

## Nehemiah 11:1-36 – Populating Jerusalem

Nehemiah 7:4 said that “the city was wide and large, but the people within it were few”. Chapter 11 picks up the idea that more people needed to live in Jerusalem. In the verses between 7:5 and 11:1, the record of the first exiles to return to Judah was given. Then came the feasts of the seventh month where the people heard the Word of God read and had it explained to them. This led to their worship of God and the confession of their sins and a vow to keep God’s commands, rules and statutes.

### **Read Nehemiah 11:1-2.**

Where did the leaders of the people live? The rest of the people lived in various other towns and the countryside within Judah. What did Nehemiah do in order to get more people to live in Jerusalem? It does not say it directly, but we assume that the selection was by family leaders. It would not make sense to break up families. (11:1)

Verse 2 mentions those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. Do you think that some were not happy about having to leave their farm land and live in the “big city”? This was the reverse of Green Acres. Why do you think some willingly went to live in Jerusalem? (11:2)

### **Read Nehemiah 11:3-6.**

Verse 3 implies that what follows is a list of the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem. There seems to be a parenthetical statement that reminds us that a variety of people still lived outside of Jerusalem in their towns and on their property. What two tribes were mentioned in verse 4? Athaiiah was traced back to Perez. Who was this Perez? The people of the tribe of Judah should have known who Perez was. (11:3-4)

In verse 5, some scholars believe that “Shilonite” is a reference to Judah’s youngest son, Shelah. There were 468 men from the sons of Perez. This seems to indicate that the lot did not separate family clans. What do you think happened to the land of the clans who moved to Jerusalem? (11:5-6)

Verses 7-9 mentioned the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin who moved to Jerusalem. No direct line was given back to Benjamin or one of his sons. In verse 8, ESV has “and his brothers, men of valor” while most other translations have “after him Gabbai and Sallai”. In verse 9, we don’t know exactly who these people were or what their specific duties were. (11:7-9)

**Read Nehemiah 11:10-14.**

These verses give the names of the priestly families that were in Jerusalem. Do you recognize any of the names? There were 1,192 priests in total. That is a lot of priests compared to the other numbers in this chapter. (11:10-14)

**Read Nehemiah 11:15-18.**

These verses give the names of the Levites who lived in Jerusalem. What were some of their duties? The number of Levites was 284 which was still well below the number of priests. (11:15-18)

**Read Nehemiah 11:19-21.**

Verse 19 ends the names of leading families who lived in Jerusalem. The gatekeepers were most likely temple gatekeepers and not gatekeepers of the outer wall of Jerusalem. Verse 20 mentioned that all other people lived outside of Jerusalem with the exception of the temple servants who lived on Ophel. Ophel was a hill between the Temple Mount and the City of David. The City of David was the southern part of Jerusalem. The Temple Mount was in the northeast corner of Jerusalem. (11:19-21)

**Read Nehemiah 11:22-24.**

The singers were descended from Asaph. From verses 22-23, what was true of the singers? Verse 24 mentioned a person who was "at the king's side". Some people think that Ezra previously held this position before going to Jerusalem. This person may have given the Persian king advice about the affairs of Judah. (11:22-24)

**Read Nehemiah 11:25-36.**

Verses 25-35 mention some of the villages occupied by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Some of the cities were Levitical cities. Some of the towns may have been outside of the Persian boundaries for Judah. Ono was in neutral territory but a number of Jews may have lived there. Which town names do you recognize? This was not an exhaustive list. (11:25-35)

Why did some Levites in Judah need to be assigned to Benjamin? (11:36)