

## Nehemiah 7:1-73 – More than a Wall Needed

Nehemiah 6:1 said that the wall had been built but that the doors in the gates had not yet been set up. Chapter 7 starts with stating that the doors had been set up. It takes more than a wall and doors to protect a city. Nehemiah's job was not yet done. The first 5 verses of Nehemiah are unique to the book of Nehemiah. The rest of the chapter is basically a repeat of Ezra 2:1-3:1. Some of the names are different, some of the numbers are different and the order is sometimes different. The passages are nearly the same. See the document "Comparison of Nehemiah 7 and Ezra 2".

### **Read Nehemiah 7:1-5.**

In verse 1, besides building the wall what else was accomplished under the leadership of Nehemiah? (7:1)

When did we first meet Hanani in the book of Nehemiah? What were Hananiah's qualifications for being put in charge of Jerusalem? Does it seem odd to you that two men were put in charge of Jerusalem? (7:2)

What were the duties of Hanani and Hananiah? Why was this important for the security of the city and its people? (7:3)

Why do you think there were few people who lived in Jerusalem at that time? ESV has "no houses had been rebuilt". Most versions have something similar to that. Does that mean that there were no livable houses within the walls of Jerusalem at the time? See Nehemiah 3:10,20-29. Some scholars believe that the meaning is "not enough houses had been rebuilt". (7:4)

In verse 5, what did Nehemiah do to solve the lack of population problem in Jerusalem? What motivated Nehemiah to do this? (7:5)

### **Read Nehemiah 7:6-72 on your own.**

Here are some highlights from our Ezra 2 study. The verse references have been changed to Nehemiah 7. There is an order to the list of names. First are family names in verses 8 through 25. Second are names of places in Judah found in verses 26 through 38. Notice that the first town mentioned is Bethlehem. Verses 39 through 42 have the family names

of the priests. All but Pashhur is found in the 24 priestly divisions of 1 Chronicles 24. The priests made up about one tenth of the total number of people who returned to Judah.

Verses 43 through 45 mention the Levites, the singers descended from Asaph and the gatekeepers. Note the very low number of Levites. The temple servants are mentioned in verses 46 through 56. The servants of Solomon are mentioned in verses 57 through 60. Verses 61-65 mentions groups of people who could not prove their genealogies. This was most important for those who claimed to be priests. They could not serve as priests if they could not establish that they were descended from Aaron. Verses 66-72 give totals of people and animals. Totals of the offerings were also recorded. The grand total for people and animals in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are exactly the same except for the number of singers.

Total number of assembly: 42,360

Servants: 7,337

Singers: 245 in Nehemiah and 200 in Ezra

Horses: 736

Mules: 245

Camels: 435

Donkeys 6,720

### **Read Nehemiah 7:73.**

Ezra 2:70-3:1 mentioned the seventh month. From Nehemiah 6:15 we learned that the wall was finished on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Elul. That was less than a week away from the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, Tishri. In verse 73 of Nehemiah 7, what month was it? God told Israel to observe the following days and feasts in the seventh month. On the first day was the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashana or the Jewish New Year). The Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the month. The Feast of Booths (Tabernacles / Sukkot) was a week long feast which started on the fifteenth day of the month. What did the first group of returned exiles do in the seventh month of their first year in Judah? See Ezra 3:1-6.

What were the returned exiles in Judah able to do that they were not able to do in their land of exile?

When we step back and look at the big picture of the exiles' return to Judah and Jerusalem, it prompts some questions. In Ezra 6 we learned that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple was built in 4 and a half years. It was finished about 22 years after the first group of exiles came to Judah and Jerusalem by decree of King Cyrus. Their primary directive was to build the temple. If that wasn't bad enough, the wall of Jerusalem laid in ruins for about 92 years from the time the first exiles returned until the wall was rebuilt under Nehemiah's leadership. The wall was rebuilt in 52 days. Why were the returned exiles so slow to rebuild Jerusalem? There is no record of any Persian King telling them to stop rebuilding efforts until the time of Xerxes I (Ezra 4:6). The period free from Persian interference covered the reigns of Cyrus II, Cambyses II and Darius I. That involved about 52 years of unfettered access to rebuild Jerusalem and yet the city was still largely in ruins at the end of that time. The scriptures contain examples to follow and also examples to avoid. Reflecting on the actions and attitudes of the returned exiles what bad examples should we avoid? What effect does discouragement have on people? What effect does fear tend to have on people's convictions?