

Study Notes: Nehemiah 11:1-2
October 29, 2023: “Not by Chance, by Choice”
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Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem.

- In Nehemiah 7:4-5, Nehemiah recognized that the city of Jerusalem needed to be repopulated. That process began by having the leaders of the people settle and live in the city. These leaders included the Hanani, Hananiah, and those who served as spiritual leaders in the temple.

The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten of them to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns.

- In order to fill the city, others were needed, so the people used the process of casting lots so that a tenth (a tithe) of the people would be called to live in Jerusalem. The rest would be permitted to stay in surrounding towns.
- While the process of casting lots may seem random, we are reminded in Proverbs 16:33, that it is ultimately the Lord who decides matters. These people (who were listed in the rest of this chapter) were chosen by the Lord to make a sacrifice and live in the city.
 - The New American Commentary gives insights on casting lots, “God can use different means to make known his will. The use of the lot is seen a number of times in the Old Testament (e.g., Num 26:55–56; 1 Chr 24:5; 25:8; John 1:7). Today Christians do not depend on this means of ascertaining God’s will. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, we can expect God to make his will known through his Word, through inner conviction, and through his guidance of the circumstances. Nevertheless, we should not limit what God can do; he is sovereign and may use unusual means in specific circumstances. The important matter is to trust God for guidance.”

The people commended all who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

- Along with those chosen by lot, some people willingly volunteered to live in the city. These people were commended (more literally “blessed”) by the people for their willingness to serve the Lord by living in the city.
- The New American Commentary explains, “Most people preferred to live in the villages rather than inside Jerusalem. Moving to Jerusalem meant a change of environment, a change of neighbors, a change of friends for the children, and a change of lifestyle. But their loyalty to the purpose of maintaining the community made them willing to do it.”