

Nehemiah

Chapter 7

Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. 3 And I said to them, “Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes.” 4 The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.

Chapters 7-13 – Major Themes - With the completion of Jerusalem’s wall, Nehemiah would turn his attention to other matters, especially the establishment of Jerusalem as a holy city populated by a sanctified people who supported the holy temple of God. Thus in these chapters four themes come to the fore. (CC)

Vocation – The first theme that characterizes Nehemiah 7-13 is that of God given vocations. Nehemiah 7 begins with one particular man’s vocation – the vocation of Hanani, Nehemiah’s brother (7:1-2). He is commended as trustworthy and God-fearing, testifying to his ability to fulfill his vocation as commander of Jerusalem’s citadel. (CC)

Other vocations are also emphasized. Priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and singers are mentioned frequently. Their vocations were involved with divine worship and the Word of God. These chapters pay much attention to the work of these men, especially at the reading of the Teaching of Moses (8:1-12), during the convocation where the Judeans confessed their sins (Chapter 9), and during the dedication of Jerusalem’s wall (12:27-47). The genealogies of the priests and Levites are listed (12:1-26) because their calls from God to do His holy work were based on their ancestry. (CC)

The vocations of the laity are also vitally important in these chapters, as the detailed list of new residents for Jerusalem suggests (chapter 11). They supported the work of the temple personnel (10:14-39), and their leaders supplied members of the processions along Jerusalem’s wall during the dedication ceremony (12:27-47). The vocations God had assigned to the laity were no less important or sacred than those assigned to the priests and other temple personnel. Quite to the contrary, the laity’s God-given vocations were just as valuable to God and just as holy to him as those of the clergy. (CC)

The Lutheran confessors condemned the Roman view that the vocations of lay people were unspiritual and less pleasing to God than the vocations of priests, monks, and nuns (e.g., AC XXVI 8-11). They argued instead that every Christian can and does serve God through carrying out his or her God-given vocation as husband or wife, worker, administrator, etc. (e.g., Ap XV 25-26; XXIII 28-34). (CC)

The most important example of a lay person fulfilling his vocation in these chapters is Nehemiah himself. He provided for Jerusalem’s safety (7:1-3), acted on God’s will to repopulate Jerusalem (7:4-5), supported the reading of God’s Word (8:9), and ensure that God’s people honored God’s

Word by following its law and decrees (12:47; 13:1-31). In all this he remained a faithful servant of God, a man of prayer (13:14, 22, 29, 31), and a skillful leader. (CC)

Israel's History – The history of God's people is a second theme that recurs throughout these chapters. It begins with the list of the first Judeans to return from the captivity (7:6-73a). That return probably took place in 533 BC. For Nehemiah, this list was a historical record from almost a century before. (CC)

The most extensive history of God's people in Nehemiah is found in the confessional prayer led by the Levites (9:5b-38). This prayer traces Israel's history from Abraham through Nehemiah's day and forms the most complete historical review of any prayer in the OT. (CC)

The historical service of the priests and the Levites since the exile is the subject of the genealogical records of Nehemiah 12:1-26. It carefully notes the line of high priests since the return from Babylon (12:10-11). (CC)

Nehemiah also shows familiarity with Israel's history and twice uses it to admonish the leaders for their failures. In Nehemiah 13:17-18 he knows Israel's history of breaking the Sabbath command. In 13:26 he is familiar with Solomon's reign as recounted in 1 Kings 1-11. (CC)

The history of Israel constantly serves to highlight the contrast between Israel's unfaithfulness and God's longsuffering patience and mercy. This made explicit in the penitential prayer (9:5b-38), but is also implicit in the other historical references. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God kept His promise to restore the Judeans to the Promised Land (chapter 7). Although the priests and Levites often neglected their duties and misused their offices and continued to do so (chapter 13), God still worked through them to bring forgiveness and life to His people (chapter 12). Even though the Judeans continued to repeat the sins of their ancestors (chapter 13), God remained faithful and used men like Nehemiah to reform them and restore them to their proper relationship to God through the righteousness God confers on all believers according to His Gospel. (CC)

Worship in the Purity of the Gospel – Throughout Nehemiah 7-13 there is an emphasis on God nourishing His people by His Gospel, both in His Word and in the atoning sacrifices at the temple. In Nehemiah 8 the people are led by Ezra to study God's Word, and they joyfully celebrate the Feast of Booth (8:13-18). In Nehemiah 9, prompted by God's Law, the people confessed their sins, which led them to join in a solemn agreement to live according to the Teaching of God given through Moses (Neh. 10). In Nehemiah 13 they had a reformation on the basis of God's Word, and they themselves took action to follow God's Teaching (13:1-3). Under the leadership of Nehemiah, who saw that God's Word was honored (13:4-31), provision was made for the service of the temple led by the priests and Levite (12:1-26), and the Sabbath was kept. (CC)

All of this was ultimately in service of the Gospel. As in every generation, each of God's people was simultaneously both a sinner – still plagued by the original sin inherited from Adam, which results in actual sins – and a saint, redeemed by God according to His Gospel and forgiven through faith in His Word and sacramental promises. The Law led each person to repentance, and God heard every penitent cry for mercy and bestowed salvation on every believer through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament. (CC)

A Holy People around Word and Sacrament – This leads to the fourth major emphasis in these chapters: Israel is defined as God's people gathered around His Word and Sacrament. (CC)

Compare St. Paul's definition of OT Israel as the people whom God redeemed sacramentally: "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were drinking from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:2-4). (CC)

Nehemiah's effort to repopulate Jerusalem was intended to make Jerusalem a thriving city that could support the temple where God's people could gather to worship Him and receive forgiveness through the sacrifices on the altar and the reading and singing of God's Word. (CC)

The people gathered around God's Word for study (Neh. 8) and confession (Neh. 9). Nehemiah took steps to ensure that God's people not only gathered around His Word, but also that they could understand it (8:7-12). Nehemiah also provided for the sacrifices (13:31), just as the people had promised to do earlier (10:32-39). Despite the two extensive genealogical lists in these chapters (7:6-73a) and (12:1-26), God's people are not defined simply by their ancestry. Instead God's people are defined as those who believe in Him. They are gathered to Him around His Word and Sacrament, where they hear the Gospel, believe its promises, and receive from Him life and salvation. This definition of God's people is consistent with NT passages that define "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) as all believers in Christ. They have been baptized into Christ (e.g., Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:26-29) and commune in the body and blood of Jesus Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-27). Through sacramental incorporation and faith in the Word of the Gospel, believers are heirs of all God's OT and NT promises (Gal. 3:26-29; see also Romans 9-11; 1 Cor. 10; Eph. 2). (CC)

Lists in Nehemiah 7-13 – One striking feature of Nehemiah is its extensive use of lists of people. These lists not only emphasize the history of the Judeans as an extension of the ancient history of Israel, but they also help the reader to see that God knows each of His people and is concerned about them individually as well as collectively. The major lists encountered here are as follows: (CC)

- The first to return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel: Neh. 7:6-73a/ Ezra 2:1-70
- Those who sealed the solemn agreement: Neh. 9:38-10:27
- The new residents of Jerusalem: Neh. 11:1-36
- The priests and Levites: Neh. 12:1-26

In addition, there are smaller lists such as the men who were standing on the platform when Ezra read the Teaching of Moses (8:4), the Levites standing on the stairs of the Levites who led the Judeans in mourning their sins (9:4), the Levites who led the Judeans in their penitential prayer (9:5a), and the members of the procession along the wall at the dedication of the wall (12:32-36, 40-42). (CC)

These lists lead the reader to see that individual members of God's people serve Him and their particular neighbors in various ways and at various times. They demonstrate that all of God's people – priests and Levites, leaders and common laity – have an honored place in God's kingdom. Even if their contribution is small or insignificant in the eyes of the world, in God's eyes their efforts are good works performed by His gracious working in them. The deeds of God's people are holy and righteous works that are blessed by Him. God knows each of His people by name (cf. Ex. 31:2; Is. 43:1; John 10:3; 2 Tim. 2:19), and He has caused some believers' names and deeds to be recorded in the historical record of Scripture (cf. Mt. 26:10-13). This shows all believers that even if the world ignores them and keeps no record of their deeds of faith, God remembers and records in His book what they have done in earthly history, and on the

Last Day He will reward them by His grace (e.g., Mal. 3:16; Ps. 56:8; Dan. 12:1-3; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:11-15). (CC)

7:1 The people mentioned in this verse would guard the temple, preserve ritual purity, and look after furniture and supplies (1 Chron. 26:12-19; 2 Chron. 8:14). (TLSB)

gatekeepers...had been appointed – Although the wall of Jerusalem had been completed, Nehemiah was not convinced that the danger of attack had completely dissipated. Therefore, he took steps to make sure that vigilance was maintained along the wall. (CC)

Nehemiah uses three different verbs to speak about appointing a guard. First, the passive form “had been appointed,” probably indicates that the leaders of the people had appointed the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites. (CC)

The third verb Nehemiah uses is the Hiphil (H) infinitive absolute in the clause “appoint guards.” Nehemiah issued this command to the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites as well as his brother Hanani, directing them to appoint guards to be stationed along the wall. A number of these appointed guards served on the wall near their own houses, probably on the east side of the city (cf. Neh. 3:23, 28-30). However, some were simply posted at various other points along the wall. (CC)

These guarded the entrances to the temple, preserved ritual purity and looked after furniture and supplies (1 Chr. 26:12-19; 2 Chr. 8:14). (TLSB)

7:2-3 With the walls completed and the temple personnel in place, Nehemiah turned his attention to strengthening Jerusalem’s security. (TLSB)

7:2 *in charge of Jerusalem.* Over Rephaiah and Shallum, who were over sections of the city (3:9, 12). (CSB)

Nehemiah now turned his attention to organizing an orderly administration of the restored city. Two reliable, godly men were entrusted with governing the city. Nehemiah’s brother Hanani seems to have filled a position similar to that of our mayors. Hananiah was responsible for military and police operations in the city. Strong security measures and military alertness had to continue, since a sneak attack was still a possibility. (PBC)

Theodore Roosevelt said, “The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” (Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership – p. 116)

A second principle of sound administrative practice is the proper development of one’s subordinates. (Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership – p. 116)

The second verb is a first person form of the verb “I placed,” which Nehemiah uses to indicate his appointment of his brother over Jerusalem. (CC)

The construction emphasizes that Hanani was given a position of authority. Nehemiah seems particularly concerned about defending his motives for appointing his brother. He offers a theological explanation that highlights Hanani’s faithfulness to God in order to dispel any charges of nepotism. Considering that Nehemiah scrupulously avoided any personal enrichment at the

expense of others (5:10-11, 14-18), he may have felt constrained to justify how his appointment did not run counter to his other actions. (CC)

Hanani. Hanani is described as both “trustworthy” and one who “feared God.” He is in fact the only person in Ezra or Nehemiah described as one who “feared God,” marking him as an outstanding man of faith and integrity. The fear of God can denote fear of God’s wrath (Prov. 24:21-22). More often, however, it is also denotes a positive, filial relationship to God through faith that causes a redeemed person to want to please the heavenly Father (Prov. 8:13). God, who bestows blessings for temporal and eternal life leads people to wisdom, initiates, sustains, and completes this positive relationship. This objective saving relationship with God is established by Christ, the Wisdom of God. (See, for example, Proverbs 8:1-36; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30) (CC)

Thus the fear of Yahweh is first and foremost a filial relationship initiated by God when He reckons sinners as righteous by His grace alone and simply through faith (Gen. 15:6; Is. 53:11; Hab. 2:4). Believers in the one true and triune God are justified and have this positive relationship with God, who has forgiven them and made them His children. Of all the books of the OT, Proverbs most often speaks of this filial relationship with God by using phrases with “to fear” God or “the fear” of Yahweh. It was God alone who first promised this relationship through the conquering Seed of Eve (Gen. 3:15). He established this relationship with His people when He called their ancestor Abraham (Gen. 17:7; Deut. 29:14-15). He then delivered His chosen people from Egypt, instituted His covenant with them, and graciously promised to be their God. (E.g., Ex. 6:7; Lev. 11:45; 22:32-33; 25:38; Num. 15:41; Jer. 11:4). (CC)

The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it. A second principle of sound administrative practice is to develop one’s subordinates. (Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership – p. 116)

castle. Hananiah was responsible for military and police operations in the city. Strong security measures and military alertness had to continue, since a sneak attack was still a possibility. (PBC)

Men with similar names (some suggest these are spelling variants for the same name) were given charge over Jerusalem. (TLSB)

governor of the castle. Commander of the temple fortress. (TLSB)

7:3 until the sun is hot. Normally the gates would be opened at dawn, but their opening was to be delayed until the sun was high in the heavens to prevent the enemy from making a surprise attack before most of the people were up. (CSB)

Midmorning to midday. (TLSB)

Nehemiah instructed that the gates were to be closed before the afternoon, when the heat of the day could induce sleep in the weary guards. This was a precaution against attack during the time when guards would have been the least alert, a tactic employed in ancient times by attacking troops. For Nehemiah to issue a command to take this precaution demonstrates that he was still concerned about a possible attack by Sanballat and his allies (cf. 4:1-23; 6:1-19). (CC)

guards. Residents were appointed. (TLSB)

7:4 *people within it were few* – This is a reference to sparse population that serves as a transition to the account of Nehemiah’s efforts to move more people into Jerusalem (11-12). (TLSB)

Now that the walls were completed, Nehemiah faced the job of repopulating the city. He needed a census to choose new inhabitants for the city. The completion of this project is reported in Nehemiah 11. While preparing for this redistribution of population, Nehemiah found a list of the families who had returned with Zerubbabel in the first return nearly 100 years earlier. (PBC)

The list of new residents recruited by Nehemiah (11:1-20) gives a total of only 3044 new men to settle in the city, but this includes only those associated with “the heads of the province” (11:3). With all the new residents, including wives and children, the total of new residents for Jerusalem may have been 10,000 to 15,000. Given that the list of the first returnees (Ezra 2:1-70; Neh. 7:6-73a) has a total of about 16,000 men whose ancestry placed them in Jerusalem (Ezra 2:3-20; Neh. 7:8-25), it is obvious that by Nehemiah’s day the city had been drastically depopulated. This may well have been a consequence of the city’s lack of a wall as well as economic factors. It appears as many were living outside the city, and that when Nehemiah arrived, its population may well have been less than 1000. The majority of those were priests and Levites and their families. (CC)

Merely having walls around the city is not sufficient to make it either secure or prosperous. It needs an adequate population that can mount a defense of the city as well as ensure a thriving economy. (CC)

no houses had been rebuilt – Hyperbole to describe general conditions in Jerusalem, since v. 3 referred to people standing in front of their homes. (TLSB)

6:15–7:4 Nehemiah appoints faithful colleagues to ensure good progress on the next phase of the work. Today, take joy in the faithful brothers and sisters who work with you in the Lord by showing your appreciation for them. How great a blessing is a shared burden in service to the One who bore all our burdens at the cross and will share heaven with us too. • I praise You, Lord, for my faithful colleagues. Grant us success in God-pleasing service. Amen. (TLSB)

Lists of Returned Exiles

5 Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it: **6** These were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. **7** They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: **8** the sons of Parosh, 2,172. **9** The sons of Shephathiah, 372. **10** The sons of Arah, 652. **11** The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818. **12** The sons of Elam, 1,254. **13** The sons of Zattu, 845. **14** The sons of Zaccai, 760. **15** The sons of Binnui, 648. **16** The sons of Bebai, 628. **17** The sons of Azgad, 2,322. **18** The sons of Adonikam, 667. **19** The sons of Bigvai, 2,067. **20** The sons of Adin, 655. **21** The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98. **22** The sons of Hashum, 328. **23** The sons of Bezai, 324. **24** The sons of Hariph, 112. **25** The sons of Gibeon, 95. **26** The men of Bethlehem and Netophah,

188. 27 The men of Anathoth, 128. 28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, 42. 29 The men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743. 30 The men of Ramah and Geba, 621. 31 The men of Michmas, 122. 32 The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. 33 The men of the other Nebo, 52. 34 The sons of the other Elam, 1,254. 35 The sons of Harim, 320. 36 The sons of Jericho, 345. 37 The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721. 38 The sons of Senaah, 3,930. 39 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, 973. 40 The sons of Immer, 1,052. 41 The sons of Pashhur, 1,247. 42 The sons of Harim, 1,017. 43 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the sons of Hodevah, 74. 44 The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148. 45 The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138. 46 The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, 47 the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon, 48 the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmi, 49 the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, 50 the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, 51 the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, 52 the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephushesim, 53 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, 54 the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, 55 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, 56 the sons of Nezhiah, the sons of Hatipha. 57 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida, 58 the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, 59 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon. 60 All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392. 61 The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their fathers' houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: 62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642. 63 Also, of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). 64 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. 65 The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise.

7:5 *God put it into my heart* – Nehemiah is keenly aware of God's work in his life. On this occasion he notes that it was God who gave him the idea to gather the leaders and the people together to enroll them.

Nehemiah's insistence that his decision was prompted by God contrasts with David, who was incited by Satan to number Israel (1Ch 21:1). (TLSB)

enrolled by genealogy – Taking a census was not forbidden and is actually permitted in Exodus 30:12. However, the motive for taking a census is critical. David sinned in ordering a census because he was placing his trust in the size of the army he could muster instead of trusting in God (2 Sam. 24:2-3/1 Chr. 21:2-3). Here, Nehemiah's motive is godly: to complete the restoration of Jerusalem as God had promised through the prophets (Jer. 31:27-40; Dan. 9:25-27), thereby preparing for the ultimate hope of Israel, the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1-4), who would be born in Bethlehem during another census (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7). (CC)

To describe God's chosen people, who were to be enrolled in the census, Nehemiah uses his normal description to represent the totality of them all: "the nobles, the officials, and the people (see also 2:16; 4:14,10; 5:7). In a highly patriarchal society, the natural way to conduct such an enrolment was by genealogy. (CC)

Nehemiah's discovery of the genealogical record of the first returnee under Shesbazzar serves two purposes. First, it gives him an indication of how many families had ancestral roots in the city, and second, it tells him some of the places in Judah outside the city where many of the first returnees would have settled (CC)

Nehemiah was about to take a census to determine by genealogy who the real members of Judah were, he came upon the book listing those who had returned to Jerusalem when Cyrus first issued his decree c 90 years earlier (Ezra 1:2-4). This roster of registered families was considered so vital for the welfare of the province that it was made a part of the record, duplicating for the most part the list in Ezra 2. (TLSB)

7:73 seventh month – The seventh month was an especially important one in the Israelite religious calendar. Four festivals took place during this month. The first was the Festival of Trumpets on 1 Tishri (Lev. 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6), which modern Jewish people celebrate as Rosh Hashanah (new Year's Day) The second was the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on 10 Tishri (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11). The third was the Festival of Booths (Succoth) or Ingathering during 15-21 Tishri. (Ex. 23:16b; 34:22b; Lev. 23:33-36a, 39-43; Num. 29:12-34; Deut. 16:13-15; Ezra 3:4; Neh. 8:16-18) Fourth, sacred assembly was held on 22 Tishri (Lev. 23:36b; Num. 29:35-38; Neh. 8:18). (CC)

7:6-65 the people. List contains essentially same names as in Ezr 2. (TLSB)

7:6-7 – Introduction – The returning Judeans are called “the people of the province” of Judah (7:6). (CC)

From Commentary on Ezra 2:1-2 – Many of them may have been born and lived their early lives in Babylon, but they are regarded as members of God's people in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. No longer simple “the exiles (Ezra 1:11), they are now being restored as people of God, living where they belong – in the province named Judah. Therefore they will once again be called “Judeans.” (CC)

7:8-24 – Returnees Listed by Descent – Since this is a list of people who “returned to Jerusalem and to Judah,” and since Jerusalem is not listed among the places named in the list (7:25-38), it is reasonable to conclude that the list presupposes that the families enumerated in 7:8 were inhabitants of Jerusalem and its environs. (CC)

7:25-38 – Returnees Listed by City – The part of the list contains laypersons listed by their ancestral city. In all, Twenty-one villages are mentioned. The city “Gibeon” in 7:25 probably should be the personal name of an ancestor, “Gibbar” (Ezra 2:20). (CC)

7:39-60 – Temple and Royal Personnel among Returnees – The list of temple and royal personnel is divided into three categories: priests, Levites, and temple servants. (CC)

7:61-65 – Returnees Who Could Not Prove Their Lineage – According to 7:61, a number of Judeans returned from several villages in Babylon: Tel-melah (“mound of salt”), Tel-harsha (“mound of potherds”), Kerub (“Meadow”), Addon (“strong place”), and Immer. Apparently these Judeans had no record of their lineage, so it was not known whether or not they were of priestly descent (CC)

Totals of People and Gifts

66 The whole assembly together was 42,360, **67** besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female. **68** Their horses were 736, their mules 245, **69** their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. **70** Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics[of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver. **71** And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. **72** And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments. **73** So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns. And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns.

7:66-69 – Total Returnees and Their Live Property – The total number of returnees is stated as 42,360. This is the same total number given in Ezra 2:64. However, if we add up the numbers listed in the preceding verses in Nehemiah 7, we arrive at a different total: (CC)

25,406 laymen of Israel
4,289 Priests
360 Levites, including singers and gatekeepers
392 temple servants and descendants of Solomon's servants
642 men of unproven origin

31,089 total

If we add up the number of people listed in Ezra 2, we arrive at still different totals: 29,818 in Ezra. (CC)

There has been much discussion about the discrepancy between the total stated in Neh. 7:66 and the total based on the addition of the numbers in the preceding list in Nehemiah 7. (CC)

7:70-72 – Voluntary Contributions for the Temple – The gifts for the temple not only testify to the generosity of the people, but also to their relative affluence, although much of their wealth probably was given to them by their neighbors, as requested in the decree of Cyrus. (CC)

7:73a – The People Settle in Their Towns – The final notice in this list is that people have settled in their own towns. This is also a reclaiming of God's promise through Jeremiah to bring the people back to the land He had once given them so that they could take possession of it (Jer. 30:3; see also Jer. 16:15; 24:6; 27:22; 29:10-14). By reclaiming their ancestral property, they were acknowledging God's faithful fulfillment of His promise. (CC)

7:7 NEHEMIAH – Not the same man as author/Persian governor. (TLSB)

Nahamani. Does not occur in Ezr 2:2. (CSB)

7:43 74. See note on Ezr 2:40. (The number of Levites who returned was relatively small (cf. 8:15). Since the Levites had been entrusted with the menial tasks of temple service, many of them may have found a more comfortable way of life in exile.) (CSB)

7:66 whole assembly. For the totals given in these verses. (TLSB)

7:70–72 *gave*. Contributions, summarized in Ezr 2:68–69, are enumerated here according to various donors. (TLSB)

7:70 *seventh month*. October-November, 445 B.C. (CSB)

7:73 *seventh month*. Tishri, our Sept/Oct, the month after Elul (6:15). Years earlier, the people had gathered in the seventh month to celebrate rebuilding of the altar (Ezr 3:1–3). Now they would gather as one body to hear the reading of the Law (8:1).