

Nehemiah

1 ¹ This is the account of Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah. In the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was in the fortress at Susa. ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men. I asked them about the remnant of the Jewish exiles who had returned from captivity, and also about Jerusalem.

³ They told me, “The remnant who are left from the exile are there in the province, but they are having a great deal of trouble and feel humiliated. Jerusalem's walls have been knocked over, and its gates burned down.”

⁴ When I heard the news, I sat down, weeping and mourning for days, fasting and praying to the God of heaven.

⁵ Then I prayed, “Please, Lord God of heaven—the great and awesome God who keeps his agreement of trustworthy love with those who love him and keep his commandments— ⁶ please listen and focus your attention on the prayer of your servant that I am praying to you now, day and night, on behalf of your servants, the Israelites. I confess the sins that we Israelites have committed against you, including my own sins and those of my family. ⁷ We have done terrible things to offend you and we have not kept the commandments, laws, and regulations that you gave to your servant Moses.

⁸ Please remember what you told Moses when you said, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but if you come back to me and follow my commandments and obey them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will gather them together and bring them to the place I have chosen where I will be honored.

¹⁰ They are your servants and our people. You saved them by your great power and incredible ability. ¹¹ Lord, please respond to my prayer and to the prayers of those who love to worship you. Please let me be successful today and make the king sympathetic to me.” I was the king's cupbearer.

2 ¹ In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, when the wine was brought in for him, I picked it up and

gave it to the king. I had never before appeared before him looking sad,² so the king asked me, “Why are you looking so sad, even though you don't seem to sick? You must be really upset.” I was absolutely terrified,³ but I replied to the king, “Long live the king live! How can I help being sad? The city where my forefathers are buried is in ruins, and its gates have been burned down.”

⁴“So what do you want?” the king asked me.

I prayed to the God of heaven,^a and answered the king,⁵ “If it pleases Your Majesty, and if you are happy with me, I request you send me to Judah, to the city where my forefathers are buried, so I can rebuild it.”

⁶The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you come back?” The king agreed to send me, and I told him how long I would be gone.

⁷I also asked him, “If it pleases Your Majesty, let letters be provided to give to the governors west of the Euphrates, so that they will allow me to pass safely until I reach Judah.⁸ May I also have a letter for Asaph, warden of the king's forest, so he can give me timber to make beams for the gates of Temple fortress, for the city walls, and for the house I will live in.” Because my gracious God was upon me, the king gave me what I asked.

⁹Then I went to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king also sent a military escort of cavalry with me.¹⁰ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were upset. For them this was a total disaster—that someone had arrived to help out the Israelites.

¹¹I arrived in Jerusalem and rested for three days.¹² Then I got up during the night and went out with just a few men. I didn't explain to anyone what my God had put in my head to do for Jerusalem. I only took one horse to ride.^b¹³ So I rode in the dark through the Valley Gate toward the Spring of the Serpent and the Refuse Gate, and I inspected Jerusalem's walls that had been knocked over and the gates that had been burned down.¹⁴ Then I continued on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but we couldn't get through as

^a2:4. Clearly an unspoken prayer.

^b2:12. In other words he was keeping his mission as quiet as possible and minimizing any noise from his group.

there wasn't enough room to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up along the valley in the dark and inspected the wall. Then I returned, going back through the Valley Gate.

¹⁶ Those in charge of the city had no idea where I had gone or what I was doing, because I hadn't yet told the Jews, priests, nobles, or officials or any others about the construction plans.^c

¹⁷ Then I said to them, “Look at the trouble we're in! Jerusalem is a heap of rubble, and its gates have been burned down. Come on, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we won't be so ashamed any more.” ¹⁸ Then I explained to them how good God had been to me, and what the king had told me.

“Let's get on with the rebuilding,” they replied, and they set to work enthusiastically.^d

¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab got to hear about it, they mocked and taunted us, asking, “What are you up to? Are you rebelling against the king?”

²⁰ But I replied, telling them, “The God of heaven, he will make sure we're successful. We, his servants, will begin rebuilding, but Jerusalem doesn't belong to you, and you have no authority over it or claim to it.”

3 ¹ Eliashib the high priest and other priests with him began rebuilding at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors. Then they continued building as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel and dedicated it. ² The men of Jericho built the section next to Eliashib, and Zaccur, son of Imri, built the one after.

³ The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and set up its doors, together with its bolts and bars.

⁴ The next section was repaired by Meremoth, son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz; next to him, was Meshullam, son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel; and next to him, Zadok, son of Baana. ⁵ Next were the Tekoites, but their nobles refused to do manual work under a supervisor.

⁶ The Old Gate was repaired by Joiada, son of Paseah and Meshullam, son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and set up its

^c2:16. “Construction plans”: literally, “doers of the work.”

^d2:18. “They set to work enthusiastically”: literally, “they strengthened their hands for the good.”

doors, together with its bolts and bars. ⁷Next were Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, who were under the jurisdiction of the governor of the province west of the Euphrates.

⁸Next was Uzziel, son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths; and next to him was Hananiah, son of the perfumer. They strengthened Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹Next was Rephaiah, son of Hur, ruler of a Jerusalem half-district.^e ¹⁰Next was Jedaiah, son of Harumaph, who made repairs opposite his house. Next was Hattush, son of Hashabneiah. ¹¹Malchijah, son of Harim, and Hasshub, son of Pahath-moab, worked on another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. ¹²Next was Shallum, son of Hallohesh, ruler of a Jerusalem half-district, helped by his daughters.

¹³The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the people who lived in Zanoah. They rebuilt it, set up its doors, together with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall up to the Refuse Gate. ¹⁴The Refuse Gate was repaired by Malchijah, son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, He rebuilt it and set up its doors, together with its bolts and bars.

¹⁵The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun, son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the Mizpah district. He rebuilt it, put a roof on it, set up its doors, together with its bolts and bars. He rebuilt the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the king's garden, as far as the steps that go down from the City of David. ¹⁶Past him, Nehemiah, son of Azbuk, ruler of a Beth-zur half-district, repaired up to a point opposite David's cemetery, as far as the man-made pool and the House of the Mighty Warriors.

¹⁷Next were the Levites under Rehum son of Bani, and next was Hashabiah, ruler of Keilah half-district, who made repairs on behalf of his district. ¹⁸Next to them were their neighbors under Binnui,^f son of Henadad, ruler of the other Keilah half-district. ¹⁹Next was Ezer, son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, who repaired another section opposite Armory Hill, where the wall turns. ²⁰Next was Baruch, son of Zabbai, who worked hard repairing another section, from where the wall turns to the entrance of Eliashib the high priest's house. ²¹Next was Meremoth, son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, who repaired

^e3:9. Thought to be an area outside of the city.

^f3:18. "Binnui": the text says "Bannai."

another section, from the entrance of Eliashib the high priest's house to its end.

²² Next were the priests from the area around made repairs. ²³ Past them were Benjamin and Hasshub who made repairs in front of their house, and next to them, Azariah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. ²⁴ Next was Binnui, son of Henadad, who repaired another section, from Azariah's house to where the wall turns and the corner. ²⁵ Palal, son of Uzai, worked opposite where the wall turns and the tower that extends from the upper palace, near the court of the guard. Next were Pedaiah, son of Parosh ²⁶ and the Temple servants that lived on the hill of Ophel who made repairs opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the tower that extends. ²⁷ Next were the Tekoites who repaired to another section opposite the great tower that extends to the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ Above the Horse Gate, each of the priests made repairs opposite his own house. ²⁹ Next was Zadok, son of Immer, who worked opposite his house, and next was Shemaiah, son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate. ³⁰ Next were Hananiah, son of Shelemiah, as well as Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, who repaired. Next was Meshullam, son of Berechiah, who made repairs opposite where he lived. ³¹ Next was Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the Temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner. ³² The goldsmiths and merchants made repairs between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate,

4 ¹ When Sanballat found out that we were rebuilding the wall, he was furious—really mad! He made fun of the Jews ² in front of his colleagues and the army of Samaria, saying, “What are these useless Jews trying to achieve? Do they think they can rebuild the wall? Are they going to offer sacrifices? Are they going to finish it in a day? Do they think they can re-use stones from piles of rubble and dirt, especially since they've all been burned?”

³ Tobiah the Ammonite, standing beside him, commented, “Even a fox walking on what they're building would knock down their wall of stones!”

⁴ I prayed, “Lord, please listen to us, because we are being treated with contempt. Rain down their insults on their own heads! Let them be taken away like plunder, prisoners in a foreign land! ⁵ Don't

forgive their guilt or blot out their sins, for they have made you angry in front of the builders.”^g

⁶ So we rebuilt the wall until it was all connected, reaching half its height, because the people were keen to work.

⁷ When Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, heard that the repair to the walls of Jerusalem was progressing and that the gaps were being filled in, they were furious.

⁸ They all plotted together to come and attack Jerusalem and to throw everything into confusion. ⁹ So we prayed to our God, and we had guards ready to defend against them day and night.

¹⁰ Then people of Judah started grumbling, saying, “The workmen are exhausted. There's just too much rubble to clear. We'll never be able to finish the wall.”

¹¹ Our enemies were saying to themselves, “Before they know it, before they're aware of anything, we'll appear right in among them, kill them, and put a stop to what they're doing.”

¹² The Jews who lived close by came and told us over and over again, “They're going to attack us from all directions!”^h ¹³ So I positioned defenders behind the lowest, most vulnerable sections, of the wall. I had them take their positions by families, armed with their swords, spears, and bows.

¹⁴ After inspecting our defenses, I stood up and addressed the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, saying, “Don't be afraid of them! Remember the Lord, who is powerful and formidable! Fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes!”

¹⁵ When our enemies discovered that we knew about their plan, and that God had foiled it, we all went back to our work on the wall.

¹⁶ From then on, half of my men were doing the work while the other half were ready to fight, holding their spears, shields, bows, and armor. The leaders stood behind all the people of Judah ¹⁷ who were building the wall. Those carrying materials worked with one hand, holding a weapon in the other. ¹⁸ All the builders carried a sword strapped to their side, and the trumpeter stood beside me.ⁱ

^g4:5. “For they have made you angry in front of the builders”: or, “for they have provoked the builders.”

^h4:12. Presumed meaning, the Hebrew is obscure.

ⁱ4:18. To provide warning on an attack.

¹⁹ Then I told the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people: “We have a lot to do everywhere, so we’re very spread out along the wall. ²⁰ Wherever you are and you hear the sound of the trumpet, run to join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

²¹ We went on working, with half of the men holding spears from dawn until the stars came out. ²² I also told the people, “Everyone including servants must spend the night inside Jerusalem, so they can be on guard duty at night and work during the day.” ²³ During that time none of us changed our clothes—not me or my brothers or my men or the guards with me. Everyone carried their weapons at all times, even to go for water.^j

5 ¹ Around this time some people and their wives started a tremendous argument with the other Jews. ² They were complaining, “Our families are so large we need more food^k so we can eat and live.” ³ Others added, “We’ve had to mortgage our fields, our vineyards, and our homes to buy food during the famine.” ⁴ Still more said, “We’ve had to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king’s tax. ⁵ Even though we are the same people as our creditors and though our children are the same as their children, yet we going to have to turn our sons and daughters into slaves. In fact some of our daughters have already been enslaved,¹ but we can’t do anything about it, because our fields and our vineyards are now owned by others.”

⁶ I became very angry when I heard them protesting their grievances. ⁷ I thought it over and then I went to argue with the nobles and officials, telling them, “You are charging your own brothers interest!” So I called a large meeting to deal with them.

⁸ There I told them, “We have done as much as we can to buy back our Jewish brothers who were sold to foreigners, but now you are selling your own brothers as slaves! Are you expecting to sell them back to us?” They kept quiet because they couldn’t think of anything to say.

^j4:23. “Everyone carried their weapons at all times, even to go for water.” The Hebrew is unclear. Literally it reads “each his weapon the water.”

^k5:2. “Food”: literally, “grain.”

¹5:5. Girls that were sold could be taken as a wife by the buyer or for one of his sons.

⁹“What you're doing isn't right,” I told them. “Don't you think you should respect our God so that enemy nations don't criticize us? ¹⁰ I, as well as my brothers and my men have been lending the people money and food. Please, let's stop this business of charging interest! ¹¹ Give them back right now their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses, along with the one percent interest on the money, grain, new wine, and olive oil that you have been charging them.”

¹²“We will give it back,” they replied, “and we won't demand anything more from them. We'll do as you say.” So I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials swear an oath that they'd do what they had promised.

¹³ I shook out the folds of my robe and said, “This is how my God will shake you out of your homes and out of your possessions if you don't keep your promise! If you don't, you'll be shaken out and end up with nothing!” Everyone there said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. The people did what they'd promised.

¹⁴ In addition to this, from the day King Artaxerxes appointed me as governor in the land of Judah, which was from his twentieth year until his thirty-second year, a total of twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food which was allocated to the governor. ¹⁵ But the governors before me had placed a heavy burden on the people, taking forty shekels of silver from them as well as food and wine. Their assistants also extorted the people. But because of my respect for God I didn't act like that.

¹⁶ I also made rebuilding the wall my top priority, and I assigned all my workers to help with that. We didn't acquire any land for ourselves. ¹⁷ I had 150 Jews and officials eating at my table, as well as visitors from nearby countries. ¹⁸ Every day I paid for one ox, six good sheep, and poultry. Every ten days I paid for a large supply of all kinds of wine. But I never demanded the governor's food allowance, because the people were already carrying a heavy burden. ¹⁹ Please remember me positively, my God, for all that I've done for this people.

6¹ When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and our other enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and there were no gaps left—though at that time I still had not put the doors into the gates—² they sent a message to me, saying, “Come on, let's meet in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.” But they intended to kill me.

³ So I sent messengers to tell them, “I’m busy with important work and I can’t come down. Why should I stop what I’m doing and leave it to come and see you?”

⁴ They sent me the same message four times, and every time my reply was the same.

⁵ Sanballat sent me the same message the fifth time by his servant, who brought in his hand an open letter. ⁶ The letter read: “People around are saying, and Geshem confirms it, that you and the Jews are planning a rebellion, and that’s why you’re building the wall. You also plan to become their king, so they say, ⁷ and you have even arranged for prophets in Jerusalem to announce for you, ‘There is a king in Judah.’ The king^m will soon get to hear about this. So come, and let’s talk this over.”

⁸ I replied, telling him, “Nothing’s happening like you’re saying! In fact you’re just making it all up!”

⁹ They were all just trying to scare us, telling themselves, “They won’t have the strength to work so it won’t ever get finished.” But I prayed, now make me strong!

¹⁰ Later on, I went to Shemaiah’s house (he was the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel) who had shut himself in his house.ⁿ He said: “Come and meet me at the house of God inside the Temple. Then we can bolt the Temple doors shut because they are coming to kill you! They’re coming to kill you tonight!”

¹¹ I replied, “Should someone like me run away? Should someone like me go and hide in the Temple so I can survive?^o I’m not going!”

¹² I thought about it and saw that God hadn’t sent him, but that he had spoken this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ They’d hired him thinking I’d be scared into doing something wrong. Then they’d be able to point the finger and ruin my reputation. ¹⁴ My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat for doing this, and Noadiah the prophetess and the other prophets too who tried to frighten me.

¹⁵ The wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul. It took fifty-two days. ¹⁶ When all our enemies found out they were

^m6:7. Referring to the Persian king.

ⁿ6:10. “Shut himself in his house”: evidently the scare tactics had worked, or Shemaiah pretended they had.

^o6:11. Nehemiah could not lawfully enter the Temple as he was not a priest.

frightened; all the nations around were very discouraged, for they recognized that this had been done by our God.

¹⁷ At that time the nobles of Judah were exchanging many letters with Tobiah, ¹⁸ because many people in Judah had sworn an oath of loyalty to him as he was a son-in-law of Shecaniah, son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of Meshullam, son of Berechiah. ¹⁹ They kept on telling me all the good things Tobiah was doing, and they reported to him what I said. Tobiah also sent letters to try and scare me.

7 ¹ Once the wall had been rebuilt and I had put up the doors, I appointed the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites. ² I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem, together with Hananiah the commander of the fortress, because he was an honest man who respected God more than many others.

³ I told them, “Don't allow the gates of Jerusalem to be opened until the sun is hot,^p and make sure the guards shut and bolt the doors while they're still on duty. Appoint some of the residents of Jerusalem as guards, to be at their posts, standing in front of their own houses.”

⁴ In those times the city was large with plenty of space, but there weren't many people in it, and the houses hadn't been rebuilt. ⁵ My God encouraged me to have everyone—the nobles, the officials, and the people—all come to be registered according to their family genealogy. I found the genealogical register of those who had returned first. This what I discovered written there.

⁶ This is a list of the people of the province who returned from the captivity. These were the exiles who had been taken away to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, to their home towns. ⁷ They were led by Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

This is the number of men of the people of Israel:^q ⁸ The sons of Parosh, 2,172; ⁹ the sons of Shephatiah, 372; ¹⁰ the sons of Arah,

P7:3. This phrase could also be translated, “Don't allow the gates of Jerusalem to be opened when the sun is hot,” meaning during the time after lunch when the guards might be lax in their duties.

97:7. This list is similar to that found in Ezra 2, with some differences in spelling, order, and number.

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

³⁹ This is the number of the priests: the sons of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua), 973; ⁴⁰ the sons of Immer, 1,052; ⁴¹ the sons of Pashhur, 1,247; ⁴² the sons of Harim, 1,017.

⁴³ This is the number of the Levites: the sons of Jeshua through Kadmiel (sons of Hodaviah), 74; ⁴⁴ the singers of the sons of Asaph, 148; ⁴⁵ the gatekeepers of the families of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, 138.

⁴⁶ The descendants of these Temple servants: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁷ Keros, Sia, Padon, ⁴⁸ Lebanah, Hagabah, Shalmal, ⁴⁹ Hanan, Giddel, Gahar, ⁵⁰ Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda, ⁵¹ Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah, ⁵² Besai, Meunim, Nephusim, ⁵³ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵⁴ Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵⁵ Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁶ Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁷ The descendants of King Solomon's servants: Sotai, Sophereth, Perida, ⁵⁸ Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁹ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Amon. ⁶⁰ The total of the Temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants was 392.

⁶¹ Those who came from the towns of Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Kerub, Addan, and Immer could not prove their family genealogy, or even that they were descendants of Israel. ⁶² They included the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, 642 in total.

⁶³ In addition there three priestly families, sons of Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai. (Barzillai had married a woman descended

from Barzillai of Gilead, and he was called by that name.)⁶⁴ They searched for a record of them in the genealogies, but their names weren't found, so they were barred from serving as priests.⁶⁵ The governor instructed them not to eat anything from the sanctuary sacrifices until a priest could ask the Lord about the issue by using the Urim and Thummim.

⁶⁶ The total of number of people returning was 42,360. ⁶⁷ In addition there were 7,337 servants and 245 male and female singers. ⁶⁸ They had 736 horses, 245 mules,^r ⁶⁹ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁷⁰ Some of the family leaders made voluntary contributions toward the work. The governor presented to the treasury 1,000 gold darics, 50 bowls and 530^s sets of clothes for the priests. ⁷¹ Some of the family leaders donated to the treasury for the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. ⁷² The rest of the people donated 20,000 gold darics, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 sets of clothes for the priests.

⁷³ The priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, and Temple servants, as well as some of the people and the rest of the Israelites, went back to live in their specific towns. By the seventh month the Israelites were living in their towns,

8¹ and the people gathered together as one in the square beside the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe^t to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had ordered Israel to follow.

² On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly—men and women, and all those children who could listen and understand. ³ He read from it in front of the square before the Water Gate from early morning till noon to everyone there, the men and the women and those who could understand. All the people listened carefully to the Book of the Law.

⁴ Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden stage built for this event. On his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, and on his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum,

^r7:68. Most Hebrew manuscripts are missing this verse.

^s7:70. Some believe that originally the text read “30 sets of clothes for the priests and 500 minas of silver.”

^t8:1. “Scribe”: as elsewhere in Scripture, a scribe is not merely someone who can write, but a teacher, particularly of God's Law.

Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. ⁵ Ezra opened the book while they were all watching because the whole crowd could see him. When he opened it they all stood up.

⁶ Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and everyone answered, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted up their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

⁷ Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, who were the Levites present, explained the Law to the people as they remained standing there. ⁸ They read from the Book of the Law of God, making clear the meaning so that the people could understand what it said.^u

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were teaching the people told them all, “This is a holy day to the Lord your God. Don't mourn or cry,” for everyone was crying as they heard the Law being read.

¹⁰ Nehemiah went on, “Go and enjoy some good food and sweet drinks, and share some with those who don't have anything ready, because today is a special, holy day to our Lord. Don't be sad, for your strength comes from the Lord who makes you happy.”

¹¹ The Levites too were quieting everyone down, telling them, “Don't cry! This is a holy day and you shouldn't be sad.”

¹² Then everyone went away to eat and drink, and to share their food. They celebrated happily because now they understood the Law as it had been explained to them.

¹³ The next day family leaders of all the people, as well as the priests and Levites, joined with Ezra the scribe to study the Law in more depth. ¹⁴ They discovered written in the Law the Lord had ordered to be observed through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in shelters during the festival of the seventh month. ¹⁵ They were to make an announcement in all their towns and in Jerusalem, saying, “Go into the hills and bring back branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees, to make shelters to live in, as the Law requires.”^v

^u**8:8.** Not only was a theological interpretation needed, but since many present had become more accustomed to speaking Aramaic in Babylon, there needed to be a translation from the Hebrew in which the Book was written.

^v**8:15.** This is not a direct Scriptural quotation but a summary of the requirements.

¹⁶ So they went out and brought back branches and made shelters for themselves on the roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of God's Temple, and in the squares near the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate. ¹⁷ Everyone who came back from exile made shelters and stayed in them. They had not celebrated like this since the time of Joshua, son of Nun. Everyone was very happy.

¹⁸ Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God every day, from the first day to the last. The Israelites observed the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day they met together in assembly, as the Law required.

9 ¹ On the twenty-fourth day of this same month, the Israelites met together, fasting and wearing sackcloth, with dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite ancestry separated themselves from the foreigners, and stood to confess their sins and those of their forefathers. ³ They spent three hours^w standing there reading the Book of the Law of the Lord their God, and another three hours confessing their sins and worshiping the Lord their God. ⁴ The Levites stood on the stage and called out loudly to the Lord their God. (Their names were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani.)

⁵ Then the Levites announced: “Stand up and praise the Lord your God who lives eternally: ‘May who you are and your glory be blessed, and may you be lifted up above all blessing and praise.’” (The names of the Levites were Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah.)

⁶ They prayed, “Only you are the Lord. It was you who made the sky, the heavens with all their stars, the land and everything on it, the seas and everything in them. You give life to all of them, and all the heavenly beings worship you.

⁷ You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram, who led him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. ⁸ You knew he would be faithful to you, and made an agreement with him to give him and his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites. You kept your promise, because you do what is right.

⁹ You saw how much our forefathers were suffering in Egypt. You heard their cries for help at the Red Sea. ¹⁰ You performed

^w9:3. “Three hours”: literally, “a quarter of a day.”

miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, all his officials, and all his people of his land, for you recognized how arrogantly they treated our forefathers. You created a wonderful reputation for yourself that people still recognize to this day. ¹¹ You split the sea apart in front of them so that they could walk through it on dry ground. But you threw their pursuers into the depths of the sea, like stones thrown into raging waters.

¹² You led them with a column of cloud during the day, and a column of fire at night, showing them the way which they should go. ¹³ You descended on Mount Sinai. You spoke to them from heaven. You gave them right ways to live, true laws, and good regulations and commandments. ¹⁴ You explained your holy Sabbath to them. You gave them commandments and regulations and laws through your servant Moses. ¹⁵ When they were hungry you gave them bread from heaven, and when they were thirsty you brought water out of the rock for them. You told them to go and take ownership of the land which you had sworn to give them.

¹⁶ But they^x and our forefathers acted arrogantly and became stubborn, and didn't pay attention to your commands. ¹⁷ They refused to listen to you, and forgot about all the miracles you did for them. They became obstinate and decided to choose themselves a leader to take them back to slavery in Egypt.^y

But you are a forgiving God, gracious and merciful, slow to get angry, and full of trustworthy love. You did not give up on them, ¹⁸ even when they made themselves a metal calf and said, 'This is your god who led you out of Egypt,' and committed terrible blasphemies.

¹⁹ But you because you are so merciful didn't abandon them in the desert. The column of cloud didn't stop guiding them during the day, and the column of fire continued to light their way at night. ²⁰ You gave your good Spirit to teach them. You did not stop feeding them with your manna, and you gave them water when they were thirsty.

^x9:16. "But they": the structure of this passage centers around the alternating actions of God's people (but they) and God (but you). This translation has attempted to preserve this format, and ensure that the relevant paragraphs begin with these contrasting elements.

^y9:17. "In Egypt": Septuagint and some Hebrew manuscripts. Most Hebrew manuscripts read "in rebellion." See Numbers 14:4.

²¹ You took care of them for forty years in the desert. Their clothes didn't wear out, they didn't want for anything. Their feet didn't even swell up!

²² You gave them kingdoms and nations; you assigned their borders. They took control of the land of Sihon, king of Heshbon, and of Og, king of Bashan. ²³ You made their descendants as countless as the stars of heaven, and led them to the land you had promised their fathers they would enter and possess. ²⁴ Their descendants went in and took over the land. Right in front of them you conquered the Canaanites who lived there, handing over their kings and people so they could do with them whatever they wanted. ²⁵ They captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took over houses full of valuable things, water cisterns, vineyards, olive groves, and many fruit trees. They ate until they were full, and grew fat. They were so happy at how good you were to them.

²⁶ But they completely rebelled^z against you. They tossed your Law over their shoulders. They killed your prophets who warned them to try and bring them back to you, and they committed terrible blasphemies. ²⁷ So you handed them over to their enemies who treated them badly. In their suffering they cried out to you for help.

But you heard their cries from heaven, and because you're so merciful you sent them leaders^a to save them from their enemies.

²⁸ However, as soon as they had peace, they went back to doing evil in your sight. So once more you handed them over to their enemies, who dominated them. They came back to you, and they cried out to you again.

But you heard from heaven once more, and you saved them time and again because you are so merciful. ²⁹ You warned them to come back to your Law, but they were arrogant. They ignored your commands, and sinned against your rules, which, as you previously said,^b 'If people obey they will live by them.' They obstinately turned their backs on you and refused to listen. ³⁰ You were patient with them for many years. You warned them by your Spirit through

^z9:26. "But they completely rebelled": literally, "But they rebelled and were rebellious." The repetition of the term intensifies the extent of rebellion.

^a9:27. "Leaders": literally, "saviors."

^b9:29. "As you previously said": supplied for clarification. See Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 4:1; Deuteronomy 30:16.

your prophets, but they didn't listen, so you handed them over to the other nations. ³¹ But because of your wonderful mercy you did not finish with them, and you did not abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² So now, our God, the great and powerful and awesome God who keeps his agreement of trustworthy love, please don't see as unimportant all the hardships that have happened to us, and to our kings and leaders, our priests and prophets, our forefather and all your people, from the time of the Assyrian kings of Assyria up till now.

³³ But you have done what is right regarding everything that has happened to us. You have always acted faithfully, while we have done so much evil. ³⁴ Our kings, our leaders, our priests, and our forefathers did not follow your Law, and they ignored your commands and regulations you ordered them to keep.

³⁵ But they, even during the time they had their own kingdom, with so many blessings you had given them in the wide and fertile land you had provided for them, even then they refused to serve you and would not turn from their evil ways.

³⁶ Look at us now, slaves in the land you gave our forefathers to enjoy its fruit and all its good things. Look at us slaves here! ³⁷ The rich harvests of this land go to the kings you have placed over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and our cattle, doing whatever they want. We are suffering so much!”

³⁸ In response the people declared,^c “Considering all this, we are making a solemn agreement, putting it in writing. It is sealed by our leaders, Levites, and priests.”

10 ¹ The document was sealed by: Nehemiah the governor, son of Hacaliah.

² Zedekiah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, ⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, ⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the priests.

⁹ The Levites: Jeshua, son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel, ¹⁰ and these other Levites: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiiah, Hanan, ¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³ Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

^c9:38. “In response the people declared”: supplied for clarity.

¹⁴ The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, ¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, ¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, ²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, ²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, ²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, ²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, ²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, ²⁷ Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

²⁸ The rest of the people, including the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, and Temple servants, and everyone who had separated themselves from the people of the land^d to keep the Law of God, as well as their wives and all their sons and daughters who were old enough to understand, ²⁹ joined the leaders in swearing an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God, to pay attention to and carry out all the commands of the Lord our God, his rules and regulations.

³⁰ “We promise not to allow our daughters to marry the people of the land, and not to allow our sons to marry their daughters. ³¹ When the people of the land bring goods and all kinds of food to sell on the holy Sabbath, we will not buy anything from them on the Sabbath or on other holy days. Every seventh year we will leave the land to rest,^e and we will cancel all debts.

³² We accept the obligation to pay one third of a shekel for the operation of the Temple of God, ³³ for the showbread, for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings, for the Sabbath offerings, for the new moon and yearly festivals, for the holy offerings, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, in short all that takes place in the Temple of our God.

³⁴ We have allocated by lot among the priests, Levites, and the people, to determine who will bring wood to the Temple of our God to burn on the altar of the Lord our God at specific times during the year, as required by the Law.

³⁵ We also promise to bring the first part of the produce from our fields and from every fruit tree to the Lord's Temple every year.

^d**10:28.** “People of the land”: referring primarily to the Canaanite peoples who had previously ruled the land.

^e**10:31.** Literally, “leave the seventh year,” following the “sabbatical year” regulation that every seventh year fields used for producing crops were to be left to “rest.” Exodus 23:10-11.

³⁶ We will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our livestock and of our herds and flocks to the Temple of our God, to the priests who minister there, as required by the Law. ³⁷ We will bring to the storerooms of the Temple of our God, to the priests, the first part of our coarse-ground flour, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees, and of our new wine and olive oil. We will also bring a tithe of our produce to the Levites, for the Levites are the ones who collect the tithes in all the farming towns.

³⁸ A priest descended from Aaron will accompany the Levites when they collect the tithe, and the Levites are to bring a tithe of these tithes to the rooms of the storehouse in the Temple of our God.

³⁹ The people of Israel and the Levites are to bring the offerings of grain, new wine, and olive oil to the storerooms where the sanctuary objects are kept, where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers are. We will not forget the Temple of our God.”

11 ¹ The leaders of the people were already living in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to come and live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine would stay in their own cities. ² Everyone praised those who were willing to move to Jerusalem.

³ This is a list of the leaders of the province who came to live in Jerusalem. (Most of the Israelites lived on their own property in the towns of Judah. This included the priests, the Levites, the Temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants who lived in their home towns. ⁴ However, some of the people of Judah and Benjamin moved to Jerusalem.)

From the tribe of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez; ⁵ and Maaseiah, son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, a descendant of Shelah. ⁶ The total of the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem was 468 men of ability.

⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin: Sallu, son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah, ⁸ and after him Gabbai and Sallai, a total of 928.

⁹ Joel son of Zichri was the officer in charge of them, and Judah son of Hassenuah was in second-in-command of the city.

¹⁰ From the priests: Jedaiah, son of Joiarib, Jachin; ¹¹ Seraiah, son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, chief administrator of the Temple of God, ¹² and their fellow priests who served at the Temple, a total of 822; Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, ¹³ and those who worked with him, family leaders, a total of 242; and Amashsai, son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, ¹⁴ and those who worked with him, a total of 128 strong warriors.^f Zabdiel, son of Haggadolim, was in charge of them.

¹⁵ From the Levites: Shemaiah, son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; ¹⁶ and Shabbethai and Jozabad, Levite leaders who were in charge of the outside work of God's Temple; ¹⁷ Mattaniah, son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who led out in giving thanks and praise; and Bakbukiah, who was second; and Abda, son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. ¹⁸ The total number of priests in the holy city was 284.

¹⁹ The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and their fellow workers, who guarded the gates: a total of 172.

²⁰ The other Israelites, with rest of the priests and Levites, lived in their home towns in Judah, each on their own property.

²¹ The Temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

²² The one in charge of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi, son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, one of Asaph's descendants, the singers who led the service in God's Temple. ²³ They had specific orders from the king who had instructed them to perform a daily service.^g

²⁴ Pethahiah, son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah, son of Judah, was the king's advisor on all things relating to the Israelites.

²⁵ Regarding the villages with their nearby fields: some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba, Dibon, and Jekabzeel, and their smaller settlements; ²⁶ in Jeshua, Moladah, and Beth-pelet;

^f**11:14.** “Strong warriors”: To modern ears it may sound strange to see priests listed as warriors. However, in those times defensive needs were a practical concern, especially defense of the Temple.

^g**11:23.** This probably refers to the decree issued by King Cyrus for prayers to be said for him and his sons. See Ezra 6:10.

²⁷ in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba with its settlements, ²⁸ in Ziklag, in Mekonah and its settlements, ²⁹ in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, ³⁰ Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its settlements. They lived all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

³¹ The people of Benjamin from Geba lived in Michmash, Aija, and Bethel and its settlements, ³² in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, ³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, ³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, ³⁵ Lod, Ono, and in the Valley of Craftsmen. ³⁶ Some divisions of the Levites of Judah also settled in Benjamin.

12 ¹ This is a list of the priests and Levites who came back with Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, the high priest: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, ³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, ⁴ Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, ⁵ Miniamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, ⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah. These were the leaders of the priests and their relatives in Jeshua's time.

⁸ The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his fellow Levites was in charge of the songs of praise. ⁹ Two other Levites, Bakbukiah and Unni, stood opposite them in the service.

¹⁰ Jeshua the high priest was the father of Joiakim, who was the father of Eliashib, who was the father of Joiada, ¹¹ who was the father of Jonathan, who was the father of Jaddua.

¹² In Joiakim's time, these were the family leaders of the priests: of the family of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; ¹³ of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; ¹⁴ of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; ¹⁵ of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; ¹⁶ of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; ¹⁷ of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin and of Moadiah, Piltai; ¹⁸ of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; ¹⁹ of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; ²⁰ of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; ²¹ of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

²² The family leaders of the Levites in the time of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, in addition to those of the priests, were recorded during the reign of Darius the Persian. ²³ As for the genealogy of the sons of Levi, the family leaders up to the time of Johanan, son of Eliashib, were listed in the Book of the Records.

²⁴ The Levite leaders were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua, son of Kadmiel, together with their fellow Levites, who stood opposite them, each section giving praise and thanks and responding to one another, as arranged by David, the man of God. ²⁵ They were joined by Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, and Obadiah.^h

Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the storehouses at the gates. ²⁶ They served in the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and in the time of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

²⁷ In order to dedicate the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were called from everywhere they were living to come to Jerusalem and celebrate with joy the dedication with songs of praise and thanks, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. ²⁸ The singers were also brought in from the area around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites, ²⁹ as well as from Beth-gilgal and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves all around Jerusalem. ³⁰ Once the priests and the Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

³¹ I had the leaders of Judah go up on the wall, and arranged two large choirs that to give thanks. One group went to right along the wall to the Refuse Gate. ³² Hoshai and half the leaders of Judah followed them, ³³ with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, ³⁵ as well as some of the priests with trumpets, and Zechariah, son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph, ³⁶ and his fellow priests, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, along with the musical instruments as required by David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe led them. ³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they headed straight up by the stairs of the city of David, where the wall goes uphill, above the house of David, and on to the Water Gate on the east.

³⁸ The other choir group went in the opposite direction. I followed them, along with half the people, on the wall passing the Tower of the Ovens, on to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ over the Ephraim Gate, the

^h12:25. “Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, and Obadiah”: these Levites are identified as choir directors in 11:17, and are not included in the gatekeeper group. Abda is a variant spelling of Obadiah.

Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate, stopping at the Guard Gate.

⁴⁰ Both thanksgiving choirs then took their places in God's Temple. I followed with the group of leaders that was with me, ⁴¹ along with the priests blowing their trumpets: Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. ⁴² Then came the singersⁱ Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer, and the choirs sang, directed by Jezrahiah.

⁴³ Many sacrifices were offered that day, celebrating that God had brought them so much happiness, tremendous happiness. The women and children also celebrated, and the sounds of joy in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

⁴⁴ On the same day men were put in charge over the storerooms that contained the offerings, the first part of the crops, and tithes. What was allocated by the Law for the priests and Levites was brought into these storerooms from the fields around the towns, because all the people of Judah were happy for the service of the priests and Levites. ⁴⁵ They were responsible for the worship of their God and for the service of purification, along with the singers and gatekeepers, following the instructions of David and his son Solomon. ⁴⁶ For long ago, back in the time of David and Asaph, directors had been appointed for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanks to God. ⁴⁷ So in the time of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, everyone in Israel provided the daily food allowances for the singers and the gatekeepers. They also made sure to provide for the other Levites, and the Levites gave a share of this to the descendants of Aaron.

13 ¹ One day^j when the Book of Moses was being read to the people, the section was found where it was written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be allowed into the assembly of God, ² because they hadn't brought food and water when they met the Israelites, but instead they had hired Balaam to put a curse on them—though our God turned that curse into a blessing!

ⁱ12:42. “Singers”: added for clarity. They have already been introduced in verses 25 and 36 as accompanying Ezra as singers/musicians.

^j13:1. “One day”: the date is not specific, and is certainly not the same as that of the previous chapter. In verse 6 Nehemiah notes that he was absent from Jerusalem at the time.

³ When the people heard about this law, they separated out from Israel everyone who had foreign ancestry.

⁴ Before all this, Eliashib the priest, who was related to Tobiah,^k had been put in charge of the storerooms of the Temple of our God. ⁵ He had provided Tobiah with a large room which had previously been used to store the grain offerings, incense, and Temple items, as well as the tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil allocated to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, in addition to the offerings for the priests.

⁶ When all this happened I was not in Jerusalem because I had returned to King Artaxerxes of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign. Some time later I requested permission from the king to go back. ⁷ When I arrived back in Jerusalem I discovered the dreadful thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courtyard of God's Temple. ⁸ I was extremely upset, and I went and threw out everything that was in Tobiah's room. ⁹ I ordered the rooms purified, and put back the Temple items, the grain offerings, and the incense.

¹⁰ I also found out that the food allowances for the Levites were not being provided, so the Levites had gone back to take care of their fields, along with the singers who led the worship services. ¹¹ I went and confronted the leaders, asking, “Why is God's Temple being neglected?” I called the Levites^l back and made sure they were carrying out their responsibilities. ¹² Everyone in Judah then brought the tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil into the storerooms.

¹³ I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah, one of the Levites, in charge of the storerooms with Hanan, son of Zakkur, son of Mattaniah, to assist them, because they were considered honest people. Their responsibility was to distribute the allowances to their fellow Levites.

¹⁴ My God, please remember me over this. Please don't forget my good deeds I have done for the Temple of my God and its services.

¹⁵ Around that time I noticed people treading the winepress on Sabbath. I saw others collecting grain and loading it up on donkeys, along with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, and bringing it all into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. ¹⁶ I told them off for selling their produce on that day. ¹⁷ Some people from Tyre who lived in

^k13:4. Tobiah was an Ammonite: 2:10.

^l13:11. “Levites”: implied.

Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of things and they were selling them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

¹⁸ I confronted the Jewish leaders, asking them, “Why are you are doing such an evil thing? You are violating the Sabbath day! Wasn't this what your forefathers did, bringing our God down on us, causing us and this city such disasters? Now you're bringing even more trouble on us by violating the Sabbath!”

¹⁹ So I ordered Jerusalem's gates to be shut at sunset on the day before the Sabbath, and that were not to be opened until after the Sabbath had ended. I assigned some of my men to guard the gates to make sure no goods would be brought in on the Sabbath day.

²⁰ A couple of times merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside of Jerusalem. ²¹ I warned them, saying, “Why are you spending the night by the wall? If you do that again I'll have you arrested!” After that they didn't come on the Sabbath.

²² Then I told the Levites to purify themselves and to come and guard the gates to keep the Sabbath day holy. My God, please also remember me for doing this, and be merciful to me because of your trustworthy love.

²³ Around the same time I realized some Jews had married women from Ashdod, Moab, and Ammon. ²⁴ Half their children could only speak the language of Ashdod or that of another people, and didn't know how to speak the language of Judah. ²⁵ So I confronted them and told them they were cursed. I beat some of them and pulled out their hair. Then I made them take an oath before God, saying, “You must not allow your daughters to marry their sons, or allow your sons—or yourselves—to marry their daughters. ²⁶ Wasn't it marriages like these that made King Solomon of Israel sin? There wasn't a king in any nation like him. God loved him, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was made to sin by foreign women. ²⁷ So do we have to hear about you committing this dreadful sin, how you are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?” ²⁸ Even one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of Eliashib the high priest, had become a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. So I expelled him.^m

^m**13:28.** Literally, “I drove him away from me.” This probably means he was exiled. To have married a daughter of Sanballat, one of Nehemiah's most significant enemies, must have been a great insult to Nehemiah.

²⁹ My God, remember them and what they did, violating the priesthood and the solemn agreement of the priests and Levites. ³⁰ I purified them from everything foreign, and I made sure the priests and Levites were carrying out their assigned responsibilities. ³¹ I also arranged for wood to be supplied for the altar at the specified times, and for the first part of the produce to be donated.

My God, remember me favorably.