

Nehemiah Chapter 7

Verses 1-2

The “doors” were those in the gates (6:1).

Nehemiah appointed Levitical singers and porters, whose work was usually that of caring for the temple and the gates of its courts, to help stand guard at the city gates (“while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them”, verse 3).

He then put “Hanani” (1:2), and “Hananiah”, the governor of the palace (on the north side of the temple), in charge of the city.

These verses are an almost exact transcription (of Ezra chapter 2). This record was probably stored in the temple archives and provided the basis of Nehemiah’s repopulation measures (in chapter 11).

Tirshatha (verse 65; compare verse 70; 8:9; 10:1; Ezra 2:63), is a Persian title of honor and probably should be translated “governor”.

The very thing the nobles had feared came to pass when Nehemiah gave the charge of Jerusalem to his brother and to the leader of the citadel, faithful men who “feared God”.

Nehemiah 7:1 "Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,"

Which was not done when Sanballat sent his first letter, but now was (Neh. 6:1).

"And the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed":

Not to attend the doors of the gates of the wall, but to return to their service in the temple.

Who had been employed in one thing or another, while the wall and gates were building and repairing (see Neh. 3:17).

There are a number of reasons why the Levites would keep the gates of the city.

One of the reasons was because Jerusalem was the city of God.

It was the holy city.

Another very good reason was because after the Babylonian captivity, about half of those who returned to Jerusalem were Levites.

We must remember again, that not all Levites were priests, but they were all in the service of the LORD in some capacity or other.

Now we see why Nehemiah stayed longer than the time it took to build the wall.

He was governor, and he was taking care of the city until it got started again.

The people needed a strong leader.

The porters and the singers served in the temple, and they were Levites as well.

Nehemiah 7:2 "That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he [was] a faithful man, and feared God above many."

Who first brought him the melancholy account of the state of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:2).

"And Hananiah the ruler of the palace":

The king's palace, in which the viceroy of the king of Persia dwelt, and now Nehemiah.

To these two men he gave:

"Charge over Jerusalem":

Committed it to their care during his absence, who may be supposed now to return to Persia, as he had promised (Neh. 2:6).

"For he was a faithful man":

This is said of Hananiah, and given as a reason why such a trust was committed to him.

Hanani's character was well known, and his journey from Jerusalem to Shushan was a full proof of his hearty concern for the interest of it.

"And feared God above many":

Hananiah was exemplary in his fear of God, few were equal to him, and none exceeded him.

Or of many days, as Jarchi.

Of a long time, he had feared the LORD, and served him many years.

The similarity in the names here is a little confusing, but these were two men who would rule together.

Hanani seemed to be the brother of Nehemiah.

The reason for making Hananiah one of the rulers was a very good one.

His main attribute was that he feared God.

He probably had worked under Nehemiah before, and Nehemiah knew that he was trustworthy.

A person who truly is in correct relationship with God, so much that they fear him, would be faithful.

Nehemiah 7:3 "And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar [them]: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one [to be] over against his house."

When he commanded that “the gates” of Jerusalem be shut each day “until the sun be hot”, Nehemiah initiated both a military strategy that would help to protect the city from its enemies and a spiritual strategy that would be applied (in 13:15-22), to preserve the observation of the Sabbath.

In the ancient Near East, it was customary to open the city gates at sunrise and close them at sunset.

Nehemiah recommended that this not be done, because of the hostility of the enemies.

Rather the gates were to be kept shut until well into the heat of the morning when everyone was up and active.

When the gates were shut, they were to be guarded by sentinels at watch stations and in front of their own vulnerable homes (verse 4).

The gates were to be closed and barred at night.

They were opened in the middle of the day, but even then, there would be guards closely watching everyone who entered and left the city.

Nehemiah knew of the hatred Sanballat, and others like him, had for Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was taking no chances.

Verses 4-5

Although firm walls now surrounded the city, Jerusalem’s population was relatively small.

To update the official “register” of the genealogies of the people would help the leaders develop a plan to repopulate the city and rebuild it further.

Nehemiah 7:4 "Now the city [was] large and great: but the people [were] few therein, and the houses [were] not builded."

The circumference of it, all within the wall.

For that was built on its old foundation, and enclosed as much ground as ever it did.

Hecataeus, a Heathen writer, says the circumference of Jerusalem was fifty furlongs, which was 6.25 miles.

But Josephus makes the circuit of it but thirty-three furlongs or about 4.12 miles.

"But the people were few therein":

In comparison of the largeness of the place.

For though there were 42,360 that came up at first with Zerubbabel, and many more with Ezra.

Yet a great number chose to settle in the towns and cities in the country, Jerusalem being in such a desolate condition.

"And the houses were not builded":

Some were, but they were but few, many of them still lay in ruins.

We must remember, that Jerusalem had been a large city.

The wall covered 4 miles around it.

The remnant of people, who came back from captivity in Babylon, were extremely few compared to the space in the city.

They must be extremely careful that the enemy did not get within the walls.

Jerusalem had been totally destroyed when the Babylonians attacked them and took the captives.

Now they had not finished rebuilding their homes.

Nehemiah 7:5 "And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,"

“My God put into mine heart”:

Throughout the book, Nehemiah claimed the hand of God was at work in all circumstance (compare 2:8, 18; 6:16).

“I found a register of the genealogy”:

Nehemiah discovered a record of the people made by Ezra in Babylon before the first group returned, a listing of the people who had come with Zerubbabel.

There had been some difficulty with the people being faithful during the building of the wall.

Perhaps it was caused by some who had crept in, who were not in the genealogy register.

God had put it in the heart of Nehemiah to check this register to see who were Hebrews, and who were not.

Verses 6-73

This list is very similar to the one (in Ezra 2:1-70).

However, the numbers and names differ somewhat, perhaps because Ezra mentions those who decided to leave Persia, while this list reflects those who completed the journey.

Some may have died on the way, and they may have gathered new recruits while traveling.

Nehemiah 7:6 "These [are] the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;"

Who were of the province of Judea, as it was now reduced, and came up out of the captivity of Babylon through the edict of Cyrus (see Ezra 2:1).

Where the same preface is given to the list of names as here; and from hence to the end of (Neh. 7:69).

The same account is given of persons and families as there.

With some little difference of numbers and names.

In some instances, there are more in this list, in others fewer, which may be thus accounted for; that list was made in Babylon, when, upon the edict of Cyrus.

The Jews, who intended to go up with Zerubbabel, gave in their names, and they were registered.

But this list was made when they came to Jerusalem.

Now some of those that gave in their names changed their minds, and tarried in Babylon, and some might have died by the way, which makes the numbers fewer in some instances.

And others who did not give their names at first, but, being better disposed towards their own country, followed after and joined those which were returning, and increased the number of others.

To which may be added what Abendana observes, that in Ezra an account is given of those that came out of the captivity by the companies, in which they came not without genealogy as they had a mixture of persons of other families in them, and some that had no genealogy.

But afterwards, when they were given genealogy according to their families and a register of their genealogies was made, and is what Nehemiah now found, and here gives.

And, as for difference of names, that may be owing to the carelessness of copiers, or to the different pronounciation of names, or some men might have two names.

The matter is of no great importance.

This is an accounting of who is left of Judah, in Jerusalem, and the surrounding towns.

Nehemiah 7:7 "Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, [I say], of the men of the people of Israel [was this];"

Jeshua, Nehemiah, etc.

To the eleven names given by Ezra, Nehemiah adds one, "Nahamani," the sixth.

He gives the others in the same order as Ezra, but spells some of the names differently - e.g. "Azariah" for "Seraiah," "Raamiah" for "Reelaiah," "Mispereth" for "Mizpar," and "Nehum" for "Rehum."

Zerubbabel had brought the first group back from captivity.

He brought the largest number of the people back to their homeland.

We find in the list of names of this group that Ezra had given, one addition by Nehemiah of Nahamani.

These were the leaders.

Some of the names are spelled a little differently, but they are the same people.

Nehemiah 7:8-23

"The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two."

"The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two."

"The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two."

"The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred [and] eighteen."

"The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four."

"The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five."

"The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore."

"The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight."

"The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight."

"The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two."

"The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven." Adonikam had one more, than in the earlier list.

"The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven."

"The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five."

"The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight."

"The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight."

"The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four."

Nehemiah 7:24 "The children of Hariph, a hundred and twelve."

Hariph is spoken of as Jorah in Ezra.

Beginning with the verse below, the cities of the people who are registered is given.

The families were listed before.

Nehemiah 7:25-29

"The children of Gibeon, ninety and five."

"The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, a hundred fourscore and eight."

"The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight."

"The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two."

"The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three."

"Kirjath-jearim" means city of forests.

We will continue on with the people returning to their cities.

Nehemiah 7:30-32

"The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one."

"The men of Michmas, a hundred and twenty and two."

"The men of Beth-el and Ai, a hundred twenty and three."

Nehemiah 7:33 "The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two."

There had been no other Nebo mentioned.

Some of the scholars believe the other is speaking of Acher.

Nehemiah 7:34-38

"The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four."

"The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty."

"The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five."

"The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one."

"The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty."

All of the above were listed according to their localities.

Nehemiah 7:39-42

"The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three."

"The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two."

"The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven."

"The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen."

These are a listing of their priests according to their families.

Nehemiah 7:43-45

"The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, [and] of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four."

"The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred forty and eight."

"The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, a hundred thirty and eight."

This above is a listing of Levites that were not priests, and yet worked in the temple as singers and porters.

All of the Levites were in the service of the LORD, but not all were priests.

Nehemiah 7:46-56

"The Nethinim:

"The children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth,"

"The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,"

"The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmal,"

"The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,"

"The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,"

"The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah,"

"The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim,"

"The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,"

"The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,"

"The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah,"

"The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha."

The Nethinim did the servile work in the temple.

The name Akkub, listed in Ezra as a part of the Nethinim, is omitted in this list.

Nehemiah 7:57-60

"The children of Solomon's servants:

"The children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida,"

"The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,"

"The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon."

"All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, [were] three hundred ninety and two."

It is interesting to note that the Nethinim and Solomon's servants' children were not counted as individual families.

Perhaps they were counted together, because they were all to serve, some in the temple and some for the kings.

Nehemiah 7:61 "And these [were] they which went up [also] from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not show their father's house, nor their seed, whether they [were] of Israel."

We decided in our study on Ezra that these were, probably, those who had intermarried and lost their genealogy connections.

Nehemiah 7:62-63

"The children of Delaiah:

"The children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two."

"And of the priests:

"The children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took [one] of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name."

Most of these were probably daughters of the Hebrews, including daughters of the priests who took the name of their husbands who were not listed as Hebrews.

Nehemiah 7:64 "These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood."

The priests that married the heathens and had been removed from the register were no longer classified as priests.

Priests were strictly forbidden to marry a non Hebrew.

Nehemiah 7:65 "And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood [up] a priest with Urim and Thummim."

"Stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim":

One of the methods used to discern the will of God on a specific matter (see note on (Exodus 28:30)).

The Urim and Thummim was a pocket behind the breastplate of the high priest.

God spoke to the people through this Urim and Thummim.

This was saying they must not eat of the most holy things, until they had heard from God.

Nehemiah 7:66 "The whole congregation together [was] forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore,"

"The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore".

It makes against the view of Bishop Patrick and others, who regard Ezra's list as made at Babylon, some time before the final departure, and Nehemiah's as made at Jerusalem, after the arrival of the exiles.

That the sum total is in each case the same (see Ezra 2:64).

This number was extremely small compared to the number who had settled Judah before their fall to Babylon.

It is remarkable that the number given here, is the same as the number in Ezra.

The number is 42,360.

Nehemiah 7:67 "Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom [there were] seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women."

These were not included in the servile workers given earlier.

These singers were not of the Levitical tribe here.

These singing men and women were in addition to the family of Asaph.

Nehemiah 7:68-69

"Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five:"

"[Their] camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses."

These were the animals they brought with them.

There were not enough of them for everyone to ride.

We may safely assume they carried the possessions of the people, and were used to carry those who, for one reason or another, could not walk.

Nehemiah 7:70 "And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basins, five hundred and thirty priests' garments."

Of building the city and the temple, and for that service (Ezra 2:68).

"The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold":

Each of which was one pound sterling, and so amounted to so many pounds.

Of these "drachmas", or "darics", a Persian coin, mentioned in (Ezra 2:69).

They were golden shekels and had their name as is said.

Not from Darius, the father of Xerxes, though it is certain, from Herodotus, that he coined golden money.

But from some other king of the same name, more ancient, which must be Darius the Mede.

And if they are the same with the Adarcon in (Ezra 8:27), as they seem to be, then those in (1 Chron. 29:7), were pieces of money not so called in the times of David, but of Ezra, the writer of that book.

Whether this "Tirshatha" was Zerubbabel, or Nehemiah, is not easy to say, since this donation is not the same with that in Ezra.

Not made at the same time nor are the gifts the same, nor the persons that gave them.

Zerubbabel was Tirshatha when the Jews came out of Babylon, and Nehemiah now.

"Fifty basins":

Which were vessels, in the which the blood of the sacrifices was received and out of which it was sprinkled.

"Five hundred and thirty priests' garments":

Which were laid up in the wardrobe, and used on occasion.

Tirshatha was the title of the governor of Judaea under the Persians.

This was a title that had been given Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 7:72 "And [that] which the rest of the people gave [was] twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pounds of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments."

"And two thousand pounds of silver":

Of which (see notes on Neh. 7:71).

"And threescore and seven priests' garments":

Having been so long in Babylon, and no use of sacrifices, and so not of garments to minister in, no care was taken to provide any.

Which seems to be the reason why so many were given, when they returned to their own land, and sacrificed.

This was speaking of the average Hebrew and what they gave collectively.

Verses 73b – 10:39

God gave revival under Ezra's spiritual leadership.

Verses 73b – 8:12:

The revival began with an exposition of God's Word.

Nehemiah 7:73 "So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and [some] of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel [were] in their cities."

“Seventh month”:

The month of Tishri (Sept. / Oct., 445 B.C.), less than one week after completing the walls (compare 6:15).

The Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, usually began on the fifteenth day (compare 6:14 with Lev. 23:33-44), but here it began on the second (compare 8:13), and it was a feast to which the whole nation was called.

Usually the Feast of Trumpets occurred on the first day (compare Lev. 23:23-25).

This lists the various classes of people who went back to their homeland led by Zerubbabel.

Their seventh month would be like our October.

This was a several months journey.

When they arrived back in their homeland, they would have to begin again to re-build.

Ezra brought the second group a little later, and Nehemiah came with a few at an even later time.

The lesson that stands out in this to me, for us is it does not matter what station in life we have.

We will all go home to heaven together.

Our names must be written in the Lamb's book of life, before we will be accepted into our homeland.

These Hebrews had to have their genealogy correct to stay in the homeland.

They traveled together, as we travel together in life.

All of them take their rightful places in the service of their LORD for this to work out.

Not everyone could be a priest.

This is the way it is in a church as well.

We all have to take our rightful places in God's work for the church to succeed.

Nehemiah Chapter 7 Questions

1. What was done, after the wall was built and the doors set up?

2. What were some of the reasons for the Levites keeping the gates of the city of Jerusalem?
3. Not all Levites were priests, but all were in the _____ of the LORD.
4. Why did Nehemiah stay after the wall was finished?
5. Who was Nehemiah's brother?
6. Who ruled Jerusalem with Nehemiah's brother?
7. What kind of man was he?
8. When were the gates of Jerusalem to be opened?
9. When they were opened, what did they do for precautions?
10. How large was the city itself?
11. The people were _____ for that much area.
12. Why were the houses not built?
13. What did God put in Nehemiah's heart to do?
14. What could have been a reason for checking the record of the genealogy of the people?
15. Who had carried them away captive to Babylon?
16. Who led the first group returning to their homeland?
17. What does "Kirjath-jearim" mean?
18. What do most scholars believe is the other Nebo, mentioned in verse 33?
19. Verses 39 through 42 are a list of the _____.
20. What did the Nethinim do?
21. Why were Solomon's servants and the Nethinim listed together?
22. Those, in verse 61, are whom?
23. What happened to priests, who married heathen women?
24. They should not eat of the most holy things, until what happened?
25. How many were in the total congregation?
26. How many animals were carried back with them?

27. Who gave to the treasures?

28. Verse 73 is a listing of what?

29. What is a lesson Christians can receive from this lesson?

30. We must all take our _____ places in God's work for the church to succeed.