

***Rebuilding What Was Lost***  
***The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah***



# ***Rebuilding What Was Lost***

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*
- *Letters to Kings*
- *The Return of the Heroes*
- *After “The End”*
- *The Cupbearer to the King*
- *Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem*
- *Rebuilding the Wall*
- *After “The End”*
- *Making Things Right*
- *The Feast of Tabernacles (Part 2)*



# The Feast of Tabernacles

- Ezra has been leading a "Bible study"
  - Why is the Feast of Tabernacles significant?
  - How are they framing the "sin offering" at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles in Nehemiah 9:6-32?
    - How is Nehemiah 9:30-31 such a perfect synopsis?
      - How can they intermingle their praise and contrition?
        - Why is it so crucial to our understanding of God's grace that we need to *keep* interweaving those strands of the narrative?

—intermingling praise with contrition—

(consider who God truly is)  
(consider who we truly are)  
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etc.



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    - Please read Nehemiah 9:33
      - How does this simple verse intermingle praise and appreciation for God with contrition and an acceptance of personal guilt?
        - How can we healthily do that today?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 9:33
    - Please read Nehemiah 9:34-37
      - Waitamminute—I thought things were going well
        - Are Ezra and Nehemiah complaining about having to serve (and pay taxes to) Artaxerxes?



- Remember: this was the land that God gave to Abraham long before and that God enabled Moses to lead the people back to years later and that kings like David and Solomon and Hezekiah had grown—but because of their own sin, the people had to give the *best* of that "milk and honey" to foreign kings
  - Even if Artaxerxes was the greatest, *niciest* foreign invader ever, it still had to be *crushing* to lose your *pride*...



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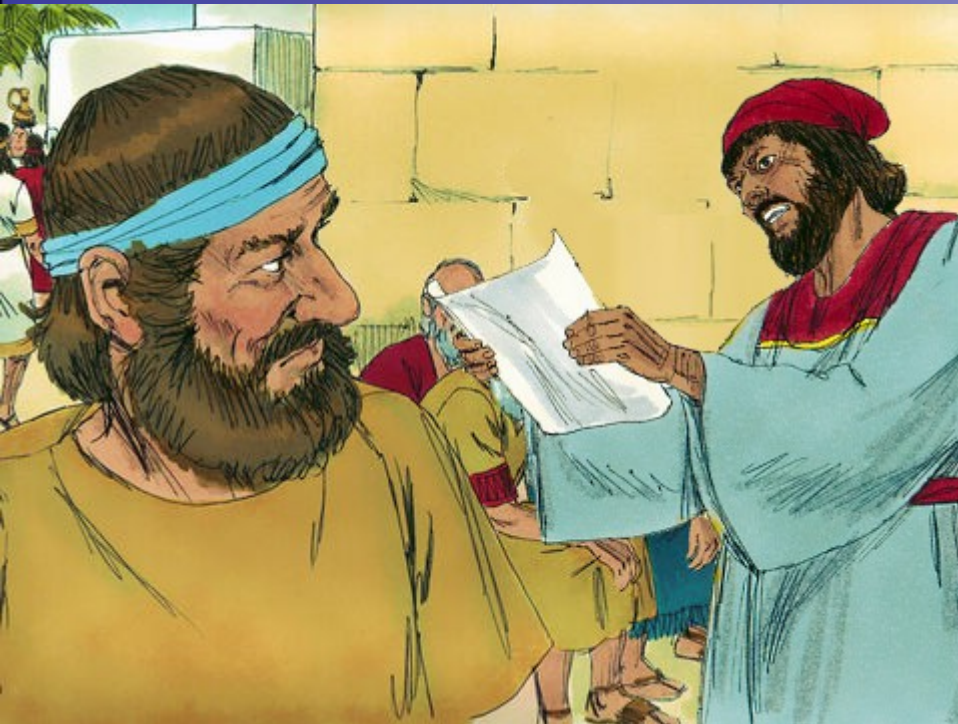


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- And emember the Treaty of Versailles after World War I?
  - Germany was so distressed that they embraced Hitler!



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    - Please read Nehemiah 9:33
    - Please read Nehemiah 9:34-37
    - Please read Nehemiah 9:38
      - What sort of "binding agreement" (i.e.; "covenant") would they be making in a context like this?
      - Is the covenant itself explained any further in Nehemiah 10:1-27?



# The Feast of Tabernacles

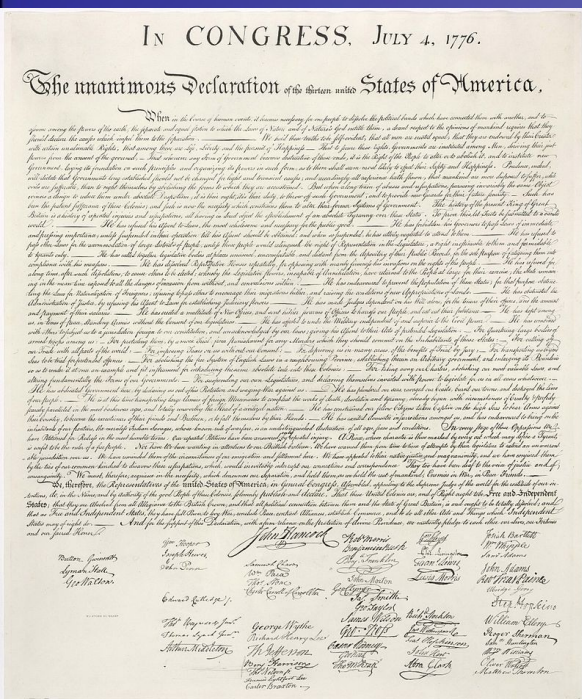


Funky little teaching moment...

- Do you remember the covenant that our own forefathers made when *they* found being under the thumb of a foreign power to be overly distressing?
- On July 2, 1776, they signed a Declaration of Independence, promising each other—

“For the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

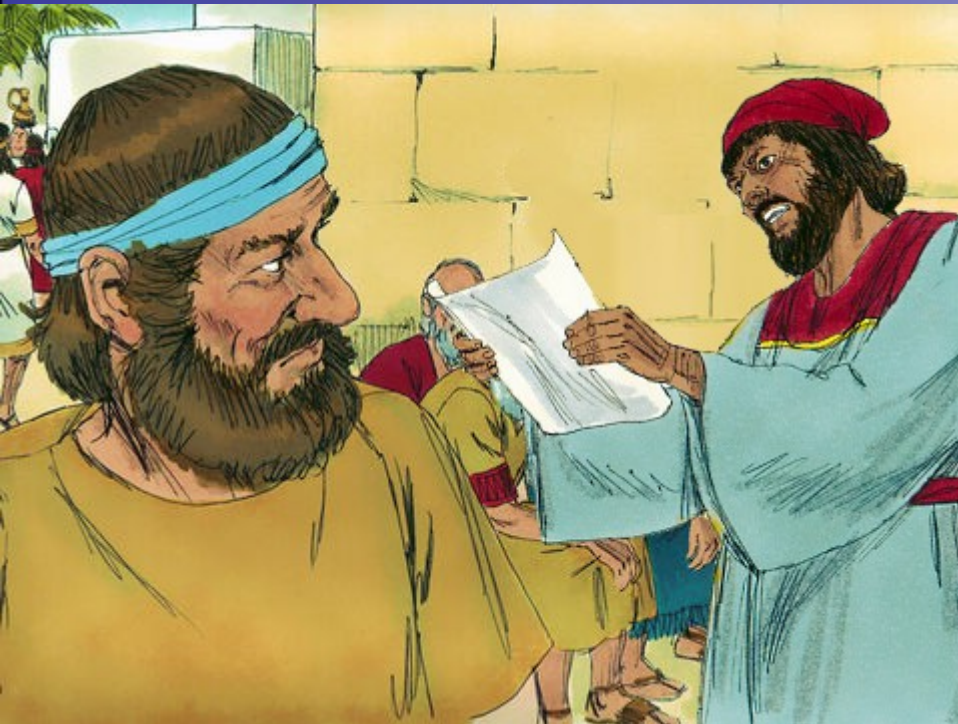
- They pledged everything they had to one another to support the active rebellion against their foreign king, so that they could have and govern their own nation
- Isn't that *precisely* what Israel's opponents warned the Babylonians that the people of God would do in those letters between Rehum, Shimshai, and Artaxerxes that were reprinted in Ezra 4?





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    - Please read Nehemiah 9:37-38, 10:28-29
      - So what is *this* binding agreement a "Declaration" of?
        - Think about that crucial paradigm—  
"We're in distress because our sins have left our nation under the thumbs of foreign kings  
—so we covenant to overthrow these kings!"  
—so we covenant to not do those sins any longer!"
      - How is this paradigm antithetical to the stereotypical, modern American mindset?
      - How can we strive to apply it to our own, *personal* contexts?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 10:30-31
      - How would this *change* things in Israel—and what does it suggest that they *haven't* been paying attention to all of this time?
        - Are Tobiah and his local "mafia" gonna like this?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 10:30-31
    - Please read Nehemiah 10:32-36
      - What are they covenanting here?
        - And what's going on in verse 36—are they giving all of their firstborn sons to the priests?
  - What had God told Aaron in Numbers 18:14-18 about what is due to the priests because they serve in the house of the Lord?
    - What does it mean that the sons and the unclean animals must be "redeemed" rather than given over to the priests?
      - How would that play out?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 10:32-36
    - Please read Nehemiah 10:37-39
      - Math with me for a moment—
        - The Levites collect a tithe (a "tenth") from everyone

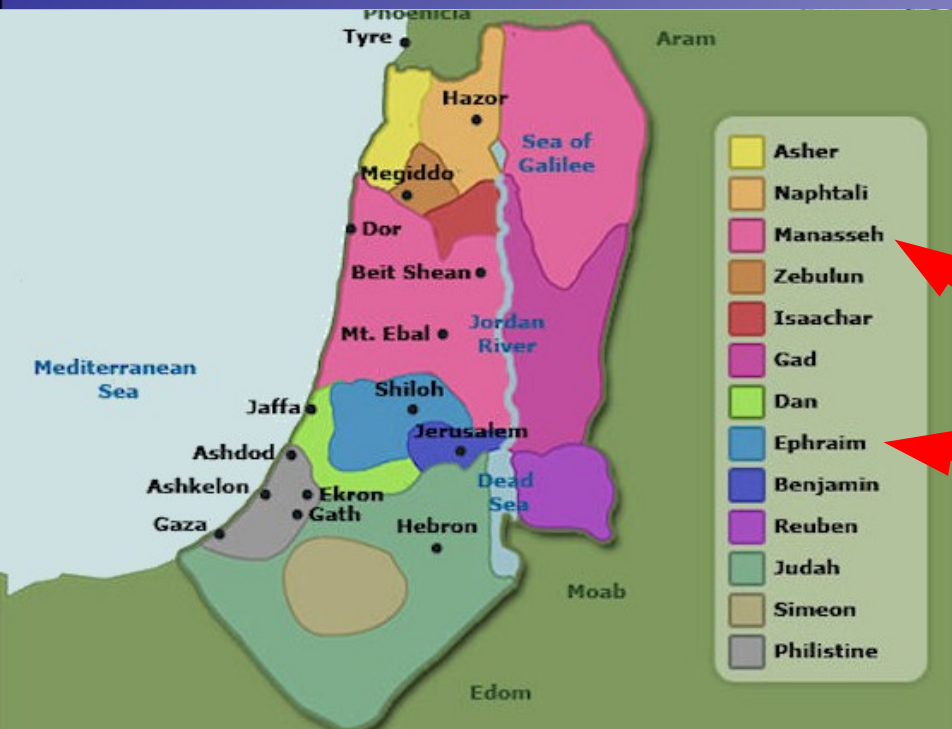
- Then the Levites tithe (give 10% of what they collected) to the Temple—and ultimately keep the other 90% for themselves

- How is that fair?

- Please read Deuteronomy 18:1

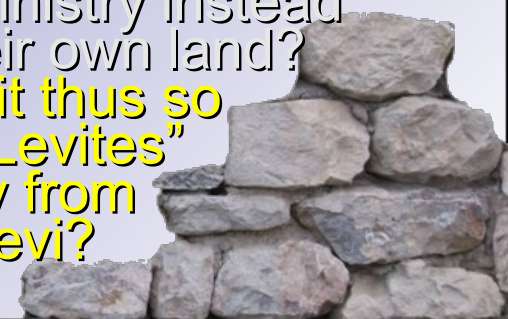
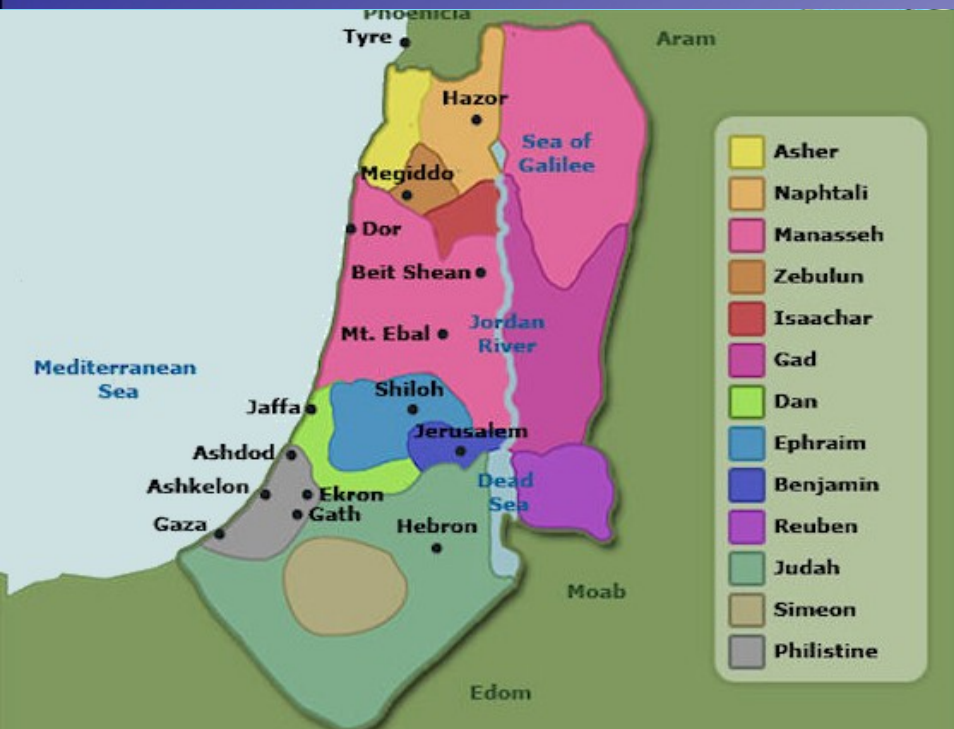
- So how does that all work out fairly, with the Levites working in full-time ministry instead of having their own land?

(Joseph's portion was divided up between his sons)



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      - Math with me for a moment—
        - The Levites collect a tithe (a "tenth") from everyone
        - Then the Levites tithe (give 10% of what they collected) to the Temple—and ultimately keep the other 90% for themselves
        - How is that fair?
        - Please read Deuteronomy 18:1
          - So how does that all work out fairly, with the Levites working in full-time ministry instead of having their own land?
          - So why was it thus so crucial that "Levites" were actually from the tribe of Levi?

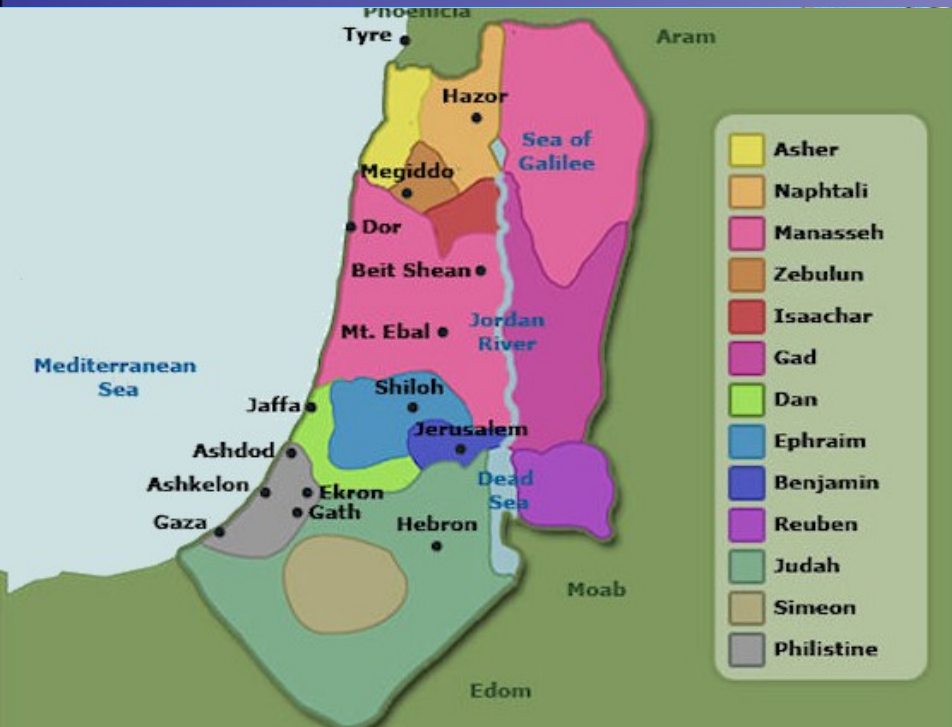


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- How is that fair?
- Please read Deuteronomy 18:1
- Does that give a richer context to verses such as Psalm 73:26 (written by Asaph, a Levite)?

"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."



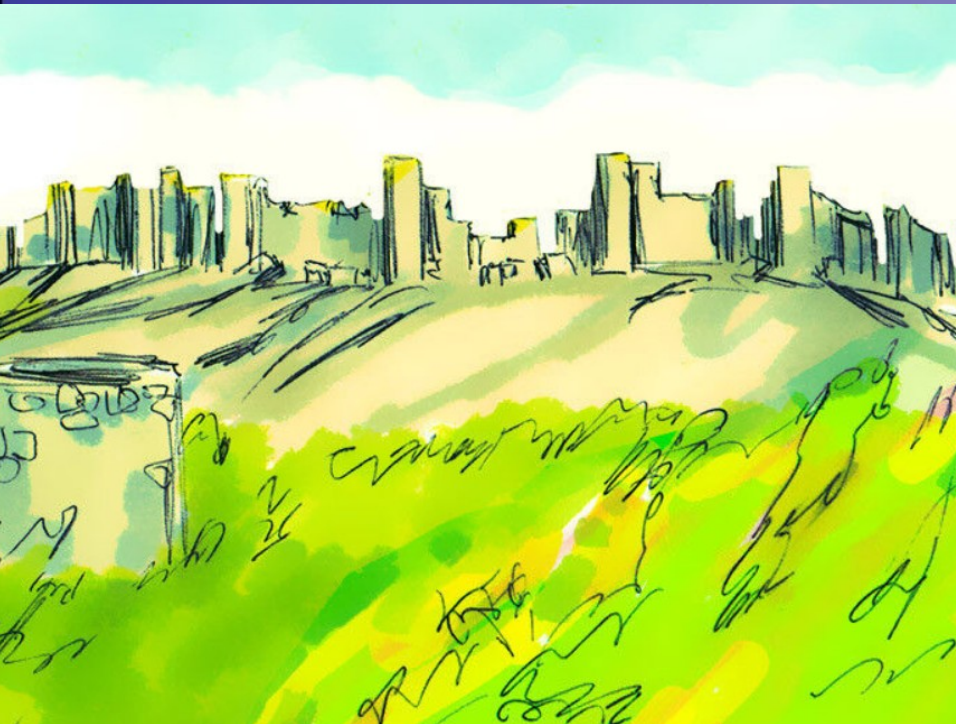
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      - Math with me for a moment—
      - This was *all* part of the Feast of Tabernacles sacrifice
  - All of this was in the context of that eighth day of the Feast, when they would make burnt "sin offerings" to the Lord and remember His gracious provision and forgiveness
    - How is that relevant?



# ***The Feast of Tabernacles***

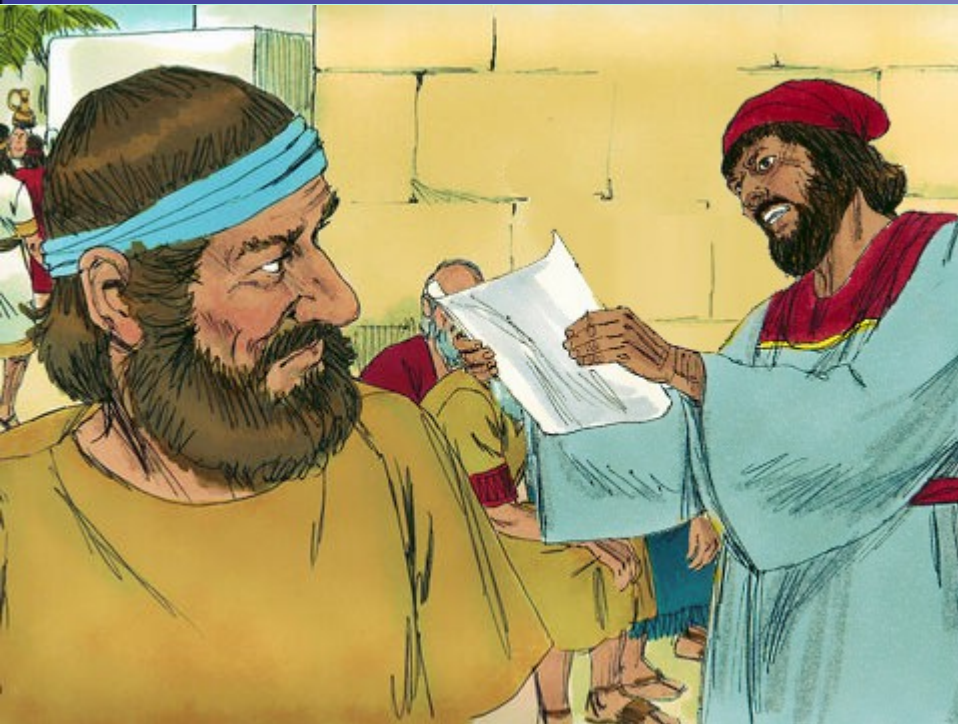
- Ezra has been leading a "Bible study"
  - Speaking of tithes...
    - What had Nehemiah noted back in Nehemiah 7:4?
      - What wrongness had that been an indicator of?





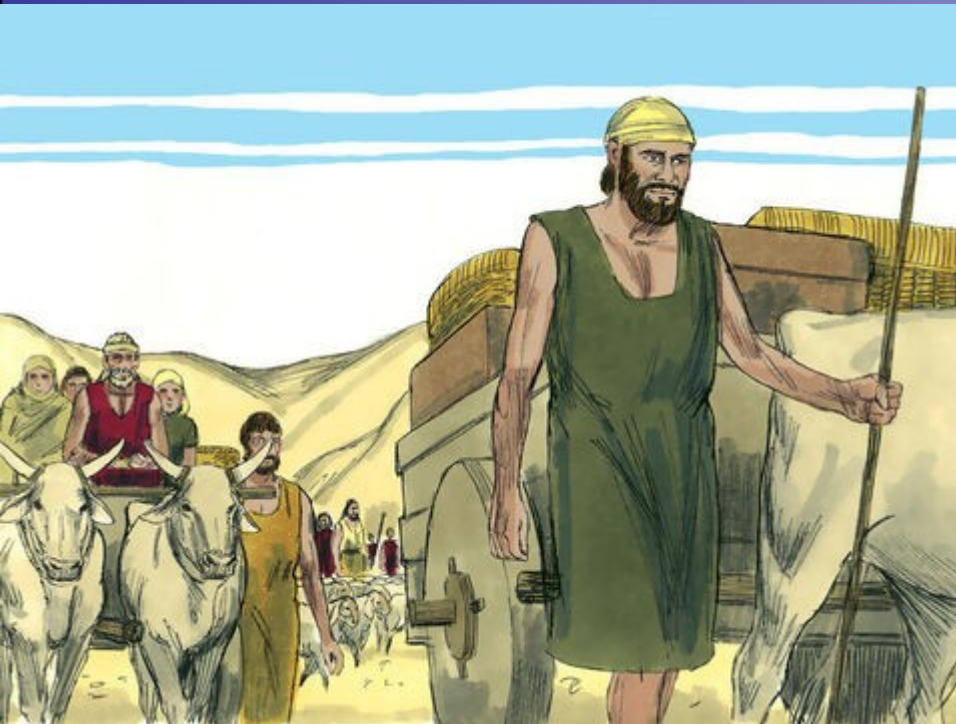
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    - Please read Nehemiah 11:1-2
      - Who committed themselves to repopulating the city?
        - 1) All of the leaders (like Nehemiah)
        - 2) A "tithe" of the people
        - 3) Other people who just volunteered



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      - Why was this such a big deal for people to choose to do? What would that require?
        - Personal upheaval  
(verse 3 reminds us that these people had established lives and careers and families and property and priorities for themselves in other cities—and all of that would have to change)



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        - The problems of urban life

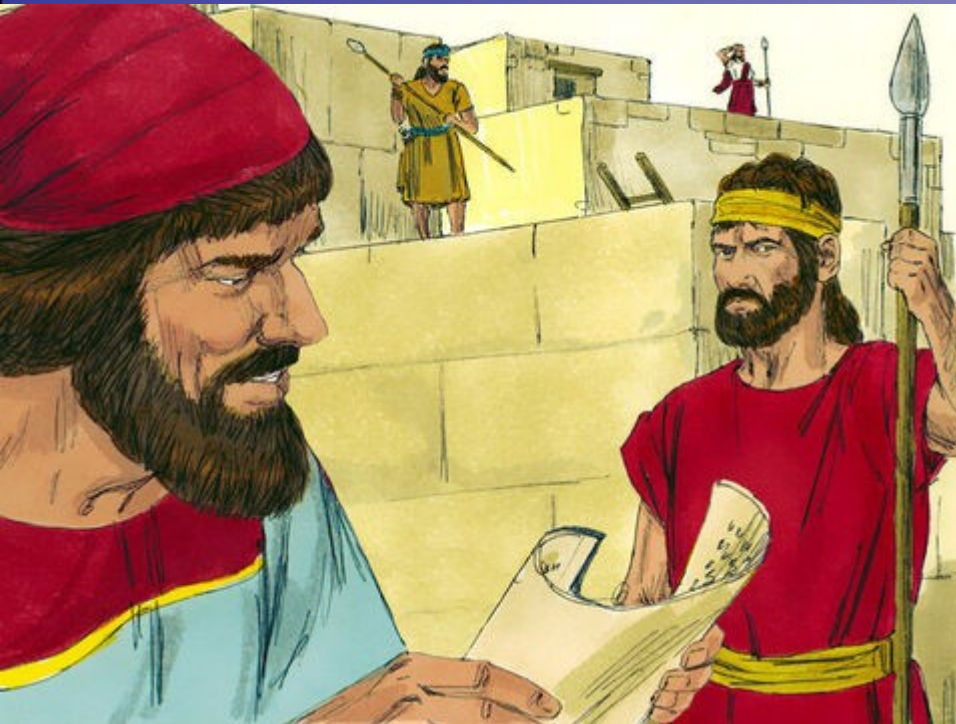
(remember—Jerusalem is still a dilapidated, devastated city, and its interior and infrastructure are still gutted—so moving there would be like asking modern, economically stable families to consciously move into the most messed-up cities in America in order to rebuild them from within)



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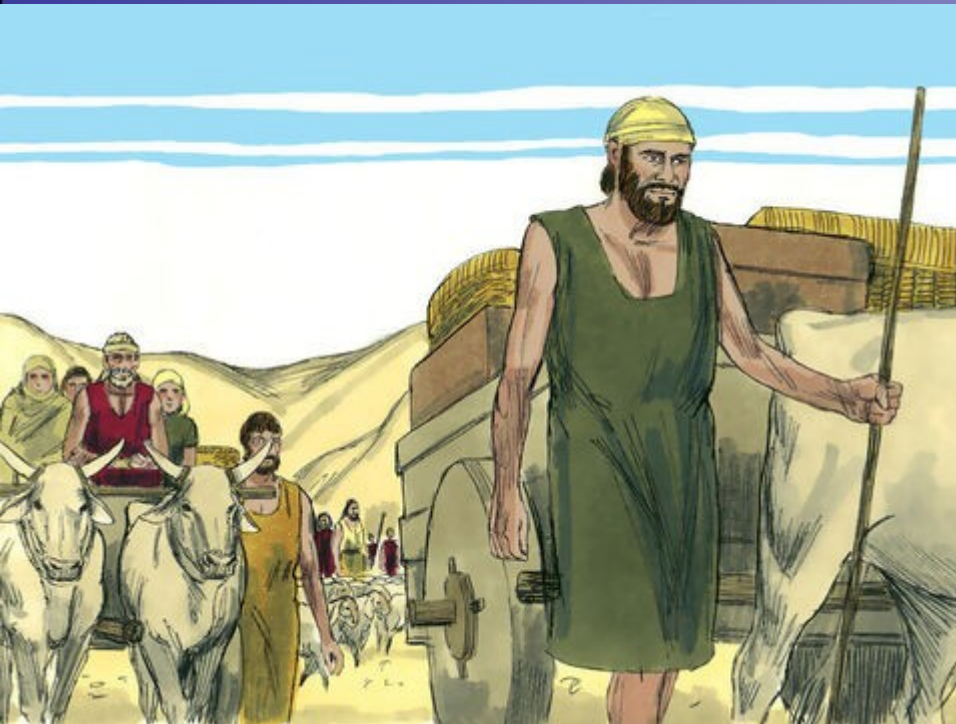
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        - Personal upheaval
        - The problems of urban life
        - Constant opposition from enemies

(it's not like the enemies of God's people just faded out and went away —so to move yourself and your family into Jerusalem was to paint a target on yourselves for all those who stand against God and His purposes)



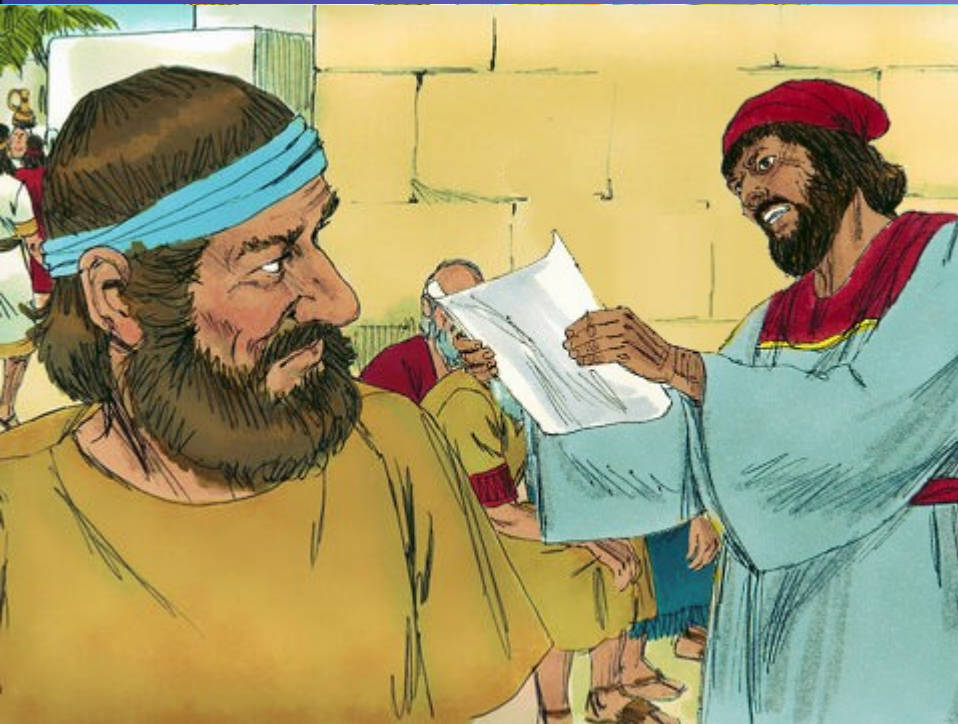
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        - Constant opposition from enemies
    - How might modern Christians respond to this sort of call?
      - Where can we stutter-step in following God's leading in faith and with joy?



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      - Why is it so significant that this wasn't a king's edict —that this was part of a corporate worship service?
        - And that they all put their names to it in writing?  
(and that those names weren't just on a paper document now lost to us, but are actually reprinted for all posterity here in Nehemiah 11:4-12:26—included in the very Word of God!)



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      - How can we apply all of this today in our own lives?

