

Nehemiah Chapter 11 — One in Ten to Live in Jerusalem

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Nehemiah Chapter 10 ended with a covenant signed and sealed — specific commitments, written down, about worship, marriage, rest, and giving. Chapter 11 answers a quieter but equally practical question: who would actually live inside the rebuilt walls?

A rebuilt Jerusalem with too few residents was still vulnerable. The walls stood, but a city needs people — families, workers, worshipers — to truly be a city again.

This chapter records how that need was met: some volunteered, one in ten was chosen by lot, and the resulting population is carefully listed by tribe, family, and role, followed by an accounting of where everyone else settled throughout the towns and villages of Judah and Benjamin.

A wall protects a city, but people are what make it a home — and Chapter 11 shows a community willing to be repopulated, not merely rebuilt.

Nehemiah Chapter 11 teaches us that faithfulness sometimes looks like sacrifice hidden inside a census — ordinary families choosing, or being chosen, to leave familiar towns so that the holy city would not stand empty.

PART ONE: ONE IN TEN TO LIVE IN JERUSALEM

I. CASTING LOTS FOR THE HOLY CITY

Nehemiah 11:1 — A Tenth Chosen to Resettle

“The leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to choose one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine would remain in their towns.”

Leaders already lived in Jerusalem, but the general population had largely settled back into their ancestral towns after the exile. Repopulating the capital required a deliberate, fair method — casting lots — rather than simply hoping enough people would volunteer.

Being chosen this way meant leaving established homes, fields, and neighbors for the uncertain work of resettling a city still recovering from decades of ruin.

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:2

The first to resettle in their own towns were some of the Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants.

Nehemiah 7:4

Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and none of the houses had yet been rebuilt.

Joshua 18:10

Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the Lord, dividing the land among the tribes of Israel.

Observation

Nehemiah 7:4 explains exactly why this chapter was necessary — a city with strong walls but too few residents was still an unfinished project.

II. PRAISING THE VOLUNTEERS

Nehemiah 11:2 — Honoring Willing Sacrifice

“The people praised those who willingly volunteered to live in Jerusalem.”

Not everyone who resettled in Jerusalem was chosen by lot. Some offered themselves freely, and the community made a point of honoring that willingness publicly.

This brief verse draws a clear distinction: obedience by lot was accepted, but voluntary sacrifice was celebrated.

Cross References

Judges 5:2

When the leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, praise the Lord!

2 Chronicles 17:16

Next to him was Amasiah son of Zicri, who volunteered himself for the service of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 29:9

The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.

Principle

A community that notices and praises willing sacrifice encourages more of it — recognition matters, even for quiet, costly decisions.

PART TWO: RESIDENTS OF JERUSALEM

III. LEADERS WHO SETTLED IN JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 11:3 — A City of Mixed Backgrounds

“These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem. The rest of Israel—including the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon’s servants—lived in their own towns throughout Judah.”

This verse sets up the entire chapter’s structure — a summary before the detailed lists, distinguishing those who lived in the capital from the majority who remained in towns throughout the province.

Cross References

Ezra 2:70

The priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants settled in their own towns, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns as well.

1 Chronicles 9:3

In Jerusalem lived some of the people of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.

Nehemiah 7:73

So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel settled in their own towns.

Application

Even a summary verse like this one reminds us that God’s work depends on many people, in many different locations, each fulfilling their part.

IV. THE DESCENDANTS OF JUDAH IN JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 11:4-6 — A Family Line of 468 Brave Men

Two family lines from the tribe of Judah are traced in detail before the chapter gives their combined total.

- Athaiah son of Uziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, from the family line of Perez
- Maaseiah son of Baruch, son of Colhozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, a descendant of the Shilonite
- The descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem — 468 brave men in total

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:4

Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, a descendant of Perez son of Judah.

Genesis 38:29

Then his brother came out with a scarlet thread on his hand, and he was named Perez.

1 Chronicles 9:6

The descendants of Zerah: Jeuel. The relatives of Perez and Zerah numbered six hundred ninety in all.

Observation

These men are specifically described as “brave” — resettling a half-ruined capital required real courage, not just a willingness to move.

V. THE DESCENDANTS OF BENJAMIN IN JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 11:7-8 — A Family Line of 928 Men

- Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah
- Gabbai and Sallai
- Total from Benjamin who settled in Jerusalem — 928 men

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:7

From the descendants of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah.

Numbers 26:38

The descendants of Benjamin by their clans were Bela, Ashbel, Ahiham, Shupham, and Hupham.

1 Chronicles 7:6

The sons of Benjamin were Bela, Beker, and Jediah — three in all.

Key Instruction

Judah and Benjamin together formed the backbone of Jerusalem's resettled population — the two tribes most closely tied to the city since the days of the divided kingdom.

VI. OVERSEERS OF THE BENJAMITE COMMUNITY

Nehemiah 11:9 — Named Leadership Over the City

“Joel son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in command over the city.”

Even within this smaller section of the population, clear leadership was named — an overseer and a second in command — reflecting the same pattern of structured accountability seen throughout Nehemiah's reforms.

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:9

All these men were heads of their families, as listed in their genealogical records.

Nehemiah 3:9

Next to them, Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

1 Chronicles 27:16

Over the tribe of Reuben was Eliezer son of Zicri; over Simeon, Shephatiah son of Maacah.

Principle

Clear lines of leadership, named specifically rather than left informal, appear again and again throughout Nehemiah's approach to rebuilding community life.

PART THREE: PRIESTS AND LEVITES IN JERUSALEM

VII. THE PRIESTLY FAMILIES IN JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 11:10-14 — Nearly 1,200 Men in Priestly Service

Several priestly family lines are recorded, each with its own leader and total, adding up to a substantial priestly presence in the resettled city.

- Jedaiah son of Joiarib and Jakin
- Seraiah son of Hilkiyah, chief officer in the house of God — with 822 associates carrying out temple duties
- Adaiah son of Jeroham, with 242 relatives who were heads of families
- Amashsai son of Azarel, with 128 relatives described as brave warriors, overseen by Zabdiel son of Haggadolim

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:10

From the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin.

Ezra 7:1

Ezra was the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiyah, in the line of the high priests.

1 Chronicles 6:13

Shallum was the father of Hilkiyah, and Hilkiyah the father of Azariah.

Observation

Between these four family lines, nearly 1,200 priests and their relatives served in Jerusalem — a significant commitment of manpower to sustain the temple's daily worship.

VIII. THE LEVITES IN JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 11:15-18 — 284 Levites Serving in Worship

The Levites listed here include both administrators and worship leaders, showing the range of roles Levites filled beyond the priesthood itself.

- Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni
- Shabbethai and Jozabad, leaders in charge of the outside work of the temple
- Mattaniah son of Mika, director who led in thanksgiving and prayer, with Bakbukiah second among his associates, and Abda son of Shammua
- Total Levites in the holy city — 284

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:14

From the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, a descendant of Merari.

Ezra 2:40

The Levites included the family of Jeshua and Kadmiel, descendants of Hodaviah — seventy-four in all.

Nehemiah 12:8

The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who led the songs of thanksgiving.

Application

A named “director who led in thanksgiving and prayer” shows that organized worship, not just administration, required dedicated, accountable leadership.

IX. GATEKEEPERS AND TEMPLE SERVANTS

Nehemiah 11:19-21 — Guarding and Supporting the House of God

The chapter closes its account of Jerusalem’s temple staff with the gatekeepers and temple servants, along with a reminder that most Israelites still lived on their own inherited land throughout Judah.

- The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and their fellow gatekeepers — 172 in all
- The rest of the Israelites, priests, and Levites lived in the towns of Judah, each on his own inherited property
- The temple servants settled in the area of Ophel, overseen by Ziha and Gishpa

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:17

The gatekeepers were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives; Shallum was the chief.

Ezra 2:42

The descendants of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai — 139 in all.

Ezra 2:43

The temple servants included the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, and Tabbaoth.

Observation

Gatekeepers may seem like a minor role, but guarding access to the temple was essential to protecting the sanctity of worship taking place inside it.

PART FOUR: LEADERSHIP AND ROYAL SUPPORT

X. THE CHIEF OFFICER OF THE LEVITES

Nehemiah 11:22 — Musicians Descended from Asaph

“The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mika, a descendant of Asaph, the musicians responsible for the service of the house of God.”

This verse traces leadership back to Asaph, David’s appointed choir leader generations earlier, showing continuity between the worship of the first temple and the worship now being restored.

Cross References

1 Chronicles 9:16

Also Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

Nehemiah 12:46

In the days of David and Asaph long ago, there was a director of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

1 Chronicles 25:1

David and the commanders of the army set apart some of the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying with harps, lyres, and cymbals.

Observation

A worship tradition connected all the way back to David gave the resettled community a sense of continuity, not a fresh start built from nothing.

XI. ROYAL PROVISION FOR THE TEMPLE MUSICIANS

Nehemiah 11:23 — Support from the King Himself

“They were under royal orders that provided them a daily allowance for their duties.”

Remarkably, the Persian king’s own decree provided daily support for the temple’s musicians — a foreign ruler funding Israel’s worship, echoing the pattern seen earlier when Artaxerxes supported Nehemiah’s original mission.

Cross References

Nehemiah 12:47

In the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers, and set aside the portion for the Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

Ezra 6:9

Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings, wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil—must be given to them daily without fail, as the priests in Jerusalem require.

1 Chronicles 25:1

David and the army commanders set apart the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for ministry, accompanied by harps, lyres, and cymbals.

Principle

God can provide for His people’s worship through unexpected sources, even the resources of a foreign government, when His purposes are at work.

XII. THE KING’S AGENT AMONG THE PEOPLE

Nehemiah 11:24 — A Bridge Between Israel and the Persian Court

“Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah son of Judah, was the king’s agent in all matters concerning the people.”

This role placed one man in the position of representing Israel’s interests directly to Persian authority, showing that faithful service to God and cooperation with civil government were not treated as contradictory.

Cross References

Genesis 38:30

Then his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand, and he was named Zerah.

1 Chronicles 9:6

The descendants of Zerah: Jeuel. The relatives of Perez and Zerah numbered six hundred ninety in all.

Nehemiah 2:1

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, wine was set before him, and I took the wine and gave it to the king.

Application

Faithful believers can serve as trusted bridges between God's people and the wider governing structures they live under, just as Nehemiah once did before the king himself.

PART FIVE: SETTLEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE LAND

XIII. VILLAGES OF JUDAH

Nehemiah 11:25-30 — From Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom

The chapter widens its view beyond Jerusalem to the many towns and villages where the majority of Judah's people continued to live, working the surrounding fields and countryside.

- Kiriath-arba, Dibon, and Jekabzeel and their villages
- Jeshua, Moladah, and Beth-pelet
- Hazar-shual and Beersheba and its towns
- Ziklag and Mekonah and their villages
- En-rimmon, Zorah, and Jarmuth
- Zanoah, Adullam, Lachish, and Azekah and their villages — settled from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom

Cross References

Joshua 15:13

Joshua gave Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, as the Lord had commanded — Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron.

Joshua 15:21

The towns of the tribe of Judah nearest the border of Edom in the Negev were Kabzeel, Eder, and Jagur.

Joshua 15:35

Also Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah.

Observation

These town names stretch back to the original tribal allotments under Joshua, showing that the returned exiles were resettling ancestral ground, not unfamiliar territory.

XIV. TOWNS OF BENJAMIN

Nehemiah 11:31-35 — From Geba to the Valley of the Craftsmen

The tribe of Benjamin's towns are listed next, filling out the picture of a province fully resettled beyond just its capital.

- Geba, Michmash, Aijah, and Bethel and its towns
- Anathoth, Nob, and Ananiah
- Hazor, Ramah, and Gittaim
- Hadid, Zeboim, and Neballat
- Lod and Ono, and the Valley of the Craftsmen

Cross References

Joshua 18:24

Also Kephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba — twelve towns, together with their villages.

Joshua 21:18

Anathoth and Almon, together with their pasturelands — four towns in all.

Ezra 2:33

The descendants of Lod, Hadid, and Ono numbered seven hundred twenty-five.

Key Instruction

A “Valley of the Craftsmen” among these town names is a quiet reminder that resettling the land required not only farmers but skilled workers of every kind.

XV. LEVITES ASSIGNED AMONG BENJAMIN

Nehemiah 11:36 — Worship Spread Beyond the Capital

“Some divisions of the Levites of Judah were assigned to live among the people of Benjamin.”

This closing note shows that spiritual instruction and worship were not confined to Jerusalem alone — Levites were deliberately placed among the towns of Benjamin, ensuring that faithful teaching reached beyond the capital’s walls.

Cross References

Joshua 21:4

The first lot fell to the Kohathite clans; the Levites who were priests, descendants of Aaron, received thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

1 Chronicles 6:60

From the tribe of Benjamin they were given Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth, together with their pasturelands — thirteen towns in all for their clans.

Joshua 21:17

Also Gibeon and Geba, together with their pasturelands.

Principle

Placing Levites intentionally throughout the towns of Benjamin shows a deliberate strategy to keep God’s Word close to every community, not centralized in one location alone.

XVI. THE GREAT MESSAGE OF NEHEMIAH 11

Nehemiah Chapter 11 can read like a bare administrative record, but underneath the names and numbers is a picture of a whole community reorganizing itself around a rebuilt, but still under-populated, holy city.

Some were chosen by lot to make Jerusalem their home. Others volunteered and were publicly praised for it. Priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, and temple servants were carefully counted and assigned. And far beyond the capital, ordinary families resettled ancestral towns from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom, with Levites deliberately placed among them so that worship and instruction would not stay confined to one city.

The wall from earlier chapters protected Jerusalem. This chapter shows what filled it — real families willing to leave comfort and familiarity, by choice or by lot, so that the holy city, and the land around it, would be fully alive again.

A rebuilt city is only truly restored when people are willing to live in it, and this chapter shows an entire nation, in ten thousand quiet decisions, choosing to do exactly that.

KEY LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH

CHAPTER 11

1. Sacrifice for the Sake of Worship

Some willingly chose to live in Jerusalem, leaving the comfort of their ancestral homes to strengthen the city of God.

Others were chosen by lot and accepted it, but the ones who volunteered were specifically praised — showing that willing sacrifice carries its own weight.

Strengthening God's work sometimes requires leaving behind what is comfortable and familiar.

2. Everyone Has a Role in God's Community

Whether priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, or governors, each person had a God-appointed place to serve.

The chapter names overseers, musicians, guards, and administrators alike — no single role was treated as more essential than the others to the community's life.

A healthy community depends on many different roles being faithfully filled, not just the most visible ones.

3. Order, Planning, and Oversight Matter in God's Work

Specific leaders were appointed for temple duties, civil affairs, and worship—reflecting the importance of structure in God's kingdom.

Overseers, second-in-commands, and chief officers are named at every level, from the Benjamite community to the temple musicians to the king's court.

Clear structure and accountable leadership are not opposed to spiritual life — they sustain it.

4. Faithful Stewardship Is Essential

People were assigned to care for the outer work of the temple, organize worship, and maintain daily service—indicating the value of dependable service.

Even administrative details, like royal provisions for musicians or oversight of the tithe, mattered enough to be recorded carefully.

Dependable, faithful service in ordinary duties keeps the larger work of God running.

5. God Honors Both Visible and Invisible Obedience

While Jerusalem had prominence, the people in outlying villages were also part of God's redemptive plan and community.

The chapter gives as much careful attention to distant towns like Beersheba and Lachish as it does to the capital itself.

Faithfulness lived out far from recognition matters just as much to God as faithfulness lived out in full view.

XVII. ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY — NEHEMIAH 11

Question 1

Why was casting lots necessary to determine who would live in Jerusalem?

Nehemiah 7:4 already explained the problem: the city was large but underpopulated. A fair method was needed to select residents without favoritism or resentment.

Casting lots left the decision, and its outcome, in God's hands rather than in the hands of any single leader.

Question 2

Why does verse 2 single out the people who volunteered for special praise?

Being chosen by lot required acceptance, but volunteering required initiative — offering up comfort and familiar surroundings before being asked to.

Willing sacrifice, freely offered, is worth noticing and honoring, not simply expected as ordinary duty.

Question 3

Why does the chapter go into such detail about specific family lines and their exact totals?

Careful records gave every family a documented place in the restored community, protecting their identity and inheritance for future generations.

Question 4

Why are overseers named for even relatively small groups, like the Benjamite community in verse 9?

Clear, named leadership — an overseer and a second in command — prevented confusion and ensured accountability at every level of the resettled population, not only at the top.

Question 5

What does it mean that nearly 1,200 priests and their relatives, described in verses 10-14, served in Jerusalem?

This significant number shows how much manpower was required to sustain the temple's daily worship, offerings, and duties without interruption.

Consider what a commitment of this scale required:

- Enough workers to maintain worship every single day without gaps.
- Multiple family lines organized under clear leaders and overseers.
- A community willing to dedicate this much of its population to sustained service.

Question 6

Why is Mattaniah specifically named as the one who “led in thanksgiving and prayer” in verse 17?

Naming a specific director for thanksgiving and prayer shows that organized, intentional worship required real leadership, not simply spontaneous participation.

Sustained, meaningful worship in a community usually depends on someone taking responsibility to lead it well.

Question 7

Why does the chapter bother to mention gatekeepers by name in verse 19?

Gatekeepers guarded access to the temple, protecting the sanctity of what happened inside. Even this less visible role was considered important enough to record by name and number.

Question 8

Why does verse 22 trace the chief officer of the Levites all the way back to Asaph, David's appointed choir leader?

This connection linked the restored community's worship directly to the worship established generations earlier under King David, giving it a sense of continuity rather than a fresh, disconnected start.

Question 9

What is significant about a Persian king providing daily support for temple musicians, as described in verse 23?

A foreign ruler funding Israel's worship echoes earlier moments in Nehemiah and Ezra where God used Persian authority to support His people's restoration.

God is not limited to using only His own people's resources to accomplish His purposes.

Question 10

Why did Israel need someone like Pethahiah serving as “the king's agent in all matters concerning the people” in verse 24?

Living under Persian rule required someone trusted to represent Israel's interests to the government, showing that faithful service to God and cooperation with civil authority were not seen as being in conflict.

Question 11

Why does the chapter list so many towns and villages outside of Jerusalem in verses 25-35?

This wider view reminds readers that the nation's life did not revolve around Jerusalem alone — most of the population lived, worked, and worshiped throughout the surrounding towns.

Consider what this teaches about how God's work is often carried out:

- Significant ministry often happens far from any capital or center of attention.
- Faithfulness in an ordinary town matters as much as visible service in a prominent city.
- A healthy nation, or community, needs strength spread throughout it, not concentrated in one place.

Question 12

Why were Levites specifically assigned to live among the towns of Benjamin, according to verse 36?

This deliberate placement ensured that spiritual instruction and worship leadership reached beyond Jerusalem's walls, into the daily life of surrounding communities.

Faithful teaching and worship are strongest when they are intentionally carried outward, not left to remain centralized in one location.

Personal Reflection

Nehemiah 11 is easy to read quickly and move past — names, numbers, and town after town. But read slowly, it tells the story of an entire people choosing, or accepting, real personal cost so that a rebuilt city and a scattered land could both come fully back to life.

Some left comfortable towns because a lot fell to them.

Others left because they simply chose to, and were praised for it.

Priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and musicians were counted and placed with care.

Levites were sent out into distant towns so that no community would be left without instruction.

None of this was glamorous work. Most of it never appeared in a headline moment the way the rebuilding of the wall did. But it was just as necessary — the quiet, ordinary decisions that turn a rebuilt structure into a living, functioning community.

Your own faithfulness may look a great deal like this chapter — an unremarkable decision to stay planted where you are needed, or to move somewhere less comfortable, simply because the work of God requires people willing to fill the gaps.

God notices willing sacrifice, even when it never makes it into the most memorable chapter of the story.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the ordinary faithfulness of people whose names rarely make it into the most celebrated parts of the story — the ones who moved, who served quietly, who guarded a gate or led a small group in thanksgiving.

Give us the same willingness this community showed, whether we are called to sacrifice by our own choice or by circumstances we did not choose.

Where our comfort has kept us from being planted where we are needed, unsettle us gently and give us courage to go.

Thank You that You use every kind of leadership, every role, and even foreign resources to sustain Your people's worship — remind us that our provision does not depend only on what looks familiar or expected.

Help us to carry faithful instruction and worship outward, into ordinary towns and unnoticed corners, rather than keeping it centered only where it is most visible.

May our willing sacrifice, however small or unseen, be counted by You as it was counted here. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

**"The people praised those who willingly volunteered to live in Jerusalem." —
Nehemiah 11:2**

This short verse captures the heart of the chapter — a community that noticed and honored willing sacrifice, even amid long lists of names chosen simply by lot.

Central Truth

A rebuilt city, and a restored community, come fully to life only when real people are willing to leave comfort behind and fill the roles God has placed before them.

Nehemiah Chapter 11 in One Sentence

Some Israelites were chosen by lot and others volunteered to resettle Jerusalem, while priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and musicians were carefully assigned to their duties, and the rest of the nation filled the towns and villages of Judah and Benjamin, so that both the holy city and the land around it would be fully alive again.