

Notes on Nehemiah Chapter 11

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IV. The People Who Dwelt in the City – Chap. 11

Verses 1,2

1. Where did the leaders of the people live? Where did the other people live?
2. How did they decide where people would live? Explain casting lots and give examples.

2. How did they decide where people would live? Explain casting lots and give examples. The need for people to live in the city

Since Jerusalem's walls had been rebuilt, it was necessary for a sufficient number of people to inhabit the city. Perhaps this included people to defend the city, carry on business, etc.

The leaders of the people already dwelt in the city, as you might expect for the capital city. But it was decided that they needed one tenth of other people in the city, so they cast lots to decide which people would live there. The other nine tenths were to dwell in the other cities of the land. For more information about casting lots see Nehemiah 10:34; 11:1; Acts 1:24-26; Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 14:2; 1 Samuel 14:41,42; Proverbs 16:33 (Psalms 22:18).

Since this required many people to make sacrifices (such as moving and perhaps leaving ones inherited possession in the land – cf. v3), the people who were willing to live in Jerusalem were blessed and appreciated by the other people. (I wonder if the reference to “willingly offered” means that some people simply volunteered to go. If so, did this reduce the need for others to go as a result of the lots?)

Verses 3-36

3. What information is given in 11:3-36?

People of Judah who lived in Jerusalem

Many people of various kinds lived in other cities according to their inheritance, but the following verses then list the chief people who lived in Jerusalem. Many were of descendants of Judah, others were of the tribe of Benjamin.

Vv 4-6 specifically lists leaders of the tribe of Judah who lived in Jerusalem. A total of 468 valiant men lived there (one wonders if this counted only those who were of military age, since that was done in other censuses).

People of Benjamin who lived in Jerusalem

Verses 7-9 then list leaders of the people of the tribe of Benjamin who lived in Jerusalem. The total men of the tribe of Benjamin was 928. Their overseers in the city were Joel and the second in command was Judah.

Priests who lived in Jerusalem.

Verses 10-14 list leaders of the priests who lived in Jerusalem. The numbers in this case are 822, 242, and 128, but I am not sure exactly what the distinction was between these different numbers.

The priests, of course, had to be descendants of Aaron, and they led in the worship in the temple (v11).

Levites who lived in Jerusalem

Verses 15-18 then list the leaders of the Levites who lived in Jerusalem. These had oversight of the business outside the temple (v16). Remember that Levites could not serve inside the temple and could not touch the holy articles. So they served outside.

In addition Mattaniah is named (v17) as leading the thanksgiving in prayer. The total Levites were 284.

Other groups – verses 19-21

The gatekeepers or porters guarded the gates of the city. There were 172 of them.

The rest of the people lived in their various family inheritances throughout the land. This included other priests and Levites.

Also the Nethinim lived in a place named Ophel. The Nethinim were people who assisted the Levites in their jobs around the temple. See on Ezra 8:20.

The singers – verses 22,23

The overseer of the Levites at Jerusalem was a man named Uzzi. He was also a descendant of Asaph, so he was one of the singers in charge of the worship in the temple.

Further information is given telling that the king had commanded a daily income to be appointed for the singers who led the worship in the temple.

The king's deputy

V24 states that the deputy of the king was a man named Pethahiah of the tribe of Judah. He apparently represented the Persian king in all matters concerning the people. Though the Israelites had been allowed to return to Judah, the king of Persia still maintained power over them. This man was apparently his appointed representative.

People living in the other cities of Judah

Verses 25-36 simply list other cities where various Jews lived. Vv 25-30 list cities where people of Judah lived. They generally lived south of Jerusalem (v30). Vv 31-36 list verses where people of Benjamin lived.

We are also told that some of the Levites that had been assigned to Judea lived in the territory of Benjamin.

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