

# **Bible Study April 30, 2025**

## **NEHEMIAH 7 (AMPLIFIED VERSION)**

### **Census of First Returned Exiles**

***<sup>1</sup> Now when the wall had been rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites had been appointed,***

***<sup>2</sup> I put my brother Hanani, with Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for Hananiah was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many [of the others].***

### **A. Delegate Authority**

Faithfulness and fear of God (reverence) were the key character traits that qualified these men to govern Jerusalem. Faithful people can be trusted to carry out their work; God-fearing people can be expected to do so in line with God's priorities. These men had both qualities. If you are in a position to select leaders, look for faithfulness and reverence as two of the most important qualifications. Although other qualities may seem more impressive, these two pass the test of time.

### **Proverbs 20:6-7 (AMP)**

*<sup>6</sup> Many a man proclaims his own loyalty and goodness, But who can find a faithful and trustworthy man?<sup>7</sup> The righteous man who walks in integrity and lives life in accord with his [godly] beliefs— How blessed [happy and spiritually secure] are his children after him [who have his example to follow].*

***<sup>3</sup> I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while the watchmen are still standing guard, have them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from the residents of Jerusalem, each at his post [on the wall], and each in front of his own house.”***

City gates were usually opened at sunrise, enabling merchants to enter and set up their tent-stores. Nehemiah didn't want Jerusalem to be caught unprepared by an enemy attack, so he wisely gave instructions for when the gates should be open as well as for appointing guards.

The wall was complete, but the work was not finished. Nehemiah assigned each family the task of protecting the section of wall next to their home. It is tempting to relax our guard and rest on past accomplishments after we have completed a large task. But we must continue to serve and to take care of all that God has entrusted to us. Following through after a project is completed is as vital as doing the project itself.

***<sup>4</sup> Now the city was spacious and large, but there were few people in it and the houses had not [yet] been built.***

***<sup>5</sup> Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be registered by genealogy. Then I found the register of the genealogy of those who came [from Babylon] first, and I found the following record:***

This phrase highlights the divine inspiration and guidance that Nehemiah experienced. It underscores the belief that God actively directs the hearts and actions of His people. This aligns with other biblical instances where God influences individuals, such as in Proverbs 21:1, which speaks of God directing the hearts of kings. It also reflects the intimate relationship between Nehemiah and God, emphasizing prayer and reliance on divine wisdom.

### **Proverbs 21:1 (NLT)**

*<sup>21</sup> The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD;  
he guides it wherever he pleases.*

As Nehemiah contemplated the vast empty spaces within the city walls, and considered with himself how they might best be peopled, the thought came to him - and he hailed it as a Divine inspiration - that by taking a census of the people he might pave the way for some transfer of the inhabitants of the country districts into the capital, which would at any rate strengthen the latter, and lessen the desolate appearance of its streets and squares, which had so pained him. The census would show what proportion the country and town populations bore to each other, and would point out which were the places in the country districts that could best afford to lose a portion of their inhabitants. No doubt the genealogical principle was acted upon throughout, but further evidence upon the point is wanting. It would seem to have been in the course of his preparations for this census, perhaps in searching for precedents, that Nehemiah found the "register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first," which is the subject of the next section.

***<sup>6</sup> These are the sons (descendants, people) of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had deported [to Babylon]; they returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, each to his city, <sup>7</sup> the ones who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.***

Zerubbabel was a key leader in the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. He was a descendant of King David and played a significant role in the rebuilding of the temple, as prophesied in Haggai 2:23. His leadership is a type of Christ, as he was instrumental in restoring worship in Jerusalem.

### **Jeshua**

Jeshua, also known as Joshua, was the high priest who returned with Zerubbabel. He is mentioned in the prophetic visions of Zechariah (Zechariah 3:1-10), where he is depicted as a symbol of the coming Messiah, who would cleanse the people from sin.

### **Nehemiah**

Nehemiah, the central figure of the book, was a cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes. He was instrumental in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, demonstrating leadership and faithfulness. His actions foreshadow the protective and restorative work of Christ for His people.

### **Azariah**

Azariah, a common name in the Old Testament, means "Yahweh has helped." This name reflects the divine assistance experienced by the returning exiles, emphasizing God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises.

### **Raamiah**

Little is known about Raamiah, but his inclusion in this list highlights the collective effort of various leaders in the restoration of Jerusalem. His name means "thunder of Yahweh," suggesting a powerful presence or influence.

## **Nahamani**

Nahamani is another figure about whom little is known. His name means "comforter," which may symbolize the comfort and hope brought to the exiles as they returned to their homeland.

## **Mordecai**

This Mordecai is not the same as the one in the Book of Esther, but his name, meaning "warrior" or "follower of Marduk," indicates a strong character. The name's presence in the list underscores the diverse backgrounds of those involved in the restoration.

## **Bilshan**

Bilshan's name means "inquirer" or "searcher." This could reflect the seeking of God's will and guidance by the leaders during the challenging task of rebuilding.

## **Mispereth**

Mispereth, meaning "numbering" or "recording," may indicate a role in organizing or documenting the returnees, highlighting the importance of order and record-keeping in the restoration process.

## **Bigvai**

Bigvai was one of the leaders who returned with Zerubbabel, as mentioned in Ezra 2:2. His name means "happy" or "fortunate," reflecting the joy and blessing of returning to the Promised Land.

## **Nehum**

Nehum, meaning "comfort," aligns with the theme of divine comfort and restoration for the exiles. This name reinforces the message of hope and renewal found throughout the book of Nehemiah.

## **Baanah**

Baanah, meaning "in affliction," may represent the hardships faced by the exiles. His inclusion in the list serves as a reminder of the trials endured and the perseverance required to rebuild Jerusalem.

## **This is the count of the men of Israel:**

The enumeration of the men of Israel signifies the importance of community and identity in the post-exilic period. It reflects the fulfillment of God's promise to restore His people and reestablish them in their land, as seen in prophecies like Jeremiah 29:10-14. This census also underscores the continuity of God's covenant with Israel, despite their previous disobedience and exile.

***The men of the people of Israel numbered: <sup>8</sup> the sons of Parosh, 2,172; <sup>9</sup> the sons of Shephatiah, 372; <sup>10</sup> the sons of Arah, 652; <sup>11</sup> the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818; <sup>12</sup> the sons of Elam, 1,254; <sup>13</sup> the sons of Zattu, 845; <sup>14</sup> the sons of Zaccai, 760; <sup>15</sup> the sons of Binnui, 648; <sup>16</sup> the sons of Bebai, 628; <sup>17</sup> the sons of Azgad, 2,322; <sup>18</sup> the sons of Adonikam, 667; <sup>19</sup> the sons of Bigvai, 2,067; <sup>20</sup> the sons of Adin, 655; <sup>21</sup> the sons of Ater, of Hezekiah, 98; <sup>22</sup> the sons of Hashum, 328; <sup>23</sup> the sons of Bezai, 324; <sup>24</sup> the sons of Hariph, 112; <sup>25</sup> the sons of Gibeon, 95; <sup>26</sup> the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188; <sup>27</sup> the men of Anathoth, 128; <sup>28</sup> the men of Beth-azmaveth, 42; <sup>29</sup> the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743; <sup>30</sup> the men of Ramah and Geba, 621; <sup>31</sup> the men of Michmas, 122; <sup>32</sup> the men of Bethel and Ai, 123; <sup>33</sup> the men of the other Nebo, 52; <sup>34</sup> the sons of the other Elam, 1,254; <sup>35</sup> the sons of Harim, 320; <sup>36</sup> the sons of Jericho, 345; <sup>37</sup> the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 721; <sup>38</sup> the sons of Senaah, 3,930.***

***<sup>39</sup> These are the priests: the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973; <sup>40</sup> the sons of Immer, 1,052; <sup>41</sup> the sons of Pashhur, 1,247; <sup>42</sup> the sons of Harim, 1,017.***

<sup>43</sup> *These are the Levites: the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodevah, 74. <sup>44</sup> The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148. <sup>45</sup> The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, 138.*

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

<sup>57</sup> *The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida, <sup>58</sup> the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, <sup>59</sup> the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon.*

<sup>60</sup> *All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants, totaled 392.*

<sup>61</sup> *And these were the ones who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon and Immer; but they [had no birth records and] could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they were of Israel:*

Genealogies were greatly valued because a Jewish person needed to be able to prove that he or she was a descendant of Abraham, and therefore a member of God's chosen nation (Genesis 12:1-3; 15; Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 11:22-28). A lost genealogy put one's status as a Jew at risk.

<sup>62</sup> *the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642. <sup>63</sup> Of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai, who [was so named because he had] married one of the daughters of Barzillai, the [well-known] Gileadite, and was named after them. <sup>64</sup> These men searched for their ancestral registration among those recorded in the genealogies, but it was not located; so they were excluded from the priesthood as [ceremonially] unclean. <sup>65</sup> The governor told them that they should not eat any of the most holy food until a priest arose with Urim and Thummim [to determine God's will in the matter].*

The Urim and Thummim (a form of sacred lots) were a means of learning God's will (Exodus 28:30). If a man's name wasn't in the genealogies, he could still be admitted as a priest if the Urim and Thummim proved him to be a Jew and a Levite. It is not clear whether the Urim and Thummim here were the originals that had survived the destruction of Jerusalem or if they were new. The "priest's share of food" was the prescribed portion of the sacrifices to God designated as food for the priests and their families. Only the true priests - the descendants of Aaron - were permitted to eat it.

## **Total of People and Gifts**

<sup>66</sup> *The entire assembly together was 42,360, <sup>67</sup> besides their male and their female servants, of whom there were 7,337; and they had 245 male and female singers. <sup>68</sup> Their horses were 736; their mules, 245; <sup>69</sup> their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720.*

<sup>70</sup> *Some from among the heads of fathers' households gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, 530 priests' garments. <sup>71</sup> Some of the heads of fathers' households gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,200 silver minas. <sup>72</sup> And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas, 2,000 silver minas, and 67 priests' garments.*

***<sup>73</sup> So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, along with all Israel, lived in their cities.***

***And when the seventh month came, the sons (descendants) of Israel (Jacob) were in their cities.***

Nehemiah found the genealogical record. Because this genealogy is almost identical to Ezra's (Ezra 2), most likely Ezra's list was stored in the Temple archives and was the one Nehemiah found.