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v92

Nehemiah

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NEHEMIAH

1 I am Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah. *I am writing this account.*
My story begins in the month of Kislev during the twentieth
year of the reign of King Artaxerxes *over the Persian Empire*. I was
in the capital city of Susa. 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came
to see me, along with some other people from the province
of Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and
remained in Judah *many years earlier* when soldiers had forced
many Jews to go *to Babylon*. I also asked about *the condition
of* the city of Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "The Jews who escaped the exile and
remained in the province of Judah are in a desperate situation.
The Babylonian soldiers broke down the wall of Jerusalem *to get
into the city*, and *they* burned down all of its gates. The people
living there are defenseless."

4 When I heard about these things, I sat down and cried. I
could not stop mourning for days. I went without food, and I
prayed to the God who is in heaven.

5 I said, "O Yahweh, you are the God who is in heaven.
You are the great and awesome God. You always keep your
promises faithfully to those who love you and obey your
commandments. 6 Now please pay careful attention and listen
to my prayer that I am praying to you now, as I have been
constantly, for the people of Israel, your chosen people. I must
confess the sins that we, the people of Israel, have committed
against you. Both I and my family have also sinned. 7 We have
acted very wickedly toward you. *Many years ago* you gave us
your Law through your servant Moses. But we have not obeyed
your Law.

8 Please call to mind the promise that you made to your
servant Moses. You told him, 'If you Israelites do not obey
my commandments, I will take you from your land and make
you live among the other nations. 9 But if you become loyal
to me again and start obeying my commandments once more,
then I will bring you back to *your homeland of Judah*. That is
the place *from* which I chose to start making myself famous
throughout the world. I will do this no matter how far you
have been taken away.'

10 We are your chosen people, whom you rescued *from
slavery in Egypt*. *You did that easily because* you are so very
powerful. 11 O my Lord, please pay careful attention to my
prayer and to the prayers of *my fellow Israelites*. We are eager
to honor you. Please grant that the king *will agree to the request
that I hope to make soon*." At that time, I was *an important
official who served the wine at* the king's *table*.

2 I prayed like this for four months. Then one day in the
month of Nisan, still in the twentieth year of the reign of
Artaxerxes, something happened. *When it was time to serve* the
wine, I took some and gave it to the king. I had never before
looked sad in his presence.

2 *No one was supposed to look unhappy in the king's presence.
But the king noticed that I did look sad.* So he asked me, "Why
are you sad? I can tell that you are not sick. You must be
unhappy about something." This made me very afraid.

3 I replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I hope you will live *a
very long time*! *I am sorry, but I cannot help being sad.* I am sad
because the city of Jerusalem, the place where my ancestors
are buried, lies in ruins. *Our enemies* have burned down its
gates."

4 The king replied to me, "What do you want *me to do for
you*?" *Before I answered him*, I prayed to the God who is in
heaven.

5 Then I replied to the king, "If it seems like a good *idea*
to you, and if you are pleased with me, then *please* allow me
to go to Judah, to Jerusalem. *I would like* to *help my people*
rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

6 *I was able to speak freely because this was a private meal,* with
the queen sitting next to the king. The king asked me, "How
long would you be away?" I told him how long I would be
gone. That was acceptable to him, and he gave me permission
to go. So I told him what day *I wanted to leave*.

7 I also said to the king, "If it seems like a good *idea* to you,
please give me letters *that I can show* to the governors of *the
province* Beyond the River. In these letters, *please tell them* to
give me *safe* passage through their province to Judah. 8 *Please*
also *write* a letter *for me* to Asaph, the man who takes care of
your royal forest *in that area*. *Please tell* him to give me timber
to make the beams to support the gates of the fortress that is
near the temple. *Please* also *tell him to give me timber* for the
city wall and for the house that I will live in."

God was with me and helping me, and so the king agreed
to *all of* my *requests*.

9 *When I left to travel to Judah,* the king sent along some
army officers and soldiers riding on horses *to protect me*. When
I reached *the province* Beyond the River, I went *to see* its
governors. I showed them the letters the king had given me,
and they gave me safe passage.

10 *One of the people I showed my letters to was* Sanballat the
Horonite. *He was the governor of Samaria, the area right next to
Judah.* He and his deputy, Tobiah the Ammonite, became very
upset when they learned that someone had come to help the
people of Israel. *They did not want to see Judah become strong
again, because that would be a threat to Samaria.* 11 But I made
it *safely* to Jerusalem *despite their opposition*. I stayed there for
three days,

12 I did not say *publicly* what God was leading me to do for
Jerusalem. Instead, I got up *secretly* in the night *to inspect the
city walls*. I brought *only* a few other men with me. *So that we
could work quietly,* the only animal I brought with me was the
one that I was riding.

13 That night we went out through the Valley Gate and
went past the Dragon Well to the Rubbish Gate. We made a
careful inspection of the walls of Jerusalem. We *noted where our
enemies* had broken down the walls, and *where* they had burned
up the wooden gates. 14 Then we came to the Fountain Gate
and the Royal Pool. *The opening there was so narrow that* the
animal I was riding could not get through. 15 So we followed
the path of the *Kidron* Brook, *even though* it was night. *From
there* we were able to look *up* at the wall *and see its condition*.
This route brought us back *to where we started*. We re-entered
the city through the Valley Gate, and I went back *home without
being seen*.

16 The city officials did not know where I had gone or what
I was doing. To that point I had not said *anything about it* to
the Jewish leaders, the priests, the leading citizens, or the city
officials. *I had not approached* anyone *about* doing the work *of*
rebuilding the walls.
17 *But* now I said to them, "You see what a desperate situation
we are in. You see that Jerusalem lies in ruins, and *our enemies*
have burned down its gates. *We need to* do something *about*
this! I challenge all of you to join me in rebuilding the wall
of Jerusalem. Then we will not have to feel ashamed any
more." 18 Then I told them how God had been with me and
had been helping me. I also told them how the king had given
me permission to come.
When they heard this, they said, "Let's get going and
start building!" They encouraged one another *and committed*
themselves to the project.
19 Then Sanballat the Horonite, his deputy Tobiah the
Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard *that we had started*
to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They ridiculed us mercilessly.
They said, "What you are doing is not going to amount to
anything! *But* you should not be rebelling against the king *like*
that!"
20 But I answered them *firmly*. I said, "The God who is in
heaven is the one who will enable us to complete this project.
We are his chosen people. We are going to start rebuilding.
But you have absolutely nothing to do with what happens in
Jerusalem."

3 *These are the names of the people who helped to rebuild the*
wall around Jerusalem. Eliashib the Supreme Priest and
his fellow priests began by rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They
dedicated this gate *to God, as a symbolic way of dedicating the*
entire wall. Then they set the doors of the Sheep Gate in place.
They rebuilt the wall as far as the Tower of 100 Soldiers and
beyond that to the Tower of Hananel. Then they dedicated that
part of the wall *to God* as well.
2 Next to them, people from Jericho rebuilt *part of the wall*.
Next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri, rebuilt *part of the*
wall.
3 The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They framed
it with *wooden* beams, they set its doors in place, and they
installed bolts and bars *for locking the gate*.
4 Next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson
of Hakkoz, repaired *part of the wall*.
Next to him, Meshullam, the son of Berekiah and grandson
of Meshezabel, repaired *part of the wall*.
Next to him, Zadok the son of Baana repaired *part of the*
wall.
5 Next to him, some people from Tekoa repaired *part of the*
wall. But the leading citizens of Tekoa were too proud to do
the work that the leaders *of Judah had asked them to do*.
6 Joiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of
Besodeiah, repaired the Old Gate. They framed it with *wooden*
beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and
bars *for locking the gate*.
7 Next to them, Melatiah from *the city of* Gibeon, Jadon
from *the town of* Meronoth, and other men from Gibeon and
from the *city of* Mizpah repaired *part of the wall*. They repaired
it as far as the residence of the governor of *the province* Beyond
the River.
8 Next to them, Uzziel the son of Harhaiah repaired *part of*
the wall. He was one of the goldsmiths, *the workers who made*
jewelry and other objects from gold.
Next to him, Hananiah repaired *part of the wall*. He was
one of the workers who made perfumes. They rebuilt the wall
of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.
9 Next to them, Rephaiah the son of Hur repaired *part of*
the wall. Rephaiah ruled half of the district of Jerusalem.
10 Next to him, Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired *the*
part of the wall near his house.
Next to him, Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired *part*
of the wall.
11 Malkijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of
Pahath-Moab repaired another section *of the wall*, along with
the Tower of the Ovens.
12 Next to them, Shallum the son of Hallohesh repaired
part of the wall. Shallum ruled the *other* half of the district of
Jerusalem. His daughters worked with him on the repairs.
13 Hanun and some people from *the city of* Zanoah repaired
the Valley Gate. They rebuilt the gate, they set its doors in
place, and they installed bolts and bars *for locking the gate*.
They also repaired 1500 feet of the wall, as far as the Rubbish
Gate.
14 Malkijah. The son of Rechab, repaired the Rubbish Gate.
Malkijah ruled the district of Beth-Hakkerem. He rebuilt the
gate, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars
for locking the gate.
15 Shallun the son of Kol-Hozeh repaired the Fountain Gate.
Shallun ruled the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt the gate and
put a roof over it, he set its doors in place, and he installed
bolts and bars *for locking the gate*. Near the Pool of Siloam he
also repaired the wall next to the royal garden, as far as the
steps that went down from the City of David.
16 Next to him, Nehemiah the son of Azbuk repaired *the wall*
as far as the place opposite the tombs in *the City of* David, to
the reservoir that the people had made and the army barracks.
Nehemiah ruled half of the district of Beth-Zur.
17 Next to him, some Levites repaired *parts of the wall*. One
of them was Rehum the son of Bani. Next to them, Hashabiah,
who ruled half of the district of Keilah, repaired *a section of*
the wall on behalf of the people of his district.
18 *Some other Levites* repaired the next *section of the wall*.
Next to them, Binnui the son of Henadad, who ruled the other
half of the district of Keilah, repaired *more of the wall*.
19 Next to him, Ezer the son of Jeshua repaired another
section *of the wall*. Ezer ruled the *city of* Mizpah. *He started*
from a place in front of the steps that went up to the building
for storing weapons, *and he finished* at the place where the
wall bends slightly.
20 Next to him, Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another
section with great enthusiasm, from the bend in the wall as
far as the door of the house of Eliashib the Supreme Priest.
21 Next to him, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of
Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the door of the house
of Eliashib to the end of that house.
22 Next to him, some priests from the area around *Jerusalem*
repaired *a section of the wall*.
23 Next to them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired *a section*
opposite their house.

Azariah, the son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah, repaired the next *section*, beside his house.

24 Next to him, Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the bend in the wall as far as the bulwark. 25 *Next to him,* Palal the son of Uzai *repaired a section*. He began at the place opposite the bend in the wall *where* the watchtower is taller than the upper palace that King *Solomon built*. That is near the courtyard where the guards live. Next to him, Pedaiah the son of Parosh *repaired a section*.

26 The temple servants who lived on Ophel *Hill repaired the wall* as far as the eastern side of the Water Gate, *where there is* a tall tower.

27 Next to them, the people from Tekoa repaired another section, from opposite the very tall watchtower as far as the wall at Ophel *Hill*.

28 A group of priests repaired *the wall* starting at the Horse Gate. Each one repaired *the section* in front of his own house.

29 Next to them, Zadok the son of Immer repaired *the section* in front of his house.

Then Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, repaired the next *section*.

30 Next to him, Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section.

Next to them, Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired *the section* opposite the rooms *where* he *lived*.

31 Malkijah, who was *another* one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next *section*, as far as the building used by the temple servants and the merchants. That building was opposite the Appointment Gate. He *rebuilt the wall* as far as the upper apartments *of this building*, which were on the corner.

32 Some of the *other* goldsmiths, along with some merchants, repaired *the last section of the wall* from the corner apartments to the Sheep Gate.

4 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the *city* wall, he became furious, and he mocked the Jews.

2 He spoke to the *other provincial* officials and army officers. He said, "These weak Jews will not be able to accomplish anything! They will never restore *the city! Their God* will not help them. They do not realize what a long time it would take to repair *that wall. The only way* they can get stones *is* by pulling them out of rubbish heaps. And *the Babylonians* burned *the city, so those* stones are probably weak *anyway*."

3 Tobiah the Ammonite was standing beside Sanballat. He made fun of the Jews by saying, "Right! The wall that they are building *is so weak* that if a fox walked across the top *of it*, it would fall down!"

4 *When I heard about what they were saying, I prayed to God and said,* "O our God, listen *to the way* they are mocking us! Make *them fail in their attempts to stop us,* so that *other* people will mock them! Allow their enemies to capture them and force them to go to a foreign land! 5 *They are guilty, and they have sinned against you.* Do not take away their guilt, and do not ignore their sin! *I am asking this* because they are also causing others to be angry at the people who are rebuilding the wall!"

6 But we kept building the wall, *and after some time,* we finished the wall around the whole city to about half the necessary height. Everyone was determined to accomplish this.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the men from *the land of* Arabia, the men from *the nation of* Ammon, and the men from *the city of* Ashdod heard that we were continuing to repair the wall of Jerusalem and to fill in the gaps, they became furious. 8 All of them together made a plan to come and fight against the people of Jerusalem. They wanted to make the people inside the city confused *and divided*. 9 But we prayed to our God *to protect us*, and we stationed lookouts *on the walls* at all times to watch out for them.

10 Then the people of Judah started saying, "The people who are carrying *the stones* are getting worn out. There is too much rubbish. We are not going to be able to *finish* rebuilding the wall."

11 Then our enemies *started* saying, "Before *the Jews* know we are coming, we will rush *down* on them and kill them and stop their work *on the wall*!"

12 And when some of the Jews who lived near *our enemies* came *to Jerusalem*, they pleaded with us repeatedly, "Let *our men* return *home so* they *can defend* us!"

13 But I put *guards* behind the wall at the places where it was low or where there were gaps. I also had people from each family group stand *guard* with their swords, spears, and bows and arrows. 14 After I had inspected *everything*, I summoned the leading citizens and the city officials and many of the other people, and I said to them, "Do not be afraid of our enemies! The Lord is great and awesome, *so* think about *what he can do*. And fight to *protect* your families, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes!"

15 When our enemies learned that we had found out about *their plan*, they realized that God had kept them *from launching a surprise attack*. *They decided not to attack us.* So we all went back to *working on* the wall. Each person continued doing *the same* work *as before*. 16 But after that, *only* half of my servants worked *on the wall*. The other half of them *stood guard* armed with spears, shields, bows and arrows, and metal armor. Officers *stood* behind the workers and guards *to encourage everyone and to give orders in case there was an attack*. 17 Those who were building the wall and those who carried the heavy loads *always* had their weapons with them *so that they would be prepared to fight off an attack*. 18 Each builder worked with his sword strapped to his side. *I stationed* someone next to me who would blow a ram's horn *if we needed a signal*.

19 Then I said to the leading citizens, the city officials, and many of the other people, "We are working over a very wide area, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. 20 But wherever you hear *the man* sounding the ram's horn, gather around us at that place. Our God will fight for us!"

21 So we continued to work *on rebuilding the wall*. Half of the men *served as guards* and kept their weapons ready at *all* times. 22 At that time, I also said to the people, "Each *worker* and his servant must spend the night inside Jerusalem *and not go home if they live outside the city*. *That way* the city will have plenty of defenders *even* at night, and they can *still* work *on the wall* during the daytime." 23 *During that time* none of us took off our clothes. I did not, and my brothers, my servants, and my personal bodyguard did not. Each of us *always had* our weapons *with us*, *even when we were washing ourselves*.

5 *Around this same time,* many of the men and their wives complained bitterly about what their fellow Jews were doing to them.

2 Some of them began, “We have many children. We need to get *a lot of* food to feed them *all*.”

3 Others added, “We have had to promise to give someone our fields, vineyards, and houses if we do not pay back the money *he* has loaned us. We had *to borrow the money* to buy food during this time when food is scarce.”

4 Still others said, “We have had to borrow money to *pay* the taxes that the king *commanded us to pay* on our fields and our vineyards. 5 *This is how bad things have gotten.* We are selling our children into slavery. In fact, we have even sold some of our daughters. Our creditors took the fields and vineyards *we pledged as security for loans*, so there was nothing *else* we could do. But we are Jews, just like the people who are doing these things to us!”

6 I got very angry when I heard these things that they were complaining about. 7 I thought hard about what to do. Then I brought charges against the leading citizens and the city officials. I called together a large group of people *to hear* the charges against them. I told these leaders, “You are charging interest *on loans* to your fellow Jews. *You know that is forbidden in the Law of Moses*.”

8 I said to them, “Whenever our fellow Jews have had to sell themselves into slavery to people from *other* nations, to *the best of* our ability we have been buying them back. But you are actually selling your fellow Jews into slavery to get back the money they owe you. These are some of the very people we have been buying back!” They knew that these charges were true, so there was absolutely nothing they could say in response.

9 Then I said to them, “What you are doing is wrong! You certainly ought to obey God and do what is right! Otherwise, our enemies will mock us even more. 10 I myself, my relatives, and my servants have been lending money and grain *to anyone in need without charging interest*. All of us should stop charging interest on loans. 11 Give them back their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses. Do it right away! And pay back the 12% annual *interest you have been collecting* on the money, grain, wine, and olive oil that you have lent them.”

12 These leaders replied, “Yes, we will do what you say. We will give back *their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses*. And we will stop *charging* them *interest*.”

Then I called the priests, and I made the leaders swear *to God in front of them* that they would do what they had promised. 13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said to them, “In this same way, may God fling anyone who does not keep this oath away from everything he owns. Yes, may that person lose everything!”

Then everyone who was there said, “We agree!” And they praised Yahweh. After that none of the Jews took houses or fields to guarantee loans, and none of them charged interest any more.

14 Here is something else I did to help the people. Artaxerxes, the king *of Persia*, had appointed me to be the governor of *the province of* Judah during the twentieth year *of his reign*. During the twelve years from the time that he appointed me until the thirty-second year of his reign, I did not accept the governor’s food allowance, and *I did not use it to feed* my relatives. *I knew that the people were poor and could not afford to pay for it.* 15 The governors before me had made life very difficult for the people. They had demanded that the people supply them with bread and wine and forty silver shekels every day. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I respected and honored God, and so I did not oppress them. 16 I devoted myself to the work of *rebuilding* the wall. *My relatives and I* did not buy any property, *even though we could have gotten it cheaply because the poor were so desperate*. I also assigned all of my servants to work *on the wall*.

17 *As governor,* I *was responsible for* feeding 150 Jewish leaders and city officials. I also entertained *Jewish* visitors who came from nearby countries. 18 Each day *I told my servants* to prepare *for us* one ox, six good sheep, and various kinds of poultry. I paid for these myself. Every ten days I also brought in an abundant supply of various kinds of wine. But *I knew that* the people were struggling to survive, and so *I paid for all of these things at my own expense*. I did not accept the governor’s food allowance.

19 My God, think of me, and reward me for all the good that I have done for the people of Judah.

6 Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arabian, and our other enemies learned that we had finished rebuilding the wall, and that there were now no more gaps in it. (However, we had not yet put the doors in the gates.) 2 So Sanballat and Geshem sent me *a message that* said, “We want to arrange to meet with you in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.” But *I knew that they were saying this because* they wanted to harm me.

3 So I sent messengers to tell them, “The work I am doing *here* is very important. I am not able to travel *while it is going on*. There is no reason for me to stop the work and leave it so that I can meet with you.”

4 They sent me the same message four times, and *each time* I refused them for this same reason.

5 Then Sanballat sent one of his servants to me bringing the same request for a fifth time. This time the message was written, but it was not sealed. Sanballat *left the letter unsealed so that others would find out what it said, because he wanted to pressure me to meet with him*. 6 The letter said, “*The people in* the countries *around us* are saying, and Geshem confirms *that it is true*, that you and the Jewish people are planning to rebel *against King Artaxerxes*. That is why you are rebuilding the wall. *They are also* saying that you intend to become the king of the Jews yourself. 7 *These people are* also *saying that* you have appointed prophets to make a proclamation about you in Jerusalem. They are saying, ‘The Jews *now* have a king *of their own*!’ King Artaxerxes will certainly hear these reports, *and when he does, he will be very angry with you*. So we really should meet together and talk *about this*.”

8 I sent *a message* back to him saying, “None of these things that you are saying are true. You are just making them up yourself.”

9 I knew that they were all *just trying to* frighten us. They thought, “*The Jews will become so afraid that* they will stop working *on the wall*, and they will never finish *rebuilding it*.” So *I prayed, “O God,* give me courage.*”*

10 *Around this time* I went to visit Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel. *I went to see him in his home, because* he was not leaving *his house*. He was a priest, and

he was trying to show that it was not safe for Jewish leaders to go out in public. He told me, "*We are not safe even here.* We need to go into the temple and lock the doors, because people are trying to kill you. One night they are going to come and kill you."

11 I responded, "I am not the kind of man who would run away! Besides, I am the governor, *and everyone knows me,* so I could not save my life by *trying to* hide in the temple. I refuse to do it!"

12 All of a sudden I realized that God had not given Shemaiah a prophetic message for me. Instead, he was saying these things because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him *to say them*. 13 *They* had paid him the money specifically to *say things that* would scare me. They were hoping they could make me sin *by abandoning my responsibilities and hiding in the temple*. *If I had done that,* they would have ruined my reputation and discredited me.

14 *So I prayed,* "My God, treat Tobiah and Sanballat the way they deserve for what they have done. Do the same for the female prophet Noadiah and all the other prophets who are *trying to* make me afraid."

15 We finished *rebuilding* the wall on the twenty-fifth *day* of the month of Elul, after *working on it* for 52 days.

16 When all of our enemies learned that we had completed the rebuilding in such a short time, they realized that our God must have helped *us*. This made the people in the countries around us lose all of their confidence. 17 During this time, the leading citizens of Judah were writing many letters to Tobiah *to give him information about me*, and he was sending letters back to them *with instructions*. 18 Tobiah was married to the daughter of *a powerful and influential member of the community,* Shecaniah the son of Arah. His son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of *another powerful and influential man,* Meshullam the son of Berechiah. And so, for those reasons, many people in Judah had sworn oaths to *be loyal to* Tobiah. 19 *The people who were loyal to Tobiah* would also *come and* tell me what good things he was doing, and then they would report to him everything I said *in response*. Tobiah also sent me many letters to try to make me afraid.

7 Once we had finished rebuilding the wall and we had put the doors in the gates, we assigned the gatekeepers and singers and Levites to their tasks. 2 I appointed two men to *help me* govern Jerusalem, my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress *in Jerusalem*. I appointed Hananiah because he was trustworthy, and because he showed God more reverence and respect than most people do.

3 I told them, "Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until broad daylight. *That way we will be able to see anything our enemies are doing.* Have the gatekeepers close *the gates* and put the bars across the doors while they are still guarding *the gates before they go home for the night*." I also told them, "Have the men who live in Jerusalem take turns keeping watch in their own neighborhoods."

4 The city of Jerusalem covered a large area, but *at that time* not many people lived in the city, and they had not yet built houses *for themselves*. 5 So *as a first step towards filling Jerusalem with people again*, God led me to gather together the leading citizens and the city officials and the other people *living in the city* to register them according to their family histories. I also found a book containing the records of the first group of people who had returned *to Jerusalem* from the exile. This is what those records said.

6 "These are *the names of* the people from Judah who returned home from exile. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had taken *their ancestors* away *to Babylon*. But they returned to Jerusalem and to *other places in* Judah. They returned to the *same* towns where their *ancestors had lived*.

7 The people who came back were following Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

This is a list of the number of men from *each* Israelite *clan who returned*:

8 2172 men from *the clan of* Parosh;
9 372 men from *the clan of* Shephatiah;
10 652 men from *the clan of* Arah;
11 2818 men from *the clan of* Pahath-Moab, who are descendants of Jeshua and Joab;
12 1254 men from *the clan of* Elam;
13 845 men from *the clan of* Zattu;
14 760 men from *the clan of* Zakkai;
15 648 men from *the clan of* Binnui;
16 628 men from *the clan of* Bebai;
17 2322 men from *the clan of* Azgad;
18 667 men from *the clan of* Adonikam;
19 2067 men from *the clan of* Bigvai;
20 655 men from *the clan of* Adin;
21 98 men from *the clan of* Ater who were descendants of Hezekiah;
22 328 men from *the clan of* Hashum;
23 324 men from *the clan of* Bezai;
24 112 men from *the clan of* Hariph;
25 95 men from *the clan of* Gibeon.
26 *Some other* men *also returned, whose ancestors had lived in these towns*:
188 men from Bethlehem and Netophah;
27 128 men from Anathoth;
28 42 men from Beth-Azmaveth;
29 743 men from Kiriath-Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth;
30 621 men from Ramah and Geba;
31 122 men from Michmas;
32 123 men from Bethel and Ai;
33 52 men from a *small town* called Nebo;
34 1254 men from a *small town* called Elam;
35 320 men from Harim;
36 345 men from Jericho;
37 721 men from Lod, Hadid, and Ono;
38 3930 men from Senaah.
39 These priests also returned:
973 men from *the clan of* Jedaiah who are descendants of Jeshua;
40 1052 men from *the clan of* Immer;
41 1247 men from *the clan of* Pashhur;
42 1017 men from *the clan of* Harim.
43 These Levites also returned:
74 men from the clan of Jeshua and *the clan of* Kadmiel, all of them descendants of Hodevah.
44 148 members of the *sacred* choir *also returned*. All of them were from the clan of Asaph.

45 138 *temple* gatekeepers *also returned*. They were from the
clan of Shallum, the clan of Ater, the clan of Talmon, the clan
of Akkub, the clan of Hatita, and the clan of Shobai.
46 Some temple workers also returned. They were from the
clan of Ziha, the clan of Hasupha, the clan of Tabbaoth, 47 the
clan of Keros, the clan of Sia, the clan of Padon, 48 the clan of
Lebanah, the clan of Hagabah, the clan of Shalmai, 49 the clan
of Hanan, the clan of Giddel, the clan of Gahar, 50 the clan
of Reaiah, the clan of Rezin, the clan of Nekoda, 51 the clan
of Gazzam, the clan of Uzza, the clan of Paseah, 52 the clan
of Besai, the clan of Meunim, the clan of Nephushesim, 53 the
clan of Bakbuk, the clan of Hakupha, the clan of Harhur, 54 the
clan of Bazlith, the clan of Mehida, the clan of Harsha, 55 the
clan of Barkos, the clan of Sisera, the clan of Temah, 56 the
clan of Neziah, and the clan of Hatipha.
57 Some descendants of the laborers that King Solomon *first
conscripted also returned*.
These were from the clan of Sotai, the clan of Sophereth,
the clan of Perida, 58 the clan of Jaalah, the clan of Darkon,
the clan of Giddel, 59 the clan of Shephatiah, the clan of
Hattil, the clan of Pochereth-Hazzebaim, and the clan of
Amon. 60 Altogether, there were 392 descendants of the *temple*
workers and *conscripted* laborers *who returned*.
61 Another group also returned *that came from the towns of*
Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer *in Babylonia*.
But they could not prove that they were descendants of
Israelites.
62 These 642 men were from the clan of Delaiah,
the clan of Tobiah, and the clan of Nekoda.
63 Some priests *also returned who were* from the clan of
Hobaiah, the clan of Hakkoz, and the clan of Barzillai. Barzillai
had married a woman who was a descendant of a man named
Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the family
name of his wife. 64 These *priests* searched the records that
contained the names of the Israelite ancestors, but they could
not find the names of their families. *They did not qualify to
be priests because they could not trace their family history,* so
they were not allowed to have *the rights and duties of* priests.
65 The governor told them that they must not eat any of the
share of food taken from the sacrifices and kept for the priests.
They would have to wait until the priest *in charge of the temple*
had begun his duties and could ask *God* what to do *about this
situation*. 66 Altogether, 42360 people *returned to Judea*.
67 There were also 7337 male servants and female servants,
and 245 male singers and female singers.
68 *The Israelites also brought back from Babylonia* 736 horses,
245 mules, 69 435 camels, and 6720 donkeys.
70 Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans gave *gifts* for
the work *of rebuilding the temple*.
The governor gave into the treasury more than 8 kilograms
of gold, 50 bowls *to be used in the temple*, and 530 robes for
the priests.
71 Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans also gave into
the *temple* treasury for the work *of rebuilding the temple a total
of* 153 kilograms of gold, and 1460 kilograms of silver.
72 And the remainder of the people gave *a total of* 153
kilograms of gold, 1330 kilograms of silver, and 67 robes for
the priests." 73 So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the
singers, the *temple* workers, and many ordinary people *started
to* live in the *towns and* cities *of Judea where* their *ancestors had
lived*. All these people were Israelites. By the seventh month
all of the Israelites had gone to their cities and had started
living in them.

8 A huge crowd of people gathered together in the plaza
that was near the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe
to bring out the scroll of the law that Moses *had written down*,
and which Yahweh had given to the people of Israel *for them to
obey its rules and commands*. 2 Ezra the priest, *who served God by
offering sacrifices in the temple,* brought out the law *and presented
it* before all the people, to both men and women, and *children*
who were old enough to understand what he read. He did
this on the first day of the seventh month *of that year*. 3 So he
read aloud from the book in the plaza that was near the Water
Gate throughout the whole morning. He read it in front of all
the people, both men and women and *children* who *were old
enough* to understand what he read. And all the people listened
carefully to the laws that were written *on the scroll*. 4 Ezra the
scribe stood on top of a *high* wooden platform that the people
had built for this purpose. At his right side stood Mattithiah,
Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. At his left side
stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah,
Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 Ezra *stood on the platform* above
all the people so that everyone could see him. He opened the
scroll, and as he did that all the people stood up.
6 Then Ezra praised Yahweh, the great God, and all the
people lifted up their hands *to show that they were praying
with him*. *At the end of his prayer* they said, "We agree!" Then
they all bowed down with their faces touching the ground,
and they worshiped Yahweh. 7 Then Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah,
Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah,
Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, who were all Levites, explained the
meaning of the laws *of Moses* to the people who were standing
there. 8 They read clearly from the scroll of the law of God, and
they explained what it meant, so that the people understood
what *Ezra and the others* were reading.
9 Then the people began to cry from sadness when they
heard what the law said. So Nehemiah (who was the governor),
Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining
the meaning to the people, said to all the people, "Today is a
festival day on which you are supposed to worship Yahweh
your God. Do not mourn or cry!"
10 Then Nehemiah said to them, "*Now* go home, eat some
good food, and drink something sweet. And share some of
it with those who are not able to afford *rich food and drink*,
because today is a holy day set apart *to worship* our Lord. So do
not grieve, because the joy that Yahweh gives will strengthen
you."
11 The Levites also told the people *who were crying* to stop,
saying, "Today is a holy day! So, shhh. Do not grieve."
12 So all the people went *home* to eat and drink and share
what they had. And they were very happy, because they
understood *the meaning of* the words that *Ezra had read and*
the others had explained to them.
13 On the next day, the clan leaders of all the people and
the priests and the Levites met together with Ezra the scribe.
They wanted *to study* carefully what was written in the law
that Yahweh had given to Moses. They wanted to understand
it *better*. 14 They learned that the law said that Yahweh had
told Moses to command the Israelite people to live in shelters

during a festival in the seventh month. *This was so that they would remember that their ancestors had lived in shelters when they walked in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.* 15 *They* also *learned* that they should publicly proclaim, in all their towns and in Jerusalem, that the people should go into the hills and cut branches. These should be from olive trees, wild olive trees, myrtle trees, palm trees, and shade trees. They must bring these branches and make shelters *to live in during the festival*. That was what the scroll instructed.

16 So the people went out *of the towns and cut branches* and brought *them* to make shelters for themselves. They built shelters on the *flat* roofs *of their houses*, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the temple, in the plaza near the Water Gate, and in the plaza near the Ephraim Gate. 17 All of the Israelite people who had returned from Babylon built shelters and lived in them *for one week*. Now the Israelite people had never celebrated *that festival* like this since Joshua the son of Nun *led them into this territory*. This was the *first* time they were doing it. And the people were very happy. 18 Every day during that week *Ezra* read aloud *to the people* from the scroll of the law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days. On the eighth day, they called for all the people to come together *so they could hold a ceremony to bring the festival to an end*. That was what the scroll instructed.

9 Two days later, the Israelite people gathered together again. *To show that they were sorry for their sins,* they went without food, they wore *clothes made from* rough cloth, and they put dirt on their *heads*. 2 The descendants of Israel separated themselves away from all the descendants of foreigners. They stood there and confessed their own sins and the wicked things their ancestors had done. 3 They stood in place and *listened to someone* read from the scroll of the law of Yahweh their God for three hours. Then for another three hours they confessed their sins and bowed down and worshiped Yahweh their God.

4 *Some of* the Levites stood up on the stairs, including Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, another *man* named Bani, and Kenani. And they cried out *sorrowfully* in a loud voice to Yahweh their God. 5 Then some Levites spoke. They were named Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah.

They said, “Stand up and praise Yahweh your God, who has always *lived* and will *live* forever! Yahweh, we praise your glorious name! Your name is more important than everything else that is good and wonderful! 6 You are Yahweh, and no one else. You made the heavens that are above everything, and all that lives in the heavens *above the earth*. You made the earth and everything that is on it, and you made the seas and everything that is in them. You are the one who causes all living things to be alive. Everything that *lives* in the heavens *above the earth* worships you.

7 You are Yahweh! You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of *the city of* Ur, where the Chaldean people *lived*. You changed his name to Abraham. 8 You saw that he was faithful to you in his inner being. You made a promise to him *pledged with blood*, promising that you would give a land *to him* and to his descendants. This was the land where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites *lived*. And you did what you promised, because you *always* do what is right.

9 You saw how *the Egyptians* mistreated our ancestors in Egypt. You heard them cry out *to you for help* when they were beside the Sea of Reeds. 10 You knew that *the leaders of Egypt* were treating *our ancestors* very arrogantly. So you performed miracles for Pharaoh and his officials and all the people of Egypt. *These proved you are the true God.* You made yourself famous, and you are still famous! 11 You divided the sea in front of *your people Israel*, and they *walked* through the middle of the sea on dry land. But you drowned *the soldiers of the Egyptian army* under the waters. They sank as a stone sinks in deep water! 12 During the day you led *your people* by a cloud *that looked like a huge* pillar. At night you led them by a fire *that looked like a huge* pillar. It shone on the path in front of them to show them where they should walk. 13 When *our ancestors* were at Sinai Mountain, you appeared to them and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them honest instructions and trustworthy laws. You gave them good rules and commands. 14 You taught them about your Sabbath *day of rest*. It is set apart *from the other days of the week*. You gave commands and rules and laws for the people by your servant Moses. 15 When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, you gave them water from a rock. You told them to go and take the land *of Canaan*, which you had promised with a vow to give them.

16 But our ancestors were proud and stubborn. They refused to obey what you commanded them *to do*. 17 They refused to obey you. They did not consider all the miracles that you had performed for them. They became stubborn and rebelled against you. They appointed a leader to take *them* back *to Egypt*, where they would be slaves *again*! But you are a God who forgives us. You act kindly and mercifully *toward us*. You do not become angry quickly. Instead, you faithfully love *us* very much. So you did not leave *our ancestors* alone *in the desert*. 18 Indeed *you did not leave them alone*, even though they made an idol for themselves *that resembled* a calf. They said *about the idol*, ‘This is our god, who brought us up out of Egypt.’ By doing that they insulted you greatly. 19 But because you always act mercifully, you did not leave them alone in the desert. During the daytime, the cloud *that looked like a huge* pillar above them continued to lead them in the way *you wanted them to go*. And during the night, the fire *that looked like a huge* pillar shone on the path in front of them to show them where to walk. 20 You gave them your good Spirit to instruct them. You continued to give them manna when they were hungry, and you gave them water when they were thirsty. 21 For forty years you took care of them in the desert. During all that time, they had everything they needed. Their clothes did not wear out. Their feet did not swell up, *even though they were continually walking*. 22 You helped *our ancestors* to defeat *the armies of great* kings *who ruled* many people. *By doing that,* you allowed *our ancestors* to settle in every part *of this land*. They took over the land that King Sihon ruled from *the city of* Heshbon and the land that King Og ruled in the Bashan *area*. 23 You gave so many children to *our ancestors* that they were like the stars *in the sky*. You brought them into this land, which you had told their parents to enter and take for themselves *so that they could live there*.

24 Their children went in and took the land. You enabled them to defeat the people who were living there. They were *the descendants of* Canaan. You enabled them to conquer their

kings and all the people who *lived* there. They were able to do whatever they wanted to those people. 25 *Our ancestors* captured cities that had walls around them. They took possession of fertile fields. They took possession of houses that were already full of all kinds of good things, and wells that someone had already dug. They took possession of many vineyards and groves of olive trees and fruit trees. They ate all that they wanted and became fat. They enjoyed *all* the many good things you did *for them*.

26 But they turned against you. They rejected your law. They killed the prophets who warned them that they should return to *obeying* you. They *said and* did very evil things *against you*. 27 So you allowed their enemies to defeat them. But when their enemies caused them to suffer, they called out to you. You heard them from heaven, and because you are very merciful, you sent them people to help them. Those *leaders* rescued them from their enemies.

28 But when there was *a time of* peace *again*, *our ancestors* again did evil things that you *hated*. So you allowed their enemies to conquer *them* and rule over them. But *whenever* they returned to you and cried out to you again *to help them*, you heard them from heaven. You rescued them many times, because you *always* act mercifully. 29 You warned them that they should return to *obeying* your laws *again*. But they became proud *and stubborn*. They would not listen to your commands. They sinned by disobeying your decrees, even though a person lives by obeying them. They purposely ignored what you commanded them to do. They became stubborn and refused to obey.

30 You were patient with them for a long time. You warned them by *the messages* your Spirit gave to your prophets. But they did not listen *to those messages*. So again you allowed *the armies* of the nations nearby to defeat them. 31 But because you act very mercifully, you did not destroy them completely. You never left them alone. Yes, you are a very gracious and merciful God!

32 Our God, you are great and mighty and awesome! You *always* fulfill *your* promises and *always* faithfully love *us*! So now *we are praying*: Do not ignore all our difficulties. Consider all the troubles that our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all of your people have experienced. We have been experiencing these troubles since *the armies of* the kings of Assyria *conquered us* until now. We are still experiencing them today. 33 *We know that* you have acted fairly in *letting* all these things happen to us. Yes, you have treated *us* as *we* deserve. But we have done evil things. 34 *In the past,* our kings, our leaders, our priests and our *other* ancestors did not obey your laws. They did not listen to your commands or the warnings that you gave them. 35 They had their own kings. They *enjoyed* the many good things that you provided in this large and fertile land that you gave them. But *even then,* they did not serve you. They would not stop doing evil things.

36 Consider our situation! Today we *live like* slaves here in this land that you gave to our ancestors. You gave them this land so that they could enjoy all the good things that grow here. But consider us now! We are *like* slaves on this land. 37 The kings whom you have allowed to rule over us are enjoying *all* the good things that grow here. This is because we have sinned. They rule over our bodies and our cattle. They do whatever they please. We feel great distress. 38 Because of all this, we *the Israelite people* are making a solemn agreement. We are writing it on a scroll. We will write down *the names of* our leaders, our Levites, and our priests. Then we will seal the scroll."

10 These are *the names of* the people who signed the agreement:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah; Zedekiah the scribe.

2 *The priests who signed the agreement included:*

Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah, 4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk, 5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8 Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. Those are *the names of* the priests *who signed the agreement*.

9 The Levites *who signed the agreement* were:

Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

10 *Some of* their associates also *signed the agreement, including*: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

11 Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah,
Shebaniah, 13 Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

14 The Israelite leaders *who signed the agreement* were:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, and Bani, 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, 24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 26 also Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

28 The rest of the people *joined in this solemn agreement. This included* the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, and the *temple* workers. *It also included* everyone who agreed only to worship and obey the God of Israel, along with their wives and their sons and daughters who were *old enough* to understand what they were *doing*. 29 They *all* joined with their leaders, who were important people, and together they all made a solemn agreement to obey *all* the laws that God had given by Moses his servant. They agreed that they would strictly obey everything that Yahweh our God had commanded, yes, *all of* his instructions. 30 This is what *they promised to do*: "We will not give our daughters *in marriage* to people *who live* in this land *who do not worship Yahweh*. We will not allow our sons to marry their daughters. 31 People from other groups *who live* in this land might bring merchandise and all kinds of food to sell on Sabbath days. But we will not buy anything from them on a Sabbath *day* or any other sacred day. Every seventh year, we will let *the fields* rest *and not plant any crops. That same year* we will not make anyone pay back *anything they owe* to another person. 32 We each also agreed to a pledge that *every* year we would pay 4 grams of silver for the *supplies* needed for the temple. 33 *Here is a list of those supplies.* The *sacred* bread that is placed *before God*. The grain that is *burned on the altar* each day. *The animals that* are completely burned up *on the altar* each day. The sacred offerings for the Sabbath days and for celebrating each new moon and other *festivals* that *God* told *us to celebrate*. *Other* offerings that are dedicated *to God*. *The*

animals to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the Israelite people. Anything else *that is needed* for the work of *taking care of* the temple.

34 We have cast lots to determine when each clan of the priests, the Levites, and *the rest of* the people will bring an offering of wood to the temple. Each clan will do this at an appointed time every year. *The Levites will use* the wood to burn *the sacrifices* on the altar that belongs to Yahweh our God. He commanded this in the law *he gave through Moses*. 35 We will also bring *an offering* to the temple every year from the first *grain* that we *harvest* and from all the first fruit that *grows on* all our trees. 36 We will also do something else that God commanded. We will bring our firstborn sons to the temple *for dedication*, and our firstborn calves and lambs and goats *as sacrifices*, to the priests who minister in the temple. 37 We will also bring supplies to the priests that *they* can store in the temple. These will include the first grain that we *harvest*, the first flour we *make*, the first fruit from all *our* trees, and the first wine and olive oil *that we produce*. We will also bring 10 percent of our harvest to the Levites. We will allow them to collect this 10 percent right in all the towns where we work. 38 A priest, one of the descendants of Aaron, will be with the Levites *and supervise* them when they collect that 10 percent. Then the Levites must bring 10 percent of what they have received to the temple. *The priests will put it* in the storerooms and it will support *them*. 39 That is how it will work. The Israelites and the Levites will bring their offerings of grain, wine, and olive oil to those storerooms. That is where *the priests* will store the equipment for the temple. And that is where *they will keep the food supplies* for the priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers who are serving at that time.

We promise that we will keep taking care of the temple."

11 So the *Israelite* leaders settled in Jerusalem *with their families*. The rest of the people cast lots to select one family out of ten to live in Jerusalem. That was the city set apart *for God*. The remaining nine families lived in the *other* towns. 2 The people *asked God to* bless all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

3 These are *the names of* the provincial officials who settled in Jerusalem. But in the towns of Judah, everyone lived on his own family property in their towns. This included the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of the servants of Solomon. 4 But some of the people of Judah and some of the people of Benjamin stayed and lived in Jerusalem.

Here are *the names of* the leaders who lived in Jerusalem.

From the descendants of Judah, one of them was Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez.

5 Another one was Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, who was one of the descendants of Shelah. 6 Altogether 468 men who were descendants of Perez lived in *the city of* Jerusalem. These men were *very* brave and skilled in combat.

7 These are the descendants of Benjamin *who decided to live in Jerusalem*.

One of them was Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah.

8 Two men who assisted him were Gabbai and Sallai. Altogether 928 people *from the tribe of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem*. 9 Their leader was Joel the son of Zichri. Judah the son of Hassenuah was *the official who was* second in command in Jerusalem.

10 The priests *who settled in Jerusalem* included Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin. 11 Another priest was Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub. He was in charge of the temple. 12 Another 822 of their associates *settled in Jerusalem and* performed work for the temple. Another priest *who settled in Jerusalem* was Adaiah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah. 13 Another 242 of his associates, including the leaders of their ancestral clans, *settled in Jerusalem*. *Another priest who settled there* was Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer. 14 Another 128 of their associates who were strong men *settled in Jerusalem*. Their leader was Zabdiel the son of Haggedolim.

15 One of the Levites *who settled in Jerusalem* was Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni. 16 Two others were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who supervised the work outside the temple and were leaders of the Levites. 17 Another Levite *who settled in Jerusalem* was Mattaniah, who directed the temple choir when they sang the prayers to thank God. He was the son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph. His assistant choir director was Bakbukiah. Another Levite was Abda, the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18 Altogether, 284 Levites settled in *Jerusalem*, the city set apart *for God*.

19 The gatekeepers *who settled in Jerusalem* included Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their associates who kept watch at the gates.

20 The rest of the Israelite people, including the priests and the Levites, all lived on their own property in all the other towns in Judea. 21 The *temple* workers lived on Ophel *Hill in Jerusalem*; and Ziha and Gishpa supervised them.

22 The man who supervised the Levites who lived in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of the descendants of Asaph. These were the singers responsible for the music in the temple *services*. 23 Now the king *of Persia* had said *that his kingdom would provide support* for the singers. The king had said to give them whatever they needed to maintain the singing in the temple services. 24 Pethahiah was the *ambassador* to the king *of Persia* for any matter pertaining to the *Israelites*. He was the son of Meshezabel, who was one of the descendants of Zerah, the son of Judah.

25 Some of the descendants of Judah did not settle in Jerusalem. They lived in *towns and* villages near their farms. These included *the city of* Kiriath-Arba and its neighboring villages, *the city of* Dibon and its neighboring villages, and *the town of* Jekabzeel and its neighboring villages. 26 *Some descendants of Judah* also *lived* in *the town of* Jeshua, *the town of* Moladah, *the town of* Beth-Pelet, 27 *the town of* Hazar-Shual, and *the city of* Beersheba and its neighboring villages. 28 *Some* also *lived* in *the town of* Ziklag, *the town of* Mekonah and its

neighboring villages, 29 *the town of* En-Rimmon, *the town of* Zora, *the town of* Jarmuth, 30 *the towns of* Zanoah and Adullam and the nearby villages, *the city of* Lachish and the nearby farms, and *the town of* Azekah and the nearby villages.

All of those people settled *in the territory of Judah, in the area* between Beersheba *in the south* and the Valley of Hinnom *in the north*. 31 Some people who were descendants of Benjamin *settled in these cities and towns*: Geba, Michmas, Aija, Bethel and its neighboring villages, 32 Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35 Lod, and Ono the Valley of Craftsmen. 36 Some Levites who had previously lived in *the territory of* Judah *went and settled* in *the land that had belonged to the old tribe of* Benjamin.

12 These are *the names of* the priests and Levites who returned *from Babylonia* with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and with Joshua *the Supreme Priest*. The priests included Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2 Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, 3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, 5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.
All those men were leaders of the priests, their associates, during the time when Joshua *was the Supreme Priest*.

8 The Levites *who returned* included Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. Mattaniah and his associates led *the people in singing songs* to thank *God*. 9 Their associates Bakbukiah and Unni *stood* opposite them during the worship services *and led a choir that sang responses*. 10 Joshua *the Supreme Priest* was the father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada. 11 Joiada was the father of Jonathan. Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

12 When Joiakim was *the Supreme Priest*, these priests were the leaders of their clans. Meraiah was the leader of the clan of Seraiah. Hananiah was the leader of the clan of Jeremiah. 13 Meshullam was *the leader of the clan* of Ezra.

Jehohanan was *the leader of the clan* of Amariah.
14 Jonathan was *the leader of the clan* of Malluchi. Joseph was *the leader of the clan* of Shecaniah. 15 Adna was *the leader of the clan* of Harim. Helkai was *the leader of the clan* of Meraioth. 16 Zechariah was *the leader of the clan* of Iddo. Meshullam was *the leader of the clan* of Ginnethon.
17 Zichri was *the leader of the clan* of Abijah. Piltai was *the leader of the clan* of Miniamin and *the clan* of Moadiah. 18 Shammua was *the leader of the clan* of Bilgah. Jehonathan was *the leader of the clan* of Shemaiah. 19 Mattenai was *the leader of the clan* of Joiarib. Uzzi was *the leader of the clan* of Jedaiah. 20 Kallai was the *leader of the clan* of Sallai.
Eber was *the leader of the clan* of Amok.
21 Hashabiah was *the leader of the clan* of Hilkiah. Nethanel was *the leader of the clan* of Jedaiah.

22 *Some scribes* wrote down *the names of* the clan leaders of the Levites during the time when Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were *Supreme Priests*. They wrote down *the names of* the clan leaders of the priests when Darius was king of Persia.

23 *Scribes* recorded *the names of* the clan leaders of the Levites in their record books up until the time when Johanan the descendant of Eliashib was *the Supreme Priest*. 24 Hashabiah, Serebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel were Levite leaders *who directed one choir*. Their associates *stood* opposite them *directing another choir*. The singers praised *God* and gave thanks *to him*, with one group facing the other. This was what King David, the man who served God faithfully, had instructed. 25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers. They *stood* guard at the storerooms near the gates. 26 They did that *work* during the time when Joiakim, the son of Jeshua and grandson of Jozadak, was *the Supreme Priest*. They did it *again* during the time when Nehemiah *served* as governor and Ezra *served* as priest and scribe.

27 When *we* dedicated the wall around Jerusalem, we summoned the Levites from all the places *where* they were *living*. We brought them to Jerusalem to assist in dedicating the wall by rejoicing and giving thanks and by singing *accompanied by* cymbals and harps and other stringed instruments. 28 We summoned the Levites who *were used to* singing *together*. They came to Jerusalem from nearby areas where they had settled around the city. They also came from places around *the village of* Netophah *southeast of Jerusalem*. 29 They also came from *three places northeast of* Jerusalem, Beth-Gilgal and the areas around Geba and Azmaveth. *We summoned* those singers because they had built villages to live in near Jerusalem. 30 The priests and Levites performed rituals to make themselves acceptable *to God*. Then they performed *similar* rituals to purify the other people, the gates, and the wall. 31 Then I gathered the leaders of Judah together on top of the wall. I assigned them *to lead* two large groups that would march *around the city* on top of the wall, thanking *God*. *As they faced the city, one group* walked to the right toward the Rubbish Gate. 32 Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah marched behind that group. 33 *The people who marched with that group* included Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. 35 Some descendants of the priests *also marched with that group* playing musical instruments. They included Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph. 36 Some associates *of Zechariah* also *marched and played musical instruments*. They included Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They all were playing *the same kinds of* musical instruments that King David, the man who served God faithfully, *had told the Levite musicians to play many years previously*. Ezra the scribe *marched* in front of this group. 37 When the people in this group reached the Fountain Gate, they went up the steps that were in front of them to *the area known as* the City of David. Then they went along the top of the wall past the location of the *royal* palace of David, and then to the Water Gate, on the east *side of the temple*. 38 The other group of those who were *singing and* thanking *Yahweh* marched to the left on top of the wall. I followed them with half of the people. We marched past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall. 39 From there *we marched* past the Ephraim Gate, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred Soldiers to the Sheep Gate. We finished marching near a gate that *leads into the temple area*. 40 Both of the groups *reached* the temple *as they were singing*

and giving thanks. They stood *in their places there*. I was there with the half of the city officials who had come with me.
41 *My group* included the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. All of them were blowing trumpets. 42 *Others who were blowing trumpets* included Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah who was their leader.
43 The people offered many sacrifices that day. They *all* rejoiced because God had made them very happy. The women and the children rejoiced along with the men, so the sound of the celebration in Jerusalem was so loud that people far away could hear it.

44 On that day *we* appointed men to be in charge of the storerooms. That was where *the priests* kept the money and the food and the grain and the tithes. *The people* brought these things from the fields near the cities into the storerooms for the priests and the Levites, as Moses had commanded in the law. *The people of* Judah did all this because they were so happy about the priests and the Levites serving *in the temple*.
45 The priests and the Levites served God by performing rituals to purify things. The singers and the gatekeepers also *did their work* as King David and his son Solomon had declared they should. 46 *We did all this* because that was how it was in the days of old, when David was *king* and Asaph was *in charge of the temple musicians*. There was someone to lead the singers, and they sang songs to praise and thank God. 47 During the time when Zerubbabel was *the governor*, the people all contributed the food that the singers and temple gatekeepers needed each day. They did the same during the time when Nehemiah was *the governor*. They gave a tenth *of their crops* to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tenth *of that* to the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, *the first Supreme Priest*.

13 Then someone read out loud to the people from a scroll *that contained the law that God gave to* Moses. They learned that the *law* said that no Ammonites or Moabites should ever join the *Israelite* people *when they gathered together to worship God*. 2 *The law said this* because *the people of Ammon and the people of Moab* did not give any food or water to the Israelites *while they were traveling through their areas after leaving Egypt*. Instead, they paid Balaam to get him to curse the Israelites. But our God turned that attempt to curse Israel into a blessing. 3 So the people obeyed that law. They sent away all the people whose ancestors had come from other countries.

4 When he became the *Supreme* Priest, Eliashib got control of the storerooms in the temple. Now he was related to Tobiah.
5 He allowed *Tobiah* to have a large room in which the priests used to store supplies. These included the grain offerings and the incense, the equipment for the temple, and the tithes of grain and wine and olive oil. *God* had commanded *the people to bring* these to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers. This room had also held the offerings for the priests. 6 During that time I was not in Jerusalem, because in the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was the king of Babylonia, I had gone back *to report to the king what I had been doing*. After I had been there a while, I asked the king to allow me to return *to Jerusalem*.

7 When I arrived in Jerusalem, I discovered the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by allowing him to use this room in the temple area. 8 That grieved me very much. I threw everything that belonged to Tobiah out of that room. 9 Then I commanded *the priests to perform a ritual to cleanse* that room and make it pure again. I also *ordered* the equipment for the temple and the grain offerings and incense *to be* put back in that room *where they belonged*.

10 I also learned that the singers and the other Levites who were responsible for the *temple* services had left Jerusalem. They had returned to their own fields because the people had stopped giving them *10 percent of their* harvests, *since Tobiah had occupied the storeroom*. 11 So I rebuked the city officials. I told them, “You have neglected *the work of* the temple!” Then I brought *the Levites and the singers* back to the temple and told them to do their work *again*. 12 Then all *the people of* Judah started bringing their tithes of grain, wine, and olive oil to the *temple* storerooms *once again*. 13 I appointed some *men* to be in charge of the storerooms. They were Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah the Levite. I also appointed Hanan the son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah to assist them. I appointed these *men* because *everyone* knew that they were trustworthy and would distribute *the offerings fairly* to their associates.

14 “My God, please bless me for this. Yes, bless me for the good things that I have done for your temple and for the temple services!”

15 During that time, I saw *some people* in Judea *who were working* on the Sabbath day. Some were pressing grapes to make wine. Others were taking their grain and loading it on donkeys. Others were also loading *bags of* wine, baskets of grapes, figs, and many other things onto donkeys and bringing them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I warned them not to sell *food to the people of Judea* on *Sabbath* days. 16 I also saw some people from *the city of* Tyre who were living there in *Jerusalem* bringing fish and other things into Jerusalem to sell to the people of Judah on the Sabbath day. 17 So I rebuked the Jewish leading citizens. I said to them, “This is a very evil thing that you are doing! You are making the Sabbath day into something *God never wanted* it to be. 18 You know that your ancestors did these same things, and God *punished* our nation *by* bringing great trouble to this city! But *now* you too are breaking *the laws* for the Sabbath day. You are going to cause *God* to be angry with *the nation of* Israel *again*. *He will punish us* even more!”

19 So I commanded *the gatekeepers* to shut the doors of the gates of the city when it started to get dark on Friday evening. I commanded them not to open the gates until Saturday evening. I also stationed some of my men at the gates *so they would make sure that* no one brought things to sell into *the city in between those times*, on the Sabbath day. 20 One or two times traders and merchants selling all kinds of things camped outside the city on the night *before the Sabbath day*. *They were hoping* to sell *something the next day*. 21 I warned them. I said to them, “It is useless for you to camp here outside the walls on Friday night. If you do this again, I will arrest you by force!” After that, they did not come on Sabbath days.

22 I also commanded the Levites to *perform a ritual to* purify themselves and then *take up stations* to guard the city gates. I wanted them to ensure that Sabbath days were kept holy *by not allowing merchants to enter the city on that holy day*.

“My God, please bless me for doing this too! And be kind to me, because you faithfully love us so abundantly.”

23 During that time, I also learned that many of the Jewish
men had married women from *the city of* Ashdod, and from the
Ammonites and Moabites. 24 So half of their children spoke a
foreign language, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew.
They spoke whatever language *their* foreign *parent spoke*. 25 So
I rebuked those men. I *asked God* to curse them. I struck some
of them *with my fists*. I pulled out their hair. Then I forced them
to make a solemn promise, knowing that God was listening. I
made them promise that they would *never* again allow their
daughters to marry foreign men. I also made them promise
that they and their sons would not marry foreign women.
26 *I said to them,* "You know that Solomon, the king of Israel,
sinned as a result of *marrying foreign women who worshiped
idols*! You know that he was greater than any of the kings of
other nations. God loved him, and God set him as the king
over all *the people of* Israel. But his foreign wives caused even
him to sin! 27 *I am grieved* to hear this about you! You have
married foreign wives *who worship idols*. You have committed
a great sin against our God!"
28 A man who was a son of Joiada and a grandson of Eliashib
the Supreme Priest had married the daughter of *our enemy*
Sanballat the Horonite. So I forced this man to leave *Jerusalem*.
29 "My God, these *men* have brought shame to the priesthood.
They have broken the covenant of the priesthood and of the
Levites. Punish them as they deserve!"
30 I took away everything from *the priests* that came from
other nations and religions. I also established regulations for
the priests and for the Levites *so they would know* what work
each of them was supposed to do. 31 *I* also *arranged* for the
people to bring their offerings of wood at the set times *to burn
on the altar*, and to bring the first part of what they harvested
of each crop during the year.
"My God, please consider that I *have done all these things*,
and bless me *for doing them*."