

Nehemiah

A Prayer of Nehemiah

1:1¹ These are the words of Nehemiah² son of Hacaliah:

It so happened that in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year,³ I was in Susa⁴ the citadel. 1:2 Hanani, who was one of my relatives,⁵ along with some of the men from Judah, came to me,⁶ and I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and had survived the exile, and about Jerusalem.⁷

1:3 They said to me, “The remnant that remains from the exile there in the province are experiencing considerable⁸ adversity and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem lies breached, and its gates have been burned down!”⁹

1:4 When I heard these things I sat down abruptly,¹⁰ crying and mourning for several days. I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 1:5 Then I said, “Please, O LORD God of heaven, great and awesome God, who keeps his loving covenant¹¹ with those who love him and obey¹² his command-

ments, 1:6 may your ear be attentive and your eyes be open to hear the prayer of your servant that I am praying to you today throughout both day and night on behalf of your servants the Israelites. I am confessing the sins of the Israelites that we have committed¹³ against you – both I myself and my family¹⁴ have sinned. 1:7 We have behaved corruptly against you, not obeying the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments that you commanded your servant Moses. 1:8 Please recall the word you commanded your servant Moses: ‘If you act unfaithfully, I will scatter you among the nations.¹⁵ 1:9 But if you repent¹⁶ and obey¹⁷ my commandments and do them, then even if your dispersed people are in the most remote location,¹⁸ I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen for my name to reside.’ 1:10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your mighty strength and by your powerful hand. 1:11 Please,¹⁹ O Lord, listen attentively²⁰ to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who take pleasure in showing respect²¹ to your name. Grant your servant success today and show compassion to me²² in the presence of this man.”

Now²³ I was cupbearer for the king.

Nehemiah Is Permitted to Go to Jerusalem

2:1 Then in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine

¹ sn In ancient Judaism Ezra and Nehemiah were regarded as a single book with dual authorship. According to the Talmud, “Ezra wrote his book” (b. *Bava Batra* 15a). The Gemara then asks and answers, “And who finished it? Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.” Accordingly, the two are joined in the *Leninograd Codex* (ca. A.D. 1008), the manuscript upon which modern printed editions of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., *BHK* and *BHS*) are based.

² sn The name *Nehemiah* in Hebrew (נְחֵמְיָהוּ, *n^ekhemyah*) means “the LORD comforts.”

³ tn That is, the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes’ reign (cf. 2:1).

⁴ tn Heb “Shushan.”

⁵ tn Heb “brothers.”

⁶ tn The Hebrew text does not include the words “to me”; these words were supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

⁷ map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

⁸ tn Heb “great.”

⁹ tn Heb “have been burned with fire” (so also in Neh 2:17). The expression “burned with fire” is redundant in contemporary English; the translation uses “burned down” for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ tn Heb “sat down.” Context suggests that this was a rather sudden action, resulting from the emotional shock of the unpleasant news, so “abruptly” has been supplied in the present translation.

¹¹ tn Heb “the covenant and loyal love.” The phrase is a hendiadys: the first noun retains its full nominal sense, while the second noun functions adjectivally (“loyal love” = loving). Alternately, the first might function adjectivally and the second noun function as the noun: “covenant and loyal love” = covenant fidelity (see Neh 9:32).

¹² tn Heb “keep.” The Hebrew verb שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to observe; to keep”) is often used as an idiom that means “to obey” the commandments of God (e.g., Exod 20:6; Deut 5:16; 23:24; 29:8; Judg 2:22; 1 Kgs 2:43; 11:11; Ps 119:8, 17, 34; Jer 35:18; Ezek 17:14; Amos 2:4). See BDB 1036 s.v. 3.c.

¹³ tn Heb “have sinned.” For stylistic reasons – to avoid redundancy in English – this was translated as “committed.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “the house of my father.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “peoples.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “turn to me.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “keep.” See the note on the word “obey” in Neh 1:5.

¹⁸ tn Heb “at the end of the heavens.”

¹⁹ tn The interjection אַנָּה (*anna*) is an emphatic term of entreaty: “please!” (BDB 58 s.v.; HALOT 69-70 s.v.). This term is normally reserved for pleas for mercy from God in life-and-death situations (2 Kgs 20:3 = Isa 38:3; Pss 116:4; 118:25; Jonah 1:14; 4:2) and for forgiveness of heinous sins that would result or have resulted in severe judgment from God (Exod 32:31; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5, 11).

²⁰ tn Heb “let your ear be attentive.”

²¹ tn Heb “fear.”

²² tn Heb “grant compassion.” The words “to me” are supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness and style in English.

²³ tn The *vav* (ו) on וְאָנֹכִי (*va’ani*, “Now, I”) introduces a disjunctive parenthetical clause that provides background information to the reader.

was brought to me.¹ I took the wine and gave it to the king. Previously² I had not been depressed³ in the king's presence.⁴ **2:2** So the king said to me, "Why do you appear to be depressed when you aren't sick? What can this be other than sadness of heart?" This made me very fearful.

2:3 I replied to the king, "O king, live forever! Why would I not appear dejected when the city with the graves of my ancestors⁵ lies desolate and its gates destroyed⁶ by fire?" **2:4** The king responded,⁷ "What is it you are seeking?" Then I quickly prayed to the God of heaven **2:5** and said to the king, "If the king is so inclined⁸ and if your servant has found favor in your sight, dispatch me to Judah, to the city with the graves of my ancestors, so that I can rebuild it." **2:6** Then the king, with his consort⁹ sitting beside him, replied, "How long would your trip take, and when would you return?" Since the king was amenable to dispatching me,¹⁰ I gave him a time. **2:7** I said to the king, "If the king is so inclined, let him give me letters for the governors of Trans-Euphrates¹¹ that will enable me to travel safely until I reach Judah, **2:8** and a letter for Asaph the keeper of the king's nature preserve,¹² so that he will give me timber for beams for the gates of the fortress adjacent to the temple and for the city wall¹³ and for the house to which I go." So the king granted me these requests,¹⁴ for the good hand of my God was on me. **2:9** Then I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, and I pre-

sent to them the letters from the king. The king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. **2:10** When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official¹⁵ heard all this, they were very displeased that someone had come to seek benefit for the Israelites.

Nehemiah Arrives in Jerusalem

2:11 So I came to Jerusalem.¹⁶ When I had been there for three days, **2:12** I got up during the night, along with a few men who were with me. But I did not tell anyone what my God was putting on my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no animals with me, except for the one¹⁷ I was riding. **2:13** I proceeded through the Valley Gate by night, in the direction of the Well of the Dragons¹⁸ and the Dung Gate,¹⁹ inspecting²⁰ the walls of Jerusalem that had been breached and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. **2:14** I passed on to the Gate of the Well and the King's Pool, where there was not enough room for my animal to pass with me. **2:15** I continued up the valley during the night, inspecting the wall. Then I turned back and came to the Valley Gate, and so returned. **2:16** The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had been doing, for up to this point I had not told any of the Jews or the priests or the nobles or the officials or the rest of the workers. **2:17** Then I said to them, "You see the problem that we have: Jerusalem is desolate and its gates are burned. Come on! Let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that this reproach will not continue." **2:18** Then I related to them how the good hand of my God was on me and what²¹ the king had said to me. Then they replied, "Let's begin rebuilding right away!"²² So they readied themselves²³ for this good project. **2:19** But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard all this,²⁴ they derided us and expressed contempt toward us. They said, "What is this you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" **2:20** I responded to them by saying, "The God of

¹ **tc** The translation reads with the LXX וַיִּין לְפָנַי (vayyin lefanay, "and wine before me") rather than לַפְּנֵי (vayin lefanay, "wine before him") of the MT. The initial vav (ו) on original וַיִּין probably dropped out due to haplography or orthographic confusion with the two yods (י) which follow. The final vav on לַפְּנֵי in the MT was probably added due to dittography with the vav on the immediately following word.

² **tc** The translation reads לְפָנָיו (lefanim, "formerly") rather than לְפָנָיו (lefanay, "to his face") of the MT. The MT seems to suggest that Nehemiah was not sad before the king, which is contrary to what follows.

³ **tn** Or "showed him a sullen face." See HALOT 1251 s.v. רָע, רָע.

⁴ **tn** This expression is either to be inferred from the context, or perhaps one should read לְפָנָיו (lefanay, "before him"); cf. the MT) in addition to לְפָנָיו (lefanim, "formerly"). See preceding note on the word "previously."

⁵ **tn** Heb "fathers" (also in v. 5).

⁶ **tn** Heb "devoured" or "eaten" (so also in Neh 2:13).

⁷ **tn** Heb "said to me."

⁸ **tn** Heb "If upon the king it is good." So also in v. 7.

⁹ **tn** Or "queen," so most English versions (cf. HALOT 1415 s.v. שֶׁנִּי); TEV "empress."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "It was good before the king and he sent me."

¹¹ **tn** Heb "beyond the river," here and often elsewhere in the Book of Nehemiah.

¹² **tn** Or "forest." So HALOT 963 s.v. בְּרֵךְ 2.

¹³ **tc** One medieval Hebrew ms, the Syriac Peshitta, Vulgate, and the Arabic read here the plural לְחֻמּוֹת (ul'khomat, "walls") against the singular לְחֻמָּה (ul'khamat) in the MT. The plural holem vav (ו) might have dropped out due to dittography or the plural form might have been written defectively.

¹⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text does not include the expression "these requests," but it is implied.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "servant" (so KJV, ASV; NAB "slave"; NCV "officer." This phrase also occurs in v. 19.

¹⁶ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "the animal."

¹⁸ **tn** Or "Well of the Serpents"; or "Well of the Jackals" (cf. ASV, NIV, NLT).

¹⁹ **tn** Or "Rubbish Gate" (so TEV); NASB "Refuse Gate"; NCV "Trash Gate"; CEV "Garbage Gate."

²⁰ **tc** For the MT reading שֹׁבֵר (sover, "inspecting") the LXX erroneously has שֹׁבֵר (shover, "breaking"). However, further destruction of Jerusalem's walls was obviously not a part of Nehemiah's purpose.

²¹ **tn** Heb "the words of the king which he had spoken to me."

²² **tn** Heb "Arise! Let us rebuild!"

²³ **tn** Heb "strengthened their hands."

²⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text does not include the words "all this," but they have been added in the translation for clarity.

heaven will prosper us. We his servants will start the rebuilding.¹ But you have no just or ancient right in Jerusalem."²

The Names of the Builders

3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest and his priestly colleagues³ arose and built the Sheep Gate. They dedicated⁴ it and erected its doors, working as far as the Tower of the Hundred⁵ and⁶ the Tower of Hananel. **3:2** The men of Jericho⁷ built adjacent to it, and Zaccur son of Imri built adjacent to them.⁸

3:3 The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars. **3:4** Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakoz, worked on the section adjacent to them. Meshullam son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel worked on the section next to them. And Zadok son of Baana worked on the section adjacent to them. **3:5** The men of Tekoa worked on the section adjacent to them, but their town leaders⁹ would not assist¹⁰ with the work of their master.¹¹

3:6 Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah worked on the Jeshanah Gate.¹² They laid its beams and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars. **3:7** Adjacent to them worked Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, who were men of Gibeon and Mizpah. These towns were under the jurisdiction¹³ of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. **3:8** Uzziel son of Harhaiah, a member of the goldsmiths' guild, worked on the section adjacent to him. Hananiah, a member of the perfumers' guild, worked on the section adjacent to him.

They plastered¹⁴ the city wall of Jerusalem¹⁵ as far as the Broad Wall. **3:9** Rephaiah son of Hur, head of a half-district of Jerusalem, worked on the section adjacent to them. **3:10** Jedaiah son of Harumaph worked on the section adjacent to them opposite¹⁶ his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah worked on the section adjacent to him. **3:11** Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab worked on another section and the Tower of the Fire Pots. **3:12** Shallum son of Hallohesh, head of a half-district of Jerusalem, worked on the section adjacent to him, assisted by his daughters.¹⁷

3:13 Hanun and the residents of Zanoah worked on the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars, in addition to working on fifteen hundred feet¹⁸ of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

3:14 Malkijah son of Recab, head of the district of Beth Hakkerem, worked on the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

3:15 Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, head of the district of Mizpah, worked on the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it, put on its roof, and

¹ **tn** *Heb* "will arise and build." The idiom "arise and..." means to begin the action described by the second verb.

² **tn** *Heb* "portion or right or remembrance." The expression is probably a hendiatis: The first two nouns retain their full nominal function, while the third noun functions adjectivally ("right or remembrance" = "ancient right").

³ **tn** *Heb* "his brothers the priests."

⁴ **tn** Or "consecrated" (so NASB, NRSV); KJV, ASV "sanctified"; NCV "gave it to the Lord's service."

⁵ **tc** The MT adds קִדְּשׁוּהוּ (*qidshuhu*, "they sanctified it"). This term is repeated from the first part of the verse, probably as an intentional scribal addition to harmonize this statement with the preceding parallel statement.

⁶ **tc** The translation reads וְגַדְּ (v^ead, "and unto") rather than the MT reading וְגַדְּ (ad, "unto"). The original vav (ו) was probably dropped accidentally due to haplography with the final vav on the immediately preceding word in the MT.

⁷ **map** For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "it."

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "their nobles."

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "bring their neck."

¹¹ **tn** The plural form אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם (*adonehem*, "lords") is probably a plural of majesty referring to Nehemiah (e.g., Isa 19:4; see GKC 399 §124.i). However, some English versions take the plural to refer to the "supervisors" (NIV, NCV, TEV) and others to "their Lord" (KJV, NRSV).

¹² **tn** Or "the Old Gate" (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB, NCV, NRSV, NLT).

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "to the seat."

¹⁴ **tc** Assuming that the MT reading וַיִּצְבּוּ (*vayya'azvu*) is related to the root צָבַח | ("to abandon") – which makes little sense contextually – some interpreters emend the MT to וַיִּעֲזְרוּ (*vayya'azu*, "they aided"), as suggested by the editors of *BHS*. However, it is better to relate this term to the root יָצַב meaning "to restore; to repair" (BDB 738 s.v. II יָצַב) or "to plaster" (*HALOT* 807 s.v. II יָצַב qal.1). This homonymic root is rare, appearing elsewhere only in Exod 23:5 and Job 9:27, where it means "to restore; to put in order" (*HALOT* 807-8 s.v. II יָצַב qal.2). The related Mishnaic Hebrew noun מְעִיבָה refers to a "plastered floor." This Hebrew root is probably related to the cognate Ugaritic, Old South Arabic and Sabeian verbs that mean "to restore" and "to prepare; to lay" (see BDB 738 s.v.; *HALOT* 807 s.v.). Some scholars in the nineteenth century suggested that this term be nuanced "paved." However, most modern English versions have "restored" (so NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV) or "rebuilt" (so NCV, CEV).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "[the city wall of] Jerusalem." The term "Jerusalem" probably functions as a metonymy of association for the city wall of Jerusalem. Accordingly, the phrase "the city wall of" has been supplied in the translation to clarify this figurative expression.

map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

¹⁶ **tc** The translation reads לְפָנָיו (*neged*, "before") with a few medieval Hebrew mss, some mss of the LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Vulgate, rather than וּלְפָנָיו (*v^eneged*, "and before") of the MT.

¹⁷ **tc** The reference to daughters, while not impossible, is odd in light of the cultural improbability that young women would participate in the strenuous labor of rebuilding city walls. All other such references in the Book of Nehemiah presuppose male laborers. Not surprisingly, some scholars suspect a textual problem. One medieval Hebrew ms and the Syriac Peshitta read וּבְנָיו (*uvanayv*, "and his sons") rather than the MT reading וּבְנוֹתָיו (*v^enotayv*, "and his daughters"). Some scholars emend the MT to וּבְנָיו (*uvonayv*, "and his builders"). On the other hand, the MT is clearly the more difficult reading, and so it is preferred.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "one thousand cubits." The standard cubit in the OT is assumed by most authorities to be about eighteen inches (45 cm) long, so this section of the wall would be about fifteen hundred feet (450 m).

positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars. In addition, he rebuilt the wall of the Pool of Siloam,¹ by the royal garden, as far as the steps that go down from the City of David. **3:16** Nehemiah son of Azbuk, head of a half-district of Beth Zur, worked after him as far as the tombs of David and the artificial pool and the House of the Warriors.

3:17 After him the Levites worked – Rehum son of Bani and² after him Hashabiah, head of half the district of Keilah, for his district. **3:18** After him their relatives³ worked – Binnui⁴ son of Henadad, head of a half-district of Keilah. **3:19** Adjacent to him Ezer son of Jeshua, head of Mizpah, worked on another section, opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. **3:20** After him Baruch son of Zabbai worked on another section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. **3:21** After him Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, worked on another section from the door of Eliashib's house to the end of it.⁵

3:22 After him the priests worked, men of the nearby district. **3:23** After them Benjamin and Hasshub worked opposite their house. After them Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, worked near his house. **3:24** After him Binnui son of Henadad worked on another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress and the corner. **3:25** After him Palal son of Uzai worked⁶ opposite the buttress and the tower that protrudes from the upper palace⁷ of the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh **3:26** and the temple servants who were living on Ophel worked⁸ up to the area opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the protruding tower. **3:27** After them the men of Tekoa worked on another section, from opposite the great protruding tower to the wall of Ophel.

3:28 Above the Horse Gate the priests worked, each in front of his house. **3:29** After them Zadok son of Immer worked opposite his

house, and after him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, guard at the East Gate, worked. **3:30** After him⁹ Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, worked on another section. After them Meshullam son of Berechiah worked opposite his quarters. **3:31** After him Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, worked as far as the house of the temple servants and the traders, opposite the Inspection Gate,¹⁰ and up to the room above the corner. **3:32** And between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and traders worked.

Opposition to the Work Continues

4:1 (3:33)¹¹ Now when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he became angry and was quite upset. He derided the Jews, **4:2** and in the presence of his colleagues¹² and the army of Samaria¹³ he said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they be left to themselves?¹⁴ Will they again offer sacrifice? Will they finish this in a day? Can they bring these burnt stones to life again from piles of dust?”

4:3 Then Tobiah the Ammonite, who was close by, said, “If even a fox were to climb up on what they are building, it would break down their wall of stones!”

4:4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised! Return their reproach on their own head! Reduce them to plunder in a land of exile!

¹ **tn** The Hebrew word translated “Siloam” is שִׁלּוֹם (*hashelakh*, “water-channel”; cf. ASV, NASB, NRSV, TEV, CEV “Shelah”). It apparently refers to the Pool of Siloam whose water supply came from the Gihon Spring via Hezekiah's Tunnel built in 701 B.C. (cf. Isa 8:6). See BDB 1019 s.v. שִׁלּוֹם; W. L. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 372. On the etymology of the word, which is a disputed matter, see HALOT 1517 s.v. שִׁלּוֹם III.

² **tc** The translation reads וְעַל (‘*al*, “and unto”) with several medieval Hebrew MSS and some MSS of LXX, rather than the MT reading עַל (‘*al*, “unto”).

³ **tn** Heb “brothers.”

⁴ **tc** The translation reads with a few medieval Hebrew MSS and the Syriac Peshitta בִּנְיָ (‘*binny*) rather than the MT reading בְּנֵי (‘*bavny*).

⁵ **tn** Heb “the house of Eliashib.” This has not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁶ **tc** The MT lacks the phrase אַחֲרָיו הִתְחַיֵּב (*akharayv hekheziv*, “after him worked”). This phrase is used repeatedly in Neh 3:16-31 to introduce each worker and his location. It probably dropped out accidentally through haplography.

⁷ **tn** Heb “house of the king.”

⁸ **tc** The Hebrew text lacks the verb “worked.” It is implied, however, and has been supplied in the translation.

⁹ **tc** The translation reads אַחֲרָיו (*akharayv*, “after him”) with the Qere and many medieval Hebrew MSS, rather than the reading אַחֲרַי (*akharay*, “after me”) of the MT. So also in v. 31.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “Miphkad Gate” (so TEV; KJV similar); NRSV “Muster Gate.”

¹¹ **sn** Beginning with **4:1**, the verse numbers through **4:23** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with **4:1** ET = **3:33** HT, **4:2** ET = **3:34** HT, **4:3** ET = **3:35** HT, **4:4** ET = **3:36** HT, **4:5** ET = **3:37** HT, **4:6** ET = **3:38** HT, **4:7** ET = **4:1** HT, etc., through **4:23** ET = **4:17** HT. Thus in the Hebrew Bible chap. 3 of the Book of Nehemiah has 38 verses, while chap. 4 has only 17 verses.

¹² **tn** Heb “brothers.”

¹³ **map** For location see Map2-B1; Map4-D3; Map5-E2; Map6-A4; Map7-C1.

¹⁴ **tc** The Hebrew text is difficult here. The present translation follows the MT, but the text may be corrupt. H. G. M. Williamson (*Ezra, Nehemiah* [WBC], 213-14) translates these words as “Will they commit their cause to God?” suggesting that MT לָהֶם (*lahem*, “to them”) should be emended to לֵאלֹהִים (*lelohim*, “to God”), a proposal also found in the apparatus of BHS. In his view later scribes altered the phrase out of theological motivations. J. Blenkinsopp's translation is similar: “Are they going to leave it all to God?” (*Ezra–Nehemiah* [OTL], 242-44). However, a problem for this view is the absence of external evidence to support the proposed emendation. The sense of the MT reading may be the notion that the workers – if left to their own limited resources – could not possibly see such a demanding and expensive project through to completion. This interpretation understands the collocation עָזַב (‘*azav*, “to leave”) plus לְ (‘*le*, “to”) to mean “commit a matter to someone,” with the sense in this verse “Will they leave the building of the fortified walls to themselves?”

4:5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not wipe out their sin from before them. For they have bitterly offended¹ the builders!²

4:6 So we rebuilt the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height.³ The people were enthusiastic in their work.⁴

4:7 (4:1)⁵ When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod heard that the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem⁶ had moved ahead and that the breaches had begun to be closed, they were very angry. 4:8 All of them conspired together to move with armed forces⁷ against Jerusalem and to create a disturbance in it. 4:9 So we prayed to our God and stationed a guard to protect against them⁸ both day and night. 4:10 Then those in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers⁹ has failed! The debris is so great that we are unable to rebuild the wall.”

4:11 Our adversaries also boasted,¹⁰ “Before they are aware or anticipate¹¹ anything, we will come in among them and kill them, and we will bring this work to a halt!”

4:12 So it happened that the Jews who were living near them came and warned us repeatedly¹² about all the schemes¹³ they were plotting¹⁴ against us.

4:13 So I stationed people at the lower places behind the wall in the exposed places.¹⁵ I stationed the people by families, with their swords, spears, and bows. 4:14 When I had made an inspection,¹⁶ I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the great and awesome Lord,¹⁷ and fight on behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families!”¹⁸

4:15 It so happened that when our adversaries heard that we were aware of these matters,¹⁹ God frustrated their intentions. Then all of us returned to the wall, each to his own work. 4:16 From that day forward, half of my men were doing the work and half of them were taking up spears,²⁰ shields, bows, and body armor. Now the officers were behind all the people²¹ of Judah 4:17 who were rebuilding the wall.²² Those who were carrying loads did so²³ by keeping one hand on the work and the other on their weapon. 4:18 The builders to a man had their swords strapped to their sides while they were building. But the trumpeter²⁴ remained with me.

4:19 I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “The work is demanding²⁵ and extensive, and we are spread out on the wall, far removed from one another. 4:20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather there with us. Our God will fight for us!”

4:21 So we worked on,²⁶ with half²⁷ holding spears, from dawn till dusk.²⁸ 4:22 At that time I instructed²⁹ the people, “Let every man and his coworker spend the night in Jerusalem and

¹ **tn** The Hiphil stem of כָּעַס (*ka'as*) may mean: (1) “to provoke to anger”; (2) “to bitterly offend”; or (3) “to grieve” (BDB 495 s.v. Hiph.; HALOT 491 s.v. כָּעַס hif). The Hebrew lexicons suggest that “bitterly offend” is the most appropriate nuance here.

² **tn** *Heb* “before the builders.” The preposition בְּיָד (*neged*, “before”) here connotes “in the sight of” or “in the view of” (BDB 617 s.v. 1.a; HALOT 666 s.v. 1.a).

³ **tn** *Heb* “up to its half.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the people had a heart to work.”

⁵ **sn** Chapter 4 begins here in the Hebrew text (*BHS*). See the note at 4:1.

⁶ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “to fight.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “against them.” The words “to protect” are added in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness. Some emend MT עֲלֵיהֶם (*alehem*, “against them”) to עֲלֵיהָ (*aleha*, “against it,” i.e., Jerusalem).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “burden-bearers.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “said.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “see.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “ten times.”

¹³ **tc** The MT reads the anomalous מִכְלֵי־הַמַּקְלוֹת (*mikkol hamm^eqomot*, “from every place”) but the *BHS* editors propose כְּלֵי־הַמְנוּחָה (*kol hamm^ezimmot*, “about every scheme”). The initial *mem* (מ) found in the MT may have been added accidentally due to dittography with the final *mem* (ם) on the immediately preceding word, and the MT *qof* (ק) may have arisen due to orthographic confusion with the similar looking *zayin* (ז). The emendation restores sense to the line in the MT, which makes little sense and features an abrupt change of referents: “Wherever you turn, they will be upon us!” The threat was not against the villagers living nearby but against those repairing the wall, as the following context indicates. See also the following note on the word “plotting.”

¹⁴ **tc** The MT reads תִּשְׁבוּ (*tashuvu*, “you turn”) which is awkward contextually. The *BHS* editors propose emending to הִשְׁבוּ (*hashvu*, “they were plotting”) which harmonizes well with the context. This emendation involves mere orthographic confusion between similar looking *khet* (ח) and *tav* (ת), and the resultant dittography of middle *vav* (ו) in MT. See also the preceding note on the word “schemes.”

¹⁵ **tc** The MT preserves the anomalous *Kethib* form צְהִיִּים (*ts^ekhikhiyim*); the *Qere* reads צְהִיִּים (*ts^ekhikhim*) which is preferred (BDB 850 s.v. צְהִיִּים; HALOT 1018 s.v. *צְהִיִּים).

tn The meaning of the Hebrew term צְהִיִּים (*ts^ekhikhim*) here is uncertain. Elsewhere (Ezek 24:7, 8; 26:4, 14) it refers to a shining or glaring surface of a rock (BDB 850 s.v. צְהִיִּים; HALOT 1018 s.v. *צְהִיִּים), but here it refers to an exposed or vulnerable portion of the wall: “open positions of the wall” (HALOT 1018 s.v. 2).

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “And I saw.”

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew term translated “Lord” here is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “houses.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “it was known to us.”

²⁰ **tc** The MT reads “and spears.” The conjunction should be deleted.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “all the house.”

²² **tn** The first words of v. 17, “who were rebuilding the wall,” should be taken with the latter part of v. 16.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “were carrying loads.” The LXX reads ἐν ὄπλοις (*en hoplois*, “with weapons”).

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the one blowing the shofar.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “much.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and we were doing the work.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “half of them.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “from the coming up of the dawn till the coming forth of the stars.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “said [to].”

let them be guards for us by night and workers by day. **4:23** We did not change clothes¹ – not I, nor my relatives, nor my workers, nor the watchmen who were with me. Each had his weapon, even when getting a drink of water.²

Nehemiah Intervenes on behalf of the Oppressed

5:1 Then there was a great outcry from the people and their wives against their fellow Jews.³ **5:2** There were those who said, “With our sons and daughters, we are many. We must obtain⁴ grain in order to eat and stay alive.” **5:3** There were others who said, “We are putting up our fields, our vineyards, and our houses as collateral in order to obtain grain during the famine.” **5:4** Then there were those who said, “We have borrowed money to pay our taxes to the king⁵ on our fields and our vineyards. **5:5** And now, though we share the same flesh and blood as our fellow countrymen,⁶ and our children are just like their children,⁷ still we have found it necessary to subject our sons and daughters to slavery.⁸ Some of our daughters have been subjected to slavery, while we are powerless to help,⁹ since our fields and vineyards now belong to other people.”¹⁰

5:6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints.¹¹ **5:7** I considered these things carefully¹² and then registered a complaint with the wealthy¹³ and the officials. I said to them, “Each one of you is seizing the collateral¹⁴

from your own countrymen!”¹⁵ Because of them I called for¹⁶ a great public assembly. **5:8** I said to them, “To the extent possible we have bought back our fellow Jews¹⁷ who had been sold to the Gentiles. But now you yourselves want to sell your own countrymen,¹⁸ so that we can then buy them back!” They were utterly silent, and could find nothing to say.

5:9 Then I¹⁹ said, “The thing that you are doing is wrong!²⁰ Should you not conduct yourselves²¹ in the fear of our God in order to avoid the reproach of the Gentiles who are our enemies? **5:10** Even I and my relatives²² and my associates²³ are lending them money and grain. But let us abandon this practice of seizing collateral!²⁴ **5:11** This very day return to them their fields, their vineyards, their olive trees, and their houses, along with the interest²⁵ that you are exacting from them on the money, the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil.”

5:12 They replied, “We will return these things,²⁶ and we will no longer demand anything from them. We will do just as you say.” Then I called the priests and made the wealthy and the officials²⁷ swear to do what had been promised.²⁸ **5:13** I also shook out my garment,²⁹ and I said, “In this way may God shake out from his house and his property every person who does not carry out³⁰ this matter. In this

¹ tn Heb “strip off our garments.”
² tc Heb “a man, his weapon, the waters.” The MT, if in fact it is correct, is elliptical and difficult. Some scholars emend the MT reading המים (hammayim, “the waters”) to במינו (bimino, “in his right hand”; cf. NAB, NRSV) or חמיניו (heminu, “they held on the right side”).
³ tn Heb “their brothers the Jews.”
⁴ tn Heb “take” (so also in v. 3).
⁵ tn Heb “for the tax of the king.”
⁶ tn Heb “according to the flesh of our brothers is our flesh.”
⁷ tn Heb “like their children, our children.”
⁸ tn Heb “to become slaves” (also later in this verse).
⁹ tn Heb “there is not power for our hand.” The Hebrew expression used here is rather difficult.
¹⁰ sn The poor among the returned exiles were being exploited by their rich countrymen. Moneylenders were loaning large amounts of money, and not only collecting interest on loans which was illegal (Lev 25:36-37; Deut 23:19-20), but also seizing pledges as collateral (Neh 5:3) which was allowed (Deut 24:10). When the debtors missed a payment, the moneylenders would seize their collateral: their fields, vineyards and homes. With no other means of income, the debtors were forced to sell their children into slavery, a common practice at this time (Neh 5:5). Nehemiah himself was one of the moneylenders (Neh 5:10), but he insisted that seizure of collateral from fellow Jewish countrymen was ethically wrong (Neh 5:9).
¹¹ tn Heb “words.”
¹² tn Heb “my heart was advised upon me.”
¹³ tn Heb “nobles.”
¹⁴ tn Heb “taking a creditor’s debt.” The Hebrew noun מִשְׁחָה (masha’) means “interest; debt” and probably refers to the collateral (pledge) collected by a creditor (HALOT 641-42 s.v.). This particular noun form appears only in Nehemiah (5:7, 10; 10:32); however, it is related to מִשְׁחָה (masha’ah, “contractual loan; debt; collateral”) which appears elsewhere (Deut 24:10; Prov 22:26; cf. Neh 5:11). See the note on the word “people”

at the end of v. 5. The BHS editors suggest emending the MT to מִשְׁחָה (masha’, “burden”), following several medieval Hebrew MSS; however, the result is not entirely clear: “you are bearing a burden, a man with his brothers.”
¹⁵ tn Heb “his brothers.”
¹⁶ tn Heb “I gave.”
¹⁷ tn Heb “our brothers, the Jews.”
¹⁸ tn Heb “your brothers.”
¹⁹ tc The translation reads with the Qere and the ancient versions וְאִמָּר (va’omar, “and I said”) rather than the MT Ket-hib, וַיֹּאמֶר (wayyomer, “and he said”).
²⁰ tn Heb “not good.” The statement “The thing...is not good” is an example of tapeinosis, a figurative expression which emphasizes the intended point (“The thing...is wrong!”) by negating its opposite.
²¹ tn Heb “[should you not] walk.”
²² tn Heb “brothers.”
²³ tn Heb “servants.”
²⁴ tn Heb “this debt.” This expression is a metonymy of association: “debt” refers to the seizure of the collateral of the debt.
²⁵ tc The MT reads וְהָאָתָּה (um’at, “and the hundredth”) which is somewhat enigmatic. The BHS editors suggest emending to וְהָאָתָּה (umasha’t, “and the debt”) which refers to the interest or collateral (pledge) seized by a creditor (Deut 24:10; Prov 22:26; see HALOT 641-42 s.v. מִשְׁחָה). The term מִשְׁחָה (masha’t) is related to the noun מִשְׁחָה (masha’, “debt”) in 5:7, 10.
²⁶ tn The words “these things” are not included in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for clarity.
²⁷ tn Heb “took an oath from them”; the referents (the wealthy and the officials, cf. v. 7) have been specified in the translation for clarity.
²⁸ tn Heb “according to this word.”
²⁹ tn Heb “my bosom.”
³⁰ tn Heb “cause to stand.”

way may he be shaken out and emptied!” All the assembly replied, “So be it!” and they praised the LORD. Then the people did as they had promised.⁴

5:14 From the day that I was appointed² governor³ in the land of Judah, that is, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes – twelve years in all – neither I nor my relatives⁴ ate the food allotted to the governor.⁵ **5:15** But the former governors who preceded me had burdened the people and had taken food and wine from them, in addition to⁶ forty shekels of silver. Their associates were also domineering over the people. But I did not behave in this way, due to my fear of God. **5:16** I gave myself to the work on this wall, without even purchasing⁷ a field. All my associates were gathered there for the work.

5:17 There were 150 Jews and officials who dined with me routinely,⁸ in addition to those who came to us from the nations⁹ all around us. **5:18** Every day one ox, six select sheep, and some birds were prepared for me, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Despite all this I did not require the food allotted to the governor, for the work was demanding on this people.

5:19 Please remember me for good, O my God, for all that I have done for this people.

Opposition to the Rebuilding Efforts Continues

6:1 When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and no breach remained in it (even though up to that time I had not positioned doors in the gates), **6:2** Sanballat and Geshem sent word to me saying, “Come on! Let’s set up a time to meet together at Kephirim¹⁰ in the plain of Ono.” Now they intended to do me harm.

6:3 So I sent messengers to them saying, “I am engaged in¹¹ an important work, and I am unable to come down. Why should the work come to a halt when I leave it to come down to you?” **6:4** They contacted¹² me four times in this way, and I responded the same way each time.¹³

6:5 The fifth time that Sanballat sent his assistant to me in this way, he had an open letter in his hand. **6:6** Written in it were the following words:

“Among the nations it is rumored¹⁴ (and Geshem¹⁵ has substantiated¹⁶ this) that you and the Jews have intentions of revolting, and for this reason you are building the wall. Furthermore, according to these rumors¹⁷ you are going to become their king. **6:7** You have also established prophets to announce¹⁸ in Jerusalem¹⁹ on your behalf, ‘We have a king in Judah!’ Now the king is going to hear about these rumors. So come on! Let’s talk about this.”²⁰

6:8 I sent word back to him, “We are not engaged in these activities you are describing.²¹ All of this is a figment of your imagination.”²²

6:9 All of them were wanting²³ to scare us, supposing, “Their hands will grow slack from the work, and it won’t get done.”

So now, strengthen my hands!²⁴

6:10 Then I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel. He was confined to his home.²⁵ He said, “Let’s set up a time to meet in the house of God, within the temple. Let’s close the doors of the temple, for

¹ tn Heb “according to this word.”

² tc The BHS editors suggest reading צִוִּיתִי (*tsuvve’i*, “and I was appointed”) rather than the reading of the MT, צִוֶּה אֹתִי (*tsivvah’oti*, “he appointed me”).

³ tc The translation reads with one medieval Hebrew מִשְׁפָּחָה (*pekhhah*, “governor”) rather than בְּתָרָם (*pekham*, “their governor”) of the MT. One would expect the form with pronominal suffix to have a *tav* (ת) before the suffix.

⁴ tn Heb “brothers.”

⁵ tn Heb “the food of the governor.” Cf. v. 18.

⁶ tc The Hebrew term אַחֲרַי (*akhar*) is difficult here. It normally means “after,” but that makes no sense here. Some scholars emend it to אַחֲדַי (*akhad*) and supply the word “day,” which yields the sense “daily.” Cf. TEV “40 silver coins a day for food and wine.”

⁷ tn Heb “we did not purchase.”

⁸ tn Heb “who were gathered around us at my table.”

⁹ tn Or “from the Gentiles.” The same Hebrew word can refer to “the Gentiles” or “the nations.” Cf. the phrase in 6:16.

¹⁰ tn It is not entirely clear whether the Hebrew word בְּפִירִים (*k²firim*) is a place-name not mentioned elsewhere in the OT (as indicated in the present translation; so also NAB, NASB) or whether it means “in [one of] the villages” (so, e.g., NIV, NRSV, NLT; see BDB 499 s.v.; HALOT 493 s.v.). The LXX and Vulgate understand it in the latter sense. Some scholars connect this term with the identically spelled word בְּפִירִים (“lions”) as a figurative description of princes or warriors (e.g., Pss 34:11; 35:17; 58:7; Jer 2:15; Ezek 32:2, 13; Nah 2:14 HT [2:13 ET]; see HALOT 493 s.v.): “let us meet together with the leaders in the plain of Ono.”

¹¹ tn Heb “[am] doing.”

¹² tn Heb “sent to.”

¹³ tn Heb “and I answered them according to this word.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “heard.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “Gashmu”; in Neh 2:19 this name appears as Geshem. Since it is important for the modern reader to recognize that this is the same individual, the form of the name used here in the translation is the same as that in v. 19.

¹⁶ tn Heb “is saying.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “words.” So also in v. 7.

¹⁸ tn Heb “call.”

¹⁹ map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

²⁰ tn Heb “Let us consult together.”

²¹ tn Heb “We are not according to these matters that you are saying.”

²² tn Heb “For from your heart you are inventing them.”

²³ tn The participle has a desiderative nuance here, describing the desire of the subject and not necessarily the actual outcome. See also v. 14.

²⁴ tn The statement “So now, strengthen my hands” is frequently understood as an implied prayer, but is taken differently by NAB (“But instead, I now redoubled my efforts”).

²⁵ tn Heb “shut in.” The reason for his confinement is not stated. BDB 783 s.v. צָנַץ suggests that it had to do with the fulfillment of a vow or was related to an issue of ceremonial uncleanness.

they are coming to kill you. It will surely be at night that they will come to kill you.”

6:11 But I replied, “Should a man like me run away? Would someone like me flee to the temple in order to save his life?¹ I will not go!” **6:12** I recognized the fact that God had not sent him, for he had spoken the prophecy against me as a hired agent of Tobiah and Sanballat.² **6:13** He had been hired to scare me so that I would do this and thereby sin. They would thus bring reproach on me and I³ would be discredited.⁴

6:14 Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat in light of these actions of theirs – also No-adiah the prophetess and the other prophets who were trying to scare me!

The Rebuilding of the Wall Is Finally Completed

6:15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in just fifty-two days. **6:16** When all our enemies heard and all the nations who were around us saw⁵ this, they were greatly disheartened.⁶ They knew that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

6:17 In those days the aristocrats of Judah repeatedly sent letters to Tobiah, and responses from Tobiah were repeatedly coming to them. **6:18** For many in Judah had sworn allegiance to him,⁷ because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah. His son Jonathan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. **6:19** They were telling me about his good deeds and then taking back to him the things I said.⁸ Tobiah, on the other hand, sent letters in order to scare⁹ me.

7:1 When the wall had been rebuilt and I had positioned the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, **7:2** I then put in charge over Jerusalem¹⁰ my brother Hanani and Hananiah¹¹ the chief of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many do. **7:3** I¹² said to them,

“The gates of Jerusalem must not be opened in the early morning,¹³ until those who are standing guard close the doors and lock them.¹⁴ Position residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their guard stations and some near their homes.” **7:4** Now the city was spread out¹⁵ and large, and there were not a lot of people in it.¹⁶ At that time houses had not been rebuilt. **7:5** My God placed it on my heart to gather the leaders,¹⁷ the officials, and the ordinary people so they could be enrolled on the basis of genealogy. I found the genealogical records¹⁸ of those who had formerly returned. Here is what I found written in that record:¹⁹

7:6 These are the people²⁰ of the province who returned²¹ from the captivity of the exiles, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had forced into exile.²² They returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, each to his own city. **7:7** They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The number of Israelite men²³ was as follows:

- 7:8** the descendants²⁴ of Parosh, 2,172;
- 7:9** the descendants of Shephatiah, 372;
- 7:10** the descendants of Arah, 652;
- 7:11** the descendants of Pahath-Moab (from the line²⁵ of Jeshua and Joab), 2,818;
- 7:12** the descendants of Elam, 1,254;
- 7:13** the descendants of Zattu, 845;

¹ **tn** Heb “go into the temple and live.”
² **tn** Heb “and Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.”
³ **tc** The translation reads לִי (*li*, “to me”) rather than the MT reading לָהֶם (*lahem*, “to them”).
⁴ **tn** Heb “would have a bad name.”
⁵ **tc** The MT understands the root here to be יָרֵא (*yare’*, “to fear”) rather than רָאָה (*ra’ah*, “to see”).
⁶ **tn** Heb “they greatly fell [i.e., were cast down] in their own eyes.” Some scholars suggest emending the reading of the MT, וַיִּפְּלוּ (*vayyipalu*) to וַיִּפְּלוּ (*vayyipale’*, “it was very extraordinary in their eyes”).
⁷ **tn** Heb “were lords of oath.”
⁸ **tn** Heb “my words.”
⁹ **tn** Or “to intimidate” (so NIV, NRSV, NLT).
¹⁰ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.
¹¹ **tn** Some have suggested that “Hananiah” is another name for Hanani, Nehemiah’s brother, so that only one individual is mentioned here. However, the third person plural in v. 3 indicates two people are in view.
¹² **tc** The present translation (along with most English versions) reads with the Qere, a Qumran text, and the ancient versions וְאִמָּר (*va’omar*, “and I said”) rather than the *Kethib* of the MT, which reads וְאִמָּר (*vayyo’mer*, “and he said”).

¹³ **tn** Heb “until the heat of the sun.” The phrase probably means that the gates were to be opened only after the day had progressed a bit, not at the first sign of morning light (cf. KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, TEV, CEV). It is possible, however, that the Hebrew preposition עַד (*ad*), here translated as “until,” has a more rare sense of “during.” If so, this would mean that the gates were not to be left open and unattended during the hot part of the day when people typically would be at rest (cf. NLT).
¹⁴ **tn** Presumably this would mean the gates were not to be opened until later in the morning and were to remain open until evening. Some, however, have understood Nehemiah’s instructions to mean that the gates were not to be left open during the hottest part of the day, but must be shut and locked while the guards are still on duty. See J. Barr, “Hebrew עַד, especially at Job 1:18 and Neh vii.3,” *JJS* 27 (1982): 177-88.
¹⁵ **tn** Heb “wide of two hands.”
¹⁶ **tn** Heb “the people were few in its midst.”
¹⁷ **tn** Heb “nobles”; NCV “important men.”
¹⁸ **tn** Heb “the book of genealogy.”
¹⁹ **tn** Heb “in it”; the referent (the genealogical record) has been specified in the translation for clarity.
²⁰ **tn** Heb “the sons of”; KJV, ASV “the children of”; NAB “the inhabitants of.”
²¹ **tn** Heb “who were going up.”
²² **tc** One medieval Hebrew manuscript has “to Babylon.” Cf. Ezra 2:1.
²³ **tn** Heb “the men of the people of Israel.” Some English versions translate as “the people from Israel” (NCV) or “the Israelite people” (NRSV), but “men” should be retained because the following numbers presumably include only adult males.
²⁴ **tn** Heb “the sons of.”
²⁵ **tn** Heb “to the sons of.”

7:14 the descendants of Zaccai, 760;
 7:15 the descendants of Binnui, 648;
 7:16 the descendants of Bebai, 628;
 7:17 the descendants of Azgad, 2,322;
 7:18 the descendants of Adonikam, 667;
 7:19 the descendants of Bigvai, 2,067;
 7:20 the descendants of Adin, 655;
 7:21 the descendants of Ater (through Hezekiah), 98;
 7:22 the descendants of Hashum, 328;
 7:23 the descendants of Bezai, 324;
 7:24 the descendants of Harif, 112;
 7:25 the descendants of Gibeon, 95;
 7:26 The men of Bethlehem¹ and Netophah, 188;
 7:27 the men of Anathoth, 128;
 7:28 the men of the family² of Azmaveth, 42;
 7:29 the men of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743;
 7:30 the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;
 7:31 the men of Micmash, 122;
 7:32 the men of Bethel³ and Ai, 123;
 7:33 the men of the other Nebo, 52;
 7:34 the descendants of the other Elam, 1,254;
 7:35 the descendants of Harim, 320;
 7:36 the descendants of Jericho, 345;
 7:37 the descendants of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721;
 7:38 the descendants of Senaah, 3,930.
 7:39 The priests:
 the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family⁴ of Jeshua), 973;
 7:40 the descendants of Immer, 1,052;
 7:41 the descendants of Pashhur, 1,247;
 7:42 the descendants of Harim, 1,017.
 7:43 The Levites:
 the descendants of Jeshua (through Kadmiel, through the line of Hodaviah), 74.
 7:44 The singers:
 the descendants of Asaph, 148.
 7:45 The gatekeepers:
 the descendants of Shallum, the descendants of Ater, the descendants of Talmon, the descendants of Akkub, the descendants of Hatita, and the descendants of Shobai, 138.
 7:46 The temple servants:
 the descendants of Ziha, the descendants of Hasupha, the descendants of Tabbaoth, 7:47 the descendants of Keros, the descendants of Sia, the descendants of Padon, 7:48 the descendants of Lebanah, the descendants of Hagabah, the descendants of Shalmi, 7:49 the descendants of

Hanan, the descendants of Giddel, the descendants of Gahar, 7:50 the descendants of Reaiah, the descendants of Rezin, the descendants of Nekoda, 7:51 the descendants of Gazzam, the descendants of Uzzah, the descendants of Paseah, 7:52 the descendants of Besai, the descendants of Meunim, the descendants of Nephussim, 7:53 the descendants of Bakbuk, the descendants of Hakupha, the descendants of Harhur, 7:54 the descendants of Bazluth, the descendants of Mehida, the descendants of Harsha, 7:55 the descendants of Barkos, the descendants of Sisera, the descendants of Temah, 7:56 the descendants of Nezhiah, the descendants of Hatipha.

7:57 The descendants of the servants of Solomon:

the descendants of Sotai, the descendants of Sophereth, the descendants of Perida, 7:58 the descendants of Jaala, the descendants of Darkon, the descendants of Giddel, 7:59 the descendants of Shephatiah, the descendants of Hattil, the descendants of Pokereth-Hazzebaim, and the descendants of Amon.

7:60 All the temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon, 392.

7:61 These are the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer (although they were unable to certify⁵ their family connection⁶ or their ancestry,⁷ as to whether they were really from Israel):

7:62 the descendants of Delaiah, the descendants of Tobiah, and the descendants of Nekoda, 642.

7:63 And from among the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, the descendants of Hakkoz, and the descendants of Barzillai (who had married a woman from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). 7:64 They searched for their records in the genealogical materials, but none were found. They were therefore excluded⁸ from the priesthood. 7:65 The governor⁹ instructed them not to eat any of the sacred food until there was a priest who could consult¹⁰ the Urim and Thummim.

7:66 The entire group numbered 42,360, 7:67 not counting their 7,337 male and female servants. They also had 245 male and female singers. 7:68 They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 7:69 (7:68)¹¹ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁵ tn Heb "relate."

⁶ tn Heb "the house of their fathers."

⁷ tn Heb "their seed."

⁸ tn Heb "they were desecrated."

⁹ tn The Hebrew term תִּרְשָׁתָא (*tirshata*; KJV "Tirshatha") is the official title of a Persian governor in Judea. In meaning it may be similar to "excellency" (cf. NAB). See further BDB 1077 s.v.; W. L. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 395; HALOT 1798 s.v.

¹⁰ tn Heb "stood."

¹¹ tc Most Hebrew mss omit 7:68 ET, which reads "They had 736 horses, 245 mules," and thus have one less verse in chap. 7, ending the chapter at 7:72. This verse is included in the LXX and most English versions. Cf. Ezra 2:66.

¹ map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

² tc The translation reads בני (*b'ne*, "the sons of") rather than the MT reading בְּיַת אֲנָשֵׁי (*anshey vet*, "men of the house of"). Cf. Ezra 2:24.

³ map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

⁴ tn Heb "to the house of."

7:70 Some of the family leaders¹ contributed to the work. The governor contributed to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas,² 50 bowls, and 530 priestly garments. 7:71 Some of the family leaders gave to the project treasury 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,200 silver minas. 7:72 What the rest of the people gave amounted to 20,000 gold drachmas, 2,000 silver minas, and 67 priestly garments.

7:73 The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all the rest of Israel lived in their cities.

The People Respond to the Reading of the Law

When the seventh month arrived and the Israelites³ were settled in their cities,⁴ 8:1 all the people gathered together⁵ in the plaza which was in front of the Water Gate. They asked⁶ Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had commanded Israel. 8:2 So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly which included men and women and all those able to understand what they heard. (This happened on the first day of the seventh month.) 8:3 So he read it before the plaza in front of the Water Gate from dawn till noon⁷ before the men and women and those children who could understand.⁸ All the people were eager to hear⁹ the book of the law.

8:4 Ezra the scribe stood on a towering wooden platform¹⁰ constructed for this purpose. Standing near him on his right were Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maseiah. On his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 8:5 Ezra opened the book in plain view¹¹ of all the people, for he was elevated above all the people. When he opened the book,¹² all the people stood up. 8:6 Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people replied "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

8:7 Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah – all of whom were Levites¹³ – were teaching the people the law, as the people remained standing. 8:8 They read from the book of God's law, explaining it¹⁴ and imparting insight. Thus the people¹⁵ gained understanding from what was read.

8:9 Then Nehemiah the governor,¹⁶ Ezra the priestly scribe,¹⁷ and the Levites who were imparting understanding to the people said to all of them,¹⁸ "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping when they heard the words of the law. 8:10 He said to them, "Go and eat delicacies and drink sweet drinks and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy to our Lord.¹⁹ Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

8:11 Then the Levites quieted all the people saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy. Do not grieve." 8:12 So all the people departed to eat

¹³ **tc** The MT reads "and the Levites." The conjunction ("and") should be deleted, following the LXX, Aquila, and the Vulgate. That the *vav* (ו) of the MT is the *vav explicativum* ("even the Levites") is unlikely here.

¹⁴ **tn** The exact meaning of the pual participle מְבַרְרֵם (*m^eforash*) in this verse is uncertain. The basic sense of the Hebrew word seems to be "to make distinct." The word may also have the sense of "to divide in parts," "to interpret," or "to translate." The context of Neh 8:8 does not decisively clarify how the participle is to be understood here. It probably refers to the role of the Levites as those who explained or interpreted the portions of biblical text that had been publicly read on this occasion. A different option, however, is suggested by the translation *distincte* ("distinctly") of the Vulgate (cf. KJV, ASV). If the Hebrew word means "distinctly" here, it would imply that the readers paid particular attention to such things as word-grouping and pronunciation so as to be sure that the listeners had every opportunity to understand the message that was being read. Yet another view is found in the Talmud, which understands translation of the Hebrew text into Aramaic to be what is in view here. The following explanation of Neh 8:8 is found in *b. Megillah 3a*: "And they read in the book, in the law of God": this indicates the [Hebrew] text; 'with an interpretation': this indicates the *targum*; 'and they gave the sense': this indicates the verse stops; 'and caused them to understand the reading': this indicates the accentuation, or, according to another version, the Masoretic notes." However, this ancient rabbinic view that the origins of the Targum are found in Neh 8:8 is debatable. It is not clear that the practice of paraphrasing the Hebrew biblical text into Aramaic in order to accommodate the needs of those Jews who were not at home in the Hebrew language developed this early. The translation of מְבַרְרֵם adopted above (i.e., "explaining it") understands the word to have in mind an explanatory function (cf. NAB, NCV, TEV, NLT) rather than one of translation.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "they"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ **tc** The unexpected reference to Nehemiah here has led some scholars to suspect that the phrase "Nehemiah the governor" is a later addition to the text and not original.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "the priest, the scribe."

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "the people." The pronoun has been used in the translation for stylistic reasons, to avoid redundancy.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "it"; the referent (the book) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹ **tn** Heb "the heads of the fathers."

² **tn** Heb "darics" (also in vv. 71, 72).

³ **tn** Heb "the sons of Israel." So also in vv. 14, 17; 9:1.

⁴ **tn** The traditional understanding of the chapter and verse division here is probably incorrect. The final part of v. 73 is best understood as belonging with 8:1.

⁵ **tn** Heb "like one man."

⁶ **tn** Heb "said [to]."

⁷ **tn** Heb "from the light till the noon of the day."

⁸ **tn** Heb "all who could hear with understanding." The word "children" is understood to be implied here by a number of English versions (e.g., NAB, TEV, NLT).

⁹ **tn** Heb "the ears of all the people were toward."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "a tower of wood."

¹¹ **tn** Heb "to the eyes."

¹² **tn** Heb "it"; the referent (the book) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

and drink and to share their food¹ with others² and to enjoy tremendous joy,³ for they had gained insight in the matters that had been made known to them.

8:13 On the second day of the month the family leaders⁴ met with⁵ Ezra the scribe, together with all the people, the priests, and the Levites, to consider the words of the law. **8:14** They discovered written in the law that the LORD had commanded through⁶ Moses that the Israelites should live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month, **8:15** and that they should make a proclamation and disseminate this message⁷ in all their cities and in Jerusalem:⁸ “Go to the hill country and bring back olive branches and branches of wild olive trees, myrtle trees, date palms, and other leafy trees to construct temporary shelters, as it is written.”

8:16 So the people went out and brought these things⁹ back and constructed temporary shelters for themselves, each on his roof and in his courtyard and in the courtyards of the temple¹⁰ of God and in the plaza of the Water Gate and the plaza of the Ephraim Gate. **8:17** So all the assembly which had returned from the exile constructed temporary shelters and lived in them. The Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day. Everyone experienced very great joy.¹¹ **8:18** Ezra¹² read in the book of the law of God day by day, from the first day to the last.¹³ They observed the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day they held an assembly¹⁴ as was required.¹⁵

The People Acknowledge Their Sin before God

9:1 On the twenty-fourth day of this same month the Israelites assembled; they were fasting and wearing sackcloth, their heads covered

with dust. **9:2** Those truly of Israelite descent¹⁶ separated from all the foreigners,¹⁷ standing and confessing their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors.¹⁸ **9:3** For one-fourth of the day they stood in their place and read from the book of the law of the LORD their God, and for another fourth they were confessing their sins¹⁹ and worshiping the LORD their God. **9:4** Then the Levites – Jeshua, Binnui,²⁰ Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani – stood on the steps and called out loudly²¹ to the LORD their God. **9:5** The Levites – Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah – said, “Stand up and bless the LORD your God!”

“May you be blessed, O LORD our God, from age to age.²² May your glorious name²³ be blessed; may it be lifted up above all blessing and praise. **9:6** You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens,²⁴ along with all their multitude of stars,²⁵ the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You impart life to them all, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

9:7 “You are the LORD God who chose Abram and brought him forth from Ur of the Chaldeans. You changed his name to Abraham. **9:8** When you perceived that his heart was faithful toward you, you established a²⁶ covenant with him to give his descendants²⁷ the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites. You have fulfilled your promise,²⁸ for you are righteous.

¹ **tn** Heb “to send portions.”

² **tn** The Hebrew text does not include the phrase “with others” but it has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** Heb “to make great joy.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “the heads of the fathers.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “were gathered to”; NAB, NIV “gathered around”; NRSV “came together to.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “by the hand of.”

⁷ **tn** Heb “a voice.”

⁸ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

⁹ **tn** The words “these things” are not in the Hebrew text but have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “the house.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “And there was very great joy.”

¹² **tn** Heb “He”; the referent (Ezra) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** Heb “the last day.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “on the eighth day an assembly.” The words “they held” have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “according to the judgment.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “the seed of Israel.”

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “sons of a foreigner.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “fathers” (also in vv. 9, 16, 23, 32, 34, 36).

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “confessing.” The words “their sins” are not present in the Hebrew text of v. 3, but are clearly implied here because they are explicitly stated in v. 2.

²⁰ **tc** Heb “Bani.” The translation reads “Binnui” (so also NAB) rather than the MT reading “Bani.” Otherwise there are two individuals with the same name in this verse. The name “Binnui” appears, for example, in Neh 10:10.

²¹ **tn** Heb “in a great voice.”

²² **tc** The MT reads here only “from age to age,” without the preceding words “May you be blessed, O LORD our God” which are included in the present translation. But apparently something has dropped out of the text. This phrase occurs elsewhere in the OT as a description of the Lord (see Ps 41:13; 106:48), and it seems best to understand it here in that light. The LXX adds “And Ezra said” at the beginning of v. 6 as a transition: “And Ezra said, ‘You alone are the LORD.’” Without this addition (which is not included by most modern English translations) the speakers of vv. 9:5b-10:1 continue to be the Levites of v. 5a.

²³ **tn** Heb “the name of your glory.”

²⁴ **tn** Heb “the heavens of the heavens.”

²⁵ **tn** Heb “all their host.”

²⁶ **tn** Heb “the” (so NAB).

²⁷ **tn** Heb “seed.”

²⁸ **tn** Heb “your words.”

9:9 “You saw the affliction of our ancestors in Egypt, and you heard their cry at the Red Sea.¹ 9:10 You performed awesome signs² against Pharaoh, against his servants, and against all the people of his land, for you knew that the Egyptians³ had acted presumptuously⁴ against them. You made for yourself a name that is celebrated to this day. 9:11 You split the sea before them, and they crossed through⁵ the sea on dry ground! But you threw their pursuers⁶ into the depths, like a stone into surging⁷ waters. 9:12 You guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and with a pillar of fire by night to illumine for them the path they were to travel.

9:13 “You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven. You provided them with just judgments, true laws, and good statutes and commandments. 9:14 You made known to them your holy Sabbath; you issued commandments, statutes, and law to them through⁸ Moses your servant. 9:15 You provided bread from heaven for them in their time of hunger, and you brought forth water from the rock for them in their time of thirst. You told them to enter in order to possess the land that you had sworn⁹ to give them.

9:16 “But they – our ancestors¹⁰ – behaved presumptuously; they rebelled¹¹ and did not obey your commandments. 9:17 They refused to obey and did not recall your miracles that you had performed among them. Instead, they rebelled and appointed a leader to return to their bondage in Egypt.¹² But you are a God of forgiveness, merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and unfailing in your loyal love.¹³ You did not abandon them, 9:18 even when they made a cast image of a calf for themselves and said, “This is your God who brought you

up from Egypt,” or when they committed atrocious¹⁴ blasphemies.

9:19 “Due to your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. The pillar of cloud did not stop guiding them in the path by day,¹⁵ nor did the pillar of fire stop illuminating for them by night the path on which they should travel. 9:20 You imparted your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths; you provided water for their thirst. 9:21 For forty years you sustained them. Even in the desert they never lacked anything. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

9:22 “You gave them kingdoms and peoples, and you allocated them to every corner of the land.¹⁶ They inherited the land of King Sihon of Heshbon¹⁷ and the land of King Og of Bashan. 9:23 You multiplied their descendants like the stars of the sky. You brought them to the land you had told their ancestors to enter in order to possess. 9:24 Their descendants¹⁸ entered and possessed the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites who were the inhabitants of the land. You delivered them into their hand, together with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with as they pleased. 9:25 They captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took possession of houses full of all sorts of good things – wells previously dug, vineyards, olive trees, and fruit trees in abundance. They ate until they were full¹⁹ and grew fat. They enjoyed to the full your great goodness.

9:26 “Nonetheless they grew disobedient and rebelled against you; they disregarded your law.²⁰ They killed your prophets who had solemnly admonished them in order to cause them to return to you. They committed atrocious blasphemies. 9:27 Therefore you delivered them into the hand of their adversaries, who oppressed them. But in the time of their distress they called to you, and you heard from heaven. In your abundant compassion you provided them with deliverers to rescue them from²¹ their adversaries.

¹ *tn* *Heb* “the Sea of Reeds.” Traditionally this is identified as the Red Sea, and the modern designation has been used in the translation for clarity.

² *tn* *Heb* “signs and wonders.” This phrase is a hendiadys. The second noun functions adjectivally, while the first noun retains its full nominal sense: “awesome signs” or “miraculous signs.”

³ *tn* *Heb* “they”; the referent (the Egyptians) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ *tn* Or “arrogantly” (so NASB); NRSV “insolently.”

⁵ *tn* *Heb* “in the midst of.”

⁶ *tn* *Heb* “those who pursued them.”

⁷ *tn* *Heb* “mighty.”

⁸ *tn* *Heb* “by the hand of.”

⁹ *tn* *Heb* “had lifted your hand.”

¹⁰ *tn* *Heb* “and our fathers.” The *vav* is explicative.

¹¹ *tn* *Heb* “they stiffened their neck” (so also in the following verse).

¹² *tc* The present translation follows a few medieval Hebrew MSS and the LXX in reading *בְּמִצְרַיִם* (*b⁶mīṣrayim*, “in Egypt”; so also NAB, NASB, NRSV, TEV, NLT) rather than the MT reading *בְּמִרְיָם* (*b⁶mīryam*, “in their rebellion”).

¹³ *tc* The translation follows the *Qere* reading *חֶסֶד* (*khesed*, “loyal love”) rather than the *Kethib* reading *חֶסֶד* (*v⁶khesed*, “and loyal love”) of the MT.

¹⁴ *tn* *Heb* “great.”

¹⁵ *tn* *Heb* “did not turn from them by day to guide them in the path.”

¹⁶ *tn* The words “of the land” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷ *tc* Most Hebrew MSS read “the land of Sihon and the land of the king of Heshbon.” The present translation (along with NAB, NASB, NIV, NCV, NRSV, CEV, NLT) follows the reading of one Hebrew MS, the LXX, and the Vulgate.

¹⁸ *tn* *Heb* “the sons.”

¹⁹ *tn* *Heb* “they ate and were sated.” This expression is a hendiadys. The first verb retains its full verbal sense, while the second functions adverbially: “they ate and were filled” = “they ate until they were full.”

²⁰ *tn* *Heb* “they cast your law behind their backs.”

²¹ *tn* *Heb* “from the hand of” (so NASB, NIV); NAB “from the power of.”

9:28 “Then, when they were at rest again, they went back to doing evil before you. Then you abandoned them to¹ their enemies, and they gained dominion over them. When they again cried out to you, in your compassion you heard from heaven and rescued them time and again. **9:29** And you solemnly admonished them in order to return them to your law, but they behaved presumptuously and did not obey your commandments. They sinned against your ordinances – those by which an individual, if he obeys them,² will live. They boldly turned from you,³ they rebelled⁴ and did not obey. **9:30** You prolonged your kindness⁵ with them for many years, and you solemnly admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. Still they paid no attention,⁶ so you delivered them into the hands of the neighboring peoples.⁷ **9:31** However, due to your abundant mercy you did not do away with them altogether; you did not abandon them. For you are a merciful and compassionate God.

9:32 “So now, our God – the great, powerful, and awesome God, who keeps covenant fidelity⁸ – do not regard as inconsequential⁹ all the hardship that has befallen us – our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all your people – from the days of the kings of Assyria until this very day! **9:33** You are righteous with regard to all that has happened to us, for you have acted faithfully.¹⁰ It is we who have been in the wrong! **9:34** Our kings, our leaders, our priests, and our ancestors have not kept your law. They have not paid attention to your commandments or your testimonies by which you have solemnly admonished them. **9:35** Even when they were in their kingdom and benefiting from your incredible¹¹ goodness that you had lavished¹² on them in the spacious and fertile land you had set¹³ before them, they did not serve you, nor did they turn from their evil practices.

9:36 “So today we are slaves! In the very land you gave to our ancestors to eat its fruit

and to enjoy¹⁴ its good things – we are slaves! **9:37** Its abundant produce goes to the kings you have placed over us due to our sins. They rule over our bodies and our livestock as they see fit,¹⁵ and we are in great distress!

The People Pledge to be Faithful

9:38 (10:1)¹⁶ “Because of all of this we are entering into a binding covenant¹⁷ in written form;¹⁸ our leaders, our Levites, and our priests have affixed their names¹⁹ on the sealed document.”

10:1 On the sealed documents were the following names:²⁰

Nehemiah the governor, son of Hacaliah, along with Zedekiah,

10:2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

10:3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,

10:4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

10:5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

10:6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

10:7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

10:8 Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the priests.

10:9 The Levites were as follows:

Jeshua²¹ son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel.

10:10 Their colleagues²² were as follows:

Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

10:11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

10:12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

10:13 Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

10:14 The leaders²³ of the people were as follows:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

10:15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

10:16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

10:17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

10:18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

10:19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

¹⁴ **tn** The expression “to enjoy” is not included in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “according to their desire.”

¹⁶ **sn** Beginning with **9:38**, the verse numbers through **10:39** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with **9:38** ET = **10:1** HT, **10:1** ET = **10:2** HT, **10:2** ET = **10:3** HT, etc., through **10:39** ET = **10:40** HT. Beginning with **11:1** the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “we are cutting.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and writing.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “our leaders, our Levites, and our priests on the sealed document.” The Hebrew text is elliptical here; the words “have affixed their names” are supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons. Cf. v. 2.

²⁰ **tn** The words “were the following names” are not in the Hebrew text but have been supplied in the translation for clarity. Cf. v. 9, 10, 14.

²¹ **tc** With many medieval Hebrew manuscripts and the ancient versions the translation reads יֵשׁוּעַ (y^hshua’, “Jeshua”) rather than the reading יֵשׁוּעַ (y^heshua’, “and Jeshua”) of *BHS*.

²² **tn** *Heb* “brothers” (also in v. 29 [ET]).

²³ **tn** *Heb* “heads”; *ASV* “chiefs.”

¹ **tn** *Heb* “in the hand of” (so *KJV*, *ASV*); *NAB* “to the power of.”

² **tn** *Heb* “if a man keep.” See note on the word “obey” in *Neh* 1:5.

³ **tn** *Heb* “they gave a stubborn shoulder.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “they stiffened their neck.”

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew expression here is elliptical. The words “your kindness” are not included in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “did not give ear to.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “the peoples of the lands.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “the covenant and loyal love.” The expression is a hendiadys. The second noun retains its full nominal sense, while the first functions adjectivally: “the covenant and loyalty” = covenant fidelity.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “do not let it seem small in your sight.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “you have done truth.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “great.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “given them.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “given.”

- 10:20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
- 10:21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,
- 10:22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
- 10:23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
- 10:24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,
- 10:25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
- 10:26 Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,
- 10:27 Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

10:28 “Now the rest of the people – the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple attendants, and all those who have separated themselves from the neighboring peoples¹ because of the law of God, along with their wives, their sons, and their daughters, all of whom are able to understand – 10:29 hereby participate with their colleagues the town leaders² and enter into a curse and an oath³ to adhere to⁴ the law of God which was given through Moses the servant of God, and to obey⁵ carefully all the commandments of the LORD our Lord,⁶ along with his ordinances and his statutes.

10:30 “We will not give our daughters in marriage to the neighboring peoples, and we will not take their daughters in marriage for our sons. 10:31 We will not buy⁷ on the Sabbath or on a holy day from the neighboring peoples who bring their wares and all kinds of grain to sell on the Sabbath day. We will let the fields lie fallow every seventh year, and we will cancel every loan.⁸ 10:32 We accept responsibility for fulfilling⁹ the commands to give¹⁰ one third of a shekel each year for the work of the temple¹¹ of our God, 10:33 for the loaves of presentation and for the regular grain offerings and regular burnt offerings, for the Sabbaths, for the new moons, for the appointed meetings, for the holy offerings, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the temple of our God.

10:34 “We – the priests, the Levites, and the people – have cast lots concerning the wood offerings, to bring them to the temple of our God according to our families¹² at the designated times year by year to burn on the altar of

the LORD our God, as is written in the law. 10:35 We also accept responsibility for¹³ bringing the first fruits of our land and the first fruits of every fruit tree year by year to the temple of the LORD. 10:36 We also accept responsibility, as is written in the law, for bringing the firstborn of our sons and our cattle and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks to the temple of our God, to the priests who are ministering in the temple of our God. 10:37 We will also bring the first of our coarse meal, of our contributions, of the fruit of every tree, of new wine, and of olive oil to the priests at the storerooms of the temple of our God, along with a tenth of the produce¹⁴ of our land to the Levites, for the Levites are the ones who collect the tithes in all the cities where we work.¹⁵ 10:38 A priest of Aaron’s line¹⁶ will be with the Levites when the Levites collect the tithes, and the Levites will bring up a tenth of the tithes to the temple of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. 10:39 The Israelites and the Levites will bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil to the storerooms where the utensils of the sanctuary are kept, and where the priests who minister stay, along with the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the temple of our God.”

The Population of Jerusalem

11:1 So the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem,¹⁷ while the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to settle in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine¹⁸ remained in other cities. 11:2 The people gave their blessing on all the men who volunteered to settle in Jerusalem.

11:3 These are the provincial leaders¹⁹ who settled in Jerusalem. (While other Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple attendants, and the sons of the servants of Solomon settled in the cities of Judah, each on his own property in their cities, 11:4 some of the descendants of Judah and some of the descendants of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem.)

Of the descendants of Judah:

Athaiah son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, from the descendants of Perez; 11:5 and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of

¹ **tn** Heb “from the peoples of the lands.” Cf. vv. 30, 31.
² **tn** Heb “the nobles.”
³ **tn** The expression “a curse and an oath” may be a hendiadys, meaning “an oath with penalties.”
⁴ **tn** Heb “to walk in.”
⁵ **tn** Heb “keep.” See the note on the word “obey” in Neh 1:5.
<sup>6 **tn** The Hebrew term translated “Lord” here is אֲדֹנָי (adonay).
⁷ **tn** Heb “take.”
<sup>8 **tn** Heb “debt of every hand,” an idiom referring to the hand that holds legally binding contractual agreements.
<sup>9 **tn** Heb “cause to stand on us.”
¹⁰ **tc** The MT reads “to give upon us.” However, the term אָלֵינוּ (“alenu, “upon us”) should probably be deleted, following a few medieval Hebrew mss, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Vulgate.
¹¹ **tn** Heb “house” (also in vv. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39).
¹² **tn** Heb “the house of our fathers.”</sup></sup></sup>

¹³ **tn** The words “we accept responsibility” are not included in the Hebrew text, but are inferred from v. 33 (so also in v. 37).
¹⁴ **tn** Heb “a tithe of our land.”
¹⁵ **tn** Heb “of our work.”
¹⁶ **tn** Heb “And the priest the son of Aaron.”
¹⁷ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.
¹⁸ **tn** Heb “nine of the hands.” The word “hand” is used here in the sense of a part or portion.
¹⁹ **tn** Heb “the heads of the province.”

Zechariah, from the descendants of Shelah.¹
11:6 The sum total of the descendants of Perez who were settling in Jerusalem was 468 exceptional men.

11:7 These are the descendants of Benjamin:

Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah, **11:8** and his followers,² Gabbai and Sallai – 928 in all. **11:9** Joel son of Zicri was the officer in charge of them, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second-in-command over the city.

11:10 From the priests:

Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jakin, **11:11** Seraiah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, supervisor in the temple of God, **11:12** and their colleagues³ who were carrying out work for the temple – 822; and Adaiiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah, **11:13** and his colleagues who were heads of families⁴ – 242; and Amashsai son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, **11:14** and his colleagues⁵ who were exceptional men – 128. The officer over them was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim.

11:15 From the Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; **11:16** Shabbethai and Jozabad, leaders⁶ of the Levites, were in charge of the external work for the temple of God; **11:17** Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the praise⁷ leader who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his colleagues; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. **11:18** The sum total of the Levites in the holy city was 284.

11:19 And the gatekeepers:

Akkub, Talmon and their colleagues who were guarding the gates – 172.

11:20 And the rest of the Israelites, with the priests and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own property.

11:21 The temple attendants were living on Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were over them.⁸

11:22 The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica. He was one of Asaph's descendants who were the singers responsible for the service of the temple of God. **11:23** For they were under royal orders⁹ which determined their activity day by day.¹⁰

11:24 Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, one of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was an adviser to the king¹¹ in every matter pertaining to the people.

11:25 As for the settlements with their fields, some of the people of Judah settled in Kiriath Arba and its neighboring villages,¹² in Dibon and its villages, in Jekabzeel and its settlements, **11:26** in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet, **11:27** in Hazar Shual, in Beer Sheba and its villages, **11:28** in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, **11:29** in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, **11:30** Zanoah, Adullam and their settlements, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its villages. So they were encamped from Beer Sheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

11:31 Some of the descendants of¹³ Benjamin settled in Geba,¹⁴ Micmash, Aija, Bethel¹⁵ and its villages, **11:32** in Anathoth, Nob, and Ananiah, **11:33** in Hazor,¹⁶ Ramah, and Gittaim, **11:34** in Hadid, Zeboim, and Neballat, **11:35** in Lod, Ono, and¹⁷ the Valley of the Craftsmen.¹⁸ **11:36** Some of the Judean divisions of the Levites settled in Benjamin.

¹ **tc** The translation reads *מִן הַשְּׁלֵחִי (min hashelani*, "from the Shelahite") rather than the MT reading *בֶּן הַשְּׁלֵחִי (ben hashiloni*, "the son of the Shilonite"). See 1 Chr 9:5.

² **tn** *Heb* "those behind him." Some scholars emend the text to *אֶחָיו (v^e ekhayv*, "his brothers").

³ **tn** *Heb* "brothers" (also in vv. 13, 14, 17, 19).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "heads of fathers."

⁵ **tc** The translation reads with the LXX *אֶחָיו (v^e ekhayv*, "and his brothers") rather than the MT reading *וְאֶחָיהֶם (va'akhehem*, "and their brothers").

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "who were of the heads."

⁷ **tc** The translation reads with the Lucianic Greek recension and Vulgate *הַתְּהִלָּה (hatt^ehilah*, "the praise") rather than the MT reading *הַתְּהִלָּה (hatt^ekhillah*, "the beginning").

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "the temple attendants." The pronoun "them" has been substituted in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "the commandment of the king was over them."

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "a thing of a day in its day."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "to the hand of the king."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "its daughters." So also in vv. 27, 28, 30, and 31.

¹³ **tc** The translation reads with a few medieval Hebrew mss and the Syriac Peshitta *וּמִבְנֵי (umib^eney*, "and some of the descendants of"; cf. NLT) rather than the MT reading *וּבְנֵי (uv^ene*, "and the sons of").

¹⁴ **tc** *Heb* "from Geba." It is preferable to delete the preposition "from" read by the MT.

¹⁵ **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

¹⁶ **map** For location see Map1-D2; Map2-D3; Map3-A2; Map4-C1.

¹⁷ **tc** The translation reads *גֵּי (v^egey*, "and the valley") rather than the MT reading *גֵּי (vey*, "the valley"). The original *vav* (ו) probably dropped out accidentally due to haplography with the final *vav* on the immediately preceding word.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "Ge-harashim," which could be left untranslated as a place name.

The Priests and the Levites Who Returned to Jerusalem

12:1 These are the priests and Levites who returned¹ with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, **12:2** Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, **12:3** Shecaniah, Rehun, Meremoth, **12:4** Iddo, Ginnethon,² Abijah, **12:5** Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah, **12:6** Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, **12:7** Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and Jedaiah. These were the leaders³ of the priests and their colleagues⁴ in the days of Jeshua.

12:8 And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who together with his colleagues⁵ was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. **12:9** Bakbukiah and Unni,⁶ their colleagues, stood opposite them in the services.

12:10 Jeshua was the father of⁷ Joiakim, Joiakim was the father of Eliashib, Eliashib was the father of Joiada, **12:11** Joiada was the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

12:12 In the days of Joiakim, these were the priests who were leaders of the families: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; **12:13** of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; **12:14** of Malluch,⁸ Jonathan; of Shecaniah,⁹ Joseph; **12:15** of Harim, Adna; of Meremoth,¹⁰ Helkai; **12:16** of Iddo,¹¹ Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; **12:17** of Abijah, Zicri; of Mijamin and¹² of Moadiah, Piltai; **12:18** of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; **12:19** of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;

12:20 of Sallu,¹³ Kallai; of Amok, Eber; **12:21** of Hilkiyah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

12:22 As for the Levites,¹⁴ in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua the heads of families were recorded, as were the priests during the reign of Darius the Persian. **12:23** The descendants of Levi were recorded in the Book of the Chronicles¹⁵ as heads of families up to the days of Johanan son of Eliashib. **12:24** And the leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their colleagues, who stood opposite them to offer praise and thanks, one contending corresponding to the other, as specified by¹⁶ David the man of God.

12:25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers who were guarding the storerooms at the gates.

12:26 These all served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priestly scribe.¹⁷

The Wall of Jerusalem is Dedicated

12:27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem,¹⁸ they sought out the Levites from all the places they lived¹⁹ to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication joyfully with songs of thanksgiving and songs accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. **12:28** The singers²⁰ were also assembled from the district around Jerusalem and from the settlements of the Netophathites **12:29** and from Beth Gilgal and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built settlements for themselves around Jerusalem. **12:30** When the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

12:31 I brought the leaders of Judah up on top of the wall, and I appointed two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed²¹ on the top of the wall southward toward the Dung Gate. **12:32** Going after them were Hoshaiah, half the leaders of Judah, **12:33** Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, **12:34** Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah,

¹ **tn** Heb “who went up.”
² **tc** Most Hebrew mss read “Ginnethoi”; the present translation follows a number of Hebrew mss and the Vulgate (cf. Neh 12:16 and NIV, NCV, NLT).
³ **tn** Heb “heads” (so also in v. 12).
⁴ **tn** Heb “brothers” (also in vv. 8, 9, 24, 36).
⁵ **tn** Heb “he and his brothers.”
⁶ **tc** The translation reads וּנְנִי (v^e *unni*) with the Qere rather than וּנְנִי (v^e *uno*) of the MT *Kethib*.
⁷ **tn** Heb “begat.”
⁸ **tc** The present translation reads with the LXX מַלְלֻךְ (m^l *mallukh*) rather than מַלְלֻכִי (m^l *limlukhi*) of the *Kethib* (by dittography) or מַלְלִיכָה (m^l *limlikhu*) of the Qere.
⁹ **tc** Most Hebrew mss read “Shebaniah” (cf. KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV, CEV); the present translation follows the reading of some Hebrew mss, some LXX mss, and the Syriac (cf. Neh 12:3 and NIV, NCV, NLT).
¹⁰ **tc** The present translation reads with the Lucianic Greek recension and the Syriac Peshitta מֵרֵמוֹת (m^r *remot*), cf. NAB, NIV, NCV, NLT “Meremoth”) rather than the MT reading מֵרֵמוֹת (m^r *remot*), cf. KJV, NASB, NRSV, CEV “Meraioth”). Cf. v. 3.
¹¹ **tc** The present translation (along with most English versions) reads with the Qere and the Syriac Peshitta לֵידֹדוֹ (l^e *iddo*), “Iddo”) rather than the MT reading לֵאֲדָאָיָהּ (l^a *adaya*) which probably arose through graphic confusion. Cf. v. 4.
¹² **tn** Or “of Mijamin, . . . of Moadiah, Piltai,” where the name of the leader of the family of Mijamin has dropped out of the text due to a problem in transmission.

¹³ **tc** The present translation reads סַלְלִי (sallu), cf. NAB, NIV, NCV, NLT “Sallu”) rather than the MT reading סַלְלִי (sallai), cf. KJV, NASB, NRSV, CEV “Sallai”). Cf. v. 7.
¹⁴ **tn** Some scholars delete these words, regarding them as a later scribal addition to the text.
¹⁵ **tn** Or “the Book of the Official Records”; NRSV “the Book of the Annals”; NLT “The Book of History.”
¹⁶ **tn** Heb “in [accord with] the commandment of.”
¹⁷ **tn** Heb “the priest, the scribe.”
¹⁸ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.
¹⁹ **tn** Heb “from all their places.” The words “they lived” are implied.
²⁰ **tn** Heb “the sons of the singers.”
^{21 **tc** The translation reads וְהָאֶחָד מֵהֵלֵךְ (v^h *ha’ akhat holekhet*, “and one was proceeding”) rather than the MT reading וְהָאֶחָד מֵהֵלֵךְ (v^h *tahalukhot*, “and processions”).}

Jeremiah, 12:35 some of the priests¹ with trumpets, Zechariah son of Jonathán, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, 12:36 and his colleagues – Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani – with musical instruments of² David the man of God. (Ezra the scribe led them.)³ 12:37 They went over the Fountain Gate and continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall. They passed the house of David and continued on to the Water Gate toward the east.

12:38 The second choir was proceeding⁴ in the opposite direction. I followed them, along with half the people, on top of the wall, past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, 12:39 over the Ephraim Gate, the Jeshanah Gate,⁵ the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate. They stopped⁶ at the Gate of the Guard.

12:40 Then the two choirs that gave thanks took their stations⁷ in the temple of God. I did also, along with half the officials with me, 12:41 and the priests – Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with their trumpets – 12:42 and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. The choirs sang loudly⁸ under the direction of Jezrahiah. 12:43 And on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced, for God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard from far away.

12:44 On that day men were appointed over the storerooms for the contributions, first fruits, and tithes, to gather into them from⁹ the fields of the cities the portions prescribed by the law for the priests and the Levites, for the people of Judah¹⁰ took delight in the priests and Levites who were ministering.¹¹ 12:45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, along with the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commandment of David

and¹² his son Solomon. 12:46 For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors¹³ for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanks to God. 12:47 So in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah, all Israel was contributing the portions for the singers and gatekeepers, according to the daily need.¹⁴ They also set aside¹⁵ the portion for the Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

Further Reforms by Nehemiah

13:1 On that day the book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing¹⁶ of the people. They found¹⁷ written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite may ever enter the assembly of God, 13:2 for they had not met the Israelites with food¹⁸ and water, but instead had hired Balaam to curse them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into blessing.) 13:3 When they heard the law, they removed from Israel all who were of mixed ancestry.

13:4 But prior to this time, Eliashib the priest, a relative of Tobiah, had been appointed over the storerooms¹⁹ of the temple of our God. 13:5 He made for himself a large storeroom where previously they had been keeping²⁰ the grain offering, the incense, and the vessels, along with the tithes of the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil as commanded for the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the offering for the priests.

13:6 During all this time I was not in Jerusalem,²¹ for in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes of Babylon, I had gone back to the king. After some time²² I had requested leave of the king, 13:7 and I returned to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by supplying him with a storeroom in the courts of the temple of God. 13:8 I was very upset, and I threw all of Tobiah's household possessions out of the storeroom. 13:9 Then I gave instructions that the storerooms should be purified, and I brought back

¹ **tn** *Heb* "some of the sons of the priests."

² **tn** Or "prescribed by" (NIV, NLT); TEV "of the kind played by." The precise relationship of these musical instruments to David is not clear.

³ **tn** *Heb* "was before them."

⁴ **tc** The translation reads הולכת (*holekhet*, "was proceeding") rather than the MT הולכת (*haholekhet*, "the one proceeding"). The MT probably reflects dittography – accidental writing of ה (*hey*) twice instead of once.

⁵ **tn** Or "the Old Gate" (so KJV, NASB, NCV, NRSV).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "they stood."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "stood."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "caused to hear."

⁹ **tc** The translation reads מִשְׂדֵי (*miss'ede*, "from the fields") rather than the MT reading לְשָׂדֵי (*lisdai*, "to the fields").

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "for Judah." The words "the people of" have been supplied in the translation for clarity, since "Judah" is a proper name as well as a place name.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "standing."

¹² **tc** With many medieval Hebrew MSS and the ancient versions the translation reads the conjunction ("and"). It is absent in the Leningrad MS that forms the textual basis for *BHS*.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "heads." The translation reads with the *Qere* the plural ראשי (*ro'shey*, "heads") rather than the *Kethib* singular ראש (*ro'sh*, "head") of the MT.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "a thing of a day in its day."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "were sanctifying."

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "ears."

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "it was found." The Hebrew verb is passive.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "bread." The Hebrew term is generic here, however, referring to more than bread alone.

¹⁹ **tc** The translation reads the plural rather than the singular of the MT.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "giving."

²¹ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

²² **tn** *Heb* "to the end of days."

the equipment¹ of the temple of God, along with the grain offering and the incense.

13:10 I also discovered that the grain offerings for the Levites had not been provided, and that as a result the Levites and the singers who performed this work had all gone off to their fields. **13:11** So I registered a complaint with the leaders, asking “Why is the temple of God neglected?” Then I gathered them and reassigned them to their positions.²

13:12 Then all of Judah brought the tithe of the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil to the storerooms. **13:13** I gave instructions³ that Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a certain Levite named Pedaiah be put in charge of⁴ the storerooms, and that Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah, be their assistant,⁵ for they were regarded as trustworthy. It was then their responsibility to oversee the distribution to their colleagues.⁶

13:14 Please remember me for this, O my God, and do not wipe out the kindness that I have done for the temple of my God and for its services!

13:15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath, bringing in heaps of grain and loading them onto donkeys, along with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, and bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them on the day that they sold these provisions. **13:16** The people from Tyre⁷ who lived there were bringing fish and all kinds of merchandise and were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah – and in Jerusalem, of all places!⁸ **13:17** So I registered a complaint with the nobles of Judah, saying to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? **13:18** Isn’t this the way your ancestors⁹ acted, causing our God to bring on them and on this city all this misfortune? And now you are causing even more wrath on Israel, profaning the Sabbath like this!”

13:19 When the evening shadows¹⁰ began to fall on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered¹¹ the doors to be closed. I further directed that they were not to be opened until after the Sabbath. I positioned¹² some of my young men at the gates so that no load could enter on the Sabbath day. **13:20** The traders and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem once or twice. **13:21** But I warned them and said,¹³ “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you repeat this, I will forcibly remove you!”¹⁴ From that time on they did not show up on the Sabbath.¹⁵ **13:22** Then I directed the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

For this please remember me, O my God, and have pity on me in keeping with your great love.

13:23 Also in those days I saw the men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. **13:24** Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod (or the language of one of the other peoples mentioned¹⁶) and were unable to speak the language of Judah. **13:25** So I entered a complaint with them. I called down a curse on them, and I struck some of the men and pulled out their hair. I had them swear by God saying, “You will not marry off¹⁷ your daughters to their sons, and you will not take any of their daughters as wives for your sons or for yourselves! **13:26** Was it not because of things like these that King Solomon of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made¹⁸ him king over all Israel. But the foreign wives made even him sin! **13:27** Should we then in your case hear that you do all this great evil, thereby being unfaithful to our God by marrying¹⁹ foreign wives?”

13:28 Now one of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. So I banished him from my sight.

¹ tn On the usage of this Hebrew word see HALOT 478-79 s.v. כָּלִי.

² tn Heb “and I stood them on their standing.”

³ tc Probably one should read with the Lucianic Greek recension, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Vulgate וְצִוִּיתִי (va’atsavveh, “and I commanded”) rather than the rare denominative verb וְאִצְוִיתִי (va’ots’erah, “and I appointed over the storeroom”) of the MT.

⁴ tn Heb “be over”

⁵ tn Heb “on their hand.”

⁶ tn Heb “brothers.”

⁷ map For location see Map1-A2; Map2-G2; Map4-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

⁸ tn The words “of all places” are not in the Hebrew text but have been supplied in the translation to indicate the emphasis on Jerusalem.

⁹ tn Heb “your fathers.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “the gates of Jerusalem grew dark.”

¹¹ tn Heb “said” (so also in v. 22).

¹² tn Heb “caused to stand.”

¹³ tn The Hebrew text includes the words “to them,” but they have been excluded from the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁴ tn Heb “I will send a hand on you.”

¹⁵ sn This statement contains a great deal of restrained humor. The author clearly takes pleasure in the effectiveness of the measures that he had enacted.

¹⁶ tn Heb “people and people.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “give.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “gave.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “give a dwelling to.”

13:29 Please remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, the covenant of the priesthood,¹ and the Levites.

13:30 So I purified them of everything foreign, and I assigned specific² duties to the priests and the Levites. **13:31** I also provided for³ the wood offering at the appointed times and also for the first fruits.

Please remember me for good, O my God.

¹ **tc** One medieval Hebrew ms, the Lucianic Greek recension, and the Syriac Peshitta read the plural הַכֹּהֲנִים (*hakkohanim*, “the priests”) rather than the singular reading of the MT, הַכֹּהֵן (*hakkohunnah*, “the priesthood”).

² **tn** *Heb* “a man in his work.”

³ **tn** The words “I also provided for” are not included in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.