

Nehemiah

¹ The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

Now it happened in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in the fortress of Susa, ² that one of my brothers, Hanani, came with some people from Judah, and I asked them about the Jews who had escaped, the remnant of the Jews who were there, and about Jerusalem.

³ They said to me, "Those in the province who survived the captivity are in great trouble and disgrace because the wall of Jerusalem has been broken open, and its gates have been set on fire."

⁴ As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and for days I continued grieving and fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

⁵ Then I said, "You are Yahweh, God of heaven, the God who is great and awesome, who keeps the covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. ⁶ Listen to my prayer and open your eyes, so you may hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants. I am confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly against you, and we have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Please call to mind the word you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you

act unfaithfully, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but if you return to me and follow my commandments and do them, though your people were scattered under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to that place where I have chosen to make my name remain.' ¹⁰ Now they are your servants and your people, whom you have rescued by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ Yahweh, I beg you, listen now to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to honor your name. Now give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

I served as cupbearer to the king.

2

¹ In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, he selected wine, and I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never before been sad in his presence. ² But the king said to me, "Why is your face so sad? You do not appear to be ill. This must be sadness of heart." Then I became very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad? The city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire." ⁴ Then the king said to me, "What do you want me to do?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ I replied to the king, "If it seems good to the king, and if your servant has done well in your sight, you could send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers'

tombs, that I may rebuild it.”⁶ The king replied to me (and the queen was also sitting beside him), “How long shall you be away and when will you return?” The king was glad to send me when I gave him the dates.⁷ Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, may letters be given to me for the governors in the Province Beyond the River so that they may permit me to pass through their territories on my way to Judah.⁸ May there also be a letter for Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, so that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress next to the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house in which I will live.”

So because the good hand of God was on me, the king granted me my requests.

⁹ I came to the governors in the Province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, they were greatly displeased that someone had come who was seeking to help the people of Israel.¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.¹² I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me, other than the one I was riding.¹³ I went out by night by the Valley Gate, toward the Jackal's Well and to the Dung Gate, and inspected the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken open, and the wooden gates were destroyed by fire.¹⁴ Then I

went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool. The place was too narrow for the animal I was riding to pass through. ¹⁵ So I went up that night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ The rulers did not know where I went or what I did, and I had not yet informed the Jews, nor the priests, nor the nobles, nor the rulers, nor the rest who did the work.

¹⁷ I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so we will no longer be in disgrace." ¹⁸ I told them that the good hand of my God was on me and also about the king's words that he had spoken to me. They said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite servant, and Geshem the Arabian heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us, and they said, "What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ Then I answered them, "The God of heaven will give us success. We are his servants and we will arise and build. But you have no share, no right, and no historic claim in Jerusalem."

3

¹ Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brother priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors in place. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred and as far as the Tower of Hananel.

² Next to him the men of Jericho worked, and next to them Zaccur son of Imri worked. ³ The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They made beams for it, and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁴ Meremoth repaired the next section. He is the son of Uriah son of Hakkoz. Next to them Meshullam repaired. He is the son of Berechiah son of Meshezabel. Next to them Zadok repaired. He is the son of Baana. ⁵ Next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their leaders refused to do the work ordered by their supervisors.

⁶ Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate. They made beams for it, and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁷ Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, who were men from Gibeon and Mizpah, made repairs on the portion where the governor of the Province Beyond the River lived. ⁸ Next to him Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired, and next to him was Hananiah, a maker of perfumes. They rebuilt Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹ Next to them Rephaiah son of Hur repaired. He was the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Next to them Jedaiah son of Harumaph repaired next to his house. Next to him Hattush son of Hashabneiah repaired. ¹¹ Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section along with the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² Next to them Shallum son of Hallohesh, the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, along with his

daughters.

¹³ Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. They repaired a thousand cubits as far as the Dung Gate.

¹⁴ Malchijah son of Recab, the ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem, repaired the Dung Gate. He built it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

¹⁵ Shallun son of Kol-Hozeh, the ruler of the district of Mizpah, rebuilt the Fountain Gate. He built it, and put a cover on it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. He also rebuilt the wall of the Pool of Siloam by the king's garden, as far as the stairs leading down from the city of David. ¹⁶ Nehemiah son of Azbuk, the ruler of half the district of Beth Zur, repaired to the place across from the tombs of David, to the man-made pool, and to the house of the mighty men. ¹⁷ After him the Levites repaired, including Rehum son of Bani and next to him, Hashabiah, the ruler of half the district of Keilah, for his district. ¹⁸ After him their countrymen repaired, including Binnui son of Henadad, the ruler of half the district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section that faced the ascent to the armory at the corner of the wall. ²⁰ After him Baruch son of Zabbai devotedly repaired another section, from the corner of the wall to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹ After him Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.

²² Next to him the priests, the men from the area around Jerusalem, repaired. ²³ After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their own house. After them Azariah son of Maaseiah son of Ananiah repaired next to his own house. ²⁴ After him Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the corner of the wall. ²⁵ Palal son of Uzai repaired over against the corner of the wall and the tower that extends upward from the upper house of the king at the courtyard of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh repaired. ²⁶ Now the temple servants living in Ophel repaired to the point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷ After him the Tekoites repaired another section that was opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. ²⁸ The priests repaired above the Horse Gate, each opposite his own house. ²⁹ After them Zadok son of Immer repaired the section opposite his own house. Then after him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the east gate, repaired. ³⁰ After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah repaired opposite his living chambers. ³¹ After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired to the house of the temple servants and the merchants that was opposite the Appointment Gate and the upper living chambers on the corner. ³² The goldsmiths and the merchants repaired between the upper chamber of the corner and the Sheep Gate.

4

¹ Now when Sanballat heard we were building the wall, it burned within him, and he was furiously angry, and he mocked the Jews. ² In the presence of his brothers and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore the city for themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish the work in a day? Will they bring to life the stones from the piles of rubble after they were burned?”

³ Tobiah the Ammonite was with him, and he said, “If only a fox went up on what they are building, it would break down their stone wall!”

⁴ Hear, our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunts on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are prisoners. ⁵ Do not cover over their iniquity and do not erase their sin from before you, for they have provoked the builders to anger. ⁶ So we built the wall and all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a desire to work.

⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the work of repairing the walls of Jerusalem was going forward, and that the broken places in the wall were being closed up, a great anger burned within them. ⁸ They all conspired together, and they came to fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and set a guard as protection against them day and night because of their threat. ¹⁰ Then the people of Judah said, “The strength of those who carry

the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble, and we are not able to rebuild the wall.”

¹¹ Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them and kill them, and stop the work.” ¹² At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and spoke to us ten times, warning us about the schemes they were making against us. ¹³ So I positioned people in the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I positioned each family with their swords, spears, and bows. ¹⁴ Then I looked, and stood up, and I said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Call to mind the Lord, who is great and awesome. Fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

¹⁵ It came about when our enemies heard that their plans were known to us, and God had frustrated their plans, all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. ¹⁶ So from that time half of my servants worked only on rebuilding the wall, and half of them held spears, shields, bows, and wore armor, while the leaders stood behind all the people of Judah. ¹⁷ The same workers who were building the wall and carrying loads were also guarding their positions. Everyone worked with one hand, and with the other hand he held his weapon. ¹⁸ Every builder wore his sword on his side and that is how he worked. The one who sounded the trumpet stayed beside me. ¹⁹ I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall, far from one

another. ²⁰ You must rush to the place where you hear the trumpet sound and assemble there. Our God will fight for us.”

²¹ So we were doing the work. Half of them were holding spears from the rising of the dawn until the coming out of the stars. ²² I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant spend the night in the middle of Jerusalem, so they may be for us a guard during the night and a worker in the day.” ²³ So neither I, nor my brothers, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us changed our clothes, and each of us carried his weapon, even if he went for water.

5

¹ Then the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. ² For there were some who said, “With our sons and daughters we are many. So let us get grain that we may eat and stay alive.” ³ There were also some who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain during the famine.” ⁴ Some also said, “We have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. ⁵ Yet now our flesh and blood is the same as our brothers, and our children are the same as their children. We are forced to sell our sons and our daughters to become slaves. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved. But it is not in our power to help it because other men now own our fields and our vineyards.”

⁶ I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷ Then I thought about this, and brought charges against the nobles and officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his own brother." I held a great assembly against them ⁸ and said to them, "We, as much as we are able, have bought back from slavery our Jewish brothers who had been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers and sisters that they may be sold back to us!" They were silent and never found a word to say. ⁹ Also I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations that are our enemies? ¹⁰ I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. But we must stop charging interest on these loans. ¹¹ Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses and the percentage of the money, the grain, the new wine, and the oil that you exacted from them." ¹² Then they said, "We will return what we took from them, and will require nothing from them. We will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and made them swear to do as they had promised. ¹³ I shook out the fold of my robe and said, "So may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep his promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied."

All the assembly said, "Amen," and they praised Yahweh and the people did as they had promised.

¹⁴ So from the time I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food provided for the governor. ¹⁵ But the former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people, and took from them forty shekels of silver for their daily food and wine. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I did not do so because of the fear of God. ¹⁶ I also continued to work on the wall, and we bought no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. ¹⁷ At my table were the Jews and the officials, 150 men, besides those who came to us from among the nations who were around us. ¹⁸ Now what was prepared each day was one ox, six choice sheep, and also birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance, yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the demands were too heavy on the people.

¹⁹ Call me to mind, my God, for good, because of all that I have done for this people.

6

¹ Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and that there were no longer any sections left broken open, although I had not yet set up the doors in the gates, ² Sanballat and Geshem sent to me saying, "Come, let us meet together somewhere in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do harm to

me. ³ I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" ⁴ They sent me the same message four times, and I answered them the same way each time. ⁵ Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same way the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. ⁶ In it was written,

"It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel, for that is why you are rebuilding the wall. From what these reports say, you are about to become their king.

⁷ You have also appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem, saying, 'There is a king in Judah!' You can be sure the king will hear these reports. Therefore come, let us speak with one another."

⁸ Then I sent word to him saying, "No such things have occurred as you say, for within your heart you invented them." ⁹ For they all wanted to make us afraid, thinking, "They will drop their hands from doing the work, and it will not be done." But now, God, please strengthen my hands. ¹⁰ I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of Mehetabel, who was confined in his home. He said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. At night they are coming to kill you."

¹¹ I replied, "Would a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into the temple just so he could save his own life? I will not go in!"

¹² I realized that it was not God who sent him, but that he had prophesied against me. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ They hired him to make me afraid, so that I might do what he said and sin, so they could give me a bad name in order to humiliate me. ¹⁴ Call to mind Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, and all that they did. Also call to mind the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who tried to make me be afraid.

¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, after fifty-two days.

¹⁶ When all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us, they became afraid and they fell greatly in their own eyes. For they knew the work was done with the help of our God. ¹⁷ At this time the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. ¹⁸ For there were many in Judah who were bound by an oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah. His son Jehohanan had taken as his wife the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. ¹⁹ They also spoke to me about his good deeds and reported my words back to him.

Letters were sent to me from Tobiah to frighten me.

7

¹ When the wall was finished and I had set up the doors in place, and the gatekeepers and singers and Levites had been appointed, ² I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem, along with Hananiah who had oversight of the fortress, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. ³ I said to them, "Do not open the

gates of Jerusalem until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are on guard, you may shut the doors and bar them. Appoint guards from those who live in Jerusalem, some at the place of their guard station, and some in front of their own homes.”⁴ Now the city was wide and large, but there were few people within it, and no houses had yet been rebuilt.

⁵ My God put into my heart to gather together the nobles, the officials, and the people to enroll them by their families. I found the book of the genealogy of those who returned at the first and found the following written in it. ⁶ “These are the people of the province who went up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon took into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, each to his city. ⁷ They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel included the following. ⁸ The descendants of Parosh, 2,172. ⁹ The descendants of Shephatiah, 372. ¹⁰ The descendants of Arah, 652. ¹¹ The descendants of Pahath-Moab, through the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818. ¹² The descendants of Elam, 1,254. ¹³ The descendants of Zattu, 845. ¹⁴ The descendants of Zakkai, 760. ¹⁵ The descendants of Binnui, 648. ¹⁶ The descendants of Bebai, 628. ¹⁷ The descendants of Azgad, 2,322. ¹⁸ The descendants of Adonikam, 667. ¹⁹ The descendants of Bigvai, 2,067. ²⁰ The

descendants of Adin, 655. ²¹ The descendants of Ater, of Hezekiah, 98. ²² The descendants of Hashum, 328. ²³ The descendants of Bezai, 324. ²⁴ The descendants of Hariph, 112. ²⁵ The descendants of Gibeon, 95. ²⁶ The men from Bethlehem and Netophah, 188. ²⁷ The men from Anathoth, 128. ²⁸ The men of Beth Azmaveth, 42. ²⁹ The men of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743. ³⁰ The men of Ramah and Geba, 621. ³¹ The men of Michmas, 122. ³² The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. ³³ The men of the other Nebo, 52. ³⁴ The people of the other Elam, 1,254. ³⁵ The men of Harim, 320. ³⁶ The men of Jericho, 345. ³⁷ The men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721. ³⁸ The men of Senaah, 3,930.

³⁹ The priests: The descendants of Jedaiah (of the house of Jeshua), 973. ⁴⁰ The descendants of Immer, 1,052. ⁴¹ The descendants of Pashhur, 1,247. ⁴² The descendants of Harim, 1,017.

⁴³ The Levites: The descendants of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of Binnui, and of Hodevah, 74. * ⁴⁴ The singers: The descendants of Asaph, 148. ⁴⁵ The gatekeepers of the descendants of Shallum, the descendants of Ater, the descendants of Talmon, the descendants of Akkub, the descendants of Hatita, the descendants of Shobai, 138.

⁴⁶ The temple servants: The descendants of Ziha, the descendants of Hasupha, the descendants of Tabbaoth, ⁴⁷ the descendants of Keros, the descendants of Sia, the descendants of Padon, ⁴⁸ the descendants of Lebana, the descendants

* **7:43** Instead of of Binnui, and of Hodevah , some modern versions have the descendants of Hodevah .

of Hagaba, the descendants of Shalmal, ⁴⁹ the descendants of Hanan, the descendants of Giddel, the descendants of Gahar. ⁵⁰ The descendants of Reaiah, the descendants of Rezin, the descendants of Nekoda, ⁵¹ the descendants of Gazzam, the descendants of Uzza, the descendants of Paseah, ⁵² the descendants of Besai, the descendants of Meunim, the descendants of Nephushesim. ⁵³ The descendants of Bakbuk, the descendants of Hakupha, the descendants of Harhur, ⁵⁴ the descendants of Bazluth, the descendants of Mehida, the descendants of Harsha, ⁵⁵ the descendants of Barkos, the descendants of Sisera, the descendants of Temah, ⁵⁶ the descendants of Nezhiah, the descendants of Hatipha.

⁵⁷ The descendants of Solomon's servants: the descendants of Sotai, the descendants of Sophereth, the descendants of Perida, ⁵⁸ the descendants of Jaala, the descendants of Darkon, the descendants of Giddel, ⁵⁹ the descendants of Shephatiah, the descendants of Hattil, the descendants of Pochereth Hazzebaim, the descendants of Amon. ⁶⁰ All the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants, were 392.

⁶¹ These were the people who went up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer. But they could not prove that they or their ancestors' families were descendants from Israel: ⁶² the descendants of Delaiah, the descendants of Tobiah, and the descendants of Nekoda, 642. ⁶³ Those who were from the priests: the descendants of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai (who took his wife from the daughters of Barzillai of

Gilead and was called by their name). ⁶⁴ These sought their records among those enrolled by their genealogy, but they could not be found, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. ⁶⁵ Then the governor said to them that they should not be allowed to eat the priests' share of food from the sacrifices until there rose up a priest with Urim and Thummim.

⁶⁶ The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁷ besides their male servants and their female servants, of whom there were 7,337. They had 245 singing men and women. ⁶⁸ Their horses were 736 in number, their mules, 245, ⁶⁹ their camels, 435, and their donkeys, 6,720.

⁷⁰ Some from among the heads of ancestors' families gave gifts for the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand darics of gold, 50 basins, and 530 priestly garments. † ⁷¹ Some of the heads of ancestors' families gave into the treasury for the work twenty thousand darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. ⁷² The rest of the people gave twenty thousand darics of gold, and two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priestly garments.

⁷³ So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel lived in their cities.

By the seventh month the people of Israel were settled in their cities.”

† **7:70** The Hebrew text has thirty priestly garments , but it is difficult to understand. Most modern versions have 530 priestly garments . However, some recommend reading thirty priestly garments and five hundred minas of silver .

8

¹ All the people gathered as one man in the open area in front of the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which Yahweh had commanded Israel. ² On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear and understand. ³ He faced the open area in front of the Water Gate, and he read from it from early morning until midday, before men and women, and any who could understand, and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. ⁴ Then Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform which the people had made for the purpose. Standing beside him were Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right side; and Pedaiah, Mishaël, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam were standing on his left side. ⁵ Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above the people, and when he opened it all the people stood up. ⁶ Ezra gave thanks to Yahweh, the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands and answered, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh with their faces to the ground. ⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah—the Levites—helped the people understand the law, while the

people remained in their place. * 8 They read in the book, The Law of God, making it clear with interpretation and giving the meaning so the people understood the reading.

9 Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting to the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to Yahweh your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then Nehemiah said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and have something sweet to drink, and send some of it to one who has nothing prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength." 11 So the Levites made the people be quiet, saying, "Hush! for this day is holy. Do not be grieved." 12 Then all the people went their way to eat and to drink and to share food and to celebrate with great joy because they had understood the words that were made known to them.

13 On the second day the leaders of the ancestors' families from all the people, the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe to gain insight from the words of the law. 14 They found written in the law how Yahweh had commanded through Moses that the people of Israel should live in shelters during the festival of the seventh month. 15 They should make a

* **8:7** Most modern versions, including the ULB and UDB, translate so as to identify as Levites all the persons named in this verse. However, some modern versions translate so as to put the Levites in the same list as the individuals first named.

proclamation in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out into the hill country, and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtle, palms and shade trees, to make shelters, as it is written." ¹⁶ So the people went out and brought the branches back and made themselves shelters, each on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God, in the open area in front of the Water Gate, and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷ All the assembly of those who had returned from captivity made shelters and lived in them. For since the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day, the people of Israel had not celebrated this festival, and so their joy was very great. ¹⁸ Also day by day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the book of the law of God. They kept the festival for seven days and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, in obedience to the decree.

9

¹ Now on the twenty-fourth day of the same month the people of Israel were assembled and they were fasting, and they were wearing sackcloth, and they put dust on their heads. ² The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all the foreigners. They stood and confessed their own sins and the evil actions of their ancestors. ³ They stood up in their places, and for one-fourth of the day they read from the book of the law of Yahweh their God. For another fourth of the day they were confessing

and bowing down before Yahweh their God. ⁴ The Levites, Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani, stood on the stairs and they called out with a loud voice to Yahweh their God.

⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah said, "Stand up and give praise to Yahweh your God forever and ever."

"May they bless your glorious name, and may it be exalted above every blessing and praise.

⁶ You are Yahweh. You alone. You have made heaven, the highest heavens, with all their host, and the earth and everything on it, and the seas and all that is in them. You give life to them all, and the host of heaven worship you. ⁷ You are Yahweh, the God who chose Abram, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham. ⁸ You found his heart was faithful before you, and you made with him the covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

⁹ You saw the affliction of our forefathers in Egypt and you heard their cry by the Sea of Reeds. ¹⁰ You gave signs and wonders against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and on all the people of his land, for you knew that the Egyptians acted with arrogance against them. But you made a name for yourself which stands to this day. ¹¹ Then you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the middle of the sea

on the dry land; and threw those who pursued them into the depths, as a stone into deep waters. ¹² You led them by a pillar of cloud during by day, and by a pillar of fire during the night to light the way for them to go. ¹³ On Mount Sinai you came down and you spoke with them from heaven and gave to them righteous decrees and true laws, good statutes and commandments. ¹⁴ You made your holy Sabbath known to them, and you gave them commandments and statutes and a law through Moses your servant. ¹⁵ You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and water from a rock for their thirst, and you said to them to go in to possess the land you swore on oath to give them.

¹⁶ But they and our ancestors acted disrespectfully, and they were stubborn, and did not listen to your commandments. ¹⁷ They refused to listen, and they did not think about the wonders that you had done among them, but became stubborn, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their slavery. But you are a God who is full of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. You did not abandon them. ¹⁸ Even when they had cast a calf out of molten metal and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹ you, in your compassion, did not abandon them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them on the way did not leave them during day, neither did the pillar of fire by night to light the way for them to go. ²⁰ Your good Spirit

you gave them to instruct them, and your manna you did not withhold from their mouths, and water you gave them for their thirst. ²¹ For forty years you provided for them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. ²² You gave them kingdoms and peoples, assigning to them every corner of the land. Then they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan. ²³ You made their children as numerous as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you told their ancestors to go in and possess. ²⁴ So the people went in and possessed the land and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites. You gave them into their hands, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that Israel might do with them as they pleased. ²⁵ They captured the fortified cities and a productive land, and they captured houses full of all good things, cisterns already cut out, vineyards and olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were satisfied and grew fat and enjoyed themselves in your great goodness.

²⁶ Then they became disobedient and they rebelled against you. They threw your law behind their backs. They murdered your prophets who had warned them to turn back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. ²⁷ So you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. In the time of their suffering, they cried out to you, and you heard them from

heaven, and because of your great mercies you sent them rescuers who rescued them out of the hand of their enemies. ²⁸ But after they had rest, they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so their enemies ruled over them. Yet when they returned and cried out to you, you heard from heaven, and many times because of your compassion you rescued them. ²⁹ You warned them so they might turn back to your law. Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to your commands. They sinned against your decrees which give life to anyone who obeys them. They gave the stubborn shoulder-blade and stiffened their neck and refused to listen. ³⁰ For many years you put up with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they did not listen. So you gave them into the hand of the neighboring peoples. ³¹ But in your great mercies you did not make a complete end of them, or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² Now therefore, our God—you great, mighty, and awesome God who keep your covenant and steadfast love—do not let all this hardship seem little to you that has come on us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our ancestors, and on all your people from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. ³³ You are just in everything that has come on us, for you have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly. ³⁴ Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our ancestors have not kept your

law, nor paid attention to your commandments or your covenant decrees by which you warned them. ³⁵ Even in their own kingdom, while they enjoyed your great goodness to them, in the large and productive land you set before them, they did not serve you or turn away from their evil ways. ³⁶ Now we are slaves in the land you gave our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, and behold, we are slaves in it! ³⁷ The rich yield from our land goes to the kings you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please. We are in great distress. ³⁸ Because of all this, we make a firm covenant in writing. On the sealed document are the names of our princes, Levites, and priests.”

10

¹ On the sealed documents were Nehemiah, the governor, son of Hakaliah and Zedekiah, ² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, ⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk, ⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the priests. ⁹ The Levites were: Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the family of Henadad, Kadmiel, ¹⁰ and their fellow Levites, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ¹¹ Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³ Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu. ¹⁴ The leaders of the people were: 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 Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

²⁸ As for the rest of the people, who were priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants, and all who had separated themselves from the people of the neighboring lands and pledged themselves to the law of God, including their wives, their sons and their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, ²⁹ they joined together with their brothers, their nobles, and bound themselves with both a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and obey all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord and his decrees and his statutes. ³⁰ We promised that we would not give our daughters to the people of the land or take their daughters for our sons. ³¹ We also promised that if the people of the land bring goods or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will let our fields rest, and we will cancel all debts.

³² We accepted the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God, ³³ to provide for the bread of the presence, and for the regular grain offering,

the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, the new moon festivals and appointed feasts, and for the holy offerings, and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, as well as for all the work of the house of our God. ³⁴ The priests, the Levites, and the people cast lots for the wood offering. The lots would select which of our families would bring wood into the house of our God at the appointed times each year, to be burned on the altar of Yahweh our God, as it is written in the law. ³⁵ We promised to bring to the house of Yahweh the firstfruits grown from our soil, and the firstfruits of every tree each year. ³⁶ As it is written in the law, we promised to bring to the house of God and to the priests who serve there, the firstborn of our sons and of our herds and flocks. ³⁷ We will bring the first of our dough and our grain offerings, and the fruit of every tree, and the new wine and the oil we will bring to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God. We will bring to the Levites the tithes from our soil because the Levites collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. ³⁸ A priest, a descendant of Aaron, must be with the Levites when they receive the tithes. The Levites must bring a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God to the storerooms of the treasury. ³⁹ For the people of Israel and the descendants of Levi are to bring the contributions of grain, new wine, and oil to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are kept and where the priests who are serving, and the gatekeepers, and the singers stay.

We will not neglect the house of our God.

11

¹ The leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other nine remained in other towns. ² Then the people blessed all those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

³ These are the provincial officials who lived in Jerusalem. However, in the towns of Judah everyone lived on his own land, including some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants, and descendants of Solomon's servants. ⁴ In Jerusalem lived some of the descendants of Judah and some of the descendants of Benjamin.

The people from Judah included: Athaiah son of Uziah son of Zechariah son of Amariah son of Shephatiah son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez. ⁵ There was Maaseiah son of Baruch son of Kol-Hozeh son of Hazaiah son of Adaiiah son of Joiarib son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite.

⁶ All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468. They were outstanding men.

⁷ These are the descendants of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam son of Joed son of Pedaiiah son of Kolaiah son of Maaseiah son of Ithiel son of Jeshaiiah, ⁸ and those following him, Gabbai and Sallai, 928 men. * ⁹ Joel son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in command over the city.

* **11:8** Instead of those following him , which some Hebrew copies and some other ancient versions have, but other ancient copies read his brothers .

¹⁰ From the priests: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jakin, ¹¹ Seraiah son of Hilkiah son of Meshullam son of Zadok son of Meraioth son of Ahitub, the chief official of the house of God, ¹² and their associates who did the work for the house, 822 men, along with Adaiah son of Jeroham son of Pelaliah son of Amzi son of Zechariah son of Pashhur son of Malchijah. ¹³ His brothers were heads of clans, 242 men; and Amashsai son of Azarel son of Ahzai son of Meshillemoth son of Immer, ¹⁴ and their brothers, 128 courageous fighting men; their overseer was Zabdiel son of Hagedolim.

¹⁵ From the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hashub son of Azrikam son of Hashabiah son of Bunni, ¹⁶ and Shabbethai and Jozabad, who were from the leaders of the Levites and were in charge of the outside work of the house of God. ¹⁷ There was Mattaniah son of Mika son of Zabdi, a descendant of Asaph, who was the director who began the thanksgiving in prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brothers, and Abda son of Shammua son of Galal son of Jeduthun. ¹⁸ All the Levites in the holy city numbered 284.

¹⁹ The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and their associates, who kept watch at the gates, 172 men.

²⁰ The remainder of Israel and of the priests and the Levites were in all the towns of Judah. Everyone lived on his own inherited property.

²¹ The temple workers lived in Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

²² The chief officer over the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani son of Hashabiah

son of Mattaniah son of Mika, of the descendants of Asaph, singers over the work in the house of God. ²³ They were under orders from the king, and firm orders were given for the singers as every day required. ²⁴ Then Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah son of Judah, was at the king's side in all matters concerning the people.

²⁵ As for the villages and their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its villages, and in Dibon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, ²⁶ and in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth Pelet, ²⁷ Hazar Shual, and Beersheba and its villages. ²⁸ Some of the people of Judah lived in Ziklag, Mekonah and its villages, ²⁹ Enrimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, ³⁰ Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, and in Lachish its fields and Azekah and its villages. So they lived from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. ³¹ The people of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Mikmash and Aija, at Bethel and its villages, ³² at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, ³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, ³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, ³⁵ Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. ³⁶ Some of the Levites who lived in Judah were assigned to the people of Benjamin.

12

¹ These were the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ² Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, ³ Shecaniah, Rehum, and Meremoth. ⁴ There were Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, ⁵ Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah, ⁶ Shemaiah, and

Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and Jedaiah. These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Jeshua.

⁸ The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who was in charge of the thanksgiving songs, along with his associates. ⁹ Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood opposite them during the service. ¹⁰ Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim was the father of Eliashib, Eliashib was the father of Joiada, ¹¹ Joiada was the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

¹² In the days of Joiakim these were the priests, the leaders of the families: Meraiah was the leader of Seraiah, Hananiah was the leader of Jeremiah, ¹³ Meshullam was the leader of Ezra, Jehohanan was the leader of Amariah, ¹⁴ Jonathan was the leader of Malluk, and Joseph was the leader of Shebaniah. * ¹⁵ Adna was the leader of Harim, Helkai the leader of Meremoth, ¹⁶ Zechariah was the leader of Iddo, Meshullam was the leader of Ginnethon, and ¹⁷ Zichri was the leader of Abijah. ... of Miniamin. Piltai was the leader of Moadiah. † ¹⁸ Shammua was the leader of Bilgah, Jehonathan was the leader of Shemaiah, ¹⁹ Mattenai was the leader of Joiarib, Uzzi was the leader of Jedaiah, ²⁰ Kallai was the leader of Sallu, Eber was the leader of

* **12:14** Many modern versions, including the ULB and UDB, have Malluk as a correction for Malluki in the Hebrew text. The correct form of this name appears in Neh. 12:2. † **12:17** The expression ... of Miniamin is incomplete, because no leader of that family is named in the Hebrew text.

Amok, ²¹ Hashabiah was the leader of Hilkiyah, and Nethanel was the leader of Jedaiah.

²² In the days of Eliashib, the Levites Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were recorded as the heads of families, and the priests were recorded during the reign of Darius the Persian.

²³ The descendants of Levi, their leaders of families were recorded in the book of the annals up to the days of Johanan son of Eliashib.

²⁴ The leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, with their associates, who stood opposite them to give praise and to give thanks, responding section by section, in obedience to the command of David, the man of God. ²⁵ Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storerooms by the gates. ²⁶ They served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

²⁷ At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the people sought out the Levites wherever they lived, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with joy, with thanksgivings and singing with cymbals, harps, and with lyres.

²⁸ The fellowship of singers gathered together from the district around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites. ²⁹ They also came from Beth Gilgal and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. ³⁰ The priests and the Levites purified themselves, and

then they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

³¹ Then I had the leaders of Judah go up to the top of the wall, and I appointed two large choirs who gave thanks. One went to the right on the wall toward the Dung Gate.

³² Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them, ³³ and after them went Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, ³⁵ and some of the priests' sons with trumpets, and Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph. ³⁶ There also were Zechariah's relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. Ezra the scribe was in front of them. ³⁷ By the Fountain Gate they went straight up on the stairs of the city of David, by the stairway to the wall above David's palace, to the Water Gate on the east.

³⁸ The other choir of those who gave thanks went in the other direction. I followed them on the wall with half the people, above the Tower of Ovens, to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate, and they stopped at the Gate of the Guard.

⁴⁰ So both choirs of those who gave thanks took their place in the house of God, and I also took my place with half of the officials with me. ⁴¹ Then the priests took their place: Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai,

Zechariah, and Hananiah, with the trumpets, ⁴² and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer, and the singers made themselves heard and Jezrahiah was their leader. ⁴³ They offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. Also the women and the children rejoiced. So the joy of Jerusalem could be heard far away.

⁴⁴ On that day men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites. Each was assigned to work the fields near the towns. For Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who were standing before them. ⁴⁵ They performed the service of their God, and the service of purification, and so did the singers and the gatekeepers, in keeping with the command of David and of Solomon his son. ⁴⁶ For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there were directors of singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. ⁴⁷ In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah, all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers. They set aside the portion that was for the Levites, and the Levites set aside a portion for the descendants of Aaron.

13

¹ On that day they read in the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. It was found written in

it that no Ammonite or Moabite should come into the assembly of God, forever. ² This was because they had not come to the people of Israel with bread and with water, but they had hired Balaam to curse Israel. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. ³ As soon as they heard the law, they separated out from Israel every foreign person.

⁴ Now before this Eliashib the priest was appointed over the storerooms of the house of our God. He was related to Tobiah. ⁵ Eliashib prepared for Tobiah a large storeroom, where previously they kept the grain offering, the incense, the articles, and the tithes of the grain, new wine, and the oil, which were designated for the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. ⁶ But in all this time I was not in Jerusalem. For in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. After some time I asked the king for permission to leave, ⁷ and I returned to Jerusalem. I understood the evil that Eliashib had done by giving Tobiah a storeroom in the courts of the house of God. ⁸ I was very angry and I threw all Tobiah's household articles out of the storeroom. ⁹ I ordered that they purify the storerooms, and I put back in them the articles of the house of God, the grain offerings, and the incense.

¹⁰ I learned that the Levites' portions had not been given to them, and they had run away, each to his own field, the Levites and the singers who did the work. ¹¹ So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God neglected?" I

gathered them together and stationed them at their posts. ¹² Then all Judah brought in the tithe of the grain, the new wine, and the oil to the storerooms. ¹³ I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe, and from the Levites, Pedaiah. Next to them was Hanan son of Zaccur son of Mattaniah, for they were counted as trustworthy. Their duties were to distribute the supplies to their associates. ¹⁴ Call me to mind, my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out the good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and its services.

¹⁵ In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of heavy loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I protested that they were selling food on that day. ¹⁶ Men from Tyre living in Jerusalem brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and they sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah and in the city! ¹⁷ Then I confronted the leaders of Judah, "What is this evil thing you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers do this? Did not our God bring all this evil on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

¹⁹ As soon as it became dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors be shut and that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. I stationed some

of my servants at the gates so no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. ²⁰ The merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares camped outside Jerusalem once or twice. ²¹ But I warned them, “Why do you camp outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!” From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath. ²² Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves, and come and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Call me to mind for this also, my God, and have mercy on me because of the covenant loyalty you have toward me.

²³ In those days I also saw Jews that had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod. None of them could speak the language of Judah, but only the language of one of the other peoples. ²⁵ I confronted them, and I cursed them, and I hit some of them and pulled out their hair. I made them swear by God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves. ²⁶ Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of these women? Among many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, his foreign wives caused him to sin. ²⁷ Should we then listen to you and do all this great evil, and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?”

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the

Horonite. Therefore I caused him to flee from my presence.

²⁹ Call them to mind, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

³⁰ Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and established the duties of the priests and the Levites, each to his own task. ³¹ I provided for the wood offering at the appointed times and for the firstfruits.

Call me to mind, my God, for good.

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