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Nehemyah

(Nehemiah)
rebuilds Yerushalem's walls

Introduction

Nehemyah (Nehemiah) was a servant of Persian King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes) in the city of Shushan. While he was there, he heard an account from some Israelis who'd been allowed to return back to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) about how hard it was to live there. Yahweh's temple had been rebuilt, however the city wall hadn't been fixed yet, so their enemies who surrounded them were easily able to ambush and attack them.
Because of that, Nehemyah requested permission from the king to go personally to Yerushalem to supervise the rebuilding of the city walls.
In this document we read how God helped Nehemyah of organise the rebuild of the city wall in the middle of the opposition from their enemies around them.

Main components of this account

Nehemyah's returning back to Yerushalem *1:1–2:20*
The rebuilding of Yerushalem's city wall *3:1–7:73*
The reading of the law and the renewal of their agreement *8:1–10:39*
Nehemyah's other achievements *11:1–13:31*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Readers' Version

1:1 The account by Hakalyah's son Nehemyah (Nehemiah).

Nehemyah's prayer for Yerushalem

In the month of Kislev during the twentieth year of the reign of King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes) over the Persian Empire, I was in the capital city of Shushan (Susa). **2** Hanani, one of my brothers, came with some other men from Yehudah (Judah), and I asked them about the Yehudim (Jews) who'd escaped and managed to avoid being exiled, and about Yerushalem (Jerusalem), **3** and he told me, "The ones left behind in the provinces and who avoided the captivity, are in a bad way and feeling depressed. The wall around Yerushalem was torn down, and its gates were burnt."

4 When I heard all that, I sat down and I was upset for days. I fasted and cried and prayed to the god of the heavens, **5** and I said, "Oh Yahweh, God of the heavens, the great and awesome God, who keeps his agreement and is determinedly loyal to those who love him and obey his instructions: **6** Please listen carefully to your servant's prayer that I'm presenting to you today, day and night, on account of your servants the Israelis. On behalf of all Israelis, I'm confessing that we've sinned against you—both my generation and previous generations. **7** We've acted extremely corruptly—disobeying you by not obeying your commands, statutes, and judgements that you instructed through your servant Mosheh (Moses). **8** Please remember that you told your servant Mosheh that if we act unfaithfully, you yourself would scatter us among the nations,[1] **9** but if we'd return to you and obey your instructions, then even if we had been banished to the ends of the earth, you'd gather us back up and bring us back to the place where you've established your name and reputation.[2]

10 "We're your servants and your people that you rescued from slavery with your incredible power. **11** Oh, my master, please listen carefully to your servant's prayer, and to the prayer of your other servants who delight to honour your name. Please cause your servant to succeed today, and give me favour in the king's eyes."

Now as for me, I was the king's cupbearer.

Nehemyah gets sent to Yerushalem

2:1 In the spring of the twentieth year of King Artahshashta's (Artaxerxes') reign, I was serving wine to the king. I'd never looked sad before in his presence, **2** and the king asked me, "Why do you look unhappy? I know that you're not sick so something must be upsetting you."

I was very scared **3** and I answered the king, "May the king live forever. I can't help but look unhappy when the city containing my ancestors' graves has had its gates burnt down and it's now abandoned."[3] **4** "So what would you like to happen?" the king asked.

Then I prayed to the god of heaven **5** and answered the king, "If I have your favour, and if it seems good to the king, maybe you'd send me to Yehudah (Judah)—to the city of my ancestors' graves so I could rebuild it."

6 Then the king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, "How long would your journey be? And when would you return?" So I gave him a date and he seemed happy with it, because he released me to go.

7 Then I made another request, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the provinces across the Perat (Euphrates) river to ask them to help me in my travel towards Yehudah. **8** Also a letter to Asaf, the keeper of the king's forest, so he'll give me timber for the beams of the gates of the fortress near the temple, and for the city wall, and for the house that I'll live in." Then the king granted those requests, thanks to God's help on what I was doing.

9 Then I went to the governors of the provinces across the Perat, and I gave them the king's letters. The king had sent army officers and horsemen with me. **10** When Sanvalat the Horoni and the servant Toviyah the Amoni heard my plans, they were very angry that someone would come to help the Israelis.

11 So I got to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and was there for three days, **12** One night, I got up and took a few men with me, without having told anyone what I felt that my god had been telling me to do for Yerushalem. We only had the one horse that I was riding, **13** and we went out in the dark through the Valley Gate and past the Dragon Well to the Dung Gate. I was carefully inspecting the city walls—noting where they were broken down and which gates had been burnt out. **14** Then I crossed to the Fountain Gate and the Royal Pool, but there was nowhere that we could get my mount through the rubble. **15** So I went up the creek bed in the dark, carefully inspecting the wall, before turning back and returning quietly through the Valley Gate.

16 None of the city officials knew where I'd gone or what I was doing, and up until this point I hadn't yet told my plans to the Jewish leaders or the priests or leading citizens or city officials, or hired any workers. **17** So now I told them, "You call all see the desperate situation that we're in: Yerushalem is in ruins and its gates have been burnt out. So now, let's rebuild the city wall and then we'll no longer be mocked by others." **18** I told them how God had helped me so far and what the king had given me permission to do.

"Well, let's get started on the rebuilding," they said, and got ready to work together. **19** But then Sanvalat the Horoni, and the Amoni servant Toviyah, and Geshem the Aravi heard, and they mocked and despised us, saying, "What are

1 RV 1:8 · Cross-ref. Lev 26:33.

2 RV 1:9 · Cross-ref. Deu 30:1-5.

3 RV 2:3 · Cross-ref. 2Ki 25:8-10; 2Ch 36:19; Jer 52:12-14.

you guys all up to? Are you all rebelling against the king?"
20 I answered them by explaining, "The god of the heavens will help us to succeed, and we ourselves, his servants, will do the rebuilding work, but you all will have no part in it, and no rights in Yerushalem."

Rebuilding Yerushalem's wall

3:1 The high priest Elyashiv worked together with his brothers the priests, and they rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They themselves dedicated it and installed the doors on it. In addition, they dedicated the section of the wall as far as the Hundred Tower and beyond that to the Hananel Tower.
2 The men from Yeriho (Jericho) rebuilt the section beside them, and Imri's son Zakur rebuilt the next section again.
3 Hasena'ah's son rebuilt the Fish Gate—laying the beams then installing the doors with their bolts and bars.
4 Uriyah's son Meremot (the son of Hakots's son Uriyah) rebuilt a section, as did Meshulam (son of Mesheyzavel's son Berekyah) and Ba'ana's son Tsadok. **5** The Tekoim worked next to them, but their leaders wouldn't actually help with the work.
6 Paseah's son Yoyada and Besodeyah's son Meshulam rebuilt the Yeshanah Gate—laying the beams then installing the doors with their bolts and bars. **7** Next to them was Melatyah the Givoni, Yadon the Meronoti, and men of Giveon and Mitspah rebuilding the section to the residence of the governor of the regions that side of the Perat (Euphrates).
8 Next again was Harhayah's son Uziel (one of the goldsmiths), then Hananyah (who was a son of the perfumers) rebuilt as far as the Broad Wall. **9** Then it was Hur's son Refayah, the administrator for half of the Yerushalem (Jerusalem) district. **10** Harumaf's son Yedayah repaired the section in front of his house, then Hashavneyah's son Hatush made the next repairs.
11 Harim's son Malkiyah and Pahat-Moav's son Hashuv repaired a section, as well as the Tower of Ovens. **12** Next to them was Halohesh's son Shalum, the administrator for another half of the Yerushalem district, helped by his daughters.
13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah rebuilt the Valley Gate—installing the doors with their bolts and bars, as well as repairing 500m of wall along to the Dung Gate. **14** Rekav's son Malkiyah, the administrator for the Beyt-Hakerem district, rebuilt the Dung Gate—installing the doors with their bolts and bars.
15 Kal-Hozeh's son Shalun, the administrator for the Mitspah district, rebuilt the Fountain Gate—he built and covered it, installing the doors with their bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the Shelah Pool from the king's garden as far as the stairs that come down from the City of David.
16 Next to him was Azbuk's son Nehemyah (Nehemiah), the administrator for half of the Beyt-Tsur district
17 Next to him were some Levites: Bani's son Rehum, then Hashavyah (the administrator for half of the Ke'ilah district) did his district, **18** then Henadad's son Bavay the administrator for the other half of the Ke'ilah district.
19 Then there was Yeshua's son Ezer (the administrator of Mitspah) repaired a section opposite the steps up to the armoury where the wall turned at an angle.
20 Then Zakay's son Baruk enthusiastically repaired another section from that angle to the entrance to the house of the high priest Elyashiv. **21** Next to him was Meremot (son of Hakots' son Uriyah) who repaired another section from the doorway of Elyashiv's house to the end of it.
22 Next to them, some priests from the surrounding area made repairs.
23 After them Benyamin and Hashuv repaired a section in front of their house, then Azaryah (son of Ananyah's son Ma'aseyah) repaired beside his house, **24** Henadad's son Binuy repaired another section from Azaryah's house to the corner, **25** Uzay's son Palal did opposite the corner and the tower above the palace by the guards' courtyard, and then Par'osh's son Pedayah.
26 The temple servants who lived in Ofel repaired as far as the eastern side of the Water Gate and its tower. **27** After them, the men from Tekoa repaired another section from opposite that tall tower to the Ofel wall.
28 The priests repaired the section past the Horse Gate—each of them repairing the section in front of his own house. **29** Next to them, Imer's son Tsadok repaired opposite his house, then Shekanyah's son Shemayah the gatekeeper at the Eastern Gate repaired the next section.
30 After him was Shelemyah's son Hananyah with Tsalaf's sixth son Hanun working on a second section, then Berekyah's sib Meshulam repairing a section in front of his quarters. **31** Next was the goldsmiths' son Malkiyah who repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and up to the upper room in the corner, **32** and the other goldsmiths and some merchants repaired the last section of the wall from the upper room in the corner to the Sheep Gate.

The opposition to Nehemyah

4:1 When Sanvalat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he got really angry. He mocked the Yehudim (Jews) **2** and he spoke before in front of his brothers and the army of Shomron (Samaria), "What are those feeble Yehudim doing? Do they think they'll be able to rebuild that place themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they get finished one day? Will they form the stones back together from piles of dust, when they've been weakened by the heat of the fires?"
3 Toviyah the Amoni was standing beside him and confirmed, "Yes, even if a fox walked over that stone wall that they're building, it would make it fall down."
4 I prayed, "Our god, listen to how we're mocked and cause their words to return on their own heads and send them away as captives to become the plunder for another country.

Readers' Version

5 Don't just cover over their evil, and don't just ignore their
sin, because they've repeatedly made the workers get angry."
6 So we kept on at building the wall, and eventually all the
segments of wall were joined up together up to about half its
full height, and so the people were encouraged to keep per-
severing.
7 Now when Sanvalat, and Toviyah, and the Aravim, and
the Amonim, and the Ashdodim heard that the Yerushalem
(Jerusalem) walls were getting repaired and the breaks were
beginning to be closed up, it made them extremely angry
8 and they all got together to come to attack Yerushalem and
to throw us into confusion. 9 So we prayed to our god, as well
as setting up a 24-hour guard to watch out for them.
10 People around Yehudah (Judah) said, "The workers are
running out of strength and there's a lot of rubble still to be
moved. Maybe we're not up to building this wall."
11 Then those against us said, "We'll rush in among them
and kill some of them before they even see us or know that
we're coming, then that will bring the work to an end." 12 Af-
ter that, whenever the Yehudim (Jews) living close to them
came, they repeatedly warned us, "They're going to attack us
from all directions." 13 So I stationed guards behind the low-
est places along the wall and where there were still gaps. I
also made sure that the families stood guard with their
swords, spears, and bows.
14 I looked then I got organised and told the leading citi-
zens and the prefects, and the rest of the people, "Don't be
afraid of their threats. Remember my powerful and fearsome
master, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your
daughters, your wives, and your houses." 15 After all that,
when our enemies realised that we were aware of their in-
tentions and that God had frustrated their surprise attack
plan, we all returned to our work on the wall.
16 So from that day onwards, half of my young men would
work on the rebuilding, while the other half stood guard
with spears, shields, and breastplates, and the officials en-
couraged them all from behind. 17 Both those who were plac-
ing the stones on the wall and those who were carrying the
heavy loads to them, always had their weapons with them in
case of an attack. 18 The builders had their swords strapped
to their sides as they worked, and the man who would sound
the trumpet stayed with me. 19 Then I told the leading citi-
zens and prefects, and the rest of the people, "This job is so
large and extensive that we're all separated from each other
when we work on the wall, 20 so whenever you all hear the
trumpet blast, join us at that place. Our god will fight for us."
21 So we continued the work with half of them keeping their
hands on their spears from the beginning of the day until
the stars came out at night.
22 Also at that time, I told the people, "Every worker in-
cluding servants should spend the night inside the city, so
they double as workers during the day and guards at night."
23 During that period of construction, none of us, not even
our servants, stayed undressed or separated from our
weapons, even when washing.

The resolution of Nehemyah of problem

5:1 However around then, there was a
widespread complaint from the people
and their wives against what their fel-
low Yehudim (Jews) were doing. 2 Some of them complained,
"There's a lot of us when we include our sons and daughters.
We need grain so we can eat and stay alive."
3 Others said, "We are mortgaging our fields and vineyards,
and our houses so we can get grain during this famine."
4 Yet others said, "We've borrowed silver to pay the tax on
our fields and our vineyards that goes to the tribute to be
paid to the foreign king. 5 We're Yehudim just like our coun-
trymen, but we're having to commit our children into
bondage as slaves—yes, even our daughters. Now we own
nothing at all—not even our fields and vineyards.
6 I got very angry when I heard their complaints and des-
peration, 7 and I couldn't get it out of my mind. I protested
to the leading citizens and the officials, "You guys are charg-
ing interest against your own countrymen."[4]
So I called for a gathering of all the people to deal with
them, 8 and I told them, "Our brothers, the Yehudim, were
sold to other countries as slaves and we've done all we can to
bring them back here. But now even you yourselves are buy-
ing and selling your own countrymen to make a profit." They
couldn't argue against that, so they were just silent.
9 "It's not good what you're doing," I continued. "Shouldn't
you all respect and obey our god, because otherwise we'll be
despised by the other nations, our enemies. 10 I myself have
lent them money and grain, as have my brothers and my
young men, but please let's forgo charging interest.
11 Please, even today, return their fields to them, and their
vineyards and olive orchards, their houses, and the interest
on the money and the grain, the new wine, and the oil that
you are charging against them."
12 "Okay, we'll do what you're asking," they responded.
"We'll return their property and we won't impose any more
charges on them."
So I called the priests to witness those leading citizens and
officials making an oath to do what they'd said they would
do. 13 Also I shook the folds of my robe and told them, "May
God shake you all out of his house like that, and shake every
man's business if he doesn't do what he just promised—may
he be shaken out like that and lose everything."

Nehemyah's generosity

14 Also, from the day that I was ap-
pointed to be their governor in the
Yehudah (Judah) region (for the twelve years from the Per-
sian King Artahshashta's (Artaxerxes') 20th year until his
32nd year), I myself didn't accept the governor's food al-

4 **RV 5:7 · Cross-ref.** Exo 22:25; Lev 25:35-37; Deu 23:19-20.

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lowance, nor did my relatives. **15** The governors who preceded me had been very hard on the people—demanding bread and wine and forty silver coins. Even their servants oppressed the people. In contrast, I didn't do that due to desire to honour God. **16** Also I remained focused on rebuilding the wall, and we didn't invest in a farm property, and all my servants also contributed to the work. **17** I regularly fed a hundred and fifty Jewish leaders and city officials, as well as visitors from other countries around us, **18** so in one day we needed one bull, six choice sheep, and various kinds of poultry, as well as various types of wines every ten days. I didn't demand any of this from the people because it would have been a heavy burden for them.

19 My god, remember me for the good that I've done for these people.

The plan of killing Nehemyah

6:1 Although we didn't yet have any doors in the gates, when Sanvalat and Toviyah and Geshem the Aravi and the rest of our enemies heard that we'd finished building the wall so it didn't have any gaps left in it, **2** Sanvalat and Geshem invited me, "We'd like to arrange to meet with you in one of the villages on the Ono plain." But they were intending to harm me. **3** So I sent messengers back to them, "This work is important and extensive, so I can't afford to abandon it and have the work stop if I travelled down to you on the plain."

4 They tried four times to get me to go, but I kept refusing them for those same reasons.

5 Then Sanvalat sent his servant to me a fifth time with the same request, but this time in an unsealed, open letter **6** saying, "There's rumours flying around in nearby countries, and Geshem confirms it, that you and the Yehudim (Jews) are building the wall because you're all plotting thinking to rebel. Then you'd become their king, according to what we're hearing. **7** We've also heard that you've set up 'prophets' to speak out in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) to say about you, 'There's a king in Yehudah (Judah).' By now, all of that will have been heard by the Persian king. So now, come and let's discuss this together."

8 I sent a message straight back, "None of what you're saying is true. It's simply your own imagination at work."

9 We knew that they were just trying to frighten us so that we'd stop the repairs and it would never get finished.

My god, strengthen my hands.

10 After that, I entered Shemayah's house (the son of Meheytavel's son Delayah) who was confined to his house, and he said, "Let's set a time to meet in the temple—we'll shut the temple doors because they'll be coming to kill you—probably in the night."

11 But I disagreed, "Would a man like me run away? Besides that, who's allowed to live inside the temple? I won't do that."

12 Then I suddenly realised that God hadn't told him to say that, but rather he was working against me because he'd been paid by Toviyah and Sanvalat. **13** They must have hired him so that I'd be afraid and take that advice and sin. Then they could have ruined my reputation and discredited me.

14 My god, remember what Toviyah and Sanvalat have done, and also the prophetess Noadyah and the other prophets who've been trying to scare me.

The completion of wall

15 So the rebuilding of the wall was finished on the 25th of September in just fifty-two days, **16** and when our enemies heard about it, the surrounding countries were afraid and discouraged because they realised that our god must have helped us.

17 During that time, the Yehudah (Judah) leading citizens were sending many letters to Toviyah, and letters from Toviyah were also coming to them, **18** because many people in Yehudah had ties with him because he was the son-in-law of Arah's son Shekanyah, plus his son Yehohanan had married Berekyah's daughter Meshulam. **19** Those leading citizen kept telling me about the good things he was doing, and they reported my words back to him. Toviyah also sent letters to try to frighten me.

7:1 Once the wall had been rebuilt and the doors hung in the gates, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites had been appointed. **2** I put my brother Hanani and the fortress commander Hananyah in charge over Yerushalem (Jerusalem). (Hananyah was a faithful man and respected God more than many others do.) **3** I told them, "Don't open Yerushalem's gates until broad daylight, and then shut and bar them again while the guards are still on full alert. And assign neighbourhood watch groups among the inhabitants to keep an eye on their own areas."

The list of returned exiles[5]

4 Now Yerushalem (Jerusalem) covered a large area but not many people had returned to live there yet, and the houses hadn't yet been rebuilt.

5 So God gave me the idea of gathering the leaders and the people grouped by their ancestors. I found the register of those who'd returned from exile to Yerushalem, with this written in it:

6 "These are the descendants of the people exiled by the Babylonian King Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) , who returned to Yehudah (Judah) and to Yerushalem—each family returning to their own ancestral town. **7** Their leaders were Zerubavel, Yeshua, Nehemyah (Nehemiah), Azaryah, Ra'amyah, Nahamani, Mordekai, Bilshan, Misperet, Bigvay, Nehum, and Ba'anah.

The number of Israeli men:
8 2,172 descendants of Par'osh,
9 372 descendants of Shefatyah,
10 652 descendants of Arah,

5 RV 7:4 · Parallel Ezra 2:1-70

Readers' Version

11 2,818 descendants of Pahat-Moav (descendants of
Yeshua and Yoav (Joab)),
12 1,254 descendants of Eylam,
13 845 descendants of Zatu,
14 760 descendants of Zakay,
15 648 descendants of Binuy,
16 628 descendants of Bevay,
17 2,322 descendants of Azgad,
18 667 descendants of Adonikam,
19 2,067 descendants of Bigvay,
20 655 descendants of Adin,
21 98 descendants of Ater (from Hizkiyah (Hezekiah)),
22 328 descendants of Hashum,
23 324 descendants of Betsay,
24 112 descendants of Harif,
25 and 95 descendants of Giveon.
26 Other men from these towns:
188 from Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) and Netofah,
27 128 from Anatot,
28 42 from Beyt-Azmavet,
29 743 from Kiryat-Yearim, Kefirah, and Be'erot,
30 621 from Ramah and Geva,
31 122 from Mikmas,
32 123 from Beyt-El (Bethel) and Ay,
33 52 from Nevo,
34 1,254 descendants of the other Eylam,
35 320 descendants of Harim,
36 345 descendants of Yeriho (Jericho),
37 721 descendants of Lod, Hadid, and Ono,
38 and 3,930 descendants of Sena'ah.
39 The priests who returned:
973 descendants of Yedayah (a descendant of Yeshua),
40 1,052 descendants of Imer,
41 1,247 descendants of Pashhur,
42 and 1,017 descendants of Harim.
43 The Levites who returned:
74 descendants of Yeshua and Kadmiel (descendants of
Hodevah).
44 The singers:
148 descendants of Asaf.
45 The gatekeepers:
138 descendants of Shalum, Ater, Talmon, Akuv, Hatita, and
Shovay.
46 The temple servants:
the descendants of Tsiha, Hasufa, and Tabaeot,
47 the descendants of Keyros, Siea, and Padon,
48 the descendants of Levana, Hagava, and Shalmay,
49 the descendants of Hanan, Gidel, and Gahar,
50 the descendants of Reayah, Retsin, and Nekoda,
51 the descendants of Gazam, Uza, and Paseah,
52 the descendants of Besay, Meunim, and Nefisim,
53 the descendants of Bakbuk, Hakufa, and Harhur,
54 the descendants of Batslut, Mehida, and Harsha,
55 the descendants of Barkos, Sisera, and Temah,
56 and the descendants of Netsiah and Hatifa.
57 The descendants of Shelomoh's (Solomon's) servants who
returned:
the descendants of Sotay, Soferet, and Perida.
58 the descendants of Ya'ala, Darkon, and Gidel,
59 and the descendants of Shefatyah, Hatil, Pok-
eret-Hatsvayim, and Amon.
60 Altogether, there were 392 descendants of the temple
workers and conscripted labourers.
61 There were also some who returned from Tel-Melah,
Tel-Harsha, Keruv, Adan, and Imer, even though they
couldn't prove who their ancestors were, or even that they
were descendants of Israelis:
62 There were also 642 descendants of Delayah, Toviyah,
and Nekoda, 63 plus some priests:
the descendants of Havayah, Hakots, and Barzilay. (Barzilay
had married a descendant of a man named Barzilay from
Gilead, and had taken his wife's family name.)
64 They had search the genealogical records for their family
histories, but didn't find them, so they were ineligible to
serve as priests. 65 The governor had disallowed them from
eating the priests' food until a recognised priest could con-
sult the Urim and Tumim.[6]
66 Altogether, 42,360 people returned to Yehudah (Judah),
67 not counting their 7,337 male and female servants, and
245 male and female singers. 68 They had 736 horses, 245
mules, 69 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys. 70 Some of the lead-
ers of the ancestral clans gave to the work. The governor do-
nated 8kg of gold, 50 bowls, and 530 robes for the priests,
71 and some of the leaders donated 150kg of gold and 1,500kg
of silver. 72 The rest of the people donated 150kg of gold,
1,300kg of silver, and 67 robes for the priests.
73 So the priests and the Levites, the gatekeepers and the
singers, the temple workers and the rest of the Israelis, all
settled in their various ancestral cities.[7]

Ezra reads God's instructions to the people

8:1 All the people gathered together
in the plaza near the Water Gate and
asked Ezra the scribe to bring the
scroll with Yahweh's instructions to Yisrael (Israel) given
through Mosheh (Moses). 2 So it was the beginning of Octo-
ber when Ezra the priest brought the scroll to the gathering
of men and women and everyone who wanted to understand
it, 3 and he read it aloud in the plaza near the Water
Gate—reading from dawn until the middle of the day in front
of those men and women and interested people, who all lis-
tened intently.

6 **RV 7:65 · Cross-ref.** Exo 28:30; Deu 33:8.

7 **RV 7:73 · Cross-ref.** 1Ch 9:2; Neh 11:3.

Readers' Version

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a raised wooden platform that they had made especially for this purpose. Standing on his right were Matityah, Shema, Anayah, Uriyah, Hilkiyah, and Ma'aseyah, and on his left stood Pedayah, Mishael, Malkiyah, Hashum, Hashbadanah, Zekaryah (Zechariah), and Meshulam.

5 Up on the platform, Ezra opened the scroll in front of all the people, and as he did so, all the people stood up. 6 Ezra blessed the great God Yahweh and the people raised their arms and responded, "May it be so." Then they knelt down and bowed to Yahweh with their faces to the ground.

7 Then Yeshua, Bani, Shereveyah, Yamin, Akuv, Shabtay, Hodiyah, Ma'aseyah, Kelita, Azaryah, Yozavad, Hanan, Pelayah, who were all Levites, explained what had been read to the people standing there. 8 They read the scroll containing God's instructions, explaining how it applied so the people could understand it.

9 Then Nehemyah (Nehemiah) the governor and Ezra the priest & scribe, and the Levites who were explaining it, said to all the people, "Today is a sacred day—it belongs to your god Yahweh. Don't mourn or weep." That was because all the people were weeping after they heard Yahweh's instructions to them. 10 Then Nehemyah told them, "Go home and eat some special food with sweet drink, and share some with those who can't afford such things because today is a sacred day that belongs to our master. And don't grieve, because the happiness from Yahweh will make you all strong."

11 The Levites told the people to quieten down, saying, "Don't grieve today because it's a sacred day. Stay quiet." 12 So all the people went to eat and drink and to take plates of food to others, and to have a big celebration because they understood what had been read to them.

The celebration in shelters

13 The next day, all the clan leaders, and the priests and Levites, met with Ezra the scribe to study the instructions on the scroll. 14 They discovered that it was written in the instructions that Yahweh had given through Mosheh (Moses), that the Israelis should live in temporary shelters during the celebration in their seventh month (our September-October).[8] 15 They should publicly proclaim in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and in all their towns that the people should go into the hills and bring back branches from olive or wild olive trees, myrtle or palm trees, and/or other leafy trees to make shelters as it's written.

16 So the people went out and brought back branches to make shelters for themselves on their roofs or in their courtyards, or in the temple courtyard or in the plazas near the Water Gate and the Efrayim Gate. 17 Then the whole assembly of people who'd come back from captivity made shelters and lived in them for one week. The Israelis hadn't done that since the time of Yehoshua's (Joshua's) leadership, and they did it with a lot of celebration. 18 Ezra read aloud from the scroll of God's instructions each day of the seven days of celebration, then on the eighth day they all gathered together as per the instructions.

The people confess their sins

9:1 On the 24th of that month, the Israelis dressed in sackcloth, put dust on their heads, fasted, and gathered together. 2 Those of Jewish descent stood separately from the descendants of foreigners, and they confessed their own sins, as well as those of their ancestors. 3 They stood and listened to the scroll with Yahweh's instructions being read for three hours, then for another three hours they confessed and bowed down to Yahweh their god. 4 Then Yeshua went up the Levites' stairs with Bani, Kadmiel, Shevanyah, Buni, Shereveyah, another Bani, and Kenani, and they called out loudly to their god Yahweh.

5 Then some Levites (Yeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashavneyah, Shereveyah, Hodiyah, Shevanyah, and Petahyah) said, "Stand up and bless your eternal God Yahweh: May the peoples bless your wonderful reputation which is greater than anything else that we bless or praise. 6 Yahweh, you alone are God. You yourself made the heavens, the galaxies in the heavens and all their stars, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and all the stars bow down to you.

7 "You are Yahweh, the god who chose Avram. Then you brought him out from Ur in the Chaldean region, then you renamed him to Avraham (meaning 'father of many'). 8 You discovered that he was sincere and faithful to you, and made an agreement with him—to give the Kena'ani (Canaanite), Hiti, Amori, Perizi, Yevusi, and the Girgashi regions to his descendants,[9] and you have ensured that it's all come to be because you're righteous. 9 You noticed the suffering of our ancestors enslaved in Mitsrayim (Egypt), and then you heard their cry for help at the edge of the Red Sea.

10 "You displayed miracles to Par'oh (Pharaoh), and to all his servants and to all the Mitsri (Egyptian) people, because you knew that they were acting as if you weren't real, so you got yourself a reputation which you still have to this day.[10] 11 Then you split the sea open the sea right in front of their eyes, and they walked through the middle of it on dry land.[11] After that, you drowned their pursuers into the deep sea like a stone in a huge lake.[12] 12 You led them during the day with

8 **RV 8:14-15 · Cross-ref.** Lev 23:33-36,39-43; Deu 16:13-15.

9 **RV 9:8 · Cross-ref.** Gen 15:18-21.

10 **RV 9:10 · Cross-ref.** Exo 7:8–12:32.

11 **RV 9:11 · Cross-ref.** Exo 14:21-29.

12 **RV 9:11 · Cross-ref.** Exo 15:4-5.

a pillar of cloud, and during the night with a pillar of fire to illuminate the way that they should go.[13]

13 "Then you came down to Mt. Sinay and spoke with them
from the sky, and you gave to them principles of justice and
laws of truth—good statutes and instructions.[14] 14 You re-
vealed the concept of a rest day to them, and you gave them
rules and instructions and laws via your servant Mosheh
(Moses).
15 "You gave them bread from the sky when they were
hungry,[15] and you made water come out of a rock when they
were thirsty,[16] then eventually you told them to go ahead to
possess the land that you had said that you'd give to them.[17]
16 "But our ancestors were proud and stubborn and they
refused to obey your instructions.[18] 17 Not only did they
refuse to listen, they forgot about all the miracles that you'd
done for them and they became stubborn and appointed a
leader to take them back to their slavery. But you are a god of
forgiveness—gracious and compassionate, slow to get angry
and generously showing loyal affection, and you didn't aban-
don them.[19] 18 Even when they molded a metal calf for them-
selves and said, 'This is your god who brought you out of
Mitsrayim' (Egypt),[20] and they badly insulted you, 19 you
didn't abandon them in the wilderness because you're so
merciful. You didn't remove the pillar of cloud that led them
on the way during the day, or remove the pillar of fire that
shone at night for them to show them which way they
should go.[21] 20 You gave them your good spirit to give them
insight. You didn't withhold your manna for them to eat, and
you still gave them water to drink, 21 yes, you sustained
them in the wilderness for forty years—they had everything
they needed—their clothes didn't wear out, and their feet
didn't swell.
22 "Then you handed kingdoms and people groups over to
them, and you let them settle in even the far corners of the
regions. They took possession of the King Sihon's Heshbon
region, and King Og's Bashan region.[22] 23 You gave our ances-
tors lots of children so they were like the many stars in the
sky,[23] then you brought them into this land[24] which you'd
told their ancestors to enter and take ownership of. 24 Their
children went in and took over the land after you went
ahead of them and subdued the previous inhabitants, the
Kena'anim (Canaanites). You allowed them to defeat them
and their kings, and the people groups in the land—letting
them do whatever they wanted to do with them.[25] 25 They
captured fortified cities and productive land, and they took
over houses full of all good things, stone cisterns, vineyards
and olive orchards, and lots of fruit trees.[26] They ate and
were satisfied, and grew fat and enjoyed themselves as a re-
sult of your amazing goodness.
26 "But they disobeyed and rebelled against you, and they
turned their backs on your instructions.[27] They killed your
prophets who testified against them in order to bring them
back to you and they badly insulted you. 27 So you allowed
their enemies to harass and conquer them. Then in the time
of their distress, they cried out to you, and you yourself
heard from heaven. Because you're so merciful, you sent
saviours to them who rescued them from their enemies.
28 After they'd returned to an era of peace, they reverted to
doing evil again in front of you and you left them to submit
to their enemies and the oppression that followed. Then
they'd return and cry out to you, and you heard from heaven
and delivered them many times because you're merciful.
29 You showed them their errors so they'd return to follow-
ing your instructions, but instead they ignored you and
didn't obey your commands. They ignored your values which
would have helped them if they'd lived by them[28] and they
turned a stubborn shoulder, stiffened their necks, and re-
fused to listen. 30 Yet you put up with them for many years,
and you testified against them with your spirit through the
messages of your prophets, but they still didn't take any no-
tice, so you allowed the other people groups to conquer

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13 **RV 9:12 · Cross-ref.** Exo 13:21-22.
14 **RV 9:13-14 · Cross-ref.** Exo 19:18–23:33.
15 **RV 9:15 · Cross-ref.** Exo 16:4-15.
16 **RV 9:15 · Cross-ref.** Exo 17:1-7.
17 **RV 9:15 · Cross-ref.** Deu 1:21.
18 **RV 9:16-17 · Cross-ref.** Num 14:1-4; Deu 1:26-33.
19 **RV 9:17 · Cross-ref.** Exo 34:6; Num 14:18.
20 **RV 9:18 · Cross-ref.** Exo 32:1-4.
21 **RV 9:19-21 · Cross-ref.** Deu 8:2-4.
22 **RV 9:22 · Cross-ref.** Num 21:21-35.
23 **RV 9:23 · Cross-ref.** Gen 15:5; 22:17.
24 **RV 9:23 · Cross-ref.** Josh 3:14-17.
25 **RV 9:24 · Cross-ref.** Josh 11:23.
26 **RV 9:25 · Cross-ref.** Deu 6:10-11.
27 **RV 9:26-28 · Cross-ref.** Jdg 2:11-16.
28 **RV 9:29 · Cross-ref.** Lev 18:5.

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them.[29] 31 However, because you're so merciful, you didn't abandon them and you didn't wipe them out completely. Yes, you're a god who's gracious and merciful.

32 "So now God, our amazing, powerful, and awesome God who keeps his agreements due to his loyal commitment, don't just ignore all our current hardships affecting us, our kings and our leaders, our priests and our prophets, and our ancestors and all your people, from the period of the Assyrian kings until today.[30] 33 You are totally fair in allowing all that to happen to us, because you have behaved faithfully, but in contrast, we have behaved wickedly— 34 and our kings, our leaders, our priests, and our ancestors haven't obeyed your instructions and they haven't bothered with following your commands or taking notice of your complaints that you made know to them. 35 They served in their own kingdom and enjoyed the incredible goodness that you poured on them and the wide and prosperous land that you gave them, but they didn't serve you, and they didn't turn away from their evil actions.

36 "Take notice of us today—we're servants, and the land that you gave to our ancestors so we could eat its fruit and its produce, but look at us now—we're servants in our own land. 37 Now its plentiful produce belongs to the kings who you've placed over us due to our sins, and who rule over our bodies and over our livestock just however they want to, so we're terribly distressed.

38 "So now in all of this, we're faithfully making an agreement, and our leaders, our Levites, and our priests will even write it down on a document and sign it."

Signing the agreement

10:1 The ones who signed the document were:

Nehemyah (Nehemiah) the governor, Hakalyah's son, and Tsidkiyah (Zedekiah).

2 The priests who signed:
Serayah, Azaryah, and Yirmiyah (Jeremiah),
3 Pashhur, Amaryah, and Malkiyah,
4 Hatush, Shevanyah, and Malkiyah,
5 Harim, Meremot, and Ovadyah (Obadiah),
6 Daniyel, Gineton, and Baruk,
7 Meshulam, Aviyah, and Miyamin,
8 Ma'azyah, Bilgay, and Shemayah. (All priests.)

The Levites

9 The Levites who signed:
Azanyah's son Yeshua, Henadad's son Binuy, and Kadmiel,
10 their brothers Shevanyah, Hodiyah, Kelita, Pelayah, and Hanan,
11 Mika, Rehov, and Hashavyah,
12 Zakur, Shereveyah, and Shevanyah,
13 Hodiyah, Bani, and Beninu,

14 The leaders who signed:
Par'osh, Pahat-Moav, Eylam, Zatu, and Bani,
15 Buni, Azgad, and Bevay,
16 Adoniyah, Bigvay, and Adin,
17 Ater, Hizkiyah (Hezekiah), and Azur,
18 Hodiyah, Hashum, and Betsay,
19 Harif, Anatot, and Novay,
20 Magpiyeash, Meshulam, and Hezir,
21 Mesheyzavel, Tsadok, and Yadua,
22 Pelatyah, Hanan, and Anayah,
23 Hoshea, Hananyah, and Hashuv,
24 Halohesh, Pilha, and Shovek,
25 Rehum, Hashavnah, and Ma'aseyah,
26 Ahiyah, Hanan, and Anan,
27 Maluk, Harim, and Ba'anah.

The agreement

28 The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the gatekeepers, and all the people who were prepared to dedicate themselves to obeying God rather than the customs of the former inhabitants of the land, their wives, their sons and their daughters, and everyone who was old enough to understand, 29 were joining with their brothers, their leading citizens, and were committing to a promise which also had a curse: to obey God's instructions as given by God's servant Mosheh (Moses), and to keep and to do all the commands of Yahweh our master, accepting his judgements and his statutes.

30 They committed to not giving their daughters to the other people groups in the land, and to not taking their daughters for their sons.[31]

31 On the rest day or other holy day, we won't buy goods or grain from the peoples of the land (even if they bring it to sell it to us), and we won't plant or harvest,[32] or reclaim debts,[33] in the seventh year.

32 We will also pledge to each donate a week's wages each year to support the temple functions[34] 33 including the bread displayed in rows, the continual offering and the continual burnt offering, for the rest day offerings and the new moons, for the appointed times and for the holy things, for the sin offerings to cover over Yisrael's (Israel's) guilt, and for all the operation of God's residence.

34 Then we threw dice to choose from among the priests, the Levites, and the people to create the roster for bringing firewood to the temple as an offering to be used at the appointed times each year for burning on the altar of Yahweh

29 **RV 9:30 · Cross-ref.** 2Ki 17:13-18; 2Ch 36:15-16.

30 **RV 9:32 · Cross-ref.** 2Ki 15:19-29; 17:3-6; Ezr 4:2,10.

31 **RV 10:30 · Cross-ref.** Exo 34:16; Deu 7:3.

32 **RV 10:31 · Cross-ref.** Exo 23:10-11; Lev 25:1-7.

33 **RV 10:31 · Cross-ref.** Deu 15:1-2.

34 **RV 10:32 · Cross-ref.** Exo 30:11-16.

our god as written in the scrolls.

35 Every year we will also bring the early produce from our soil and the first harvest from every fruit tree to Yahweh's temple.[35] 36 We will dedicate our eldest male sons at the temple, and bring the eldest offspring of our herds and our flocks to the priests who serve at God's residence.[36]

37 We will bring our offerings and the first of our flour, and the fruit of every tree, wine, and oil, for the priests, to the temple storerooms, and a tenth of our produce for the Levites.

The Levites will be the ones receiving a tenth of our cash income in all the towns where we work.[37] 38 A priest who's a descendant of Aharon (Aaron) must be with them when they collect the tenths, then the Levites must take a tenth of that to the temple to be placed in their treasury rooms.[38] 39 The Israelis and the Levites must bring the offerings of grain, wine, and oil to the storerooms. There must also be utensils for the sanctuary and the priests, for the ones who are ministering and the gatekeepers, and for the singers.

We mustn't neglect our god's house.

The people living in Yerushalem

11:1 The people's leaders lived in Yerushalem (Jerusalem), but the rest of the people drew straws to select one out of ten families to reside in Yerushalem the holy city—the other nine settled in the towns, 2 then the people blessed the ones who'd freely offered to live there in Yerushalem. 3 In the towns in Yehudah (Judah), everyone lived on their own property. That included the Israelis, the priests and Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Shelomoh's (Solomon's) servants. The provincial officials lived in Yerushalem,[39] 4 as well as some of Yehudah's and Benyamin's descendants.

Yehudah's descendants in Yerushalem included:

Atayah (son of Uziyah, son of Zekaryah (Zechariah), son of Amaryah, son of Shefatyah, son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perets),

5 Ma'aseyah (son of Baruk, son of Kal-Hozeh, son of Hazayah, son of Adayah, son of Yoyariv, son of Zekaryah, son of Shiloni).

6 Altogether 468 strong men who were Perets' descendants lived in Yerushalem.

7 Benyamin's descendants in Yerushalem included:

Salu (son of Meshulam, son of Yoed, son of Pedayah, son of Kolayah, son of Ma'aseyah, son of Itiel, son of Yeshayah (Isaiah)).

8 Gabay and Salu.

A total of 928. 9 Zikri's son Yoel (Joel) was their overseer in the city, and Senuah's son Yehudah (Judah) was his second-in-command.

10 The priests in Yerushalem included:

Yoyariv's son Yedayah and Yakin,

11 Serayah (son of Hilkiyah, son of Meshulam, son of Tsadok, son of Merayot, son of Ahituv) who was the leader in the temple. 12 There were 822 of them when their brothers who work in the temple were included.

Adayah (son of Yeroham, son of Pelalyah, son of Amtsi, son of Zekaryah (Zechariah), son of Pashhur, son of Malkiyah). 13 There were 242 of them when their brothers and family heads were included.

Amashsay (son of Azarel, son of Ahzay, son of Meshilemot, son of Imer), 14 and his brothers who were strong warriors, came to a total of 128.

Haggedolim's son Zavdiyel was their overseer.

15 The Levites in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) included:

Shemayah (son of Hashuv, son of Azrikam, son of Hashavyah, son of Buni),

16 Shabtay and Yozavad from the Levite leaders who supervised the work outside the temple,

17 Matanyah (son of Mikah, son of Zavdi, son of Asaf) the leader who offered the thanksgiving prayer,

Bakbukyah who was the assistant leader, and Avda (son of Shamua, son of Galal, the son of Yedutun).

18 The total number of Levites in the sacred city were 284.

19 The gatekeepers in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) included:

Akuv, Talmon, and their brothers.

A total of 172.

20 The rest of Yisrael (Israel) and the other priests and Levites, all lived their ancestral towns across Yehudah (Judah). 21 The temple workers lived on Ofel hill, and Tsiha and Gishpa supervised them.

22 The overseer of the Levites in Yerushalem was Uzi (son of Bani, son of Hashavyah, son of Matanyah, son of Mika)—a descendant of Asaf's sons who were the temple singers 23 because the Persian king had ordered that the singers should have daily provisions supplied.

24 Petahyah (son of Mesheyzavel, from the sons of Zerah, the son of Yehudah) was the intermediary with the king for any matter that the people raised.

The people in other cities and towns

25 Most of Yehudah's (Judah's) descendants settled in the villages with their fields nearby: in Kiryat-Arba and the surrounding villages, in Divon and the surrounding villages, and in Yekavtse'el and the surrounding villages, 26 in Yeshua, in Moladah, and in Beyt-Pelet, 27 in Hatsar-Shual, and in Be'er-Sheva (Beersheba) and the surrounding villages, 28 in

35 **RV 10:35 · Cross-ref.** Exo 23:19; 34:26; Deu 26:2.

36 **RV 10:36 · Cross-ref.** Exo 13:2.

37 **RV 10:37 · Cross-ref.** Num 18:21.

38 **RV 10:38 · Cross-ref.** Num 18:26.

39 **RV 11:3-4 · Cross-ref.** Neh 7:73.

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Tsiklag, and in Mekonah and the surrounding villages, 29 in Eyn-Rimon, in Tsor'ah, and in Yarmut, 30 in Zanoah and Adulam and their villages, in Azekah and its villages. So they settled from Be'er-Sheva all the way to the Hinom valley.

31 Benyamin's descendants settled in Geva, Mikmas, Ayah, and Beyt-El (Bethel) and its villages, 32 in Anatot, Nov, and Anayah, 33 in Hatsor, Ramah, and Gitayim, 34 in Hadid, Tsevoim, and Nevalat, 35 in Lod, Ono, and in the Craftsmen's valley. 36 Also some Levites previously connected with Yehudah (Judah) settled in Benyamin.

The priests and Levites

12:1 These are the priests and the Levites who came back with Shealtiyel's son Zerubavel and with Yeshua:

Serayah, Yirmiyah (Jeremiah), and Ezra,
2 Amaryah, Maluk, and Hatush,
3 Shekanyah, Rehum, and Meremot,
4 Ido, Gineton, and Aviyah,
5 Miyamin, Moeadyah, and Bilgah,
6 Shemayah, Yoyariv, and Yedayah,
7 Salu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and another Yedayah.
Those were the leaders of the priests and their brothers in Yeshua's time.

8 The Levites were:

Yeshua, Binuy, Kadmiel, Shereveyah, Yehudah (Judah), and Matanyah who led the thanksgiving songs along with his brothers,
9 Bakbukyah and Uni—their brothers who stood opposite them in the services.

The high priest Yeshua's descendants

10 Yeshua fathered Yoyakim who then fathered Elyashiv, and Elyashiv fathered Yoyada. 11 Then Yoyada fathered Yonatan (Jonathan) who then fathered Yadua.

Leaders of priestly families

12 In Yoyakim's time, these were the heads of the priestly families:

Merayah was the head of Serayah's family,
Hananyah for Yirmiyah's (Jeremiah's),
13 Meshulam for Ezra's family,
Yehohanan for Amaryah's,
14 Yonatan (Jonathan) for Maluk's family,
Yosef (Joseph) for Shevanyah's,
15 Adna for Harim's family,
Helkay for Merayot's,
16 Zekaryah (Zechariah) for Ido's family,
Meshulam for Gineton's,
17 Zikri for Aviyah's family,
Piltay for Moeadyah's,
18 Shamua for Bilgah's family,
Yonatan (Jonathan) for Shemayah's,
19 Matenay for Yoyariv's family,
Uzi for Yedayah's,
20 Kalay for Salu's family,
Ever for Amok's,
21 Hashavyah for Hilkiyah's family,
and Netanel for Yedayah's.

The records of priests and Levites

22 In the days of Elyashiv, Yoyada, Yohanan, and Yadua, during the reign of Persian King Dareyavesh (Darius), the heads of the families of the Levites and priests were recorded. 23 The names of the descendants of Levi who were heads of families were written in the official history records up till the time of Elyashiv's son Yohanan.

Various helper roles in the temple

24 The Levites' leaders were Hashavyah, Shereveyah, and Kadmiel's son Yeshua with their brothers serving opposite them in each service to praise and give thanks as had been commanded by David, the man of God.

25 Matanyah, Bakbukyah, Ovadyah (Obadiah), Meshulam, Talmon, and Akuv were gatekeepers who stood guard at the storerooms near the temple gates.

26 That was at the time of Yoyakim (son of Yeshua, son of Yotsadak), and at the time of Nehemyah (Nehemiah) the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

The dedication of Yerushalem's wall

27 At the dedication of the wall around Yerushalem (Jerusalem), they summoned Levites from all over the region to come to Yerushalem to perform the dedication with rejoicing and thanksgiving, and with musical instruments and singing, 28 plus the next generation of singers came both from Yerushalem and its surrounds, and from the Netofati villages. 29 They also came from Beyt-Hagilgal, and from the fields of Geva and Azmavet, because the singers had built villages near Yerushalem to live in. 30 The priests and Levites held a purification ceremony for themselves, then they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

31 Then I assembled Yehudah's (Judah's) leaders together up on top of the wall, and I assigned them into two large groups who would give thanks as they walked around it.

The first group headed towards the Dung Gate on the right. 32 Hoshayah and half of Yehudah's officials were in that group 33 along with Azaryah, Ezra, and Meshulam, 34 Yehudah, Benyamin, Shemayah, and Yirmiyah (Jeremiah), 35 plus some of the next generation of priests with trumpets: Zekaryah (Zechariah) (son of Yonatan (Jonathan), son of Shemayah, son of Matanyah, son of Mikayah, son of Zakur, son of Asaf) 36 and his brothers Shemayah, Azarel, Milalay, Gilalay, Ma'ay, Netanel, Yehudah, and Hanani. They used the instruments as per the instructions of the late King David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe went in front of them.
37 When they got to the Fountain Gate, they went up the stairs at the City of David, and along the higher portion of the wall by David's palace as far as the Water Gate (on the east side of the city).

38 The other group giving thanks with the other half of the people went in the opposite direction around the top of the wall—going past the Ovens Tower to the wider part of the wall. 39 We passed Efrayim Gate, the Old Gate, Fish Gate, and

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Hananel Tower, the Hundred Tower, and all the way to the Sheep Gate, and we stopped at the Guard Gate.

40 Then both groups ended up at the temple and stood there. I was there with the half of the city officials who'd accompanied me, 41 as well as the priests with their trumpets: Elyakim, Ma'aseyah, Minyamin, Mikayah, Elyehoeynay, Zekaryah, Hananyah, 42 another Ma'aseyah, Shemayah, Eleazar, Uzi, Yehohanan, Malkiyah, Eylam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with their leader Yizrahyah.

43 Then that same day they offered many sacrifices, and they celebrated because God had made them very pleased. The women and children also celebrated, in fact the sound of the celebrations in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) was so loud that it can be heard far away.

Supporting the temple operation

44 Then still on that same day, men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the tithes and offerings. The percentages for the priests and the Levites were gathered from the fields around the cities as per the written law, because the people of Yehudah (Judah) were happy to have the priests and the Levites serving. 45 They served God with their daily duties and the purification ceremonies, as well as the duties of the singers[40] and gatekeepers[41]—all done according to the instructions left by King David and his son Shelomoh (Solomon), 46 because it was handed down from the original singers who sang songs of praise and thanksgiving to God in the time of David and Asaf. 47 In Zerubavel and Nehemyah's (Nehemiah's) times, all Yisrael (Israel) contributed the daily food allowance for the singers and gatekeepers. They also gave a percentage to the Levites who then gave a percentage of that to the priests (Aharon's (Aaron's) descendants).

Separating out the foreigners

13:1 That day, the Mosheh (Moses) scroll was read out aloud to the people, and it was discovered that it had been written that no Amoni or Moavi is ever allowed to join the congregation[42] 2 because instead of helping the travelling Israelis with food and water, they had hired Bil'am (Balaam) to curse them[43] (even though God had turned that curse into blessing). 3 After hearing that, they separated out all of the foreigners.

Nehemyah's reforms

4 Prior to that time, the high priest Elyashiv (closely related to Toviyah) had been in charge of the temple storerooms 5 and he'd allowed Toviyah to have a large room that had previously been used to store offerings: the frankincense, the utensils, and donated grain, wine, and oil, (the percentage commanded to be given to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers), and the offerings for the priests. 6 During all that period, I hadn't been in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) because I'd returned to the Babylonian king in the 32nd year of Artahshashta's (Artaxerxes') reign (Artaxerxes). However, after a while I requested leave again from the king 7 and I came back to Yerushalem. It was then that I discovered how evil Elyashiv had been by making a storeroom for Toviyah in the courtyards of God's residence. 8 It made me very upset and I threw everything of Toviyah's out of the room. 9 Then I ordered the storerooms to be purified by the priests before I returned the temple utensils to the room, along with the grain offerings and the incense.

10 I found out that the Levites and the singers weren't being given their percentage, so they'd left their duties and returned to cultivate their own fields.[44] 11 I made a complaint to the officials asking why the operation of the temple had been neglected, and then I rounded up the Levites and the singers and sent them back to their duties. 12 After that, the people of Yehudah (Judah) started bringing a tenth of their grain and wine and oil to the storerooms.[45] 13 I appointed book-keepers over the storerooms: the priest Shelemyah, the scribe Tsadok, and the Levite Pedayah with Hanan (the son of Zakur, the son of Matanyah) helping. They were all considered trustworthy, and their job included distributing the produce among their colleagues.

14 My god, remember me handling all these issues and don't wipe out my loyal kindness for your temple and its operation that I've shown.

The rest day

15 In those days I saw people in Yehudah (Judah) working on the rest day—treading wine, bringing in grain, and loading donkeys, yes, even bringing wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads into Yerushalem (Jerusalem) on the rest day. I complained to them when they were selling the goods.[46] 16 Also, people from Tsor (Tyre) were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and were selling it on the rest day to the Israelis, even in Yerushalem. 17 I rebuked the Yehudah business leaders, asking them, "What's this evil thing that you're all doing—profaning the rest day by treating it like a regular day? 18 Wasn't that what your ancestors did—the very reason our god brought all this evil on us and on this city? Now you're all making God angry with Yisrael (Israel) again by profaning the rest day."

19 So after that, when it started to get dark on Friday evenings, I ordered that the city gates be closed, and not to be opened until after the rest day. I also stationed some of

40 **RV 12:45 · Cross-ref.** 1Ch 25:1-8.

41 **RV 12:45 · Cross-ref.** 1Ch 26:12.

42 **RV 13:1-2 · Cross-ref.** Deu 23:3-5.

43 **RV 13:2 · Cross-ref.** Num 22:1-6.

44 **RV 13:10 · Cross-ref.** Deu 12:19.

45 **RV 13:12 · Cross-ref.** Mal 3:10.

46 **RV 13:15 · Cross-ref.** Exo 20:8-10; Deu 5:12-14; Jer 17:21-22.

my young men to stand at the gates to ensure that no load could enter on the rest day. **20** Some traders and merchants selling various goods camped outside the city walls once or twice, **21** but I warned them, "Why are you camping there outside the wall? If you do it again, I'll have you all removed." After that, they no longer came on the rest days. **22** Then I told the Levites that they should purify themselves and then come to the gates to monitor them on the rest day.

My god, remember me having to deal with this, and show your amazing loyal faithfulness towards me.

The scolding of marriage of foreigner

23 During that time, I also saw Yehudim (Jews) who'd married women from Ashdod, Amon, and Moav (Moab), **24** and half of their children spoke a foreign language from those other people groups and couldn't speak Hebrew. **25** So I scolded those men and cursed them and hit some of them and pulled out their hair. Then I forced them to promise in front on God that they wouldn't allow their daughters to marry foreign men, or their sons to take foreign wives. **26** I explained, "Didn't Yisrael's (Israel's) own King Shelomoh (Solomon) sin concerning that same matter? Among all the countries in the world, there wasn't any other king like, and he was loved by his god who'd placed him there as king over all Yisrael. But even then, the foreign women caused him to sin. **27** So do we need to hear about all of you doing this terrible evil of being unfaithful to God by marrying foreign wives?"

28 Also one of Yoyada's sons (grandson of the high priest Elyashiv) was a son-in-law of Sanvalat the Horoni,[47] so I banished him from my sight.

29 My god, remember them for bringing shame to the priesthood and dishonouring the vows made by the priests and the Levites.

30 Then I purified them from everything foreign, established regulations for each part of the work done by the priests and the Levites, **31** and organised the firewood supply at certain times, including for the first-fruits celebrations.

My god, remember me for good.

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47 RV 13:28 · Cross-ref. Neh 4:1.