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The New Residents of Jerusalem
Nehemiah 11: 1-36

The new residents of Jerusalem DIG: Why do you think the people were so reluctant to settle in Jerusalem? Why did Nehemiah and the other leaders deem it necessary to re-populate the Holy City? What two recruitment policies did they use? What does the list of residents (verses 3-24) say about the administrative abilities of Nehemiah? Percentage-wise, what relative successes did he have in transferring rural people to the urban center of Jerusalem? Why so few Levites (284) compared with the total number of priests (1192)? Could it be that life in exile was more appealing than the menial tasks of Temple service? What labor divisions and family ties are evident from the descriptive notes with each set of residents? Why was it crucial that most of the people live in villages and settlements outside Jerusalem?

REFLECT: Is the downtown "center" of worship where you live attractive or unattractive? Why is that? Would you be willing to relocate to the inner city, maybe forsaking your chosen field or ancestral home, to be of greater use to God and His Kingdom? Why or why not? What is your place of worship doing to promote ministry to those who live and work in the heart of your urban ghettos? What would the impact be if ten percent of your spiritual community's families were set aside for that ministry?

445 BC During the ministry of Nehemiah (**to see link click Bt – The Third Return**).
Compiled by: The Chronicler from the Ezra and Nehemiah Memoirs
(see **Ac – Ezra-Nehemiah from a Jewish Perspective: The Nehemiah Memoirs**).



Chapter 11 begins where **the Nehemiah Memoirs** left off, with the repopulation of **the City (Nehemiah 7:4). So, the leaders of the people dwelt in Jerusalem while the remainder of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the Holy City, while the other nine remained in the other towns.** This was vital for the defense of **Tziyon**. In addition, **the people blessed all the men who volunteered to dwell in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:1-2).** The fact that **the people** blessed **them** confirmed this positive attitude and suggests that this decision required some sacrifice. Most **people** preferred to live in **the villages** rather than inside **Jerusalem**. Moving to **the** big **City** meant a change of environment, a change of neighbors, a change in friends for the children, and a change in life-style. But **their** loyalty to the purpose of maintaining the community made **them** willing to do it.[288]

Jerusalem, as the capital and **the Holy City**, was the obvious center for **the leaders** and for most of **the Temple staff**. **These are the leaders of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. (Some of Isra'el, the cohanim, the Levites, the Temple servants, and the children of Solomon's servants dwelt in the towns of Judah, each on his own property (Nehemiah 11:3), and some of the descendants of Judah and Benjamin** who were not **priests** or **Levites dwelt in Jerusalem).** A fairly complete cross-section of the community.

Those who moved to Jerusalem from the sons of Judah: Athaiah son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, from the descendants of Perez; also Maaseiah son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, son of the Shilonite. In all, 468 sons of Perez dwelt in Jerusalem – valiant men, who would defend the City (Nehemiah 11:4-6).

Now these are the sons of Benjamin who moved to Jerusalem: Sallu son of

Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiah. Following him were 928 valiant men. Joel son of Zichri was in charge over them; Judah son of Hassenuah was second over the City (Nehemiah 11:7-9). The population was not an unstructured mass, but an ordered society.

Of the cohanim who moved to Jerusalem: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jachin, Seraiah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the ruler of the House of God, an official who acted as custodian of the Temple, not the High Priest, their relatives who performed the work of the House of God – 822 (Nehemiah 11:10-12a). That's quite a staff! **These people** faithfully supported the work of **the Temple** with **their** skills and gifts. We don't know exactly what **they** did, but we can be confident that every single one of **them** had a very important job to do. **ADONAI** had set aside special cities for **them (Joshua 21)**, so **they** could have legitimately lived outside **Jerusalem**; but **they** chose to be with **the people** as **they** served **God** in **the Temple**. Like **Jeremiah**, **they** chose to remain with **God's people**, even though it might have been safer and more comfortable elsewhere (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gf – Jeremiah Freed**).

This **work of the Temple** implied that some less-ceremonial duties fell to other groups. One such task was that of **teaching (Malachi 2:7)**; another, for the time being in the precarious state of **Tziyon**, may well have been defense. **Also Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, and his relatives, leaders of ancestral lines – 242. Also Amashsai son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, and their relatives were 128 valiant warriors. Zabdiel son of Haggedolim was in charge over them (Nehemiah 11:12b-14).**

From the Levites who moved to Jerusalem: The glimpses of **the people** involved in **Temple** duties are tantalizingly brief, but enough to indicate the hive of activity that was maintained there. The picture comes to life more fully in **First Chronicles 9:17-34**, where we see the posting of **the gatekeepers**, the checking in and out of **the vessels**, and the preparing of **offering-cakes**, and so on. **Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah of Bunni. From the leaders of the Levites, Shabbethai and Jozabad had oversight over the external business: Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, the director** of music **who led the thanksgiving prayer. Also Bakbukiah, second among his relatives, and then Abda son of Shammua,**

son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. In all there were 284 Levites, assistants to the priests, **in the Holy City (Nehemiah 11:15-18). These men** worked outside **the House of God**. **They** were judges, **they** handled civil affairs, counseled and ministered outside the place of worship. You have probably never heard their names before and probably won't remember their names tomorrow. But they are like those small white markers in the cemetery. We remember them, not as individuals, but a mass of willing workers who made it possible for ministry to continue on without a hitch.[289]

Also, there were 172 gatekeepers Akkub, Talmon and their brothers – who kept watch at the gates (Nehemiah 11:19). The duties of these gatekeeper families (more of whom are mentioned in **12:25**) are explained more fully in **First Chronicles 9:17-27**, where it appears that the security of **the Temple** area was their hereditary responsibility, and that their number was supplemented by non-resident kinsmen who came in from their villages for a week's duty at a time. **The Temple** needed a strong guard on account of both its treasures and sacredness. The questions and answers in **Psalms 15** and **24** about ascending **the Hill of ADONAI**, and the brief exchange in **Psalm 118:19ff**, may be examples of the kind of challenge that those **guardians of the Sanctuary** would put to those who sought entry.[290]

The singers of Isra'el, the cohanim, and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, each in his own inheritance. But the Temple servants dwelt on the Ophel, with Ziha and Gishpa over the Temple servants. The one in charge over the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, from the sons of Asaph who were singers responsible for the choral **service in the House of God. The king's command concerning them was to provide regular daily support for the singers.** Worship was too important to be left unplanned. **Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, from the descendants of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's adviser** at the Persian court **for any matter concerning the Jewish people (Nehemiah 11:20-24).**

It seems that the extent of the province of **Judah** at that time, which included the former area of **Benjamin**, extended beyond what would be expected because some of **the villages** mentioned appear to be outside of **Judah**. **Ono** and cities in the Negev were where Geshem and the Arabs lived. So the list probably includes some **villages** that had a partially **Jewish** population beyond the border of **Judah**. **The**

Jews were free to move around the Persian Empire.[291] **Now as for the villages with their fields,** in the post exile period under **Nehemiah, some of the people of Judah dwelt in Kiriat-arba (the former name of Hebron) and its four towns, in Dibon and its towns, in Jekabzeel and its villages, in Jeshua; in Moladah, in Beth-pelet; in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its towns, in Ziklag, in Meconah and its towns, in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, in Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its towns. So they settled from Beersheba to the Hinnom valley (Nehemiah 11:25-30).**

The descendants of Benjamin dwelt in Geba about eleven miles north of Jerusalem, Michmas and Aijah, Bethel and its towns, Anatoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, Lod, Ono and Ge-harashim. Some of the divisions of the Levites formally residing in Judah settled with Benjamin (Nehemiah 11:31-36).

It seems that these lists have been strategically placed to inform the reader that the ministry of the reformers, **Zerubbabel**, **Ezra**, and **Nehemiah**, had been successful. The Temple had been rebuilt and fully staffed with Levitical personnel. Similarly, **the walls** had been rebuilt and **the City** was fully inhabited with **people** bound together under the proclamation and exhortation of **the Torah**.[292]