 *shekels*."

<sup>‡‡</sup>6:10 **Holy Place** Literally, "palace". Only priests were allowed to go into this part of the Temple.

Tonight they are coming to kill you.”

<sup>11</sup> But I said to Shemaiah, “Should a man like me run away? You know that an ordinary man like me cannot go into the Holy Place without being put to death. I will not go!”

<sup>12</sup> I knew that God had not sent Shemaiah. I knew that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him to do that. <sup>13</sup> They hired Shemaiah to scare me and make me sin. They were planning those bad things against me so that they could shame me.

<sup>14</sup> My God, please remember Tobiah and Sanballat and the bad things they have done. Also remember the prophet Noadiah and the other prophets like her who have been trying to frighten me.

### The Wall Is Finished

<sup>15</sup> So the wall of Jerusalem was completed on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul.<sup>¶</sup> It had taken 52 days to finish building the wall. <sup>16</sup> Then all our enemies heard that we had completed the wall, and all the nations around us saw that it was finished. So they lost their courage, because they understood that this work had been done with the help of our God.

<sup>17</sup> Also in those days, the leaders of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and he was answering them. <sup>18</sup> Like many people in Judah, these leaders had promised to be loyal to Tobiah because of his Jewish relatives: his father-in-law was Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. <sup>19</sup> So these people kept telling me how good Tobiah was. And they kept telling Tobiah what I was doing. And Tobiah sent me letters to make me afraid.

**7** After we finished rebuilding the wall and set the gates in place, we chose the men who would guard the gates and the men to sing in the Temple and help the priests. <sup>2</sup> Next, I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem. I chose another man named Hananiah to be the commander of the fortress. I picked Hanani because he was a very honest man, and he feared God more than most people do. <sup>3</sup> Then 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 who live in Jerusalem as guards. Put some of them at special places to guard the city, and put the other people near their own houses.”

### The List of Captives Who Returned

<sup>4</sup> Now the city was large and there was plenty of room. But there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. <sup>5</sup> So my God put it in my heart to have all the people meet together. I called together all the leaders, the officials and the common people. I did this so that I could make a list of all the families. I found the family lists<sup>§§</sup> of the people who had been the first to return from captivity. This is what I found written there:

<sup>6</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken many people from Judah to Babylon as captives. They now returned to Jerusalem and other places in Judah, everyone to their own towns. <sup>7</sup> These are the leaders of the people who returned: Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. And

<sup>¶</sup>6:15 *Elul* That is, August–September, 443 BC.

<sup>§§</sup>7:5 *family lists* See Ezra 2.

here is a list showing how many men returned in each Israelite family group:

<sup>8</sup> the descendants of Parosh: 2172

<sup>9</sup> the descendants of Shephatiah: 372

<sup>10</sup> the descendants of Arah: 652

<sup>11</sup> the descendants of Pahath Moab of the family of Jeshua and Joab: 2818

<sup>12</sup> the descendants of Elam: 1254

<sup>13</sup> the descendants of Zattu: 845

<sup>14</sup> the descendants of Zaccai: 760

<sup>15</sup> the descendants of Binnui: 648

<sup>16</sup> the descendants of Bebai: 628

<sup>17</sup> the descendants of Azgad: 2322

<sup>18</sup> the descendants of Adonikam: 667

<sup>19</sup> the descendants of Bigvai: 2067

<sup>20</sup> the descendants of Adin: 655

<sup>21</sup> the descendants of Ater through the family of Hezekiah: 98

<sup>22</sup> the descendants of Hashum: 328

<sup>23</sup> the descendants of Bezai: 324

<sup>24</sup> the descendants of Hariph: 112

<sup>25</sup> the descendants of Gibeon: 95

<sup>26</sup> from the towns of Bethlehem and Ne-tophah: 188

<sup>27</sup> from the town of Anathoth: 128

<sup>28</sup> from the town of Beth Azmaveth: 42

<sup>29</sup> from the towns of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth: 743

<sup>30</sup> from the towns of Ramah and Geba: 621

<sup>31</sup> from the town of Micmash: 122

<sup>32</sup> from the towns of Bethel and Ai: 123

<sup>33</sup> from the other town of Nebo: 52

<sup>34</sup> from the other town of Elam: 1254

<sup>35</sup> from the town of Harim: 320

<sup>36</sup> from the town of Jericho: 345

<sup>37</sup> from the towns of Lod, Hadid and Ono: 721

<sup>38</sup> from the town of Senaah: 3930

<sup>39</sup> These are the priests:

the descendants of Jedaiah through the family of Jeshua: 973

<sup>40</sup> the descendants of Immer: 1052

<sup>41</sup> the descendants of Pashhur: 1247

<sup>42</sup> the descendants of Harim: 1017

<sup>43</sup> These are the people from the tribe of Levi:

the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel through the family of Hodeiah\*: 74

<sup>44</sup> These are the singers:

the descendants of Asaph: 148

<sup>45</sup> These are the gatekeepers:

the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai: 138

<sup>46</sup> These are the special Temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

<sup>47</sup> Keros, Sia, Padon,

<sup>48</sup> Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmal,

<sup>49</sup> Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,

<sup>50</sup> Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,

<sup>51</sup> Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,

<sup>52</sup> Besai, Meunim, Nephussim,

<sup>53</sup> Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

<sup>54</sup> Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

<sup>55</sup> Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

<sup>56</sup> Neziah and Hatipha.

<sup>57</sup> These are Solomon's servants whose descendants returned:

Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,

<sup>58</sup> Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

<sup>59</sup> Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth Hazzebaim and Amon.

<sup>60</sup> The total of the descendants of the Temple servants and of Solomon's servants: 392

<sup>61-62</sup> These people came to Jerusalem from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer:

the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda: 642

But none of these could prove that they were descendants from the family of Israel.

<sup>63</sup> There were also these three families of priests:

the descendants of Hobaiiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai, who was given this name be-

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\*7:43 *Hodeiah* Or "Hodaviah".

cause he married a daughter of Barzilai from Gilead.

<sup>64</sup>These three families searched for their family histories, but they could not find them. So they were disqualified from serving as priests. <sup>65</sup>The governor ordered them not to eat any of the holy food until a priest could use the Urim and Thummim to ask God what to do.

<sup>66</sup>All together, there were 42,360 people in the group who returned. <sup>67</sup>This is not counting their 7337 men and women slaves. They also had 245 men and women singers with them. <sup>68</sup>They had 736 horses, 245 mules, <sup>69</sup>435 camels and 6720 donkeys.

<sup>70</sup>Some of the family leaders gave money to support the work. The governor gave 8 kilogrammes<sup>†</sup> of gold to the treasury. He also gave 50 bowls and 530 robes for the priests. <sup>71</sup>The family leaders gave 170 kilogrammes<sup>‡</sup> of gold to the treasury to support the work. They also gave 1260 kilogrammes<sup>¶</sup> of silver. <sup>72</sup>All together the other people gave 170 kilogrammes of gold, 1100 kilogrammes<sup>§</sup> of silver and 67 robes for the priests.

<sup>73</sup>So the priests, the people from the tribe of Levi, the gatekeepers, the singers and the Temple servants settled down in their own towns. And all the other Israelites settled down in their own towns. By the seventh month<sup>\*\*</sup> of the year, all the Israelites had settled down in their own towns.

### Ezra Reads the Law

**8** So all the Israelites met together in the seventh month of the year. They

were united and in complete agreement. They all met together in the open place in front of the Water Gate. All the people asked Ezra the teacher to bring out the *Book of the Law of Moses*, which the LORD had given to the Israelites. <sup>2</sup>So Ezra the priest brought the Law before those who had met together. This was on the first day of the month.<sup>††</sup> It was the seventh month of the year. Men, women and anyone old enough to listen and understand were at the meeting. <sup>3</sup>Ezra read the Law in a loud voice from early morning until noon. He 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*.

<sup>4</sup>Ezra stood on a high wooden stage. It had been built just for this special time. On his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maa-seiah. And on his left side stood Pedai-ah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

<sup>5</sup>So Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them on the high stage. As he opened the book, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup>Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people held up their hands and said, "Amen! Amen!" Then all the people bowed down and put their faces low to the ground, and they worshipped the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>These men from the tribe of Levi taught the people about the Law as they

<sup>†</sup>7:70 **8 kilogrammes** Literally, "1000 drachmas".

<sup>‡</sup>7:71 **170 kilogrammes** Literally, "20,000 drachmas".

<sup>¶</sup>7:71 **1260 kilogrammes** Literally, "2200 minas".

<sup>§</sup>7:72 **1100 kilogrammes** Literally, "2000 minas".

<sup>\*\*</sup>7:73 **seventh month** That is, September–October. Also in 8:1,14-15.

<sup>††</sup>8:2 **first day of the month** This was a special day of worship. The people met together and shared a fellowship meal.

were all standing there. The Levites were Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah. <sup>8</sup>They read the *Book of the Law of God*. They made it easy to understand, and explained what it meant. They did this so that the people could understand what was being read.

<sup>9</sup>Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher, and the Levites who were teaching the people spoke. They said, "Today is a special day<sup>‡‡</sup> to the LORD your God. Don't be sad and cry." They said this because all the people had begun to cry as they were listening to the messages of God in the Law.

<sup>10</sup>Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy the good food and sweet drinks. Give some food and drinks to those who didn't prepare any food. Today is a special day to our Lord. Don't be sad, because the joy of the LORD will make you strong."

<sup>11</sup>The Levites helped the people to calm down. They said, "Be quiet, because this is a special day. Don't be sad."

<sup>12</sup>Then all the people went to eat the special meal. They shared their food and drinks. They celebrated that special day. They were happy that they could hear the reading of God's Law and were now able to understand it.

<sup>13</sup>Then on the second day of the month,<sup>¶</sup> 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.

<sup>14-15</sup>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 Israelites must go to Jerusalem to celebrate a special festival. They must live in temporary shelters. And they must make sure that all the people in Jerusalem and their other towns hear this message: "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 the branches to make temporary shelters. Do what the Law says."

<sup>16</sup>So the people went out and got 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 courtyard, in the open place near the Water Gate and near Ephraim Gate. <sup>17</sup>The whole group that had returned from captivity built shelters, and they lived in them. Since the days of Joshua son of Nun up until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated the Festival of Shelters like this. Everyone was very happy!

<sup>18</sup>Ezra read to them from the *Book of the Law* every day of the festival from the first day of the festival to the last day. The Israelites celebrated the festival for seven days. Then on the eighth day, the people met together for a special meeting, as the Law says.

### The People of Israel Confess Their Sins

**9** Then on the twenty-fourth day of that same month, the Israelites came together for a day of fasting. They wore rags and put dirt on their heads to show they were sad and upset. <sup>2</sup>Those people who were true Israelites had separated themselves from all foreigners. The Is-

<sup>‡‡</sup>**8:9 special day** The first and second days of each month were special days of worship. The people met together and shared a fellowship meal.

<sup>¶</sup>**8:13 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.

raelites stood and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup>They stood there for about three 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.

<sup>4</sup>Then 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. <sup>5</sup>And these Levites called out to the people: Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah. They said, “Stand up and praise the LORD your God! He has always lived and will live forever.”

### The People Pray

“God, may everyone praise your glorious name,  
which is greater than all our blessing and praise.

<sup>6</sup>You alone are the LORD.  
You made the sky, the heavens,  
and all the stars.  
You made the earth  
and everything on it.  
You made the seas  
and everything in them.  
You give life to everything.  
All the heavenly angels bow down and  
worship you.

<sup>7</sup>“You are the LORD,  
the God who chose Abram.  
You led him from Ur in Babylonia.  
You changed his name to Abraham.

<sup>8</sup>You saw he was faithful to you,  
and you made an agreement with him.  
You promised to give him the land of the  
Canaanites, Hittites,  
Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and  
Girgashites.

You promised that his descendants  
would live in that land.

And now you have done what you  
promised

because you are faithful to do what you  
say.

<sup>9</sup>“You saw our ancestors suffering in  
Egypt  
and heard them call for help by the Red  
Sea.

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>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 in the raging  
waters.

<sup>12</sup>With the tall cloud, you led them by  
day,

and at night you used the cloud of fire.  
That is the way you lit their path  
and showed them where to go.

<sup>13</sup>Then you came down to Mount Sinai.  
You spoke to them from heaven.

You gave them fair rules and true  
teachings.

You gave them laws and commands that  
were good.

<sup>14</sup>You told them about your special day  
of rest, the Sabbath.

Through your servant Moses,  
you gave them commands, laws and  
teachings.

<sup>15</sup>They were hungry,  
so you gave them food from heaven.

They were thirsty,  
so you gave them water from a rock.

You told them,  
‘Come, take this land.’

You used your power,  
and took the land for them.

<sup>16</sup>“But our ancestors became proud and  
stubborn

and refused to obey your commands.

<sup>17</sup>They refused to listen;

they forgot the amazing things you did  
for them.

They became stubborn.

They decided to return to Egypt and be-  
come slaves again.

“But you are a forgiving God!

You are kind and merciful.

You are patient and full of unfailing love.

So you didn’t leave them!

<sup>18</sup>You didn’t leave them even when they  
made gold calves and said,

‘These are the gods that led us out of  
Egypt.’

<sup>19</sup>“But because you are so kind,  
you did not leave them in the desert.

You provided the tall cloud every day  
that showed them the way to go.

And you gave them a fire at night  
that never stopped lighting their path.

<sup>20</sup>You gave them your good Spirit to  
make them wise.

You gave them manna for food.

You gave them water for their thirst.

<sup>21</sup>You took care of them for 40 years;  
they had all they needed in the desert.

Their clothes did not wear out,  
and their feet did not swell and hurt.

<sup>22</sup>“You gave them kingdoms and  
nations,

and you gave them faraway places  
where few people live.

They got the land of King Sihon of  
Heshbon

and the land of King Og of Bashan.

<sup>23</sup>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.

<sup>24</sup>Their 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.

<sup>25</sup>They defeated powerful cities  
and took the fertile land.

They got houses filled with good things  
and wells that had already been 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.

<sup>26</sup>“But then they turned against you  
and threw away your teachings.

They killed your prophets.

Those prophets warned the people to  
come back to you,

but our ancestors said terrible things  
against you.

<sup>27</sup>So you let their enemies have them,  
and their enemies caused them great  
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 they rescued them from their  
enemies.

<sup>28</sup>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.

<sup>29</sup>You warned them to come back,

but they were too proud.

They refused to listen to your  
commands.

If people obey your laws, they will live,

but our ancestors broke your laws.  
 They were stubborn.  
 They turned their backs on you.  
 They refused to listen.  
<sup>30</sup>“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.  
<sup>31</sup>“But you are so kind!  
 You didn’t completely destroy them.  
 You didn’t leave them  
 because you are a kind and merciful  
 God!  
<sup>32</sup>“Our God, you are the great God,  
 the awesome, powerful soldier!  
 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!  
<sup>33</sup>But God, in all that has happened to  
 us, you have been just.  
 You have been faithful to us.  
 We are the ones who have done wrong.  
<sup>34</sup>Our kings, leaders, priests and fathers  
 did not obey your Law.  
 They didn’t listen to your commands;  
 they ignored your warnings.  
<sup>35</sup>Our ancestors didn’t serve you even  
 when they were living in their own  
 kingdom.  
 They didn’t stop doing evil.  
 They enjoyed all the wonderful things  
 you gave them.  
 They enjoyed the rich land and had  
 plenty of room,

but they didn’t stop their evil ways.  
<sup>36</sup>“So now we are slaves in this land  
 that you gave our ancestors to enjoy.  
 It’s a land full of fruit and other good  
 things,  
 but here we are as slaves!  
<sup>37</sup>The land’s wonderful harvest goes to  
 the kings  
 that you put over us because of our sins.  
 They do whatever they want with us and  
 our cattle.  
 And here we suffer in misery.  
<sup>38</sup>“Because of all these things, we  
 are making an agreement that cannot  
 be changed. We are putting this agree-  
 ment in writing. Our leaders, Levites and  
 priests are signing their names to this  
 agreement and sealing it with a seal.”  
**10** These are the names on the  
 sealed agreement:  
 Nehemiah the governor, the son  
 of Hacaliah. Zedekiah, <sup>2</sup>Seraiah,  
 Azariah, Jeremiah, <sup>3</sup>Pashhur,  
 Amariah, Malkijah, <sup>4</sup>Hattush,  
 Shebaniah, Malluch, <sup>5</sup>Harim,  
 Meremoth, Obadiah, <sup>6</sup>Daniel,  
 Ginnethon, Baruch, <sup>7</sup>Meshullam,  
 Abijah, Mijamin, <sup>8</sup>Maaziah, Bilgai  
 and Shemaiah. These were the priests  
 who put their names on the sealed  
 agreement.  
<sup>9</sup>And these are the Levites who put  
 their names on the sealed agreement:  
 Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui from the  
 family of Henadad, Kadmiel, <sup>10</sup>and  
 their brothers: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Ke-  
 lita, Pelaiiah, Hanan, <sup>11</sup>Mica, Rehob,  
 Hashabiah, <sup>12</sup>Zaccur, Sherebiah, She-  
 baniah, <sup>13</sup>Hodiah, Bani and Beninu.  
<sup>14</sup>And these are the names of the lead-  
 ers who put their names on the sealed  
 agreement:  
 Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu,  
 Bani, <sup>15</sup>Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,  
<sup>16</sup>Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, <sup>17</sup>Ater,  
 Hezekiah, Azzur, <sup>18</sup>Hodiah, Hashum,

Bezai, <sup>19</sup>Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, <sup>20</sup>Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, <sup>21</sup>Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, <sup>22</sup>Pelathiah, Hanan, Ananiah, <sup>23</sup>Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, <sup>24</sup>Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, <sup>25</sup>Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, <sup>26</sup>Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, <sup>27</sup>Malluch, Harim and Baanah.

<sup>28-29</sup> And then the rest of the people joined with these leaders, their own relatives. Together they promised to follow the Law that God had given them through his servant Moses. They made this promise with an oath. And they asked God to punish them with a curse if they failed to keep their promise. Those who joined the leaders in making this promise were the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers and Temple servants. With them were all the Israelites who had separated themselves from the people living around them so that they could obey God's Law. These men were joined by their wives and their sons and daughters who were old enough to understand the Law. All these people promised with an oath to carefully obey all the commands, rules and teachings of our Lord GOD.

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

<sup>31</sup> "We promise not to do business on the Sabbath day. Even if the people living around us bring grain or other things to sell, we will not buy them on that day of rest or on any other holy day. Every seventh year,<sup>§§</sup> we will not plant or work the land. And every seventh year, we will cancel every debt that other people owe to us.

<sup>32</sup> "We agree that each of us has the duty to give 5 grammes\* of silver each year for the expenses of the Temple of God. <sup>33</sup> This money will pay for the holy 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 celebrations and other special meeting days. It will pay for the holy offerings and for the sin offerings that make the Israelites pure. It will pay for any work needed on the Temple of our God.

<sup>34</sup> "We all agree to provide wood to keep the fire burning on the altar of the LORD our God. The families of the priests, the Levites and the people will take turns doing this during each year. And we have thrown lots to decide the time of each family's turn. That's when they must bring the wood as a gift to the Temple of God to burn on the altar, as described in the Law.

<sup>35</sup> "We also accept the responsibility of bringing the first part of our harvest, whether from the grain in our fields or the fruit from our trees. We will bring them to the LORD's Temple each year.

<sup>36</sup> "Just as it is also written in the Law, we will bring our firstborn sons and our firstborn cattle, sheep and goats to the priests. They are serving at the Temple of our God.

<sup>37</sup> "And we will also bring the first part of our harvest to the priests to put in the storerooms of the Temple of our God. We will bring the first of our ground meal, the first of our grain offerings, the first fruit from our trees, and the first of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tenth of our crops to the Levites, because they are the ones who collect these

§§10:31 *seventh year* See Exod. 23:10-11.

\*10:32 5 *grammes* Literally, "1/3 *shekel*". This was probably a coin.

things in all the towns where we work. <sup>38</sup>A priest from the family of Aaron must be with the Levites when they receive the crops. Then the Levites must bring the crops to the Temple of our God and put them in the storerooms of the Temple treasury. <sup>39</sup>The Israelites 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 the storerooms, and that is where the priests who are on duty stay. The singers and gatekeepers also stay there.

“We all promise that we will take care of the Temple of our God.”

### New People Move Into Jerusalem

**11** Now the leaders of the Israelites moved into the city of Jerusalem. The rest of the people used lots to decide who else should move there with the leaders. They chose a tenth of the people to live in Jerusalem, the holy city. The rest of the people stayed in their own towns. <sup>2</sup>The people who stayed asked God to bless those who were willing to move to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>Some of the Israelites, priests, Levites, Temple servants and descendants of Solomon’s servants lived in the various towns throughout Judah. They all lived on property they owned in these towns. But the area leaders lived in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And other people from the families of Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem.

These are the descendants of Judah who moved into Jerusalem:

Athaiah son of Uziah (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) <sup>5</sup>and Maaseiah son of Baruch (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). <sup>6</sup>The number of Perez’s descendants living in Jerusalem was 468. All of them were brave men.

<sup>7</sup>These are the descendants of Benjamin who moved into Jerusalem:

Sallu son of Meshullam (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), <sup>8</sup>and those who followed Jeshaiiah were Gabbai and Sallai. All together there were 928 men. <sup>9</sup>Joel 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.

<sup>10</sup>These are the priests who moved into Jerusalem:

Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jakin <sup>11</sup>and Seraiah son of Hilkiah (the son of Meshullam son of Zadok, who was the son of Meraioth son of Ahitub). Seraiah was the supervisor in the Temple of God. <sup>12</sup>With these priests were 822 others of the same family group who worked at the Temple. Also, there was Adaiah son of Jeroham (the son of Pelaliah son of Amzi, who was the son of Zechariah son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah).

<sup>13</sup>In Adaiah’s family group were 242 others who were leaders of their families. Another priest who came was Amashsai son of Azarel (the son of Ahzai son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer). <sup>14</sup>In his family group were 128 others who were brave soldiers. The officer over them was Zabdiel son of Haggadolim.

<sup>15</sup>These are the Levites who moved into Jerusalem:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub (the son of Azrikam son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni), <sup>16</sup> Shabbethai and Jozabad (two leaders of the Levites in charge of the outside work of the Temple of God). <sup>17</sup> Mattaniah son of Mica (the son of Zabdi son of Asaph) was the director who led the people in singing songs of praise and prayer. Bakbukiah was his assistant. Another Levite who came was Abda son of Shammua (the son of Galal son of Jeduthun). <sup>18</sup> In all, there were 284 Levites who moved into Jerusalem, the holy city.

<sup>19</sup> These are the gatekeepers who moved into Jerusalem:

Akkub, Talmon and 172 others from the same family group. They watched and guarded the gates of the city.

<sup>20</sup> The other priests, Levites and the rest of the Israelites lived in the other towns of Judah. Everyone lived on the land that their ancestors had owned.

<sup>21</sup> The Temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the Temple servants.

<sup>22</sup> The officer over the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi. Uzzi was the son of Bani (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 who were responsible for the music in God's Temple. <sup>23</sup> The singers obeyed orders from the king, which told them what to do from day to day. <sup>24</sup> Pethahiah son of Meshezabel told the people what the king wanted done. (Meshezabel was one of the descendants of Zerach. Zerach was Judah's son.)

<sup>25</sup> The 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, <sup>26</sup> and in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet, <sup>27</sup> in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and the small towns around it, <sup>28</sup> and in Ziklag, in Meconah and the small towns around it, <sup>29</sup> and in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth <sup>30</sup> and 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.

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

### Priests and Levites

**12** These are the priests and Levites who returned to the land of Judah with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua. This is a list of their names:

Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

<sup>2</sup> Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

<sup>3</sup> Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

<sup>4</sup> Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,

<sup>5</sup> Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

<sup>6</sup> Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

<sup>7</sup> Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah and Jedaiah.

These men were the leaders of the priests and their relatives in the days of Jeshua.

<sup>8</sup> The 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. <sup>9</sup> Bakbukiah and Unni were the relatives of those Levites. These two men stood across from them in the Temple services. <sup>10</sup> Jeshua was the father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father

of Joiada. <sup>11</sup> Joiada was the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

<sup>12</sup> In 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.

<sup>13</sup> The leader of Ezra's family was Meshullam.

The leader of Amariah's family was Jehohanan.

<sup>14</sup> The leader of Malluch's family was Jonathan.

The leader of Shecaniah's family was Joseph.

<sup>15</sup> The leader of Harim's family was Adna.

The leader of Meremoth's family was Helkai.

<sup>16</sup> The leader of Iddo's family was Zechariah.

The leader of Ginnethon's family was Meshullam.

<sup>17</sup> The leader of Abijah's family was Zicri.

The leader of Miniamin and Maadiah's families was Piltai.

<sup>18</sup> The leader of Bilgah's family was Shammua.

The leader of Shemaiah's family was Jehonathan.

<sup>19</sup> The leader of Joiarib's family was Mattenai.

The leader of Jedaiah's family was Uzzi.

<sup>20</sup> The leader of Sallu's family was Kallai.

The leader of Amok's family was Eber.

<sup>21</sup> The leader of Hilkiyah's family was Hashabiah.

The leader of Jedaiah's family was Nethanel.

<sup>22</sup> The 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.

<sup>23</sup> The family leaders among the descendants of the Levites and up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the book of their history.

<sup>24</sup> And these were the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel and their brothers. Their brothers stood across from them to sing praise and honour to God. One group answered the other group. That is what was commanded by David the man of God.

<sup>25</sup> The gatekeepers who guarded the storerooms next to the gates were Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon and Akkub. <sup>26</sup> They served in the days of Joiakim. Joiakim was the son of Jeshua, who was the son of Jozadak. And the 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**

<sup>27</sup> The people dedicated the wall of Jerusalem. They invited all the Levites to come to Jerusalem from the towns where they lived. They came to celebrate the dedication of the wall. They came to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. They played their cymbals, harps and lyres.

<sup>28</sup> And all the singers also came to Jerusalem. They came from the towns all around Jerusalem. They came from the town of Netophah, <sup>29</sup> from Beth Gilgal, Geba and Azmaveth. The singers had built small towns for themselves in the area around Jerusalem.

<sup>30</sup> So 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.

<sup>31</sup> I 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, towards the Ash Pile Gate. <sup>32</sup>Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah followed the singers. <sup>33</sup>Also following them were Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup>Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah and Jeremiah. <sup>35</sup>And some of the priests with trumpets also followed them up to the wall. Zechariah also 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.) <sup>36</sup>There were also Asaph's brothers, who were Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani. They had the musical instruments that David, the man of God, had made. Ezra the teacher led the group of people who were there to dedicate the wall. <sup>37</sup>They went to the Fountain Gate and walked up the steps all the way to the City of David. They were on top of the city wall. They walked past the house of David and went towards the Water Gate.

<sup>38</sup>The second group of singers went 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. <sup>39</sup>Then 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 and stopped at the Guard Gate. <sup>40</sup>Then the two singing groups went to their places in the Temple. And I stood in my place. And half of the officials stood in their places in the Temple. <sup>41</sup>Then these priests stood in their places: Eliakim, Maaseiah, Mijamin, Micaiah, Elioenai,

Zechariah and Hananiah. These priests had their trumpets with them. <sup>42</sup>Then they 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. <sup>43</sup>So on that special day, the priests offered many sacrifices. The people were full of joy because God had given them a reason to be happy. The women and children joined in the loud celebration, which could be heard far away from Jerusalem.

<sup>44</sup>On that same day, men were chosen to be in charge of the storerooms. They collected all the gifts the people brought, including the first part of the harvest and a tenth of their crops. They also collected the part of the crops from the fields outside the towns that the Law said should be given to the priests and Levites. The people of Judah were very pleased with the work of the priests and Levites. <sup>45</sup>They were doing the work given to them by God, including the ceremonies that made people pure. And the singers and gatekeepers did their part. They did everything that David and Solomon had commanded. <sup>46</sup>(From the time of David and Asaph, there had been directors who led many songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.)

<sup>47</sup>So in the time of Zerubbabel and also in the time of Nehemiah, all the Israelites gave something every day to support the singers and gatekeepers. The people set aside the share that they were supposed to give to the Levites. And the Levites set aside the part of what they received that was for the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

### Nehemiah's Last Commands

**13** On that day the *Book of Moses* was read out loud so that all

the people could hear. They found this law written there: no Ammonite and no Moabite would ever be permitted in the meetings with God. <sup>2</sup>That law was written because those people didn't give the Israelites food and water. And they had paid Balaam to put a curse on the Israelites. But our God changed that curse and made it a blessing for us. <sup>3</sup>So when the Israelites heard that law, they obeyed it. They separated themselves from the people who were descendants of foreigners.

<sup>4</sup>But, before that happened, Eliashib the priest was put in charge of the storerooms in the Temple of our God. And he was a close friend of Tobiah. <sup>5</sup>Eliashib let Tobiah use one of the rooms. That room had been used for storing the grain offerings, incense and the dishes used in the Temple. They also kept there the tenth of grain, new wine and oil for the Levites, singers and gatekeepers. And they also kept the gifts for the priests in that room.

<sup>6</sup>I was not in Jerusalem while this was happening. I had gone back to the king of Babylon. I went back to the king's palace in the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was king of Babylon.<sup>†</sup> Later, I asked the king for permission to go back to Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup>So I came back to Jerusalem. There I heard about the sad thing that Eliashib had done. He had given Tobiah a room in the Temple of God! <sup>8</sup>I was very angry about what Eliashib had done, so I threw all of Tobiah's things out of the room. <sup>9</sup>I gave commands for the rooms to be made pure and clean. Then I put back all the things that are used in the Temple along with the grain offerings and the incense.

<sup>10</sup>I 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. <sup>11</sup>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 the Levites together and told them to go back to their places and duties in the Temple. <sup>12</sup>Then everyone in Judah brought their tenth of grain, new wine and oil to the Temple. These things were put into the storerooms.

<sup>13</sup>I 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.

<sup>14</sup>My God, please remember me for this. And don't forget all the good things I have done for the Temple of my God and the worship that takes place there.

<sup>15</sup>In 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 in the city carrying grapes, figs and all kinds of things. 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.

<sup>16</sup>There were some men from the city of Tyre living in Jerusalem. They were bringing fish and all kinds of things into Jerusalem and selling them on the Sabbath day. And the Jews were buying them. <sup>17</sup>I told the leaders of Judah that they were wrong. I said, "You are doing a very bad thing. You are dishonouring the Sabbath day. <sup>18</sup>You know that your ancestors did the same things. That is why our God brought all the troubles and dis-

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<sup>†</sup>13:6 *the thirty-second year ... Babylon* That is, 432 BC.

aster to us and to this city. But now you are trying to make God angry with Israel again by letting people do things on the Sabbath day that are not permitted.”

<sup>19</sup> So 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. They were commanded to make sure that no load was brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.

<sup>20</sup> Once or twice, traders and merchants had to stay the night outside Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup> But I warned 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.

<sup>22</sup> Then 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.

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

<sup>23</sup> About that same time, I also noticed that some Jewish men had married women from the countries of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. <sup>24</sup> And half of the children from those marriages didn’t know how to speak the Jewish language. They spoke the language of Ashdod, Ammon or Moab. <sup>25</sup> This made me so angry that I asked God to curse them. I fought

with them. I hit some of them and pulled out their hair. I forced them to make a promise in God’s name. I said, “You must not marry the daughters of these foreigners. Don’t let their daughters marry your sons, and don’t let your daughters marry their sons.” <sup>26</sup> You 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 him and made him king over all Israel. But even Solomon was led into sin by his foreign wives. <sup>27</sup> And now, we hear that you also are doing this terrible sin. You are not being true to our God. You are marrying foreign women.”

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

<sup>29</sup> My God, punish these people. They made the priesthood unclean. They treated it as if it was not important. They did not obey the agreement that you made with the priests and Levites. <sup>30</sup> So 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. <sup>31</sup> And I made sure that the people would bring gifts of firewood and the first part of their harvest at the right times.

My God, remember me for doing these good things.