

# **Nehemiah**

## **Chapter 11**

### *The Leaders in Jerusalem*

Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. 2 And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. 3 These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah everyone lived on his property in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants. 4 And in Jerusalem lived certain of the sons of Judah and of the sons of Benjamin. Of the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez; 5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, son of the Shilonite. 6 All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 valiant men. 7 And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah, 8 and his brothers, men of valor, 928. 9 Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer; and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second over the city. 10 Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin, 11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, ruler of the house of God, 12 and their brothers who did the work of the house, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, 13 and his brothers, heads of fathers' houses, 242; and Amashsai, the son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, 14 and their brothers, mighty men of valor, 128; their overseer was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim. 15 And of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; 16 and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who were over the outside work of the house of God; 17 and Mattaniah the son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who was the leader of the praise, who gave thanks, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brothers; and Abda the son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. 18 All the Levites in the holy city were 284. 19 The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brothers, who kept watch at the gates, were 172. 20 And the rest of Israel, and of the priests and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, every one in his inheritance. 21 But the temple servants lived on Ophel; and Ziha and Gishpa were over the temple servants. 22 The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the work of the house of God. 23 For there was a command from the king concerning them, and a fixed provision for the singers, as every day required. 24 And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerach the son of Judah, was at the king's side in all matters concerning the people.

**11:1** *cast lots*. See 10:34. Lots were usually made out of small stones or pieces of wood. Sometimes arrows were used (Eze 21:21). (CSB)

(7:4), it was agreed that one person in 10 living outside the city would be selected by lot to become an urban resident. May have also been for purposes of defense (cf vv 6, 8). (TLSB)

This method was used because God controlled the outcome of the casting of lots. (CC)

For the casting of lots as a tool through which God revealed His will, see, for example, Lev. 16:8; Num. 26:55; Josh 7:14, 16-18; 14:2; 18:6, 8, 10; 1 Sam. 10:20-21; 14:41-42; Jonah 1:7; 1 Chr. 24:31; 25:8; 26:13-14. Although the new covenant never stipulates that Christians should or must use this method to determine God's will, the practice did continue into the early part of the NT era (see Lk. 1:9; Acts 1:26; cf. Jn. 19:24). (CC)

Therefore it was God who made the ultimate decision about who would move to Jerusalem. Yet those chosen are called "those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem" (11:2) They were willing to obey God's will, and for this selfless spirit of sacrifice, the rest of the people blessed them. (CC)

*one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem.* Josephus (*Antiquities*, 11.5.8) asserts: "But Nehemiah, seeing that the city had a small population, urged the priests and Levites to leave the countryside and move to the city and remain there, for he had prepared houses for them at his own expense." The practice of redistributing populations was also used to establish Greek and Hellenistic cities. It involved the forcible transfer from rural settlements to urban centers. Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee was populated with Gentiles by such a process by Herod Antipas in A.D. 18. (CSB)

**11:2** In addition to those chosen by lot (v. 1), some volunteered out of a sense of duty. But evidently most preferred to stay in their hometowns. (CSB)

*willingly offered.* Those chosen by lot were praised for being willing to move. (TLSB)

**11:3–36** Following the report of the additions to Jerusalem's population, a list of those who lived there (vv 3–24) and in the Judean villages (vv 25–36) was attached. This city directory has almost the same names found in 1Ch 9:2–34. It is arranged under five categories: laypeople (vv 3–9); priests (vv 10–14); Levites (vv 15–18); gatekeepers and temple servants (vv 19, 21); officials (vv 22–24). (TLSB)

**11:3–19** A census roster that parallels 1Ch 9:2–21, a list of the first residents in Jerusalem after the return from Babylonia. About half the names in the two lists are the same. (CSB)

**11:3–19** The list of new residents consists of Judean names. The list is similar to the list in 1 Chr. 9:2-17 of "the first who lived on their property in their cities" (1 Chr. 9:2) and especially those who "lived in Jerusalem" (1 Chr. 9:3). The list in 1 Chronicles is a list of people who lived on their ancestral property, especially those who lived in Jerusalem. The list in Nehemiah is less comprehensive, however. It claims to be a list only of "the heads of the province who lived in Jerusalem." (CC)

**11:3** *these are the provincial leaders* – Nehemiah's administration cut across conventional lines. He followed a decentralized form of administration. Each city and village was responsible for its own government. His practice was in marked contrast to the established policy of his day which emphasized a strong central government. (Nehemiah and the Dynamics of effective Leadership – p 155)

*Israel.* Common people, children of Israel. (TLSB)

His confidence is in the Lord. Those who might have constituted a threat to his security do not do so because of his implicit faith and trust in the One who called him to undertake this task. Insecurity arises when people, for one reason or another, fail to feel a part of a group, suffer from a poor estimate of their work, or lack confidence in themselves. (Nehemiah and the Dynamics of effective Leadership – p 154)

**11:4** *sons of Judah ... sons of Benjamin.* Lay leaders from these two tribes. (TLSB)

**11:6** *valiant men.* Respectable men, fit for fighting. (TLSB)

**11:8** 928. The men of Benjamin provided twice as many men as Judah (v. 6) to live in and protect the city of Jerusalem. (CSB)

**11:9** *overseer.* Military commander. (TLSB)

*Second over the city.* See 2Ch 34:22 (in Zep 1:10 the Hebrew for this phrase is translated “New Quarter”). Like the “market district” (Zep 1:11), which was probably the Tyropoeon Valley area, the Second District was a new suburb west of the temple area. Excavations indicate that the city had spread outside the walls in this direction by the late eighth century B.C. before the so-called Broad Wall was built c. 700 by Hezekiah. (CSB)

**11:11** *ruler.* High priest. (TLSB)

**11:16** *outside work.* Duties outside the temple (cf. 1Ch 26:29) but connected with it. (CSB)

Exterior maintenance of the temple. (TLSB)

**11:17** *Asaph.* Ps 50; 73–83 are attributed to a man with this name. (TLSB)

*leader of the praise.* Singers, sometimes mentioned separately (10:28), are listed with the Levites. (TLSB)

*Jeduthun.* See 1Ch 16:42; 25:1, 3; 2Ch 5:12; titles of Ps 39; 62; 77.

**11:18** 284. The relatively small number of Levites, compared with 1,192 priests (the total of 822, 242 and 128 in vv. 12–13), is striking (see note on Ezr 2:40). (CSB)

**11:20–36** The remainder of Nehemiah 11 is about each Israelite on his own “inheritance.” This refers to the ancestral property that was assigned to the family in perpetuity at the time of Joshua, after the conquest of the land. Such property could be sold until the Jubilee Year, but in that year it always reverted to the original heirs. (CC)

**11:20** *every one in his inheritance.* Inalienable hereditary possessions—including land, buildings and movable goods—acquired by either conquest or inheritance (Ge 31:14; Nu 18:21; 27:7; 34:2; 36:3; 1Ki 21:1–4). (CSB)

Property outside Jerusalem inherited from one’s ancestors. (TLSB)

**11:21–24** Before listing villages of Judah (vv 25–35), three notes about Jerusalem residents were inserted. (TLSB)

**11:21** Temple servants lived just south of the temple. (TLSB)

**11:23** *command from the king.* David had regulated the services of the Levites, including the singers (1Ch 25). The Persian king, Darius I, gave a royal stipend so that the Jewish elders might “pray for the well-being of the king and his sons” (Ezr 6:10). Artaxerxes I may have done much the same for the Levite choir. (CSB)

Perhaps King Artaxerxes. (TLSB)

*provision ... as every day required.* Support for the daily needs of the temple singers was provided from the king’s treasury. (TLSB)

**11:24** Pethahiah was the king’s adviser. (TLSB)

*Villages Outside Jerusalem*

**25** And as for the villages, with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its villages, and in Dibon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, **26** and in Jeshua and in Moladah and Beth-pelet, **27** in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its villages, **28** in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, **29** in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, **30** Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So they encamped from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. **31** The people of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages, **32** Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, **33** Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, **34** Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, **35** Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. **36** And certain divisions of the Levites in Judah were assigned to Benjamin.

**11:25–30** An important list, corresponding to earlier lists of towns in Judah. All these names also appear in Jos 15 with the exception of Dibon, Jekabzeel (but see Kabzeel in Jos 15:21), Jeshua, Meconah and En Rimmon (but see Ain and Rimmon in Jos 15:32). The list, however, is not comprehensive, since a number of towns listed in ch. 3; Ezr 2:21–22 are lacking. No Judean coins have been found outside the area designated by vv. 25–30. (CSB)

**11:25** *villages.* Apparently, many people preferred to live in unwalled towns “with their fields” rather than in the close quarters of fortified Jerusalem. There were 17 villages in the territory of Judah, 15 in Benjamin. (TLSB)

*Kiriath Arba.* In the Hellenistic era it fell to the Idumeans, together with other Judean towns. (CSB)

Ancient name for Hebron, 19 mi S of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Dibon.* Probably Debir, 15 mi E of Beersheba. (TLSB)

*Jekabzeel.* Or Kabzeel (Jsh 15:21), c 6 mi NE of Beersheba. (TLSB)

**11:26** *Jeshua.* Probably Shema, 17 mi E of Beersheba. (TLSB)

*Moladah.* Near Beersheba; later occupied by the Idumeans. (CSB)

C 4 mi NE of Beersheba. (TLSB)

*Beth Pelet.* Means “house of refuge,” a site near Beersheba. (CSB)

Location unknown (Jsh 15:27). (TLSB)

**11:27** *Hazar Shual.* Means “enclosure of a fox” (see 1Ch 4:28). (CSB)

Ancient site is c 2 mi E of the modern city, c 45 mi SW of Jerusalem. Southernmost area inhabited by Judeans. (TLSB)

*Beersheba.* Archaeological excavations reveal that the city was destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. and only resettled in the Persian period. (CSB)

**11:28** *Ziklag.* Given to David by Achish, king of Gath (1Sa 27:6), and taken by the Amalekites (1Sa 30:1); see Jos 15:31. (CSB)

C 14 mi NW of Beersheba. (TLSB)

*Meconah.* Location unknown. (TLSB)

**11:29** *En Rimmon.* Means “spring of the pomegranate,” probably Khirbet Umm er-Ramamin, nine miles north-northeast of Beersheba (see Jos 15:32). (CSB)

C 9 mi N of Beersheba. (TLSB)

C 15 mi W of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Zorah.* C 15 mi W of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Jarmuth.* Eight miles north-northeast of Eleutheropolis (Beit Jibrin), it was one of five Canaanite cities in the south that attempted to halt Joshua’s invasion (Jos 10:3–5). (CSB)

C 17 mi SW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**11:30** *Zanoah.* A village in the Shephelah district of low hills between Judah and Philistia. The men of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate (3:13). The site has been identified with Khirbet Zanu, three miles south-southeast of Beth Shemesh. (CSB)

C 15 mi SW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Adullam.* See note on Ge 38:1. (CSB)

C 18 mi SW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Lachish.* See Jos 10:3; see also notes on Isa 36:2; Mic 1:13. (CSB)

28 mi SW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*fields.* Lachish may not have had small, surrounding settlements like some of the towns. (TLSB)

*Azekah.* Near Jarmuth (v 29). (TLSB)

*encamped*. Type of dwelling in which people lived varied; some undoubtedly lived in tents. (TLSB)

*Hinnom*. The valley west and south of Jerusalem; Gehenna in the NT.

Deep valley just south of Jerusalem (2Ki 23:10). (TLSB)

**11:31–35** Most of the Benjamite towns listed here appear also in 7:26–38; Ezr 2:23–35. (CSB)

**11:31** *Geba*. C 7 mi N of Jerusalem in territory of Benjamin. (TLSB)

*Micmash*. Just north of Geba. (TLSB)

*Aija*. An alternate name for Ai. (CSB)

Same as Ai, 10 mi N of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**11:32** *Anathoth*. C 3 mi N of Jerusalem, home of Jeremiah. (TLSB)

*Nob*. Just east of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Ananiah*. May be Bethany, not far to the east. (TLSB)

**11:33** *Hazor*. C 5 mi NW of Jerusalem, not to be confused with the large city north of the Sea of Chinnereth. (TLSB)

*Ramah*. C 6 mi N of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Gittaim*. Its location is not known. (CSB)

Perhaps Gath, 23 mi NW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**11:34** *Hadid*. Three to four miles northeast of Lod (see 7:37; Ezr 2:33). (CSB)

North of Gittaim (v 33). (TLSB)

*Zeboim*. Near Lod (v 35). (TLSB)

*Neballat*. Northwest of Lod. (TLSB)

**11:35** *Lod*. C 25 mi NW of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Ono*. Ravine running northwest of Lod. (TLSB)

*Valley of the Craftsmen*. See 1Ch 4:14. It may be the broad valley between Lod and Ono. The name may preserve the memory of the Philistine iron monopoly (1Sa 13:19–20). (CSB)

**11:36** *assigned to Benjamin*. Some Levites lived in Benjamin. (TLSB)

**Ch 11** For the sake of security and good order, a number of people willingly agree to occupy Jerusalem, which was only beginning to be restored. Volunteer service has great value and may involve great sacrifice. Prayerfully consider how you may voluntarily serve your Lord, your Church, and your community. As you pray, give thanks for the willing heart of Jesus, who paid the greatest sacrifice to render the greatest service: your salvation. • Grant me a willing heart, good order, and fruitful service, O Savior. Amen. (TLSB)