

Chapter Eleven

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. Why do you suppose new residents were wanted in Jerusalem?
2. What was the method used to get them?

OUTLINE

- III. Persons Bound by Vows are Listed, and Reforms on Nehemiah's Second Visit are Described: chapters 11-13.
- A. The genealogies of residents of Jerusalem and names of other cities are listed.
1. An effort is made to increase Jerusalem's population (vss. 1-2).
 2. People of Israel (vss. 3-9).
 3. Priestly leaders (vss. 10-14).
 4. Levites (vss. 15-19).
 5. Other groups (vss. 20-24).
 6. Towns occupied in Judah and Benjamin (vss. 25-36).

TEXT AND VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENT

- III. Persons Bound by Vows are Listed, and Reforms on Nehemiah's Second Visit are Described: chapters 11-13
- A. The genealogies of residents of Jerusalem and names of other cities are listed.
1. An effort is made to increase Jerusalem's population.

TEXT, 11:1-2

- 1 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities.
- 2 And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

COMMENT

The story is resumed from chapter seven after the interruption of the great revival. Nehemiah had gotten the genealogical list to

help trace the people's present whereabouts; now an effort was about to be made to coax some of them to Jerusalem. With the city's walls repaired there was more protection for them. A strong Jerusalem would be a refuge in time of danger for all the surrounding townspeople and would help build a stable economy for the entire area. But people were needed to man the fortifications.

From *verse 1* we judge that government officials were the largest part of its residents; the location of government buildings and agencies there would be responsible for that. Evidently it had been an almost empty city before the walls had been constructed. None really wanted to move there; it was the post in greatest danger; so the expedient of casting lots was resorted to. Families or clans would be the units involved; to select individuals would fragment families.

The volunteers of *verse 2* then present a puzzle. Were they people who chose to move there, and thus reduced the number who must be chosen by lot?¹ Or were they the ones who allowed their names to be included in the drawing,² or were good sports about moving there when they lost? The lot is cast in *verse 1*; the volunteers are applauded in *verse 2*; we would have expected to hear mention of those chosen by lot, if they were a different group. At any rate, something of the desperate conditions of the city may be guessed from the applause they received for moving there.

2. People of Israel.

TEXT, 11:3-9

- 3 Now these are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah each lived on his own property in their cities—the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants.
- 4 And some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. From the sons of Judah: Athaiah

1. *Interpreter's Bible, op. cit.*, p. 771.

2. Adenay, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

- the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez;
- 5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite.
- 6 All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 able men.
- 7 Now these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah;
- 8 and after him Gabbai and Gallai, 928.
- 9 And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second in command of the city.

COMMENT

In *verse 3*, the heads of the provinces are not the same as the leaders of the people in *verse one*, but are the persons who moved to Jerusalem (*vss. 4-19*) or lived in the cities of Judah and Benjamin (*vss. 20-36*). Next we have the classifications of the names which will follow, except that no names of descendants of Solomon's servants will appear. It may be that they are synonymous with the gatekeepers in *verse 19*. All these groups are named in *Ezra 2*, in the same order, where also the gatekeepers are associated with the sons of Solomon's servants, and with the temple servants (*Ezra 2:42, 55, 58*).

The term "Israelites" (or "Israel") corresponds with "people of Israel" in *Ezra 2:2*, where also it is placed first after the rulers.

In *verse 4* they are subdivided into "sons of Judah" and "sons of Benjamin." Leaders from Judah are listed in *verses 4-6*, and those from Benjamin in *verses 7-9*.

3. Priestly leaders.

TEXT, 11:10-14

- 10 From the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin,
 11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of

- Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the leader of the house of God,
- 12 and their kinsmen who performed the work of the temple, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah,
- 13 and his kinsmen, heads of fathers' households, 242; and Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,
- 14 and their brothers, valiant warriors, 128. And their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of Hagedolim.

COMMENT

Verse 10 is almost identical with I Chr. 9:10.

Verse 11 we recognize from the genealogy of Ezra (Ezra 7:1, 2). This list is very condensed; if you are interested in the way genealogies are used in the Scriptures, you might compare these two in Nehemiah and Ezra with I Chr. 6:8-14 and 9:11; no two are alike, and no one is complete.

Note the similar length of the genealogies of the other two priestly lines in *verses 12, 13*. For the importance of these lengthy lists, see comments on Ezra 2:59-62.

In *verse 14* the mention of valiant warriors is a surprise. Priests were excluded from military service. Since the entire passage, *verses 10-14*, is paralleled by I Chr. 9:10-13, we can supplement this description from that, where they are called "very able men for the work of the service of the house of God." Of course, the Lord's work is a warfare too, but this phrase need not be translated this way: in Ruth 2:1 the same words are translated, "a man of great wealth." We could even say, "manly man of holiness" — see Word Studies on WEALTHY, Neh. 4.

4. Levites.

TEXT, 11:15-19

- 15 Now from the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

- 16 and Shabbethai and Jozabad, from the leaders of the Levites, who were in charge of the outside work of the house of God;
- 17 and Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the leader in beginning the thanksgiving at prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.
- 18 All the Levites in the holy city were 284.
- 19 Also the gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren, who kept watch at the gates, were 172.

COMMENT

These verses likewise are paralleled in I Chr. 9:14-16. Only two phrases will be picked out for comment.

In *verse 16*, the outside work was probably the various kinds of responsibilities which the Levites had as distinguished from the service of the house of God (see *verse 22*): teaching, acting as officers or as judges (I Chr. 23:4) for example.

In *verse 19*, the gatekeepers (presumably of the Temple) are evidently synonymous with the descendants of Solomon's servants, as noted in our comments on *verse three*, thus completing the categories named there.

5. Other groups.

TEXT, 11:20-24

- 20 And the rest of Israel, of the priests, and of the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own inheritance.
- 21 But the temple servants were living in Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the temple servants.
- 22 Now the overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica, from the sons of Asaph, who were the singers

for the service of the house of God.

- 23 For there was a commandment from the king concerning them and a firm regulation for the song leaders day by day.
 24 And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's representative in all matters concerning the people.

COMMENT

Verse 20 describes the situation in the rest of Judah, which will be developed beginning with *verse 25*. But first, other incidental matters are dealt with.

In *verse 21* the location of the residences of the Temple servants (cf. *Ezra 2:43*; *Neh. 3:26*) is described as being outside the city walls. Ophel was at other times within the city boundaries (*II Chr. 33:14*); it is normal that the size of a city would fluctuate, and we would expect that at this time the shortest possible distance would be walled.

Verse 22 speaks of Uzzi as being in charge of Levite affairs in the city. Singers are also listed in *Ezra 2:41*.

Verse 23 explains this a little further by saying the king (Artaxerxes probably, though some see a reference here to regulations affecting the Levites made by King David) had issued a commandment regarding them. The firm regulation may have been a daily allowance, putting them under royal patronage.³

In *verse 24*, at the other end of the flow of finances was Pethahiah, possibly stationed in the Persian court as the people of Israel's representative there.

6. Towns occupied in Judah and Benjamin.

TEXT, 11:25-36

- 25 Now as for the villages with their fields, some of the sons of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its towns, in Dibon and its

3. Adenay, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

- towns, and in Jekabzeel and its villages,
 26 and in Jeshua, in Moladah and Beth-pelet,
 27 and in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its towns,
 28 and in Ziklag, in Meconah and in its towns,
 29 and in En-rimmon, in Zorah and in Jarmuth,
 30 Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields,
 Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba
 as far as the valley of Hinnom.
 31 The sons of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Mich-
 mash and Aija, at Bethel and its towns,
 32 at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,
 33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,
 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,
 35 Lod and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.
 36 And from the Levites, some divisions in Judah belonged to
 Benjamin.

COMMENT

Verses 25-30 list the populated towns of Judah, south of Jerusalem. Kiriath-arba is the ancient name for Hebron. Many of these towns are also named in Joshua 15, when Israel was entering the land. The distance from Beersheba to the valley of Hinnom at the edge of Jerusalem, from one extreme to the other, is 50 miles: a little farther than they had occupied previously, in Ezra.

Verses 31-35 list the settlements in Benjamin, north of Jerusalem (cf. Joshua 18:21-28).

Verse 36 speaks of the necessity of transferring Levites occasionally to serve both areas.

WORD STUDY

LOT (vs. 1, Goral; sound like "gravel"?): a small stone. Sometimes a number of stones, including one or more of an odd color, were shaken in a container and thrown onto the ground, thus

deciding matters by chance; or they were shaken together and thrown into a vase, and each person drew one out, seeking for the odd-colored one. Eventually they were made into cubes and the faces numbered to form dice.

SUMMARY

In order to increase the population and strengthen the situation of Jerusalem (where no one seemed to want to live), lots were cast and one tenth of the people were chosen as residents; the others remained in the villages. Names are given of families of the people of Israel, priests, Levites, and gatekeepers of the Temple. Temple servants lived just outside the wall. The Persian king furnished aid for the Levites, and the people had a representative at the Persian court.

A list of settlements, both in Judah and Benjamin, follows; Levites were stationed in both areas.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What proportion of the people were asked to move to Jerusalem?
2. Who were already living there?