



Nehemiah - Chapter Seven

II Nehemiah 3:1-7:4 - The Wall Is Built, Despite Difficulties (continues/concludes)

II.d Nehemiah 6:1-7:4 - A Conspiracy Against Nehemiah, but the Wall is Finished (continues/concludes)

II.d.ii Nehemiah 6:15-7:4 - The Wall Completed (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Seven

Now that the walls and gates are securely in place, Nehemiah appoints the Levites to their duties including the gatekeepers. A curfew is set to ensure that no one enters Jerusalem at night. Nehemiah then gathers all the nobles and the officials of the city. The book of all the original returnees who came with Zerubbabel and Jeshua is brought out and presumably read to the gathering.

¹ 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 charge over Jerusalem, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel – for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

Nehemiah 7:1-2

Now when the wall had been built. Everything was in order - both practically, i.e. **the wall, the doors, and the gatekeepers,** and spiritually for **the singers, and the Levites had been appointed;** the work was finally complete and set right.

The gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites form a typical grouping of worship officials, refer also to Ezra 2:40-42, so it is surprising to find them in connection with guarding the walls for their normal function was in the temple. Yet the

guarding of the city was ultimately related to establishing the worship of Yahweh in his temple.

The singers and the Levites were there to lead the people in worship; the walls were not rebuilt so that the people of Jerusalem could look at the walls and feel secure. They were rebuilt so they could worship God with greater glory and freedom than ever before. Every victory in life should take the worshipper deeper into praise. If people are not praising God more, and more deeply, with each passing year, are they really having much of a victory? Maybe the people are making it through tough times but coming out more bitter and sour than ever. That is not God's victory. His victory leads to a sweeter spirit and to deeper praise.

I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem. Nehemiah was not in this for political glory. He had done a work, and now he could let it go. God would still use him in Jerusalem, but he knew it was not his place to stay in authority.

Hanani was Nehemiah's brother and was the person who first told him about the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem in Nehemiah 1:2. His initiative and concern made him well qualified to govern. He and Hananiah may possibly have replaced the rulers named in Nehemiah 3:9 and 3:12, or they may have had authority over such districts governed by these men.

For he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. This described Hananiah, who was the co-leader of Jerusalem. This is what God needs in a man or a woman to use them greatly. Many people who do not appear to be all that gifted - they cannot sing well, they cannot recite Bible verses from memory, they do not have a gift for teaching, and so forth - can still be used greatly of God if they are faithful and fear God. On the other hand, many terribly gifted people may always be frustrated in their service to God if they are not faithful and fearing of him.

³ And I said to them, 'The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot; while the gatekeepers are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their watch-posts, and others before their own houses.'

Nehemiah 7:3

The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. Caution is still necessary. A tremendous victory had been won: the walls and gates were rebuilt and the city was secure. Yet, the walls would not protect themselves. Diligent watchmen must be appointed and the walls had to be guarded. The gates were to be opened late and closed early - it was a time of high security.

Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The guards were appointed from among those who lived in the city and thus were most committed to it.

In the Christian life, often a victory is won and later lost because there was no guard put in place. An enemy may come in because people are not watching. Walls can be climbed if there is no one there to stop the enemy but an enemy is easily turned back from a wall by a watchful guard.

⁴ The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been built.

Nehemiah 7:4

Apparently the people are relatively few in number. The building of houses had taken second place to reconstructing the walls. Now that the walls were rebuilt, Nehemiah still wanted to see how he could be a blessing to the people of God and the city of God. He noticed that the population was low and there were many abandoned houses.

III Nehemiah 7:5-73a - Lists of the Returned Exiles

Nehemiah lists the returned exiles from the time of Zerubbabel.

⁵ Then my God put it into my mind 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 were the first to come back, and I found the following written in it:

Nehemiah 7:5

Then my God put it into my mind. Nehemiah maintains a close relationship with God, as evidenced by his frequent prayers and his clear convictions about God's guidance. He now decides to make a census of the people and is helped by the discovery of the book of the genealogy of the first returnees.

Nehemiah wanted Jerusalem to grow and prosper. However, before that could happen, he must first know who he had already. Just as when he toured the broken down walls in Nehemiah 2:11-16, he needed to know the problem well. So, he took a census and looked at the registry first written by Ezra in Ezra 2:1-70.

⁶ These are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried into exile; they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. ^{7a} They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah,

Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

Nehemiah 7:6-7a

These are the people who returned to Jerusalem and Judah with Zerubbabel. This list was important because each of these people were important to God in that they did what so few of their fellow Jews did - they took the trouble to return back to the Promised Land after they had already set down roots for seventy years in the Babylonian empire. These were people who had a pioneer spirit; they were willing to endure hardship and discomfort because they had a call from God that was more important than their own comfort. Life was easier in Babylon but it was better in Jerusalem!

Since only about 2% of the Jews who were carried away into exile by the Babylonians came back, these ones who did are considered worthy of mention and they are mentioned twice in God's eternal Word, i.e. here and in Ezra Chapter 2. What a privilege to be recorded positively by name in the Scriptures!

In this list several things were important:

- Who the people were was important and specific names were mentioned.
- What families they came from was important and many family heads are named.
- Their gifts to support the work were important, which are specifically listed towards the end of the chapter.

^{7b} The number of the Israelite people: ⁸ the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two. ⁹ Of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two. ¹⁰ Of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two. ¹¹ Of Pahath-moab, namely the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen. ¹² Of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ¹³ Of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five. ¹⁴ Of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty. ¹⁵ Of Binnui, six hundred and forty-eight. ¹⁶ Of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight. ¹⁷ Of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two. ¹⁸ Of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven. ¹⁹ Of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven. ²⁰ Of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five. ²¹ Of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety-eight. ²² Of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight. ²³ Of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four. ²⁴ Of Hariph, one hundred and twelve. ²⁵ Of Gibeon, ninety-five. ²⁶ The people of Bethlehem and Netophah,

one hundred and eighty-eight. ²⁷ Of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight. ²⁸ Of Beth-azmaveth, forty-two. ²⁹ Of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three. ³⁰ Of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one. ³¹ Of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two. ³² Of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and twenty-three. ³³ Of the other Nebo, fifty-two. ³⁴ The descendants of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ³⁵ Of Harim, three hundred and twenty. ³⁶ Of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five. ³⁷ Of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one. ³⁸ Of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

³⁹ The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three. ⁴⁰ Of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two. ⁴¹ Of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven. ⁴² Of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

⁴³ The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the descendants of Hodevah, seventy-four. ⁴⁴ The singers: the descendants of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight. ⁴⁵ The gatekeepers: the descendants of Shallum, of Ater, of Talmon, of Akkub, of Hatita, of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight.

⁴⁶ The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, of Hasupha, of Tabbaoth, ⁴⁷ of Keros, of Sia, of Padon, ⁴⁸ of Lebana, of Hagaba, of Shalmi, ⁴⁹ of Hanan, of Giddel, of Gahar, ⁵⁰ of Reaiah, of Rezin, of Nekoda, ⁵¹ of Gazzam, of Uzza, of Paseah, ⁵² of Besai, of Meunim, of Nephushesim, ⁵³ of Bakbuk, of Hakupha, of Harhur, ⁵⁴ of Bazlith, of Mehida, of Harsha, ⁵⁵ of Barkos, of Sisera, of Temah, ⁵⁶ of Neziah, of Hatipha.

⁵⁷ The descendants of Solomon's servants: of Sotai, of Sophereth, of Perida, ⁵⁸ of Jaala, of Darkon, of Giddel, ⁵⁹ of Shephatiah, of Hattil, of Pochereth-hazzebaim, of Amon.

⁶⁰ All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants were three hundred and ninety-two.

⁶¹ The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their ancestral houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: ⁶² the

descendants of Delaiah, of Tobiah, of Nekoda, six hundred and forty-two. ⁶³ Also, of the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, of Hakkoz, of Barzillai (who had married one 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 come.

⁶⁶ The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, ⁶⁷ besides their male and female slaves, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred and forty-five singers, male and female. ⁶⁸ They had seven hundred and thirty-six horses, two hundred and forty-five mules,

⁶⁹ four hundred and thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred and twenty donkeys.

⁷⁰ Now some of the heads of ancestral houses contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand darics of gold, fifty basins, and five hundred and thirty priestly robes. ⁷¹ And some of the heads of ancestral houses gave into the building fund twenty thousand darics of gold and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. ⁷² And what the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand darics of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priestly robes.

^{73a} So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns.

[Nehemiah 7:7b-73a](#)

This list is virtually identical to the one in Ezra Chapter 2; refer also to the comments made there. Therefore, its purpose is not to give new information but to highlight Nehemiah's next concern after completing the walls, namely, to repopulate Jerusalem (v.4). He may have had in mind such prophecies as Isaiah Chapter 62.

Regarding the discrepancies in exact numbers between the list of returning exiles in Ezra 2:1-67 and Nehemiah 7:6-66, various solutions have been proposed, and several factors may have contributed to the differences. Since Nehemiah was reading from a copy of an older list, either the list in Ezra or an

official list that both of them consulted, the list may have been updated and corrected to allow for a number of births and deaths that occurred shortly after the exiles returned, and perhaps in some cases people were counted or grouped differently or in different categories. Either or both lists may also have been corrected and supplemented by a number of relatives who had been delayed on the journey by illness or for other reasons and were added later. Some of the differences may also be due to copying errors.

These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there (v.64). Some could not be priests until their lineage was determined. In the OT, one could not be a priest unless it was fully established that they descended directly from Aaron, the brother of Moses, and the first high priest over Israel.

IV Nehemiah 7:73b-10:39 - The Reading of the Law, and Covenant Renewal

In this long section, the Book of the Law is solemnly read, the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles is kept, and a great act of covenant renewal is performed. For the first time in this book, Ezra enters the narrative. This section shows the unity of his and Nehemiah's projects. With the walls securely in place, the centrality of the Mosaic Law is once again made prominent, since it is not security alone that is essential to the life of the community, nor even the temple, but trust in God and obedience to God's Word as revealed through Moses. The whole passage has Leviticus Chapter 23 especially in mind.

IV.a Nehemiah 7:73b-8:12 - Ezra Summons the People to Obey the Law

Ezra reads the Book of the Law to all the people, and the Levites ensure that everyone has understood it.

^{73b} When the seventh month came – the people of Israel being settled in their towns –

Nehemiah 7:73b

This verse will be commented on in the next chapter.