

Nehemiah 7
November 21, 2021

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What do you know about your family tree or genealogy? Is anyone here into their genealogy and has worked hard at it? What's the most interesting thing you've learned about your family?

Transition: Share my genealogy of coming from French Huguenots in the 17th century who were refugees and arrived by the Santee River in SC circa 1659.

Chapter 7 contains a listing of the Jewish genealogy of those who had returned from Babylon captivity to Jerusalem. This chapter parallels Ezra 2:1–64. If you compare the two lists of names, you will see that some of Nehemiah's names and numbers differ from those recorded nearly a century before when the exiles returned from Babylon. There are solid hypotheses that serve as good explanations for the differences, but that does not need to be our focus for today. What we care about is that Nehemiah wanted to document the population of Jerusalem once the wall had been built after 52 days of hard work!

Reading this long list of difficult names might be boring to the modern student, but these people were God's "bridge" from the defeats of the past to the hopes of the future. These Jews were the "living link" that connected the historic past with the prophetic future and made it possible for Jesus Christ to come into the world. Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are to the Old Testament what Hebrews 11 is to the New Testament: a listing of the people whose faith and courage made things happen.

And from Nehemiah's vantage point, it was important to him to populate the holy city with citizens who knew they were Jews and were proud of it. And if a family or priest couldn't prove their genealogy, they were treated differently. Let's begin, but instead of trying to read through all the names, let's read the intros, interludes and endings.

BOOK:

7 After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed. ² I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do. ³ I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses."

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

⁴ Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. ⁵ So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there:

⁶These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, ⁷in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah)

The list of the men of Israel:

- ⁸ the descendants of Parosh 2,172 FAMILIES AND CLANS
⁹ of Shephatiah 372
¹⁰ of Arah 652
¹¹ of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,818
¹² of Elam 1,254
¹³ of Zattu 845
¹⁴ of Zaccai 760
¹⁵ of Binnui 648
¹⁶ of Bebai 628
¹⁷ of Azgad 2,322
¹⁸ of Adonikam 667
¹⁹ of Bigvai 2,067
²⁰ of Adin 655
²¹ of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
²² of Hashum 328
²³ of Bezai 324
²⁴ of Hariph 112
²⁵ of Gibeon 95
- ²⁶ the men of Bethlehem and Netophah 188 VILLAGES
²⁷ of Anathoth 128
²⁸ of Beth Azmaveth 42
²⁹ of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth 743
³⁰ of Ramah and Geba 621
³¹ of Micmash 122
³² of Bethel and Ai 123
³³ of the other Nebo 52
³⁴ of the other Elam 1,254
³⁵ of Harim 320
³⁶ of Jericho 345
³⁷ of Lod, Hadid and Ono 721
³⁸ of Senaah 3,930
- ³⁹ The priests:
the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973
⁴⁰ of Immer 1,052
⁴¹ of Pashhur 1,247
⁴² of Harim 1,017
- ⁴³ The Levites:

the descendants of Jeshua (through Kadmiel through the line of Hodaviah) 74

44 The singers:

the descendants of Asaph 148

45 The gatekeepers:

the descendants of

Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 138

46 The temple servants:

the descendants of

Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

47 Keros, Sia, Padon,

48 Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmal,

49 Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,

50 Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,

51 Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,

52 Besai, Meunim, Nephussim,

53 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

54 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

55 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

56 Neziah and Hatipha

57 The descendants of the servants of Solomon:

the descendants of

Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,

58 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,

59 Shephatiah, Hattil,

Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Amon

60 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392

⁶¹ The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel:

62 the descendants of

Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 642

63 And from among the priests:

the descendants of

Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name).

⁶⁴ These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. ⁶⁵ The governor, therefore, ordered them not to eat

any of the most sacred food until there should be a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

⁶⁶The whole company numbered 42,360, ⁶⁷besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 245 men and women singers. ⁶⁸There were 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁹435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

⁷⁰Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 drachmas (about 19 lbs) of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests. ⁷¹Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 drachmas (about 375lbs) of gold and 2,200 minas (1 and 1/3rd tons) of silver. ⁷²The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 drachmas of gold, 2,000 minas (about 1.25 tons) of silver and 67 garments for priests.

⁷³The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns.

Ezra Reads the Law

When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

One of the key lessons we can learn from this long chapter is that *people are important to God*. When God wanted to take the next step in His great plan of redemption, He called a group of Jews to leave the place of exile and return to their own land. He gave them encouragement from the prophets and leadership from people who feared God and wanted to honor Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Determined* (pp. 81-93). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

NEHEMIAH 7 - "V" Is for Vigilance

The walls were completed, the gates were restored, and the enemy was chagrined; but Nehemiah's work was not finished by any means. Now he had to practice the truth Paul emphasized in Ephesians 6:13, "And having done all, to stand." Nehemiah had been steadfast in building the walls and in resisting the enemy, and now he had to be steadfast in consolidating and conserving the gains. "Look to yourselves," warned the Apostle John, "that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

A city is much more than walls, gates, and houses; a city is people. In the first half of this book, the people existed for the walls; but now the walls must exist for the people. It was time to organize the community so that the citizens could enjoy the quality of life God wanted them to have. God had great things in store for Jerusalem, for one day His Son would walk the city streets, teach in the temple, and die outside the city walls.

This chapter records three important steps that must be taken by any leader in order to protect the people and the work that has been done.

1. Enlisting leadership (Neh. 7:1-3)

Napoleon described a leader as "a dealer in hope," and Nehemiah certainly fits that description. Before the work began, he inspired the people by assuring them that God would prosper their efforts (2:18-20). When the people were afraid, he prayed that God would strengthen them (6:9). When the enemy threatened, Nehemiah stood his ground and called their bluff; and the work was completed in fifty-two days to the glory of God.

Assistants (Neh. 7:2). Like all good leaders, Nehemiah knew he couldn't do the job alone. One of his first official acts was to appoint two assistants, his brother Hanani (see 1:2) and Hananiah, who was in charge of the citadel ("palace"; see 2:8). The citadel was a fortress in the temple area, guarding the north wall of the city, which was especially vulnerable to attack. Hanani and Hananiah would work with Rephaiah (3:9) and Shallum (v. 12), rulers of districts in the city.

Why was Nehemiah convinced that these men would be good leaders? They had two wonderful qualities: They were faithful to God and they feared God (7:2). Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., often said, "The greatest ability is dependability." If we truly fear the Lord, we will be faithful to do the work He has called us to do. When leaders fear people instead of fearing God, they end up getting trapped (Prov. 29:25); and that leads to failure.

Years ago, the German psychiatrist and philosopher Dr. Karl Jaspers said, "The power of leadership appears to be declining everywhere. More and more of the men we see coming to the top seem to be merely drifting." My former "boss" in Youth for Christ International, Dr. Ted Engstrom, wrote in his book *The Making of A Christian Leader* (Zondervan, 1976), "We see the tragedy of weak men in important places—little men in big jobs" (p. 12). British essayist Walter Savage Landor wrote, "When little men cast long shadows, it is a sign that the sun is setting." An ominous statement, indeed!

Not everybody is called to be a Nehemiah, but some of us can be Hananis, Hananiahs, Rephaiahs, or Shallums, and work with God-given leaders to help get the job done right. God is

looking for faithful, God-fearing men and women who will have the courage and conviction to serve Him, come what may.

Gatekeepers (Neh. 7:1, 3). What good are strong new gates if nobody is guarding them and controlling who enters and leaves the city? What good are walls if the gates are open to every foe who wants to enter the city? I understand that the Great Wall of China was penetrated by the enemy at least four times, and each time the guards were bribed. Gates and walls are only as good as the people who guard them.

The gatekeepers (“porters” in v. 1) were given specific instructions as to when to open and close the gates (v. 3). To open the gates early in the morning would only invite the enemy to come in while the city was asleep and unprepared. To close and lock the gates without the guards on duty might give enemy agents opportunity to slip in unnoticed.

Guards. Nehemiah also had appointed two kinds of guards (“watches” v. 3): Those to patrol the walls at specific stations and those to keep watch near their own houses. Since many of the people had worked on areas of the wall near their homes (3:10, 23, 28–30), Nehemiah now challenged them to guard the areas they had built. With guards at the gates, watchmen on the walls, and a solid “neighborhood watch,” the city was safe from outside attack.

All of this has a message for us today. *If God’s people don’t protect what they have accomplished for the Lord, the enemy will come in and take it over.* Paul’s admonition must be heeded: “And having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). What a tragedy that schools that once were true to the faith are today denying the faith, and churches that once preached the Gospel now have in their pulpits ministers who preach “another gospel.” *Every Christian ministry is one short generation away from destruction, and God’s people must be on guard.*

We need guards at the gates, faithful men and women who will not allow false Christians to get in and take over the ministry (2 Cor. 11:13–15). We need watchers on the walls to warn us when the enemy is approaching. Christian parents need to guard their homes lest the enemy gets in and captures their children. It is while God’s servants are asleep and overconfident that the enemy comes in and plants his counterfeits (Matt. 13:25), so we must be awake and alert.

In this day when “pluralism” is interpreted by most people to mean “agree with everybody about everything and don’t make waves,” Christians need to remember that they are *different* and must test everything by the Word of God. There are many religions, but there is still “none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Anything that changes that message or weakens our motivation to get that message out is of the devil and must be opposed. We need guards at the gates and watchers on the wall, or the enemy will take over.

2. Establishing citizenship (Neh. 7:4–69)

This section parallels Ezra 2:1–64. If you compare the two lists, you will see that some of Nehemiah’s names and numbers differ from those recorded nearly a century before when the exiles returned from Babylon. This does not suggest that there are either errors or contradictions in the Bible. Errors in spelling names or copying numbers could easily creep in over a century, and none of these differences affects any matter of doctrine or duty.

Furthermore, the scribes who kept the public records certainly updated them after the community was established in Jerusalem. Ezra 2 lists the names of those who set out with Ezra, but it’s possible that others joined the group after Zerubbabel’s list was completed. For instance, Ezra 2:2 lists only *eleven* leaders, while Nehemiah 7:7 gives *twelve* names, adding Nahamani. “Nehum” in Nehemiah 7:7 is probably “Rehum” in Ezra 2:2. Variations such as this one are to be expected in ancient documents.

Reading this long list of difficult names might be boring to the modern student, but these people were God's "bridge" from the defeats of the past to the hopes of the future. These Jews were the "living link" that connected the historic past with the prophetic future and made it possible for Jesus Christ to come into the world. Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are to the Old Testament what Hebrews 11 is to the New Testament: a listing of the people whose faith and courage made things happen.

Our modern cities are ethnic "melting pots"; but in Jerusalem at that time, the important thing was to be a Jew *and be able to prove your ancestry*. Genealogies were "lifelines" that linked the Jews not only to the heritage of the past but also to their hope for the future. Not to be able to prove your ancestry meant second-class citizenship and separation from all that God had given to Israel (Rom. 9:4–5). Nehemiah wanted to populate the holy city with citizens who knew they were Jews and were proud of it.

There are ten different groups listed here, starting with the *leaders who returned with Zerubbabel* (Neh. 7:7). These twelve men may have represented the twelve tribes of Israel, even though ten of the tribes had been assimilated by the Assyrians when the Northern Kingdom was captured in 722 B.C. The "Nehemiah" mentioned here is not the author of this book, since these men lived nearly a century before. It appears that these were the elders of the people who helped Zerubbabel, the governor, establish the nation.

Next are listed the various *families or clans* (vv. 8–25) and the number of people in each family who returned to the land. Verses 27–38 list the people according to their *villages*. It is interesting that the largest group in the entire list came from Senaah (v. 38), a town whose location is a mystery to us. It must have been a large community if nearly 4,000 people came from there. The Hebrew word means "hated," and some students think it refers to a category of citizen and not to a place. These may have been the "lower classes" in the Jewish society. Whoever they were, they worked on the walls (3:3) and helped restore the city.

It is worth noting that these returned exiles had maintained their identification with their native towns and villages. They knew where they came from and were not ashamed of it! Many people in our modern mobile population care little about family roots or even civic loyalty. Home is wherever one's work is, no matter where your original roots were planted. Also, in spite of their local loyalties, these Jews put the good of Jerusalem first (Ps. 137:1–6). True patriotism sees no conflict between loving one's home city and loving one's nation, for both are gifts from God.

The temple personnel are listed next: *priests* (Neh. 7:39–42), *Levites* (v. 43), *temple singers* (v. 44), *gatekeepers* (v. 45), and *various temple servants* (vv. 46–60). In the original return to the land, it was necessary for Ezra to send for Levites to serve in the restored temple (Ezra 8:15–20). Were the Levites so comfortable in Babylon that they were unwilling to serve in Jerusalem?

The temple servants ("Nethinim") had been organized by David to assist in the temple (Neh. 7:20) and may have been either prisoners of war or descendants of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:22–27), who relieved the Levites of heavy routine tasks, like cutting wood and drawing water. "Solomon's servants" (Neh. 7:57) were also foreigners who labored for the king. That these non-Jews were willing to leave the secure life in Babylon for the difficulties of life in Jerusalem may indicate that they had come to trust the God of Israel. On the other hand, perhaps they were compelled to return by their masters.

The *singers* will play an important role in the life of the city. There are at least eighteen references to singers in the Book of Nehemiah and eight references to giving thanks to the Lord.

There was not much singing during the exile, when the nation was out of fellowship with God (Ps. 137); but now they needed the musicians to maintain worship at the temple.

One group of people, including some priests, *could not prove their genealogies* (Neh. 7:61–65). For the priests, this would mean being cut off from the temple ministry and the income it provided from the tithes and offerings of the people. But the Law of Moses made it clear that only those whose family line was clearly in the family of Aaron could minister at the altar. Finally, there was a miscellaneous assembly of over 7,000 *servants* (v. 67). Since the total number of the congregation was over 42,000 (v. 66), about one-sixth of the population was in servitude. Jewish masters must have been very kind to their servants for so many of them to want to travel with them to Judea.

The animals were mentioned (vv. 68–69) because they were vitally important to the Jewish agricultural economy and to the work of rebuilding the nation.

The total of the figures in this list is 29,818; but Nehemiah's total is 42,360. When you add the 7,337 servants and the 245 singers to the 29,818 total, you get a total of 37,400, a difference of almost 5,000 from Nehemiah's figure. Some of these extra unnumbered people may have been priests who could not prove their genealogy (vv. 63–65), as well as others who didn't fit into any special category. If we knew all the facts about how Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 were compiled and copied, we would understand these seeming discrepancies.

The important thing is not to count the people but to realize that *these people counted*. In leaving Babylon, they did much more than put their names on a list. They laid their lives on the altar and risked everything to obey the Lord and restore the Jewish nation. They were "pioneers of faith" who trusted God to enable them to do the impossible.

Before we leave this section, it might be good for you to ask yourself, "If I had to prove my genealogy in order to get into God's city, could I do it?" You are heading for one of two destinies—heaven or hell—and only those who belong to God's family can enter heaven. You enter God's family by receiving Jesus Christ as your own Savior, and this alone guarantees your entrance into heaven (John 1:11–12; 3:16; 14:6).

3. Encouraging worship (Neh. 7:70–73)

Citizenship and leadership together can make a state, but it takes worship to make that state into a godly nation. John Stuart Mill wrote, "The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it." But the worth of the individual depends on his or her relationship to God, and this involves worship. If individual godliness declines, the morality of the nation declines.

The parallel passage is Ezra 2:68–70, which tells us that some of the Jewish leaders gave generously to the temple ministry. But Nehemiah informs us that the governor ("Tirshatha") and some of the common people also gave offerings to the Lord. It was only right that the leaders set the example. A thousand drams (Neh. 7:70) would be 19 pounds of gold, and 20,000 drams (vv. 71–72) would be about 375 pounds. It seems obvious that some of the Jewish leaders left Babylon very wealthy men, with precious metals and servants; but within a few years, the economy failed and the nation was in the grips of a crippling depression (Hag. 1).

But all of this money would have been useless were it not for the God-appointed ministers at the temple: the priests, Levites, singers, and helpers (Neh. 7:73). Moses had assigned special towns for the priests and Levites to live in (Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 21), but later Nehemiah had to move some of them into Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1–2).

It was now the seventh month (Oct.–Nov.), when Israel was expected to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:23–44). There could have been no better time for Nehemiah to call the people together to honor the Word of God, confess their sins, and dedicate themselves and their work to the Lord. What began with *concern* (Neh. 1) led to *construction* (chaps. 2–3) and *conflict* (chaps. 4–7); and now it was time for *consecration* (chaps. 8–12).

As we serve the Lord, we must always do our best; but without His help and blessing, even our best work will never last. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1, NKJV). Nehemiah knew that there was a desperate need for the people to come back to the Lord and turn away from their secret sins that were grieving Him. Even though Nehemiah was the official representative of a pagan king, he did everything he could to glorify the God of Israel.

One of the key lessons we can learn from this long chapter is that *people are important to God*. When God wanted to take the next step in His great plan of redemption, He called a group of Jews to leave the place of exile and return to their own land. He gave them encouragement from the prophets and leadership from people who feared God and wanted to honor Him. The Lord didn’t send a band of angels to do the job; He used common people who were willing to risk their futures on the promises of God.

Today, God is still calling people to leave their personal “Babylons” and follow Him by faith. The church is living in a day of reproach (Neh. 2:17), and there are “ruins” all around us that need to be rebuilt. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” David asked (Ps. 11:3). The answer is plain: *The righteous can rebuild what has been torn down and start over again!* If you think that an enemy victory is final, then you have lost your faith in God’s promises. There is always a new beginning for those who are willing to pay the price.

This chapter also reminds us that *God keeps accounts of His servants*. He knows where we came from, what family we belong to, how much we gave, and how much we did for Him. When we stand before the Lord, we will have to give an accounting of our lives before we can receive our rewards (Rom. 14:7–12); and we want to be able to give a good account.

A third lesson we must learn is that *the Lord is able to keep His work going*. The first group of Jewish exiles left Babylon for Judea in 538 B.C. and, in spite of many difficulties and delays, rebuilt the temple and restored the worship. Eighty years later, Ezra and another group returned; and fourteen years after that, Nehemiah arrived and rebuilt the walls and gates. During the days of Zerubbabel, God raised up the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah to give God’s message to His people. No matter how discouraging the situation might be, God is able to accomplish His purposes if we will trust Him and do His will. John Wesley was right when he said that God buries His workers but continues His work. We must not be discouraged!

Finally, and most important, we must all be sure that *we know we are in the family of God*. No matter how much they argued or protested, the priests without legitimate genealogies could not enter the temple precincts and minister at the altar. God is not impressed with our first birth; what He wants is that we experience a second birth and become His children. If you are not certain of your spiritual genealogy, read John 3:1–18 and 1 John 5:9–13 and make sure that your name is written down in heaven (Luke 10:20).

Getz, G. A. (1985). Nahum. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 687-688) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

A. *The security of the city (7:1–3)*

7:1–3. Besides repairing the walls, the builders repaired the gates. The last part of the project was setting **the doors in** the gates (cf. 6:1). **Hanani** was Nehemiah's **brother** who had reported the Jerusalem problems to the cupbearer (1:2). **Hananiah ... a man of integrity**, had deep spiritual convictions. Nehemiah, knowing that his enemies were still around, ordered that security measures be maintained: **the city gates were to be opened** only a few hours each day; and citizens, probably many of whom had been wall-repairers, were to serve **as guards**.

B. *The census of the returnees (7:4–73a)*

7:4–7a. Comparatively **few people** were residing in **Jerusalem** (v. 4) so Nehemiah wanted to populate it with people of pure Jewish descent (cf. 11:1–24). To register the present population Nehemiah began with the **record of those who had.... returned** with **Zerubbabel** and others (7:5–7). The list of names in verse 7 is almost identical with the list in Ezra 2:2, except that Nehemiah included **Azariah** and **Nahamani**.

7:7b–65. Some scholars suggest that the list in Ezra 2 is that of the returnees before they departed from Babylon and that Nehemiah 7 gives **the list of** those who actually arrived in Jerusalem or the list of the community sometime after their arrival. The two chapters, however, give no indication of those differences. The variations in the lists are seen in the chart “The Lists of Exile Returnees in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7.” The list included people by 18 families and clans (vv. 8–25) and a listing of inhabitants from 20 towns and villages (vv. 26–38; see the map “Postexilic Samaria and Judah,” near Ezra 2). Then **the priests** (4,289 of them) were listed (Neh. 7:39–42), followed by mention of 360 **Levites** which included **singers** and **gatekeepers** (vv. 43–45). **The temple servants** (vv. 46–56) and **descendants of Solomon's servants** (vv. 57–59) totaled **392** (v. 60). These were followed by reference to **642** returnees who could **not** trace their ancestries (vv. 61–62). Some of **the priests** could **not** clearly trace their genealogies so they were not allowed by **the governor** (*tiršāṭā'*, a Persian term, possibly a reference to Sheshbazzar—see comments on Ezra 1:8—or to Zerubbabel) **to eat the sacred food till a priest was ministering with the Urim and Thummim** (see comments on Ezra 2:63).

The groups enumerated in Nehemiah 7:8–62 total 31,089, whereas the groups enumerated in Ezra 2:3–60 total 29,818. The difference of 1,271 is seen in 19 of the 41 items. These variations may be copyists' errors or Ezra and Nehemiah may have had reasons for the different figures which were unstated and therefore unknown today.

7:66–69. Nehemiah's grand total of 49,942 people is very close to Ezra's total of 49,897 (Ezra 2:64–65). The extra 45 in Nehemiah's total are the **singers** (Nehemiah **had 245** whereas Ezra referred to 200). A scribe, in copying Nehemiah 7:67, might have inadvertently picked up the 245 in verse 68, in reference to mules, and inserted that number for the 200 singers. He then might have mistakenly omitted verse 68 (X-ref NIV margin). The total then was probably as Ezra recorded it—49,897.

But how does one account for the difference between the enumerated 31,089 and the 49,897—a difference of 18,808? The larger number may include women and children. Or it may include Jews from the Northern tribes who might have joined the remnant in Judah and Benjamin. It may also include the priests who could not delineate their genealogies (vv. 63–64).

Nehemiah's enumeration even included the animals—a total of 8,136, most of them **donkeys**, used for riding. There was about one donkey available for every seven people.

7:70–72. **Heads of the families** and even **the governor** (see comments on v. 65) and **the people** gave large amounts of money and materials to begin the work of the temple. Nehemiah's 41,000 **drachmas of gold** are 61,000 in Ezra 2:69. Nehemiah referred to 4,200 **minas of silver** (totaling more than 21½ tons; X-ref NIV margin) whereas Ezra refers to 5,000 silver minas. The 597 priests' **garments** mentioned by Nehemiah are 100 in Ezra. Again, these differences are probably caused by scribal errors in copying the manuscripts.

7:73a. The people **settled in their** ancestors' **towns** and villages.

C. The ministry of Ezra (7:73b–10:39)

1. THE ISRAELITES' OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW (7:73b–8:18)

The pattern in 7:73b–10:39 reflects the suzerainty-vassal treaties of the ancient Near East (see comments on 9:5b–31). The covenant was to be read at regular intervals (chap. 8), sin was confessed (chap. 9), and obedience was promised (chap. 10).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ne 7:1-73). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.