

# The Christadelphian Expositor

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EXILED  
JEWS IN BABYLON?

THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM AND  
THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED.

HOW THE ECCLESIA FAILED TO  
RESPOND TO THE NEED OF THE  
TIMES.

THE REPORT THAT DEVELOPED A  
LEADER.

THE PRAYER THAT PRODUCED A  
POLICY.

THE WORK OF THE ELOHIM IN THE  
AFFAIRS OF THE NATIONS.

HOW TO RESPOND TO  
CIRCUMSTANCES.



## Nehemiah ch. 1:1 to 2:6

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## From the Editor...

October 1993

Dear Fellow-Student,

Having completed our extensive exposition of the **Book of Romans** in the *Expositor* series, we now set forth upon another exciting subject. We have selected for mutual study the dramatic **Book of Nehemiah** — the personal diary of one man's experiences in reviving a nation and developing worthwhile ecclesial practices. In the course of this exposition we will be able to enter into the heart and emotion of this sincere and dedicated man of God, as he responds to the needs of the times. His **Diary** outlines some of his activities for the Truth, his prayers for the divine co-operation in those endeavors, his impressions of friend and foe, and the way he faced and overcame the subtle challenges to faith, perpetrated by cunning enemies. It is a book that can inspire us in an age of general apathy and indifference to the cause of the Truth. We will observe many parallels apparent between those and our times, and thus become better equipped in the present service to the Truth that we are called upon to give.

I am sure that every reader will enjoy this spiritual excursion to the city of Jerusalem about 2,500 years ago. It will take us along the pathway of service, and encourage us to co-operate with those of a godly disposition in the development of the Truth.

I look forward to hearing from readers as we traverse this remarkable book. Additional comments, questions and suggestions are always welcome.

Subscriptions for the 1994 volume are also invited. Any help in extending the circulation of *Expositor* will be deeply appreciated, as increasing costs put additional strain on our ability to maintain production.

Although we set forth upon this further volume with excitement, we hope that the greater Nehemiah will interrupt our labor "for good", and convey us in the city of "new Jerusalem", the focus of all our joy and hope.

Faternally,

In the service of the Truth,

*Isaac E. Mansfield*  
Editor

# ***The Book of Nehemiah***



**T**HE example of Nehemiah is one to encourage, stimulate and direct. In studying, reading and meditating upon his record, preserved by divine providence, we are helped to bear our witness to the Truth bravely, to live our lives consistently, holily and blamelessly; to perform our work in the Truth diligently and in the spirit of total dedication. If we are opposed by enemies, or those who would discourage us from our commitment, let us not be dismayed, deterred, or even checked by the absence of man's appreciation. We can continue to walk firmly, with psalms of hope in our hearts and upon our lips, committed steadfastly along the path of spiritual duty and loyalty, because Yahweh our Saviour will "remember us for good", and will not "wipe out" our faithfulness (Neh. 13:14). Instead, He will, according to His mercy and favor, record our names in a Book of Remembrance (Mal. 3:16), which no hand may blot out or erase. Then, through His beloved Son, the greater Nehemiah, who has himself trodden the same path of service and sacrifice, Yahweh will reward us with an abundance of eternal joy in the coming day of glory. Let us with determination continue our walk of faith after the example of Nehemiah, until the coming of our Great King.

# *The Christadelphian Expositor*



## **NEHEMIAH**

# **The Book of Nehemiah**

*In one of the most dramatic of Biblical records we are introduced to a man who epitomises the qualities of faithful diligence coupled with earnest and consistent prayer. He works in loyal co-operation with God as he appears in Jerusalem to strengthen the ecclesia, to educate the people, and to confirm the nation in its relationship with Yahweh. As he goes about his momentous task he reveals an attitude of complete dedication to the Truth; being essentially a man of prayer, communion with the Father in heaven becomes a continual exercise, independent of circumstances.*

*As we read and meditate upon the life and work of this outstanding man revealed in this remarkable and challenging book, we must be impressed with his unflinching loyalty in every situation he faces. No sacrifice is too great and no task too difficult for Nehemiah when he knows that it is in God's will. Some may condemn as excessive religious zeal the sternness of some of his actions in the incidents narrated; some may criticize his refusal to compromise with those who sought feignedly to assist the work of the ecclesia; some may urge that he should have ignored the challenges of the enemy. We would be wise, however, to recognize his absolute commitment to the work in hand. This shows a willingness to take any necessary action which may be required to fulfil the divine will. There can be no compromise with God's purpose. Nehemiah reveals an example of uncompromising loyalty to Yahweh which should be emulated by all faithful believers. We need more of this kind of uncompromising loyalty in the work of the Truth today.*

**THE  
CHRISTADELPHIAN  
EXPOSITOR**



**A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPOSITION  
OF THE SCRIPTURES**

**Edited by  
G. E. Mansfield**

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# Foreword

**T**HE book of Nehemiah is certainly needful for these times. Recorded against a background of disgrace and apathy in the Brotherhood, when the Truth was in decline, and the affairs of ecclesial work were relegated to secondary importance by many, the experiences of this man of God can inspire and strengthen concerned brethren and sisters today. The appeal "*Let us rise up and build*" must again be expressed, and the encouraging exhortation that develops from the Book of Nehemiah is of great value to that end.

It is a book portraying intense activity. Without preliminaries, the reader is immediately involved in the drama of the times and impressed with the ardor of Nehemiah's love for Jerusalem.

We know little of his background. He introduces himself as "the king's cup-bearer" (1:11), and beyond this we know nothing, except what may be inferred from the narrative. He was certainly a member of an important family of Judah which had been taken to Babylon into exile, and afterwards found their way to the city of Shushan in Persia. Apparently he was not a priest, nor of priestly ancestry, as was Ezra. However, in character he showed every mark of outstanding godliness and nobility, and doubtless for this reason, as well as for his obvious scrupulous honesty, loyalty and concern for the majesty of Persia, he was chosen for the important position of cupbearer to the Persian monarch.

When he finds himself moved to work as the *Restorer of Jerusalem*, under regal authority, he becomes not only an enthusiastic organiser and laborer with his people, but also a man of personal prayer. He puts time aside to appeal to his God; he calls upon Him in moments of great pressure and trial; he daily communes with Yahweh as he continues in his work. His prayers are always to the point, without hypocrisy, idle phraseology or vain repetition (cp. Mat. 6:7). Such prayers can help us become a community of praying laborers, as we closely examine the prayers of Nehemiah which are so interwoven with the record, that they appear as an intimate part of his character — which, of course, they are.

Nehemiah was not unaware of the vagaries of flesh, nor was he likely to be deceived by a feigned interest in the Truth of those who in reality were treacherously committed to its destruction. He could recognise the "mind of the flesh" and took steps to protect the ecclesia in Jerusalem from the influence of the enemy, even when, like wolves in sheep's clothing, they tried to infiltrate the walls of Jerusalem. In this he is revealed as a *Protector of the Flock* — a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfils the role of the *Greater Shepherd, Restorer and Man of Prayer*. It is to the end that we might more fully appreciate these great examples of faithful diligence, and earnest conviction, that we set out upon the exposition of the *Book of Nehemiah*.



# Analysis

The Book of Nehemiah is divided into three major sections, portraying the stages of his ministry to the Jews of the restoration as authorised by the great king of Persia, in accordance with the divine purpose. They typify the three stages of the work of Jesus Christ, according to the appointment of his Father, the Monarch of Heaven and Earth, as seen in his first advent when he came to perform "his Father's business" (Lk. 2:49); his mediatorial work that followed the foundation of the ecclesia of faith (Mat. 16:17-18); and his second coming as Judge and Redeemer of his people (2Thes. 1:7-10).

The name Nehemiah signifies *The Consolation of Yah*, and in his record Nehemiah becomes the vehicle by which the saving work of Yahweh for His distressed people is accomplished. Throughout the book there are allusions to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come "in the spirit of Nehemiah" to ultimately fulfil that which Nehemiah accomplished in type.

## NEHEMIAH: MAN OF PRAYER AND ACTION

### Revealing

## THE CONSOLATION OF YAHWEH

### In a Time of Distress and Difficulty

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# **A Chronology**

## **of the Times of the Exile and Restoration**

### **BC**

- 538 .....Darius and Cyrus are joint rulers over the Persian empire.
- 536 .....Cyrus assumes sole rulership. The completion of the 70 year prophecy (2Chr. 36:22). Daniel dies in Babylon (Dan. 1:21; 10:1; 12:13)
- .....49,897\* return from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.
- .....7th month: The people gather to build the altar, and sacrifices offered (Ezra 3:1-6).
- 535 .....2nd year of Cyrus. Work on the temple is begun; the foundations laid (Ezra 3:8-13); then work stops.
- 529 .....Cambyses (the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6) in control of the empire. Samaritan opposition in Jerusalem continues (Ezra 4:4-6).
- 522 .....7 months reign of the usurper Pseudo-Smerdis (the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7-23); Samaritan opposition is renewed.
- 521 .....Darius Hystaspes (the Darius of Ezra 4:5, 24; the Artaxerxes of Ezra 6:14; the Ahasuerus of Esther) reigns (until BC485).
- 520 .....2nd year of Darius. The work is renewed with the exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah.
- 516 .....The temple is completed and Passover is observed (Ezra 6:19).
- 515 .....Esther becomes Queen of Persia.
- .....Ezra leaves Babylon (Ezra 7:9); arrives at Jerusalem five months later.
- 502 .....Nehemiah arrives at Jerusalem to rebuild the wall.
- .....The wall is finished in 52 days.
- 490 .....Nehemiah returns to Persia after his first ministry in Jerusalem.

\* Comprised of the congregation (42,360), servants (7,337) and singers (200), according to Ezra 2:64-65.

# Chronology Background

## [The Bible Challenges Conventional History!]

The historical background of the Book of Nehemiah is governed largely by the chronological structure of the Book of Ezra with which it is intimately connected. Accepting conventional historical dating, the Book of Ezra provides for the decree of Cyrus in BC536 (Ezra 1:1), the completion of the temple in the year BC516 (ch. 6:15), and then for a long break of some sixty years when Ezra returned to Jerusalem in BC457 (ch. 7). According to this dating, Nehemiah would have visited Jerusalem in BC444 (Neh. 2:1).

This dating is based upon the identification of the "Artaxerxes" of Ezra's and Nehemiah's record (Ezra 7:7; Neh. 2:1; 13:6) with *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, a Persian monarch who ruled between BC464-424.

However, there are certain difficulties which arise from the Scriptural narrative if we accept *Longimanus* as being the ruler referred to by Ezra and Nehemiah. Consider, therefore, the following suggestions.

### THE TITLE OF THE PERSIAN KINGS

There is often confusion over the names of the Persian monarchs. The temple of Jerusalem was completed in the reigns of "Darius and Artaxerxes" and according to their decrees (Ezra 6:1; 7:13). But there was only one decree — that of Cyrus (Ezra 5:13), which was endorsed by Darius. Who then was the *Artaxerxes* of Ezra 6:14 and 7:12-13? It is another title for Darius and this is supported by the Hebrew. In Ezra 6:14, the word "and" is the Hebrew *vav*, and should be rendered "even". The terms *Ahasuerus*, *Artaxerxes* and *Darius* were really titles and not individual names. *Ahasuerus* means *The Mighty*, and was a title assumed by many Persian kings. *Artaxerxes* signifies *The Great King*, and was commonly used. *Darius* means *The Restrainer or Maintainer*, and was also a title. Some Persian kings used all three titles. The *Darius* of Ezra and the *Artaxerxes* of Nehemiah is undoubtedly *Darius Hystaspes*.

### REASONS WHY DARIUS LONGIMANUS COULD NOT BE KING AT THE TIME

If we accept *Darius Longimanus* as the ruler referred to by Ezra and Nehemiah, as is assumed by many commentators, the following problems are evident:

- Ezra would be at least 128 years old when he returned from Babylon in BC457, and at least 141 when associated with Nehemiah at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:27, 36), because his father was Seraiah the priest who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar in the year BC587 when Jerusalem was overthrown (Ezra 7:1; 2Kgs. 25:8, 18-21). That would require Ezra to be already born at that time
- Twenty out of thirty priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel in BC536 signed the covenant with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:2-10). If *Artaxerxes* was *Longimanus*, these men were all still alive in BC444, 91 years after their return from Babylon, though even then they were all heads over families!
- The *Artaxerxes* of Nehemiah reigned at least 32 years (Neh. 5:14; 13:6) and no other Persian king before *Longimanus* did this, except *Hystaspes*. The Jewish history book of 1Esdras identifies *Artaxerxes* as *Hystaspes*.

Therefore we suggest that the references to the Persian monarchs in the books of Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah all relate to *Darius Hystaspes* who reigned from BC521-485 (36 years). Thus Ezra left Babylon in BC515 (Ezra 7:7), just 72 years (and not 130) after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and all other difficulties otherwise associated with the three historical records are eliminated.

#### DIFFICULTIES IN THE TIMES OF THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

There still remains a problem, however. Dan. 9:24 declares that 70 weeks (490 years) would stretch from the “going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem” (v. 25) until the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 26). This commandment was that issued to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes (see notes on Neh. 2:1, 8). The commandment was given in the “20th year of Artaxerxes”, approximately BC502. However, this would mean that the commandment was given 530 years before the death of Christ, and Daniel’s prophecy is put in question. This certainly would be the case if we accept the normal dating of conventional history, but we believe that the dates accepted by historians generally are incorrect, and that therefore Daniel’s time period stands correct. If this is the case, then the span of world history is actually about forty years shorter than historians list between the issuing of the decree of Neh. 2:1, 8 and the death of the Lord.

This is also suggested by the following extract from the book *The Romance of Bible Chronology*:

“The actual chronology of this period has never yet been accurately determined. The received chronology, though universally accepted, is dependent on the list of the kings, and the number of the years assigned to them in Ptolemy’s Canon (of kings and dates). Ptolemy (AD70-161) was a great constructive genius. He was the author of the Ptolemaic system of Astronomy. He was one of the founders of the Science of Geography. But in chronology he was only a late compiler and contriver, not an original witness, and not a contemporary historian, for he lived in the second century after Christ. He is not corroborated. He is contradicted both by the Persian National Traditions preserved in Firdusi, by the Jewish National Traditions preserved in the *Seder Olam*, and by the writings of Josephus.”

The above comment points out that Ptolemy set out to establish the list of kings in world history. But when it came to those of Persia he had no means of accurately determining the length of the reign of some of them, or the years during which they ruled. The records were very vague, and have never been substantiated.

Therefore, if we accept Daniel’s time-prophecy (which we believe to be divinely accurate), it conflicts with the chronology of Ptolemy. Certainly, Ptolemy’s Canon disagrees with the *National Traditions of Persia*, the *National Traditions of the Jews*, the testimony of *Josephus*, and other well-authenticated events.

Consequently, in *The Christadelphian Expositor* we follow the shorter time period that places *Darius Hystaspes* as the Persian monarch of the three books of Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah.

## **Nehemiah: Builder of Jerusalem**

### **Historical Setting**

Nehemiah was a man strong in purpose and in faith, and humble before his God. By the strength of his character, and his outstanding personal example of godliness, he succeeded in revitalising — at least temporarily — a people who had become weary, dispirited, spiritually weak, and morally lax.

The events are set in a period when the fate of nations was undergoing radical changes. Egypt and Assyria had fought their rivalry to a decision triumphant for the latter, and Judah had fallen before the power of Nebuchadnezzar between the years BC606 and 586. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and all the noble families carried away captive. The people who remained were in a disorganised and poverty-stricken state.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had built a powerful empire, but it did not last long. Cyrus, leading the Medes and Persians, overthrew Babylon about BC539, and with the advent of this new power, the fortunes of God's people again underwent a dramatic change. Jeremiah had prophesied a captivity of seventy years, and in BC536 (approximately) Cyrus gave leave for those Jews who so desired to return to their beloved city. Under Zerubbabel and Joshua, 42,360 of them returned, and immediately set about rebuilding the temple. They met with much opposition from the surrounding tribes, but encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah, they completed the task within twenty years. Later, Ezra the scribe obtained a commission from Artaxerxes, king of Persia, to conduct a further return to Jerusalem, and there to restore the temple services and to inaugurate a civil magistracy with power to tax and execute law.

### **Nehemiah's Work at Jerusalem**

Nehemiah's work was the culmination of all that had been done before him. He held a position of high honor and responsibility in the Persian court — that of cupbearer to the king; but, like Moses, he remained faithful to his God and his people. He heard discouraging reports of his beloved Jerusalem — for while the temple had been rebuilt, the city walls lay still in ruins, and despite Ezra's efforts, the people were spiritually and morally decadent. Earnest supplications to Yahweh brought Nehemiah permission from the king to return to Jerusalem, and to "restore and to build" the city. It is from this decree that the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks given to Daniel (ch. 9:24) had its commencement: "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times", said Gabriel (v. 25).

Immediately upon his arrival in the Holy City, Nehemiah secretly viewed for himself, by night, the circumstances surrounding him. Then he approached the people, appealed to their patriotism and spirituality, and showing his own experiences as evidence of God's approval, induced in them the desire to rebuild the city and its walls. Nehemiah commenced his work and continued his labors,

inspired by the ideal: "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants *will arise and build*".

### **Israel's Enemies Oppose the Work**

The task was no small one, and the means at the disposal of the people were so limited that it seemed to be almost impossible. So thought Sanballat, Tobiah and leaders of the Samaritans, Moabites, Ammonites and others who surrounded the city. They ridiculed the efforts of these feeble Jews. "They laughed us to scorn, and despised us", says Nehemiah. "What do these feeble Jews?", they said, "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned?" And Tobiah responded: "If a fox go up he shall break down their stone wall!"

But the people were undeterred, and under Nehemiah's able administration the mighty task was divided into portions. Each group, including even the priests and their families, set to work with a will. "So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work".

So successful were these efforts that the adversaries soon became alarmed, and their ridicule changed to active hindrance. "They conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it" (ch. 4:8). The obvious determination of such powerful opponents to put a stop to the work, even to the point of using force, would have caused a lesser man than Nehemiah to falter. But this man, firm in his confidence in God, took immediate and effective steps to protect the city and its inhabitants. Let us carefully note his actions. "We made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night because of them" (v. 9). He armed the people as best as he could, and exhorted them to have faith in God, and to be prepared to fight for their lives and for their loved ones. The strategy was successful, for "God brought their counsel (*that is, that of their enemies*) to nought".

Nehemiah's actions provide a lesson for us in our spiritual warfare. Our fight is as serious as was Nehemiah's. The reward for faithful service is the same as that which will be accorded him at the last. God expects of us that we place ourselves as completely in His hands, as did Nehemiah — but also that, like Nehemiah, we are prepared to work out our salvation, doing all we can to protect ourselves from the wiles of the adversary, using the weapons of His providing, in the manner exemplified for us by the Lord Jesus, our Captain and Governor.

Though the expected attack did not materialise, Nehemiah did not relax his vigilance. The people were now divided — half of them to labor and half to stand by with "spears and shields, and bows, and habergeons", while even those who worked did so with their swords girded to their sides. The trumpeter remained with Nehemiah, and all the people had orders to be ready to fight immediately they heard the trumpet sound, secure in the confidence that "our God shall fight for us". No one left the city day or night, for it was desirable to have everyone at hand as a guard. Nehemiah records that "neither I, nor my



brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that everyone put them off for washing" (Neh. 4:23). So the work proceeded despite all difficulties.

Perceiving that their stratagem had failed, Sanballat and his companions next turned their attention to Nehemiah himself, believing that if they could destroy him the work would cease. They sought to entice him to leave the city. First they invited him openly to meet them in conference in a village. When he refused four times to meet them, they sought by means of an artful letter to force him to meet them through fear of blackmail. They accused him of intending to set himself up as a king, and of inciting the Jews to rebellion as soon as they had fortified the city. They threatened, moreover, to advise king Artaxerxes of his supposed intention. While the letter caused Nehemiah great anxiety and concern, he still refused them, and again implored his God to "strengthen his hands".

Then they hired a false prophet to prophesy peril to his life, to put him in fear, but he perceived the plot, and again they failed. And still the work went on with such good effect that "the wall was finished on the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days" (ch. 6:15).

### **Governor of Jerusalem**

Nehemiah spent twelve years in Jerusalem as its governor. He restored the walls, and, out of the ruins of Jerusalem a city rose once again. He appointed men to have charge over the city, and gave them good advice as to its protection. Then, as "the city was large and great; but the people were few therein", he caused "one in ten" by lot, of those who lived in the provinces to reside in Jerusalem for its protection, and to assist in rebuilding the houses, and generally making it a place in which they could be happy to dwell.

Nehemiah surely had cause to be well satisfied with the results of his labors in the "work of restoration" under God's guiding hand, despite the strenuous efforts of his adversaries, including the "fifth column" activities of those in the city who corresponded with Tobiah, seeking to ingratiate themselves to him and endeavoring to persuade Nehemiah to do likewise.

Nehemiah also performed wonders in regard to the spiritual and moral character of the people. He set them a fine example, placing himself under God's hand with humility; showing strength and faith in the face of grave danger and difficulties, and uncorruptness in his office. Because of the poverty of the people he refused to accept his lawful allowance as governor, and even maintained a table at his own expense to provide for 150 Jews, besides any returning from the captivity, who were always welcome. He protected the poor, firmly repressing the exactions of the nobles, and the usury of the rich. He made careful provision for the maintenance of the ministering priests, and the celebration of divine worship.

Under such strong influence, the people gladly heard Ezra read from the Law of Moses, and finding therein the commandment concerning the feast of Taber-

nacles, they built themselves booths, and kept the feast, as it had not been done since the days of Joshua. They acknowledged their sins, praised Yahweh, and sought His forgiveness.

Nehemiah firmly insisted on the sanctity of the temple precincts being preserved inviolable, and later, on his return to Jerusalem after reporting back to Persia, he ejected Tobiah who had so strongly resisted his rebuilding work. Tobiah had been given a chamber in the temple by the high priest, Eliashib. Nehemiah therefore expelled from all sacred functions those of the high priest's family who had contracted heathen marriages, and rebuked and punished those of the common people who had committed the same sin. God's commandments regarding the sabbath had been shamefully ignored, and Nehemiah demanded that they be kept, firmly and successfully suppressing the mercenary trade with foreigners, which had become the accepted sabbath occupation.

Such is the story of the work of restoration performed by a great man. He was at once the restorer of his people to their homeland, and the rebuilder of their homes, their city and their characters.

But his work did not last.

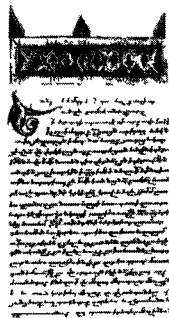
It was, despite its excellence, but an incident in the long and ever-fluctuating history of God's chosen people. He was, however, like some of his contemporaries, a "man of sign" (Zech. 3:8). Soon there will come a governor who will not only be *Governor of Jerusalem*, but, under the patronage of the God of Heaven and Earth, he will be *King over all the Earth*. He will restore, purify and feed his people; build the temple and city to undreamed-of splendor; and glorify for eternity those, who, like Nehemiah, have faithfully served their Lord.

We, who hope to be of that number, therefore sing with confidence and feeling:

*"The vision hath an end, yea, he who shall, will come,  
The Man at God's right hand, To build Jerusalem".*

— E. Wilson.

*Nehemiah  
depicted in an  
Armenian  
manuscript  
Bible from  
Constantinople,  
approximately  
1649/1693.*



# **Rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem — Chapters 1-6**



**The Foundation  
of Faith  
Established and  
Strengthened**

## CHAPTER ONE

### JERUSALEM'S SAD PLIGHT

*Thirteen years had passed since Ezra the scribe was first sent to Jerusalem (cp. Ezra 7:8; Neh. 2:1). Following his pioneering work with the people earlier, he probably returned to Persia to report on the activities performed under the decree of Darius (Ezra 7:14). The voices of Haggai and Zechariah had been heard, calling the people to their responsibilities. But now, without effective leadership in the land of Judah, conditions deteriorated, and the work of the Truth was gravely affected. No longer was the previous zealotry maintained. Apathy beset it, and the work of the Truth seriously declined. The enemies of God gloated over the scene. Meanwhile, in Shushan, the palace of the great king of Persia, the Elohim were preparing the scene for one of the most remarkable revival campaigns in the history of Judah. It commenced with a visit to a royal employee, Nehemiah, by his brother with news concerning the state of Jerusalem.*

#### **Sad News from Jerusalem — vv. 1-3**

*Notwithstanding his important responsibilities in the court of Persia, Nehemiah was greatly concerned with the state of the Brotherhood in Jerusalem. With the arrival of a deputation of brethren from the holy city, he discovers the true spiritual state of the people, and learns that the province was in great distress.*

#### **VERSE 1**

**“The words of”** — The prophetic books generally commence with a title of this kind (see Jer 1:1), but this is unique among the historical records. Ezra and Nehemiah are part of one book in the Hebrew scriptures, and perhaps the personal comments of Nehemiah are thus introduced to indicate the commencement of his diary of events. Nehemiah's narrative continues in the first person to ch. 7:5

where he inserts a genealogy of the returning exiles.

**“Nehemiah”** — His name signifies *The Consolation of Yah*, an appropriate title for the times. Jerusalem was in a state of disarray, the spiritual condition of the people in distress, and the few faithful looked for Yahweh to manifest His saving power, in order to bring the consolation they sought.

The fact that Nehemiah was so named is a testimony to the faithfulness of his parents, who had inculcated in him the love that he bore for his God and his city. After such a long time in captivity, a great many parents, immersed in Babylonian and Persian society, had forgotten their roots, and accordingly named their children after the gods of the land, as was the custom of the times. But these faithful were “in” but not “of” the world (cp. Jn

17 14-16)

Nehemiah *"the man of consolation"* prefigures the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, concerning whom John the Baptist announced in the spirit of Isaiah "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of Yahweh's hand double for all her sins" (Isa 40 1-2, Jn 1 29) The word "comfort" in this prophecy (*nacham* to sigh) is the root word from which is derived the name "Nehemiah" There were some in the days of the Lord Jesus who similarly sought for "consolation" because of the desolate spiritual condition of the nation at that time (cp Lk 2 25)

**"the son of Hachaliah"** — Sig *Yah has hidden* His name links with that of his son, since Nehemiah's testimony points to a period of apostasy, when the light of the Truth had been almost extinguished Thus the *"consolation of Yahweh"* was hidden in those days, as it was later again in the time of the Master Both generations were noted for the manifestation of spiritual darkness (Isa 8 22), waiting for Yahweh to raise up a saviour who would bring "a great light" so that "they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa 9 2)

**"And it came to pass"** — This phrase significantly occurs thirteen times in the book of Nehemiah (see 1 1, 4, 2 1, 4 1, 7, 12, 15, 16, 6 1, 16, 7 1, 13 3, 19) It indicates that the events were under the control of Providence, and that at a "set time" (Psa 102 13) seemingly natural events would occur to advance the divine purpose

**"in the month Chisleu"** — This is the ninth month, corresponding to Nov/Dec, thus the beginning of the northern winter The word signifies *Like a Quail*, perhaps indicating sluggish, torpid weather — a

further indication of the spiritual attitude of the people

**"in the twentieth year"** — Dated according to the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia (ch 2 1) The king most probably was *Darius Hystaspes* (BC521-485, see comments on p 11 ), the king of Persia in the time of Esther, and the events recorded in the book under her name seem to have occurred between Ezra chs 6 and 7, which was about 13 years earlier (Ezra 7 8) If so, the experiences of Nehemiah were about 8-12 years after the events recorded concerning Esther These would have had a significant influence upon the attitude of the king, as indicated in Neh 2 6

**"as I was in Shushan the palace"** — Nehemiah was a privileged employee of the great king, serving as wine-bearer (v 11), one of the most honorable and confidential offices at the court, and therefore under the protection of the king Thus, he enjoyed a position of great influence Susa, in southwest Persia (about 230km north of the Persian Gulf) was the ordinary winter residence of the Persian kings, and the "palace" was a special area set aside for royalty

In the antitype, the Lord Jesus was found "in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1 18), in the sense that he came "from heaven" (ch 3 13), a place far from the scene of sin's dominion, as depicted in the state of Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah

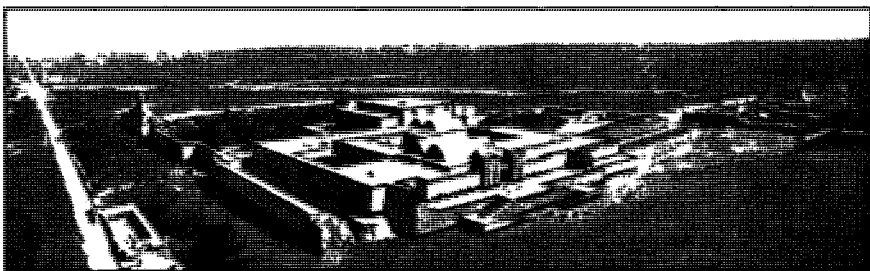
## VERSE 2

**"That Hanani"** — The actual brother of Nehemiah His name signifies *Graciousness* He was later given the position of co-ruler over Jerusalem (7 2), therefore he must have returned to the city with Nehemiah after having visited the Court in Persia with the message that he now delivers to convey his sad tidings to Nehemiah

**"one of my brethren"** — Thus there were other members of Nehemiah's immediate family, not here mentioned by name, but who later labored with him in the work



*North of the village of Ahwaz in Iran lies the great artificial mound of Susa upon a wide plain. Excavations have discovered the remains of the city restored as a fortified town by Cyrus. From the foundations it has been possible to reconstruct a picture of "Shushan the palace" as shown below—a scene which must have been familiar to Nehemiah.*



*The impressive palace of the Persian kings. Shushan was originally built by Darius as a winter residence of the Persian kings. There Artaxerxes sympathetically noted Nehemiah's sadness, and, on learning its cause, gave him permission to rebuild Jerusalem.*

(cp. 4:23; 5:10, 14) They typify the great "unnamed" company of faithful fellow-workers of the Lord who become recognised as "his brethren" (cp. Heb. 2:11; Rev. 7:9).

**"came, he and (certain) men of Judah"** — A delegation of leading members of the community in Jerusalem had accompanied Hanani on his important mission to the court of Persia. This may well have been required of them by the king of Persia in accordance with the royal decree (Ezra 1:1-4), and during which visit Nehemiah sought information concerning the condition of the city.

**"and I asked them"** — This apparently insignificant enquiry led to the most

remarkable episode in the story of the restoration. Hanani's response caused Nehemiah to contemplate how he might act, which led to an intense and emotional prayer to heaven; his prayer gave him confidence to petition the king; the petition was doubtless supported by the presence of the queen (2:6); the royal interest provided the means and commission for Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem and develop the spiritual condition of the ecclesia.

Often apparently unimportant incidents give rise to outstanding moments of history.

**"concerning the Jews that had escaped"** — Probably referring to the pogroms of Haman (Est. 3:8-12) which

had affected Jews in all areas, including Judea.

**“which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem”** — Nehemiah was anxious to learn about the city since it was the place of David’s throne and the city in which the glory of God will dwell (Isa. 2:2-4). His interest in the things of Zion constituted an expression of his faithfulness. He knew that Yahweh desired to elevate the holy city, and therefore made it part of his personal concern (Psa. 51:18). Sincere believers recognise Jerusalem as a symbol of their hope, realising that ultimately it will become the “house of prayer for all nations” (Mat 21:13), the place of Yahweh’s dwelling (Ezek. 43:7), and the “city of the great king” (Mat. 5:35). For that reason they give Yahweh “no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:7).

### VERSE 3

**“And they said unto me, The remnant”** — A significant phrase found particularly in Haggai’s prophecy, previously delivered to the people in Jerusalem (cp. Hag. 1:12, 14; 2:2).

**“that are left of the captivity there in the province”** — Judah had been made into one of the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire (Est. 1:1). The phrase indicates that the numbers dwelling in Jerusalem were severely reduced, due to the prevailing conditions of drought (Hag. 1:6) and opposition from antagonistic parties (Neh. 2:10).

**“(are) in great affliction”** — The Hebrew *ra’ah* means to *spoil; to make good for nothing*. Poverty was widespread (Mal. 3:10-12). The temple services were indifferently carried out (1:6-14). Oppression was rampant (Neh. 5). These conditions were particularly so in the reign of the pseudo-king Smerdis, who had earlier stopped the building of the wall.

**“and reproach”** — Not only were

*Nothing is known of Nehemiah’s beginning of days, nor end of life; but one thing the Scriptures testify: Nehemiah was the model of a good reformer. He allowed nothing to turn him aside from a task he had set himself. He asked of no man to bring a sacrifice or shoulder a burden, which he himself was not willing to shoulder. He was able to fill others with enthusiasm, because he himself felt enthusiastic about the things of Yahweh. When we read of the passion, almost violence, with which Nehemiah went about cleansing the temple, we see the spark of divine indignation that was also revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 2:17). Nehemiah was noble, generous, high-minded, courageous, upright. Stern integrity was blended with great humility, kindness and princely hospitality. As a statesman he revealed forethought, prudence and sagacity in counsel, manifested with vigor. When dealing with fellowman he showed neither fear nor favor, aiming only at doing what was right. He was by no means a respecter of persons and was most remarkable for his piety and singleness of heart with which he walked before Yahweh. In all his actions he asked for God’s guidance and blessing, and he knew that his reward rested with the Almighty.*

— H. P. Mansfield.

conditions difficult, causing “great affliction”, but the morale of the people had suffered badly. The Hebrew *cherpah* signifies *to put in disgrace*, from a root meaning *to expose; to uncover* (by stripping). Nehemiah makes repeated reference to this shameful condition (2:17; 4:4; 5:9). The causes of the reproach were the faithlessness and rebellion of the people, as revealed in 1Kgs. 8:47; Ps. 78:41; Isa. 43:28; Jer. 42:18.

Similarly, the Truth can suffer through the foolishness of its adherents (cp. 2Sam. 12:14; Pro. 14:34).

Humanity is in a similar condition due to the effects of transgression in Eden. Consequently, we suffer “great affliction” being burdened with the misfortune of mortality with its sin-prone condition (Rom. 7:18, 21), and we also experience “reproach” through personal trespass and sins (Rom. 3:23). It was to remove the effects of both areas of condemnation that the God of Israel, through His Son, has “visited his people” (Lk. 1:68), in order to heal and redeem those stricken by sin and death (Lk. 4:18), in the spirit of Nehemiah.

**“the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down”** — About twenty years earlier, the enemies of Judah had attacked the Jews and compelled them to cease from their labors (Ezr. 4:6-23), which seems to indicate that after the initial restoration of the temple there was an attempt to rebuild the walls of the city (cp. Ezr. 4:12). But apparently, subsequent attacks by the enemies had been partially successful, causing Jerusalem to become leaderless and remain in a deplorable condition (Neh. 2:15-17), causing many people to leave for other centres (ch. 11:1).

**“and the gates thereof are burned with fire”** — Gates are the means of entry into or exit from the city; thus they are an important part of its construction. It was the normal practice to burn the gates to demonstrate complete control over the city

and the removal of its power.

Christ is to control “the gate” of his enemies (Gen. 22:17), at which time the gates of the temple city of Zion will be permanently open to receive visitors (Rev. 21:12-15, 25).

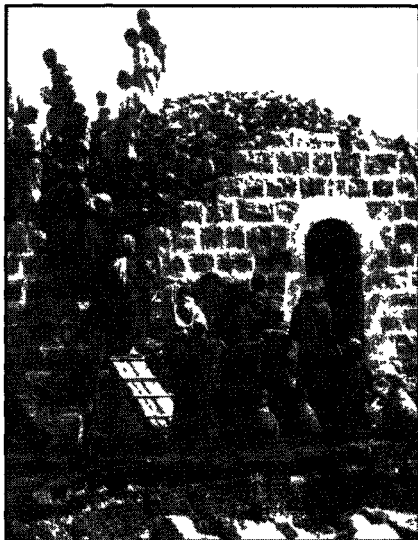
### Nehemiah Seeks

#### Divine Guidance — vv. 4-11

*There was a need of a special man for the times, and divine Providence sought such a man who would perform the Father's will. The circumstances revealed him, and expanded the godly characteristics in Nehemiah that were to prove so valuable for the mission in hand. In that regard he was “a chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15).*

### VERSE 4

**“And it came to pass”** — See notes on v. 1. The phrase usually introduces a matter of importance. In this case, the record reveals the faithful attitude of *The Man in Exile*, and his immediate response to the sad news he received. This must





### **The Prayer of Nehemiah**

*The words expressed are full of beauty and reveal a correct conception of what prayer ought to be under such circumstances. It opens with confession. Without reserve Nehemiah acknowledges the sin of the people and identifies himself with it. He then proceeds to plead the promises of God made to them, and concludes with a personal and definite petition that God would grant him favor in the eyes of the Persian Monarch — that Yahweh's will might be done. The Spirit has recorded his prayers — both long and short — that the same spirit of continual praying might be developed in the faithful, who repeat Nehemiah's work of restoration in their own personal lives. So Paul exhorts: "pray without ceasing" (1Thes. 5:17; see Rom. 8:26), by which he urges saints to constantly recognise the presence of the Father in the differing circumstances of life, and to remain in communication with Him. It is an ideal project for the Bible student to color the verses in Nehemiah which record such prayers, in order to develop the same constancy in oneself.*

also be the attitude of all who await "the set time to favor Zion" (Psa. 102:13), knowing that at the present time the "tabernacle of David" still remains in ruins (Acts 15:16).

**"when I heard these words"** — Nehemiah was responsive to the "signs of the times". He did not ignore the challenge to faith contained in the message of Hanani, but applied himself that he might

effectively work for the honor of God and the salvation of His people. He set his mind to properly and effectively present a petition to heaven, that his prayer might be heard (cp. Dan. 10:2-3; 9:3). In this he recognised the exalted position of Yahweh the king of heaven, and would not enter into the august divine presence without the proper preparation. Prayers, generally, must be thoughtfully considered, especially those presented on behalf of a community, such as in this case. Divine inspiration has preserved such prayers to assist those who consider them "in spirit and in truth", and who desire to respond to the circumstances that face them. Of course, sometimes Nehemiah found it necessary to pray in urgency, on the spur of the moment (see ch. 2:4; 13:22), as may also be our own experience in times of pressure.

**"that I sat down"** — In order to make careful preparation. He did not act hastily, but recognised the need for mental preparation, meditation and prayer.

**"and wept and mourned"** — Nehemiah was distressed over the sad news received from his brother, being overcome with deep emotion. He viewed the disgrace that had come upon Jerusalem as a catastrophe and bereavement, as did Ezekiel (ch. 9:8; cp. Isa. 30:19). True saints continue to "mourn for Zion" (Psa. 137:1) awaiting the day of its political resurrection and exaltation to become the "first dominion" in the land (Mic. 4:8), when it shall then "rejoice" (Psa. 48:11).

The Lord similarly wept as he looked over the city from the heights of Mt. Olivet (Lk. 19:41) and saw in vision the future destruction that would befall the holy city throughout the course of history until he would return a second time.

**"(certain) days"** — Nehemiah did not act hastily concerning the matter, but spent days mourning, meditating and carefully considering what action should be undertaken.

**“and fasted”** — So that he might give intense thought to the matter in hand. Fasting assisted the development of concentration. Daniel fasted as a prelude to prayer (Dan. 9:3; 10:3); Esther in preparation to approach the Persian monarch for the deliverance of her people (Est. 4:16); Christ, under guidance of the Spirit, that he might overcome trial (Mat. 4:2). But, to be effective, fasting must not be a mere affectation (Lk. 18:12; Mat. 6:16), but must result from a sincere desire to draw the mind of the Spirit and the attitude of dedication into an individual’s actions.

**“and prayed”** — This is the result of his previous extensive preparation. As cupbearer to the monarch of Persia, Nehemiah was aware of the need for proper protocol in the presence of the king. Now, before the Monarch of Heaven he bows to place his petition on behalf of the holy city. Evidently prayer was a usual practice of Nehemiah, and his book contains many references to this important and personal aspect of his worship. Four months (from Chisleu: 1:1, to Nisan, or Abib: 2:1) were occupied in preparation and prayer for the selfless purpose before him.

**“before the God of heaven”** — A significant title in view of Nehemiah’s regal occupation. He recognised a greater authority than the Persian king, and approached the Deity first. The title appears four times in the record of Nehemiah (1:4-5; 2:4, 20).

## VERSE 5

**“And said”** — In this action Nehemiah places himself in the position of advocate on behalf of his people, and personally identifies himself with the failings of the nation. He thus represents the Master who mediates for his followers (cp. 1Jn. 2:1), and whose prayer (Jn. 17) sought God’s care upon his apostles and disciples.

**“I beseech Thee”** — Note the development of Nehemiah’s prayer of petition,

which is a model for faithful disciples concerned about the state of the brotherhood. He first extols the divine excellence (v. 5); then presents a plea for the Father’s characteristic mercy (v. 6); he acknowledges the sin of the nation (v. 7); remembers Yahweh’s declaration of righteousness (v. 8); makes an expression of Yahweh’s goodness (v. 9); mentions the need to uphold an ecclesia in distress (v. 10); makes a conclusion and summary of the substance of the prayer (v. 11).

**“O Yahweh, God of heaven”** — “Yahweh Elohim of Heaven” is the Memorial Name declared to Moses at the beginning of Israel’s history (Exo. 3:14-15), and which identifies the omniscient majesty of the great King of heaven. In this he acknowledges Yahweh’s pre-eminence above all earthly monarchs such as he served in his daily experience (v. 12). Literally it means *He who will be manifested* (Yahweh) *as the mighty ones* (Elohim) *of heaven* (the place of glory, power and authority), and refers to the powerful forces of immortal beings which do the divine bidding on behalf of the saints (Heb. 1:14). The covenant Name guarantees the perpetuity of Israel (Jer. 33:20), and therefore it is significant that Nehemiah commences this prayer therewith.

**“the great and terrible God”** — The phrase is a favorite expression of Nehemiah (cp. ch. 4:14; 9:32). The Hebrew *El* (translated “God”) signifies “strength”. God is “terrible” in that His judgments are decisive! This was revealed in the judgment upon Haman (Est. 7:10).

**“that keepeth covenant”** — This comment is based upon the Memorial Name, and indicates the assuredness of Yahweh’s work (Exo. 34:6-7). Yahweh thus reveals Himself (Deu. 7:9; Dan. 9:4), as the One in whom Nehemiah trusted.

**“and mercy”** — Heb. *chesed*, from a root meaning “to bow down; to show kindness”; thus, to show care to those in need.

**“for them that love Him”** — Having exalted the divine virtues, Nehemiah now acknowledges that such will only be expressed towards those who fulfil the two basic requirements of children for their parents. The first is that of love, the quality of emotional response that develops out of understanding the status and concern of the parent. See: Jn. 14:15, 21, 23; Rom. 8:28. It was the lack of this characteristic of filial response in the people that the prophet Malachi later drew to their attention: Mal. 1:6.

**“and observe His commandments”** — The second of two requirements is the practical manifestation of the love of God in doing His will (Jn. 14:15; 1Jn. 5:3).

## VERSE 6

**“Let Thine ear”** — Notice the emphasis given in this verse to Yahweh. He is referred to seven times as “Thine”, “Thou”, and “Thee”.

**“now be attentive”** — Nehemiah includes a sincere appeal that Yahweh might “hear his pleading”, and respond to the cries of those in desperate need. Yahweh’s ears are always open to the unfeigned petitions of those who trust in Him, as is acknowledged by the Psalmist (Psa. 143:1). But He will not listen to the words of infidels (Isa. 1:15; Jer. 7:16; 11:14); His ears are shut against hypocrites (see Lk. 18:11 for one who prayed “with himself” and not to God).

**“and Thine eyes open”** — That Yahweh might be aware of the words and work of enemies who destroy His servants. God’s “eye” is constantly upon His land (Deut. 11:12).

**“that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant”** — God will only hear the prayer of those who are His “servants”, and who delight to do His will (Heb. 10:7). He refuses to acknowledge the approach of the faithless and perverse (Jer. 14:12; Pro. 28:13).

**“which I pray before Thee now, day**

**and night”** — Prayer must be a constant approach to the Father (cp. Lk. 18:1; 1Tim. 5:5; 2Tim. 1:3; Psa. 55:17; 88:1), and the record of Nehemiah reveals that he took opportunity to appeal to the Father in every circumstance of life. Similarly the Lord Jesus had constant recourse to the divine throne (Mat. 14:23; 26:36; Mk. 1:35; Lk. 6:12).

**“for the children of Israel Thy servants”** — Nehemiah acknowledges the favored position and calling of Israel, as servants of the Most High. Notwithstanding the terrible history of the nation which had denied Yahweh His rightful position as king, and for which they were delivered into servitude to the king of Babylon, Yahweh’s mercy continued to preserve the faithful remnant of His people.

**“and confess”** — The Hebrew *yadah* means: *to use the hand; to revere and worship*. Thus, to open the hand so as to reveal what is held therein. Confession must be part of prayer (Psa. 32:5; Pro. 28:13; Jas. 5:16; 1Jn. 1:9), for it upholds the righteousness of Yahweh, and provides the basis upon which He can extend mercy.

**“the sins of the children of Israel”** — Recognising that the evils which had previously befallen Israel (Neh. 1:3) were not due to Yahweh deserting them, but to them deserting Yahweh! Compare Mal. 1:6; 3:8-11; Dan. 9:20. Notice the three-fold emphasis given in this verse.

**“which we have sinned against Thee”** — Petitioners must acknowledge that Yahweh’s righteousness is affronted by transgression. David recognised that his unlawful relationship with Bathsheba was primarily a sin against Yahweh (Psa. 51:4).

**“both I and my father’s house have sinned”** — In pleading for the nation, Nehemiah identified himself intimately with it, as did Daniel and others (Dan. 9:5; Psa. 106:6; Isa. 6:5). Perhaps he had before him Daniel’s prayer offered in

Babylon, and in this petition continued to press the same requests on the basis of the Lord's parable in Luke 18 1 Nehemiah thus typified the Lord Jesus, who bore in himself the sins of his people (1Pet 2 24, Psa 51 5, Heb 7 27) Notice that the prayer for forgiveness does not extend beyond "his father's house", for the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus is only for the reconciliation of "his brethren" (Heb 2 11-12)

### VERSE 7

**"We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses"** — An open and unrestricted expression of sin against the

"commandments" (Heb *mitsvavim* ordinances) which formed the basis of the Law of Moses, the "statutes" (Heb *choqim* laws, statutes) which extended the Law into the domestic affairs of the people, the "judgments" (Heb *mishpatim* decrees, verdicts, a word used again in ch 9 13, 10 29) which represented the divine pronouncements upon the weakness and failure of the nation

### VERSE 8

**"Remember, I beseech Thee"** — Nehemiah calls upon God to recall His declarations of favor towards His people

**"the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses"** — He appeals to Yahweh's Law as the basis of mercy It will be so at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Jn 12 48) However, the Word will also condemn (cp 1Cor 11 27)

**"saying, (If) ye transgress"** — Yahweh always encourages obedience in His people, and does not condemn them indiscriminately However, He continuously warned Israel of the consequences of departing from His ways The word used is the Hebrew *ma al* which signifies to *act treacherously* from a root, to *cover up*

The word appears again in Neh 13 27, where Nehemiah condemns the nation for its loose marriage practices adopted during his absence

**"I will scatter you abroad among the nations"** — The divine judgment was experienced when Judah suffered in the Babylonian captivity However the use of the Hebrew *am*, translated "nations" indicates that the prophecy goes beyond Nehemiah's times Moses' words in Deu 4 27 (cited by Nehemiah in this verse) include the word "heathen" (Heb *gowy*, indicating a *foreign nation, a Gentile*), but Nehemiah evidently only selected the parts of the prophecy relevant to his particular circumstances

### VERSE 9

**"But (if) ye turn unto Me"** — A national repentance of former transgressions and a sincere response to the divine will the only basis for Israel's restoration to Yahweh's favor (Deu 30 2, Acts 3 19-21), and this will be experienced at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jer 3 14, 18 8, 26 3, Ezek 11 19)

**"and keep My commandments"** — Heb *shamar, to hedge about* Thus to protect from harm, to care for as a precious property This commitment is seen in the action of a faithful shepherd who secures his flock against danger (Jn 10 14-17) The "sayings" of Christ are to be "kept" safely (Jn 8 51, 14 15) so as to receive the approval of the Father (Jn 14 23) It is the duty of disciples to "guard" the precious Truth that has been placed in their care (1Tim 1 18)

**"and do them"** — Not only must we "preserve" the divine instructions from apostasy or neglect, but must diligently and positively perform them — thus illustrating in action the wisdom of God This principle was incorporated in the Law of Moses (Lev 18 5), but none were able to "keep" and "do" perfectly (Rom 3 23), except the Lord Jesus Christ himself Nev-

ertheless, a disciple must demonstrate "works of faith" in order to please God (Jas 2 17)

**"though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven"**

— Judah had been exiled from Jerusalem into the land of Babylon, as foretold by Jeremiah, but this oppression was an essential element in their ultimate restoration (Jer 24 5) Persecution and difficulty might be experienced by disciples, but this is often a necessary chastening allowed by Yahweh in order to perfect His people (Heb 12 5)

**"(yet) will I gather them from thence"** — Nothing is impossible with God The RSV has "though your dispersed be under the farthest skies, I will gather them thence" The token fulfilment of this statement seen in the partial regathering of Israel in our times, is proof of the power and faithful purpose of God (Ezek 37 21) Ultimately the angels will "gather the elect [Israel] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mat 24 31), in order to restore them to their rightful position among the nations (Mic 4 8, Acts 15 16-17)

**"and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there"**

— Jerusalem had been designated "the city of the great king" (Mat 5 35) from the days of Abraham It was at Salem that he was blessed by Melchizedek, a type of the future king of all the earth (Gen 14 18-19), and where, later, Abraham enacted the sacrifice of Isaac as typical means of Yahweh's salvation (Gen 22 1) Moses saw the restoration of his people from Egypt as leading to their elevation in "the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Yahweh, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Yahweh, which Thy hands have established" (Exod 15 17) In this, he saw prefigured the elevation of Jerusalem

But in Nehemiah's day, the city was in

ruins (Neh 1 3), and therefore his prayer is an appeal that God might act to restore the city according to His declared purpose (see also Deut 12 5, cp Ps 132 13-14)

## VERSE 10

**"Now"** — Note the emphasis given to Yahweh's monopoly and power in vv 10-11 indicated by the repetition of "Thy", "Thou" and "Thee"

**"these are Thy servants"** — God had originally selected them from Egypt that they might serve Him in truth (Exo 19 4-5) He had saved them from Babylon in order that they might continue in His service To be a "servant of God" is a great responsibility that brings with it great privileges (Acts 2 18)

**"and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand"** — Yahweh did this in the past (e.g., in Egypt Deu 9 29, 26 8), and therefore has the ability to perform such a miracle again (Exo 32 11, 15 13, Deu 5 15, Ps 136 12)

## VERSE 11

**"O Yahweh"** — In the AV this appears in lower case, which usually indicates that the Hebrew original is either *Adon* or *Adonai*, but according to the *Sopherim* the word should be "Yahweh", the memorial name of Deity It is certainly appropriate in this place, as Nehemiah now pleads for Yahweh's blessing upon his mission before the king of Persia on behalf of the covenant people

**"I beseech thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant"** — Nehemiah was determined to act as mediator between his people in Jerusalem and the Monarch of Persia, and in this he typified the mediatorial prayer of the Lord Jesus (compare John 17)

**"and to the prayer of Thy servants"** — A company of faithful associates of Nehemiah, who added their voices to the ascending prayer to heaven This may be a

reference to the brethren who had come from Jerusalem with the news of the condition of the nation (Neh. 1:2). Perhaps they were also engaging in such a petition, as earlier had the friends of Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 2:17-18).

**“who desire to fear Thy name”** — Heb. *yare'*: *to respect; venerate*. Rotherham has: “who delight to revere...” This attitude is the only basis for divine mercy. Malachi spoke of a small community of faithful disciples with this disposition (Mal. 3:16).

**“and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant”** — Nehemiah stands as advocate on behalf of his people (as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ: Jn. 17:4). To “prosper Thy servant” is to grant his petition to bless him in his mission to restore Jerusalem. Nehemiah had determined to approach the Persian king, to seek his assistance in this matter, and recognised that Yahweh could provide the means by which this might be successfully performed.

**“this day”** — A similar expression to that made by the Lord Jesus to the thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43). It indicates the day of proclamation and decision, not necessarily the day of fulfilment. Nehemiah acknowledged that he needed God’s blessing on the day of his prayer and preparation, even though it might be some time before an opportunity was provided to permit him to address his plea to Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1). In this he sets an example of diligence in prayer, of seeking Yahweh’s blessing and guidance on his preparation for the actions proposed (cp. Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:3).

**“and grant him mercy”** — The Hebrew *racham* comes from a root meaning *to fondle; love*; thus, to have compassion. The word is sometimes translated “womb” (Gen. 49:25; Pro. 30:16), “damsel” (Jdg. 5:30); and represents a very intimate expression of the

GODLY QUALITIES AND MATURE KNOWLEDGE

Having considered the prayer Nehemiah offered, under these stressful and gloomy circumstances, certain of his characteristics and qualities become apparent. His prayer reveals that he had a deep and profound understanding of the Law, key elements of which he has referred to in his supplication. His appreciation of the character of Yahweh could only have resulted from a thorough grounding in the words of Scripture and a sound education therein.

His own spiritual qualities are revealed in the seven major points which form the basis for the prayer he offered, as recorded in ch. 1.

- (1) His confession concerning the divine character .....v. 5
- (2) An appeal that his consistent, humble plea might be heard and received .....v. 6
- (3) His ready acknowledgement of the sins of the nation .....v. 7
- (4) He brings to mind Yahweh’s great promises .....v. 8
- (5) He reminds Yahweh of Israel’s special calling, and the importance of Jerusalem in the divine eyes .....v. 9
- (6) He simply, but strongly, asserts his faith in Yahweh’s ability to accomplish His purpose .....v. 10
- (7) He makes a beautiful and moving plea for national and personal help in time of need .....v. 11

Here was a man of God, indeed. He was not merely an Israelite carried away with emotional fervor to perform mighty deeds; he was one well versed in the principles of the Truth, a student of the Word of God, and one who truly loved Yahweh and His people. And he was prepared to lay down his life to honor his faith and his conviction. It will be men and women of this disposition whom God will be pleased to reward with an eternal inheritance in His kingdom.

— J. Ullman.

deepest emotion. Nehemiah had already determined his plan to remove the reproach of Jerusalem, and now seeks a blessing that will produce the desired results. It is appropriate that all work for the Truth should be preceded by such a prayer, for the honor must be Yahweh's and the labor is His (Psa. 127).

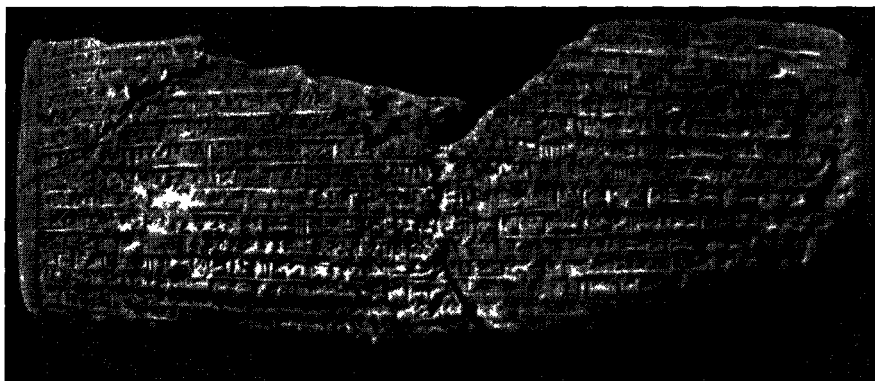
**"in the sight of this man"** — Heb. *'iysh*, an upright one. He was the supreme monarch of Persia, and Nehemiah did not forget the status of the one to whom he would appeal. He was determined to use his influence with the king, despite the dangerous consequences that might result from his requests (cp. ch. 2:1). With this plea, the prayer concludes.

**"For I was the king's cupbearer"** — This statement is appended to indicate both Nehemiah's privilege and concern. He had a great opportunity and determined to use his position to achieve his desire for Jerusalem. In this he imitated the earlier words of Mordecai to Esther (the queen of Persia at the time: see notes on ch. 2:6).

Thus Nehemiah regarded his employment as a means to an end; not the end in itself! He did not aspire to greatness in the

things of Persia, but used the opportunities that came his way, to develop the godly characteristics of honesty, responsibility and good service to his master. These are important qualities, which are not often recognised by workers in this modern age when self-will and personal rights are encouraged, but remain the obligation of the people of God (Eph. 6:5-6; Col. 2:22-23; 1Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:9; 1Pet. 2:18).

The office of a Persian king's cupbearer was one of great trust, confidence and honor. He had control over the king's wine, and thus was in the monarch's confidence, for no eastern potentate would have a cupbearer to whom he could not entrust his life, for poison was often administered in that way. In such a position Nehemiah enjoyed a measure of comfort and wealth — circumstances that would not normally be conducive to the concern and anxiety expressed by Hanani's report of a far off, now despised city. But Nehemiah was an outstanding person: a servant of the Persian Monarch who honored and loved the God of Israel above all other considerations.



*The cylinder of Cyrus proclaiming the restoration of the temple — approx bc538. From the British Museum.*

## CHAPTER TWO

### YAHWEH CREATES THE OPPORTUNITY — NEHEMIAH SEIZES IT

*The intense and heartfelt prayer of Nehemiah was heard in heaven, and angels were dispatched to guide the circumstances in the Persian court, through which the petitions of the prayer could be effectively fulfilled. Nehemiah had approached Yahweh in complete confidence and now rested on His determination. In this he is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, who similarly co-operated with His Father in prayer for the accomplishment of the divine purpose in him (Heb. 5:7).*

#### Nehemiah Makes Request of the King — vv. 1-8.

*Nehemiah prepared for the moment when he could present a petition to the king. No doubt he would have watched for every opportunity in which this could be done. Then, four months later, he was able to proclaim ‘the hope that was within him’, and heard the king approve his mission.*

#### VERSE 1

**“And it came to pass”** — A phrase which introduces a significant incident. Notice its recurrence: ch. 1:1, 4:21, 4:17, 12:15, 16:6, 16:7, 13:13, 19.

**“in the month Nisan”** — The Persian name for the month *Abib*, the first month of the Jewish religious year, and the month in which the nation was called out of Egypt (Exod. 12:2). Some suggest the word “Nisan” signifies *The Flight*, perhaps a reference to its origin in Hebrew history. The Hebrew name means *That Which is Green and Tender*, and introduces the season of spring with its evidence of rebirth in nature. It was a significant month in which Nehemiah sought to assist the “rebirth” of the city of Jerusalem, which had suffered a winter of barrenness and desolation.

During this period Nehemiah had given considerable thought to the problem

and looked for an opportunity to resolve his concern. It could have been that the month Nisan commenced a new period of service in the Persian court, and that Nehemiah felt that opportunity might thus present itself to approach the monarch in some way. However, his grief had not been noticed until this moment. Nehemiah had probably formed no definite plan, but waited in the confident hope that God’s providence would so order events that some occasion would arise whereof he might take advantage.

**“in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king”** — He is usually identified by commentators as Artaxerxes Longimanus (BC464-424), but internal evidence in the Bible indicates that the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was the *Darius* of Ezra 6:14 (see comments on pp. 10-11).

**“that wine was before him: and I took up the wine”** — Nehemiah probably alternated with other appointed cupbearers in this duty (cp. Lk. 1:8), and now assumes his responsibility for the first time since receiving the sad news of the state of Jerusalem.

**“and gave it unto the king”** — Nehemiah was consistent in his actions, applying himself diligently to the requirements of his position in all respects (cp. Col. 3:22-25).

**“Now I had not been beforetime sad**



**in his presence**” — Note the expression of concern in this phrase. It was a capital offence to appear morose and dispirited in the presence of the Persian king (cp. Est. 4:2), for it constituted an insult to the character and standing of the monarch. Despondency was not a normal trait of Nehemiah’s character, but he was under personal stress because of his anxiety for Israel. He had previously managed a cheerful countenance, but, with the passing of time, and the burden of his concern, his emotions became evident. In this, he also typified the “cupbearer” of Yahweh (cp. Mat. 26:39; Jn. 18:11), who willingly bore his load of heaviness, a commitment which was reflected in his face (Isa. 52:14), so that his sorrow was witnessed by others (ch. 53:4).

## VERSE 2

**“Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou (art) not sick?”** — A change of attitude in the case of such a close servant might suggest that he was hiding some act of treachery, or protecting those who would work against the interests of the king.

**“this is nothing (else) but sorrow of heart”** — The king realised that Nehemiah’s sorrow was so deepseated and considerable, that it could not be hidden (Pro. 15:13).

**“Then I was very sore afraid”** — The word “very” is the Hebrew *me’od*, meaning *vehemence*, *wholly*. It is expressive of intense fear, and comes from a related word used to describe “a poker for turning embers”. The word “sore” is from *rabah*, *to increase*, suggesting that his fear intensified as he watched the reaction of the king. The word “afraid” is from *yare’*, *to fear*, *revere*, as expressive of Nehemiah’s considerable anxiety.

A Persian subject was expected to be perfectly content, being able to enjoy the pleasure of being with his king. A request to quit the court for any reason was thus a

serious matter. Note also, that this “sore afraid” was the expression of a man who later proved himself to be a fearless and courageous person. Possibly he was anxious not to offend the king in view of his predetermined request, having perhaps earlier discussed it privately with the Queen (Esther: see notes on v. 6). Frightened men, however, learn to put their trust in God (Acts 21:13). Finally, the threat turned into a blessing — as so often occurs in the circumstances of life (Rom. 8:28) — because Providence was overshadowing the circumstances!

## VERSE 3

**“And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever”** — A normal and courteous mode of addressing royalty (1Kgs. 1:31; Dan. 2:4; 3:9; 5:10). From Nehemiah it also was a confirmation of his sincerity that “there was no poison in the cup”.

**“why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres”** — This phrase suggests that Nehemiah was from the tribe of Judah, his ancestors coming from Jerusalem. He now expresses loyalty to the city and its pioneering brethren, whose record of life now rests within “the hope of Jerusalem”.

**“(lieth) waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire”** — He plainly declares the cause of his deepseated sorrow (cp. Psa. 69:7, 19-20).

## VERSE 4

**“Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?”** — To Nehemiah’s great relief, he finds the king favorably inclined toward his desire (as earlier Cyrus was “divinely stirred up” to provide for the alleviation of the Jew’s plight and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem: Ezra 1:2). Consider the circumstances: the wealth and glory of the Persian palace; the regal pomp and ceremony of the surrounding dignitaries; the king

and queen resplendent in robes of opulence — Nehemiah handing the wine to the king with all eyes in the court upon him because of the king's pointed comments.

**“So I prayed to the God of heaven”**

— Swiftly he presents himself in thought to the greatest Monarch of all, before answering the mortal king before him. Nehemiah seeks the guidance and support of the greater than Artaxerxes, and, lifting his mind above the action of handing wine to the king, he approaches the throne of He who is King over all creation! Cp. Dan. 4:17. Nehemiah was heard in that he feared, as was also the Lord Jesus in his hour of need (Neh. 2:18; Heb. 5:7. See also 1Sam. 1:13; Pro. 3:6; Phil. 4:6).

*Nehemiah was emphatically a man of prayer. In every danger, in every difficulty, still more at any crisis, prayer rose to his lips: see ch. 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, etc. Sometimes, as now, the prayer was offered silently and swiftly — and found acceptance in heaven because of its sincerity.*

**VERSE 5**

**“And I said unto the king” —**

Nehemiah immediately responds to the opportunity given him to witness concerning the “hope that is within him” (cp. Mat. 10:18; 1Pet. 3:15).

**“If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight” —** Nehemiah was respectful in his reply to the monarch. His consistent and responsible service was now tendered as the basis for the king's favorable response.

**“that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it” —** Nehemiah takes the initiative in appealing to the king to allow and support his desire to be personally involved in the work of restoring the ancient city. Jerusalem represented the centre of his hopes, and that of his “fathers”. It is important that all activi-

ties for the Truth be undertaken in this spirit (Job 4:4). It was the mission of the Lord Jesus to “strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees” (Isa. 35:3; Mat. 12:20), a responsibility resting now upon his disciples (Heb. 12:12). Lives which have been scarred and “destroyed” by sin must be “restored” by careful and diligent application of the Word (Gal. 6:1), and this should be done under the guidance and direction of the great King of heaven (Phil. 4:6), after the positive example of Nehemiah.

**VERSE 6**

**“And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him)” —** Why should such an unusual parenthesis be included? Obviously because of its unique importance to the circumstances. The Hebrew for “queen” is *shegal*, a term which comes from a root meaning “to cohabit”, and designates a legitimate queen (see mg.: “wife”). The word only occurs elsewhere in Dan. 5:2, 3, 23 and Psa. 45:9.

The inclusion seems to indicate the importance of the presence of the queen, which would be understandable if the queen was Esther (who married the king approximately ten years earlier) with whom Nehemiah might well have had previous discussions, and who would now be able to support his cause.

The parenthesis might also mean that the king conferred with his Jewish wife concerning the appeal of Nehemiah (v. 5), prompting his favorable response.

**“For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return?” —** The king acceded to Nehemiah's proposal, but stipulated that he expected a report of the activities to be undertaken. It also appears that the king thought so highly of Nehemiah that he required him to return to his service as soon as his mission was completed. In the antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ was sent by appointment of heaven (Mat. 10:40; Jn. 3:34; 6:38) at a “set time” (Gal. 4:4), and would return after accomplishing his purpose to lay the foundation for salvation (Jn. 3:17; 4:34).



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## Nehemiah ch. 2:7 to 4:7

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## From the Editor...

January 1994.

Dear Fellow-Student,

I trust you enjoyed the first issue of this new series on **Nehemiah**. The record of this courageous and determined man of faith is designed to encourage and stimulate all who desire to "work at the walls of Zion". God's work is all-important — whether it was pursued in times past, under the shadow of the vengeful wrath of Samaritan opposition, or whether it is continued in the present times when the impact of the Gentile spirit is evident, and when the enemies are apathy and indifference to the Truth.

The *Expositor* can be more than a commentary on the Scriptures; or a helpful medium for Bible Marking. It can be a form of exhortation and faith-building. With this in mind we have endeavored to present the matter in a more comprehensive style than just brief notes, so as to encourage thoughtful and meditative reading of its pages, as well as providing a helpful companion to study. For that reason, we have included exhortational comments.

This issue continues the drama of Nehemiah's actions. It sees him planning the work before him, organising the line of workers appropriate to the needs, encouraging them against the influence of antagonists, and bearing the whole matter in a constant atmosphere of prayer to the Father. Nehemiah is therefore a type of our beloved Master, to whose labors we willingly dedicate our lives.

Whilst preparing the matter for this issue, we have continued our preparation for the bound volume of **Romans**, and have appreciated the comments and additional information that readers have forwarded for inclusion. Some of the typesetting has to be re-keyed into our graphics computers to restore a portion of the volume that was lost, and this is presently being undertaken. We anticipate completing the typesetting corrections and additions early in the year (God willing), and will then proceed with the printing schedules. **This volume will be available to current subscribers of *Expositor* at half-price for an introductory period, in recognition of the support provided to enable this magazine to continue.** This special offer will be announced *only through this column* in due course, and will similarly apply to the reprint of *Expositor* on **Exodus**, following the issuing of **Romans**. Meanwhile, readers can still forward us corrections or additional notes on both these books, so that the final volumes will be the best available.

We are greatly encouraged by the continuing support of many brethren and sisters so that this work can continue. We appreciate also the recommendation of this magazine to others — and the granting of gift subscriptions that some ecclesias provide for their members and Sunday School students.

Fraternally,

In the service of the Truth,

*Isaac Shaw* *E. Mansfield*  
Editor

**"So it pleased the king to send me"**

— The royal approval was evidence of Yahweh's immediate and powerful reply to the faithful prayer of Nehemiah (v. 4). Since it was a prayer in accordance with the divine will (Rom. 8:27; 1Jn. 5:14) Yahweh moved the heart of the king to comply with the request.

**"and I set him"** — The first advent of Nehemiah in Jerusalem was by royal approval. Similarly the Lord Jesus appeared at a "set time" (Gal. 4:4), and will also return at a time determined by divine decision (Psa. 102:13)

**"a time"** — An understanding was reached, an agreement made. The king permitted him an absence of twelve years to rectify matters at Jerusalem (ch. 5:14; 13:6) before returning to Persia. It was a "set time" to favor Zion (Psa. 102:13), by which Nehemiah was able to restore the city and people from the desolation that had previously been evident. At his first advent, the Lord Jesus accomplished an even greater work of personal redemption from the decay of sin and death, providing hope of eternal life for his disciples (Jn. 11:25).

**VERSE 7****"Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors"**

— The title (Heb. *pashas*) refers to officials of high standing. Nehemiah's request indicates the unsettled nature of the country and the opposition experienced by the Jews which was probably, in large measure, the cause of Jerusalem's continuing sad condition.

**"beyond the river"** — The river Euphrates, which had been earlier crossed by Abraham (Josh. 24:2), the father of the Hebrews, in travelling to the Land of Promise (Gen. 12:1), an action now to be repeated by Nehemiah. The Euphrates represents a typical baptism, as the traveller moved from the *Land of Darkness* (Babylonia) to that of *Truth and Light*. Similar-

ly, the Lord Jesus saw the need to appear at the river Jordan for baptism which "fulfilled all righteousness" (Mat. 3:15), and enabled him to labor on behalf of those in need of redemption.

**"that they may convey me over"** — "Allow me to pass unhindered". Nehemiah uses care and forethought in his preparation for the restoration of Jerusalem.

**"till I come into Judah"** — His first advent to the country of his fathers. Typical of the first appearance of Messiah who came to Judah in his mission of redemption.

**VERSE 8**

**"And a letter unto Asaph"** — Sig. *Collector; Gatherer*. Nehemiah's foresight included those in his plans who would be able to assist him in his work. So the Lord Jesus selected his apostles and disciples to assist in "collecting" the elements required for his purpose amongst mankind (Jn. 17:20).

**"the keeper of the king's forest"** — A Persian word *pardes* meaning *park, orchards, gardens*. This refers to a walled enclosure, generally ornamented with trees. Rotherham has: "keeper of the park", and Asaph was probably in charge of the Royal Properties, an area most likely in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This might have been the reconstructed "gardens of Solomon" (Ecc. 2:5), or possibly an area in Lebanon renowned for the cedars of that place (cp. 1Kgs. 7:2).

**"that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace"**

— Rotherham renders this word (*biyrah*: *castle; palace*) as "fortress". Nehemiah intended not only to repair the walls, but also to provide adequate defence for the city (cp. Psa. 62:1-2). Yahweh is such a defence, declaring Himself "a fortress" (Psa. 18:2; 31:3; 144:2) in which the righteous will find comfort.

**"which (appertained) to the house, and for the wall of the city"** — Whereas

**LETTERS TO THE GOVERNORS — vv. 7-8**

These two verses contain brief comments — “letters to the governors... a letter unto Asaph” — which are probably the most significant words in Nehemiah’s diary.

Prophetically, reference to these letters is of vital importance. They represent the “going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25). From this time, there would be “seventy weeks” (490 years) to the cutting off of Messiah the Prince. Here, then, is the beginning of the fulfilment of a prophecy which highlights the remarkable accuracy of Bible prophecy, and therefore the existence of a divine hand in its authorship. This prophecy was literally fulfilled, thereby testifying to the undeniable power of Yahweh’s Living Word.

Brother Thomas wrote: *“Precise information was granted concerning the time when the things testified in the twenty-fourth verse of the ninth chapter [Daniel], and the cutting off of Messiah the Prince, should come to pass. They were to be accomplished in a period of seventy weeks of years from the promulgation of a certain decree — that is, after 490 years. Two years after this was revealed to him, Daniel’s heart was rejoiced by the proclamation of Cyrus in the first year of his reign, for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. But had he reckoned the 490 years from this date, they would have terminated 13 years before Messiah was born. The seventy weeks, however, were not to commence with a decree for rebuilding the temple; but “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem”; in other words, to restore the wastes of the city by setting up the wall and the gates thereof...”* (Elpis Israel, page 394).

These words of exposition clearly define two different datings which should not be confused. The decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1) was sanctioned by Darius (ch. 6:1-16). In Ezra 6:14 the word “and” can be rendered “even”; thus: “Cyrus even Darius, even Artaxerxes...” This Darius must have been Hystaspes; and the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah’s diary would have been the same man. Whilst the “decree” related to the rebuilding of the temple (the work of Ezra), the angelic prophecy of 490 years which was given to Daniel (ch. 9:24-25) related to the restoration of the city and its walls and gates. This latter work was the mission of Nehemiah, and began the time period that would conclude with the death of Messiah the prince who would “make an end of sin offerings” and “bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24) — **J. Ullman.**

Ezra provided for the reconstruction of the temple, Nehemiah was concerned with the walls of Jerusalem. He realised that true worship had to be protected from the threats and attacks of the enemy. It is not sufficient for us to establish what is the Truth; we must actively and positively guard it from the dangers of apathy, and destruction (1Tim. 1:18; 6:13, 20).

**“and for the house that I shall enter into”** — The governor’s residence, from which he could control the mission. The Lord Jesus examined the “house” in Jerusalem as part of the terms of his ministry (Jn. 2:14; Mk. 11:15). Unfortunately, the “house” did not accept the Lord Jesus, and rejected the terms of his salvation. Consequently, he left the “house of God”, and proclaimed divine judgment that would descend upon the temple because its adherents refused to accept the work of truth and righteousness (Mat. 23:38).

**“And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me”** — Nehemiah saw the success of his petition as the result of Yahweh’s blessing. He was always aware of the hand of



Providence in his life (cp. v. 18; Pro. 21:1; Dan. 1:9; Acts 7:10).

### **Nehemiah Arrives at Jerusalem**

— vv. 9-11.

*About four months journeying from Persia (Ezra 7:9) brings him to the arena of his activity. Nehemiah's appearance with an armed escort and credentials from the Persian Monarch was viewed with sullen resentment by the enemies of the Jews.*

### **VERSE 9**

**"Then I came to the governors beyond the river"** — Beyond the Euphrates (see v. 7; Josh. 24:2). He immediately entered into the work appointed to him: an example to all who pass through the waters of baptism into the service of the Truth.

**"and gave them the king's letters"** — Nehemiah comes to his people, and first meets the rulers in order to tender proof of his royal appointment. Compare the actions and credentials of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came with the authority of his Father (Jn. 1:10-11; 7:28-29).

**"Now the king had sent"** — Compare Ezra 8:22 when circumstances were different. By the king's command these associates were sent, and it was not wise for Nehemiah to reject them. Moreover, in view of the unsettled conditions in the land at the time, this evidence of Persian favor was vital to Nehemiah's cause.

**"captains of the army and horsemen with me"** — Every assistance was given to Nehemiah. His efforts were thus overseen by the Hand of Providence. The Lord Jesus was "strengthened" by God (cp. Ps. 80:17-19), through angelic presence (Lk. 22:43) for the work before him, and also selected faithful men to accompany him in his labors (Mat. 19:28).

### **VERSE 10**

**"When Sanballat"** — Some suggest

that this is a Babylonian name, signifying *The Enemy is Secret*. Some give the meaning as *Sin has Given Life*. He was a deadly enemy of the Jews, who tried to ingratiate himself into their favor. Bullinger states that an Aramaic papyrus dated the 17th year of Darius Hystaspes, and discovered at Elephantine, Egypt, written by two Jews (Delaya and Shelemya) to the sons of Sanballat, identifies him as "governor of Samaria". Others suggest he hoped to become Governor of Judea; hence his antagonism to Nehemiah. He was evidently influential, having Tobiah as his servant (cp. ch. 4:2).

**"the Horonite"** — Probably referring to Beth-horon (*The House of Hollowness*), a village about 25km northwest of Jerusalem. Some suggest that this word should be Horonaim, a village in Moab (Isa. 15:5), but if that were so he would more likely be called a Moabite.

**"and Tobiah"** — Sig. *Good is Yahweh*. Evidently this Ammonite had accepted the Samaritan principles and incorporated the divine Name into his own. But Nehemiah recognised that it was Yahweh who was "good" (Heb. *tob*) to him! (Compare the word *tob* in v. 8; 5:19; 13:31; 2:18). The Lord Jesus commented that "none was good, save God" (Mat. 19:17).

**"the servant"** — He was subject to Sanballat, and gave him counsel and advice, acting as his secretary (ch. 6:17, 19). Perhaps he was a freed slave who rose to a position of some prominence among the Ammonites. A family known as the *Tobiads* later gained position and power both among the Ammonites and in Judea.

**"the Ammonite"** — The traditional enemies of Israel, listed amongst the Gentile nations who oppose the purpose of Yahweh (Ps. 83:7). Originally descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38), they were barred from association with Israel (Deu. 23:3), and later subdued by David (2Sam. 8:12) typing the future when the nations will submit to the authority of the greater

Nehemiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa 11 14)

**“heard (of it)”** — They learned of the commission given by the king to Nehemiah, and realised that this represented a threat to their own influence. Similarly, when the scribes and Pharisees “heard” of the works of John the Baptist and the Master, they set about opposing them (Jn 1 19-22, Mat 3 7)

**“it grieved them exceedingly”** — They viewed the intervention of Nehemiah in their activities with great fury. This revived the antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews which had commenced when Zerubbabel rejected their offer of co-operation in the building of the temple (Ezra 4 3). It was not that Zerubbabel, or Nehemiah, would have refused the company of earnest and honest seekers after Truth, but these men of God recognised that the offer of co-operation by the Samaritans was only a veiled attempt to destroy from within the work proposed. Their foresight was confirmed by subsequent events (v 19). This enmity between Jews and Samaritans continued until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (Jn 4 9).

**“that there was come a man”** — Heb *adam*, thus “anybody” used as a term of contempt. It angered them that anyone should help the Jews, and they watched the arrival of Nehemiah with smouldering hatred.

### ***The Opposition of the Flesh.***

*Nehemiah faced six forms of opposition — a significant number which typifies the flesh, and represents the wickedness that comes from the heart of man (Mk 7 21-23). That opposition was manifested in (1) Grief ch 2 10, (2) Ridicule v 19, (3) Intimidation ch 4 1-3, (4) Violence ch 4 7-8, (5) Craftiness ch 6 1-2, (6) Compromise vv 5-7*

**“to seek the welfare”** — Heb *tob*, meaning *the good*. This word forms part of the name of Tobiah (v 10), and thus is a play on words.

**“of the children of Israel”** — The term is used of Judah and the Jews of the nation restored from exile.

### **VERSE 11**

**“So I came to Jerusalem”** — He arrived at the “set time” that had been determined in accordance with the king’s instructions (v 6). The duration of the journey is not stated, but would be approximately four months (cp Ezra 7 8), covering a distance of about 1450 km (900 miles). Antitypically the Lord Jesus “came” from a far country (Jn 3 13) to the area of his ministrations in the “fulness of time” (Gal 4 4).

**“and was there three days”** — During this period, nothing was done as yet, while Nehemiah reviewed the situation and probably interviewed the elders. The “three days” is a significant Biblical time — reflected in the time of Abraham’s and Isaac’s sacrificial walk to Moriah (Gen 22), of Jonah in the fish’s belly (Jon 1 17), of Ezra’s three day rest for the exiles (ch 8 32), of Christ’s three day-years of preparation for the building of spiritual Jerusalem, of Christ in the grave from which he came forth victorious over death and enabled to continue his work of redemption (Mat 12 40).

### **Nehemiah Views the City at Night**

— vv. 12-16

*Nehemiah carefully plans his mission. He obtains the support of a few close associates, who travelled with him from Persia. He does not discuss the project with any others, but instead works with God in determining what is necessary. His examination was completed as he observed all areas of need. In v 12 he is revealed as a true strategist, a wise director, and an able governor.*

## VERSE 12

**“And I arose in the night”** — He determined to work at a time unseen by the enemy, and thus revealed that he was *A True Strategist!* We need to manifest wisdom in the exercise of the work of the Truth. This means that we should be “as wise as serpents, though harmless as doves” (Mat. 10:16) in determining the strategy appropriate to certain circumstances.

Nehemiah’s action typified the work of Christ. Israel was “in darkness” when the Lord Jesus Christ was introduced to the nation in order to accomplish its redemption (Isa. 9:2). His development was concealed from the nation until the moment when he appeared before the people at Jordan, and his mission was confirmed by the “voice from heaven” (Mat. 3:15). It was significantly “in the night” that Nicodemus approached the Master about his mission (Jn. 3:2), not wishing to be seen by others conferring with him.

**“I and some few men with me”** — Nehemiah (like the Lord Jesus Christ) selected men whom he could trust, as he examined the situation. These had accompanied him from Persia, and now became his associates in surveying the ruins of the city (cp. Lk. 10:1).

**“neither told I (any) man”** — That is, those of the nation to whom he was sent. They were not ready to receive the special mission of Nehemiah, and might have disclosed his plans beforetime, bringing discredit or opposition. In this action, Nehemiah was *A Wise Director!* Similarly, the Lord Jesus urged his disciples not to proclaim the circumstances of his sacrificial mission before the acceptable time (Mat. 16:20; 17:9).

**“what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem”** — Nehemiah constantly acknowledged that it was “*God in him*” directing the issue (ch. 2:8, 18, 20; 4:15, etc). For this application to the Lord Jesus Christ, see 2Cor. 5:19.

**“neither (was there any) beast with me”** — No extra animal for the carrying of supplies or equipment. He took with him only what was necessary, dispensing with any additional liabilities to the work in hand.

**“save the beast that I rode upon”** — Nehemiah rode on the animal whilst his companions accompanied him on foot, symbolically foreshadowing the *Coming Royal Governor* (see Zech. 9:9). Antitypically, the Lord rode a beast into Jerusalem as he came to inspect the city, in order that he might later report on its condition to heaven (Mat. 21:5; 22:7).

## VERSE 13

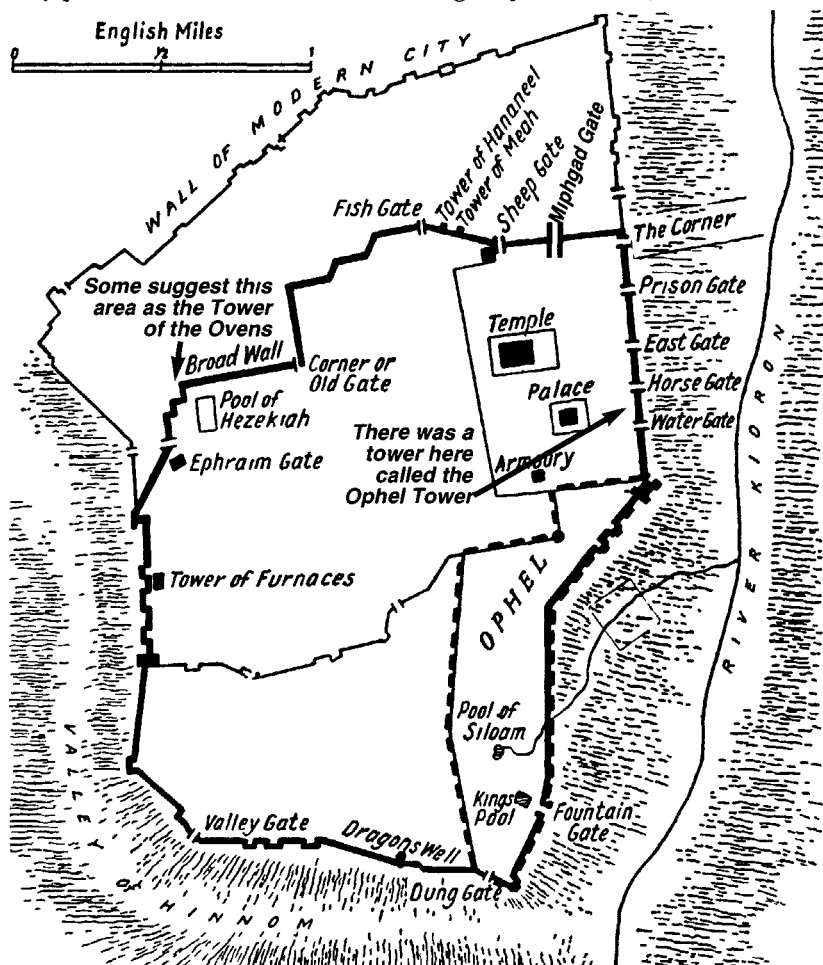
**“And I went out by night”** — Nehemiah commences his mission in the night period (as the Lord Jesus continues his examination of the spiritual city during the Gentile night). He goes from the southwest to the southeast corner, moving along the south wall.

**“by the gate of the valley”** — Nehemiah begins by examining the gate on the southwest corner of the city which opened towards the valley of Hinnom.

**“even before the dragon well”** — Some claim this to be the water spring at the pool of Siloam, although this is somewhat too far to the east. The “dragon” was related to the intermittent flow of water as produced by the opening and closing of a dragon’s mouth, and others suggest that there was a spring of water at the southeast corner.

**“and to the dung port”** — Rotherham translates this as “dung gate”, through which the city refuse was taken to the valley of Hinnom. It was towards the eastern end of the southern wall — the scene of Jeremiah’s earlier prophecy of desolation (Jer. 16:4; 19:2). The valley of Hinnom was the depository for rubbish in the days of Christ, and fires constantly burned in Gehenna to consume the refuse (Mat. 5:22).

*"So the wall was finished in fifty and two days. And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (Neh. 6:15-16).*



### The Twelve Gates of Jerusalem.

[1] Valley Gate (2 13, 3 13), [2] Dung Gate (2 13, 3 14, 12 31), [3] Gate of the Fountain (2 14, 3 15, 12 37), [4] Water Gate (3 25-26), [5] Horse Gate (3 28), [6] East Gate (3 29), [7] Prison Gate (12 39), [8] Gate of Miphkad (3 31), [9] Sheep Gate (3 1, 12 39), [10] Fish Gate (3 3, 12 39), [11] Old Gate (3 6, 12 39), [12] Gate of Ephraim (8 16, 12 39)

**“and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down”** — He saw masses of ruins and rubbish everywhere (2Kgs. 25:8-10). A similar situation, spiritually speaking, faced the Lord Jesus when he came to inspect the moral condition of the nation at his first advent. Instead of fulfilling divine principles and upholding standards of righteousness, the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem had permitted the spiritual defences of the nation to become decayed and destroyed. Instead of the letter and spirit of the Law being upheld, the temple was filled with the defiling evidences of faithlessness — so that the future “governor” appointed by God violently removed the offending objects (Jn. 2:15).

**“and the gates thereof were consumed with fire”** — Instead of protecting the city and providing safe entry and exit (cp. Gen. 22:17), there were only mere blackened gaps, leaving the people defenceless.

Similarly, faithful brethren must carefully guard the spiritual “gates” of the ecclesial city, allowing only those approved to have entry thereinto. When the sound foundations of the Truth are discarded, the principles of true fellowship become weakened, and the “fire” of the enemy brings destruction and disgrace upon the Brotherhood.

#### VERSE 14

**“Then I went on to the gate of the fountain”** — Located near the pool of Siloam, near the southeast corner of the city (3:15).

**“and to the king's pool”** — The Pool of Hezekiah was some 533 metres (1,750 ft) from the Spring of Gihon, from which the water flowed through a tunnel to just inside the Fountain Gate. Hezekiah had earlier diverted the stream to protect the water-source of the city from invaders (2Kgs. 20:20; 2Chron. 32:30). Gihon, and any overflow passed by this gate to the Kidron. Now these life-saving waters were open to enemy attack.

**“but (there was) no place for the beast (that) was under me to pass”** — An eloquent testimony to the thoroughness of the enemy's demolition of the walls of Jerusalem. Huge

#### ***SEEN IN THE NIGHT!***

*With a few faithful followers, Nehemiah descended into the Vale of Hinnom, threading his way in and out among gigantic masses of ruin and rubbish.*

*Each point reached was recorded by him with that thrill inspired by the sight of objects long expected, and afterwards long remembered*

*— the Dragon's well; the gate outside of which lay the piles of sweeping and offscouring of the streets; masses of fallen masonry all along the western and northern side; blackened gaps where gates had been destroyed by fire; till, at last, by the royal reservoir, the accumulations became so impassable that the animal refused to proceed. Then he turned along the deep shade of the Kedron watercourse, looking up at the eastern wall, less ruinous than the rest, and so the governor returned to his house within the city with a full understanding of the desolation and extent of the reconstruction needed.*

*The important work was now before him, and with the “good hand of his God” upon him, it would be successful!*

### Nehemiah's Inspection

*Nehemiah's thorough inspection of the city and environs revealed a sad and sorry situation.*

• *There were adversaries ready to cause trouble (v. 17); • Few Jews inhabited the city (v. 17); • The people were largely destitute, dispirited, and without direction (v. 17). • The gates were burnt, the walls broken down, everywhere there was evidence of destruction and disorder (vv. 13-15).*

*It was as though this community of Yahweh's people "had a name that they lived, but were dead". They were in desperate need of sound, stable leadership, that they might become reinvigorated with the ideals of the Truth.*

*In referring to the trials of life, Paul wrote: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet..." (Heb. 12:12-13). The "hands" are the means by which we labor in Yahweh's service; the movement of the "knees" gives mobility to the body; the "feet" determine the direction the body takes.*

*Paul cites these words from Isa. 35:3 since that beautiful section of Isaiah's prophecy is wonderfully descriptive of the joy which will be known by all the saints who are found worthy of receiving an incorruptible inheritance in the kingdom. It was as though Paul exhorted the Hebrew brethren, in the midst of their trials, difficulties and shortcomings, that they should regain their momentum and direction in the Truth, looking beyond the present to the glorious future of the kingdom Age. With such a vision in their minds, they would be encouraged to continue the struggle until the coming of their king.*

*The Jews of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah needed such encouragement, as they needed a unity of purpose. Nehemiah was sufficiently motivated by the power and spirit of the Truth to provide them with such sound direction; and he proceeded to to act*

—J. Ullman.

masses of broken masonry cluttered the way. Antitypically, the work of redemption undertaken by the Lord Jesus was hindered by the ignorance and wickedness of those to whom he came (cp. Jn. 7:32).

Nehemiah now apparently alighted from his animal, to pick his way over the rubbish and ruins in the dead of night along the steep, rough Kedron Valley.

### VERSE 15

**"Then went I up in the night"** — The third reference to this fact (cp. vv. 12, 13). Similarly, the work of the Master continues during the "night" of Gentile times (Mat. 14:25; 26:31; Lk. 6:12; 21:37; Jn. 3:2).

**"by the brook"** — The Kedron, a brook on the east side of the city, which David crossed to avoid danger threatening him from Absalom (2Sam. 15:23); which became the border limiting Shimei by order of king Solomon (1Kgs. 2:37); where, later, Josiah burned the idolatrous altars of Baal (2Kgs. 23:4, 12); and over which the Lord Jesus ventured into Gethsemane to face his final trials (Jn. 18:1). From this point Nehemiah would be able to "look at the eastern wall" along its whole length to examine its condition.

**"and viewed the wall"** — Turning the corner leading from the Kedron, he moved along the north, and then turned west (v. 13).

**"and turned back"** — Reaching the northeastern

angles of the city walls, Nehemiah now turned south to inspect the final section of the wall, so entering by the way he commenced, having traversed the city

**“and entered by the gate of the valley, and (so) returned”** — He completed the preparatory work that he intended to accomplish. So the Lord Jesus, having undertaken the work of examining spiritual Jerusalem during his ministry, declared from the stake “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). The subsequent work of the Master will follow the pattern set by Nehemiah, as he set a program of reconciliation and restoration (Psa 110:1).

## VERSE 16

**“And the rulers knew not”** — They were not aware of Nehemiah’s inspection nor its purpose. Neither did the rulers in Jerusalem at first understand the mission on which the Lord Jesus had been sent by his Father in heaven (Jn 8:59, Lk 9:45). Generally, it is only those of a humble faith and a meek disposition who will perceive the wonder of the Lord’s work of redemption (Mat 11:25-26).

**“whither I went, or what I did”** — The purpose and destiny of the Messiah was similarly not perceived by those to whom he was sent (Jn 1:5, 9:30).

**“neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers”** — Heb *caganim*, superintendents over the people, and subordinate to the governor.

**“nor to the rest”** — The common people. The same four groups as here mentioned generally misinterpreted the

*In his proposal to repair Jerusalem, Nehemiah reveals important principles necessary for ecclesial work:*

*EXAMINATION (vv. 12-16);*

*CO-OPERATION (vv. 17-18);*

*DETERMINATION (vv. 19-20).*

*Issues and problems must be properly identified so that the solution proposed is proportional to the need; then there must be an acceptance by the community of the responsibility to handle the issues at stake; finally it requires a spirit of commitment to ensure that the desired end is achieved.*

work of the Lord Jesus (Mat 15:8, 27:25).

**“that did the work”**

— Any work that had been attempted previously had failed through lack of support. It probably had been undertaken by the lowliest people, whom Nehemiah here separates from the others.

The people were later to understand the secret mission of Nehemiah, and to involve themselves in the work of rebuilding the walls of the city under his direction — as the nation will yet respond to the words of the Lord Jesus when he returns and makes known to them his purpose. The nation will become “the first dominion” (Mic 4:8) and participate in the plan of worldwide restoration (Zech 12:5-6).

## Nehemiah Confers with the Elders — vv. 17-18

*Nehemiah seeks the enthusiastic co-operation of his brethren. He does this in four stages: (1) By presenting the problem clearly to their attention: the people in a distressed condition, the city defenceless and deserted by many, the gates blackened, with gaping holes in ruined walls. (2) He exhorts the people: “Let us recognize and repair the reproach.” (3) He gives warm encouragement: Practical evidence that it was according to the will of God that they should engage in the work. (4) Showing them that the time was propitious for the work, seen in the ways of Providence working on their behalf, as was evidenced by the words and actions of the King of Persia himself.*

**"I Told Them..."**

Verses 17 and 18 contain the only record of the sterling and moving exhortation Nehemiah delivered to the people at this time. It is probable that the full context of his appeal to the people is not recorded, and that we are told only what is necessary for us to know in regard to this matter. Upon what basis do we make such an assumption? By the reaction of the people. It is doubtful that they would have responded with such single-minded zeal and vigor if all Nehemiah had said to them was confined to about four sentences. The response of the people was dynamic.

It is likely that Nehemiah stood before the people, addressing them with inspiring words of intensity and infectious enthusiasm. It is not difficult to picture him speaking eloquently and forthrightly concerning the purpose of the God they worshipped, the promises that had been made to the fathers', the coming glory of Messiah's reign, and their responsibilities to respond to "the good hand" of their God which would certainly rest upon them, if they had a mind to give themselves fully in His service.

The events which follow indicate that Nehemiah provided the encouraging voice from the Word which the people had not previously heard, in these present circumstances. Nehemiah thus proved to be a great shepherd to the people, fearlessly and courageously standing before them as their leader and example.

To this day, Nehemiah remains an outstanding example of faithfulness and dedication in the face of great trial. Individuals of his spiritual calibre shall be called "the children of God" for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

— J. Ullman.

**VERSE 17**

**"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress"** — The Hebrew *ra'* means *evil, affliction* (as in ch. 1:3), and implies that all that had previously been established was now in danger of disintegrating. The RV has: "evil case". The people had to recognize the problems facing them. Unless we are conscious of the issues that face us, personally or ecclesially, we will not be in a position to effectively deal with such matters.

**"that we (are) in"** — There is a need to determine our real spiritual condition. Compare Deut. 32:28; Jer. 4:22; Rev. 3:17, 22.

**"how Jerusalem (lieth) waste"** — Heb. *chareb*, meaning *parched, desolate*. This was also the spiritual condition of the nation to whom Christ came (Isa. 53:2; Mat. 23:38).

**"and the gates thereof are burned with fire"** — Nehemiah clearly pointed to the result of the people's previous neglect. They had done little or nothing about restoring the gates, which protected entrance to the city, or to prevent enemies from gaining access. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian leaders of the spiritual injury which results from allowing "grievous wolves to enter in among you, not sparing the flock", and permitting in their own community "men speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:29-30). Since such warnings have been given to us by the Spirit (cp. Rev. 2-3), we need to be aware of such dangers, and to take urgent steps to "strengthen the things which remain" (Rev. 3:2).

**"come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem"** — An appeal to repair the city and its protective wall, for the benefit and safety of the ecclesia.

**"that we be no more a**



**reproach**” — It was a reproach that after so long, the city should reveal such evidence of neglect. It was the subject of ridicule from the world, and this reflected on the power and majesty of Yahweh. Similarly, slipshod methods ecclesially can bring a like reproach against the Truth today.

### VERSE 18

**“Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me”** — This is the third of such important statements (see vv. 8, 12), and illustrates the answer to the problems which faced them. Nehemiah relied upon the goodness and direction of the Father in his work for the Truth.

**“as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me”** — Nehemiah recognised that the “hand of Yahweh” was manifested in the way in which the king of Persia responded to his request. He came to Jerusalem with the full approval of the Monarch, as later, the Lord Jesus witnessed to his divine mission (Luke 4:18; Jn. 4:34).

**“And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for (this) good work”** — Nehemiah's enthusiasm was contagious, and found a ready response in the people. All indecision and ineptitude was at an end, and the ecclesia was keen to commence, encouraged by Nehemiah's experience of divine favor. How encouraging in ecclesial life, when a similar attitude is manifested by the members in a desire to advance a good cause.

### **Nehemiah's Policy Concerning the Mocking Adversaries — vv. 19-20**

*His mission is discovered, and his work is attacked by enemies who desire to destroy his influence. They first protest, then resort to ridicule and threats. But patiently and quietly, Nehemiah went about his task undeterred.*

### VERSE 19

**“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite”** — The leading enemies of Nehemiah. See comments on v. 10.

**“and Geshem the Arabian”** — He is also known as Gashmu (6:6), and his name signifies *Firm, Strong*. He was probably an Arabian tribal chief.

The three conspirators combined to oppose Nehemiah, as did the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees against Christ. In this they were prefigured in the three shepherds who worked against Zechariah (Zech. 11:8). See also Psa. 83:6 for a threefold confederation who “counselled together with one consent” against the purpose of Yahweh (v. 4).

**“heard (it), they laughed us to scorn”** — The second form of opposition (see v. 10). It is difficult to withstand this attitude. However, Nehemiah maintained his faithful dedication, despite the scorn heaped upon him by his adversaries. This disposition is seen to perfection in the attitude of the Lord Jesus under trial (Psa. 22:7; Mat. 9:24). The scorn of those who oppose the divine purpose will ultimately rebound upon their own heads at the elevation of Zion's king (Psa. 2:4) as it did in the days of Nehemiah.

**“and despised us”** — Rotherham translates this: “poured contempt upon us” (cp. Psa. 31:18). Their voices were raised in hypocritical accusations and antagonism against the work of the Truth. The same attitude was manifested by the leaders of Jewry against the Lord (Jn. 7:52).

**“and said, What (is) this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?”** — They now added threats to ridicule, implying that a report to the court of Persia might be made! So Christ also bore the threats of the people who claimed sympathy with the king of Rome (Jn. 19:12, 15).

### VERSE 20

**“Then answered I them”** — Reveal-

ing not only Nehemiah's own determination to faithfully carry the work through to completion, but, more significantly, his faith in Yahweh that He was able to help him perform the work to which he had been called.

**"and said unto them, The God of heaven"** — Nehemiah claims Yahweh's endorsement for his actions (cp. Ezra 5:11). He uses the title of divine authority: the power overlooking the work being accomplished (Dan. 3:16-18; Ezra 5:11). The Hebrew *Elohim* (*mighty ones*) identifies the angelic forces of heavenly power which are constantly operating for the benefit of the saints (Heb. 1:14). The Lord Jesus similarly acknowledged that his work was of God (Jn. 5:17).

**"He will prosper us"** — A confident expression of faith based on his previous experiences (vv. 8, 18). The Hebrew *tsalach* means *to push forward*; thus to strengthen and promote for the divine purpose. Yahweh will certainly support and "push forward" any work performed faithfully in His service (1Sam. 30:23; Psa. 124:2; Rom. 8:31).

**"therefore we His servants will arise and build"** — A similar reply to that of Zerubbabel given earlier (Ezr. 4:3). Apparently Sanballat first tried to intimidate Nehemiah by accusing him of rebellion. When that failed, and he heard of Nehemiah's royal commission, he hypocritically offered help — but was firmly rejected, for Nehemiah knew the offer was not genuine.

**"but ye have no portion"** — Inheritance (cp. Deu. 32:9). The Hebrew *cheleq* means *smoothness*; *allotment*; thus to make pleasant and to give an inheritance.

**"nor right"** — The word *tsedaqah* is

usually translated "righteousness" (cp. Isa. 54:17). Such as Sanballat had no "fruits of righteousness" of themselves, and hence could seek none from Yahweh. All such will be excluded from the kingdom (Rev. 21:8).

**"nor memorial"** — Heb. *zikrown*: *to memorialize* (see Exo. 3:15, where the word *zeker* is translated "memorial". See also Mat. 26:13). Their fathers were not buried in Jerusalem, nor were they related to the covenant in any way. Instead, they were "of their father, the devil" (Jn. 8:44), and consequently had no relationship to the things of Yahweh. Citizenship in Jerusalem is a precious and exclusive privilege to which Sanballat could not lay just claim (Psa. 87; Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26). Fellowship in the city of God is limited to those with identical ideals, interests and commitments; only those with a "like precious faith" should be permitted in the building of the spiritual walls of the city (Rev. 21:12, 14; Eph. 2:20).

**"in Jerusalem"** — The city where Yahweh has placed His Name. The Gentiles in the days of Nehemiah should have limited their activities to areas of their own affairs, and not to have troubled the worshippers of the true God.

Similarly, we must protect the principles of spiritual Jerusalem of the present time (the ecclesia) from the influences of and compromises with the world, and not permit fellowship with the forces of darkness (Acts 5:29), even though they cloke their intentions with the guise of "an angel of light" (2Cor. 11:14). Nehemiah avoided the opposition by secrecy as long as he could; but when opposition nevertheless continued, he met it with courage, faith and defiance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### NEHEMIAH ORGANISES THE LABORERS

*It is a dramatic moment as Nehemiah draws around him the enthusiastic populace, all who desired to participate in the project to rebuild the city walls. It demonstrates the commendable quality of being “laborers together” in the things of the Truth. Paul speaks of the importance of working in harmony with the “head”, “from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). When the principles of the governor (whether that be Nehemiah, or the Lord Jesus Christ) are kept in mind, then the work will progress and the ultimate purpose will be achieved. In the building of spiritual Jerusalem, many different laborers are employed, each one “drawn by the Father” (Jn. 6:44). When the instructions of Yahweh are kept in mind, and individual desires are eliminated, the walls of the city will be completed and the honor of the governor will be enhanced.*

Nehemiah arranged the people into 44 working parties, which labored together united as one for 52 days, bringing success and fulfilment to the project set before them. All brethren and sisters were encouraged to co-operate in the work at hand: the establishing of the defences and environs of Jerusalem. Priests, Levites, nobles, professionals, laborers, commoners, daughters, families — all gathered together in the vital project and were elevated to a common status in the single-minded service of the Truth (compare Eph. 4:1-2; 1Cor. 12:18-31).

*Chapter 2 records the enthusiasm which was generated among the people, and the good intentions with which they prepared themselves for the work before them. Nehemiah was pleased with their attitude as, undoubtedly, was Yahweh in the heavens. Chapter 3 provides a record concerning those who were of one mind in seeing the issues which they faced, and in implementing the necessary action at a time of crisis for the people and the city. From the highest to the lowliest, they were intent upon performing their duties faithfully and responsibly. These men and women provide a wonderful and thrilling example to believers in every age, encouraging them to “continue the work begun.” We are called upon to be “doers of the Word, and not hearers only” (Jas. 2:22). Our ultimate destiny will be determined according to our consistent, faithful service to our God. May our profession at the day of our baptism be vindicated through our continued faithfulness, in the day when the Great Judge will dispense the promised rewards.*

*The challenge which is emphasised in chapter 3 is that of individual and collective commitment to the work of the Truth, no matter what the circumstances of life may be. There must be a recognition of particular and special needs, especially in times of crisis for individuals or for the ecclesia. In this incident, enthusiastic dedication to the cause was readily evident. However, this was in the initial stages of the work. Later, things were to be quite different. When Nehemiah's influence was withdrawn, after the events described in ch. 12:3, apathy and indifference developed. This inevitably resulted in the development and growth of apostasy. It is necessary, through zealous exposition of the Word and by means of encouragement, to maintain a spirit of dedication to the cause of the Truth. Every new convert to the Truth should be instructed in this necessity, and should be taught to work together with their brethren in the labor of building up the walls of spiritual Jerusalem, which is the Body of Christ. The defence of the faith must be maintained. The principles of the Truth must be upheld. By this means, the challenges which will arise, either from within or without will be countered, and the integrity and faithfulness of the brethren and sisters kept intact, despite the weaknesses and failings of the flesh.*

### **The Priests Commence at the Sheepgate — vv. 1-3**

*It was appropriate that the priests should be mentioned first. They were to set a good example to the people (Mal. 2:7). In the days of Joshua they led the people in possessing the land: "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God,*

*and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it" (Josh. 3:3). Now Nehemiah looked to them to lead the nation in the labor of the walls.*

### **VERSE 1**

**"Then"** — A moment of excitement: the work commences! It must have given Nehemiah great pleasure to see the enthusiastic response from most areas of the populace in Jerusalem. It was the answer to the ridicule, threats and challenges from the enemies (ch. 2:10, 19).

**"Eliashib the high priest"** — Significantly Eliashib is mentioned first. As high priest it was his duty to give an example of faithfulness (cp. Mal. 2:7). His name signifies *El Restores*, and he was energetic in material duties, but negligent in spiritual responsibilities (see ch. 13:4, 28).

He ultimately became allied to the enemy Tobiah, and guilty of profaning the temple. His grandson, Manasseh, was son-in-law to Sanballat the enemy (cp. Ezr. 10:6; Neh. 13:28).

In his compromising attitude, Eliashib typifies the leaders of Jerusalem who became allied with Rome in the days of the Lord. The scribes and Pharisees sought to conspire with the Romans, Israel's enemies, against the Lord (Jn. 19:12, 15), and although, as representatives of the people, they were supposedly "employed" in the work of the Truth, they compromised by giving their allegiance to Rome (Jn. 19:12-15).

**"rose up with his brethren the priests"** — The general company of the priests associated with Eliashib. Compare verse 28 which shows that the priests undertook a portion of the eastern wall, besides the work here mentioned. There was initial enthusiasm, but it was not sustained — as so often occurs in commitments to the Truth.

**"and they builded the sheep gate"** — The first gate mentioned: appropriate-

ly associated with shepherding and sacrifice. The priests worked in the particular area to which they might be related in their future work, when the sacrifices would be gathered for worship in the temple. The gate was north of the city through which came the animal offerings of the people; so likewise, animal sacrifices in the millennial temple will be brought in from the same direction (Eze. 40:40-41).

**“they sanctified it”** — They first “builded” and then “sanctified” it — as we first labor in the things of the Truth. Our work, if approved, will be dedicated in the eternal service of Yahweh (1Cor. 3:14).

In sanctifying the gate, the priests held a special dedication service different from that described in ch. 12:27-43. The priests consecrated their own work at the earliest possible moment, in order that the divine blessing might rest upon the labors of the whole community. In the antitype, the Lord Jesus, as the faithful high priest “builded” his sacrificial work by a life of dedicated labor, and then “sanctified” it in his offering (2Tim. 2:21; Heb. 2:11; 9:13; 10:10).

**“and set up the doors of it”** — They restored the entrance doors, ready to permit sacrificial animals to be brought in for offering.

**“even unto the tower of Meah”** — Rather: “*Hammeah*”, as in Rotherham’s translation. The word signifies *A Hundred*, evidently a measure on either side of the sheep gate.

**“they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel”** — Sig. *El hath been Gracious*. An important locality, which will form the basis of the future temple (Jer. 31:38; Zech. 14:10). Of this Brother Sulley comments (*Temple of Ezekiel’s Prophecy*, p. 63): “The tower of Hananeel” is supposed to have stood at the northeast corner of the Haram area; and it seems fairly certain that the southeastern corner of the same enclosure is the other point in the base line mentioned by the prophet [*i.e.* Jer. 31:38-

40], because the haunch of an arch exists at that point showing that an extensions of the wall once existed there, and presumably a gate or entrance called ‘the gate of the corner’.”

## VERSE 2

**“And next unto him”** — Notice the margin: “at their hand” (cp. Psa. 110:1). Christ stands at the right hand of his Father (Acts 7:55). The work of this group was virtually joined to that of their brethren.

**“builded the men of Jericho”** — The north wall between the priests’ area and the fish gate. This locality was closest to their town. The inclusion of the restored town of Jericho, over which a curse had earlier been pronounced (Josh 6:16) appeared in Ezr. 2:34. Now the curse had been turned into a blessing, as this group of men from Jericho enthusiastically responded to the call to build the walls of Jerusalem, and gathered next to the priests.

**“And next to them”** — Rotherham has “at his other hand”. The Hebrew is: “hand to hand”. There was close co-operation to ensure that every part of the city wall was carefully restored.

The ecclesia must “bond” together, laboring “hand to hand” in the work of strengthening the things that remain (see Col. 1:23; Eph. 2:22; 4:16).

**“builded Zaccur”** — Sig. *Well Remembered*.

**“the son of Imri”** — Sig. *Eloquence*.

## The Building of the Fish Gate — vv. 3-5

*The record continues to describe the rebuilding of the wall on the western side.*

## VERSE 3

**“But the fish gate”** — Gate 2 was on the northwest corner, opposite Joppa from whence came fish from the Great Sea (2Chron. 33:14; Zeph. 1:10).

**“did the sons of Hassenaah”** — Sig.

*Thornhedge*, thus a form of protection.

**“build, who (also) laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof”** — Heb. *manuwl: a bolt; a fastening*. Cross bars were fitted across the door, and locked into a socket on each wall, thus holding the doors secure against unlawful entry. The protection of the city was carefully ensured.

**“and the bars thereof”** — Heb. *beriyachim: bolts*. The sockets, or catches, which held the bars in place.

#### VERSE 4

**“And next unto them repaired Meremoth”** — His name means *Elevation*, and he manifested an “elevating” enthusiasm (ch. 3:21). He had returned with Zerubbabel (12:3), and received the silver and gold brought by Ezra (Ezra 8:33), and later sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:5). Thus he was an important member of the ecclesia.

**“the son of Urijah”** — Sig. *Yahweh is Light*. He was a priest of the family of Koz (8:4).

**“the son of Koz”** — Sig. *Pricking*; like a goad or thorn. Perhaps he manifested an agitating or driving characteristic by which things were accomplished.

**“And next unto them repaired Meshullam”** — Sig. *A Friend*. Though energetic in material labor, he lacked spiritual qualities. He repaired two portions of the wall (v. 30), but later permitted his daughter to marry Johanan, son of Tobiah, with disastrous results (6:18). It is not just the example of enthusiastic labor that is required, but this quality must be combined with consistency of wisdom and a desire to maintain the honor of Yahweh’s commandments. In neglecting these things Meshullam was not a genuine “friend” of the Truth.

**“the son of Berechiah”** — Sig. *Knee* (i.e., to receive the blessing) of Yahweh.

**“the son of Meshezabeel”** — Sig. *God Delivers*. He sealed the covenant with

Nehemiah (10:21), being also the father of Pethahiah, who occupied a high position (11:24). In this family enthusiasm for the work, and high authority, are tempered with indifference to Yahweh’s marriage requirements and this ultimately corrupted the good work established at the beginning.

**“And next unto them repaired Zadok”** — Sig. *Righteous*. He later sealed the covenant (10:21).

**“the son of Baana”** — Sig. *In Affliction*.

#### VERSE 5

**“And next unto them the Tekoites repaired”** — The men of the village of Tekoa, birthplace of Amos who vigorously witnessed against the evil practices found in the nation of Israel (Amos 1:1). The Tekoites were probably a rural community. The name signifies *Trumpet*, and their sound was certainly heard in the work they performed and the example of faithfulness they manifested.

**“but their nobles”** — These had great privileges, and had received material blessings from Yahweh, but now neglected their opportunities and responsibilities. They would not go out of their way to help Jerusalem! They probably contributed in some respects, but not in the vital and practical areas of personal labor in menial work. They were theorists who refused to soil their hands in the work. As a result, as though an action of reproach, the commoners of Tekoa repaired two portions (v. 27)!

The counterpart of the nobles were the Pharisees and Sadducees in the days of the Master. They did not consider the needs of the people, nor desired to build walls if it meant personal sacrifice (cp. Mat. 23:2-3). It is important that the leaders of the ecclesia reveal an example that can encourage younger members in the service of the Truth. Neglect in this matter puts more stress on others, and sometimes requires

another group to "build a second portion" in order to make up for the lack.

**"put not their necks"** — A discordant note in the harmony of labor, as noted by Nehemiah! These brethren had received blessings in life, but refused to acknowledge them in service to Yahweh. These "exalted ones of Tekoa" were like oxen withdrawing their necks from the yoke, and stood aloof, leaving it to the common people to accept the yoke of service. We are encouraged by the great governor of Israel to "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mat. 11:29) for the "yoke" of the Truth is "easy, and the burden is light" (v. 30). When we joyfully and willingly accept our responsibilities and disciplines, learning to work in harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ, the apparent difficulties are lessened, and the labor becomes meaningful.

**"to the work"** — The nobles followed the theory of the "service" (Rotherham) of God, but refused to put it into practice. In that they typified the Pharisees concerning whom the Lord said: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Mat. 23:3).

**"of their Lord"** — Heb. *adon: sovereign; governor*. Nehemiah had called them to this labor, but they refused to conform to his directions or to work with his compatriot overseers. In this work Nehemiah represented the greater sovereign: Yahweh! The nobles were personally responsible to God for their attitude. They compromised their high and holy calling by their apathy and indifference to the service required of them (cp. Col. 4:1).

## VERSE 6

**"Moreover the old gate"** — Gate 3. Probably the "first gate" of Zech. 14:10, and thought to be on the northwestern side of the city. Perhaps it is the Damascus

Gate of today.

**"repaired Jehoiada"** — Sig. *Yah Knows*.

**"the son of Paseah"** — Sig. *Lame*. He was head of the family of the Nethinim (7:51; Ezra 2:49).

**"and Meshullam"** — Sig. *Associate; Friend; Ally*.

**"the son of Besodeiah"** — Sig. *In the Counsels of Yahweh*.

**"they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof"** — See comments v. 3. So this part of the work was completed, and the entrance secured.

## VERSE 7

**"And next unto them repaired Melatiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Delivered*.

**"the Gibeonite"** — Gentiles converted in the days of Joshua, and bound to Israel by an inviolable covenant (Josh. 9:15, 27). It was because Saul had ignored this covenant that Israel suffered divine retribution (2Sam. 21:1). Now these Gentiles combined with their Jewish brethren in the work of Jerusalem, a typical fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). Gentiles will be included in the work of the future, assisting in the building of the temple of glory (Isa. 60:10).

**"and Jadon"** — Sig. *Judge*.

**"the Meronothite"** — Sig. *The Joyful Shouter*.

**"the men of Gibeon"** — A village about 8 km to the north of Jerusalem.

**"and of Mizpah"** — A village about 12 km to the north of Jerusalem.

**"unto the throne of the governor on this side the river"** — The RSV has: "who were under the jurisdiction of the governor of the province beyond the river". However, Gibeon was under the control of Judah (7:25), so also Bethel, further north (11:31). The governor of Syria could have had a place of authority in Jerusalem, which was normally under his jurisdiction, though now exempted

from his authority under the existing arrangements of the Court of Persia arranged with Nehemiah.

### VERSE 8

**"Next unto him repaired Uzziel" — Sig. God (El) is Strength.**

**"the son of Harhaiah" — Sig. Fearing Yahweh.**

**"of the goldsmiths" —** The Heb. *tsaraph* identifies "a refiner". The word is often used to describe religious decorations (Isa. 40:19; 41:7; 46:6; Mal. 3:2-3). Hard, rough masonry work would not be easy for these men used to handling intricate and fine artwork. But they were men of a "tried faith" (1Pet. 1:7), and faith demands effective labor. The Laodicean Ecclesia was deficient in this quality (Rev. 3:18). Their works were merely a facade; they delighted in social activities, but did not seek the more difficult, obscure labor of daily building out of ruins. Gold is the evidence of royalty (Rev. 4:4) and will grace the spiritual city of New Jerusalem (ch. 21:18), because all who form that corporate Body of immortals will be men and women of faith: spiritual goldsmiths.

**"Next unto him also repaired Hanaiah" — Sig. Yahweh was Favored.** There was one of this name who had renounced his unlawful Gentile marriage (Ezra 10:28).

**"the (son of) one of the apothecaries" —** The RV and Rotherham have "perfumers". The delightful aromas of the perfumery were now replaced with the stifling smell of grimy dust! Thus, chemists are found delving into dust in order to honor the work of faith that was of greater importance.

**"and they fortified Jerusalem" —** The word "fortified" (Heb. *azab*, as in ch. 4:2) is different from *chazaq*, translated "repaired" and which means *to fasten upon; seize; strengthen; to be courageous*. *Azab* signifies *to loosen*. Perhaps the wall only needed straightening here, and this

lighter work was given to the goldsmiths, chemists, etc. Nehemiah made certain that every man was given work according to his abilities (cp. Mat. 25:15; Acts 11:29; 1Pet. 4:11).

**"unto the broad wall" —** A straighter, wider area of the wall where was located the Ephraim Gate: Gate 4. See ch. 12:38.

### VERSE 9

**"And next unto them repaired Rephaiah" — Sig. Yahweh Heals.**

**"the son of Hur" — Sig. Whiteness, or Splendor.**

**"the ruler" —** Heb. *sar*, identifying a head person over a group of workers.

**"of the half part of Jerusalem" —** The city was divided into two sections under two "princes" or rulers (see v. 12). Rephaiah was therefore co-ruler of Jerusalem! These leaders were prepared to accept laboring work, and to provide an example to the people.

### VERSE 10

**"And next unto them repaired Jediah" — Sig. Yahweh has been Kind.**

**"the son of Harumaph" — Sig. Flat-nosed.**

**"even over against his house" —** The principle of personal interest was observed throughout, to promote a better response to the appeal for labor (cp. vv. 1, 2, 7, etc). Each person realized that his activity for the rebuilding of Jerusalem was to the benefit of his own household as well. There is a need to care for personal responsibilities (Gal. 6:10; 1Tim. 5:8), and the best way this can be done is to work valiantly in the things of the Truth, protecting and upholding the standards of faithfulness amongst one's own family and associates.

**"And next unto him repaired Hattush" — Sig. Contender.** Later he sealed the covenant (Neh. 10:4).

**"the son of Hashabniah" — Sig.**



*Yahweh has Taken Account.* He may have been the Levite who officiated with Ezra to prepare the people for the sealing of the covenant (Neh. 9:5).

# VERSE 11

**"Malchijah"** — Sig. *Yah is King.* He had earlier put away his Gentile wife (Ezr. 10:31).

**"the son of Harim"** — Sig. *Consecrated.* A prominent man who signed with Nehemiah (10:3); head of a priestly family (12:15).

**"and Hashub"** — Sig. *Intelligent.*

**"the son of Pahathmoab"** — Sig. *Governor of Moab.* A leading family, the members of which returned under Zerubbabel (Ezr. 2:6; Neh. 7:11). Further members returned with Ezra (Ezr. 8:4). Thus this family was represented at the sealing of the covenant (Neh. 10:14).

**"repaired the other piece"** — See mg.: "the second measure". This is indicative of the outstanding enthusiasm of these two companions, and their preparedness to accept additional responsibilities in the work of the Truth. It is a commendable labor of faith to see brethren unite together in the good work of establishing and supporting spiritual defences (1Tim. 5:17-18).

**"and the tower of the furnaces"** — See ch. 12:38. Its exact position is unknown; perhaps it was associated with the fires of the valley of Hinnom nearby (cp. Mat. 13:42).

# VERSE 12

**"And next unto him repaired Shalum"** — Sig. *Recompense; Retribution.*

**"the son of Halohesh"** — Sig. *Whisperer; Enchanter.* He sealed the covenant (10:24).

**"the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem"** — See v. 9. The word "ruler" is from the Heb. *sar*, *authority; head person.* There was a local authority under the main governor of the whole area (Heb. *pechah*) controlling half the city, or the district controlled by the city.

**"he and his daughters"** — A lovely family group united in the "work of their Lord" (v. 5). Father and daughters, accepting their responsibility, co-operated together to defend the beloved city, in the face of enemies (cp. Acts 21:9). Such sisters are a powerful example for good and represent the Bride of Christ on probation. There was a group of faithful women who "ministered" to the Master in a labor of faith (Mk. 15:40-41); and those whose labor for the Truth was particularly noted by the apostle Paul (cp. Rom. 16).

# The Valley Gate — v. 13

*This gate in the southwestern corner was inspected by Nehemiah (2:13), and now he sees his co-laborers involved in its restoration. In this Nehemiah typifies the Lord Jesus who watches over the activities of his brethren in their endeavors to protect spiritual Jerusalem.*

# VERSE 13

**"The valley gate"** — Gate 5. At the southwest of Jerusalem, leading to the valley of Hinnom.

**"repaired Hanun"** — Sig. *Favored.* He enthusiastically repaired two sections (see v. 30).

**"and the inhabitants of Zanoah"** — Sig. *Cast Off.* A village about 17 km. west of Jerusalem (11:30; Josh. 15:34, 56; 1Chr. 4:18).

**"they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate"** — Excavators have estimated the length of this wall as about 487 metres (the entire circuit was about 6 km.). It is hardly likely that one man was given this lengthy section to build. Probably it relates to the distance between two gates, or perhaps this section of the wall was not in great need of repair.

# The Dung Gate — v. 14

*Inspected by Nehemiah in ch. 2:13. It*

*was through this gate that the city refuse was conveyed to the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) for burning*

#### VERSE 14

**"But the dung gate"** — Gate 6

**"repaired Malchiah"** — Sig *Yah is King*

**"the son of Rechab"** — Sig *Character, Horseman*

**"the ruler of part"** — Rotherham has "circuit", the RV translates this "the district"

**"of Bethhaccerem"** — Sig *The House of the Vineyards*, so evidently Malchiah was not of the Rechabites who were under covenant not to be involved in the production and consumption of wine (cp Jer 35 1-19)

**"he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof"** — See notes v 3

#### The Gate of the Fountain — vv. 15-25

*This site is located on the southeastern corner, close to the King's Pool, and which exited the overflowing waters. In the time of Hezekiah an aqueduct tunnel was constructed in this area (2Kgs 20 20, 2Chr 32 30)*

#### VERSE 15

**"But the gate of the fountain"** —

The ruins were inspected by Nehemiah (2 14), and now the gate was repaired. This was an important section of the wall, ensuring that the water supply for the city was restored so that refreshment be available for the needs of the inhabitants. Similarly, laborers in spiritual Jerusalem must maintain the availability of the stream of "living waters" provided for all who thirst in the service of the Master (Jn 4 14, Isa 55 1)

**"repaired Shallun"** — Sig *Recompense, Retribution*. A common name in the tribe of Levi

**"the son of Colhozeh"** — Sig *All-*

*seeing*. The father of Baruch (11 5)

**"the ruler"** — Heb *sar, the head*

**"of part of Mizpah"** — Rotherham has "of the circuit of Mizpah". The district of Mizpah was distinct from the town (cp vv 7, 19)

**"he built it, and covered it"** — The Heb *talal* signifies *to strew over, to cover*, and by implication, "to cover in, plate with beams". Its use suggests that there was an additional need to protect the top of the wall area from enemy attack. This may have been necessary to protect Hezekiah's conduit from damage (2Chr 32 30)

**"and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof"** — See comments on v 3

**"and the wall of the pool of Siloah"**

— The pool was outside the main wall of the city at the southwestern foot of the temple hill, near the lower end of the Tyropoeon valley. It furnished water to the royal garden which was at the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys

**"by the king's garden"** — This may have been so-called from the infamous demand of Ahab for part of the possession of Naboth so that he could provide for his own pleasure from a "garden of herbs" (1Kgs 21 2). There was also a burial garden in the area (2Kgs 21 18). Zedekiah fled through the king's garden in his unsuccessful effort to escape from the Chaldeans (2Kgs 25 4, Jer 39 4)

**"and"** — The RV adds "even"

**"unto the stairs that go down from the city of David"** — This flight of steps led from the lower valley up the steep side of Ophel to the city of David probably reaching it at the point not far south of where the temple stood

#### VERSE 16

**"After him repaired Nehemiah"** — Sig *Consolation of Yahweh*. His responsibility was to repair three significant and historic sites on the wall. This was not the

governor, who was the son of Hachaliah (ch. 1:1).

**"the son of Azbuk"** — Sig. *Pardon.*

**"the ruler of the half part"** — "District", as in v. 14.

**"of Bethzur"** — Sig. *House of the Rock*, a village about 24 km. south of Jerusalem on the route to Hebron (Josh. 15:58).

**"unto (the place) over against the sepulchres of David"** — The first historic site in this area. The tombs of the kings of Judah that followed in the line of David to the time of Hezekiah were apparently located on the western side of the temple (2Chr. 21:20). The sepulchres of the royal line were a mute reminder of the glorious past. There was a respect for the regal line of David, as there should be a respect for the pioneers of our times, whose "sepulchres are with us to this day" (Acts 2:29). It is valuable to remember our heritage, as did Nehemiah in his work of restoration.

**"and to the pool that was made"** —

The second important spot undertaken by this Nehemiah, son of Azbuk. Hezekiah's pool was formed from the waters of Gihon when Sennacherib was about to besiege the city (2Chr. 32:30; Isa. 22:9-11).

**"and unto the house of the mighty"**

— The third important spot. The Heb. *gibborim*, probably a place where a band of soldiers, perhaps the city guard were stationed.

## VERSE 17

**"After him repaired the Levites"** —

The constant mention of priests, Levites and Nethinim indicates that these areas were of special interest to the religious families, immediately about the temple.

**"Rehum"** — Sig. *Compassionate.* A Levite.

**"the son of Bani"** — Sig. *Built.* A Levite who regulated the devotions of the people after Ezra read and expounded the Law (9:4-5). His son, Uzzi, was appointed overseer of the Levites (11:22).

### UNITED IN A GOOD WORK!

*In the labor of Nehemiah all classes of society are united into One Body and levelled to One Status: BUILDERS IN GOD'S CITY (cp. Eph. 4:1-2; 1Cor. 12:18-31). Priests (Neh. 3:1), Levites (v. 17), commoners (v. 5), tradesmen (v. 8), doctors (v. 8), administrators (v. 9), women (v. 12), merchants (v. 32) were all there. For most it was hard, unaccustomed labor. But, moved by a desire to serve God, and to protect their spiritual heritage, they did what was not customary for them. Many labored at spots where they had particular interest (cp. v. 1, 26, 30). Gradually, order appeared out of the chaos, as Nehemiah moved around, instructing his scribe to enter in the records the names of those giving faithful service (cp. Mal. 3:16). It was a RECORD OF HEROES, such as is recorded in Heb. 11. Names of faithful laborers in these latter days are still being added to the "book of life", and will be acknowledged in the record of the Lord Jesus Christ in the day of his glory.*

**"Next unto him repaired Hashbani"** — Sig. *Yahweh Reckons.* He may have been the father of Bani (cp. 11:22), and seems to have been a Levite who returned with Ezra (Ezr. 8:19). He sealed the covenant (Neh. 10:11), and as a prominent Levite assisted at the Dedication (12:24). He built on the eastern wall — appropriate to the Levites

**"the ruler of the half part"** — District, as in v. 14.

**"of Keilah, in his part"** — About 25 km. southwest of Jerusalem in the low plain area of the Philistines; scene of a great deliverance under the hand of David (1Sam. 23:1-3).

**VERSE 18**

**"After him repaired their brethren, Bavai"** — Sig. *Wishes*. J. Strong suggests the name is of Persian origin.

**"the son of Henadad"** — Sig. *Hadad is Gracious*. The head of a Levite family which supported Zerubbabel when the foundation of the second temple was laid, and who now enthusiastically repaired the wall under Nehemiah (v. 24), and later sealed the covenant (10:9).

**"the ruler of the half part of Keilah"** — See notes, v. 17.

**VERSE 19**

**"And next to him repaired Ezer"** — Sig. *Help*.

**"the son of Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yahweh will Save*.

**"the ruler of Mizpah"** — Although Ezer was not previously mentioned, the men of Mizpah are (v. 7). Ezer probably was over both groups, though the former was supervised by Jadon.

**"another piece over against the going up to the armoury"** — Probably the site of the "house of the forest of Lebanon" (1Kgs 10:17-21; Isa. 22:8).

**"at the turning of the wall"** — Lit. "the ascent to the armoury of the corner". There were apparently several armouries in Jerusalem (see Isa. 22:8), with this one being situated at the northwestern angle of the special wall of the city of David. There was an "ascent" to it, either by steps, or by a steep pathway, from the Tyropoeon Valley.

**VERSE 20**

**"After him Baruch"** — Sig. *Blessed*. He had the high honor of being singled out for special praise. With zeal he earnestly worked at repairing the wall, completing the task first set him (which is not mentioned), and then setting about on a double portion. He sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (10:6).

**"the son of Zabbai"** — Sig. *Pure*.

There was a man of this name, a son of Bebai, who put away his foreign wife (Ezr. 10:28).

**"earnestly repaired"** — Rotherham has: "zealously repaired". He toiled with keenness and zest: qualities which should be manifested by believers in the work of the Truth (Titus 2:14).

**"the other piece"** — Rotherham: "a second piece". The first is not mentioned.

**"from the turning (of the wall) unto the door of the house"** — It seems that this door was in the wall to which the house must have abutted (see v. 21).

**"of Eliashib the high priest"** — His name signifies *God (El) Restores* (see v. 1).

**VERSE 21**

**"After him repaired Meremoth"** — Sig. *Elevation*. He seems to have been an energetic and meticulous worker (see notes v. 4).

**"the son of Urijah"** — Sig. *Yah is Light*. A priest of the family of Koz, he later supported Ezra in the reading and expounding of the Law to the people (8:4).

**"the son of Koz"** — Sig. *Pricking* (as with a goad or thorn). A priest whose descendants returned under Zerubbabel, but who lost their positions through inability to prove their descent (Ezr. 2:61; Neh. 7:63). Perhaps his grandson Meremoth doubled his work to counterbalance his inability to prove his priestly descent.

**"another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib"** — See v. 20. This second piece cannot have been very long, since it only extended along a portion of the high priest's house.

**VERSE 22**

**"And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain"** — Heb. *ha kikkar*, meaning "the circuit". Thus it refers primarily to the Jordan valley (cp. Gen. 13:10). These men evidently were some of

the officers of the temple, particularly the singers, who dwelt in the plain country around Jerusalem (Neh. 12:28). Evidently some priests dwelt with them.

### VERSE 23

**"After him repaired Benjamin" —** Sig. *Son of the Right Hand*. He put away his foreign wife (Ezr. 10:32), and assisted in the dedicating of the walls (Neh. 12:34 — unless this reference is to the tribe of the same name).

**"and Hashub" —** Sig. *Intelligent*. Perhaps the same man who sealed the covenant (10:23).

**"over against their house" —** Evidently an "intelligent" decision, in view of the significance of Hashub's name! These men would have particular interest in building the wall at that place: their home is the appropriate locality to commence any building or reformation. Notice the careful attention given to this feature (vv. 10, 23, 28, 29, 30), so that each were able to labor mindful of their personal interest and responsibility. This principle was later seen in the preaching work of the apostles, who witnessed first at Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and finally in the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Paul and Barnabas likewise reminded their Jewish hearers that it was "*necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*" (Acts 13:46). They recognized their responsibility to "build over against their house" (cp. Rom. 9:3), but when they were outrightly rejected they sought "another piece" of the spiritual wall of Jerusalem at which to build. Similarly, we have a responsibility to protect our family and ecclesia from the ruinous effects of sin, and need to seek such areas in which to build the principles of faith and righteousness.

**"After him repaired Azariah" —**

Sig. *Helped by Yahweh*. A Levite who later assisted Ezra in expounding the Law (8:7), and who sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (10:2).

**"the son of Maaseiah" —** Sig. *Work (or Activity) of Yahweh*.

**"the son of Ananiah" —** Sig. *Yahweh has Answered, or Protected by Yahweh*.

**"by his house" —** He followed the example of his companions (see previous note on this verse).

### VERSE 24

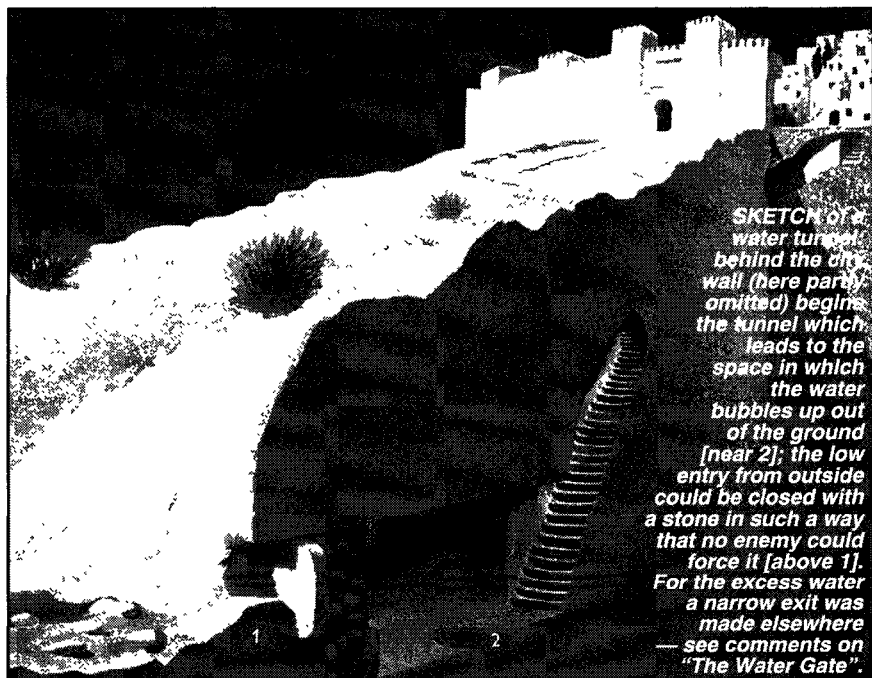
**"After him repaired Binnui" —** Sig. *Built*. A Levite whose family returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel (12:1, 8), and who also assisted in sealing the covenant (10:9).

**"the son of Henadad" —** Sig. *Hadad is Gracious*. See notes on v. 18.

**"another piece, from the house of Azariah" —** Sig. *Helped by Yahweh* (v. 23).

**"unto the turning (of the wall), even unto the corner" —** The northeastern angle of the "city of David" seems here to have been reached. At this point a tower "lay out" (v. 25), or projected extraordi-

*In ecclesial projects great value should be placed on careful organization, and the securing of co-operation on the part of every member of the community. Under the supervision of Nehemiah every part of the wall had its particular builder, and the governor had given careful attention to the proper distribution of the assignments made. Further, each member played his and her part so that the work proceeded unhindered. As a result, God was glorified in the activity conducted; the ecclesia was stimulated and strengthened; the community was protected against the threat of the enemy. Herein is seen the benefit and beauty of ecclesial co-operation.*



narly, from the wall, being probably a watchtower commanding the Kidron valley and the approaches to the city from the eastern side.

#### VERSE 25

**"Palal"** — Sig. *God Judges*.

**"the son of Uzai"** — Sig. *Strong*.

**"over against the turning (of the wall)"** — The northeast angle of the special wall of the city of David, which adjoined the main wall of Jerusalem. A tower here stood out, and the wall turned at a right angle, both northward and southward.

**"and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house"** — The "old place of David".

**"that (was) by the court of the prison"** — The Prison Gate derived its name from this court: Neh. 12:39.

**"After him Pedaiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Ransomed*. He assisted Ezra in reading and explaining the Law (8:4), and was appointed treasurer (13:13).

**"the son of Parosh"** — Sig. *A Flea*. Of a family whose members returned under Zerubbabel (Ezr. 2:3).

#### At the Water Gate — vv. 26-27

*Located near the spring of Gihon, the Water Gate (Gate 8) was an important locality. It permitted access to the water supply for the city.*

#### VERSE 26

**"Moreover the Nethinim"** — The working Levites (7:46-60), considered to be the wood and water carriers for the temple, so that they lived in Ophel, near the water supply. The name means *Given; Dedicated*, and the Nethinim are referred

to 17 times in Ezra and Nehemiah, although only once elsewhere (1Chr. 9:2). They are described as "those whom David appointed for the service of the Levites" (Ezr. 8:20), and are closely connected with "the servants of Solomon" (Ezr. 2:55-60), who seem to be descendants of Canaanites that he used in the building of his temple (2Chr. 2:17), and whose duties were possibly even humbler than that of the Nethinim. The Midianites (Num. 31:27) and Gibeonites (Josh. 9:23) were used for this service. David organized the Nethinim (Ezr. 8:20), who thus seemed to be naturalized foreigners, and some of them identified by the prince or tribe from whence they had been taken captive.

**"dwelt in Ophel"** — The long, narrow, rounded promontory which intervenes between the central valley of Jerusalem (the Tyropoeon) and the Kidron. Thus, the southern extremity of the temple hill.

**"unto (the place) over against the water gate"** — This led to the spring of Gihon in the gorge of the Kidron. Perhaps superfluous waters from temple reservoirs were carried through this gate.

**"toward the east, and the tower that lieth out"** — Southeastern angle of the elevated area on which stood the temple.

#### VERSE 27

**"After them the Tekoites repaired another piece"** — They manifested outstanding enthusiasm and concern for the safety of the city, which more than compensated for the sluggishness of their indifferent nobles (v. 5).

**"over against the great tower that lieth out"** — Perhaps the Tower of Siloam (Lk. 13:4).

**"even unto the wall of Ophel"** — A spur on the eastern side which reached to the Pool of Siloam (v. 15).

#### The Horse Gate — v. 28

*This gate was southeast of the temple*

*and close to the city of David, which originally was the Jebusite fortress, and later included the entire southeastern hill (2Sam. 5:7; 1Chr. 11:5). The gate was so named perhaps because of the many horses connected with the kings of Israel and the city of David.*

#### VERSE 28

**"From above the horse gate" —** Gate 9. The Rabbins suggest that those riding to Jerusalem by horse had to alight at this point (Jer. 31:40), perhaps to ascertain their business and check their credentials.

**"repaired the priests, every one over against his house"** — See comments on v. 23.

#### The East Gate — vv. 29-30

*The gate to the east of the temple. Gate 10.*

#### VERSE 29

**"After them repaired Zadok"** — Sig. *Righteous*. Perhaps the man who was appointed over the treasures of Yahweh's house (13:13).

**"the son of Immer"** — Sig. *Talkative*.

**"over against his house"** — See comments on v. 23.

**"After him repaired also Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh hath Heard*. A descendant of David (1Chr. 3:22) whose son Hattush returned with Ezra (Ezr. 8:2-3). Identified by some with Semei (Lk. 3:26).

**"the son of Shechaniah"** — Sig. *Yahweh hath Dwelt*. A descendant of David (1Chr. 3:22).

**"the keeper of the east gate"** — The area of the temple.

#### VERSE 30

**"After him repaired Hananiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh hath Favored*.

**"the son of Shelemiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh Repays*. Evidently one of the apothecaries (vv. 8, 29). The Berkeley translation

renders this verse so as to make Shelemiah one of the builders of the wall.

**"and Hanun"** — Sig. *Favored*. He enthusiastically repaired two parts of the wall (v. 13). Perhaps he was encouraged by his father to that end, for on the repetition of his name his father's is included.

**"the sixth son of Zalaph"** — Sig. *Caper Plant*, or *Purification*. Evidently

five of his sons stood aside from the work, but the sixth (Hanun), possibly the youngest and despised, not only labored but demonstrated his enthusiasm by repairing a double portion (cp. v. 13). Thus he stood out in his family as a faithful and diligent lover of Zion.

**"another piece"** — Cp. v. 13.

**"After him repaired Meshullam"** —

### How Many Labored for the Cause?

There must have been a considerable number of laborers in the days of faithful Noah who associated with him in commencing the work of building the ark. Obviously the remarkable size of the vessel and the workmanship required to construct it, would have necessitated a group of workers. But as the years passed, it seems that the number diminished. Some were unable to stand the violent ridicule of their contemporaries; others found that their faith did not remain firm under pressure, and they quietly departed the scene, to join the majority. When the work was completed, only eight men and women of faith remained.

At Sinai, Moses was required to call upon the people: *"Bring me an offering: of every man whose heart urgeth him..."* (Ex. 25:2, Roth.). Are we to assume that every man in Israel responded to this divine appeal? By no means! Many would have remained quite indifferent to the call. Others would have looked at their gold and silver and would have decided that they would need their wealth, gotten from Egypt, to "make a start" once they gained entrance to the Land of Promise. Yet others may well have adopted the attitude: "There are plenty of others to give — why should I contribute?"

Although Nehemiah addressed the people with an impassioned appeal for unity, and for spirited support in the work before them, does this necessarily indicate that all the Jews of the city and environs put their collective shoulders to the wheel? Not at all. As in past generations, and as in these present times, there is — and always has been — the every-present enemies, which we know as *Apathy; Indifference; Spiritual Carelessness; Lukewarmness; Too-busy-with-the-Things-of-the-World; Negligence; Spiritual Insensibility*; and so forth.

There were others who commenced the work with their brethren, but fell away, feeling that "this was not their kind of work", or it was too hard or too demanding.

Therefore, let our hearts be firmly knit together with those who followed Nehemiah through all the trials and vicissitudes of this great undertaking — and who were still found faithful when the work was completed; and who rejoiced together before Yahweh when the walls were dedicated to the honor and glory of His Name. In every generation, the faith of believers will be put to the test. *"We must, through much pressure enter into the kingdom of God!"* (Acts 14:22, lit. Gr.). — J. Ullman.



Sig. *Associate, Friend or Allied*. He helped repair two portions of the wall (v. 4), and although energetic in material labor, he lacked spiritual discernment. He permitted his daughter to marry Johanan, son of Tobiah, with sad results for Nehemiah (6:18).

**“the son of Berechiah”** — Sig. *Blessed by Yahweh*. His family was affected by unscriptural marriage, as indicated in the previous note.

**“over against his chamber”** — His room (see notes on v. 23). This was at the Prison Gate: Gate 11.

### The Miphkad Gate — vv. 31-32

*The record now describes developments at the northeastern section of the wall. The Miphkad Gate (sometimes referred to as the Muster Gate) was used for the gathering of sacrificial animals.*

### VERSE 31

**“After him repaired Malchiah”** — Sig. *Yahweh is King*.

**“the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad”** — Gate 12. The RSV has “Muster gate”; Bullinger: “Registry gate”. It was located in the northeastern wall, beyond the corner, a little to the southeast of the sheep gate, and where flocks were gathered for counting and registration.

**“and to the going up of the corner”** — This may signify an ascent, or, as suggested in the margin, identify an upper chamber situated over the gate itself.

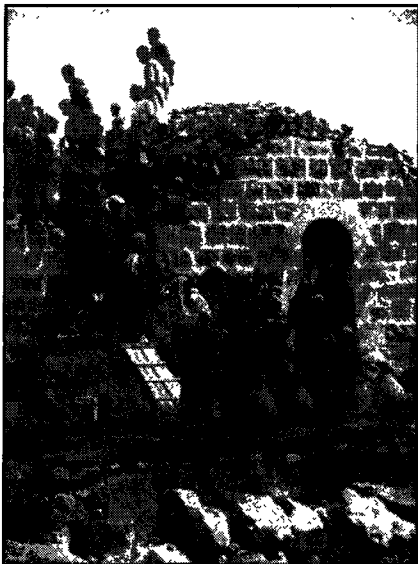
### VERSE 32

**“And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate”** — So the city was completely encircled (cp. v. 1).

**“repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants”** — See notes on v. 8. They were required to repair the piece of the wall immediately to the southeast of the

sheep gate, for which no individual had volunteered. Probably they had houses in the neighborhood. They consented; and thus the entire wall was completed and the great work which Nehemiah had conceived in his heart while still in Susa, was inaugurated, and the first stage of the restoration was achieved.

This typifies the first stage of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his first advent the Master sought to “repair the wall of faith” that had been broken down by the spiritual apathy and indifference of the nation. By his fearless declaration of doctrine (Jn. 6:63) and his perfect example of divine workmanship (Jn. 5:17), the Master strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, and having done all, was able to declare of his labor: “*It is finished*” (Jn. 17:4; 19:30). It is upon this foundation of spiritual excellence that the city of New Jerusalem is built (Rev. 3:12) and glorified (21:2).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FACING THE WILES OF THE ADVERSARY

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pet. 5:8-11).*

The city of Samaria was held by a Persian garrison called *“The Army of Samaria”* (Neh. 4:2). Its governor, doubtless deriving his authority from the Satrap of Syria, was Sanballat. His position was one of authority and great influence. He was on close terms with an Ammonite chief named Tobiah, and an Arab sheikh, Geshem, who commanded a band of those persistent marauders who seemed to be willing at any time to put their swords at the disposal of Sanballat. Sanballat became allied in marriage to Eliashib, the high priest-elect, his daughter Nicaso being wedded to Manasseh, son of Joiada and grandson of Eliashib ( Josephus’ *Ant.* 11:7; Neh. 13:28). Tobiah also became allied to Eliashib (Neh. 6:17-18; 13:4), and these men, particularly Sanballat, were in a position to render formidable opposition to the work of Nehemiah — and Sanballat, being a man of reckless and violent temper would be expected to cause serious trouble to the work in hand. From the first, he had resented Nehemiah’s appointment and had simmered with ill-will towards the man of God (2:10). A powerful Jerusalem meant a weaker Samaria. Besides, he had designs on the priesthood (implied by his offer of help: 2:20; and his ties of marriage: 13:28). He saw Nehemiah as a dangerous enemy who could nullify his ambitions. He thus tried to rid himself of him by intimidation (2:19), ridicule (4:2) and force (4:7-8). But all his attempts were thwarted and answered by prayer, vigilance and faithful labor.

In this may be seen the continuing antagonism between the *Seed of the Serpent* and the *Seed of the Woman* (Gen. 3:15), with temporary inconvenience being caused to Nehemiah’s work of restoration, but with the eventual defeat of Sanballat’s forces of evil. The work of the Truth has always been subjected to opposition (Rom. 16:17), but it is through such trials that determination is developed and faith is perfected.

### **The Adversaries Ridicule the Work — vv. 1-3**

*The labors of the ecclesia are observed by enemies without, who now determine to frustrate the activities. A coalition of adversaries is developed and a powerful force of the flesh endeavors, in its first attempt, to weaken the faith of the workers by ridicule in the "day of small things"*

#### **VERSE 1**

**"But it came to pass"** — A period of time had elapsed as those occupying surrounding areas had carefully observed the activity in Jerusalem

**"that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall"** — The enemy had his spies, who reported on the activities being undertaken by the Jews. Thus, a form of gospel proclamation was involved in the building of the wall. Nehemiah made no attempt to hide what was being done, and, similarly, the defence of the Truth requires its profession to others (2Tim 4:2, 1Pet 3:15)

**"he was wroth"** — Heb *charah* to glow, grow warm, blaze up. This indicates the anger resulting from the information concerning the work of Nehemiah that had come to the attention of the enemy.

**"and took great indignation"** — Heb *ka'ac* to trouble. Sanballat determined on his action. He would inflict trouble on the Jews and interrupt their progress. In this he represents the spirit of antisemitism throughout the ages (Psa 2:1).

**"and mocked the Jews"** — Heb *la'ag* to deride. This was a reflection against the work of the Truth (cp Pro 17:5), and represents those who decry the work of faith (cp Jer 15:17), especially in the last days (Jude v. 18). It was the attitude of the enemies of Christ (Mat 20:19, 27:29).

#### **VERSE 2**

**"And he spake before his brethren"**

— The leaders of the communities associated with Sanballat, which would have included Tobiah and Geshem. There were similar conspirators in the days of the Master, who gathered in committee to determine how to defeat his work (Mat 26:3-4).

**"and the army of Samaria, and said"** — It is suggested that this was a Persian garrison, stationed in Samaria under its own commander, with which Sanballat had influence. He endeavored to incite the army against the Jews and indicated that anyone who did them an injury would find support and protection from Sanballat and his army. In this he manifested the spirit of Haman in the time of Esther (Est 3:13).

**"What do these?"** — In this verse Sanballat presents five challenging and threatening questions. Conversely, David selected five stones from the brook of Elah to oppose the ridicule and opposition of Goliath. Sanballat exhibits the same antagonistic spirit as earlier seen in the Philistines against David. Nehemiah answers with five requests of Yahweh vv. 4-5. This first question draws attention to the purpose for which the Jews were laboring.

**"feeble Jews?"** — "Feeble" is from the Heb *'amelal*, meaning to be languid, thus to be sickly and weak. This was hardly true in view of the fervent activity and dedicated labor that the Jews had already manifested. But the statement was designed to bring ridicule upon their work.

**"will they fortify themselves?"** — The second question concerns their physical endurance. The word *'azab* means to loosen, to leave (translated as "forsaken" in Psa 22:1). The margin has "leave to themselves", that is, to complete the work in hand.

**"will they sacrifice?"** — The third question concerns their religious devotions. Having completed the work, will they now engage in worship in order to

**"These Feeble Jews!"**

*Sanballat heard the news. The Jews were at work! They were trying to rebuild the walls and gates of the city! With an attitude typical of the thinking of the flesh which "cannot receive the things of the Spirit... because they are spiritually discerned," Sanballat gave his considered opinion of these people: "These feeble Jews!" The Sanballats of this world will one day discover, to their dismay, that it will be "feeble Jews" of this disposition who will reign with Christ over a world in which all Gentile power has been destroyed or surrendered. It will be those who are regarded by the world as "feeble" but who are rich in the faith that is in Christ Jesus, who will be vindicated before all men, as the approved of Almighty God. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised,, hath God chosen..." (1Cor. 1:27-28). — J.U.*

dedicate the walls? This, in fact, was done (12:27, 43).

**"will they make an end in a day?"**

— That is, in the period of time that they had allocated for the work. This fourth question is one of principle: Could they sustain their energies as they had asserted?

**"will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"** — The Hebrew for "revive" is *chayah*, to give life. This final question implies that the people were attempting the impossible: to transform what was considered to be rubbish into something substantial and solid! The Jews were rebuilding with broken stones and burnt timber recovered from the rubble which

greatly hindered their work (v. 10). The adversaries realised this, and mocked at their feeble attempts.

Contrast the confident statement of Neh. 2:17-18 when trust is placed upon Yahweh. This is similar to the assurance given to Peter in the work of the first century: "I have prayed for thee, that *thy faith fail not*: and when thou art converted, *strengthen thy brethren*" (Lk. 22:32).

In building up the walls and defences of spiritual Zion (the present work of the ecclesia) there may be much rubbish to clutter the way, but we continue to labor in faith. This phrase of Sanballat fittingly describes the criticism of some against the faithful work of Bro. Thomas in reviving the Truth in these latter days, and the labors of those who follow in his path of service — whose efforts are sometimes described as "feeble" by unworthy opponents.

**VERSE 3**

**"Now Tobiah the Ammonite"** — See comments on Neh. 2:10.

**"(was) by him"** — In league with, and supporting Sanballat.

**"and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox"** — Heb. *shuw'al*; probably a jackal.

**"go up"** — To lean against, or seek to stray over the wall. Thus, the slightest strain.

**"he shall even break down their stone wall"** — Mocking at the diligent efforts of loyal men and women who labored together under difficulties and without much apparent encouragement.

**Enemy Ridicule Is Answered by Prayer and Work — vv. 4-6**

*A greater strength was available to the dedicated Jews in the ecclesia than in the camp of the enemy (cp. 2Chr. 32:7). This was by prayer to Yahweh, and encouragement to the ecclesia.*

**VERSE 4**

**"Hear, O our God"** — The first of

five requests in answer to the five challenges of Sanballat (v. 2). Nehemiah sets the situation before Yahweh for Him to take action (Rom. 12:19; Psa. 123:3-4). Prayer was a customary action by this man of great faith (see 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31. The example: Luke 18).

**“for we are despised”** — As the representatives of Yahweh, this attitude by the enemies of Zion reflected on Him. All such accusations should be placed into the care of Yahweh, for it is His prerogative to answer (Rom. 12:19). The Lord Jesus was pre-eminently the man “despised and rejected” (Isa. 53:3), who put his case continually before his Father (Heb. 5:7).

**“and turn their reproach upon their own head”** — The work of building the walls was essentially the work of Yahweh, not Nehemiah (Psa. 127:1), so that if the reproach of the enemy succeeded it would be at the expense of God’s labor (cp. Psa. 79:12; Rom. 12:19-20).

**“and give them for a prey”** — The third request. This was actually pleading: “Let the work of Zion succeed”. The adversary had revealed himself as an enemy to this work, therefore, having put himself in this position the work could only succeed through his defeat. Christ anticipated the downfall of the enemy who opposed his labor during his first ministry (Lk. 10:18), and again in a later Age (Rev. 18:6-8).

**“in the land of captivity”** — The Heb. *shibyah* signifies *to strip bare*; thus “to exile; to capture”. Israel had been in that position in Babylon, and now, having no strength of their own, the people had to rely upon Yahweh for deliverance. Nehemiah recognised that the captivity represented a divine trial upon the nation, and now requested that the adversaries be in the same position Israel originally experienced.

#### VERSE 5

**“And cover not their iniquity”** — The fourth request. See Psa. 109:7, 14-15. The word “iniquity” is from ‘*avon*: *per- versity*. The company of the enemy were acting in opposition to the divine Will.

**“and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee”** — The final request. There was nothing personally vindictive in these appeals. Sanballat had opposed the work in such a public way, that to blot out his sin would be to acknowledge Sanballat’s right to defeat the work. However, the Hebrew form of the verb in these imprecatory sayings can be rendered positively: “Their sin will not be blotted out...” (Heb. *machah*: *erased*; see Psa. 69:28). This does not refer to personal repentance and forgiveness, but to active opposition to the work of restoration.

**“for they have provoked (Thee) to anger before the builders”** — Sanballat’s words of ridicule had been uttered publicly, and reflected upon the righteousness of Yahweh. Nehemiah is mindful of the honor of Yahweh which must be upheld before any benefit can be given to individuals.

#### VERSE 6

**“So built we the wall”** — There is a note of joy in this statement, as the half way mark was reached (the whole project was completed in 52 days: ch. 6:15). Some translations have: “and we [still] built the wall” — i.e., they continued on regardless of the opposition. The work was successful because the people had not merely prayed, but provided God with a basis upon which He could bless them. They prayed and worked! Thus, in spite of all ridicule and invective, the work progressed quietly and steadily. There is nothing more irritating than this to such enemies as Sanballat! It is the complete answer to personal trouble and opposition.

Now the first half of the project of the work of God was completed. Compare the

triumphant expression of the Lord Jesus from the cross, as he, likewise, came to the successful conclusion of the first part of his atoning work *"It is finished"* (Jn 19 30)

**"and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof"** — The Hebrew for "joined together" is *quashar* meaning *to tie, to bind together*. Similarly the spiritual city is beinge built upon the principle of true unity, being "compacted together" (Psa 122 3)

**"for the people had a mind to work"** — The insults and gibes had little effect upon the people. Instead, they made a conscious effort to maintain the labor before them. It was a co-operative venture, and due to good leadership which recognized the need of the times, and applied itself to the work, the project went on apace. Jerusalem was ringed with workers, and although it was heavy, difficult and dirty work, gradually results became evident.

As present-day workers, believers need to develop the "mind to work" an attitude of dedication in spiritual activity, such as is seen to perfection in the Lord Jesus (Phil 2 2-5, Jn 5 17). This is the principle of God manifestation: the true labor of the ecclesia (cp Eph 4 16).

### **The Adversary Indulges in Threats of Force — vv. 7-8**

*Since the use of ridicule did not accomplish its desired result, a further conference of the enemies is held, a second attempt is made to destroy that which had been built*

### **VERSE 7**

**"But it came to pass"** — Note the repetition of this expression. This was the second attempt by the enemy to overcome the strength of the Truth and the influence of Nehemiah in the work. We must always expect adversaries and difficulties in the work of the Truth. Such "thorns in the

flesh" (2Cor 12 7) may not always be removed from our sides, because we need to learn the value of laboring in faith, and trust in God under adverse as well as favorable circumstances.

**"(that) when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites"** — Five identities are mentioned, paralleling the five threats of verse 2, and the five requests of vv 4-5. A formidable company of enemies assembled against Jerusalem. It was probably a band composed of the nations mentioned, which Sanballat maintained as a personal guard, and which formed a portion of the "army of Samaria" (v 2). The Arabians were the descendants of Hagar and Ishmael, the Ammonites descended from Lot (Gen 19 36-38), the Ashdodites were probably the remnant of the Philistines who had fought against Israel many times throughout the centuries (Josh 11 22).

The antitype will be seen in the gathering of Gog against Jerusalem in the latter days (Ezek 38 9). Significantly there are five nations mentioned in collaboration with Gog.

**"heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up"** — A report of the Jewish activities reached Samaria. The words "were made up" are translated in the margin as "ascended" (cp v 6).

**"(and) that the breaches began to be stopped"** — Evidence that a thorough work was being accomplished. All the defenses of the city wall were strengthened. This was a work of faith, and such a work needs to be continued by ecclesial laborers today. All have a responsibility to prevent "breaches" in the walls of doctrine and practice, so that the Truth is protected from the insidious influence of enemies.

**"then they were very wroth"** — "Very" is the Heb *me'od*, meaning *vehement, wholly*. Previously they manifested "wrath" (v 1), but now that rage and fury had further increased.



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**VERSE 8**

**“And conspired”** — Heb. *qashar, to tie*; thus, to bring together and unite in decisions made. The object of the conspiracy was to hinder and confuse the work by instilling fear and uncertainty in the work-

ers. Later, Judas gathered with the priests to conspire against the Lord (Mk. 14:10-11); and the Jews also did so to Paul (Acts 23:12-13). The conspiracy of these enemies of Israel foreshadowed the latter-day confederacy of the northern host (Psa. 2;

### **Facing the Challenges from Within and Without**

Pressures come upon the ecclesia of the living God in every age and generation. They come from within the Body and from without. The latter result from innumerable manifestations of evil, all of which are implacably opposed to Yahweh and His holy Word, either through ignorance or blatant rebellion against the Truth. Times of testing from within the Body are not always readily identified, other than by those who are well educated in “the Word of righteousness” and who are thus able to “discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:13-14).

Opposition from without is quite different. Sometimes it is subtle, like the voice of the serpent in Eden. Indifference or carelessness for spiritual standards may result in such influences bringing destructive consequences upon the ecclesia. This type of opposition is the most dangerous to the Brotherhood. When worldly philosophies or customs are introduced into ecclesias, causing some who see the pitfalls which lie ahead, to *question* the wisdom of accepting such ideas into the ecclesia, they are usually asked: “What is wrong with it?” The very fact that such a question is actively canvassed by undiscerning brethren, presents a danger to the ecclesia. This stratagem confronted Nehemiah a little later (ch. 6:17-19); but this was not the problem in ch. 4:7-8. Here, Nehemiah and his brethren were confronted by openly belligerent opposition which all could recognize. “They [the enemies] were very wroth, and conspired all of them together [united in their hatred for the people of Yahweh] to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it” — or, “create confusion” (NEB). What must the ecclesia do under such circumstances? First and foremost, it is essential that the ecclesia be united in oneness of mind and singleness of purpose. They must recognize that there is action they can take: “Set a watch against them!” Close ranks. Remain alert and awake. Be ready to defend the Truth and guard the ecclesia. With faith and courage, face the “wiles of the devil.” But under such circumstances there are things that only Yahweh can do: “We made our prayer unto our God...” The entire ecclesia, with one voice, appealing to Yahweh for help and strength in time of need.

However, when such issues must be faced from without, the greatest danger to the ecclesia remains within. If the ecclesia is subject to turmoil within, being ravaged by division, discord, confusion and discontent, how is an appeal to be made to Yahweh? How is the enemy without to be faced if the enemy within has already accomplished its ungodly work? “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias... stand fast in one spirit, with one mind...” — *J. Ullman*.

Isa. 8:9-10; Ezek. 38).

**"all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem"** — The city becomes synonymous with the people. This is the case with the present-day State of Israel, against which enemies conspired to destroy it in 1948, 1967, 1973, etc, but

*Nehemiah's defence is fourfold: (1) Prayer, v. 9; (2) Watchfulness, v. 9; (3) Encouragement, v. 14; (4) Arms, vv. 16-22. Spiritual and moral defences are given first place, but material and practical protection is not neglected. Spiritual warriors must seek divine guidance in such matters, and also take precautions of a practical nature against the enemy.*

*There were difficulties within and enemies without. The difficulties within were caused by the weariness of the people (v. 10), and the repeated messages of discouragement that came from those who dwelt close to the enemies' camp (v. 12), as is often the case with those who enjoy association with the world.*

*Enemies without were of many types (v. 7), who combined together against the Truth (v. 8), manifesting anger (v. 7), being wily (v. 11) and ruthless (v. 11), and determined on their course to stop the work of Faith which was continuing under great difficulties. It is the presence of, and the challenge against, such enemies, that develops in men and women qualities of character and faith.*

*Therefore Nehemiah prayed (v. 9), set a watch (v. 9), strengthened the community (v. 13), and gave faith-stirring addresses (v. 14). Such is the example to all who strive to maintain the faith through times of adversity (Eph. 6:10-18).*

who were frustrated by Yahweh's power being exercised on behalf of His people. Thus, Sanballat and his company stand as a type of the latter-day Gog (Joel 3:1-3; Zech. 14:1-3).

**"and to hinder it"** — Heb. *tow'ah*, signifying *error, injury, going astray*. The margin has: "to make an error to it"; the Septuagint has: "to destroy it utterly". They desired not only to destroy, but also to bring the work of the Jews into dispute.

#### **Force is Nullified by Prayer and Vigilance — v. 9**

*The activities of the enemy were defeated by the inward strength of the ecclesia. Their "secret weapon" was in the power of prayer: cp. Mat. 26:41.*

#### **VERSE 9**

**"Nevertheless"** — There is no actual word in the Hebrew text; however Young has: "and" so as to connect the following with that which has been already declared. The Jews were not defeated by the obvious power of the enemy because they took defensive measures. They challenged the forces before them (cp. Psalms 121:1).

**"we made our prayer"** — It was a communal approach to seek divine help. This privilege strengthens a community in faith and mutual support, and acknowledges the weakness of the flesh to accomplish spiritual progress (Mat. 26:41). Yahweh has promised to deliver those who "call upon" Him (Psalms 50:15; Romans 8:27-28).

**"unto our God"** — He is the first line of defence, the strongest force extant (Job 22:27; Psalms 50:15; Proverbs 10:29). The Hebrew *Elohim* is expressive of the divine company of mighty ones (angels) commissioned by Yahweh to perform His will on behalf of His people (Psalms 34:7; Hebrew 1:14).

**"and set a watch against them"** — The second line of defence. There is a need to co-operate with Yahweh in every

labor of faith (Psalms 127; 2Corinthians 6:1). Faith is not presumption, or "tempting Yahweh". If prayer is to be answered, we must provide Yahweh with the basis upon which He can bless us (cp. James 1:5 with 2Timothy 2:15).

**"day and night"** — Unceasing vigilance and activity (cp. Exodus 17:16). The work of the Truth requires constant attention, and absolute commitment, "in season and out of season" (2Timothy 4:2).

**"because of them"** — The enemy was identified, and their activities were noted, as was the case with the Lord Jesus. He recognised "the devil" in flesh (Hebrew 2:14), and maintained a vigilance against it, ultimately destroying its power. The work of Christ was aimed at destroying the influence of sin, as well as saving and rewarding the righteous with immortality (Hebrew 2:14-15).

#### **Difficulties Within and Without — vv. 10-12**

*The continual responsibility, the anguish and strain of protecting the walls, the exhausting nature of the labor — all began to take effect. This occurs usually towards the end of the day, and is relative to the times now faced by the ecclesia. The "latter days" are noted for their evidence of a weakening faith (Luke 18:8).*

#### **VERSE 10**

**"And Judah said"** — A term expressive of Jewish ability and strength (cp. Zech. 9:13; 12:7; Rev. 5:5). But now they became weary with the constant opposition and heavy labor they had to endure. They saw only problems, and felt that the burden-bearers were unequal to the task. They were fearful of the power of Sanballat, and needed the exhortation of the Lord Jesus: "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Lk. 18:1. See also Gal. 6:9; Hebrew 12:3). How true is this condition of God's laborers in every age.

**"The strength of the bearers of bur-**

**dens is decayed"** — Rotherham has: "The burden bearer faileth". The incessant, tiring labor; the difficult work of extracting good stones from heaps of rubble; the need to be on guard day and night — were wearing out the laborers. Some, like Nehemiah, remained in their working clothes during the whole period of building (vv. 21, 23). In the face of these trials some began to weaken, quoting the words of the adversary: "They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease" (v. 11). The Hebrew for "decayed" is *kashal*, which signifies *to totter; waver; falter; stumble*; indicating the deteriorating morale of the ecclesia. These were difficulties "within" (cp. 2Corinthians 7:5).

**"and (there is) much rubbish"** — A recognition of the difficulties being faced — some of the difficulties "without" (see note above).

**"so that we are not able to build the wall"** — With difficulties "within" and "without" God's people were subjected to twofold trials (personal weariness and accumulated rubbish), as has ever been the case in the work of the Truth (2Corinthians 7:5).

#### **VERSE 11**

**"And our adversaries said"** — Some of the difficulties "without" were the constant verbal barrages of ridicule, invective and insidious threats. The Hebrew word for "adversaries" is *tsarim*, meaning *narrow; a pebble; an opponent*; thus "trouble; foe" (see also Ezra 4:1). It has the idea of constricting or cramping, so as to apply pressure from every side. Thus, to create difficulties that the work might not proceed. On one occasion Peter was such an adversary to the work of the Lord, when he suggested that the Lord's sacrifice was not necessary: "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto

**"The Strength is Decayed" (v. 10)**

The workers within the city were subject to great pressure at this time. The enemy without tried to terrorize them, and the brethren came to know the meaning of fear. They worked almost ceaselessly, under constant threat of violence and death. Conditions were appalling. Working in the heat of summer (ch. 6:15) they were choked with dust and dirt, laboring under the relentless rays of a burning sun. Exhausted by the heaviness of the work and the trying conditions, they dared not cease their labor even for a day, for time was of the essence. The slightest sign of weakness or capitulation would have brought their hate-filled enemies charging in upon them, sparing none. They felt unequal to the task, and weary beyond measure. Those who, throughout the centuries have labored wholeheartedly in the service of Yahweh, have known similar experiences.

What is the answer?

Christ taught his disciples: "With God, all things are possible" (Mat. 19:26). Without the strength and comfort that only Yahweh can provide, man is hopelessly ill-equipped to fight the warfare of faith. "Men ought always to pray," said the Lord, "and *not to lose heart!*" (Lk. 18:1, AV, NASB). All who strive to follow the perfect example of the Son of God in his ceaseless devotion to the cause of his Father may take courage from his faithfulness, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Paul's example is one for all to follow: "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, *we do not lose heart!*" (2Cor. 4:1, NASB) The Lord Jesus has given an assurance to all who remain faithful: "He who *stands firm to the end* will be saved!" (Mat. 24:13, NIV). — *J. Ullman.*

me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Mat. 16:21-23). Peter's misguided zeal to protect the Lord from the consequences of his work presented in fact an unnecessary obstacle that the Master could well do without. Suggestions, though well-meaning, which do not conform to the purpose of the Deity are, in fact, the voice of "the adversary".

**"They shall not know, neither see"** — This was a planned attack to take the workers off guard. Thus: "We will secretly attack them and destroy them, to cause the work to cease". It was the voice of intrigue, such as was heard again in the counsels of the Jews who opposed the work of the Lord Jesus (Mat. 26:3-5). There is a need for constant vigilance on the part of faithful laborers of the Truth (Prov. 4:25-26).

**"till we come in the midst among them"** — This is ever the action of the serpent mind, which desires to infiltrate the mind of the righteous (Rom. 7:23). This occurred in the Ephesian Ecclesia, and injured the work performed faithfully by the apostle Paul (see Acts 20:29-30).

**"and slay them, and cause the work to cease"** — The design of the flesh against the spirit (Rom. 8:6-8; Gal. 5:17). However, this policy will not for ever be successful. God has promised ultimate victory over the flesh and all its ungodly propensities, to those who remain faithful (1Cor. 15:24-26).

**VERSE 12**

**"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by**

**them came"** — The danger of too close an affiliation with the world, for its thinking is infectious!! Nehemiah later dealt with this problem, insisting that those in outlying parts (close by the world!) keep within the secure walls of the city (v. 22), and this effectively stopped the rumors. Spiritual laborers of faith must similarly avoid the influence of those "outside" (Jn. 17:14).

**"they said unto us ten times"** — A figurative number expressing constant repetition (Dan. 1:20; Gen. 31:7).

**"From all places whence ye shall return unto us (they will be upon you)"** — Rotherham has: "From all places ye shall turn (they will be) upon us". The RSV has: "From all the places where they live they will come up against us". The Jews, tired from unceasing activity, in fear of the enemies' threats, constantly reminded Nehemiah that these enemies were preparing to gather against them at all points of the compass ("whither ye turn"), and that mere vigilance would not hold them at bay once the threatened attack commenced.

**Constant Threatening Is Overcome by Constant Preparedness — vv. 13-23**

*Nehemiah must have seen these circumstances as being a typical fulfilment of Dan. 9:25. The people are armed with the means of protection, and are reassured of the presence of divine help in their privileged position.*

**VERSE 13**

**"Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall"** — Nehemiah ensured that every area of the city was protected from the enemy. He placed armed guards, sheltered from sight at the lowest and most vulnerable parts of the city to counter the enemy quickly if they attempted to scale the wall. As a wise governor, he strengthened every part of the wall: similarly, the ecclesia must maintain every element of

true doctrine and faithful practice.

**"(and) on the higher places"** — The RV has "in the open (exposed) places." Other forces were placed at elevated parts to deter the enemy by throwing down stones and darts upon them.

**"I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows"** — That by close relationship they might be better co-ordinated and have a greater desire for mutual protection (Psa. 127). This strategy (the basis of the kibbutz system of co-operation adopted in modern Israel) strengthens the defence. Even if their faith weakened, they would fight for family! (cp. v. 14). Similarly, the warfare of faith conducted by the Lord Jesus, was on behalf of "I and the children God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13).

**VERSE 14**

**"And I looked"** — Heb. *panah: to turn; to face*. The constant awareness of a leader on behalf of his people. But perhaps this was a specific incident to which Nehemiah immediately responded, in that he acted as a worthy watchman (Ezek. 33), observing the approach of the enemy (ch. 38), and making proper preparations. Similarly, the Lord Jesus realized the need to protect his children against the enemy and understood their plight, being himself affected by the *diabolos* (Heb. 2:14). There is a constant need for watchfulness on the part of the leaders in the ecclesia (Mat. 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; 1Cor. 16:13).

**"and rose up"** — He assumed the position of authority. Similarly, the Lord ascended on high to perform the work of the "captain of our salvation" (Heb. 2:10).

**"and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people"** — His voice was constantly heard in all areas of his community. As the "Word made flesh" the voice of Christ continues in the ecclesia, through the Spirit-Word (Jn. 6:63).

**"Be not ye afraid of them"** — A

courageous voice of encouragement! He exercised the faith of Moses (Josh. 1:5-6). The word "afraid" is the Heb. *yare: to fear; revere*. This should not result from the opposition of the flesh, but is a characteristic to be only shown to Yahweh, who would protect them (Jos. 11:4-6; Deu. 1:29; 20:1-4).

**"remember Yahweh"** — Although "Lord" appears in lower case in the AV (usually indicating the Heb. *adon* or *adonai*), the *Sopherim* indicated that the original should be the divine Name. It is appropriate in this exhortation by Nehemiah. The people had to recall the great strength available to them, through the Covenant Name by which they were delivered from Egypt (Exo. 3:14). In turn, Yahweh "remembers" His people for good (Mal. 3:16).

**"(which) is great and terrible"** — See ch. 1:5. Nehemiah refers to the attribute of Yahweh referred to in Deu. 7:21. Deity is therefore to be revered by Israel, and feared by their enemies (Gen. 12:3). Yahweh will honor His promises, and deliver His people.

**"and fight"** — Be active and courageous in the warfare of faith (2Tim. 2:3).

**"for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses"** — They had to recognise their filial responsibilities, and to respond in protection of their family and possessions. Their courage would not only strengthen themselves, but also help their associates. Such a mutual concern is to be developed within the "brotherhood" (1Tim. 1:18; 5:8).

#### VERSE 15

**"And it came to pass"** — Repeating the phrase of vv. 1, 7.

**"when our enemies heard that it was known unto us"** — Both sides became aware of the contest. There would be no holds barred, as the impending attack by the enemy, and the consequent determined

action of the Jews to defend their cause, became apparent. Similarly the divine "enmity" established in the beginning (Gen. 3:15) would continue until there was no longer need for further combat (1Cor. 15:25-26; Rev. 21:3).

**"and God"** — Heb. *elohim*; the immortal agents working on behalf of Yahweh's faithful people.

**"had brought their counsel to nought"** — So impressive was the defence set up that the foes apparently made no advance against the city. Nehemiah turned the enemies' propaganda to his own account, for God had revealed their plot (Job 5:12; Ps. 33:10). Further rumors could now be treated as evidence of God's presence, inasmuch as He had revealed their plans!

**"that we returned all of us to the wall"** — There was a closing of the ranks when danger threatened from without; and continued combined activity when that danger subsided.

**"every one unto his work"** — Every one accepted their obligations, and as a result the work proceeded: the wall of the city was built! This requirement continues in the labor for spiritual Jerusalem. We cannot slacken our endeavors, or neglect our responsibilities, but must continue in faithful diligence to "continue the work begun" (Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:7; 1Pet. 2:5).

#### VERSE 16

**"And it came to pass"** — See repeated phrase (vv. 1, 7, 15), indicating continuing and developing activities.

**"from that time forth, (that) the half of my servants"** — Nehemiah's servants were divided into two groups: one to labor; the other to protect. The Heb. *na'arim* signifies "young men". This was probably his personal guard, some of whom doubtless came from Persia. So there was Nehemiah, his immediate servants, and the bulk of the workers. Similarly there is the Lord Jesus, the apostles,

and his group of disciples (John 17:19-20).

**"wrought in the work, and the other half of them"** — Nehemiah's soldiers (ch. 2:9) alternated with the duty of laboring and guarding.

**"held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons"** — For "habergeons" the RV has "coats of mail;" the Septuagint: "breastplates" (Heb. *shiryonim*). These items were for protection against the enemy weapons and to ward off any attack. They represent the weapons of faith, described in Eph. 6:10-18, that must be preserved and utilised in the spiritual warfare against the inroads and influences of the flesh.

• Our constant enemy is the *Flesh-Power* (Eph. 6:11-12; Heb. 2:14; 2Cor. 10:4-5). • Our weapons are the elements of the *Spirit-Word* (Eph. 6:13-18).

**"and the rulers (were) behind all the house of Judah"** — They were stationed behind the builders in order to direct, encourage and keep them informed of any danger which might threaten the work in hand. Thus they exercised the greatest diligence, and the people were united in the face of the enemy.

#### VERSE 17

**"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded"** — The RV has: "they that bare burdens laded themselves." Those engaged in the work are divided into two classes: the builders, and those that carry the materials. The former needed both hands to work, and had swords girt to their sides; the latter used one hand and carried a weapon in the other. The work was doubtless slowed down as a result, but still it continued. The work of faith must similarly continue notwithstanding the difficulties of both proclaiming and protecting the doctrines of the Truth.

**"(every one) with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other (hand) held a weapon"** — So pressing

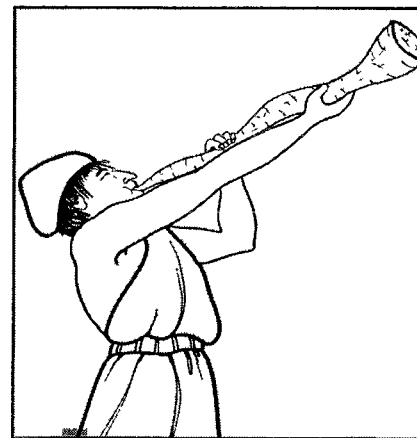
were the attacks of the enemy, so close their presence, that there was no opportunity for relaxation or leisure. When laborers for the Truth forget the need to maintain the faith, and their vigilance, then the enemy will conquer. This is not our time of rest (Heb. 4:9-11); we await the grand consummation of the work of redemption at the advent of our Master.

#### VERSE 18

**"For the builders"** — RV: "and the builders." The actual builders had swords at their sides, whilst those that carried materials took them in their hands: thus presenting a formidable and determined appearance.

**"every one had his sword girded by his side, and (so) builded"** — They were all provided for, with equipment and prepared for the fray, as warriors of faith (Eph. 6:10).

**"And he that sounded the trumpet (was) by me"** — Yahweh instructed Israel to be in a continual state of awareness against enemy attack. The nation had to ensure that a watchman keep check on any suspicious activity, and a trumpeter be always alert to warn the people, and to remind them of the protective care of Yahweh: "if ye go to war in your land against



**A WISE DEFENCE WITH FAITH BRINGS THE FRUITS OF VICTORY — vv. 19-23.** *Nehemiah realized the danger that faced the people and ensured that they were properly prepared for any eventuality. They had to be mindful of the need for the divine presence (vv. 9, 14); to clearly understand the issues to be faced (v. 14); to prepare the defence needed (vv. 14-16); to be aware of the need for vigilance (v. 9); to manifest an industrious attitude (patience: v. 21; united mind: v. 15; self-sacrifice: v. 23); and to provide for order and discipline (vv. 13, 19, 20).*

the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before Yahweh your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (Num. 10:9). Following this instruction, Nehemiah employed a trumpeter to stay at his side, so that he could sound an alarm if the enemy approached. This would allow an opportunity for all the people to rush to the place where the attack was being made.

The word "trumpet" comes from the Hebrew *shophar* (from *shaphar*, to *gladden*; *shine*), being formed from a curved ram's horn. The trumpet was heard at Sinai (Exo. 19:16; 20:18); introduced the day of atonement (Lev. 25:9); was used by Joshua to destroy Jericho (Jos. 6:4); and by Gideon to destroy the Midianites (Jud. 6:34; 7:22).

#### VERSE 19

**"And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people"** — He gathered the three groups together, to unite them in the work of salvation, making them aware of the difficulties, and providing a solution. In this, Nehemiah represented the greater work of Christ in providing for the redemption of all people (Jn. 15:15; cp. Gal. 3:27-28).

**"The work is great and large"** — The project was important, and therefore Nehemiah required the people to understand what was involved. Similarly laborers in spiritual Jerusalem must recognize the work of salvation as being of supreme importance, requiring our constant attention. It demands a lifetime of activity in protecting the faith from the inroads of enemies "within and without." Let us enthusiastically apply ourselves to the work of the Truth, and never minimise its principles and benefits.

**"and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another"** — There was a danger that the foe could infiltrate and destroy isolated areas, and therefore Nehemiah provided for protection in such a case. Similarly, if circumstances cause brethren to be "separated" by isolation, there remains a need to retain contact with the work of the Truth. Therefore the "sound of the trumpet" (the voice of the Word, and the expositions of faithful brethren) must be continually heeded, so that harmony and co-operation is maintained.

#### VERSE 20

**"In what place (therefore) ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us"** — By mutual co-operation and support, the weaker areas, which might first suffer from enemy attack, would be protected and strengthened. The sound of the trumpet would warn those in other areas, to assist their brethren under attack.

This is an important principle in ecclesial responsibilities. Sections of the worldwide brotherhood might be threatened by the impact of false doctrine or practice, or by the influence of worldly materialism. If the Truth is under challenge in any area of the ecclesial world, there should be a ready response by others, and an eagerness to protect the "most precious faith" held by us. It is not enough

to disregard weaknesses or difficulties being faced by others, on the excuse that it has nothing to do with us. In matters of personal issues, of course, we must act in accordance with the principles outlined in *The Ecclesial Guide*, and with respect for ecclesial autonomy. But where error reveals itself, we have a duty to "declare and fear not." Followers of the greater Nehemiah, the Lord Jesus, will respond to the care of disciples, as did he so perfectly (Jn. 17:12). The Lord's worthy example was repeated by the apostle Paul, upon whose shoulders fell "the care of all the ecclesias" (2Cor. 11:28). Present-day warriors of the faith should respond to such needs as they are able; strengthening feeble hands and weak knees, encouraging the maintaining of the purity of faith and doctrine, so that the walls of spiritual Jerusalem might be protected.

**"our God shall fight for us"** — Nehemiah recognized that the work of faith is not performed alone (see v. 15; ch. 6:16), for Yahweh is mindful of all the experiences and troubles of His people. The Lord Jesus recognised the presence of divine power in his fight against the enemy (Jn. 16:32; Mat. 26:53).

#### VERSE 21

**"So we"** — Nehemiah and his servants (v. 16).

**"labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared"** — Long days were spent in rebuilding the walls. From dawn to sunset they labored — without strikes or disruptions! They were a dedicated community. This will be the attitude of faithful brethren and sisters, who realise that their responsibilities are to maintain the faith, whatever the cost to personal convenience. "Dawn" represents the commencement of the work of faith; "sunset" speaks of the time of conclusion, when the "nobleman" returns from a far country to examine the labors of his ser-

vants (Lk. 19:12-13). We can take no holidays or excursions from our spiritual labor (Heb. 4:11).

#### **"Our God shall Fight for Us" (v. 20)**

Nehemiah was fired with such a zeal for the Truth and for the cause of Yahweh, that exhortations came from his lips with such consistency and obvious conviction, that the people could not help but respond. He was a true leader of Yahweh's people. He did not seek the praises of men. He was unimpressed by flattery. He was not moved by mere emotion, nor did he make charismatic appeals to the people. He set his face to fulfil the purpose of Yahweh, and nothing was permitted to nullify that objective. The particular exhortation in v. 20, to lift up the people and spur them onward, was to the point and in accord with the Word: "Our God shall fight for us!" No doubt he had in mind the principle set forth in Deu. 20:1-4.

Today believers need to remember that Yahweh has *not yet finished fighting for Israel* — for both natural and spiritual Israel. He will war a great warfare against all the powers of Gentilism, to save His people and to vindicate His saints before all the nations (Zech. 14:3; 2Thes. 1:7-10). This, then, is no time to become wearied with the burdens of life; to capitulate to the prevailing pressures; to weaken in either doctrine or practice. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" For, "our God shall fight for us!" (Rom. 8:31). — *J. Ullman.*

## VERSE 22

**"Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant"** — Heb. *na'ar*, a young man. Thus representing those associated with us, and over whom we might have influence. We have a responsibility to protect our companions in the faith, as did the apostle Paul (Acts 20:31-35).

**"lodge"** — To pass the evening; to remain for a time. There are such "abiding places" (Jn. 15:4; Eph. 2:22; Col. 1:19) provided by the greater Nehemiah, in which his disciples will find lodgment.

**"within Jerusalem"** — There were few inhabitants, comparatively speaking, and large spaces in the city where no houses were yet built (ch. 7:4). Evidently those in the surrounding provinces had previously returned home, but with the urgency of the developing crisis, the close proximity of Sanballat and his forces, and the danger of rumors which might have weakened the morale of the people (v. 12), it was not wise for the workers to commute to areas outside the city.

Ecclesiastically, it is necessary to remain "within the city," to maintain our responsibility and commitment to the Truth.

**"that in the night they"** — The larger company of Jews within the city.

**"may be a guard to us, and labor on the day"** — The twofold aspect of ecclesial labor. To "guard" is to protect from prevailing enemy influences, and to maintain the things of our "common salvation" (1Tim. 1:3); to "labor" is to witness for the Truth "in season and out" (2Tim. 4:2; cp. 1Tim. 6:17).

## VERSE 23

**"So neither I"** — Nehemiah, the governor, as a type of Christ who labored selflessly to provide an example of consistent and loyal service for the Truth.

**"nor my brethren"** — Such as Hanaiah (ch. 1:2; cp. 7:2). Typifying the apostles who associated with the Lord (Lk.

22:28-29).

**"nor my servants"** — Those in Nehemiah's employ (v. 16); antitypically those of outstanding character selected to labor in specific areas of work in the "word and doctrine" (1Tim. 5:17).

**"nor the men of the guard which followed me"** — Nehemiah's bodyguard appointed to protect him and assist in performing his instructions: typical of brethren and sisters who willingly accept special responsibilities of ecclesial activity.

The vigilant Nehemiah would thus be seen with his bodyguard from point to point, encouraging the workers. It seemed he never slept!

**"none of us put off our clothes, (saving that) every one put them off for washing"** — The translation is difficult, and some render it: "No one took off his clothes, not even for the bath." Notice the margin and RV: "everyone went with his weapon for water." The Septuagint renders the verse: "I was there, and the watchmen behind me, and there was not a man of us that put off his garments." Rotherham has: "No one leaving them off even for washing himself." The sense of the verse appears to be "none of us put off our clothes (and none left the site of the wall) except to take his weapon (utensil) to obtain drinking water" (AV margin).

The greatest vigilance possible was exercised. Only the barest essentials were permitted to interfere with the arrangements of guarding and building the wall. Apart from these, there was absolute dedication to incessant labor, day and night, so that the wall was finished in the incredibly short period of fifty-two days (6:1). They thus worked long hours, sleeping in their clothes, and the only reason for leaving the site of work was for the essentials of life. This reflects the Passover attitude of preparedness (Ex. 12:11), and is expressive of the need for believers to be constantly "vigilant" (1Pet. 5:8; 1Thes. 5:5-8).

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CHALLENGES WITHIN THE ECCLESIA

*"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:5-10).*

**N**OT only did Nehemiah meet with opposition from the enemy without (ch. 4), but he was also troubled with disturbances within. The wealthier Jews were taking advantage of the distress which their poorer brethren had fallen into on account of a failure of crops and because of the necessity of working on the walls of Jerusalem. Many had been forced to surrender their property to satisfy loans occasioned in part by these circumstances and in part by the heavy taxes levied by the Persian government. In some cases children were being enslaved to meet the indebtedness incurred.

The Jewish exiles had ridden forth from Babylonia mounted, not on asses only, but on horses, camels, mules (Ezra 2:66-67). They had been rich enough to contribute towards the erection of the temple in Jerusalem, 5,000 pounds of silver and 40,000 drams of gold (Neh. 7:71-72). But the tide of prosperity began to ebb. To test His people, Yahweh sent famine, drought and want in the land (Hag. 1:9; Zech. 8:10), and though this was subsequently relieved (Hag. 2:19), it left its mark on the community and was reimposed when necessary (Mal. 3:8-10).

The dedication of the whole of the nation's resources had brought many of the families into poverty, causing them to seek assistance from their more wealthier brethren. The Law permitted a person in need to mortgage home or land, or to offer a daughter as security (Exo. 12:7) in order to obtain financial assistance, and such money was to be offered without interest (usury) by a wealthy brother according to the value of the land, and only until the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10-17).

But the nobles in Nehemiah's day demanded that the borrower mortgage home, land, or both (Neh. 5:3), or that he offer himself, or his son or daughter, as security (v. 5). Whilst the Law permitted this offer of security in measure (it allowed a man to pledge the person of a daughter: Exo. 21:7, but made no provision for a son), it ensured that such servants were not oppressed physically and go free in the sabbatical year (Exo. 21:2; Deut. 15:12), when, at the time of release, the creditor should "furnish the man liberally" out of his own store with a supply of necessities (Deut. 15:12-14).

This was now not being done, and a large number of the poorer people had sunk into a state of perpetual servitude to the richer nobles (Neh. 5:15). Some had even been sold into the hands of the heathen (v. 8). The population of the land was seriously diminished by the drain upon it, and that of Jerusalem was especially scanty (7:4). Failure of crops (5:3), heavy tribute (v. 4), oppressive governors (v. 15), had increased the difficulties. The Law legislated concerning usury (Exo. 22:25; Lev. 25:36), and demanded release at the jubilee (Lev. 25:24-31).

But this had been set aside, as the nobles sought to benefit themselves. The building of the wall had accentuated the problem — for these poor slaves (as they virtually were) still had to provide the heavy monthly interest, whilst being denied the opportunity to obtain it — for they were fully engaged in building the wall. The oppressed rose against their oppressors, and found a worthy champion in Nehemiah!

#### The Complaints of the Poor — vv. 1-5

*Nehemiah uncovers a state of exploitation of brethren. Greed, selfishness, lack of brotherly kindness and suppression of the poor had destroyed the unity of outlook within the community, and threatened the work of the Truth. Notice the extent of the trouble: v. 2: family responsibilities; v. 3: business undertakings; v. 4: national obligations.*

#### VERSE 1

"And there was a great cry" — The Hebrew *ts'agah* is more literally "a shriek" (compare with v. 6 where the cry is distinguished from "words"). This was an emotional reaction as an expression against their oppressive condition. The people experienced a similar situation to that suffered in Egypt; the same word is translated in Exo. 2:23 as "and they cried."

"of the people and of their wives" — This relates to those Jews who already

were residents of the land, not to the newcomers. They had responded willingly to the "call" and now suffered more in consequence. The whole family experienced the distress caused by the oppression of the rulers. Evidently the shrill voices of the women rose in intensity, drawing attention to their particular need, and the trouble affecting the family.

"against their brethren the Jews" — The richer Jews of the community (The Jerusalem Bible has "brother Jews") who had adopted the practice of lending upon pledge to those in desperate need for survival. This oppression against the poorer class was not from Sanballat, but from within the ecclesia. Paul also experienced the oppressive attitude of Judaizers who sought to pressurise the ecclesia on certain issues. He spoke of "trouble on every side... within were fears" (2Cor. 7:5).

#### VERSE 2

"For there were that said, We, our

sons, and our daughters, (are) many" — Their numerous families were a benefit to the State, but imposed a heavy burden on individual breadwinners. This difficulty was accentuated when time had to be given to building the wall, rather than developing personal resources. Instead of helping them, the rich nobles laid upon them financial burdens in a time of general dearth.

"therefore we take up corn (for them), that we may eat, and live" — This is the language of desperate men, compelled by necessity to accept the harsh conditions imposed by those to whom the people had recourse for needs. They had to seek help to assist in the absolute necessities of life.

#### VERSE 3

"(Some) also there were that said, We have mortgaged" — The Hebrew *'arab* means "to barter, to give security, to traffic," and indicates a commitment for financial assistance through necessity.

"our lands, vineyards, and houses" — The people would lose these holdings if they could not raise the monthly interest, and their absence in order to build the wall, placed them in financial difficulty. The question presented itself: Should they leave off the work to meet their financial obligations?

In these present days of materialism it is important to avoid becoming financially over-committed so as to enjoy a more comfortable existence. This could impose the burden of seeking additional income to service such a debt at the expense of service to the Truth. Purchase of unnecessary possessions should therefore be avoided.

"that we might buy corn, because of the dearth" — It was a matter of urgency and family need due to the famine being experienced. But sometimes such untoward circumstances are a means of divine testing, or to extend Yahweh's purpose (Gen 26:1; Ruth 1:1).

#### VERSE 4

"There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute" — The commoners were not exempted from tribute to Persia, as were the priests and other ministers of the temple (Ezra 4:13; 7:24).

"(and that upon) our lands and vineyards" — The dearth and demand for taxation had forced the people into debt to provide for their basic needs.

#### VERSE 5

"Yet now our flesh (is) as the flesh of our brethren" — Class distinction had alienated one from the other (Jas. 2:1-5; 5:1-7), although all were Jews. Some had become slaves (Ex. 21:7), the nobles invoking this aspect of the Law, but overlooking that which required release in the sabbatical year (Ex. 21:2).

"our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage" — This word is from the Hebrew *kabash*, meaning "to tread down; to subject." This situation had arisen out of a gross violation of God's principles.

No Israelite should be in bondage to another, for they were all Yahweh's servants who had originally been brought out of Egypt to serve Him (Lev. 25:35-42). They all should have viewed similarly their release from Babylonian captivity as a means to freedom!

"our sons and our daughters to be servants, and (some) of our daughters are brought unto bondage (already)" — Through the additional sacrifice caused by building the wall, the fathers had felt the need to sell their daughters (Ex. 21:7). Appealing to the rich resulted in help being provided on their restrictive terms.

"neither (is it) in our power (to redeem them); for other men have our lands and vineyards" — Because all their resources went into paying the exorbitant interest demanded, they had no remedy to effect any change!



### Nehemiah Stands for the Oppressed (ch. 5:6-8)

Becoming aware of the disastrous financial state of many of the poorer brethren — a condition made far worse by the ruthless greed of unprincipled brethren — Nehemiah was “angry.” The word is rendered “earnestly” in ch. 3:20, and is indicative of fervent zeal for the principles of the Truth. Therefore, Nehemiah was a man of justice and mercy, and intense integrity. Seeing the havoc which resulted from these circumstances (vv. 1-5), he “consulted” with himself (v. 7). With a man of Nehemiah’s character this could only mean that he thought deeply about the matter, upon the basis of the Spirit-Word. As his prayer in the first chapter shows, he was a diligent student of the Word, and turned to it constantly for guidance and direction. Like the Psalmist, he “communed with his own heart” and “made diligent search” within the Word of God (Psa. 77:6). Having done this, and having established clearly in his mind what the Word required, he “contended” (RV) for the faith, against the wrongdoers. In dealing with the problem in the way he did, he upheld without compromise the requirements of Lev. 19:15, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.” He argued the question from the Word with such conviction that the brethren who needed to be rebuked could not answer him. They “held their peace, and found nothing to answer” (v. 8). These brethren not only found Nehemiah’s case to be unanswerable; they could not help but be impressed by his wisdom and knowledge, and his personal integrity. Like the One he typified, “he taught them as one having authority” (Mat. 7:29). This incident provides a further example of Nehemiah — not only as a strong leader and a man of action, but as a deeply spiritually-minded man, and an earnest student of the Word of God. — *J. Ullman.*

### Nehemiah Intercedes to Help — vv. 6-13

*He moves quickly, calling an assembly of witnesses to correct the abuses that had become obvious within the ecclesia.*

#### VERSE 6

“And I was very angry” — Heb. *charah*, to glow, to grow warm with anger. Nehemiah became hot with indignation at the injustice of it all. The people were impoverished partly by their sacrifices in God’s work, and largely through the greed of their brethren. Nehemiah was also angry with ecclesial compromises (Neh. 13:8).

The Master was emotionally affected by iniquity, and expressed anger at it (Mk. 3:5; Rev. 2:6). The apostolic injunction is to express sinless anger (Eph. 4:26) by upholding the divine principles in any contention.

“when I heard their cry and these words” — Both the sound and the reason brought a response from the governor. Yahweh hears the cries of His people (Exo. 2:23; Lk. 18:7; Jas. 5:4) and acts for their relief (Heb. 4:16). His children need to develop the same characteristic, and respond to genuine cases of need (Gal. 6:10).

#### VERSE 7

“Then I consulted with myself” — Though he acted quickly, Nehemiah was not impetuous. Nor did he allow sentiment to control his deci-

sion. He carefully considered the issues (cp. Psa. 4:4; Eph. 4:26) that he might act with discretion.

“and I rebuked” — Such burdens as were being imposed by the nobles and rulers were difficult to bear, now that all the time of the people was required in the work of building. Such rebuke is sometimes necessary to uphold the divine principles (Lev. 19:17; 1Tim. 5:20). This is evidence of true *agape* love (Pro. 27:5; Mat. 18:17; 2Jn. 6).

“the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother” — This was in opposition to the Mosaic Law which disallowed interest being charged of the Israelites. See Exo. 22:25; cp. Psa. 15:5.

“And I set a great assembly against them” — Evidently Nehemiah’s earlier rebuke had little effect, so now he brings the matter before the whole congregation (cp. Mat. 18:17). The word “assembly” is the Hebrew *qehillah* (fem.) from *qahal*, to convoke; to gather together. The Septuagint translation has “the ecclesia.” In his challenge to Goliath on the battlefield of Elah, David used the word *qahal* to show that his action was to benefit the ecclesia gathered at the site (1Sam. 17:47).

#### VERSE 8

“And I said unto them, We after our ability” — According to the providence and blessing of God.

“have redeemed” — The word is from the Hebrew *qanah*, to erect; thus, to rescue, deliver, repurchase so as to set up firmly.

“our brethren the Jews” — They had come from Babylon, and “redeemed” (set up straight) so as to present a form of political resurrection. Nehemiah’s action in redeeming some of the Jewish slaves that had been sold, gave an example to the wealthy nobles, of what should be done. Already some sold to the heathen had been redeemed, and it was incongruous that they

should be released only to now fall into the hands of greedy brethren.

“which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us?” — In this way the nobles acted like Gentiles, and sought to return their brethren to a condition like to their former servitude, so that no longer were they able to “stand erect” (“redeemed”), but became bowed down in adversity.

“Then held they their peace, and found nothing (to answer)” — As judge, Nehemiah had shamed them, for they could see the ungodliness of their action. Now, as shepherd, he had to persuade them to act consistently with divine principles!

#### VERSE 9

“Also I said” — To silence the nobles was not enough. To shame them was not sufficient. It was necessary to persuade them to respond to the need of the ecclesia. Nehemiah accomplished this in the appealing argument he now set before them.

“It (is) not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear” — See the requirements of the Law: Lev. 25:17, 36, 43; Rom. 12:19. To “walk in the fear of Yahweh” is to manifest a godly attitude to those about (Gen. 20:11; Acts 9:31).

“of our God” — Although the nobles were rulers on earth, to do as they wished, they were actually under responsibility to the divine rulership in heaven (Ecc. 5:8; Col. 4:1). As prospective rulers of the earth, we are required to respond to the ordinance: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecc. 12:13).

“because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?” — The inconsistency of the Jews caused this. What was the use of building the wall, if God was not on their side? Because by their actions they set Him at nought! It is important to manifest a consistency in appearance and



action among the community, so that the things of the Truth are upheld (Rom. 2:24; Tit. 2:5; 1Pet. 2:12).

#### VERSE 10

**"I likewise, (and) my brethren, and my servants"** — See notes ch. 4:16.

**"might exact of them money and corn"** — Rotherham translates this: "I might be lending unto them on interest." But instead of making such demands upon the population, Nehemiah provided an example of integrity; he not only exhorted, he acted to relieve their need.

**"I pray you, let us leave off this usury"** — On the basis of his own sacrifice, Nehemiah appeals to the goodwill of his brethren to follow his example, and to fulfil the principles of the Law in contrast to the attitude of the Pharisees (Mat. 23:14).

#### VERSE 11

**"Restore"** — Heb. *shuwb*: to turn back; thus, to repent, to change the course of life. The Law forbade taking interest from a brother in such circumstances (Exo. 22:25; Lev. 25:36). See Lev. 6:4-5; 1Sam. 12:3; Lk. 3:8.

**"I pray you, to them, even this day"** — Some have concluded that this was a sabbatical year, when, according to the Law, all debts should be forgiven.

**"their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth (part) of the money"** — Note the development of the description. First the land, which was the basis of their inheritance; then the product of the ground and of their labor: vines and olives; finally their houses, the place of security and dwelling. The interest was computed at a monthly rate of 1%; thus a rate of 12% annually. This was certainly an exorbitant rate in a time of extreme depression. Nehemiah called upon the nobles to restore both interest and principal to the people, and thereby free them from the

oppression they suffered. In so doing they would manifest the caring attitude of the Father, and reflect the principles of atonement and forgiveness.

**"and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them"** — The results of their labor and industry.

#### VERSE 12

**"Then said they, We will restore (them), and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest"** — The day became a day of personal sacrifice as all agreed not only to give back the interest they had wrongfully received, but also to restore the forfeited lands, houses and the produce exacted. In so doing they co-operated with Nehemiah in his program of restoration. We are called upon to similarly act in our relationship with our fellows, even though it might require us to "suffer ourselves to be defrauded" (1Cor. 6:7).

**"Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise"** — Nehemiah required that the action of the nobles be supported by a vow made in the presence of God. In this he repeated the practice of Ezra (Ezra 10:5).

#### VERSE 13

**"Also I shook my lap"** — The word "shook" is *na'ar* which means to tumble about. Thus it indicates declaring a judgment made. It was a demonstrative act of repudiation and disdain, to emphasize Nehemiah's revulsion that the common people should be destitute (cp. Mat. 10:14; Acts 13:51; 18:6). Often the necessities of life were carried in the lap, or bundle, of the flowing garments; therefore to shake the lap was to express an action in which nothing worthwhile remained.

This judgment was represented in the action of the Lord Jesus when he went into the temple to witness against the oppressive attitude of the leaders. Seeing those

who "sold oxen and sheep and doves" (Jn. 2:14), making commerce out of worship, he cast them forth in a dramatic act of condemnation (v. 15). It was, in a sense, a "shaking of the lap."

**"and said, So God shake out"** — Nehemiah strengthened the oath by a malediction, and accompanied this by a symbolic act to render it more impressive. This was a solemn expression, and could not be set aside without the direst consequences. It bound the people to a commitment before God, to perform their vows.

Such a commitment is now made through baptism, by which an individual enters into a destiny of either life or death (2Cor. 2:16). At the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ, the value of such a commitment will be made evident, for those who neglected its terms will hear the voice of disapproval, and be "cast from the lap;" whilst those who have willingly done "according to the sayings" (cp. Neh. 5:12; Mat. 7:24; Jn. 14:24) will be preserved and retained "in the lap."

**"every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise"** — No indictment is mentioned of this matter in ch. 10, although the people fell back into other sins. Evidently Nehemiah's stirring exhortation and sterling example affected the rulers for good.

**"even thus be he shaken out, and emptied"** — He would have nothing left. It was a complete condemnation, such as will be experienced by those whom the Lord will reject at his judgment seat: "for unto every one that hath (*honored the vow of obedience*) shall be given (*the reward of immortality*), and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not (*performed his vow*) shall be taken away even that (*the promise of life*) which he hath" (Mat. 25:29; Jn. 15:2).

**"And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised Yahweh"** — Nehemiah's wise and instant action restrained the wrath of man, and turned it

to the praise of Yahweh (Psa. 76:10). The term "amen" means more than a mere conclusion of a ceremony or prayer. It is a title of the Deity (Rev. 3:14; Isa. 65:16, where the word "truth" is from the Hebrew *aman*). The word signifies "to be faithful; dependable; whose declaration will be established." Thus, in expressing the word, the people assented that they knew Yahweh would complete His declaration; and that they also had a responsibility to manifest a similar quality — that they would be as consistent and faithful in their part of the promise. The use of the word in prayer thus places the worshipper in a position of solemn obligation (see 1Cor. 14:16).

**"And the people did according to this promise"** — A moment of joy at the happy ending of the whole affair, so that the work of the Truth in Jerusalem could continue unimpeded.

#### Nehemiah's Personal Example — vv. 14-15

*From his Diary of Events, Nehemiah provides details of his own household activities. This would have continued during the period of his first appointment to Jerusalem as governor, so that he daily provided for his own, and for the needs of others. In this, he prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ, who cared about his own (Jn. 17), whilst also overlooking the affairs of national Israel (cp. Mat. 22:1-7).*

#### VERSE 14

**"Moreover from the time that I was appointed"** — From the day that king Artaxerxes appointed the terms of Nehemiah's commission (ch. 2:6-8).

**"to be their governor in the land of Judah"** — See notes on ch. 2:1.

**"from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, (that is), twelve years"** — This period represents the "first advent" of Nehemiah, and is therefore emphasised in

the record. Nehemiah spent twelve years in Jerusalem before returning to the palace of the monarch, as was agreed with the king (cp. 13:6). Similarly the Lord Jesus appeared at "the set time" (Gal. 4:4), and concluded his first term of service to provide for the restoration of the throne of David in accordance with the prophetic word established by Yahweh (cp. Dan. 9:24-25).

**"I and my brethren have not eaten"** — He had not lived at the expense of the Jews, although he had authority to do so. Neither did the Lord Jesus take advantage of his privilege as the Son of God (Phil. 2:6). Compare with the same sacrificial attitude of the apostle Paul: 1Cor. 9:4, 14, 18; 2Thes. 3:8-9; Acts 20:33-34). Similarly, we should not seek to benefit materially from the Truth, as did Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-5).

**"the bread of the governor"** — This would have been legitimate, as in the case of the apostles (2Cor. 11:9). However Nehemiah realised that the prevailing circumstances required an example of sacrifice, which was provided in his decision.

#### VERSE 15

**"But the former governors"** — Those who ruled after the death of the governor Zerubbabel, but whose names are not recorded in the inspired records.

**"that (had been) before me were chargeable"** — Heb. *kabad*: to be heavy, burdensome. Thus, oppressive. The taxes formerly experienced by the people made it difficult in the circumstances of famine and distress.

**"unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver"** — Perhaps a yearly tax upon each person. F. J. Dake (1960) computed the forty shekels as about US\$64 each; thus a tax of about US\$25.60. This is probably a conservative estimate.

**"yea, even their servants"** — The servants imitated their masters in oppress-

ing the people.

**"bare rule over the people: but so did not I"** — He had not enriched himself at the expense of the people. He had not even taken his legitimate allowance (tribute) because of the poverty being experienced. In fact, Nehemiah had expended himself in helping the cause (v. 17), bending all resources to restoring the wall.

**"because of the fear of God"** — See notes v. 9; Psa. 112:1; Pro. 1:7; 16:6; Ecc 12:13-14. Nehemiah's labor for his people stemmed from a recognition that he, in fact, was laboring for God (cp. Col. 4:1, Eph. 6:9; Heb. 3:2).

#### VERSE 16

**"Yea, also I continued"** — Or, "repaired" (Rotherham). It was in this work, not in buying up properties at low prices, that Nehemiah was engaged (cp. 1Cor. 15:58; Gal. 5:9). This likewise reflects the example of Christ in devoted and dedicated service (2Cor. 8:9; Phil 2:5-8).

**"in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land"** — "Neither got we (by foreclosing mortgages) further possession." Nehemiah was scrupulously honest in his dealings with the people (cp. Acts 20:33-35).

**"and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work"** — Cp. ch. 4:16. All of his entourage worked in unison with their lord, and provided an example of integrity, dedicating their efforts to the work of God.

#### VERSE 17

**"Moreover (there were) at my table"** — The conduct of Nehemiah was that of a warmhearted, generous man, following the example of David (2Sam. 9:7). Typically, the table represented the "table of the Lord" at which disciples are privileged to gather, in order to find their true spiritual nourishment (Jn. 6:54-55; 12:2 1Cor. 10:21).

**"an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us"** — He kept an open house, besides having 150 that he regularly entertained. Thus he gave an example of willing hospitality (cp. Isa. 32:8; Rom. 12:13; 1Pet. 4:9-10).

**"from among the heathen that (are) about us"** — Foreign Jews redeemed from the nations, and which found residence in the land.

#### VERSE 18

**"Now (that) which was prepared (for me) daily"** — Nehemiah was a faithful representative of the court of Persia. He meticulously recorded the expenses incurred in the work he set himself.

In 1960, F. J. Dake estimated in American currency, the cost of this food as: 1 ox @ \$325 = \$325; 6 sheep @ \$20 = \$120; fowls and wine (amounts not known) = approx. \$445+, each day. The meat bill alone for a year would be US\$162,425; for the twelve years of his ministry: US\$1,949,100.

**"(was) one ox (and) six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine"** — The wine was replenished every ten days. All these provisions would have exacted a heavy toll on his personal resources, but he was prepared to accept "the care of the ecclesias" in the spirit of the shepherd (2Cor. 11:28).

**"yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage"** — He did not take advantage of the right to use the taxes for the upkeep of his household, as the Lord Jesus refused to rest upon the privileges of his office (Phil. 2:6; Psa. 37:21, 26).

**"was heavy upon this people"** — He was highly sensitive to the needs of his people, and provided

his own sacrifice that they might be relieved. Similarly, the Lord Jesus provided of his own resources (Phil. 2:7) that he might lift the burden of others (Heb. 2:14-18).

#### VERSE 19

**"Think upon me, my God"** — The recurring prayer of this man of faith (see ch. 13:14, 22, 31). He seeks not man's praise, but that of God (Rom. 2:29; Mat. 6:3-4).

**for good, (according to) all that I have done for this people"** — This is all that Nehemiah asked of Yahweh for the many years of service and sacrifice performed to benefit the people and to restore the city of Jerusalem. If granted, which no doubt it was, it would have been a great return for his service; for God cannot think upon any person for good without that person receiving an abundance of His blessing (Mat 10:32).



## CHAPTER SIX

## THE RETURN OF THE ENEMY WITHOUT

*"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6).*

**I**N chapter Four, the enemy used ridicule and threats against Nehemiah and his laborers, causing some to be wearied by continuous burdens in the face of difficulties. These were met and overcome by the energetic, faithful and prayerful Nehemiah. Now the enemy returns to the attack.

Having settled the differences experienced within the ecclesia, so that all the people now responded to the call of the Truth, and supported the work that Nehemiah was attempting, attention returns to the building of the wall. The enemy returned to the scene, and again endeavored by hypocrisy and guile to infiltrate the defences of the Jews. It was a Laodicean spirit, in which compromise was invited by the enemies around. As a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, Nehemiah rises to the challenge and reveals the true spirit of the enemy.

#### Sanballat Hypocritically Seeks a Conference — 6:1-2

*Jealousy and anger against the work of the Jews is felt in the camp of Sanballat. But it is disguised as the enemy endeavors to infiltrate the ranks of the laborers by using the policy of compromise. However, Nehemiah is not deceived by the advances of apparent friendship, and rejects the subtle approach of the enemy.*

#### VERSE 1

**"Now it came to pass"** — See the constant use of this phrase in the record: ch. 1:1, 4; 2:1; 4:1, 7, 12, 15, 16; 6:1, 16; 7:1; 13:3, 19.

**"when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian"** — The margin has "Gashmu" which was probably his actual name, but which, in the mouth of a Jew became "Geshem" (cp. 2:19).

**"and the rest of our enemies"** — A conference was called of all those who

desired the destruction of the work of faith.

**"heard that I had builded the wall"** — The complaint of the enemies was against the "one man" who frustrated their designs on Jerusalem. With him removed, overcoming the people would be simple. Later this proved to be the case, for once Nehemiah had left Jerusalem to return to Persia to make a report to the monarch, the enemy was able to penetrate the defences of the people.

Realising that his own disciples would be threatened by enemy challenges, the Lord Jesus urged them to strengthen themselves against the time he would be taken from their midst (Lk. 22:35-37).

**"and (that) there was no breach left therein"** — Sanballat found that all his efforts to retard the building availed nothing, and now tried different methods. This destructive attitude was repeated in the days of Christ by the Scribes and Phar-

isees (Mat. 26:5). Compare the prophecy of Christ, that his work would overcome all obstacles (Jn. 2:19).

**"(though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates)"** — This appears in parenthesis to indicate that the work had not been fully completed, although Nehemiah had achieved his initial objective of rebuilding the walls. With the doors in place, the city would be completely secured, for it was through the gates that entry and exit was permitted to and from the city.

Similarly, the Lord Jesus has provided the proper foundation for the building of faith. He has "set up the gates" by providing the means of entry into the city by those prepared to accept the terms of the Truth: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (Jn. 10:9).

When the Lord returns, he will secure the political "gates" of the city, by asserting his dominion and authority in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:17).

#### VERSE 2

**"That Sanballat and Geshem"** — Tobiah's name is not mentioned. He does not appear involved in this scheme, perhaps preferring to wait and gain his designs by his own methods (like Balaam's evil counsel: Num. 31:16).

**"sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together"** — A pretence of friendship (see Pro. 27:6). These men were driven by hatred, and sought to allay Nehemiah's concern by words designed to deceive (Pro. 26:24). Compare the action of Judas, who implied a concern for the welfare of others, but was actually motivated by his own envy and materialistic desires (Lk. 22:48).

**"in (some one) of the villages"** — Probably a nominated village, not now identifiable.

**"in the plain of Ono"** — Sig. Strong; Effort; Work. It was a plain in the area of

Benjamin, considered to be about forty km from Jerusalem, and some 12 km SE from Joppa.

**"But they thought to do me mischief"** — Nehemiah stood as firm as his wall! He knew that such inveterate enemies proposed no good as to the mission to which he was dedicated. Their friendly approach was to get him at a disadvantage (Pro. 14:15); but it was an example of the deceitfulness of sin (cp. Jn. 2:25; compare 1Pet. 5:8).

#### Nehemiah's Answer: The Work Must Proceed — vv. 3-4

*He refuses association with the evil intentions of his opponents, and claims that the work he is commissioned to perform is far more important than his own personal enjoyment or their company.*

#### VERSE 3

**"And I sent messengers unto them, saying"** — Nehemiah was shrewd enough not to disclose that he knew their plans. To do so might have driven them to extremes — perhaps even caused them to boldly attack the city, which would not then have been easily defended. So he gave them an answer free of pressure or false excuse.

**"I (am) doing a great work"** — No better answer could be given to the thousand invitations or provocations that a man might receive to cease his work for the Truth and to enter into useless or trivial conferences; or listen to insincere praises; or to experience malicious, wicked attacks on his labors or motives.

**"so that I cannot come down"** — Nehemiah suspected their evil intentions and did not allow himself to fall into their trap (Pro. 14:15). He was not prepared to compromise his responsibilities to the Truth and the work of the ecclesia in Jerusalem, in order to discuss matters with his opponents.

**"why should the work cease"** — God's work must be given precedence

over all other occupations that might otherwise engage our attention. We should avoid allowing the work of the Truth to be minimised or neglected; it is the most important labor of life!

**"whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"** — What had Sanballat done to assist the work he now wanted to discuss? Brother Thomas wrote: "Be valiant for the Truth; teach it without compromise, and all lovers of the Truth will approve you; for all others you need not care a rush!" The "others" of whom he spoke were those who stood in the way of faithful labor for the Truth, and who were not prepared to put their support and effort into such activity. Our attention must remain riveted upon labor for the Truth; it is not worth putting time aside for any activity if it be to the disadvantage of the Truth.

#### VERSE 4

**"Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort"** — Sanballat made determined attempts to turn Nehemiah from his project. The number "four" generally relates to Israel; here, however, it indicates the anti-Semitic nature of the opposition.

**"and I answered them after the same manner"** — He refused to be compromised, or to give in to their intrigue (cp. Pro. 1:10), but remained consistent in his rejection of the ways of sinners (Psa. 1:1).

#### Opposition by Accusation — vv. 5-7

*A further endeavor is made to frustrate the work of faith being accomplished by Nehemiah. This time the enemy seeks to seduce the people by insidious innuendo and wicked letters which have no substance in fact.*

#### VERSE 5

**"Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time"** — The previous four attempts (v. 4) failed to achieve the objective of infiltrating the

camp of the faithful, and of destroying the work in Jerusalem, and therefore a further attempt is made. "Five" is the number of grace, but Sanballat desired to destroy the grace under which Nehemiah continued his work.

**"with an open letter"** — The first mention in Scripture of a letter is one which David sent to Joab (2Sam. 11:14). Jezebel wrote in the name of Ahab (1Kgs. 21:8); the king of Syria wrote to the king of Israel (2Kgs. 5:5-7); Jehu also wrote letters (2Kgs. 10:1). Writers probably used animal skins prepared for writing, or palm-leaves manufactured like the Egyptian papyrus, the use of which is known to be of very ancient origin.

An "open" letter, however, is generally considered to be an insult. Sanballat deliberately sent it in this way, so that others could read it, and his cause be dramatically publicized in this insidious manner. It was a mark of contempt to send such a letter to the governor of the land!

**"in his hand"** — Normally, letters were sealed with wax to preserve the messages and prevent prying eyes from examining their contents. On this occasion, however, Sanballat deliberately left it open, to allow others to read it, and to become thereby alarmed. In this way he hoped to turn the populace against the governor.

#### VERSE 6

**"Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen"** — The evidence of a false witness. Nehemiah had not said anything to warrant such accusations as are made here. Christ had to accept similar false witness against the work he endeavored to achieve (cp. Mat. 26:60).

The word for "heathen" is *goy*, which indicates the nation; its people.

**"and Gashmu saith (it)"** — The name is probably the native Arabic form of the name which, in Hebrew, becomes "Geschem". Thus Geschem is put up to

falsely accuse Nehemiah rebelling against the State, and accusing him of sedition by desiring to reign as king.

**"(that) thou and the Jews think to rebel"** — This was untrue (cp. Jer. 9:3. See ch. 2:19; Ezra 4:13). A similar accusation was made against the Lord Jesus (Jn. 19:12).

**"for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words"** — In fact, God had declared that there would be no king in David's line from the times of Zedekiah (Ezek. 21:26-27), until the coming of Messiah. Nehemiah's work was but typical of the final restoration prophesied.

#### VERSE 7

**"And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee"** — Perhaps they referred to such expressions as Zech. 4:9; 9:9, etc., as though Nehemiah appropriated the words of the prophets to himself. Nehemiah did not deny the claims, for he might have seen in his position and actions a foreshadowing of the king who will yet come to Judah.

**"at Jerusalem, saying, (There is) a king in Judah"** — Cp. Lk. 23:2; Jn. 19:14. But the prophets had indicated that there would be no king in Judah, until the Messiah would appear (Hos. 3:4).

**"and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words"** — A threat of intrigue against the court of Persia, and designed to draw Nehemiah from his work and city, so as to get him into Sanballat's power. It was a scheme to destroy his influence. "If you don't come, these things will be reported to the king!" Perhaps Sanballat was also hinting that Geschem's irresponsibility in reporting the matter, could be overcome by "mutual counsel"! Compare Psa. 56:1-4.

**"Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together"** — An insidious invitation to draw Nehemiah from his work and city, so as to get him into San-

ballat's power. "Counsel together" is usually a valuable medium of co-operation, but in this instance, the design was to undermine the governor's influence.

#### Nehemiah's Reply: These Charges are False — vv. 8-9

*The governor plainly responds to the false accusations by setting before the people the true nature of his work. The accusations of the enemy are overcome by prayer and self-control (1Pet. 2:19).*

#### VERSE 8

**"Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things"** — He does not enter into lengthy discussion to determine the motive (good or evil) of Sanballat. He plainly declares the facts!

**"done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them"** — The word *bada* means *to invent*, and is only used here and in 1Kgs. 12:33. Thus it describes a figment of the imagination (cp. Psa. 36:3; Isa. 59:4).

**"out of thine own heart"** — The heart of flesh is the source of evil thoughts and wicked deeds (Mk. 7:21). But Nehemiah put his trust in Yahweh (Neh. 6:9).

#### VERSE 9

**"For they all made us afraid"** — The RSV translates: "wanted to frighten;" Rotherham has: "seeking to put us in fear." But Nehemiah refused to be afraid for he had a strong faith and particular dedication to the work (see v. 11); Sanballat's attack only served to firm Nehemiah's resolve to complete the work.

**"saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done"**

— This was the real object of the enemy, notwithstanding what they had earlier implied (v. 2), an attitude which had been clearly recognized by Nehemiah. But now the enemy played upon the weakness of the people. To strengthen his people, Nehemiah identified with their weakness

**Prayer the Answer to Pressure (ch. 6:9-13).**

Nehemiah's enemies made yet another attempt to intimidate him by circulating an open letter, ominously proclaiming impending disaster. The letter contained the most outrageous lies, and was designed not only to strike fear into the heart of Nehemiah but also to break the resolve of his people. With tactical perspicacity, this belligerent action was immediately followed by a clever deception, to draw Nehemiah into an impossible situation. Shemaiah, claiming to be a friend, but in reality allied to the enemy, tried to persuade Nehemiah that his life was so endangered that he should meet Shemaiah "in the house of God, within the temple." "They are coming to get you, Nehemiah, and they will kill you," Shemaiah warned. Perhaps it was felt that the open letter would have so unnerved Nehemiah that he would quickly panic, and take heed to this evil advice. Such an assumption shows how little his enemies appreciated his character. He had already prayed to Yahweh: "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands!"

Before responding, Nehemiah considered two things. The first was that he had placed his cause in the hands of Yahweh, and that therefore a greater power than flesh was at work in this matter. The second was to carefully weigh up what the Word would require him to do in these circumstances. With this two-fold approach to the problem, he made a series of sound decisions.

The first was the result of Scriptural reasoning: Not being a priest, he had no right to enter the temple. He would not only break the law by so acting, but would find himself trapped therein with no avenue of escape, and would probably be murdered by enemies who cared nothing for God or His law. Had this occurred, the people would have been left leaderless at a time of great crisis, and would also have been demoralized at Nehemiah's display of panic and fear.

His second decision resulted from considering his own position. "Should such a man as I flee?" he asked himself. As governor, he was the leader of the people. It was necessary for him to *lead by example*, showing faith and courage in the face of such wicked intimidation. He had to ask himself the question: "Shall I leave the flock without a shepherd?" He knew that he could not (cp. Psa. 112:4-10; Lk. 13:31-32; Acts 20:22-24; Heb. 11:27).

Then Nehemiah began to consider the advice of Shemaiah and concluded not only that it was wrong, but that Shemaiah had spoken contrary to the requirements of the law. "I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy *against* me; for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him" (v. 12). Reviewing the pressure brought upon him, he was able to discern five distinct steps which, if followed by him would have led into disaster:

1. They tried to make him weak through fear;
2. That he would accept their iniquitous advice;
3. To do so would cause him to sin;
4. This would give the enemy grounds to speak evil of him;
5. The enemy would then reproach him (lit. *to expose, to strip*; thus to hold up to contempt and humiliation).

One thing leads to another; especially when weakness becomes a simple or unsuspecting sin. But where may it end? How careful God's saints must be! (see Dan. 6:4-5; Mat. 22:15; 26:59; Acts 6:13; Tit. 2:8). In this frightening high-pressure situation, Nehemiah's first reaction was to turn to Yahweh in prayer (v. 9). Once again he is revealed as having a rock-like faith, and a deep spiritual mind which was ever alert to the all-pervading presence and power of Yahweh. In these closing days of Gentilism, there is an urgent need for brethren to aspire to the qualities of Nehemiah, to courageously lead the ecclesias through these dark and dangerous times, holding forth the light of Truth against a wicked and perverse age. — *J. Ullman*.

and concern, understanding their fears. The disciples of the Master experienced a similar emotion, as the enemy leaders of Judea put pressure upon the small group of laborers; being unable to manifest the perfect and mature strength of their Master, they "forsook him and fled" (Mat. 26:56) from association with him.

**"Now therefore, (O God), strengthen my hands"** — Nehemiah petitions Yahweh in prayer, setting the letter of Sanballat before Him (cp. Psa. 127:1 and Hezekiah's example: 2Kgs. 19:14-15). In this action he reveals the basis of real faith, by constantly seeking the co-operation of the Father in the difficult circumstances that faced him. Notice his emphasis on "*my*" hands — he desired to provide an example of diligence to others.

Nehemiah recorded his actual prayer, as if reliving the experience through his diary.

**Opposition by Treachery of a Pretended Friend — v. 10**

*Nehemiah not only had to combat adversaries "outside", but had to face the treachery of false prophets (v. 10), and deceitful nobles (v. 17) within. Instead of encouraging Nehemiah in the work before him, and protecting him from the enemy, one such so-called "friend" tried to play upon his fears. Shemaiah assumed the part of a confidant as did the infamous Judas to the Lord Jesus (Lk. 22:48), but had evil designs against the governor.*

**VERSE 10****"Afterward I came unto the house"**

— Evidently Nehemiah was invited by this Shemaiah to discuss the situation personally with him.

**"of Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh hath heard*. This is the first mention of this man (a different individual is mentioned in ch. 3:29). He was a professed friend but a false prophet (v. 12), possibly hired by the enemies to seduce Nehemiah within the city. Being able to suggest that they make use of the "house of God," he was probably also associated with the priesthood. The names of his two immediate ancestors are given; all three names were names of honor, indicating privileges given by Yahweh. Unfortunately, by his foolish action in attempting to compromise Nehemiah, Shemaiah brought shame on his house and denied the meanings of the names listed.

**"the son of Delaiah"** — Sig. *Freed by Yahweh*.

**"the son of Mehetabeel"** — Sig. *God (El) Benefits*. See 1Chr. 24:18.

**"who (was) shut up"** — Confined to his house for some reason not given (cp. Jer. 33:1; 36:5). He could have been sick, or pretending illness, or ceremonially unclean. Therefore he used this as the excuse why Shemaiah could not go to the governor. Nehemiah responded, not perceiving at the time the treachery of this prominent individual, for he evidently trusted him.

**“and he said”** — In the house, Shemaiah tried to induce Nehemiah with soft, honeyed words, to secretly meet on their own, no doubt with the intention of murdering him.

**“Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple”** — Attempting to delude Nehemiah from his real intentions by offering protection within the walls of the temple. Such was also the experience of David with Ahithophel (Psa. 55:14). Similar acts of treachery have often been made upon the basis of a friendly fellowship within the ecclesial “house”.

**“and let us shut the doors of the temple”** — The site was well chosen for such an act of deceit, so as to take Nehemiah off guard. However, Nehemiah was a commoner, and not permitted entrance through the doors of the temple. If he had done so, Shemaiah could have revealed this unlawful trespass, and accused Nehemiah before the priests. Shemaiah was himself probably of Levi, and is termed “a hired prophet” in v. 12.

**“for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee”** — He played upon the supposed fear of Nehemiah, and asked him to profane the temple in order to save his life from pretended assassins. But it was a wrong appeal to this man of courage, for it instantly put Nehemiah on his guard, and he detected the treachery.

**Nehemiah’s Reply: “Should I Flee?”** — vv. 11-14

*The deceit and treachery of supposed friends is overcome by confident prayer and outstanding bravery in Nehemiah.*

#### VERSE 11

**“And I said”** — Instantly Nehemiah recognizes the treachery and courageously responds.

**“Should such a man as I flee?”** — Of whom is Shemaiah speaking? A man

who had already encountered difficulties and threats with determination; who had constantly revealed faith in God; who had exhorted the people to trust God and fight for their families; who had urged his associates to deliberately expose themselves to danger (ch. 4:14, etc.). Such a man had to manifest courage and indifference to fear in maintaining an example to the Jews (Pro. 28:1).

**“and who (is there), that, (being) as I (am)”** — Only the priests and Levites were permitted to enter the temple.

**“would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in”** — To do so would have betrayed the worship of God in order to achieve personal safety. Nehemiah was not prepared to usurp his position upon the priesthood, as Uzziah had done previously (2Chr. 26:18). Such an action would be a desecration and evidence of faithlessness.

#### VERSE 12

**“And, lo, I perceived”** — He reflected upon the matter and realized that Shemaiah did not speak with God’s authority (cp. 1Kgs. 13:11-22). Clearly Nehemiah saw through his enemy’s clever devices, and steadfastly refused to be lured into the trap, or demean himself by any compromise with those whose heart was not in his work.

**“that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat”** — Tobiah is here mentioned first because he acted at the instigation of Sanballat and had worked to achieve connections within the walls, Shemaiah being one such. Probably Tobiah was the actual briber, Sanballat furnishing the required funds.

**“had hired him”** — Like Balak and Balaam (Num. 22:5, 7; cp. 2Pet. 2:15).

#### VERSE 13

**“Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so”** — By entering the temple, not being a priest

Such a report would spread among the Jews and weaken their confidence in him. Nehemiah soon found (perhaps by questioning) the true motives of Shemaiah, who had been hired (v. 12) and uncovered a veritable nest of intrigue (v. 14). A similar trap was set up against faithful Daniel by the conspiring of his enemies (Dan. 6:5-7).

**“and sin”** — Heb. *chata*, which has the significance of *missing the mark* (Jud. 20:16). Nehemiah would have been guilty of defying the exclusive authority of the priests by so entering the temple.

**“and (that) they might have (matter) for an evil report, that they might reproach me”** — One false step and Nehemiah would have lost his cause; his influence would have gone; and the work on which his heart was set would have come to nought.

#### VERSE 14

**“My God”** — Heb. *elohim*; *mighty ones*. The angels are ministering spirits who superintend the work of the saints (Heb. 1:14). Nehemiah recognised that the circumstances were under the careful scrutiny of God, and were subject to His control.

**“think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these”** — Having discovered that others of the Jews were in the conspiracy and that his own countrymen were intriguing against him, Nehemiah sought the companionship and support of the only One who could really help — Yahweh, his true friend.

**“their works”** — These revealed the true intent and motive of the conspirators (cp. Mat. 7:20).

**“and on the prophetess Noadiah”** — Sig. *Yahweh Hath Met*. Her evil pronouncements were intended to terrify Nehemiah. As the Jezebel in Nehemiah’s day (see Rev. 2:20), she seems to have been a leader in the conspiracies. As such she assumed a position of authority, as though

*The Wonderful Example of an Outstanding Man of Faith who Labored against the Wiles of the Enemy. Nehemiah is a type of faithful workmen in the cause of the Truth. From his conduct and concern we can learn: • how valuable one fervent laborer may be (vv. 1-2); • what is needed is wariness (vv. 2, 4) against the deceitfulness of sin; • what importance there is of committed courage (vv. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9); • how excellent is absolute dedication to the work (v. 3); • how the Truth is victorious (vv. 11, 15, 16).*

to replace Nehemiah’s voice, and acted as the spiritual harlot of Rev. 17:1-6).

**“and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear”** — They reasoned without a real knowledge of the sterling and steadfast faith of this man. He stands as a type of the Lord Jesus, who continued his labors notwithstanding the opposition of family and foe.

#### The Real Answer: The Wall Finished — vv. 15-16

*None of the actions of the enemies were successful. Like the Lord Jesus, Nehemiah put to flight the enemy and overcame all temptations insidiously put to him. Ultimately the wall was finished; the work completed; and the enemies confounded.*

#### VERSE 15

**“So the wall was finished”** — Heb. *shalam*; *to be safe*. Not only was the work completed, but it was also effective in protecting the ecclesia gathered within. The voice of the Lord Jesus uttered from the cross: “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30) similarly signalled the completion of the work of

salvation accomplished by him that his disciples might "be safe" within the confines of the household of faith.

**"in the twenty and fifth (day) of (the month)"** — There is a sense of exhilaration in this statement of work completed. Despite all hindrances, difficulties, attacks, threats, conspiracies, the work had continued and the wall was built in the short time of fifty-two days. At every turn, Sanballat had been outgeneralled and defeated, and with a sense of frustration and anger he saw it completed — as the scribes and Pharisees viewed the saving work of the Messiah (Dan. 9:25).

**"Elul"** — The sixth month: August/September. This period came in the heat at the end of summer. The word "Elul" signifies *Good for Nothing*. It was the last month of the civil year, so throughout the month the cornet is sounded to warn of the approaching new year. It is suggested that this would be a year of release: thus Jerusalem's reproach was removed before a new cycle of festivities and worship commenced.

**"in fifty and two days"** — Thus the work must have commenced on the Third Ab: the fifth month, at the height of the summer. The work was accomplished rapidly because the workers were enthusiastic, the materials were to hand, and God's good hand was upon them. These three elements hold the key to successful spiritual "building" (2Tim. 4:2; cp. Jn. 4:34).

The sequence continues: ch. 12:27-47.

#### VERSE 16

**"And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard (thereof)"** — The reports that filtered through to the enemy had brought a reaction against the work of the Truth. Notice their response: they were grieved (2:10); upset (v. 19); mocked (4:1); scorned (4:7); frustrated (4:15); threatened (6:6); cast down (v. 16).

**"and all the heathen that (were)**

**about us saw (these things)"** — Earlier they had "heard" (v. 1; 2:10; 4:1, 7), now they "saw" and "perceived". The antitype is reflected in the divine response: Ezek. 38:23; 39:7.

**"they were much cast down in their own eyes"** — Personally humiliated. But this did not stop them from continuing their opposition (vv. 17-19).

**"for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God"** — The word "wrought" is the Heb. *asah*; *to complete; to perform*. There was no self-glorification, for the work was accomplished, and not merely approved, by God. Nehemiah gave Yahweh all the praise for the victory (cp. Paul: Rom. 7:25). The enemies recognized that the divine providence had been at work to accomplish the project (Psa. 126:2). See the similar response by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 6:16), and the testimony of Nicodemus: Jn. 3:2).

#### Continuing Base Treachery Amongst the People — vv. 17-19

*Unfortunately, not all the Jews were "Israelites indeed." Amongst the nobles were those who sought the honor of the enemy, and were found to be compromised with the world. We must ever be on our guard, even in times of success. Infiltration of evil ideas might yet spoil our work and bring apostasy into the ecclesia.*

#### VERSE 17

**"Moreover in those days"** — The days when the walls were completed, and it appeared that Nehemiah's work was successful (cp. the exhortation: 1Cor. 10:12).

**"the nobles of Judah"** — The opposition of this class which had commenced from the beginning (Neh. 3:5) possibly increased as some saw their lucrative source of income taken from them (Neh. 5). They probably felt that Nehemiah was no longer necessary, now that the wall was completed.

#### "sent many letters unto Tobiah, and (the letters) of Tobiah came unto them"

— A constant barrage of intrigue and treachery in an endeavor to defeat the work of Nehemiah. He could not relax. The adversaries did not cease though the wall was completed. This treachery later resulted in a closer alliance with the alien and apostasy in Israel (Neh. 13:4).

#### VERSE 18

**"For (there were) many"** — The powerful influence of the enemy; the presence of "the majority" (see Mat. 22:14).

**"in Judah sworn unto him"** — Thus, in Jewry, there were those advocating the cause of Tobiah and Sanballat, probably denouncing Nehemiah as harsh and unyielding, and claiming that all Sanballat and Tobiah wanted, was to help in the work. "Why not, therefore, let them!" — see Neh. 2:10; 6:19. Paul similarly experienced such opposition (2Tim. 4:14-15; 2Tim. 1:15).

**"because he (was) the son in law"** — Heb. *chathan*: *related by marriage*.

**"of Shechaniah"** — Sig. Yahweh Hath Dwelt.

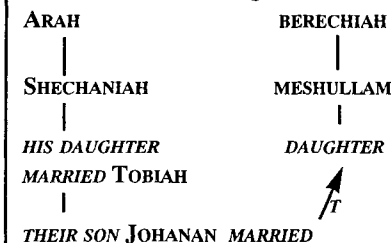
**"the son of Arah"** — Sig. Wayfaring, from a root, *arach*: *to travel*. Mentioned in Ezra 2:5 as returning from Babylon with Zerubbabel.

**"and his son Johanan"** — Sig. Yahweh Favors, from a root, *chanan*: *to bend; implore; favor*.

**"had taken the daughter of Meshullam"** — Sig. Allied in Peace, from a root, *shalam*: *to be safe; united*.

**"the son of Berechiah"** — Sig. Blessings of Yah. He had been prominent in building the wall (ch. 3:4, 20), but now was found siding with the enemy. The guile of his daughter's father-in-law (Tobiah) won him to the cause of the enemy. Now there was a complete uniting of interests by unlawful marriages with the alien. The influence and spirit of the enemy had permeated into Judah through

#### The Sad Case of Compromise in Marriage



Notice, also the connection with the high priest, ELIASHIB (Neh. 13:4), and the arrangement of compromise, by which his grandson married the daughter of Sanballat. Such contracts had the result of bringing disgrace to the families, as had earlier occurred in the circumstances of Jehoshaphat (see 2Chr. 21:1-6).

its social environment, as it did in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:2; Mat. 24:38; Lk. 17:27). Constant vigilance is necessary to faithfully and consistently serve Yahweh.

#### VERSE 19

**"Also they reported his good deeds before me"** — An endeavor to influence Nehemiah with suggestions of the supposed "conversion" of Tobiah. They acted deceitfully, claiming the enemy was devoted to the good of Jerusalem, perhaps representing his bribes (v. 12) as gifts of charity by which support for the work of the Truth was evident.

**"and uttered my words to him"** — Reporting the activities of Nehemiah to Tobiah, so that he was acquainted with all Nehemiah's activities, and the influence of the governor could be undermined.

**"(And) Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear"** — This treacherous correspondence unprofitably took up Nehemiah's time, and later led to abuses that he had to correct (ch. 13:23).



### Betrayal by False Brethren (ch. 6:17-19).

A disgraceful picture is presented in this section of the record. As a faithful leader of the people, Nehemiah needed the active and forthright support of his brethren — especially those in positions of influence. But many of those who should have been leaders and examples to the flock were “busy with their letters” (Rotherham) to and from Tobiah. Tobiah had now assumed the chief role as adversary to Nehemiah. Nothing more is heard of Sanballat, who must have retired from the scene of conflict. Tobiah’s presence remains strongly in evidence from here on: v. 19; 13:4, 7, 8. Nehemiah was now under attack from many sides: the enemy without, and false brethren within. Many who should have wholeheartedly supported and encouraged Nehemiah, were sworn by an oath to support Tobiah.

The Hebrew words *baal* (lord, master, husband), and *shebawah* (fem. pass. part: an oath) indicate that these treacherous brethren had formed a solemn alliance with Nehemiah’s bitter enemy; in the sense of the meaning of the expression, it was as though they were “married” to Tobiah, looking upon him as their master or husband. Such was the damage effected by these brethren that later on the ecclesia was led into deeper trouble so that the people of Jerusalem became almost totally apostate (13:4; cp. Mat. 24:9-13). What is it that moves brethren to betray the Truth and to act with treachery against their brethren who are striving to give sound leadership to the ecclesia and uphold the principles of the Word without compromise? The flesh may dominate through many avenues. Motivation may result from personal ambition and a desire for self-advancement; it may be due to jealousy, family ties, the embracing of erroneous philosophies, rebellion against the absolute precepts of the Truth.

The personal damage which results from the betrayal of sound brethren, such as Nehemiah, is not of prime importance. It is the repercussions and consequences of such folly that must be considered. Paul experienced “perils among false brethren” (2Cor. 11:26).

But where will those brethren stand in the day when Paul is received with all love and joy by the Lord Jesus Christ? What of the false brethren who took up the evil plan of trying to destroy Nehemiah? With whom will they stand when Nehemiah receives his great reward? False brethren, betrayers of God’s Truth, will face a fearful day of rude awakening. They will discover that they have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. And by then it will be too late to rectify their folly. — *J. Ullman*.

### REBUILDING THE ECCLESIA — Chs. 7-12

*There are two distinct sections in the story of the restoration of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. One concerns the reconstruction of the walls (chapters 1-6); the other, the restoration of the city’s population and the inauguration of certain social and religious reforms in which the contemporary leader, Ezra, also took a prominent part (chapters 7-12). The final section of the record (chapter 13) concerns the return of Nehemiah and the aspects of judgment that were then necessary — an appropriate conclusion to this most important book.*

*Chapter 7 deals with the more practical and civil aspects of the reform, the restoration of the population, the appointment of certain city officials, and measures for public safety, before Nehemiah turns his attention to the work of moral and religious reforms, reported from chapters 8 to 10.*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE NATION RECONSTITUTED

*“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).*

**N**EHEMIAH’S work did not cease with building the walls of Jerusalem. He was careful to follow up with regulations that were calculated to help the development of the nation. How important is this example! It is not enough to bring people to the Truth; we must exercise skill and consideration in the “follow-up” work, in order to strengthen and build up their understanding of the Word. Many a man who is a genius in overseeing a crisis, is a failure in the reconstitution that must follow. But not so Nehemiah. Having won the tactical battle against the enemy, he now gives attention to the work of consolidation. In all this he saw God’s hand at work: ch. 7:5.



### Nehemiah Instals some Security Regulations — vv. 1-4

*Nehemiah was aware that there were still some areas of concern to address, and set about deploying his people accordingly. He first established a hierarchy, in which certain selected brethren were elevated to positions of responsibility over the community of Israel.*

#### VERSE 1

**"Now it came to pass"** — A familiar and recurring phrase in this book. See notes, ch. 6:1. Nehemiah turned his attention to areas of social matters, following completion of the walls.

**"when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors"** — The work of securing the city protection was completed. The antitype is seen in the perfect sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 1:4) through which was established the divine "wall of righteousness" (Heb. 13:20-21).

**"and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed"** — The porters and singers were Levites appointed to special office. They were required to attend to the religious worship of the temple, an added duty which was imposed upon them because of the scanty population of Jerusalem (ch. 11:1). As the priests and Levites formed nearly half of the community (ch. 11:6-19), they were pressed into this work of guarding the city.

#### VERSE 2

**"That I gave"** — There was now a change of governors in Jerusalem, as Nehemiah reorganized the kingdom. The Lord Jesus will likewise rearrange the rulership of the future (Dan. 2:44), installing into office his intimate associates, the immortalized saints.

**"my brother Hanani"** — Sig. *Gracious*. After earlier carrying the information concerning the pitiful condition of Jerusalem to his brother Nehemiah in Per-

sia (ch. 1:2), Hanani must have returned with him to Judea, and is now put in charge of the city.

**"and Hananiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has been Gracious*. Perhaps a son of the first governor, Zerubbabel (1Chr. 3:19), and a close associate of Hanani.

However, the *Companion Bible* comments that the words should read "even Hananiah," suggesting that Hanani and Hananiah are one and the same person. Interestingly, Hanani is not listed among those who signed the covenant in ch. 1 and such a notable person could not omit to do this. Hananiah is mentioned again in Neh. 10:23.

**"the ruler of the palace"** — i.e., the stronghold (ch. 2:8). Hananiah is made the chief custodian of the important citadel, tower, adjoining the temple area to the north.

**"charge over Jerusalem"** — These two men were now established over the two divisions of the city (cp. ch. 3:9, 12). The apostles Peter and Paul were similarly designated particular areas of activity (Acts 16:3; Gal. 2:7).

**"for he (was) a faithful man"** — Bullinger has: "the Truth's own man". He was dominated by a love of the Truth, and therefore trustworthy in every sense. Nehemiah had to carefully select such men in view of the treachery he had uncovered just prior to this time (ch. 6:12-14, 18). The word "man" is the Hebrew *ish*, indicating an upright man, one of strength and power.

**"and feared God above many"** — Hananiah was therefore an outstanding example of both faithfulness and reverence for divine things.

#### VERSE 3

**"And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot"** — Soon after sunrise, when the sun had arisen (cp. 1Sam. 11:9, 11).

#### VERSE 7

**"Who came"** — The twelve leaders are first mentioned, as types of the twelve apostles of the Lord (Mat. 19:28).

**"with Zerubbabel"** — Sig. *The Shoot of Babylon*.

**"Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yahweh will Save* (Zech. 3).

**"Nehemiah"** — Sig. *Consolation of Yahweh*. This man was not the author of the book, who recently came from the court of Persia.

**"Azariah"** — Sig. *Helped by Yahweh*.

**"Raamiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Thundered* (known as Reelaiah in Ezra 2:2).

**"Nahamani"** — Sig. *Compassionate*. This name is added to those mentioned in the list of Ezra.

**"Mordecai"** — Sig. *Dedicated to Marduk* (Little Man).

**"Bilshan"** — Sig. *Son of the Tongue*; thus, an eloquent one.

**"Mispereth"** — Sig. *Narrative; Numberer*.

**"Bigvai"** — Sig. *Happy; Fortunate* (cp. v. 19).

**"Nehum"** — Sig. *Consolation*.

**"Baanah"** — Sig. *In Affliction* (3:4).

**"The number, (I say), of the men of the people of Israel was this"** — Those registered were therefore of family groups, listed by number.

#### A List of the Men of Israel — vv. 8-38.

*Nehemiah commences to examine his list of those who returned from Babylon, and to determine their ancestry. A similar procedure will be enacted at the Judgment Seat of Christ with respect to those who are "born in Zion" (Psa. 87:5).*

#### VERSE 8

**"The children of Parosh"** — Sig. *A*

### The Reason for the Register — The various Groups found in the City: v. 5.

[1] *To show that the returning exiles were of Israel or had associations therewith (Ezra 2:59). So there was a careful screening of the returning exiles — all had to confess their endorsement of the hope of Israel.*

• *The various groups relate to different types within the ecclesia today (Eph. 2:11-12).*

[2] *There were Jews with their own genealogy, which was then recorded in the register (vv. 7-25).*

• *These represent the company of faithful and earnest brethren and sisters.*

[3] *There were Jews who had little to show except the fact that they were undoubtedly of Israel (vv. 26-33).*

• *Such symbolize nominal Christadelphians, who have a name to identify them, but few acts of faith.*

[4] *There were Jews who had acted as Gentiles, but now desired to reassociate with Israel (vv. 61, 63).*

• *These typify those who stray from the Truth, but later return to the ecclesia.*

[5] *There were Gentiles who were completely Jewish in their attitude, such as the Nethinim (v. 46).*

• *Such are those in the ecclesia who completely repudiate the Gentile principles which formerly governed them.*

[6] *There were priests who previously gloried in the flesh, but now wanted to redeem themselves, and were received back into the community tentatively (vv. 63-65). All were registered after complying with the necessary requirements.*

• *They are those who reject the Truth, but on repentance are received back, awaiting Christ's ultimate judgment.*

*Flea* (see Ezra 2:3).

**"two thousand an hundred seventy and two"** — The commencement of the numbering for the register.

#### VERSE 9

**"The children of Shephatiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Judged* (Ezra 2:4; 8:8; Neh. 7:9).

**"three hundred seventy and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 2,544.

#### VERSE 10

**"The children of Arah"** — Sig. *Way-farer*

**"six hundred fifty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 3,196.

#### VERSE 11

**"The children of Pahathmoab"** — Sig. *Governor of Moab*. A leading family of Judah, members of which returned with Zerubbabel (7:11).

**"of the children of Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yah Will Save* (Ezra 2:6).

**"and Joab"** — Sig. *Yah is Father* (Ezra 2:6)

**"two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen"** — Added to the former figure computes to 6,014.

#### VERSE 12

**"The children of Elam"** — Sig. *Hidden*. Progenitor of a family which returned under Zerubbabel, and later were represented at the sealing of the covenant (10:14; Ezra 2:7)

**"a thousand two hundred fifty and four"** — Added to the former figure computes to 7,268.

#### VERSE 13

**"The children of Zattu"** — Sig. *To Germinate*. Prominent members (Ezra 2:8) who put away their foreign (strange) wives at the instigation of Ezra (Ezra 10:27). They later sealed the covenant

with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:14).

**"eight hundred forty and five"** — Added to the former figure computes to 8,113.

#### VERSE 14

**"The children of Zaccai"** — Sig. *Remembered*. The founder of a family, the members of which returned under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:9).

**"seven hundred and threescore"** — Added to the former figure computes to 8,873.

#### VERSE 15

**"The children of Binnui"** — Sig. *Built*. The head of a family whose posterity returned under Zerubbabel. He is called Bani in Ezra 2:10.

**"six hundred forty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 9,521.

#### VERSE 16

**"The children of Bebai"** — Sig. *Fatherly*. The family name of some who returned under Zerubbabel, as well as under Ezra (Ezra 8:11). Several married foreign wives (Ezra 10:28), and the family was represented at the sealing of the covenant (Neh. 10:15).

**"six hundred twenty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 10,149.

#### VERSE 17

**"The children of Azgad"** — Sig. *Strong in Fortune*. A second detachment of 110 with Johanan at their head accompanied Ezra (Ezra 8:12). Several married foreign wives (10:28), and the family was represented at the sealing of the covenant (Neh. 10:15).

**"two thousand three hundred twenty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 12,471.

#### VERSE 18

**"The children of Adonikam"** — Sig.

*The Master Arises*. His descendants returned under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:13) and Ezra (8:13). Identified by some with Adonijah.

**"six hundred threescore and seven"** — Added to the former figure computes to 13,138.

#### VERSE 19

**"The children of Bigvai"** — Sig. *Happy; Fortunate*. A further seventy-two men returned with Ezra (Ezra 8:14). The family was represented at the sealing (Neh. 10:16).

**"two thousand threescore and seven"** — Added to the former figure computes to 15,205.

#### VERSE 20

**"The children of Adin"** — Sig. *Soft; Delicate; Effeminate*. Fifty more returned with Ebed under Ezra (Ezra 8:6). Represented at the sealing (Neh. 10:16).

**"six hundred fifty and five"** — Added to the former figure computes to 15,860.

#### VERSE 21

*Up to this point Nehemiah observes the same order as Ezra, but the remaining three personal names are placed differently.*

**"The children of Ater"** — Sig. *To Shut Up; To Maim*. His relationship with Hezekiah is not known. Indicated here so as to be distinct from the porters (v. 45). Was represented at the sealing (ch. 10:17).

**"of Hezekiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh is Strength*. He had descendants who returned under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:16).

**"ninety and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 15,958.

#### VERSE 22

**"The children of Hashum"** — Sig. *Enriched*. He was the founder of a family whose members returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:19). Members had married foreign wives (10:33). Sealed the covenant (Neh. 10:18).

**"three hundred twenty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 16,286.

#### VERSE 23

**"The children of Bezai"** — Sig. *Shining; High*. The family name of a group who returned with Zerubbabel, and later sealed the covenant (Neh. 10:18).

**"three hundred twenty and four"** — Added to the former figure computes to 16,610.

#### VERSE 24

**"The children of Hariph"** — Sig. *Autumnal Rain*. A family whose members returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:18). His name is mentioned as Jorah in Ezra. Sealed the covenant (Neh. 10:19).

**"an hundred and twelve"** — Added to the former figure computes to 16,722.

#### VERSE 25

**"The children of Gibeon"** — Sig. *A Cutter Down; Mighty Warrior*. A man whose descendants returned with Zerubbabel. Identified with Gibbar of Ezra 2:20.

**"ninety and five"** — Added to the former figure computes to 16,817.

#### VERSE 26

**"The men"** — There is a change from the list of "children" to groups of Jewish settlers identified with various localities.

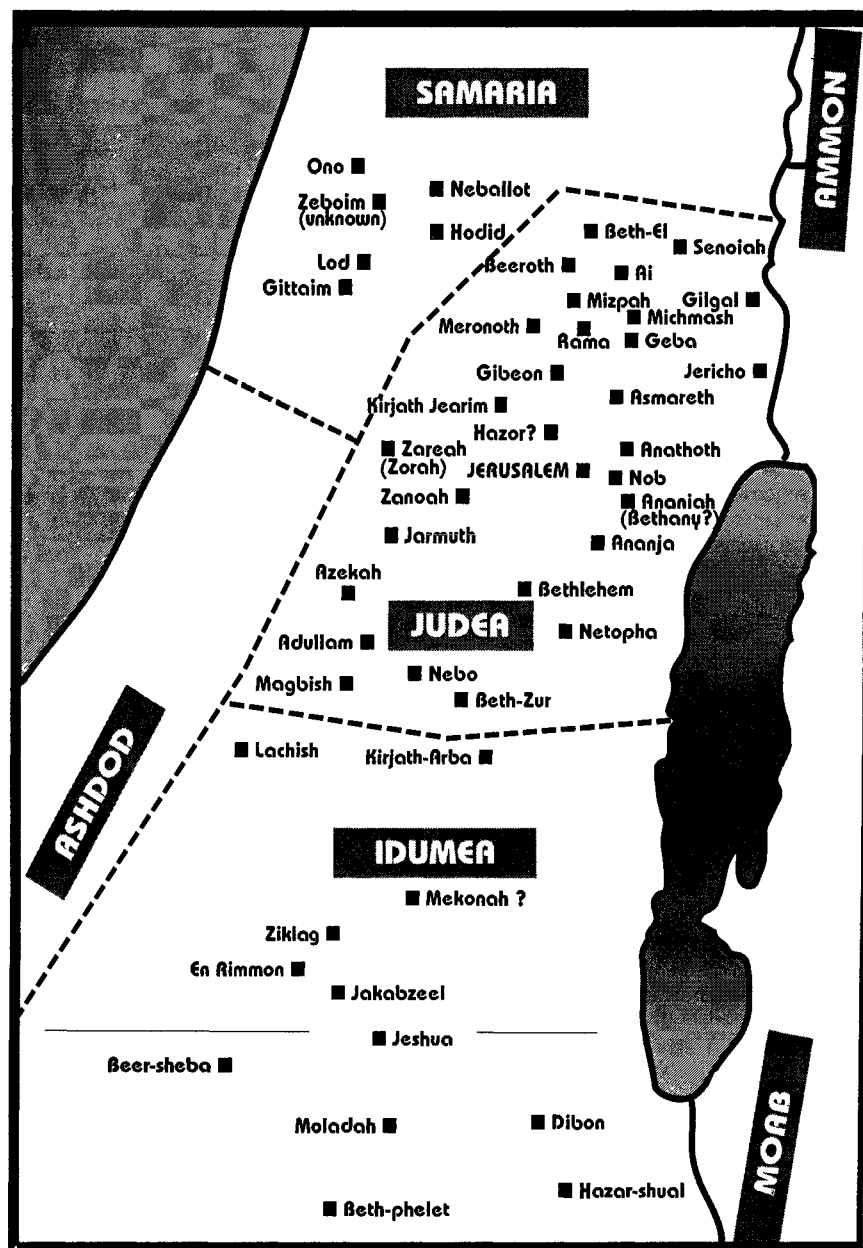
**"of Bethlehem"** — Sig. *The House of Bread*. Located about 10km south of Jerusalem.

**"and Netophah"** — Sig. *Distillation*. A village probably in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Ezra 2:22), and noted for the production of wine from the vineyards which were prolific in the area.

**"an hundred fourscore and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 17,005.

#### VERSE 27

**"The men of Anathoth"** — Sig. *Answer; Response*. A few kilometres north



of Jerusalem (Ezra 2:23), birthplace of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1).

**"an hundred twenty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 17,133.

#### VERSE 28

**"The men of Beth-azmaveth"** — Sig. *House of the Strong One of Death* (Ezra 2:24).

**"forty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 17,175.

#### VERSE 29

**"The men of Kirjath-jearim"** — Sig. *City of the Forests*. A Gibeonite town (Jos. 9:17), on the border of Judah and Benjamin (Jos. 15:9; 18:14, 28).

**"Chephirah"** — Sig. *Village; Hamlet*. A small town about 12km from Jerusalem; given to the tribe of Benjamin (Jos. 18:26).

**"and Beeroth"** — Sig. *Wells*. A Gibeonite city allotted to the tribe of Benjamin.

**"seven hundred forty and three"** — Added to the former figure computes to 17,918.

#### VERSE 30

**"The men of Ramah"** — Sig. *Height*. A city in Benjamin (Jos. 18:25). The Jewish captives, including Jeremiah, were assembled here in chains before being led to Babylon (Jer. 29:8-12; 40:1).

**"and Gaba"** — Sig. *Hill*. Sometimes called Geba; located in Benjamin (Jos. 18:24).

**"six hundred twenty and one"** — Added to the former figure computes to 18,539.

#### VERSE 31

**"The men of Michmas"** — Sig. *Something Hidden*. A town of Benjamin, east of Bethel on the road to Jerusalem.

**"an hundred and twenty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 18,661.

#### VERSE 32

**"The men of Bethel"** — Sig. *House of God*. First mentioned in the circumstances of Abraham (Gen. 12:8).

**"and Ai"** — Sig. *Ruin*.

**"an hundred twenty and three"** — Added to the former figure computes to 18,784.

#### VERSE 33

**"The men of the other Nebo"** — Sig. *To Be High*. An unidentified locality. Some from this area put away their foreign wives (Ezra 10:43).

**"fifty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 18,836.

#### VERSE 34

**"The children of the other Elam"** — Sig. *Hidden*. To distinguish from v. 12. Representatives of this family name (of which one is unknown; perhaps both) signed the covenant (Neh. 10:14), and as priests took part in the dedication services (Neh. 12:42).

**"a thousand two hundred fifty and four"** — Added to the former figure computes to 20,090.

#### VERSE 35

**"The children of Harim"** — Sig. *Consecrated*. Distinct from those of v. 42.

**"three hundred and twenty"** — Added to the former figure computes to 20,410.

#### VERSE 36

**"The children of Jericho"** — Sig. *Place of Fragrance*. Conquered by Joshua (Jos. 2:2).

**"three hundred forty and five"** — Added to the former figure computes to 20,755.

#### VERSE 37

**"The children of Lod"** — Sig. *Contention; Strife*. Compare ch. 11:35. Today known as Lydda (Acts 9:32); a place in Ephraim. One of the most westerly of the

settlements, occupied by the Benjamites (1Chr. 8:12; cp. Neh. 11:35).

**"Hadid"** — Sig. *Sharp-Pointed*. 6 km northeast of Lod (Lydda), and settled by the Benjamites (1Chr. 8:12; cp. Neh. 11:35).

**"and Ono"** — Sig. *Strong*. Settled by the Benjamites (1Chr. 8:12; cp. Neh. 6:2). This place is identified with the "Valley of the Craftsmen" (ch. 11:35), an extension of the valley of Sharon. Ono is identified today with Keft Ana, southeast of Joppa.

**"seven hundred twenty and one"** — Added to the former figure computes to 21,476.

### VERSE 38

**"The children of Senaah"** — Sig. *Thornhedge*. Identified by some with Magdal, about 12 km north of Jericho.

**"three thousand nine hundred and thirty"** — Added to the former figure computes to 25,406.

### List of the Priests — vv. 39-42.

*This section repeats exactly the list of Ezra 2:36-39. There were originally twenty-four priestly courses established under Solomon (1Chr. 24:1-19; 28:11, 13, 19). Very few of these courses remained after the captivity. The priests either preferred to remain behind, or had lost their genealogies, so that those who remained were confined to four (Neh. 7:39-42). Jewish tradition claims that Ezra established the twenty-four orders artificially by lot. A course was divided into three ranks: the chief of the course; the chief of every family; and the common priests.*

### VERSE 39

**"The priests: the children of Jediah"** — Sig. *Yahweh is King*.

**"of the house of Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yahweh is Savior*. He was a priestly descendant of Aaron (1Chr. 24:11; Ezra 2:36).

**"nine hundred seventy and three"** — Added to the former figure computes to 26,379.

### VERSE 40

**"The children of Immer"** — Sig. *Talkative*. A descendant of Aaron. They were numbered amongst those who whose family returned under Zerubbabel (1Chr. 9:12; Ezra 2:37). Members of his family put away their foreign wives (Ezra 10:20). They dwelt at Jerusalem and were noted for their outstanding ability (Neh. 11:13).

**"a thousand fifty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 27,431.

### VERSE 41

**"The children of Pashur"** — Sig. *Free; Multiplying Liberty*. A son of Malchijah and head of the priestly family, members of which returned under Zerubbabel (1Chr. 9:12; Ezra 2:38). Some were among those who married foreign wives and put them away at the instigation of Ezra (Ezra 10:22). The family was represented among the working priests in Jerusalem (Neh. 11:12).

**"a thousand two hundred forty and seven"** — Added to the former figure computes to 28,678.

### VERSE 42

**"The children of Harim"** — Sig. *Consecrated*. The head of the priestly family, members of which returned under Zerubbabel. Some were among those who married foreign wives and put them away at the instigation of Ezra (Ezra 10:21). The family was represented at the sealing (Neh. 10:27).

**"a thousand and seventeen"** — Added to the former figure computes to 29,695.

### A List of the Levites — v. 43.

*The Levites were divided into twenty-four divisions, as shown by the twenty-four names listed in 1Chr. 23:7-23, and the statement of v. 24. They appear to have been heads of families.*

### VERSE 43

**"The Levites: the children of**

**Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yahweh is Savior*.

**"of"** — The texts read "and", connecting Kadmiel's name with Jeshua's.

**"Kadmiel"** — Sig. *El is of Old*. He returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:40), and co-operated with Jeshua in stirring up the people to work on the temple (Ezra 3:9), and later led the people in their devotions (Neh. 9:4-5). He sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:9) and was appointed by Jeshua to the ministry of thanksgiving (Neh. 12:8). His son Jeshua was also associated in this work (Neh. 12:24).

**"and of the children of Hodevah"** — Sig. *Yahweh's Honor*. Called Hodaviah in Ezra 2:40. A Levitical family whose members returned under Zerubbabel.

**"seventy and four"** — Added to the former figure computes to 29,769.

### A List of the Singers — v. 44.

*The chief singers were called "seers" (1Chr. 25:5; 2Chr. 29:30; 35:15), since their ministrations helped men like David to concentrate their minds more completely on eternal things, and thus to reveal the future more vividly (cp. 2Kgs. 3:15). This group of singers were found to be listed in the register from Babylon — thus they continued the skill and labor of their forefathers.*

### VERSE 44

**"The singers: the children of Asaph"** — Sig. *Collector*. He was of a Gershomite family, and his sons were selected by David to "prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals" (1Chr. 25:1-2). Such family groups combined to produce fraternal and profitable harmony in the service of Yahweh. The father educated his sons in the music and led them in the playing, and this skill was continued through their descendants. In this they typified the saints who will yet "sing the songs of Zion" in immortal glory (Rev. 15:3).

**"an hundred forty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 29,917.

*Variations with the Record of Ezra: These could be due to errors caused through later transcriptions by the scribes, or Ezra 2 may have been the original list drawn up in Babylon, and Nehemiah's being the final list deposited in the temple after minor adjustments. Since Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible, this variation could provide the reason for the repetition of names.*

### A List of the Porters — v. 45.

*They were originally appointed to open the doors into the outer wall which led into the Court of the Gentiles, and the east, north and south doors of the Court of the Women — for the priests opened the west and all other doors that led into the Court of Israel. The porters attended in these gates throughout the day in twenty-four courses, and as guards for the care, safety and peace of the temple (1Chr. 26:17-18), and shut them at night (ch. 9:27). They also kept the gilding around the gates clear and bright, and had charge of the treasure chambers (1Chr. 9:26; 26:20-29; 2Chr. 31:12-14).*

### VERSE 45

**"The porters: the children of Shalum"** — Sig. *Recompense; Retribution*. He was a Korhite and chief porter of the sanctuary. He returned under Zerubbabel (1Chr. 9:17, 19, 31; Ezra 2:42). He put away his foreign wife (Ezra 10:24).

**"the children of Ater"** — Sig. *To Shut Up; Maim*. An ancestor of the Family of Gate-keepers.

**"the children of Talmon"** — Sig. *Oppressor; Violent* (1Chr. 9:17; Ezra 2:42; Neh. 11:19). He retained his position of gatekeeper under Joiakim (Neh. 12:25).

**"the children of Akkub"** — Sig. *Insidious; Cunning*. A porter of the temple who was among the first to return (1Chr.

9:17; Neh. 11:19; 12:25). He assisted Ezra in expounding the Law to the people (Neh. 8:7).

**"the children of Hatita"** — Sig. *Dug Up; Furrowed*. (Ezra 2:42).

**"the children of Shobai"** — Sig. *One Who Leads Captive*.

**"an hundred thirty and eight"** — Added to the former figure computes to 30,055.

#### A List of the Nethinim — vv 46-56.

*This group of people are referred to seventeen times in Ezra and Nehemiah; though only once elsewhere (1Chr. 9:2). They occupy an important part in Israel's history, and are found continuing with the nation through its period of exile, and during the return of the captives. This list follows very closely that of Ezra 2:43-54. A few names are differently spelt, and one of Ezra's names (Akkub: ch. 2:45) is omitted.*

#### VERSE 46

**"The Nethinim"** — Sig. *Given; Dedicated*. They are described as "those whom David appointed for the service of the Levites" (Ezra 8:20), and are closely connected with the "servants of Solomon" (2:55-60), who seem to be descendants of Canaanites he used in the building of the temple (2Chr. 2:17-18), and whose duties were probably even humbler than those of the Nethinim. The Midianites (Num. 31:47) and Gibeonites (Josh. 9:23), were used for this purpose. David organised the Nethinim (Ezra 8:20), who thus seemed to be proselyted foreigners, and some of them seemed to be identified by the prince or tribe from whence they had been taken captive — such as Sisera, Rezin, Mehumim, Nephusim (cp. Ezra 2:48, 50, 53 with 1Chr. 5:19-21; 2Chr. 26:7). Holding an official, though menial, position at the temple, they were exempt from imperial taxation (Ezra 7:24). They were adopted as converted Gentiles. With enthusiasm, they accepted the covenant of Nehemiah to worship Yahweh (Neh. 10:28-29).

Some lived on Ophel, a southern prolongation of the temple hill (Neh. 3:26, 31; 11:3, 21); others lived in villages surrounding Jerusalem (Neh. 7:73; Ezra 2:70).

**"the children of Ziha"** — Sig. *Drought* (Ezra 2:43). He became ruler of the Nethinim in Jerusalem (Neh. 7:73; Ezra 2:70).

**"the children of Hashupha"** — Sig. *Nakedness* (Ezra 2:43).

**"the children of Tabbaoth"** — *Rings; Spots*. The children of Tabbaoth, Keros and Sophereth (meaning: *Children of the Rings, Weaver's Comb, and Scribal Office*: Ezra 2:43-45, 55), apparently refers to official duties in the temple to which these groups were appointed. Other names were of progenitors.

#### VERSE 47

**"The children of Keros"** — Sig. *Caught by the Ankle*. Others have it as "Weaver's Comb" (see Ezra 2:44).

**"the children of Sia"** — Sig. *Congregation*. Called "Siaha" in Ezra 2:44.

**"the children of Padon"** — Sig. *Redemption; Deliverance* (Ezra 2:44).

#### VERSE 48

**"The children of Lebana"** — Sig. *White* (as in Lebanon). See Ezra 2:45.

**"the children of Hagaba"** — Sig. *Locust*.

**"the children of Shalmal"** — Sig. *Yah is a Recompenser* (Ezra 2:46).

#### VERSE 49

**"The children of Hanan"** — Sig. *Favor*.

**"the children of Giddel"** — Sig. *Stout*.

**"the children of Gahar"** — Sig. *To Hide*.

#### VERSE 50

**"The children of Reaiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Seen* (Ezra 2:47).

**"the children of Rezin"** — Sig.

*Delight* (Ezra 2:48).

**"the children of Nekoda"** — Sig. *Distinguished* (Ezra 2:48). Names such as Nekoda, Harhur and Harsha seem to be native places of the captives (vv. 48, 51-52).

#### VERSE 51

**"The children of Gazzam"** — Sig. *Devourer*.

**"the children of Uzza"** — Sig. *Strength* (Ezra 2:49).

**"the children of Phaseah"** — Sig. *Lame*.

#### VERSE 52

**"The children of Besai"** — Sig. *Domineering*.

**"the children of Meunim"** — Sig. *From Maon*.

**"the children of Nephishesim"** — Sig. *To Scatter; Expand* (Ezra 2:49).

#### VERSE 53

**"The children of Bakbuk"** — Sig. *A Bottle*.

**"the children of Hakupha"** — Sig. *Crooked; Bent*.

**"the children of Harhur"** — Sig. *Inflammation*.

#### VERSE 54

**"The children of Bazlith"** — Sig. *A Peeling*.

**"the children of Mehida"** — Sig. *Junction* (Ezra 2:52).

**"the children of Harsha"** — Sig. *Silent; Dumb*.

#### VERSE 55

**"The children of Barkos"** — Sig. *Painter*.

**"the children of Sisera"** — Sig. *Battle Array* (Ezra 2:53).

**"the children of Tamah"** — Sig. *Astonishment* (Ezra 2:53).

#### VERSE 56

**"The children of Nezhiah"** — Sig. *Conspicuous* (Ezra 2:54).

**"the children of Hatipha"** — Sig. *Robber* (Ezra 2:54).

#### The List of Solomon's Servants — vv. 57-62.

*These perhaps were the descendants of the Canaanites that Solomon used in the building of the temple. The list that follows is nearly identical with Ezra's. A few names only are slightly different.*

#### VERSE 57

**"The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai"** — Sig. *Rowing* (Ezra 2:55).

**"the children of Sophereth"** — Sig. *Scribe; Learning* (Ezra 2:55).

**"the children of Perida"** — Sig. *Separation* (Ezra 2:55).

#### VERSE 58

**"The children of Jaala"** — Sig. *To Ascend* (Ezra 2:56).

**"the children of Darkon"** — Sig. *Bearer*.

**"the children of Giddel"** — Sig. *Stout*.

#### VERSE 59

**"The children of Shephatiah"** — Sig. *Yahweh has Judged* (Ezra 2:57).

**"the children of Hattil"** — Sig. *To Wave; Vacillate* (Ezra 2:57).

**"the children of Pochereth of Zebaim"** — Sig. *Binding (or Trap) of Gazelles*.

**"the children of Amon"** — Sig. *Faithful*.

#### VERSE 60

**"All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 30,447.

#### List of the Non-Pedigreed People of the Captivity — vv. 61-62.

*They were unable to ascertain or provide evidence of their ancestry, and there-*

fore were included following the listing of the Nethinim.

#### VERSE 61

**"And these were they which went up (also) from Tel-melah"** — Sig. Hill of Salt. Probably near the Persian Gulf.

**"Tel-haresha"** — Sig. Hill of Workmanship. An unidentified Babylonian town.

**"Cherub"** — Sig. Resembling the Majesty. Unidentified Babylonian town.

**"Addon"** — Sig. Powerful; Sovereign.

**"and Immer"** — Sig. Talkative.

**"but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel"** — These previously gloried in the flesh, but now, with the rising fortunes of Israel, wanted to reclaim their position in the nation. Zerubbabel did not know whether to permit this, so whilst he did not forbid them to return to the land, he did not allow them to act as priests until one should arise through whom Yahweh would give His decision (v. 65). Thus ecclesial discipline was exercised in the matter. They were accepted into the nation, but placed under discipline. It was a wise decision. They should not have been rejected, but the final decision rested with the priest whom Yahweh would appoint. Typically this foreshadowed the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ in whose infallible wisdom will rest the decision as to who are appointed to the position of priests.

#### VERSE 62

**"The children of Delaiah"** — Sig. Freed by Yahweh.

**"the children of Tobiah"** — Sig. Yahweh is Good (Ezra 2:60).

**"the children of Nekoda"** — Sig. Distinguished (Ezra 2:60).

**"six hundred forty and two"** — Added to the former figure computes to 31,089.

#### A List of the Priests who Despised their Calling — vv. 63-65.

See comments on subheading of v. 39. These priests had to await a divine decision as to their acceptability for the responsibility of priesthood.

#### VERSE 63

**"And of the priests: the children of Habaiah"** — Sig. Yahweh Hath Hidden.

**"the children of Koz"** — Sig. Pricking as with a Goad or Thorn. As with the others, they lost their priestly positions through inability to prove their descent (Ezra 2:61). One of his descendants, Meremoth, repaired the wall.

**"the children of Barzillai"** — Sig. Made of Iron (cp. 2Sam. 17:27).

**"which took (one) of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife and was called after their name"** — Instead of rejoicing in the fact that they were priests, they had preferred the social status of being identified with Barzillai, a wealthy and honored prince of Gilead (2Sam. 17:27). They thus disgraced the priesthood.

#### VERSE 64

**"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood"** — This was a temporary arrangement, awaiting the final decision to be given when the authority of the Urim and Thummim (v. 65) should be present.

#### VERSE 65

**"And the Tirshatha"** — The title signifies: *To Fear; Dread; Revere*. Gesenius states that it denotes the prefect, or governor, of a province of less extent than a satrapy. Nehemiah held this title (ch. 8:9; 10:1) on authority of the court of Persia, in common with that of governor (ch. 5:14; 12:26).

**"said unto them"** — See Ezra 2:63.

**"that they should not eat of the most"**

#### Urim and Thummim (ch. 7:65)

Concerning these items, which were a part of the garments of the high priest, Brother Thomas comments: "It was not a plate of metal, but a texture wrought of gold, blue, purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen. It was foursquare, and of equal sides. It was filled in with settings of precious stones; four rows of them and three in a row, and each stone set in gold. Upon these twelve stones were engraved, as upon a seal, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, thereby showing that these tribes were represented by them; so that symbolically speaking, the whole nation of Israel was contained in the square ornament, and borne upon the breast, or heart, of the high priest in the holy place. This ornament, styled *khoshen mishpat*, and in our version, 'the breastplate of judgment,' was attached to the *aiphod*, a robe called *ephod*, or the *overall*, because it was put on over all other vestments. Having prepared the four-square texture, Moses was commanded to put into it the Urim and the Thummim; i.e., the twelve precious stones. Not that the stones abstractly were the Urim and Thummim, but were indispensable to its manifestation. The Urim were the *glistering* of the stones — the *lights* refracted and reflected from their cut and polished surfaces, and developing *lights of divers colors*. These were styled *urim*, lights; and the twelve stones themselves *thummim*, fullnesses, that is, of number and measure — fulness of number, and fulness of measure; or 144,000 and 144 cubits and furlongs; because these are the perfections, or square of 12." (*Eureka*, vol. 2, p. 228).

The high priest is at the centre of all this, for *Urim and Thummim* were part of those adornments which Yahweh required him to wear on specific occasions; namely when he entered the most holy place, particularly on the Day of Atonement. The Levitical high priest typified the Lord Jesus Christ. Urim and Thummim typify the relationship between Christ and true believers. As Urim and Thummim were attached to the garments of the high priest, so true disciples become a part of the Son of God (Jn. 15:5, etc). Christ "bears the names" of the faithful (cp. Exo. 28:29), who in their turn are to reflect in their characters "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" which "shines upon them" like the Shekinah glory above the mercy seat (2Cor. 4:4; Rom. 3:24-26). In similar manner, Urim and Thummim symbolically illustrate the coming appointed time when, in their "fulness," natural Israel will be regathered to their God; when they will be reflectors of that glory through the indwelling of the Word and the outward manifestation of it in their lives. The faithful Israelites in the days of Nehemiah could only wait patiently, yet with zealous dedication to their God, for the time when "the deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" and all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). — J. Ullman.



**holy things, till there stood (up) a priest with Urim and Thummim** — The Urim and Thummim (sig. *Lights and Fulness*) was associated with the Breastplate of Judgment (Ex. 28:30), whereby the nation was able to obtain divine direction. Nehemiah awaited the advent of such an accredited priest, so that there might be an answer from God. Similarly, the ultimate decision as to who are qualified to “eat of the most holy things” (i.e., in regard to immortality), awaits the advent of the Great Priest of the future Age: the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 11:3).

**A Summary of the Whole Community: Their Substance and Gifts — vv. 66-73.**

*The whole ecclesia (Heb. qahal) is numbered, as a typical foreshadowing of the great congregation of faithful ones (the 144,000 of Rev. 7:4), who will bring their substance and gifts to the king (Mat. 25:20-23).*

**VERSE 66**

**“The whole congregation”** — Heb. *qahal*: those “called out”; thus the ecclesia.

**“together (was) forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore”** — The total numbers agree with that of Ezra, but the component parts differ. Ezra’s list could have been made up at Babylon before the final departure, and that of Nehemiah’s compiled at Jerusalem on arrival (cp. Ezra 2:64). Though the stated total of 42,360 is identical in both records, the listed names when reckoned together give in Ezra only 29,818 and in Nehemiah 31,089. However, Nehemiah mentions 1,765 persons not found in Ezra’s record, whilst Ezra lists 494 names omitted by Nehemiah. Thus:

- **Ezra = 29,818 + 1,765**  
**mentioned by Nehemiah = 31,483.**
- **Nehemiah = 31,089 + 494**  
**mentioned by Ezra = 31,483.**

But this still leaves a deficiency of 10,777 from the total of 42,360. These were

apparently members of the ten tribes, and not of Judah or Benjamin. Members of “all Israel” returned (Ezra 2:70; 6:17; 8:35), but the majority were of Judah and Benjamin, and apparently the register only took note of the men of those tribes by name.

However, some suggest that differences may have been caused by errors of transcription to the parchments by later scribes. As an example, since the number 3 is the Hebrew *gimel*, and the number 6 being the Hebrew *waw*, how easy for 3,600 to become 3,900!

**VERSE 67**

**“Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women”** — Thus a total of 49,697. This is computed by: v. 45 = 30,055, plus 392 (v. 60), 642 (v. 62), with 11,271 not listed = 42,360; then add the 7,337 here mentioned = 49,697.

**VERSE 68**

**“Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five”** — Indicative of the general poverty. One slave and one ass to about six of their number; one horse to about sixty; one camel to about a hundred; one mule to about 175. Lack of material made it difficult to maintain the effective service of the nation.

**VERSE 69**

**“(Their) camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.”**

**VERSE 70**

**“And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work”** — There is a discrepancy here in the offerings of the chiefs, compared with Ezra 2:68-69. But the computation is on a different basis. Ezra mentions only what *one* section of

the groups gave; Nehemiah records what the chiefs, the governor and “the rest of the people” (v. 72) offered. Thus the accounts vary.

**“The Tirshatha gave to the treasure”** — They gave of their “wealth” to the work! The Jews went into captivity “stripped” of wealth (the Hebrew word most commonly translated “captivity”: *shebuwth*, signifies *to be stripped bare*), but during their sojourn in Babylon God had blessed them in material benefits (cp. Deu. 8:17-18).

**“a thousand drams of gold”** — Heb. *darkemon*, the Persian Daric, or drachma,

a gold coin to the value of \$5.28 (according to the *Companion Bible*; our edition printed in the 1950s). Berkeley has: “5,000 dollars of gold”.

**“fifty basons,”** — Used in connection with sacrifices.

**“five hundred and thirty priests’ garments”** — The priests depended upon the people for their sustenance, and this was a means of assistance.

**VERSE 71**

**“And (some) of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two**

**How Many Supporters?**

How many of those on this particular ecclesial “roll” (ch. 7:70) were involved in the work of the Truth in its various avenues of labor? Some of the chief of the fathers “gave unto the work.” All did not give their support. A “portion” of them (Roth.) did nothing. Those who claim to be members of “the commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12) are required to face their obligations and responsibilities, and honor them accordingly. All such dutifulness is related to self-sacrifice in service to Yahweh. Many are in a position to effectively assist the work of the Truth financially. However, all can willingly offer to labor in the service of the Great King, in a variety of ways. David’s exhortation is noteworthy: “Moreover, *because I have set my affection to the house of my God*, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house...” (1Chr. 29:3). The spirit shown by David was the same as that required by the Israelites in making contributions for the building of the tabernacle: “And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the sons of Israel, that they take for me a heave offering, *of every man whose heart urgeth him* shall ye take my heave offering... So shall they make for me a sanctuary, and I will make my habitation in their midst...” (Ex. 25:1-8). Paul exhorted the Corinthian brethren: “Now therefore perform the doing of it; that *as there was a readiness to will*, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first *a willing mind*, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2Cor. 8:11-12). The scriptures abound with evidence showing that those who would serve the living God must do so out of a love for Him and for His Truth, and not as the result of mechanical ritual or compulsion. The guiding principle is: “Faith, which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Where this disposition is absent, where there is no “willing mind” nor a “faith” that is motivated by “love”, there will be no true or faithful service to Yahweh; and the religious worship offered by such an individual will be of no benefit to himself or to God. — *J. Ullman*.



**thousand and two hundred pound of silver**” — Heb. *maneh*, generally a measure of 100 shekels (cp. 1Kgs. 10:16 with 2Chr. 9:16), although in Ezek. 45:12 sixty shekels are indicated. Berkeley has “77,000 dollars of silver”. From this Hebrew word came the Latin *Moneta*, and from thence the English *Money*.

The silver was significant as an element of the “redemption tribute” required to be paid to the treasury by every Israelite (Exo. 30:13) to emphasize that all, whether rich or poor, were brought to a common level in the matter of redemption.

#### VERSE 72

**“And (that) which the rest of the people gave (was) twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests’ garments”** — As in the days of Moses, the common people gave of their substance and possessions for the work of the Truth (Ex. 25:2; 35:21; cp. 2Cor. 9:7)

#### VERSE 73

**“So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and (some) of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities”** — At this point the account of Neh. 7 should conclude the listing of the document he found (v. 5; compare Ezra 2:70). Having completed the account of what happened in the sixth month of Elul (Neh. 6:15), and transcribed the register which he had discovered, Nehemiah proceeds to relate events belonging to the seventh month.

**“and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel (were) in their cities”** — This part of the verse should form the preamble to chapter 8, according to the R.V. and Septuagint Versions, to introduce the events of the great gathering in Jerusalem, concerning which Nehemiah now writes. The seventh month (Tishri, also called Ethanim, approximately Sept-Oct) was a significant period in the Jewish religious year. It was the time of the early

rains, providing the opportunity for plowing, speaking of the preparation of the fields for the sowing of crops. This was also reflected in the events of chapter 8, which corresponded to the foundation of the nation’s understanding of the Law (the early rain), and its response in the acceptance of the preparation of the spiritual ground.

It was also the month of the Feast of Trumpets (1st day), *Day of Atonement* (10th day), *Feast of Tabernacles* with the *Firstfruits of Wine and Oil* (15th day). Thus it paralleled the first month in its significant festivals, and represents the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, when *judgment and rejoicing* will be experienced, and the kingdom will be established — the antitype of the final “new rains and plowing” that will ultimately bring the harvest of the millennium to the glory of God.

Thus this introduction to Nehemiah ch. 8 puts the setting of the events in the important prophetic calendar of the months.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A REMARKABLE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN THE YEAR OF RELEASE

The people enjoy an outstanding “Back to the Bible” movement, revealing: (1) a sincere reading and expounding of the Word; (2) a melting of hearts and conviction of sin under the impact of the Word; (3) fasting and prayer, confession of sin, and a recognition of God’s justice and mercy; (4) a commitment to follow in the path of obedience.

*“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised); And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:22-25).*

**N**EHEMIAH’S religious reform with the people of the restoration was effected in conjunction with an important and esteemed elder colleague. If Ezra had earlier returned to Persia (as we believe), Nehemiah could possibly have applied to king Artaxerxes that he be sent back to the land to assist him in the important work that now was needed. Certainly Nehemiah could not have obtained a better assistant for the needs of the times, than this great pioneer of faith. Nehemiah was a layman, and could not command the absolute respect of either priests or nation in religious matters, that a priest would receive. Eliashib was deeply involved with the enemies of Nehemiah (ch. 13:4, 28), and not likely to give him much support. Ezra was the most distinguished and the elder priest of the day, being a member of the high priestly family (Ezra 7:1-5), high in the favor and confidence of the Persian king, eminent above all others for his learning (vv. 6, 10) and who possessed an outstanding personal influence amongst the people (Ezr. 10:1-16). His support would permit Nehemiah to effect the reforms he saw necessary. Ezra probably returned just prior to the seventh month when the people were commanded to gather together (see Neh. 8:1).



The whole program recorded in Nehemiah 8 was doubtless carefully prepared in its details. The leading part was assigned to Ezra. His age, priestly character, famed learning, as well as his prestige in the nation, enabled him to speak on religious matters with profound knowledge and understanding. His mastery of the Law enabled him to read and expound it superbly, and so impress it upon the people's consciences as no other person living at that time could have done.

Ezra would have read in the spirit of his greater antitype, who took the scroll in the synagogue of Nazareth and read aloud from the prophets, so that "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him... And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Lk. 4:20-22). This greatest of all teachers gave real significance and meaning to his reading of the Word, and thereby honored his Father.

The weight of Ezra's authority with the priests and Levites of Jerusalem more than counterbalanced any opposition that Eliashib might have attempted, whilst his reappearance in a public capacity after an absence of probably twelve years would lend the charm of surprise and interest to the proceedings, which now attracted great attention.

#### The Public Reading of the Law

— vv. 1-8.

*This commenced the day's proceedings. It is appropriate that the Word is first opened as the whole ecclesia gathers together; this being reminiscent of earlier times when Moses gathered the people before the mountain of judgment (Sinai), to deliver to them the law of God. Those same words are now to provide a new life for the people who had returned from exile.*

#### VERSE 1

"And" — The record of this chapter should commence with the last two clauses of ch. 7:73, as in the Septuagint: "When the seventh month came...", and Nehemiah now describes the events that occurred in that important month.

"all the people" — It was important that the whole community be involved in the work of developing the spiritual awareness necessary to effect a true reformation.

Similarly, in an antitypical sense, "all the people" (2Cor. 5:10) will be gathered

to the judgment seat of Christ, in order to hear the Word of Life proclaimed as the basis of the new age of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:20).

"gathered themselves together" —

This was doubtless by command (cp. Heb. 10:25). The public reading and instruction of the Law was required in sabbatical years, and this was evidently one such (cp. v. 18 with Deu. 31:10). It was to be a time of joyous association, when sadness was out of place.

"as one man" — Symbolic of the unity that should be manifested in the ecclesia (Eph. 4:3, 13), and for which the Lord Jesus prayed (Jn. 17:11). The apostles urged that the ecclesia be "of one accord" (a phrase that reoccurs throughout the Acts: e.g., 1:14; 2:1, 46, etc), as indicative of the unity upon which the Truth is based.

In the Age to come that unity will be revealed in "the Man of the One" (Dan. 10:5), as the saints are separated from the ungodly through the process of the judgment (1Pet. 4:18), and are "gathered together" with their Master in immortality

#### Lacking the Fulness of Unity (ch. 8:1)

The opening words of this chapter appear to indicate that the entire population of the city and surrounding areas came together for the purpose of hearing the Word of God. The phrase "*all the people*" obviously refers to the great majority: all who supported the policy of Nehemiah.

But what of the dissidents? It is quite evident that Nehemiah intended to rebuild the city walls and then reinvigorate the people spiritually through the power of the Word. He was not a man of compromise; nor was he one to minimize the requirements of the Word or comply with any pressure to lower the standards of the Truth. There were those who did not agree with Nehemiah's resolute and decisive stand (ch. 5:1-8; 6:9-12, 17-19; 13:4-11, 15-18, 23-28). They maintained an attitude of smouldering rebellion against Nehemiah and his faithful ways. It has ever been so. Would Cain accept the straight path of the Truth which his brother Abel tried to teach him? Rather, he rose up and killed him. Would Absalom acknowledge that his father was Yahweh's anointed? On the contrary, he tried to seize the throne and destroy David. How many similar examples may be brought to mind? No man stood more firmly for the purity of the Truth than the Son of God. Yet no man was more savagely pressured and rejected for his stand.

Though it caused Nehemiah considerable grief and stress, he maintained his integrity, resisting the pressures brought upon him by his adversaries. In this, he would have won Paul's unstinting approbation: "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (1Tim. 4:16). — J. Ullman.

The word for "man" in this verse is the Heb. *ish*: *upright, great*.

"into the street" — Heb. *rechob*: *a width; avenue*, from a root word meaning *to broaden*. Thus it indicates a broadspace, or city square, where the people gathered together. It represents the place of assembly, such as the meeting places at which believers gather today, or the broad valley at the foot of Sinai where the seat of judgment will be established following the return of Christ, and to which all the responsible will be gathered before the Master (Mat. 25:32; 2Cor. 5:10).

"that (was) before the water gate" — Towards the east, and about 500 metres south of the temple area. It was at this place that the Nethinim repaired their section of the wall (ch. 3:26).

"and they spake" — There was a

readiness by the people to hear the Law. They asked for instruction! They were not content with existing conditions, but desired better things, and sought help from God's Word, as did the community in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37). Such a willingness to *seek* the Truth is a commendable attitude, and recognises that opportunities to understand the Word are limited (Isa. 55:6; Psa. 32:6).

"unto Ezra the scribe" — Described in Ezra 7:6 as "a ready scribe," being experienced and skilful in the Law. It was announced that Ezra would be present, and a general request was made that he read and expound the Law. In doing so Ezra showed that he recognised the importance of the priest's responsibility to ensure that instruction in the things of God was given freely to the people (cp. Mal. 2:7).

This is the first mention of Ezra in the book of Nehemiah, thus providing positive proof that the two men of God were contemporary. It is probable that he returned to the palace of Artaxerxes having completed his mission of building and reform (Ezra 10). It is likely that he did not return to Jerusalem until receiving news that work was well under way in rebuilding the city walls and gates. He may have arranged his journey to arrive in the city and appear before the people at a great moment such as this, that they might all be spiritually encouraged.

In an age when it is no longer common to witness respect for older brethren and sisters, neither for their wisdom nor their experiences of life in the Truth which have taught them so much, or even merely for their age, it is delightful to read that the people chose the aged Ezra requesting that he lead them in the reading and exposition of the Word of God on this eventful occasion. His mind would have been in harmony with that of David: "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day... Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!" (Psa. 119:97, 18).

**"to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Yahweh had commanded to Israel"** — Yahweh required regular assemblies around the Law in the place in which His Name was to be honored (Deu. 31:11). See: 2Chr. 34:15; Isa. 8:20; Mal. 4:4. It was now appropriate, having returned to the city of their forefathers, that the people should seek to honor the "book of the law" which constituted them the people of Yahweh.

It is the Word that lays the basis for righteousness (Jn. 12:48; Heb. 10:25), and at the judgment seat the "Word made Flesh" will "open the books" (Dan. 7:10), to reveal the will and purpose of the Deity in individual examination. Those who have "heard the Word which Yahweh commanded to Israel" and have obeyed its instruction, will have their names entered

into the "book of life" (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12).

## VERSE 2

**And Ezra the priest** — Notice the change of title, from that of "scribe" (v. 1) to "priest". The scribe records and interprets the law; the priest expounds and applies its instructions amongst the people. It was the priest's duty to teach the nation concerning the principles and meaning of the Word of God (Deu. 17:11; 33:10; Mal. 2:7). Ezra immediately responded to that call. He did not say, "The law is difficult, hard to be understood, and is reserved for the learned." At once, he opened it for the people, and fulfilled the terms of his position.

**"brought the law before the congregation"** — Heb. *qahal*, which is translated "ecclesia" in the Greek Septuagint Version. David used the same word in his challenge to the Sin-power typified in Goliath (1Sam. 17:47, translated "assembly"), and demonstrated that the company assembled in the valley of Elah should have carefully pondered the scene before them. Now in the days of Nehemiah, the whole ecclesia gathered before Ezra as a united group to hear the Law expounded. What an encouraging and stimulating spirit! How the hearts of faithful Ezra and Nehemiah must have thrilled to the enthusiastic response of their contemporaries. It provides a picture of the kingdom Age, when all will hear the law of Yahweh proceeding from Jerusalem and when the Word will be willingly accepted (Isa. 2:2-3).

**"both of men and women, and all that could hear"** — It was a serious and solemn moment. Restless children were excluded, to permit the greatest concentration by the responsible members of the community.

**"with understanding"** — This includes all, whether young or older, that were able to respond to, and could perceive the instruction of the Law. The Hebrew *biyn* means *to separate mentally*,

*to distinguish*. All present were expected to exercise their minds and perception on the matter presented. Notice the emphasis on this word in this chapter; it is constantly repeated to indicate the importance of understanding: vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 ("taught"), 12. It was essential that the people carefully ponder each law given, and apply it in a discerning way to their own circumstances. (A different word is used in v. 13). Paul thus teaches that the Word of God is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), and thus divides between that which is "soulish" (the mind of the flesh), and that which is "spiritual" (the wisdom of God).

**"upon the first day of the seventh month"** — This was a memorial sabbath (Lev. 23:24) in preparation for the impending Day of Atonement on the 10th day. The seventh month was originally called *Ethanim*, and was established as the first month of the civil year: thus a new beginning. The month became known as *Tishri* in the Babylonian captivity. It occurs about September/October. The month commenced with a memorial blowing of trumpets which called upon the people to awaken to their spiritual responsibilities, and to prepare them for the Day of Atonement.

The blowing of these trumpets typified the symbolic trumpets of the Apocalypse, that are sent to awaken the generation of the last days to the approaching judgment (cp. 1Thes. 4:16), and the beginning of the millennium: the first day of the "new year" of joy for all mankind.

## VERSE 3

**"And he read therein before the street"** — The RV has: "the broad place", as in verse 1, which was a large open place on the eastern side of the city.

**"that (was) before the water gate"**

— This probably led to the life-giving waters from the nearby spring of Gihon and surrounding wells — a symbol for the refreshment of God's Word (cp. Jn. 4:14).

**"from the morning until midday"** — From daylight to noon: some six hours of constant reading, listening and meditating! Thus Ezra began as soon as it was light enough. The reading appears to have been varied by occasional exposition (vv. 7, 8).

This six hour period represents the 6,000 years of mankind's opportunity, during which the light of Truth has been expressed in different circumstances, and the declared Will of Yahweh revealed (cp. Jn. 1:1; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

**"before the men and the women, and those that could understand"** — Heb. *biyn*, *to separate mentally (or distinguish)*; thus to perceive the importance and significance of the words read. See comments v. 2.

**"and the ears of all the people (were attentive) unto the book of the law"** — Though there is no word in the Hebrew for "attentive," the sense is obvious: "the ears of all the people were to the book." In this is reflected the faithful obedience of the willing servant whose ear was pierced to illustrate his eager submission to a loved master (Deu. 15:17), and by which the servant was typically "attached" to the house in which he desired to serve (cp. Heb. 3:6). This principle was perfectly displayed in the attitude of the Master: Psa. 40:6.

## VERSE 4

**"And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood"** — The word "pulpit" is the Hebrew *migdal*, which refers to a platform. This raised Ezra above the assembly of people, enabling all to see and hear the aged and revered priest and scribe whose very personality and presence were an exhortation to those who knew what he had done for people in the past. He stood before them as a great manifestation of faithfulness. Standing thus before them,

with the Word of Yahweh in his hand, he exemplified the study and practice of the Truth, representing what every individual in the ecclesia should be (Ezra 7:10). He thus typifies the Lord Jesus Christ, who, at his future coronation, will appear elevated above the people in status and authority (Phil. 2:10-11), that he might represent the Word in both nature and wisdom.

**"which they had made for the purpose"** — Careful preparation was made that everything would be in order and appropriate for this important activity. Similarly in the labor of the Truth, believers participate in preparing "a platform" of faith and works that the Lord might ultimately be elevated before all mankind (Rev. 5:9-10; Phil. 2:10-11). The Master prayed for the time when he will be manifested in glory, with his immortalised associates at his side (Jn. 17:21-22), as was typified in the elevation of the companions of Ezra.

**"and beside him"** — A number of priests and Levites were carefully selected to assist Ezra in the work of bringing *The Word* to the people. There were fourteen men in all: six on Ezra's right side, the Scribe in the centre, and seven on his left side. In Bible numerics, 14 speaks of double perfection (2x7), and prefigures the future glorification of the Lord Jesus, together with his companions taken out from among Jews and Gentiles (cp. the two olive trees of Zech. 4:11-14).

**"stood"** — Together the names of these men reveal the joy of association with the priestly scribe. There are six on the right whose names describe *Present Benefits*: the needs of humanity. There are seven on the left, whose names typify *Future Blessings*, that will be granted to those who receive immortality. Thus, the people gathered in the great square in Jerusalem, would observe in the men standing with Ezra the principle that Yahweh offers "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1Tim. 4:8), the latter outweighing the former (indicat-

ed by the seven on the left hand of Ezra, compared with six on the right side).

**"Mattithiah"** — Sig. *Gift of Yahweh*.

**"and Shema"** — Sig. *That which is Heard*.

**"and Anaiah"** — Sig. *Answer of Yah*.

**"and Urijah"** — Sig. *Illumination of Yah*.

**"and Hilkiyah"** — Sig. *Inheritance of Yah*.

**"and Maaseiah"** — Sig. *Activity of Yah*.

**"on his right hand"** — Together the first six names present the principle: "*The Gift of Yahweh (is) That which is Heard. Yahweh has Answered (our prayers). He has given Illumination and light; He has provided an Inheritance; He invites our Activity in the labor of the Truth.*"

**"and on his left hand"** — In the centre was Ezra: *The Helper*, typifying the Lord Jesus Christ in the centre of his faithful community. He has on left and right those whose names present the joy of co-operative labor in the Truth. This is the antithesis of the circumstances of his crucifixion. The Master had on the left and right two thieves (Mat. 27:38), who represent those "crucified with him," but who are of two different classes: those saved because they have acknowledged his atoning work, and those who will be rejected because they, though sharing in his sacrifice, "mock" at the principles of sacrifice, and show themselves unworthy of the "joy of the Lord". Such find no relief to their sufferings at the end.

On Ezra's left hand are seven men whose names typify the promise of the Covenant: *Future Blessings*. Together the names reveal: "*Yah has Ransomed (us) through His unique Power (el), to be Kings Appointed by Him, and to be Enriched, for He is a Considerate Judge, and He will Remember (His covenant) to Completely Restore and Unite us to Him.*"

**"Pedaiah"** — Sig. *Ransomed by Yah*.

**"and Mishael"** — Sig. *Who is Like El (power)*.

**"and Malchiah"** — Sig. *King Appointed by Yah*.

**"and Hashum"** — Sig. *Enriched*.

**"and Hashbadana"** — Sig. *Considerate Judge*.

**"Zechariah"** — Sig. *Remembered by Yah*.

**"and Meshullam"** — Sig. *Completely Restored; United; Allied*.

## VERSE 5

**"And Ezra opened the book"** — It was a dramatic moment! The aged priest, unrolling the ancient and beloved scroll, revealed his ability to honor and expound the Law. At that signal all the people stood up in respect for the Law of Yahweh, as it was to be read. Consider the circumstances. All were concentrating upon the matter in hand. There were no comfortable, padded seats, no air-conditioned halls, no noisy, distracting fans — all such as are designed for fleshly comfort, but not for real concentration of the mind! There, under the bright Judean sun, with only the blue canopy of heaven above, the people stood for six hours, to listen attentively to all that was said.

**"in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up"** — They stood in reverence of the occasion, and to pray for a divine blessing upon the activity in which they were about to engage.

## VERSE 6

**"And Ezra blessed"** — Heb. *barak*: to kneel; by implication to bless God as an act of adoration. In this action, Ezra foreshadowed the action of the Lord Jesus, who acknowledged his Father as the source and conveyer of all blessings (Lk. 11:2).

**"Yahweh, the great God"** — When combined together the divine Name (*Yahweh*) and this title (*Elohim*) indicate: *He Who Will Be [manifested] in the Mighty Ones [of Glory]*. The experiences of the

nation since their deliverance from Babylon and the guidance provided in the work of Ezra and Nehemiah had been evidence of the divine blessing. In such circumstances, the unseen work of the elohistic host could be perceived (cp. Heb. 1:13).

**"And all the people answered, Amen, Amen"** — The word *amen* comes from a root meaning *to be faithful; truth*. It not only expresses acceptance of what is declared ("so be it"), but also identification with its import, compliance with its principles, and absolute confidence in the fulfilment of all declared. By its use the people indicated that they would respond to the blessings of Yahweh in ways that would honor His Name. In Isa. 65:16, the word is translated "truth", and appears in context of the blessings to be enjoyed in the millennium (Rev. 3:14). Mankind will then acknowledge the "*Elohim of the Amen*", "because former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes." Hence, the "God of the Amen" is revealed in the declaration of Truth and righteousness, and in the willing response by His people (Isa. 16:5; Zech. 8:8; cp. Psalms 40:10, where the word "truth" [Heb. *emeth*] comes from the same root *aman*).

Thus, as the people responded to the introduction of Ezra, the two *amens* would echo loudly through the half-built city and valleys of Jerusalem. They testified to the enthusiasm and willingness of the nation in Jerusalem to acknowledge the divine goodness.

**"with lifting up their hands"** — The uplifted arms represented an appeal to heaven, symbolised by the ascending incense in the temple (Psa. 134:2; Lam. 3:41; 1Tim. 2:8; Heb. 12:12). A hush followed, as each head was bowed in humility and each understanding heart communed with Yahweh in silent prayer.

**"and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Yahweh with (their) faces to the ground"** — An act of humility, in which the people acknowledged their

weakness and, with "faces to the ground", their relationship to mortality.

Following this time of prayer, the reading commenced (v. 3). Scattered throughout the crowd were thirteen Levites to assist in the activity. Their task appears to have been to repeat and explain the words read by Ezra when his voice was not strong enough to carry over the distance (v. 8). Any questions were answered quietly and on the spot by these Levites moving amongst the audience.

Their work was later continued by the apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus (1Tim. 5:17), upon which the ecclesial foundation was established (Eph. 2:20).

#### VERSE 7

**"Also"** — Whilst thirteen men were with Ezra on the platform, a further thirteen mingled with the people to help them to understand. In this they were like the followers of the apostles who carried on the work (Jn. 17:20). The following names spell the story: *"Yah will Save, Build you up and cause you to Shine with Glory. He will Strengthen you as His Right Hand, so that you will Overthrow the evil and enter your Rest. As His Bride, you will receive Praise, and will Enter upon His Work. If you are Lacking in anything, He will Endow you in His Condescending Kindness, and will Separate you unto Himself."*

**"Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yah Saves*.

**"and Bani"** — Sig. *Built*.

**"and Sherebiah"** — Sig. *Shining of Yah* (from *to heat*, thus, caused to glow).

**"Jamin"** — Sig. *The Right Hand* (as stronger).

**"Akkub"** — Sig. *Insidious* (from a root, "to grab by the feet").

**"Shabbethai"** — Sig. *Restful* (from the word "sabbath").

**"Hodijah"** — Sig. *Praise of Yah* (feminine of "Judah").

**"Maaseiah"** — Sig. *Activity of Yah*.

**"Kelita"** — Sig. *Lacking; Stunted; Maiming* (thus, "lacking arts").

**"Azariah"** — Sig. *Helped of Yah*.

**"Jozabad"** — Sig. *Endowed of Yah*.

**"Hanan"** — Sig. *To Condescend* (in kindness).

**"Pelaiah"** — Sig. *Separated by Yah* (i.e., distinguished).

**"and"** — Rotherham omits this word, so limiting the number to the thirteen identified.

**"the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people (stood) in their place"** — Rotherham has "remaining in their place." There was no expression of discomfort over the extremely trying conditions of the day, and of maintaining attention to what was being presented. The people were so intent upon their worship that they remained still, out of respect and reverence.

#### VERSE 8

**"So they read"** — Heb. *quara'*: to call out to. It was not a mere cursory reading of words, but letting the words speak in exposition and exhortation. Compare the Greek word for "exhortation": *paraklesis*, to call to one's side. It has the sense of being intimately connected with, and alongside of, the words presented.

**"in the book in the law of God distinctly"** — The RV margin has "with an interpretation." The Hebrew is *meporash*, which is equivalent to the word *mepharrash* used in Persia to denote the procedure when an official read an Aramaic document in the vernacular of the province. This suggests that some who had returned could not understand Hebrew correctly. *Meporash* is from *parash*: to expand; separate; disperse; specify; wound. The Levites analysed, emphasized and expounded at length, explaining the significance of every word (cp. Hab. 2:2; Acts 8:30-35; 2Tim. 3:15-16; Heb. 4:12).

**"and gave the sense"** — The Hebrew *vesom sechel* signifies to put weight to it. They showed its value and relevance in individual and national circumstances.

**"and caused (them) to understand"** — The Heb. *biyn* means to separate men-

### Sound Exposition (ch. 8:8)

The law of Yahweh was read "distinctly, with the correct sense," so that the people would "understand." The word rendered "distinctly" is translated "with an interpretation" (Roth., RV mg., etc). In effect, this signifies verse by verse exposition. The Hebrew word for "sense" implies intelligence; hence the thorough exposition was presented with a sound intellectual understanding of the Law. This is in contrast to the platitudinous, flesh-pleasing claptrap that is set before people by men who are "imperfectly acquainted with the teaching concerning righteousness" (Heb. 5:13, Wey.). Hence, these faithful priests "caused" the people to "understand." Their eyes were opened to the living reality of divine Truth, and they were enabled to comprehend its meaning and the way in which it should be applied in their lives. As a result, they were deeply moved (v. 9). What is the point of expounding the Word of God to the people unless this objective is aimed for and achieved? Mere talk is often meaningless or designed to simply play upon the emotions, rather than glorify God through His Word. Brethren who desire to enlighten and edify must be aware of their responsibilities and must be equipped for such labor. They must be sound students of the Scriptures and possess a well-developed comprehension of the Word and a mature understanding thereof. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1Pet. 4:11). This was the standard set and required by our latter-day pioneer brethren. It should be maintained today. If ecclesias are not consistently "fed" with a healthy diet of the Word of God, they will languish and develop spiritual malnutrition. The results of such mediocre and irresponsible attention to the needs of ecclesias may well prove disastrous. — *J. Ullman*.

*tally; to distinguish*. See note in v. 2 on this repetitive word. The people were encouraged to develop a perception of these matters, and so gain a spiritual mind (Phil. 2:5). By this means they were "instructed in the law" (Rom. 2:18).

**"the reading"** — Heb. *miqreh*: something called out; a rehearsal. It is translated "calling" in Num. 10:2, with regard to the sounding of the trumpets. This reading went on all morning (Neh. 8:3) so that the result was profound: v. 9. A taste for spiritual things was engendered in the people, so that they gathered in a similar manner the next day (v. 13).

#### The People Mourned, but were Instructed to Rejoice — vv. 9-12.

*Smitten by their own sinfulness and the realization that they had neglected the law of God, the people, like those on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37) gave themselves over to sadness and grief. But it was now time to appreciate the great privilege of divine forgiveness and deliverance, for the Day of Tabernacles was approaching!*

#### VERSE 9

**"And Nehemiah, which (is) the Tirshatha"** — Note the margin: "the governor", and see notes on ch. 7:65; Ezra 2:63. Ezra having completed his commission to instruct the people in the law, Nehemiah now directs the community to the "glad release" that their sorrow would introduce. In this both Ezra and Nehemiah foreshadow the first and second advents of the Lord Jesus Christ: Ezra as *"the Word made Flesh"* (Jn. 1:14), who declared the saving message to the people, and urged them to respond in joy and understanding; Nehemiah

as *"the Resurrection and the Life"* (Jn. 11:25), who led the people to "newness of life" and the enjoyment of the rewards of willing obedience.

**"and Ezra the priest the scribe"** — Both titles found in vv. 1 and 2 are now combined together, to indicate the position and respect in which this great statesman and spiritual leader was held. He both spoke forth the Word, and mediated on behalf of the nation in their worship before Yahweh.

**"and the Levites that taught the people"** — See 2Chr. 35:3. The word "taught" repeats the Heb. *biyn* (cp. v. 2), signifying to *separate and discern*: thus not only to hear, but also to understand.

**"said unto all the people, This day"** — This was evidently the Day of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24) in a sabbatical year of release (cp. v. 18 with Deu. 31:10), so that sadness was out of place (Psa. 81:3). The past was to be forgotten, and life began anew. In this sense they were typically *"born of the spirit"* (Jn. 3:6), and represented those ultimately to participate in the ceremonies of the millennium.

**"(is) holy unto Yahweh your God; mourn not, nor weep"** — Such mourning as may be experienced in the present day of self-examination and distress, caused by sin, is limited (Mat. 5:4). They were now to rejoice in God's mercy and look ahead (Phi. 3:13-14).

**"For all the people wept"** — They were affected by a consciousness of their transgressions which the reading and contemplation of the law had awakened (Acts 2:37). The impact of the Word was overwhelming, resulting in a great emotional reaction. Important as it was to express such emotion, it was now incongruous in view of the opening year and the prospect of the future. The exhortation of the leaders was to learn from the past, and work for the future (Phi. 3:13).

**"when they heard the words of the law"** — These words not only drew their attention to the solemnity of Atonement,

but the reason for such self-examination: the approaching joy of Tabernacles (Deu. 16:14).

#### VERSE 10

**"Then he said unto them, Go your way"** — They were directed to the paths of happiness and joy under the good hand of the governor.

**"eat the fat"** — Heb. *mashman*: a rich dish, from *shaman*, to shine (a different word from ch. 9:25). It thus relates to the great blessings from heaven provided for those who seek Yahweh in faith (Isa. 55:1-3). The exhortation is to make the most of opportunities and benefits which are provided by the beneficent hand of Providence. The word is translated "fatness" in Gen. 27:28, 39. Antitypically this invitation relates to the great joy of immortality, the ultimate divine blessing (Mat. 19:29).

**"and drink the sweet, and send portions"** — Heb. *manah*: something weighed out; a ration. Thus a selection of gifts put aside for those less fortunate.

**"unto them for whom nothing is prepared"** — In rejoicing, they had to remember the poor (Deu. 26:11-13; Phi. 4:4; Isa. 58:7), and thus make the poor partakers of their joy (Deu. 16:14). Antitypically it foreshadows the conferring of knowledge and assistance that we have received from Yahweh to others in the millennium.

**"for (this) day (is) holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry"** — Repeating the previous instruction, for emphasis. A foretaste of the kingdom (Rev. 21:4). The word "Lord" is the Heb. *adon*: ruler, master.

**"for the joy of Yahweh"** — Problems are best solved or forgotten by a quiet contemplation of Yahweh's Word, which is a "stronger tower" than even city walls (cp. Lk. 24:32). Even though we may need to weep because of present circumstances, we are assured that for those whose trust is in Yahweh, "joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

**"is your strength"** — Heb. *ma'owz*: a fortified place; thus, a tower. Rotherham has: "a defence; refuge." We can safely rest within God's strength which is available and adequate for every need (Psa. 28:7-8; 2Cor. 8:2; 12:8-9; Phi. 3:4).

#### VERSE 11

**"So the Levites stilled"** — Rotherham: "were quieting." Moving through the crowd, the Levites encouraged the people, stilling their emotions of grief, and pointing to the joy of the occasion.

This will probably be the duty of the Elohim at the judgment seat of the Lord, when his saints are confronted with their unworthiness, and recognise the rightness of divine judgment over sin. It was the experience of Daniel who typically enacted his death, resurrection and judgment: Dan. 10:16.

This will also be the work of the saints first with Israel (Zec. 12:11-13:1), and then with the Gentiles (Jer. 16:19), so that all mankind will manifest repentance, as a basis for divine approval and acceptance.

**"all the people, saying, Hold your peace"** — To guard against uttering words ill-suited to such a holy and joyful day (cp. Rev. 21:4).

**"for the day (is) holy; neither be ye grieved"** — Emphasizing the joy of the occasion.

#### VERSE 12

**"And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth"** — Rotherham has: "great rejoicing." This was not because they were saved from captivity, nor because they had completed the wall, nor having achieved peace — all being a cause for rejoicing — but because they understood the Word (Psa. 147:1, 12-13, 19). They realized the greater blessings of harmony with Yahweh through the Word He has given.

**"because they had understood"** — Heb. *biyn*, to separate; distinguish. The

perception of Yahweh's wisdom which separated righteousness from sin, brought sorrow from the recognition of human failing, but also joy in the deliverance provided (cp. Isa. 19:8-12; Psa. 119:14, 16, 72, 97, 103-104, 111, 127, 128, 130, 171, 174; Pro. 2:10-11; 24:13-14; Jer. 15:16; Lk. 24:32).

**"the words that were declared unto them"** — The words of truth were the basis of their happiness. This continued for the whole day (cp. Psa. 119:97).

#### Ezra Instructs the Leaders — vv. 13-15.

*An ignorant community does not assist the development of the Truth (cp. Isa. 43:27; Jer. 2:8; 23:1). Therefore it was important that the leading brethren be familiar with the fundamental principles of the Law, and now Ezra ensures that they fully understand what is required, so that they could become "teachers in word and doctrine" (1Tim. 5:17), as will the saints in the kingdom (Isa. 30:20; Jer. 3:15). Notice the three developments: • A meeting is convened: v. 13; • A discovery is made: vv. 14-15; • Obedience is rendered: vv. 16-18.*

#### VERSE 13

**"And on the second day"** — Their taste of good things of divine instruction had induced in them a desire for more (Psa. 119:97). Antitypically, this "second day" reflects the benefits and glory of the second advent of the Lord (Heb. 1:6).

**"were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites"** — Evidently a more select gathering of the elders to ascertain what practical applications of the Law should be implemented. The apostles of the Lord were similarly instructed in spiritual matters, and authorized to take such words to the people (Mat. 19:28; Jn. 17:20).

**"unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law"** — The Heb. for "understand" is *sakal*: to

consider; to make *circumspect*. Compare Isa. 41:20; Psa. 41:1. This is a different word from that found elsewhere in this chapter (*biyn*: to distinguish, as in vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 12). The leaders were expected not only to "distinguish" and "separate" the principles of the Word, but also to carefully meditate therein, and to reflect it in their lives. By that means they were empowered to put the people on the "strait and narrow path" of righteousness, and thereby to "make circumspect".

#### VERSE 14

**"And they found"** — See Pro. 25:12. A study class was undertaken under the leadership of Ezra, *"The Helper."* The class was instructive, with careful attention being given to every "jot and tittle" of the inspired Oracles (Mat. 5:18), so that those assembled were able to perceive the important principles of the Law.

**"written in the law which Yahweh had commanded by Moses"** — See Lev. 23:34-42; Deu. 16:13-15, etc. In addition to his divine begetting, it was the "written" Word that enabled the Master to reject the evil suggestions of the tempter in the wilderness (see Mat. 4:4, 7, 10). God's people should always study what is "written," rather than the "traditions" and comments of men made without the sound basis of the Word (Mt. 15:3, 6; Col. 2:8).

**"that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month"** — Apparently this ordinance had been neglected while the nation was in exile, but was now reinstated. The feast was that of Tabernacles, originally established when the people were delivered from Egypt to experience the joy and liberty of God's overshadowing care in the wilderness (Lev. 23:34; Deu. 16:13). It was typical of the kingdom. In the "booth-dwellings" they were taught to rely upon Yahweh for protection and shelter, and to remember that the present life is temporal.

In the kingdom, however, the temple to be established on Mt. Zion will be in

the form of "booths," for arches in the outer wall will represent the boughs of trees, and upon the pillars palm trees will be featured (Eze. 40:26).

#### VERSE 15

**"And that they should publish"** — The Septuagint adds: "and sound with trumpets... in their cities and in Jerusalem. And Ezra said, Go forth to the mountains."

**"and proclaim"** — There is no scriptural instruction to make such a specific proclamation, but merely to announce the fact that the impending feast should be made known (Lev. 23:4). Doubtless that is what is meant here, and this verse records the way it was done.

**"in all their cities"** — In order to make all aware of the requirement. In the future there will be a general proclamation throughout the world, of the presence of Christ as monarch, and an instruction to accept his will (Rev. 14:6).

**"and in Jerusalem"** — The place of Yahweh's Name (Deu. 16:16; Psa. 132:13-14). It will be from Jerusalem that the law will go forth to all mankind in the millennium (Isa. 2:2-4).

**"saying, Go forth unto the mount"** — i.e., "the hill country." This indicated the mountains "round about Jerusalem," (Psa. 125:2) and particularly the Mount of Olives. This was previously a place of offence (2Chron. 21:11), but will be turned into a scene of joy (Jer. 17:26; 32:44; 33:13).

**"and fetch"** — The trees enumerated are symbols of peace and prosperity, to indicate that Israel is at peace with its God (Isa. 41:17-20). Five different varieties are mentioned (the number of *grace* and *favor*) all representing elements of divine goodness; but no brambles or thorns were to be included, for these represent the origin of sin and the cruelty and wickedness of human nature (Gen. 3:18; Num. 33:55; 2Sam. 23:6; Mat. 13:7).

**"olive branches"** — Symbol of harmony (Gen. 8:11), prosperity (Deu. 8:8)

and the Light of the Word (Exo. 27:20); of Gentiles called to the hope of Israel (Rom. 11:24).

**"and pine branches"** — Rotherham has: "oleaster," a hardy shrub, having fragrant, ornamental foliage. The RV has "wild olive," a symbol of Gentile involvement in the hope of Israel (Rom. 11), and who will be amongst the celebrants of the future Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16). The Hebrew is *ets shemen*. *Ets* means *tree wood*; whilst *shemen* refers to the *oil*, and occurs in 1Kgs 6:23; 31-33 ("olive"); Isa. 41:19 ("oil tree"). It evidently indicates trees rich in oil, the presence of which is a sign of fertility.

**"and myrtle branches"** — The myrtle was planted in the wilderness to assist in the restoration of the land

**"and palm branches"** — See Lev. 23:40. A symbol for righteousness (Psa. 92:12; Rev. 7:9), from a tree which finds its roots deep in the "good earth" (Psa. 1:3). Palms will be featured in the future temple (Eze. 40:16).

**"and branches of thick trees"** — The word "thick" is the Hebrew *'aboth*: *entwined*. The RSV has "leafy trees." Thus full of nourishment, vigor and strength, "entwining itself" together.

**"to make booths"** — Teaching that heaven's protection is vitally necessary (Psa. 31:20). We need to shelter under the figuratively "trees" of Yahweh's provision.

**"as (it is) written"** — Reinforcing the words of the Law (v. 14), and reminding the nation that all must be done according to the divine instructions.

#### The Feast of Tabernacles is Kept — vv. 16-18.

*The nation did according as instructed in the Law, and recommended by the leaders. It was a great moment of joy, acknowledging that Yahweh had brought deliverance from exile and salvation from enemies. The occasion of dwelling in*

*booths, and the rejoicing of families, typified the greater feast of Tabernacles that will occur in the millennium (Zech. 14:16).*

#### VERSE 16

**"So the people went forth"** — The feast celebrated two things: the goodness of Yahweh in delivering His people from Egypt; and His bounty in giving them abundance in their harvests. It was therefore appropriate that the feast should be kept at this time, for they had just experienced deliverance from enemies, and received the bounty of Yahweh. Though this feast had been kept by Joshua, Solomon and Zerubbabel (2Chr. 8:13; Eze. 3:4), and doubtless on other occasions in the past, it was not celebrated in quite the unique manner here undertaken since the exodus from Egypt (cp. v. 17).

**"and brought (them), and made themselves booths,"** — Teaching that heaven's protection is vitally necessary (Psa. 31:20).

**"every one upon the roof of his house"** — The place of worship and prayer (Zeph. 1:5; Mat. 24:17; Acts 10:9)

**"and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God"** — The places of assembly.

**"and in the street of the water gate"** — The place of refreshment (cp. Jn. 4:14)

**"and in the street of the gate of Ephraim"** — One of the gates not previously mentioned. This gate was in the north wall facing the former kingdom of Ephraim.

#### VERSE 17

**"And all"** — The narrative indicates a wholehearted involvement in the program of worship. A fulness of joy was evident as everywhere booths of rejoicing were established. The occasion typified the extension of Messiah's kingdom "from one end of the earth to the other," when, "in every place" incense and worship will ascend to God (Mal. 1:11).

**“the congregation”** — Heb. *qahal*, which signifies *called out*, and is translated “ekklesia” in the Greek Septuagint. Hence the whole community represented the saints “gathered out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation” that they might assemble before God in worship.

**“of them that were come again out of the captivity”** — They had received deliverance from their enemies through the God of Protection and had to place trust, not in a literal wall of bricks and stones that surrounded the city of Jerusalem (and that represented their present protection), but in the “branches” of Yahweh’s overshadowing care (see Isa. 11:1) which were more powerful than all enemies, past, present and future.

**“made booths, and sat under the booths”** — It was a uniquely joyous and general celebration, in which the nation enjoyed fellowship with Yahweh, and remembered its privileged deliverance. The moment was typical of the pleasure and protection we enjoy in the experiences of the Truth, yet even our present privileges of fellowship with the Father and Son will be eclipsed by that which is to come, when our association will be perpetuated in immortality.

**“for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so”** — Apparently the nation had not celebrated the feast quite this way since the exodus from Egypt (Lev. 23:42-43; cp. 2Kings 23:22; 2Chr. 35:18) — perhaps by previously using tents (Hos. 12:9) or modifying the Law according to circumstances. Certainly the sincerity of the people who had wept and then rejoiced at the reading of the Law was now evident, and laid the basis for the proper observance of the feast in spirit as well as in ritual.

**“And there was very great gladness”** — A time of rejoicing in contrast to the

“afflicting” of themselves on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:32, 40; Deu. 26:9-11). The feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the joy of the kingdom (Zech. 14:16; Rev. 7:9).

## VERSE 18

**“Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day”** — The period of seven days, typifying the seven millennia of the progressive purpose of Yahweh from the beginning of creation until the end of mortal probation, when God will be “all in all” (1Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:23).

**“he read in the book of the law of God”** — Evidently this was a sabbatical year in which the Law was continuously and systematically set forth (Deu. 31:10). In reading the Law for seven days, Ezra foreshadowed the work of the Master, and the fulness of the revelation that will be experienced with the full manifestation of “the Word made flesh”.

**“And they kept the feast seven days”** — Typical of the seventh millennia in which the faithful will have maintained the joy and rejoicing of the Truth.

**“and on the eighth day”** — An octave of days, like the complete span of music, suggestive of perfect harmony, such as will be manifested in the fulfillment of God’s purpose with mankind during the eighth millennium.

**“was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner”** — A closing ceremony on the 22nd day of the month (note the margin in Num. 29:35-37). No servile (slave) work was to be done as a token of delivery from slavery (Rom. 6:17). This was the last day of the feast, and it was customary on this day for a Levite to bring water in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam to the temple, chanting the words of Isaiah 12. It was upon this set day that the Lord made his dramatic announcement (Jn. 7:37) proclaiming that he alone could provide the true water of life.

# The Christadelphian Expositor

THE JUDGMENT SEAT IN CAMEO.

THE IMPORTANT MEANING OF  
CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL NAMES.

HOW PRAYER SHOULD PRECEDE A  
COVENANT WITH GOD.

NEHEMIAH'S REMARKABLE REVIEW  
OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY.

RECOUNTING ISRAEL'S  
WICKEDNESS AND YAHWEH'S  
GOODNESS.

A CHRONOLOGICAL ENIGMA IN  
NEHEMIAH CHAPTER TEN

ELIASHIB; THE BETRAYER — AN  
EXAMPLE TO AVOID.



## Nehemiah ch. 9:2 to 11:16

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## From the Editor...

October 1994.

Dear Reader,

The drama of Nehemiah's experiences, and the challenges he faced from Sanballat, are having their replay in the current circumstances, writes a reader from Canada.

*"The exposition on Nehemiah and his trials with Sanballat and Co, has a parallel in what the Jewish nation is going through today — only, unlike Nehemiah, the Jews today put their trust in their own arm and not God's. This is why Jerusalem will fall to its enemies (Zech. 14).*

*"Why I say there is a likeness is in the fact that there are enemies who even today, do not want Israel to prosper. I have a school book from the Roman Catholic system, endorsed by their cardinals and priests, which states that the Jews, having been burned out of their territory by the Romans in AD70, would never again set foot in Palestine. How red their faces must now be, we can only imagine! What can they do to undermine the Jew's return? How can they save their red faces in front of their followers?"*

*"I would place the Papacy in the position of Sanballat and Co, and this time the evilness of the Papacy will continue to increase until Christ returns, and puts an end to their evil practices. Your sister in Christ, Adrienne Mulder."*

There is certainly a remarkable parallel evident in these events, and the returning Jews have endeavored to build up their commonwealth "in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus" (*Elpis Israel*, p. 441), and as such it cannot last. But the coming of the greater Nehemiah will change the present condition of things. He will answer the challenges of the latter-day Sanballat in all his forms, and cause all the surrounding nations to submit to his will.

But students of the book of Nehemiah know the outcome of the future contest. Having studied the works and ways of the great leader of the past, examined his attitude as revealed in his life, and followed his implicit trust in Yahweh, the disciples of the Master will know how to deal with the enemy.

Remember, our bound volume of *Expositor: Romans* is now available. Normal price is \$18 (plus post), but subscribers to the magazine can obtain their volume for \$9 (plus post) by returning the *Expositor* mailing label with an order. This is a special reduced price in appreciation for the support received in providing a subscription to the magazine. Such payments are extremely helpful in providing the financial assistance to ultimately produce the bound volume. I would like to express my personal appreciation for the help and encouragement received from many readers during this present volume. We anticipate concluding the record of Nehemiah with the next issue of the magazine.

Fraternally, In the service of the Truth,

*Isaac H. E. Mansfield*  
Editor

### THE JUDGMENT SEAT IN CAMEO

In the circumstances described in Neh 9, the ecclesia was involved in a procedure typical of the judgment seat that will be established under Christ, in preparation for the joy and glory of the millennium

Notice the similarities

- The people were gathered into one place (vv 1-3) — The responsible will be gathered from all parts of the earth, both living and resurrected, and assemble at Sinai for judgment (Deu 33 2, Rom 14 10, 1Thes 4 15-17)

- They were separated from "all strangers" (v 2) — The saints will be removed from all aliens, separated from the affairs of the world, in order to present themselves before the Judge (2Cor 6 17)

- They stood and confessed their sins (v 2) — All will give account of their lives before the great Judge (Rom 14 12, Ecc 12 14, 2Cor 5 10), and make confession unto salvation (Rom 10 10)

- The people heard the "book of the law of Yahweh their God" read before them, to bring to attention the things required of them — Judgment will be upon "the Word" expressed and understood (Jn 12 48) The Lord will likewise explain the reason for the decisions made, in conformity with the Word of Truth declared (Mat 25 34-45)

- The assembly saw the group of Levites publicly presented before the people (vv 4-5) — similarly there will be those on the "right hand" and "left hand" of the Lord selected for great honor, and acknowledged by him (Mk 10 37-40)

- The Levites gave an outline of the circumstances that led to the deliverance of Israel from the lands of their enemies (vv 9-37) — So angels will assist in the procedure (Mat 18 10), revealing the circumstances in the lives of saints that have been controlled and directed by Yahweh's often unseen "ministering spirits" (Heb 1 14)

- The people respond in worship (v 3) — At the judgment seat of Christ there will be a joyous response, and expressions of adoration for the work of salvation accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 5 9-10)

- The assembled gathering concludes the procedure by entering into a "sure covenant" with God and set a "seal unto it" (v 38) — The covenant of the Spirit, manifested in immortality, will confirm the acceptance by Christ of those who are approved by him (Isa 59 21, Rev 14 1)

**"from all strangers"** —

Notice the margin "strange children," compare Psa 144 7, 11 Such were those who refused to identify themselves with the "Hope of Israel," and remained Gentilistic in character They are described in Neh 10 28 as "the people of the lands", thus the neighboring society This separation was a dramatic action recognizing that true Israelites could no longer associate with worldly ideals and ambitions or manifest an apathetic spirit Mofatt translates this phrase "The race of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners" (cp 2Cor 6 17, Rev 18 4)

**"and stood and confessed their sins"** — The absolute and unconditional confession of sins is the only basis upon which Yahweh will provide forgiveness (Psa 51 4, Pro 28 13, 1Jn 1 9)

**"and the iniquities"** — Heb *avon* meaning *perversity* Thus speaking of the natural ways of the flesh manifested in opposition to the will of God, and transgression against His precepts

**"of their fathers"** — Thus identifying themselves with the sins of the ecclesia

### VERSE 3

**"And they stood up in their place"** — The whole assembly was in the appropriate place, so that everything was done "decently and in order" (1Cor 14 40) The whole day was spent in demanding religious exercises From 6am to 9am the Law was read, from 9am to

12 noon the people prostrated themselves and confessed their sins, having been awakened to this need by the hearing of the Law

**“and read in the book of the law of Yahweh their God”** — They probably read portions of the Law selected by Ezra, that were especially appropriate for repentance, so as to provoke them to remember their responsibilities to the Word of God, to which they were committed

**“(one) fourth part of the day; and (another) fourth part they confessed, and worshipped Yahweh their God”** — A complete period of dedication was given to this exercise. The word “worshipped” literally means “to bow themselves down, to prostrate themselves.” This was the attitude and action of Daniel who earlier had enacted a typical resurrection and judgment (see Dan 10 8-19)

### **United Praise Ascends to Heaven — vv. 4-6.**

*This was a most outstanding religious*

*devotion, revealing an ecclesia united in repentance and contrition, and representing the mourning and humility that will be manifested in national Israel at the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ*

### **VERSE 4**

**“Then stood up upon the stairs”** — The margin has “scaffold.” This was the platform already erected for the purpose of public instruction (8 4), it made readily visible the men specially selected to represent the people in their worship of God. Typically it represents those “which have the rule over” the congregation (Heb 13 7, 1Tim 5 17), as well as the angels who superintend the affairs of the saints (Heb 1 14, Psa 34 7, 25 9)

**“of the Levites”** — The company on the platform was divided into two groups — as is the Bride of Christ, being composed of Jewish and Gentile elements (Jn 10 16). Together they recapitulated Israel’s history, demonstrating the goodness of Yahweh, the folly of the nation,

### **SEPARATED FROM ALL STRANGERS (v. 2)**

When Israel came out of Egypt they were taught that Yahweh had separated them from the Gentiles to be “a kingdom of priests and an holy [separated, dedicated] nation.” They were to become “a peculiar treasure above all people.” Therefore they had been “redeemed” from Egypt. But this status was dependent upon them heeding the word of Yahweh: “If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant” (Exo 15 13, 19 5-6)

*Separation and Dedication* are the first principles of divine worship. Both of these aspects are implicit in the words of James: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name” (Acts 15 14). Hence it is God’s purpose to develop a great family who will have learned to repudiate and reject the ungodliness in the world which is contrary to the development of a character pleasing to Yahweh, and to dedicate their lives to the honor and glory of His Name, serving Him “in spirit and in truth.” By applying this twofold requirement in their lives, they will, like their Lord and Master, learn to “love righteousness” and “hate wickedness” (Jn 4 23-24, Psa 45 7)

As Nehemiah inculcated these principles into the people, there was a clear and distinct order in their worship, indicated in the first three verses of this chapter. They

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Denied the flesh                    | <i>“fasting”</i>                                   |
| 2 Humbled themselves to the dust      | <i>“sackcloth and earth”</i>                       |
| 3 Separated themselves                | <i>“separated from all strangers”</i>              |
| 4 Openly confessed their wrongdoing   | <i>“confessed their sins”</i>                      |
| 5 Carefully considered the Word       | <i>“read in the law”</i>                           |
| 6 Prostrated themselves before Yahweh | <i>“worshipping” (lit., to depress, prostrate)</i> |

— J. Ullman

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and the urgent need to obey His precepts. The activity was designed to induce a spirit of reverence, in order to lead the people to the signing of the covenant. The same message will be delivered by the saints to the people of the millennium, calling upon mankind to acknowledge their iniquitous past (Jer 16 18, Isa 2 20), and to bow in reverence to Israel's God.

**"Jeshua"** — Sig *Yah Saves*

**"and Bani"** — Sig *Built* (particularly in respect to a family)

**"Kadmiel"** — Sig *Presence of El*

**"Shebaniah"** — Sig *Yah has Grown* (prospered)

**"Bunni"** — Sig *To build* (especially in regard to children)

**"Sherebiah"** — Sig *Yah has Brought Heat* (caused to glow)

**"Bani"** — Sig *Built*

**"(and) Chenani"** — Sig *To Plant as a Vineyard*

• Together this list of names provides the following sentence, seen in the gathering of the Levites on one side, and who led the people in prayer to heaven: *Yahweh Saves to Build a family in His Presence, He has Prospered us, Accepted us as children, Filled us with Zeal (heat), and will Build us into His family, Planting us as His Vineyard.*

**"and cried with a loud voice unto Yahweh their God"** — The first company (v 4) cried unto Yahweh, the second called unto the people (see v 5).

### VERSE 5

**"Then the Levites"** — This second group addressed the people.

**"Jeshua"** — Sig *Yah Saves*. Brethren with the same name head both groups, emphasising that the basis for the assembled company is in the elevation of divine redemption, ultimately manifested in the "Saviour," the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat 1 21, 1Tim 2 5).

**"and Kadmiel"** — Sig *Presence of El*. Again the name is repeated from the list in v 4.

**"Bani"** — Sig *Built*. Repeated from the group in v 4.

**"Hashabniah"** — Sig *Thought* (or

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intelligence) of *Yah*.

**"Sherebiah"** — Sig *Yah has Brought Heat* (caused to glow).

**"Hodijah"** — Sig *Praise* (feminine of "Judah").

**"Shebaniah"** — Sig *Yah has Prospered*.

**"and Pethahiah"** — Sig *Yah has Opened* (or revealed).

• Together the following names present the message: *Yahweh will Save, and in His Presence Build Us into His Family, for the Development of His Mind will create Zeal and Praise in (Christ's) Bride, thus Yahweh has Prospered Us and will Open to Us Greater Things.*

**"said, Stand up"** — The people had been prostrate in humility and confession. Now they were to stand for praise, and recognise the great privilege of their exalted position before Yahweh.

In this they demonstrated the principle of baptism and resurrection out of a state of moral and physical death. Daniel underwent a similar typical experience (see Dan 10 11), Paul exhorts that believers, being "risen with Christ" should "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col 3 1-2).

**"(and) bless Yahweh your God for ever and ever"** — The word "bless" (Heb *barak*) signifies *to kneel in adoration*. It is a command to offer respect to the great Majesty of the heavens.

The two words "ever" are from the Heb *olam* *the hidden, or concealed period*. This speaks of the millennium, wherein all mankind will respond in grateful adoration to the Divine King on the throne in Jerusalem. The word is repeated for emphasis. Such an emphasis can also express the idea that the blessing must be maintained from generation to generation (*olam to olam*).

**"and blessed be Thy glorious name"** — The word *barak* ("blessed") is repeated in regard to the memorial name of *Yahweh your Elohim* which was originally declared to Moses in the circumstances of deliverance from the oppression of Egypt (Exo 3 13, 16). The name and title used in

**THE PRAYER THAT  
PRECEDED THE COVENANT**

*The service conducted in Jerusalem, recorded in Neh 9, was probably designed by Ezra and intended to carefully bring home to the people a deep sense of responsibility, and an acknowledgement of what was required in the light of Yahweh's Law which revealed the reason for past failures. The people were now involved in a personal and communal examination of their history, hearts and attitudes as they stood before Yahweh.*

*This memorial prayer can well form the basis for ecclesial prayers in which believers unite in petition and praise to God.*

- Vv 5-6     God's Majesty and Power
- Vv 7-8     The Separation of an Individual to become a Member of the "Holy Nation"
- Vv 9-11    The Preservation of the Nation for God's Name
- V 12       Divine Care during Affliction in the Wilderness
- Vv 13-14   Instruction in Holy Ways at Sinai
- Vv 15       Divine Parental Care and Love in all Circumstances
- Vv 16-21   Mercy manifested despite Severe Provocation
- Vv 22-25   Promises Vindicated the Land Inherited
- V 26       Israel's Base Ingratitude
- V 27       The Nation Disciplined in Love
- Vv 28-30   Israel's History Summarized  
              • Sinning • Suffering  
              • Supplication • Salvation
- V 31       Israel's History An Exhibition of Divine Mercy
- V 32       Ezra pleads on behalf of the Nation for Mercy
- V 33-35    An Acknowledgement of Divine Justice
- Vv 36-37   Servitude because of National Folly
- V 38       The Covenant to Honor the Law in the Future

Neh 9 5 signifies *He Who Will be [manifested] in Mighty Ones*, and teaches that the purpose of the Eternal Spirit is to be manifested in those whom He selects (Lev 10 3). This decision of election will ultimately be respected by all mankind (Eze 20 41, Rev 15 3).

**"which is exalted above all blessing and praise"** — That is, words fail to adequately express the blessing and praise due to Yahweh's Name (see Paul's expression of his experience in glimpsing the glory beyond the millennium 2Cor 12 4). Everything demonstrates that God's purpose, as expressed in His Name, is being worked out through His guiding hand upon the nations. Even the reverses that Israel has suffered in its long history testify to this fact (Exo 15 5-7).

**VERSE 6**

**"Thou"** — The Septuagint introduces this verse with the phrase "And Ezra said."

**"(even) Thou, (art) Yahweh alone"** — The Covenant Name proclaimed at the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and formation as a spiritual family (Exo 3 14), thus guaranteeing the continuance of the nation under divine goodness.

**"Thou"** — The Creator, who is therefore capable of fulfilling what the Covenant Name promises (Psa 147 2-4). None other can provide salvation (Deu 4 35). Notice the repetition of this principle in Isa 45 5-6, 14, 18).

**"hast made heaven"** — In all their glory, power, majesty and infinity, the heavens manifest the presence of Yahweh as Creator (Psa 19). As symbols, the elements of creation reveal different aspects of the divine purpose (cp 2Cor 4 6, Rev 14 7), thus the heaven represents Yahweh's supreme sovereignty over all creation.

**"the heaven of heavens"** — The heaven in all its infinity (Deu 10 14). This phrase speaks of the omniscience of Yahweh, who dwells beyond the gaze of mortal men (1Kgs 8 27, 2Chr 2 6, 6 18, 1Tim 6 15-16).

**"with all their host"** — The sun (Psa

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19), moon (Psa 89 37) and stars (Gen 15 5, Psa 147 4) This description is not limited to the inanimate creation of the heavenly bodies (1Cor 15 40-41), but includes the angelic host (Heb 1 14, Psa 103 21, 1Cor 15 49)

**“the earth”** — Hag 2 6

**“and all (things) that are therein, the seas”** — See Isa 57 20 Compare Deu 10 14, 1Kgs 8 27, Psa 148 4

**“and all that (is) therein, and Thou preservest them all”** — The Hebrew has “Thou givest life to them all” They have vitality and prosper under Yahweh’s mighty hand All life stems from the Preserver of all, who could, therefore, preserve the people who were then gathered in Jerusalem for worship

**“and the host of heaven worship-peth Thee”** — Even the inanimate objects such as suns, stars and planets obey divine laws and respond to the wisdom of their Creator (cp Gen 1, Psa 19, 103 21) So must those who have been elevated to the “heavenlies” by acceptance of the Truth and the way of life that directs the path of their activities as they “orbit” around the Word of Life (Eph 1 3)

### **The Faithfulness of Abraham — vv. 7-8.**

*The father of the Hebrews was selected from exile, in order to enjoy fellowship with Yahweh on the basis of a tried faith Thus, the purpose of God was not only seen in created orbs of glory, but in a heart and mind transformed through the indwelling of God’s Word*

### **VERSE 7**

**“Thou (art) Yahweh the God who didst choose Abram”** — The principle of separation was the basis upon which the nation was founded (Gen 12 1, Jos 24 2-3) God chose Abram because he had qualities that could be developed into faith Similarly the nation of Israel was selected to manifest the faith of their fathers (Rom 9 4-8)

Notice the five stages of development in the faith of Abraham, indicated in vv 7-8 He was *chosen, brought forth, given a name, founded in heart and with whom a*

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*covenant was made*

**“and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees”** — Abram came from the same region as the captivity (Babylon), and dwelt in the same area of Canaan in which the people of Israel now lived Consequently the nation had followed the same path of trial and testing, and were called upon to manifest similar courage and faith as did Abraham, if they were to receive the same favors

**“and gavest him the name of Abraham”** — Abram’s name was divinely changed by the addition of the Hebrew letter א he Being the fifth letter of the alphabet it was an acknowledgement that he had received *grace*, and a recognition of Yahweh’s purpose in Israel to make of them “many nations” (Rom 4 3-5, 15-16) Significantly Sarai’s name was similarly changed to Sarah by adding the same letter, by which action God was testifying to the favor that was then bestowed upon that faithful pair, from whom came the promised seed (Gen 17 6, 19)

### **VERSE 8**

**“And foundest”** — Heb *mikceh* which signifies a *covering*, from *kacah*, to fill up the hollows, to clothe The word is related to a “foundry” for the testing of metals It was customary for the metal to be moulded into the required product to be first heated to a liquid which is then poured into a mould, and covered by earth, until it is set In due time the earth covering and any unwanted materials are removed from the mold, and it is “brought forth” Preparation of the mould is critical, and determines the success of the final product Separation of all foreign matter throughout the whole operation ensures a finished object of beauty The actual work of shaping the vessel is in the mould provided, and is thus “untouched by human hands” This work symbolises the divine process of separation, preparation, moulding and final finishing of the man and woman of faith It was of such a “metal” that Abram and Sarai were made, and the process of divine “moulding” ensured that they will be seen to manifest the divine

glory when ultimately the "earthy-nature" is removed, and they come forth perfected in immortality. All this was made possible, because Yahweh "*founded*" his heart, "filling up the hollows," and perfecting his character through trial.

**"his heart faithful before Thee" —**

Abraham was an example of outstanding faith (Gal 3 6-9, Heb 11 8), and became known as the "father of the faithful" (Rom 4 11, 16).

**"and madest a covenant" —**

*beriyth* a compact, from *barah*, to select. A covenant comprises the meeting of two parties who come together to formalize their solemn vow. The word "madest" comes from *karath* to cut, and in regard to a covenant, it indicates the cutting of the flesh of the covenant victim so that the

covenanting parties can pass between the pieces in confirmation of their agreement. This action acknowledges that failure to maintain their part of the covenant would result in the fate of the animal becoming their own. In this Abraham enacted the covenant of life and land with Yahweh (Gen 15 17-18).

**"with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say" —**

Six enemy nations in occupation of the land of promise *offered* to Abraham, and against which he and his seed would have to contend. Deu 7 1 lists seven nations, the Hivites being unnamed in Neh 9 8, but included in the general term of Canaanites. Though surrounded by such powerful forces of the flesh, Abraham maintained his integrity, refusing to compromise his position, and remained faithful. Therefore he is yet to inherit the lands of the enemy.

**"to his seed, and hast performed Thy words" —**

Rotherham and the Septuagint have "confirmed Thy words." The portion of land here outlined was given to the nation of Israel 400 years later, but Abraham's personal inheritance is much greater (Gen 15 13, 18, cp Jos 23 14, Psa 105 43-44), and awaits the future (Acts 7 5). Then the nation will occupy the area from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen 15), as outlined in Eze 48.

**"for Thou art righteous" —** Therefore Yahweh will accomplish His Word and promises.

**Redemption from Egypt — vv. 9-11.**

*From Abraham the Faithful, the prayer now considers Moses the Separator. As Abraham came from the idolatry of Ur, so Moses led the people out of the darkness and ignorance of Egypt. There are four stages of national redemption listed, indicative of positive divine actions. Yahweh "saw," "heardest," "shewedst" and "knewest."*

**VERSE 9**

**"And didst see the affliction" —**

**ABRAHAM'S HEART FAITHFUL (v. 8)**

Abraham's faith, which led to his faithfulness, was not a mere theoretical belief. His faith was a working faith. Biblical faith is not simply what men and women believe, it is what they do *because* of what they believe. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb 11 8). Thus Abraham's "faith wrought with his works," the latter being the outworking of the former (Jas 2 22). Abraham had come out of Babylon, and had passed through many areas, dwelling ultimately in the same region as these Jews now dwelt. Like them, he had been surrounded by evil, idolatrous nations, yet his faith, though tested, had survived. Abraham walked before Yahweh with integrity, because his "heart" was fully devoted to wholeheartedly serving his God in the spirit of the Truth (Gen 15 6). In manifesting his faith by his works, he "obtained a good report through faith" so that "God is not ashamed to be called" Abraham's God (Heb 11 16, 39).

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Heb *only depression* The people were found in a state of slavery, in a land of darkness and ignorance — typical of humanity's sinful condition (Eph 2 1-2)

**"of our fathers in Egypt"** — Israel always experiences affliction in Egypt (literally and figuratively) Going to Egypt is scripturally described as "going down" (cp Gen 12 10, 26 2)

**"and hearest their cry by the Red sea"** — Even in Egypt the mercy of God was experienced, and contrasted with the hardness of servitude under the Egyptians. At the time Israel were in ignorance of their impending deliverance, and yet received Yahweh's mercy

### VERSE 10

**"And shewedst signs"** — Heb *owth a signal, beacon, evidence* The plagues that fell upon Egypt were not merely acts of punishment, but lessons for exhortation, reminding the people of Yahweh's power and His purpose to rescue His people from all kinds of oppression (1Cor 10 11-12)

**"and wonders"** — Heb *mowpheth a miracle, token* The word comes from the root *yaphah to be bright, beautiful* Thus it refers to actions which stand out remarkably in contrast to the normal circumstances of life

**"upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land"** — The miracles and judgments had spiritual lessons to convey (cp Jer 32 20-21), and even those of Egypt could profit from observing them. Since it was a "mixt multitude" (Num 11 4) that went forth into the wilderness, there may have been some Egyptians converted by the "signs and wonders" and who sought to follow the things of divine Truth (cp the words of Rahab Jos 2 9-11)

**"for Thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them"** — The Hebrew for "proudly" is *zuwd to seethe, to be insolent* The enemies of Israel rose up in opposition to them

**"So didst Thou get Thee a name"** — This act of deliverance emphasized the power associated with the Name of Yahweh given at the bush (Exo 3 7) It is

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associated with mercy (Deu 5 9-10, 33 16), and accompanied with judgment on enemies (Exo 34 6-7) Jeremiah declared this principle (Jer 32 20) but the nation ignored the Covenant Name, and was delivered into captivity. Later, the Lord Jesus declared the Name through sacrifice (Jn 17 26), thus representing the greater deliverance out of darkness that of spiritual Egypt

**"as it is this day"** — The people saw in their circumstances the continuing evidence of Yahweh's great mercy, for as He had delivered Israel under Moses, so He had brought Israel from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah

### VERSE 11

**"And Thou didst divide"** — Heb *baqa to cleave, rend, break, rip* The people saw evidence of unique divine power provided for the salvation of the nation (Exo 14 21) This was a typical baptism (1Cor 10 1-2), represented in the "dividing of waters" (Rom 6 3-7)

**"the sea before them"** — The Red Sea (Exo 14 21, Psa 10, 32 8) was divided, illustrative of the pathway that Yahweh provides through the "seas" of nations (cp Isa 57 20)

**"so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors Thou threwest into the deeps"** — See Exo 15 5 Deliverance of His people and destruction of His enemies are continually brought to attention. Thus the two aspects of Yahweh's character — justice and mercy — are represented in His Name (cp Deu 33 16, Rom 11 22)

**"as a stone into the mighty waters"** — A description taken from Moses' Song of Deliverance (Exo 15 5), and figurative of the typical removal of sin (cp Mat 18 6), a foreshadowing of the national destruction of the Apostate System (Rev 18 21)

### Israel in the Desert — vv. 12-21.

*Divine deliverance through the waters of the Red Sea commenced a period of national probation which required the nation to traverse the desert Nevertheless,*



**A TIME OF MIRACLE**

During the period of trial and testing in the wilderness privation, Yahweh provided for every need of the people. He ensured they received angelic guidance (vv 10, 19), miraculous provisions (vv 15, 20, 21), and divine legislation (vv 13, 14). To that end He provided them with Direction (v 12), Law (v 13), Instruction (v 14), Provision (v 15).

*Yahweh provided for their protection and sustenance as a manifestation of His continuing goodness*

**VERSE 12**

**“Moreover Thou leddest them” —**

Indicative of the continuing presence of divine power through the wilderness (Exo 13 21). During that time Yahweh instructed, organized, tested, proved, disciplined, and chastised His people, in order to prepare them for orderly settlement in the promised Land (cp Jer 13 11). In this, Yahweh is like a shepherd (Psa 80 1, 78 52-54). Like their father Abraham, Israel were led to an unknown land, but Yahweh was present to guide them (Isa 63 8). Similarly Christ was “led” of the Spirit into the wilderness (Lk 4 1) in order to be tested and strengthened for the task ahead.

**“in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go” —** A foreshadowing of the Light of truth and glory to be revealed at the advent of the Master (Jn 1 9-12). “Light” speaks of knowledge, illumination, understanding, “Fire” represents judgment, decision, power. Together they reveal the dual elements of goodness and severity.

**VERSE 13**

**“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments” —** An immutable standard of morality expressive of the character of

Yahweh (Exo 34 6-7). These were designed to develop righteousness in the people (Rom 7 12), but became a “hand-writing of ordinances that was against them” (Col 2 14) because of the weakness of the flesh. Later, Yahweh “came down” in confirmation of His Son. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3 17, 17 5). The word “right” is from the Hebrew *yashar* *straight*, and thus indicates to direct along a straight path by divine judgments (Psa 19 8-9, Rom 7 12).

**“and true” —** Heb *emeth* *stability, certainty*, thus laws designed to develop firmness and solidarity in life.

**“laws” —** Note the margin “laws of truth.”

**“good statutes and commandments” —**

The absolute morality of the divine wisdom, a standard of right and wrong to be followed by the people God brought out of Egypt.

**VERSE 14**

**“And madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath” —** The sabbath was the token of the Mosaic Covenant (Exo 3 16-17, Eze 20 12), setting Israel apart, and providing a prophetic promise of the coming sabbath rest (Deu 12 9-11, cp Neh 9 15, Heb 4 3-9).

**“and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand” —** Heb *yad* *an open hand*, indicating power, or means of direction. It is also the symbol of grace.

**“of Moses Thy servant” —** Through Moses, Yahweh provided the people with the means (the Law on tablets of stone) and an example of faithful, diligent service.

**VERSE 15**

**“And gavest them bread from heaven” —** Previously termed “the bread of heaven,” but here is described as “from heaven.” Rotherham has “*out of the heavens*.” For the reason, see Deu 8 3, and compare Psa 105 40, 78 24. Typically this was fulfilled in the Master (Jn 6 31) who was “from heaven” (Jn 3 13) through the

intervention of the Holy Spirit in Mary's conception of Christ

**"for their hunger"** — Fulfilled in the work of Christ (Mat 5 6, Jn 6 48-57)

**"and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock"** — Heb *sela a craggy rock, fortress* The rock represented Christ (1Cor 10 4), who was the antitypical tower in which the people could find refuge from their privations (Psa 61 3, Pro 18 10)

**"for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land"** — see Deu 1 8 Antitypically Christ is the means by which spiritual thirst can be assuaged (Isa 55 1, Jn 4 14)

**"which Thou hadst sworn to give them"** — God fulfilled His covenant to the nation (Gen 15 16) in providing the victories of Joshua (Josh 23 14), although it was still essential for the people to complete their part, by removing the enemy (v 5) — a commitment that was never completed The ultimate purpose of Yahweh, declared in Gen 15 18-21, is to grant the promised Land to faithful individuals, who reveal the true characteristics of sons and daughters of Abraham (cp Gen 18 19), and who will inherit the land (Gen 15 18)

## VERSE 16

**"But they and our fathers"** — Rather "They, our fathers "

**"dealt proudly"** — i.e., "acted insolently" The people were proud and stubbornly disobedient Compare Deu 1 43 where the same verb is translated "were presumptuous" (see margin)

**"and hardened their necks"** — Like Orpah, whose name means "the stiff neck" (Ruth 1 14) they refused to turn to Yahweh (2Kgs 17 14, 2Chr 30 8), and remained Moabite in character

This Levitical recapitulation of their evils, vindicates the righteous judgments of Yahweh, reminding the people that He was not the cause of their miseries, which had, in fact, resulted from their own foolish and rebellious spirit

**"and hearkened not to Thy commandments"** — The previous description was a positive expression of rebellion,

## HE GAVE THEM BREAD (v. 15)

Having "led" them through the wilderness (v 12), after the manner of a shepherd leading his sheep, or a father leading his child into the best and most worthwhile pathway of life, Yahweh "gave" them "bread from heaven for their hunger" This action not only showed God's great love for His people, but also His kindly benevolence for them in providing for all their needs — but not their "wants" How tragic that the generation which had come out of Egypt could not appreciate that in all these things they were being shown the grace and mercy of their God The very fact that God "gave" them the bread showed that it was a gift from Him, a philanthropic act of love which He was under no obligation to provide Seventeen centuries later, Yahweh's own Son stood in the midst of Israel and said "I am the bread of life he that cometh to me shall never hunger I am the *living* bread If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (Jn 6 35, 51) The Lord proclaimed that mankind should receive him as the true Manna, and that his character should be absorbed into their intellect and assimilated into their way of life In so doing, he gave living witness to the words of the Law "Yahweh fed thee with manna that He might make thee know that man doth not live by *bread* only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man *live*" (Deu 8 2-3, cp Mat 4 4, Lk 4 4) The Lord Jesus Christ alone could issue this invitation to humanity, for he alone became "the Word made flesh" in the most perfect sense, and the means whereby men and women could seek reconciliation with their Creator

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**HARDENED THEIR NECKS (v. 16)**

Despite the loving care their God administered to them (v. 15), they “dealt proudly” and insolently, in their faithless response to His infinite goodness and mercy. Ironically, this same expression is used of the Egyptians in v. 10. Such is the perversity of human nature. Instead of reacting graciously and humbly to Yahweh’s beneficence, they displayed the same fleshly characteristics as their former oppressors. The word rendered “proudly” (“to be insolent, to seethe”) is an apt word to describe rebellion against Yahweh. The lesson to be learned from this is clear. When man is elevated in his pride and arrogance, he debases God in his heart. When dominated by a spirit of rebellion against God, it is impossible for man to manifest humble submission to the will of Yahweh (Deu 8:11-17).

Giving way to the evil propensities of the flesh, they “hardened their necks.” This phrase is taken from language used in relation to the yoking of oxen. The term implies that the animal under the yoke is being guided and directed by the owner or controller of the oxen. The animal wearing the yoke must accept that it has to respond to the guiding hands of its controller, and that it is under the yoke for the purpose of toiling in its master’s service. In hardening their necks, animals showed their displeasure at the constrictions brought upon them by the yoke, behaving in such a way as to clearly show their controller that they resented his right to possess, command and direct them. This, then, was a most suitable term to describe Israel’s repudiation of the authority and will of God. Contrast Israel’s rebelliousness with the disposition manifested by Christ, which is an example for all to follow (Mat 11:28-30).

— J U

here is a negative refusal by the people to listen to the divine law

**VERSE 17**

**“And refused to obey, neither were mindful”** — Heb *zakar* to mark (so as to recognize), i.e. to remember, to consider accurately

**“of Thy wonders”** — Heb *pala'* to separate, distinguish. The remarkable and unique works of Yahweh in redeeming and sustaining His people, distinguished Him from the gods of the nations (Psa 115:2-9). His “wonders” are testimony to His invincible majesty.

**“that Thou didst among them”** — Yahweh was with His people through the manifestation of His glory within the tabernacle in the centre of the nation, and through His words delivered to the people by the priests. But the people did not humble themselves before His glory, and rebelled against His instructions.

**“but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion”** — The text should probably read *bemuzraim* (“in Egypt”) instead of *bemryam* (“in their rebellion” or “bitterness,” from the word *meriy*, from *marah* to provoke) as in Rotherham’s translation. More correctly, the text should read “appointed a head that they might return to their servitude in Egypt.” In the Hebrew text the word comes at the end of the verse, as though to emphasize the wicked attitude of the people in seeking to subvert the divine intention.

**“appointed a captain to return to their bondage”** — See Num 14:3, where the proposition is put as a question. Here is evidence that the request was taken further, and that the people actually confirmed the appointment of an apostate leader (a typical antichrist) under whom they might return to their previous existence (cp 2Pet 2:19-22). This constituted the spirit of Demas, who rejected the work of the apostle Paul in favor of the world from which he had formerly been delivered (2Tim 4:10).

**“but Thou art a God ready to pardon”** — The margin has “a God of Pardons,” which only elsewhere occurs in

Dan 9 9 and Psa 130 4 Rotherham prefers "a God of Forgiveness" If He were not so, the nation (and ourselves!) would have been destroyed on the grounds of sinfulness

**"gracious and merciful, slow to anger"** — The characteristics of Yahweh, declared through Moses at the time of their deliverance from Egypt Exo 34 6-7 (cp Mat 5 44-48)

**"and of great kindness"** — Abounding in lovingkindness

**"and forsookest them not"** — A consistent and loving quality by which Yahweh seeks the redemption and protection of His people In this He reveals a fatherly concern for the circumstances and distresses of His people (Psa 34 19, Isa 63 9)

#### VERSE 18

**"Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations"** — This was the wicked response of the people who turned from the divine protection granted the nation, to apostasy in the absence of their appointed leader (Exo 32 4) In that action they, in effect, turned the "grace of God into lasciviousness, and denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4) The word "provocations" is the Hebrew *ne'atsah blasphemy*, and is so rendered in Eze 35 12 Rotherham has "insults"

#### VERSE 19

**"Yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them"** — Rotherham has "from over them" It continued to overshadow their path through the wilderness as evidence of the presence of Yahweh Similarly the "angel of Yahweh encampeth around" His people (Psa 34 7)

**"by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go"** — Exo 13 21-22, Num 14 14 Notice that the cloud assumed three

positions [1] in the form of a pillar-cloud, it led the way, [2] as a pillar of fire by night it gave light and was a rallying point for the whole camp, [3] as an extended cloud it hovered over them as a covering or defence, refreshing them with its dews and providing shelter from heat It was the symbol of Yahweh in Israel (Rev 21 3) This divine protection and guidance was represented "among the people" in the cloud of glory in the most holy place of

#### THE GOLD AND THE CALF (v. 18)

Aaron was placed under considerable pressure by the people to make them a golden calf, that they might renounce Yahweh and bow before a new god, reminiscent of the type of gods they had seen in Egypt Prior to leaving Egypt the people of Israel had been told to "ask" of their Egyptian neighbors "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold" (Exo 3 22, 11 2, 12 35) In submitting to their demands to build the golden calf, Aaron told the people to "break off the golden earrings" that were in their "ears;" and from this precious metal he made the calf (Exo 32 2-4) Gold is a Biblical symbol for faith (Lam 4 1-2, 1Pet 1 7), and "faith" comes by "*hearing*" the Word of God (Rom 10 17) Thus the people did symbolically that which they had already done in their hearts They cast away their faith Faith is not easily won (Pro 25 2), but may be easily lost, if the flesh is permitted to win in the struggle between the spirit of the Truth and "the natural man" (1Cor 2 14, Gal 5 17) If faith is to flourish, the mind must be centred upon present responsibilities to God, and those precious promises He has made which are to be fulfilled in the future It was upon the basis of their faith that "the elders obtained a good report" (Heb 11 2) May those who strive to serve Yahweh faithfully in this present generation receive at the hand of the Lord Jesus, a similar "good report" — J U

the tabernacle and temple

## VERSE 20

**"Thou gavest also Thy good spirit"**

— Heb *ruarch* to blow forth, also *mind*, *spirit*, *breath*, etc, relating to life and activity The "good spirit" in this verse represents the Word of Truth which gives strength and direction in the circumstances of life (Isa 63 11, Psa 143 10, 32 8)

### FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS (v. 21)

Israel's forty years in the wilderness typified the trial of the Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness of Judea Israel was called upon to "observe to do all the commandments" of Yahweh (Deu 8 1-3) The Lord Jesus did this perfectly (Jn 5 19)

They were "to do" God's will that they might "live" The Lord did this also, and obtained life (Jn 10 17-18)

To this end, Israel was "led" by God into the wilderness to face their testing time So the Lord was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness" (Mat 4 1)

In the wilderness, Yahweh endeavored to "prove" (or "test") Israel So He did with His own Son, for the word rendered "tempted" (Gr *peirazo*) should be understood as meaning "tried" or "tested" (cp Jas 1 13) Yahweh "humbled" Israel and "suffered" them to "hunger" So He did with His Son (Mat 4 2) God provided this testing for Israel to see "whether" they would "keep His commandments or no" They failed to do so, but when put to the same test, the Lord Jesus walked perfectly before his Father (Jn 8 29, 10 30) Thus, in doing only those things which pleased his Father, he was able to demonstrate that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live" (Deu 8 3, cp Mat 4 4) In him, all believers have the perfect example, that they "should follow his steps" (1Pet 2 21) — *JU*

**"to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst"**

— Every need was fully catered for, so that the people had no cause for want during the period of their probation

## VERSE 21

**"Yea, forty years"** — A period of probation, caused by the faithlessness of the ten spies, and the refusal of the nation to reject the "evil report" in favor of the courageous words of Joshua and Caleb (Num 14 37) Forty years will be again occupied in the second restoration of the nation through the "wilderness of the nations" (Mic 7 15, Eze 20 35)

**"didst Thou sustain"** — Heb *kuwl* to keep in, maintain The word is often translated "to nourish" (Gen 45 11, 50 21, 47 12)

**"them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing"** — They were provided with all the necessities of life, and given strength to continue in the way (cp Mat 6 23, 31-34)

**"their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not"** — Both external and internal needs were supplied (Deu 8 4)

### Canaan Conquered and Possessed — vv. 22-25.

*The angels prepared the way for the nation to proceed through the wilderness as directed, thus the people were given every assistance to secure the Promised Land for their inheritance*

## VERSE 22

**"Moreover Thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners"** — Heb *peah quarter, region* (as in Jos 15 5, 18 12, 14, etc) The RV has "did allot after their portions," i.e., according to their several boundaries, into lands (Num 24 17) Thus Yahweh fulfilled His promise to bring the nation into its inheritance

**"so they possessed the land of Sihon"** — King of the Amorites, whose land was located on the northeast of the

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Dead Sea (Num 21 21), who opposed the passage of the Israelites (v 23)

**“and the land of”** — These words are omitted from the Septuagint, and most other manuscripts and versions. Sihon was king of Heshbon (Num 21 21-26)

**“the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan”** — On the eastern side of Jordan above the area of the Amorites (see Num 21 23) Thus the Israelites were strengthened to overcome their national enemies, as well as endure the privations of the wilderness

### VERSE 23

**“Their children also multipliedst Thou as the stars of heaven”** — According to the promise to Abraham (Gen 15 5)

**“and broughtest them into the land, concerning which Thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it”** — Note the emphasis on the inheritance given to the nation Jos 23 5, 10, 15 The nation first occupied the land under difficulty, and was then provided with the means to obtain complete occupation by which they would “prolong your days in the land” (Deu 11 7-9) This has a secondary application in the “pre-adventual colonisation of the Jews” (*Elpis Israel*, p 441) in preparation for the ultimate occupation of the land during the millennium (Joel 3 1)

### VERSE 24

**“So the children went in and possessed the land”** — See notes on v 8

**“and Thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings”** — The term Canaanite includes all the enemies of the Israelites to secure the land promised them The name derives from *kana* to bend the knee, hence to humiliate, vanquish It refers to the trader or pedlar who endeavors to ingratiate himself to his victim, and who conducts merchandising schemes “Canaanites” are represented in the modern-day pedlars of dogmas and doctrines designed to deceive an Israelite out of his

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rightful inheritance (Rev 18 3, 13 — mg) The spiritual Canaanite will ultimately be completely removed from the presence of Christ (Zech 14 21, a prophecy that was given token fulfilment in the violent action of the Master in the “house of Yahweh of hosts” — see Jn 2 16, Mk 11 15)

**“and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would”**

— Describing the seven nations of the Canaanites (Gen 10 18, Exo 3 8, Deu 7 1) Through Joshua, God sufficiently subdued all the enemies of the people so that the Israelites would be able to secure their individual inheritance It was the people’s responsibility to “do with them” in accordance with the divine law in order to “utterly destroy them” (Deu 7 2) Because they failed in this matter, evils later fell upon them

### VERSE 25

**“And they took strong cities”** — Such as Jericho (Jos 6 2), Ai (8 2), Libnah (10 29), Hazor (11 10), Hebron (10 5, 10), etc See Jos 12 9-15

**“and a fat land”** — A rich and fertile country (Jos 24 13) The people received everything “ready made” to hand

**“and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged”** — Deu 6 11, 8 7-8 They did not have to perform the hard, slogging labor usually needed to establish these necessities

**“vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance”** — Nourished by the “rain of heaven” (Deu 11 10-11), unlike their experiences in Egypt

**“so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat”** — They were well catered for and prosperous Unfortunately, they allowed the good things of life to affect them for evil They “grew proud” and “wanton” The word “fat” (Heb *shamen* rich greasy) has the idea of appearing gross through overindulgence, and only occurs here, in Deu 32 15 and Jer 5 28 See the complaint of Hos 13 6, and compare the warning of the Lord Lk 21 34

**“and delighted themselves”** — Heb *adan*, a word related to Eden, sometimes called “the garden of delights” Hence

they "made their Eden" in the land given them Rotherham has "luxuriated" (cp Deu 32 15) But the people pleased themselves, not Yahweh, and became soft and decadent under the influence of luxury, like the Laodiceans (Rev 3 17), and began to seek their own indulgence

**"in Thy great goodness" — Rom 11 22** The exhortation Rom 2 4

### **Israel's Wickedness and God's Goodness — vv. 26-31.**

*The Levites now summarize Israel's backslidings and God's actions in the time of the Judges This demonstrates the man's ingratitude of Israel for the blessings Yahweh had so liberally granted them It provides a graphic contrast between man's wickedness and God's goodness*

#### **DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF ENEMIES (v. 27)**

What a fearful verdict, and even more terrifying in its fulfilment Yet, the people of Israel had no one to blame but themselves for these tragic developments The Law had warned that this would occur, if the people abused their privileged position under the terms of the covenant (Lev 26 14-26), and it was therefore a perfectly righteous judgment that came upon them (Dan 9 10-14) It is noteworthy to consider the expression "I will break the pride of your power" (Lev 26 19), and compare those words with Neh 9 16, to see the way in which this dreadful condition became a reality within the nation Human pride was at the forefront of the reasons why these circumstances developed Israel refused to yield willingly and wholeheartedly to the will of Yahweh Believers in every generation should always remember the warning "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 10 31, 12 29)

— J U

### **VERSE 26**

**"Nevertheless" —** In their material abundance they thought they could do without God (Rom 2 21)

**"they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets" —** Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were murdered by their own countrymen Many prophets were slain by Jezebel with Ahab's sanction (1Kgs 18 4) Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was put to death by Joash (2Chr 24 22) The Lord Jesus warned that divine punishment would overtake the nation because of such crimes Mat 23 34 (cp Mat 21 34)

**"which testified against them to turn them to Thee" —** Yahweh constantly suffered this indignity at the hand of His people (Jer 5 25-26, Mat 23 37, Acts 7 52)

**"and they wrought great provocations" —** Repeating the claim made in v 18 The Hebrew *ne'atsah* signifies *blasphemy*, for their actions represented an insult to the righteousness of God, and the salvation that He alone could provide

### **VERSE 27**

**"Therefore Thou deliveredst them" —** Sin brings suffering, in order that the people might understand the criminality of their actions The punishment is, nevertheless, designed to draw attention to the divine principles which can lead submissive men and women to eternal redemption It is, therefore, a teaching process, as Paul explains in Heb 12 6-11

**"into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble" —** Israel's history became an illustration of the fact that *sinning* brings *sorrowing*, whereas *supplication* brings *salvation* The history of the nation recorded in the book of Judges, shows the reaction of men brought close to the divine purpose, but who refuse to recognize His power It was a time when there was "no king in Israel," for the nation rejected any guidance or direction

**"when they cried unto Thee" —** The correct disposition for action when in trou-

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ble (Jud 3 9, 1Sam 12 8, Psa 22 5, Hos 8 2)

### **“Thou heardest them from heaven”**

— Yahweh is not limited by time or distance, as His spirit fills heaven and earth (*The Christadelphian Instructor*, Q/A 15, 16, Jer 23 24, Heb 4 13, Psa 139 1-8) Thus our physical condition or location does not restrict our prayerful appeal to the Father

**“and according to Thy manifold mercies”** — Heb *racham*, meaning *compassion, care* The word is related to the womb, thus the place of intimate sympathy and concern as relating to offspring This characteristic of Yahweh is constantly stressed throughout this prayer (vv 19, 27, 28, 31) as one of His foremost qualities As our “Father” He understands our feelings and provides for our needs His willingness to help, being “manifold” provides encouragement and consolation for His people in distress (Psa 34 19, Isa 63 9)

**“Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies”** — Yahweh provided for their redemption Othniel and Ehud were called “savior” (Jud 3 9, 15), also Shamgar, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, etc

## VERSE 28

**“But after they had rest, they did evil again”** — A drift back to their previous way of life! The margin has “returned to do evil” They repeated their former follies, and so enacted the parable of the “evil spirits” (Mat 12 43-45)

**“before Thee”** — Note the four developments resulting from the folly of Israel God “leftest heardest deliver testifiedst” as evidence of His fatherly concern for the people

**“therefore leftest Thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and many times”** — The divine consistency was evident in the way Yahweh reacted to their need (see Psa 106 43)

**“didst Thou deliver them according**

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**to Thy mercies”** — Heb *racham* See comments on v 27

## VERSE 29

**“And testifiedst against them, that Thou mightest bring them again unto Thy law”** — The purpose for divine discipline was to remind Israel of the covenant established at Sinai For that reason, the responsible will be brought to judgment upon the basis of “the word spoken” (Jn 12 48), that they might understand the divine wisdom in the decisions made

**“yet they dealt proudly, and hardened not unto thy commandments, but sinned”** — Heb *chata* to miss the mark They failed to uphold the spirit of the commandments given to them (Jer 13 11)

**“against Thy judgments”** — Heb *mishpat*, which signifies a verdict pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree

**“(which if a man”** — Heb *adam earthy*, thus mortal, related to dust Such a man, being conscious of his stricken nature, had to look beyond his own situation, to “dwell with God” through the divine judgments applied in his life

**“do, he shall live in them)”** — Citing Lev 18 5, which Paul quotes in Rom 10 5 to emphasize the result of obedience to the divine law Although none, save the Lord Jesus, have been able to perfectly fulfil the terms of this “judgment,” it provides the key to a successful life, both spiritually and materially (1Tim 4 8)

The mercy of Yahweh permits a faithful believer to “live in them,” notwithstanding the incidence of personal sin, for it is covered by the principle of forgiveness (1Jn 2 1-3, 3 6, 5 18)

**“and withdrew the shoulder”** — See margin “they gave a withdrawing shoulder” Thus they refused to submit to the yoke required of them as servants of Yahweh (cp Isa 41 8-9, Hos 4 16, Zech 7 11) The yoke of divine service is, however, “easy, and the burden light” (Mat 11 30) when willingly accepted

**“and hardened their neck, and would not hear”** — Manifesting a refusal to comply, and the stubbornness of a frac-



tious animal (cp Hos 4 16, Zech 7 11)

### VERSE 30

**"Yet many years didst Thou forbear them"** — The Hebrew implies "protracted over them" Rotherham has "didst suffer many years to pass over them" Compare 2Pet 3 9

**"and testifiedst against them"** — See 2Kgs 17 13, 2Chr 36 15-16

**"by Thy spirit in Thy prophets"** — A reference to the word of Truth constantly and clearly proclaimed by faithful ministers of God (Psa 78 8, 40, Isa 63 10, Jer 7 25)

**"yet would they not give ear"** — Not only ignoring the wise counsel and urgent exhortation of the prophets, but in many cases the people acted violently against them, as the Lord later testified (Mat 23 37, Lk 13 34)

**"therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands"** — This was the logical and just result of their evil conduct They had not obeyed God in destroying their enemies, and therefore they returned to dominate them

### VERSE 31

**"Nevertheless for Thy great mercies"** — Heb *racham*, which reoccurs in this prayer See notes on vv 27, 28

**"sake Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them"** — A remnant was always preserved (2Kgs 19 4, 30, 37, Neh 1 3, Isa 1 9, 10 21-22) to preserve the covenant with faithful Abraham (Psa 105 9, Mic 7 20)

**"for Thou art a gracious"** — Heb *channuwn*, from a primary word *chanan* meaning, *to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior* Yahweh recognizes the low estate of His people, and extends Himself on their behalf

**"and merciful"** — Heb *rachuwm* This important characteristic is emphasized by repetition See vv 17, 19

**"God"** — Heb *el* *supreme power or strength* Israel's history demonstrates that God's merciful qualities are limitless (see Psa 103 12) Forgiveness will be extended to the uttermost towards those who

approach Him acceptably But note Rom 6 1, 2, 15

### A Sorrowful Appeal for Divine Compassion — vv. 32-38.

*The prayer now introduces an appeal that Yahweh would accept the humble petition of the people who willingly acknowledge their former sins*

### VERSE 32

**"Now therefore, our God"** — Citing Deu 7 21 The Heb *elohim* *mighty ones*, a development of the *El* of v 31 The divine "strength" is manifested in the "mighty ones" of Yahweh's choosing the angelic beings who overshadow the chosen people (Heb 1 14)

**"the great"** — Heb *gadowl* The lofty One, who is above all others, and whose strength and power is limitless

**"the mighty"** — Heb *gibbor*, *warrior* Thus the Warrior God who goes forth to conquer Israel's enemies (Isa 9 6)

**"and the terrible"** — Heb *yarey* *to fear, revere* He is so just and righteous as to require mankind to worship and reverence Him

**"God"** — Heb *el* *strength, power* He is the embodiment of divine omnipotence

**"who keepest"** — Yahweh maintains a consistent righteousness in His activities (v 32) — a contrast to those of Israel (v 33 "we have done") who manifested fruitless works of flesh

**"covenant and mercy"** — See Psa 89 28 The covenant Yahweh made with the nation at Sinai provided judgments for iniquity, the mercy reveals the means by which the covenant could be realized The two aspects reveal the character of Yahweh goodness and severity (Rom 11 22)

**"let not all the trouble"** — Heb *tela'ah* *distress*, from a root "to tire" Literally it means "the weariness" In fact, Yahweh was "afflicted" in the sad history of His people (Isa 63 9)

**"seem little before Thee"** — Israel's troubles could seem petty to One so exalted, even as juvenile quarrels and problems of little children may appear to

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adults (cp Psa 103 12-14)

**“that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all Thy people”** — All elements of society suffered in the distresses that have faced the nation from the forces of the Gentiles

**“since the time of the kings of Assyria”** — The kings of Assyria that distressed Israel were particularly Shalmaneser II to whom Jehu paid tribute, Tiglath-pileser (2Kgs 15 29), Shalmaneser III and Sargon (2Kgs 17 5-6), and perhaps Ashurbanipal (2Chr 33 11)

**“unto this day”** — The Assyrian dominance of Israel had been continued by Babylon, and to a lesser extent, by Persia

### VERSE 33

**“Howbeit Thou art just”** — The acknowledgement of divine justice is a basic requirement of forgiveness (Psa 119 137)

**“in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right”** — The RV has “dealt truly,” Rotherham “faithfully” — Thus God is known as *The God of the Amen* (Faithfulness and Truth Isa 65 15)

**“but we”** — Like Ezra (Ezr 9 6-11) and Daniel (Dan 9 5-19), Nehemiah also associates himself with the confessions of the people. This accords with the spirit of Christ (Isa 53 4-5)

**“have done wickedly”** — In contrast to the divine faithfulness of God. Roth “have been lawless” (see 1Jn 3 4)

### VERSE 34

**“Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept Thy law, nor hearkened unto Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, wherewith Thou didst testify against them”** — Note the contrast between “our” kings, priests (etc), and “Thy” law, commandments (etc). Yahweh’s prophets are not included in this list, for they did not cause Israel’s troubles, although they experienced them (Mat 23 37). Thus v 32

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### VERSE 35

**“For they have not served Thee in their kingdom”** — The Septuagint and some other manuscripts have “Thy kingdom,” relating it to Yahweh’s possession

**“and in Thy great goodness that Thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which Thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works”** — The land was “large” and “fat” in the sense of its prosperity and being overshadowed by divine providence (Deu 8 7-10, 11 11-12)

### VERSE 36

**“Behold, we are servants”** — Rotherham has “bondmen.” Thus they reverted back to the state in which they were found in Egypt, losing the kingdom they were given by God — because in their hearts, they had never really left that land of darkness (Num 14 4, Rom 6 16)

**“this day, and for the land that Thou gavest unto our fathers”** — A reference to the leaders who brought Israel into the land (Josh 23 14, 21 45), for the promise to the patriarchs of an eternal inheritance in the land remains unfulfilled (Acts 7 5)

**“to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it”** — As the nation would not be servants to God, they became bond-slaves to others, and now were under the control of the king of Persia. Similarly, through transgression, we are naturally in servitude to Sin (Rom 6 12), bound within the arena of mortality (Phil 3 21)

### VERSE 37

**“And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings”** — To the Gentile king of Persia, not to the people of Israel! Compare ch 5 4. Blessings came on the Gentiles because of the presence of Israel (cp Isa 60 21), and Persia extracted a large revenue from the territory of Judah

**“whom Thou hast set over us because of our sins”** — The people were responsible for the sad state of affairs that had occasioned their distress

**“also they have dominion over our**

**bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure**” — Persia had control over both persons and cattle, and could utilize either in its battles and campaigns

**“and we are in great distress”** — Heb *tsarah*, meaning *tightness, trouble*  
The word is translated “trouble” in v 27

#### VERSE 38

**“And because of all this”** — The RV has “yet for all this ” The Levites acknowledged the present servitude to Gentile kings, and thus expressed repentance for the attitude of the nation in the past, together with a determination to accept the divine action and to maintain faithfulness in the service of Yahweh

**“we make”** — Heb *karath to cut* In accordance with the law of covenants (see

Heb 9 16, 19), animals were slain, and the priests, princes and Levites, as representatives of all sections of the nation, passed between the pieces (Gen 15 9-10, Jer 34 19, Heb 9 16)

**“a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes”** — Nehemiah and Hananiah, and probably others, were members of the royal family of Judah (ch 1 1)

**“Levites, and priests, seal unto it”** — Authenticating the covenant on behalf of the people A seal preserved a document, allowing only those approved to read it Similarly, baptism in water is the seal of faith, established on the basis of a confession, the baptism of spirit which brings divine nature, is the seal of works, established upon divine approval (Jas 2 18)

#### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER NINE

Throughout the ages, Israel proved to be “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” and were therefore pronounced “crooked and perverse” (Acts 7 51, Deu 32 5) However, they continued to be preserved as a people through the outpouring of divine grace, because Yahweh remained faithful to the covenants of promise He had made to the fathers of old Therefore, “they are beloved *for the fathers' sakes*” and not because they were more righteous or worthy than any other nation (Rom 11 28) Yahweh's fidelity in this, as in all other matters, was, and continues to be, above reproach “Who is an El like unto Thee?” Thus, “He saved them *for His Name's sake*” so that ultimately they will be humbled and will see that their previous boasting has been groundless, that their pride and rebellion has brought them much suffering and affliction, and that they must learn to subdue the evil propensities of their flesh, seeking only to do the will of their God (Deu 8 1-3) This great transformation in the nation will be witnessed and encouraged by all who have learned to discipline their lives by surrendering their will to the Great God of Israel, and who have developed a character based upon the influence of His Word so as to make them acceptable to Him

Let believers today not prove faithless to their calling, but rather serve their God and king “in spirit and in truth” so that they meet the Lord at his coming with joy and gladness

— J U

## CHAPTER TEN

## THE SEALING OF THE COVENANT

## Revealing:

## The Covenant and the Law Accepted by the People

**F**OUR groups sealed this important covenant, evidently promoted by Ezra and Nehemiah, on behalf of the whole congregation. They were: the Governor (v. 1), the Priests (vv. 2-8), Levites (vv. 9-13), and the chief of the people (vv. 14-27). A comparison with Neh. 12:1-25 reveals that twenty out of thirty priests and Levites who came with Zerubbabel sealed the covenant under Nehemiah.

**The Listing of Those Who Sealed the Covenant — vv.1-27.**

*These men represent the multitudinous company of the Redeemed who will ultimately "seal the covenant" of the millennium on behalf of all people, thus securing the divine blessing upon their activities.*

## VERSE 1

**"Now those that sealed were" —**

Neither Ezra nor Eliashib are mentioned in the following list as sealing the covenant. Ezra was presiding, and therefore supervised the transaction.

But where was the high priest? He is notable by his absence. Probably Nehemiah had requested the assistance of Ezra to counter the adverse influence of Eliashib. Ezra's high standing and influence would overshadow the high priest, who apparently refrained from participating in the reformation, probably because it was foreign to his liking. In this he was similar to Annas and Caiaphas who opposed the moral and spiritual reformation preached by the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 18:13-14).

Eliashib had, at first, readily assisted in the reconstruction of the wall, but was probably led away by a desire for a more

liberal approach to the affairs of the Truth. He viewed with aversion and resentment the exclusiveness and "narrow-mindedness" of Nehemiah and Ezra. Instead, he had a tolerant outlook, seeing "a larger, nobler and freer way" where Gentiles such as Sanballat and Tobiah could find affiliation with the Jews on their own terms. The fruits of such policies are clearly revealed in Nehemiah's final record (ch. 13). Such tendencies almost led the Jewish nation to ruin and complete apostasy in one generation, despite the efforts of those who faithfully stood by Nehemiah.

**"Nehemiah"** — Sig. *Consolation of Yah*. His name is expressive of the "comfort" that would come through the advent of the Messiah (cp. Isa. 40:1).

**"the Tirshatha"** — Nehemiah's title defined his status as "the Governor" (ch. 8:9), and, as civil ruler, was the first to place his seal. He was followed by Zidkijah who was probably his secretary (ch. 13:13).

**"the son of Hachaliah"** — Sig. *Yah hath Hidden* (see ch. 1:1).

**"and Zidkijah"** — Sig. *Yah is Righteous*. Rotherham has "Zedekiah," but other authorities suggest the name should be Zadok.

**Chronological Enigma in Ch. 10**

The first thirteen verses of this chapter record the names of 40 priests and Levites, plus Nehemiah. Thirty priestly and Levitical families had earlier returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and, significantly, twenty of them are now listed. These men were therefore still alive to witness and be involved in the sealing of the covenant with Nehemiah at this time.

The commonly accepted chronology maintains that Zerubbabel returned in BC536, the first year of Cyrus, and it is claimed by some that Nehemiah served the Persian ruler Artaxerxes Longimanus. This would require that the walls be rebuilt in BC444, followed by the events described in chapter 10, which would have happened some time later, about ninety years after Zerubbabel's return from Babylon. Thus the twenty men listed here — who, it should be noted, were already heads of their families when they returned with Zerubbabel — would be another ninety years older than at the time of their return. They would therefore have been at least 130 years old at this time, assuming that they were no more than forty years old at the time of their return from Babylon. Needless to say, forty years would have been an extremely young age for men to be heads of their families, to then suggest that their age would have been at least 130 at this time, is a conservative estimation.

The alternative explanation is that the Persian monarch at this time was Darius Hystaspes, who was also the Darius of Ezra 6:14, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, and the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7. This would mean that those who returned with Zerubbabel in BC536 sealed the covenant 34 years later, in harmony with the details recorded in this chapter.

See the chronological details on pages 10-12  
— J. U.

**VERSE 2**

*From vv 2-8 the heads of the priestly houses are listed these names mostly recur in ch 12 1-6*

**"Seraiah"** — Sig *Yah has Prevailed*  
He returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2:2, Neh 12:1, 12)

**"Azariah"** — Sig *Helped by Yahweh*  
He helped repair the wall (3:23) and assisted Ezra in expounding the law (8:7)

**"Jeremiah"** — Sig *He whom Yahweh Appoints and Exalts*  
Returned with Zerubbabel (12:1), and his son ministered under Joiakim (12:12). He participated at the dedication of the walls (12:34)

**VERSE 3**

**"Pashur"** — Sig *Free or To Multiply Liberty*

**"Amariah"** — Sig *Yah hath Promised*  
Returned with Zerubbabel (12:2, 13)

**"Malchijah"** — Sig *Yah is King*  
He was present at the dedication of the walls (12:42)

**VERSE 4**

**"Hattush"** — Sig *Contender*  
A descendant of David who returned under Ezra (Ezr 8:2), and assisted in repairing the wall (Neh 3:10)

**"Shebaniah"** — Sig *Yah has Grown (or Prospered)*  
Ch 12:14

**"Malluch"** — Sig *Reigning*  
He returned under Zerubbabel (12:2)

**VERSE 5**

**"Harim"** — Sig *Consecrated*  
Father of Melchijah who repaired part of the wall (3:11). Head of a priestly family (12:15)

**"Meremoth"** — Sig *Elevation*  
Son of Uriah the priest, returned with Zerubbabel (12:3), received the silver and gold brought back by Ezra (Ezr 8:33), repaired two sections of the wall (Neh 3:4, 21)

**"Obadiah"** — Sig *Servant of Yahweh*

**VERSE 6**

**"Daniel"** — Sig *El is Judge*  
A descendant of Ithamar, who returned with Ezra (Ezr 8:1-2)

## CHAPTER TEN

**“Ginnethon”** — Sig. *Gardener*. A chief priest who returned with Zerubbabel (12:4); and whose son is mentioned as contemporary with Joiakim (12:16).

**“Baruch”** — Sig. *Blessed*. Son of Zabbai, who “earnestly repaired” the wall, setting about on a double portion (3:20).

### VERSE 7

**“Meshullam”** — Sig. *Associate; Friend; Allied*. Perhaps the same priest who assisted Ezra in reading the law (Ezr. 8:16).

**“Abijah”** — Sig. *Yahweh is My Father*. A chief priest who returned under Zerubbabel (12:4). cp. 12:17.

**“Mijamin”** — Sig. *From the Right Hand* (also Miamin, Miniamin). He returned with Zerubbabel (12:5), and his son ministered under Joiakim (12:17). He acted as trumpeter at the dedication of the wall (12:41).

### VERSE 8

**“Maaziah”** — Sig. *Strength of Yahweh*.

**“Bilgai”** — Sig. *Breaking off or Bursting Forth*. Numbered among the chief priests (12:5) who returned with Zerubbabel. His son was priest under Joiakim (12:18).

**“Shemaiah”** — Sig. *Yah has Heard*. He returned under Zerubbabel (12:6). His son ministered under Joiakim (12:18) and assisted at the dedication of the wall (12:34).

**“these were the priests”** — This concludes the first list of names.

### VERSE 9

**“And the Levites”** — See ch. 12:8. Jeshua, Binnui and Kadmiel represent the three chief families of the returned Levites (see Ezr. 2:2; 3:9; Neh. 7:43-44).

**“both Jeshua”** — Sig. *Yahweh will Save*.

**“the son of Azaniah”** — Sig. *Yahweh Helps*.

**“Binnui”** — Sig. *Built*. He returned with Zerubbabel (12:1, 8), and assisted in repairing the walls (3:24). His name appears here to supplant Kadmiel in order

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

(see ch. 7:43).

**“of the sons of Henadad”** — Sig. *Hadad is Gracious*. He was head of a Levitical family which supported Zerubbabel when the foundation of the temple was laid, enthusiastically repairing the wall under Nehemiah (3:18, 24).

**“Kadmiel”** — Sig. *El is of Old*. Returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr. 2:40; Neh. 7:43). He co-operated with Joshua in stirring up the people to work on the temple (Ezr. 3:9), and was appointed by Jeshua to the ministry of thanksgiving (Neh. 12:8). He led the people in their devotions (9:4-5).

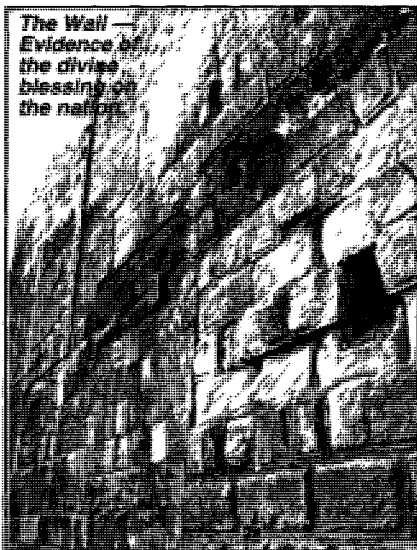
### VERSE 10

**“And their brethren, Shebaniah”** — Sig. *Yah has Grown (Prospered)*. He led the people in their devotions (9:4-5).

**“Hodijah”** — Sig. *Praise* (the feminine form of Judah). Assisted Ezra at the reading of the law (8:7) and the worship that led to the sealing of the Covenant (9:5).

**“Kelita”** — Sig. *Maiming* (i.e., *Lacking Parts*). He explained the law when read by Ezra (8:7).

**“Pelaiah”** — Sig. *Yah has Separated*



The Wall —  
Evidence of  
the divine  
blessing on  
the nation.

(or *Distinguished*) Assisted Ezra to explain the law (8 7)

**"Hanan"** — Sig *Favor* He assisted Ezra in reading the law (8 7), and was appointed to a position of honor in the temple (13 13)

#### VERSE 11

**"Micha"** — Sig *Who is Like Yahweh?* Probably of the family of Asaph, son of Zabdi and father of Mattaniah (11 17, 22)

**"Rehob"** — Sig *An Open Space*

**"Hashabiah"** — Sig *Yahweh Reckons* A ruler of half of Keilah, who repaired part of the wall next to Bani (3 17), who may have been his son (11 22) He seems to have returned with Ezra (Ezr 8 19), and to have assisted at the dedication (Neh 12 14)

#### VERSE 12

**"Zaccur"** — Sig *Well Remembered*

**"Sherebiah"** — Sig *Yah hath Brought to Heat (i.e., Caused to Glow)* He returned under Zerubbabel, and was appointed to the thanksgiving (12 8, 24)

**"Shebaniah"** — Sig *Yah Hath Grown (Prospered)*

#### VERSE 13

**"Hodijah,"** — Sig *Praise* The feminine form of Judah He co-operated with Joshua in the work of the foundation of the temple

**"Bani"** — Sig *Build* Perhaps as in ch 3 17, 9 4-5

**"Beninu"** — Sig *Our Son*

• This concludes the second list of names

#### VERSE 14

**"The chief of the people"** — Down to Magpiash (v 20), the names correspond to those of families that returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2 3-30, Neh 7 8-33), the first 18 being personal and the last three referring to localities

**"Parosh"** — Sig *A Flea*

**"Pahathmoab"** — Sig *Governor of Moab* A leading family of Judah, members of which returned under Zerubbabel

(Ezr 2 6, Neh 7 11) Further members returned with Ezra (Ezr 8 4) Hashub, who repaired portion of the wall, was of his family (Neh 3 11)

**"Elam"** — Sig *Hidden* The progenitor of two families which returned with Zerubbabel (7 12, 34) A further detachment of one of the families who returned under Ezra (Ezr 8 7)

**"Zatthu"** — Sig *To Germinate* Founder of a family whose descendants returned under Zerubbabel (Ezr 2 8, Neh 7 13 — under which see further notes)

**"Bani"** — Sig *Built* Called Binnui in ch 7 15 Father of a family, members of which returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2 10)

#### VERSE 15

**"Bunni"** — Sig *Built*

**"Azgad"** — Sig *Strong in Fortune* See notes in ch 7 17

**"Bebai"** — Sig *Fatherly* See under ch 7 16

#### VERSE 16

**"Adonijah"** — Sig *Yahweh is Lord*

**"Bigvai"** — Sig *Happy, Fortunate* A Persian name See under ch 7 19

**"Adin"** — Sig *Soft, Delicate, Effeminate* See ch 7 20

#### VERSE 17

**"Ater"** — Sig *To Shut Up, Maim* See next note

**"Hizkijah"** — Most likely should be rendered "Ater of Hezekiah" See ch 7 21, Ezr 2 16

**"Azzur"** — Sig *Helper*

#### VERSE 18

**"Hodijah"** — Sig *Praise* Feminine form of Judah

**"Hashum"** — Sig *Enriched* See ch 7 22

**"Bezai"** — Sig *Shining, High* He returned with Zerubbabel (7 23)

#### VERSE 19

**"Hariph"** — Sig *Autumnal Rain* See ch 7 24

**"Anathoth"** — Locality about five

## CHAPTER TEN

kilometres from Jerusalem The name signifies *Answered Prayer*

“**Nebai**” — Sig *To be High Locality* unidentified, but it is translated “Nebo” in ch 7 33

### VERSE 20

“**Magpiash**” — Sig *Congregating* An unknown locality, but identified with Magbish A group identified with it returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2 30)

“**Meshullam**” — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied* cp 1Chr 3 19

• From here to verse 27, the names appear to be personal, and probably those of individuals who were not authorized to represent either families or localities

“**Hezir**” — Sig *An Enclosed Swine*

### VERSE 21

“**Meshezabeel**” — Sig *God Delivers* The father of Berechiah who helped repair the city wall (3 4) Another son, Pethahiah, occupied a high position (11 24)

“**Zadok**” — Sig *Righteous* He shared in repairing the wall (3 4)

“**Jaddua**” — Sig *Knowing*

### VERSE 22

“**Pelatiah**” — Sig *Yahweh Delivers* Perhaps a grandson of Zerubbabel? (1Chr 3 21)

“**Hanan**” — Sig *Favor*

“**Anaiah**” — Sig *Yah has Answered* Perhaps the same as in 8 4

### VERSE 23

“**Hoshea**” — Sig *Delivered*

“**Hananiah**” — Sig *Yahweh has Favored* Perhaps the one mentioned in 1Chr 3 19

“**Hashub**” — Sig *Intelligent* Perhaps the repairer of the wall mentioned in ch 3 23)

### VERSE 24

“**Hallohesh**” — Sig *Whisperer, Enchanter* Perhaps mentioned in ch 3 12

“**Pileha**” — Sig *Slicing*

“**Shobek**” — Sig *Victor, One who Goes Before*

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

### VERSE 25

“**Rehum**” — Sig *Compassionate*

“**Hashabnah**” — Sig *Inventiveness*

“**Maaseiah**” — Sig *Work or Activity of Yahweh*

### VERSE 26

“**And Ahijah**” — Sig *A Brother in Yahweh*

“**Hanan**” — Sig *Favor*

“**Anan**” — Sig *Beclouds, Covers*

### VERSE 27

“**Malluch**” — Sig *Reigning*

“**Harim**” — Sig *Consecrated* He returned with Zerubbabel (7 42, cp Ezr 10 21)

“**Baanah**” — Sig *In Affliction* He also returned with Zerubbabel (7 7, cp 3 4)

• This concludes the third list of names

### The People Endorse the Sealing — vv. 28-29.

*The general community add their confirmation of the covenant entered into with Yahweh, and thus agree to its terms. It is based upon the terms already entered into, and recorded in Ezra 9 1 and which were later reinforced by action (Neh 13 3). The whole incident typifies the principle of baptism, the terms of which place a daily responsibility upon each individual. Such a covenant is represented in those who have “gone before” as the governor and high officials of Judah did in the days of Nehemiah (cp Eph 2 20).*

### VERSE 28

“**And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim**” — See notes at ch 7 46, and compare with 1Chr 9 2

“**and all they**” — Proselytes who had thrown in their lot with Israel (Ezr 6 21)

“**that had separated**” — Heb *badal* to divide, sever. Respect for the principles of Yahweh requires us to separate from sin, and this is demonstrated in the division indicated in the two terms “the sons of God and the daughters of men” (Gen



6 2) Such a division is essential for the preservation of the Truth, and the honor given to the covenant made with Yahweh

**“themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters”** — Having carefully prepared and preserved the walls of Jerusalem, a mental separation from the godlessness of the times was now required. Such was a safeguard to protect the Truth, and the privileged standing of the worshippers in the service of Yahweh. This action resulted in a literal separation from those who would not respect the divine covenant (cp Num 16 21, 1Kgs 8 53). The action of faithful brethren provided a worthwhile example for wives and children to follow. Similarly, the apostle Paul exhorts that we observe the example of faithful leaders in the ecclesia (2Tim 2 3).

**“every one having knowledge”** — Heb *yada*, *to know*. An understanding of the Truth is the foundation of a proper appreciation of its principles.

**“and having understanding”** — Heb *biyn*, *to separate mentally, distinguish in conscience*. See notes on the use of this word in Neh 8. Having developed a knowledge of the divine Will, there must come a recognition of the righteousness and holiness of Yahweh and the distinguishing of the ways of the spirit from those of the flesh (cp 1Kgs 3 9).

## VERSE 29

**“They clave”** — The Hebrew word *chazaq* signifies *to fasten upon, hence to seize, be strong, obstinate, to bind*. They gave wholehearted support to their more distinguished brethren. In this regard they respected the pioneers and ancients of the ecclesia (cp Rom 13 7, 1Tim 5 17).

**“to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse”** — By this means they submitted to the covenant restrictions, that, if they failed to maintain their commitment, they would accept its punishment. The Hebrew word *alah* signifies, *an imprecation*, hence, *to adjure oneself*. The covenant delivered by Moses involved both blessings and cursings.

## Cleaving Aright (ch. 10:29)

In the *Hiphil* tense, the Hebrew word rendered “clave” signifies, *to take hold, grasp, seize*. In this tense the word occurs 63 times in the Old Testament, of which, remarkably, 34 occurrences are in the book of Nehemiah. Mostly the word is used in the sense of “repairing,” referring to the rebuilding of the walls of the city. It is significant that, having used the word so many times in relation to the “joining” together of the various materials that made up the wall to provide strength and solidity, Nehemiah should use the same word to emphasize the way in which the people, in responding to the teaching of the Word, now “clave” to one another. They could gaze about them and see the way in which the wall had been dramatically repaired. Instead of being faced with mounds of useless rubble, heaps of broken rock and gaping holes which would provide neither defence nor comfort for themselves, they saw a carefully constructed wall, its many pieces of building material strongly joined together to form a powerful fortification and a protective barrier against the world without. Job used this same word, in the same tense, to express his unshakable faith: “My righteousness I *hold fast*, and will not let it go” (Job 27 6). The body of believers, from generation to generation, should remember the selfless, dedicated labor of those who wholeheartedly worked with Nehemiah to rebuild and “join together” the walls of Jerusalem, and should see this as a grand example of the way in which they must “cleave” unto God through faith, and be “joined” to one another in the spirit of the Truth to the glory of Yahweh. — J.U.

Yahweh’s goodness was manifested in the blessings, and His judgment was experienced through the cursings. In that respect the people were required to seek the way

## CHAPTER TEN

of righteousness, and to challenge sin, acknowledging that disobedience to the divine law was to be condemned

**“and into an oath”** — Heb *shebuv'ah* that which is sworn, from the feminine particle of *shaba*, to complete, to take an oath The law required the people to fully commit themselves to upholding the divine way (Deu 27 15, 29 12, 14) This was probably also undertaken in the days of Josiah (2Kgs 23 3)

**“to walk in God's law”** — The oath was to be confirmed in faithful action consistent with the divine instructions, and not merely to give verbal assent to it (cp 1Kgs 3 14)

**“which was given by Moses the servant of God”** — The Law was divinely inscribed in stone, but brought to the people through the mediator Moses (cp Heb 3 5, cp Num 12 7, Exo 34 1)

**“and to observe”** — Heb *shamar* to hedge about (as with thorns), i e guard, to protect Moses warned the people to carefully listen to the Law to protect them from spiritual damage or the danger of ignorance They were not to “add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deu 12 32), an instruction repeated by the Lord Jesus “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev 22 18)

**“and do”** — Heb *asah* to do or to make, in the broadest sense and widest application

**“all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes”** — This comprises the whole Law, with both its “blessings and cursings” (Rom 11 22)

### **Specific Points of Law the People Covenant to Obey — vv. 30-39.**

*Five particular aspects of the covenant are emphasized no intermarriage with foreigners (v 30), the sabbath to be strictly observed (v 31), voluntary yearly offerings to be made (v 32), a contribution of wood to be given at appointed times (v 34), and a provision of firstfruits*

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

*to be offered to Yahweh (v 35) The people thus entered into a solemn, binding, agreement*

### **VERSE 30**

**“And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons”** — The “daughters” represented the means by which families expand, through the provision of children They comprised the life-stream of the nation, and typify Israel as the Bride of Yahweh The nation could only be preserved under the blessing of Yahweh if its daughters remained consistent with the laws it followed The people thus agreed to accept parental responsibility and supervision in the marriage relationships of their children Ezra's attitude and action of rejecting intermarriage with foreigners, was re-endorsed (Ezr 10), but, unfortunately, the people later again neglected this important instruction (Neh 13 23)

### **VERSE 31**

**“And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals”** — The Jews of Jerusalem were permitting the people of the land to bring their goods in order to develop the trading and selling of products But, if doing so required them to put aside the laws of Yahweh for present benefit, this meant that religion was being contaminated with business

**“on the sabbath day”** — The sabbath and sabbatical year were to be strictly enforced and preserved The purpose of the sabbath was to give opportunity for the nation to recall Yahweh's wonderful providence It required the people to rest from mundane affairs of life and reflect upon and renew commitment to His service (Isa 56 6, 58 13-14) Thus business and activity was to be restricted, so that effort could be given to the things of God But this requirement was neglected again later, when time was given over to personal goals at the expense of the Truth (Neh 13 15-22)

Responsibility to God's way must have first call upon our decisions, the

words of the Lord to “seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Mat 6 33) must have claim upon our activities

**“to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath”** — Commercialism was restricted under the Law (Exo 20 10, Lev 23 3, Deu 15 1, Jer 17 21)

**“or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year”** — The people agreed to forego the produce of the land in the seventh year, as required by the Law (Exo 23 11, Lev 25 4, 20)

**“and the exaction of every debt”** — These words literally mean “the pledge of every hand” The practice of lending upon pledge had recommenced, despite Nehemiah’s curse and the people’s previous assent to the Law (Neh 5 13)

### VERSE 32

**“Also we made ordinances for us”** — The faithful agreed to give offerings to maintain the services of the temple

**“to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God”** — The shekel was worth about \$2, in current values (1994) This contribution was additional to that required by Exo 30 11-16, and comprised a voluntary yearly offering to support the activities of the divine services But this was also later discontinued (Neh 13 10-11), and had to be reintroduced by Nehemiah on his return (v 13)

This temple tax was ultimately altered to a half-shekel contribution (Mat 17 24-27, where the Gk *didrachma* referred to a double drachma, and would be currently worth about \$1)

### VERSE 33

**“For the shewbread”** — A complete service was established, as required by Lev 24 5-8 This was not of great cost, but is mentioned first in the list because of its importance It was the “bread of God’s presence” (Ex 40 23), the typical representation of the spirit of Christ (the “bread of life” Jn 6 35, 48) in his followers

**“and for the continual meat offering”** — The word “meat” is more correctly “meal” It comprised flour mingled

with fine oil, and was offered with the morning and evening lamb, the “continual burnt offering” (Exo 29 42, Num 28 5)

**“and for the continual burnt offering”** — Two lambs were offered daily, in the morning and evening (Num 28 4)

**“of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts”** — Constituted to be a continual ordinance in Israel (2Chr 2 4)

**“and for the holy things”** — Probably referring to the “wave offering” and “peace offering” of Lev 23 10, 17, 19, being “holy to the priest for Yahweh”

**“and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel”** — The provision of sin offerings was additional to that provided by Solomon at the dedication of the temple (2Chr 2 4) The people had fallen into trespass, and the sin offering was essential to restore harmony with Yahweh by the process of “atonement” (Heb *kaphar*, to cover), so that the sin might be removed from view

**“and for all the work of the house of our God”** — Probably the cleaning and internal maintenance of the temple area

### VERSE 34

**“And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people”** — The whole nation had to co-operate in making up the deficiency, and to organize a contribution of a certain amount of wood at set seasons Fuel had evidently become scarce, probably the land had been stripped of much of its trees by invaders, and now required a special endeavor to collect the fuel This requirement was willingly shouldered by the people But compare Neh 13 31

**“for the wood offering”** — Heb *kurban etsim*, meaning “an offering of wood” The Gibeonites or the Nethinim, originally provided this (Jos 9 21), but with the land under foreign domination and wood doubtless being scarce, some other provision was necessary to make sure that wood was available So lots were taken to determine the districts that would supply it When the wood was brought, it was delivered to the Levites who ensured that it was cut, prepared and stored, finally delivering

it to the priests when required. Gradually this delivering of wood was limited to one day, which became a day of great ceremony, called by Josephus, "The Carrying of the Wood" (*Bell, Jud*, 2 17 6)

**"to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year"** — Probably no single day was selected at the beginning, but in course of time it was found necessary to introduce and establish specific appointments

**"to burn upon the altar of Yahweh our God, as it is written in the law"** — See Lev 6 12

#### VERSE 35

**"And to bring the firstfruits of our ground"** — Notice that the firstfruits were divided into two that from the "ground" and those from the "trees" — which represent that which is developed from the ground of Israel (*Christ Isa* 53 2), and the fruit which comes from the branches (the saints *Jn* 15 5). This suggests the great offering of Christ "the firstfruits" (*1Cor* 15 23, *Heb* 7 27), and afterwards the spiritual fruit of his work revealed the saints who comprise "the ecclesia of firstborns" (*Heb* 12 23, *lit Gr*)

**"and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees"** — The bringing of firstfruits, firstborn and tithes to Yahweh was a recognition of His authority and the appropriateness of His people responding in thanksgiving for the provisions He has given (*Pro* 3 9, *cp Exo* 22 29, 23 16-19, *Lev* 23 10, 17)

This, also, was later neglected and had to be reintroduced at Nehemiah's return (*Neh* 13 12)

**"year by year, unto the house of Yahweh"** — The offerings came from the product of the earth and were designed for the work of Yahweh (*Num* 18 13, *Deu* 18 4)

#### VERSE 36

**"Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God"** — *Exo* 22 29, 34 19. The firstborn

children were to be redeemed

**"unto the priests that minister in the house of our God"** — Similarly, the offerings of the nations will be brought to the saints who minister in the millennium (*Isa* 66 20-21, 60 5, 11, *cp margin*)

#### VERSE 37

**"And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings"** — *Heb* *terumah* signifies "heave offerings" (*Num* 15 20) or "wave offerings" (*Lev* 23 17). These offerings represent the spirit of Christ, as the "firstfruits" of humanity given in devotion to Almighty God (*1Cor* 15 23)

**"and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God"** — The store chambers attached to the temple building

**"and the tithes of our ground"** — This tenth was previously given in addition to the law of firstfruits (*Lev* 27 30, *2Chr* 31 6), but this had been neglected so that Levites avoided the area of Jerusalem, and the temple worship was thereby affected

**"unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage"** — The Levitical tithe was apparently stored in some Levitical city in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. The RSV has "rural towns," Rotherham has "cities of our agriculture"

#### VERSE 38

**"And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes"** — The people paid tithes to the Levites, and in their turn the Levites gave their tithe (of the people's tithe) to the priests (*cp Num* 18 26). In this way the people, through His priests, repayed to Yahweh from the bounty that He had given them

**"unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house"** — The tenth was conveyed to Jerusalem and placed in the store house

This will be repeated typically in the future. A "tithe" of Israel will be brought

### Eliashib: The Betrayer

Eliashib had been foremost in the early work of unifying the people in the work of rebuilding the walls (ch 3 1) Now he is nowhere to be seen Not only is he no longer numbered among Nehemiah's supporters, the evidence shows that he has deserted to the opposition, disapproving of Ezra and Nehemiah, and actively supporting Tobiah (ch 13 4 cp 6 17-19) Obviously Eliashib was no longer of one mind with Ezra and Nehemiah, advocating a more liberal and broadminded attitude that neither Ezra nor Nehemiah were prepared to accept Though outwardly this may have appeared as merely a difference of opinion, the resultant dissension became openly divisive Some remained faithful to Nehemiah, whilst others followed the philosophy of Eliashib The fruits of this disagreement almost resulted in total apostasy (ch 13) The law warned "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex 23 2, an admonition which was lost on Eliashib and his followers He was apparently related to Tobiah (see ch 13 4, where the word "allied" signifies *nearness kinsman, family ties* cp Lev 21 2), and one of his grandsons married the daughter of Sanballat (13 28) The Gentile saying, "*Blood is thicker than water*" (meaning that family loyalty transcends all other considerations) has resulted in many a disastrous situation within an ecclesial environment In view of his responsible position as high priest, Eliashib should have acted with greater wisdom and shown dedicated loyalty to the ideals of the Truth Instead, he used his position and his influence to promote opposition to the requirements of the Truth Eliashib, and those like him, will, in "due time have their reward"

Similarly, the experience of the Lord Jesus amongst pseudo-supporters is captured in the record of John 6 60-67 "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him Then said Jesus unto the twelve, *Will ye also go away?*"

— J.U.

back from the lands of exile, and be placed in the Holy Land, under the care and protection of the saints (see Eze 20 37, where the "rod" refers to the shepherd's rod used to count the flock and to divide off the tithe for Yahweh)

### VERSE 39

**"For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers"** — The priests were not to be troubled with the labor or conveyancing of the offerings, but to concentrate upon their essential duties Therefore both people and Levites co-operated together in this activity in order that all the necessary activities in the temple might continue

**"and we will not forsake"** — i.e., to neglect (Psa 122 9)

**"the house of our God"** — This final challenging statement summarizes the ideal behind the reformation To put it into practice required that the Jews

- Continue in the faith (vv 29-31),
- Grow in grace (vv 32-34),
- Labor in the extension of the Truth by providing tithes to those dedicated to the work (v 35),
- Attend to God's ordinances beyond the scope of the Law (v 32),
- Produce fruit to the glory of God (v 35),
- Enter wholeheartedly into the offerings (v 34),
- Co-operate with those who minister the Word (v 38)

Unfortunately, as ch 13 reveals, the covenant was broken in almost all its principles during the absence of Nehemiah, necessitating his second advent!

The phrase "House of our God" re-occurs throughout the books of Ezra and Nehemiah Ezra 8 17, 25, 30, 33, 9 9, Neh 10 32, 33, 34, 36 (twice), 37, 38, 39, 13 4 It comes from the Hebrew "Bethel" (*The House of El*), site at which Jacob had the prophetic vision of the ascending and descending angels (Gen 31 13)

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE RECORDING OF THE CENSUS OF THE PEOPLE

#### Revealing:

**That the True Leader of the Nation will be mindful of the Need  
to Strengthen the City and Provide for the Proper  
Accommodation of Its Inhabitants**

**N**EHEMIAH recognised the need to properly establish the city, with the population listed and the whole community organized. In this he typified the work to be accomplished by the Lord Jesus, when he returns to reform the nation of Israel into the first dominion, with Jerusalem as the metropolis of the future age. Then, a symbolic tithe of all the nations will be seen in Israel (Zech. 8:23), who will “dwell in the midst of the land,” and occupy the chief area of the Middle East.

#### **A Tithe of the People for Jerusalem — vv. 1-2.**

*The status of Jerusalem had suffered because of the former attacks upon it by the enemy, and because of its meagre population. In the surge of enthusiasm for reform, the people agree to correct this. In this determination they typify the development of the kingdom following the devastation of Armageddon.*

#### **VERSE 1**

**“And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem”** — The leaders were already residing in the city, but the commoners generally gathered in country towns outside the city (v. 3). The city had been fortified, but such protection was of little value unless correctly maintained and manned. Similarly, the saints will occupy the future Holy Oblation in the centre of

the land (Eze. 43:7; 48:8), to ensure that the “protection” of the word of Yahweh is upheld, and divine principles promulgated to the peoples throughout the earth (Isa. 2:2-3; Jer. 3:17).

#### **“the rest of the people also cast lots”**

— This was done in order to determine who would be selected to dwell in the metropolis. The procedure was as established in Num. 26:55.

**“to bring one of ten”** — A tithe of the people was selected to support the development in Jerusalem.

**“to dwell in Jerusalem”** — To dwell in this city would have required a sacrifice by many families, as it does to “dwell” in “spiritual Jerusalem” (the involvement of the Truth”: Rev. 11:1; 21:2). It was pre-eminently the dwelling place of the rulers (Neh. 11:1). Others dwelt there by “lot” (by divine direction), or voluntarily sacri-

ficed to do so (see v 2)

**“the holy city”** — A significant title, indicating that the divine blessing rested upon Jerusalem. It was to be “separated” as a dedicated city in the midst of the nation. In the Age to come, the Holy Oblation will similarly be “set apart” as the “mountain of Yahweh’s inheritance” (Exod 15 17), and be called “the city of Yahweh, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 60 14)

**“and nine parts to dwell in other cities”** — The residue of the nation, typifying the future residence of Israel in the twelve cantons to be established from the Euphrates to the Nile (see Ezek 48)

## VERSE 2

**“And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem”** — Only such a “willing” offering is acceptable to Yahweh (Exo 25 2, 2Cor 8 12). David refused to worship God without a sacrificial offering (2Sam 24 24). This example is now followed in the “city of David” as the people gave themselves without stint to assisting the depleted cause of Jerusalem. They accepted the lot cheerfully, even though it entailed uprooting their homes, and heavy sacrifices in material matters, perhaps suffering uncongenial work and conditions as laborers and artisans in the capital.

## The Census is Taken — vv. 3-36.

*The inhabitants of Jerusalem are listed principally by heads of families, while the inhabitants of the outlying countryside are merely listed by villages*

## VERSE 3

**“Now these are the chief of the province”** — The province established by Persia (1 3, Ezra 2 1)

**“that dwelt in Jerusalem”** — Following the decision described in v 1

**“but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities”** — This implies that the former quit their possessions to dwell in Jerusalem, perhaps exchanging riches for poverty, a comfortable home in a fertile area for one

in ruins, the life of a landed proprietor for that of a workman on wages. Whatever the situation, a measure of sacrifice was required to assist the cause of the Truth.

**“to wit, Israel”** — Many of the ten tribes (1Chr 9 3)

**“the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim”** — Specific groups in the nation. The Nethinim (see notes on ch 7 46) were a significant company, described as “those whom David appointed for the service of the Levites” (1Chr 9 2)

**“and the children of Solomon’s servants”** — They were closely associated with the Nethinim, and seem to be descendants of Canaanites and Midianites that Solomon used in the building of his temple (ch 7 46, 2Chr 2 17), and whose duties were possibly even humbler than those of the Nethinim.

## VERSE 4

**“And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athaiah”** — Sig *Yah Helps*

**“the son of Uzziah”** — Sig *Strength of Yah*

**“the son of Zechariah”** — Sig *Yah hath Remembered*

**“the son of Amariah”** — Sig *Yah hath Promised*

**“the son of Shephatiah”** — Sig *Yah hath Judged*

**“the son of Mahalaleel”** — Sig *Praise of El*

**“of the children of Perez”** — Pharez (Sig *Breach*)

## VERSE 5

**“And Maaseiah”** — Sig *Work or Activity of Yah*

**“the son of Baruch”** — Sig *Blessed One*

**“the son of Colhozeh”** — Sig *All-seeing*

**“the son of Hazaiah”** — Sig *Yah hath Seen*

**“the son of Adaiah”** — Sig *Whom Yah Adorns*

**“the son of Joiarib”** — Sig *Yahweh*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Contents*

**"the son of Zechariah"** — Sig *Yah hath Remembered*

**"the son of Shiloni"** — Rotherham has "the Shilonite," as in 1Chr 9 5 It signifies *The Sent One*

### VERSE 6

**"All the sons of Perez"** — Sig *Breach* (i.e. Pharez, see v 4)

**"that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men"** — Active men able to bear arms and fight 1Chr 9 6 suggests that there were originally 690 men in this company, so, evidently, the numbers became depleted They are typical of the valiant in the warfare of faith (1Tim 1 18)

### VERSE 7

**"And these are the sons"** — The Heb *benim* signifies "children" as in v 7

**"of Benjamin"** — Sig *The Son of the Right Hand*

**"Sallu"** — Sig *Weighed* Mentioned in 1Chr 9 7

**"the son of Meshullam"** — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied* Mentioned in 1Chr 9 7

**"the son of Joed"** — Sig *Yah is Wit ness*

**"the son of Pedaiah"** — Sig *Yah has Ransomed*

**"the son of Kolaiah"** — Sig *The Voice of Yah*

**"the son of Maaseiah"** — Sig *Work or Activity of Yah*

**"the son of Ithiel"** — Sig *El is With Me*

**"the son of Jesaiah"** — Sig *Yah hath Saved*

### VERSE 8

**"And after him Gabbai"** — Sig *Tax Gatherer*

**"Sallai"** — Sig *Weighed*

**"nine hundred twenty and eight"** — The number listed in 1Chr 9 9 is 956 Thus there were more of Benjamin than of Judah (cp v 6, see panel) They had proved more staunch than those of Judah, and for this reason became renowned

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

(Phil 3 5)

### VERSE 9

**"And Joel"** — Sig *Yah is Strength*

**"the son of Zichri"** — Sig *Famous, Renowned*

**"was their overseer"** — Chief or magistrate

**"and Judah"** — Sig *Praise*

**"the son of Senuah"** — Sig *The Violated*

**"was second over the city"** — He acted as the deputy to Joel

### VERSE 10

**"Of the priests: Jedaiah"** — Sig *Yah has been Kind* He returned with Zerubbabel (1Chr 9 10, Neh 12 6, Zech 6 10, 14) His son ministered under Joiakim (Neh 12 19)

**"the son of Joiarib"** — Sig *Yah Con tends* He is not mentioned at the signing of the covenant, so probably may have died (cp 12 6, 19)

**"Jachin"** — Sig *He doth Establish* He was among the first to return (1Chr 9 10)

### VERSE 11

**"Seraiah"** — Sig *Yah hath Prevailed* One of the twelve leaders who returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2 2, Neh 10 2, 12 1, 12)

**"the son of Hilkiah"** — Sig *Inheritance of Yah* Stood with Ezra to read the Law (8 4), returned with Zerubbabel (12 7), and his sons ministered under Joiakim (12 21) Perhaps the one mentioned in 1Chr 9 11

**"the son of Meshullam"** — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied*

**"the son of Zadok"** — Sig *Right eous*

**"the son of Meraioth"** — Sig *Rebel lious* Doubtless the same person as in 1Chr 9 11, the son of Zerahiah, high priest of the line of Eleazar (1Chr 6 6-7, 52, Ezra 7 3) Here mistakenly placed by copyists between Zadok and Ahitub instead of after the latter

**"the son of Ahitub"** — Sig *Brother of Goodness* A priest and ruler of the tem-



ple (1Chr 9 11) Among the first to return (1Chr 9 2)

**“was the ruler of the house of God”**

— He had command over secular matters, as the high priest did over spiritual affairs

## VERSE 12

**“And their brethren that did the work of the house”** — Priests of the ordinary rank that provided the necessary services of the temple and its upkeep

**“were eight hundred twenty and two”** — Originally this group was divided into twenty-four sections, but apparently had become depleted

**“and Adaiah”** — Sig *Whom Yahweh Adorns*

**“the son of Jeroham”** — Sig *Compassionate*

**“the son of Pelaliah”** — Sig *Yah Judges*

**“the son of Amzi”** — Sig *Strong One*

**“the son of Zechariah”** — Sig *Yah hath Remembered*

**“the son of Pashur”** — Sig *Free, or Multiplies Liberty* Of a priestly family which returned under Zerubbabel (1Chr 9 12, Ezra 2 38, Neh 7 41) Some married foreign wives, but put them away at the instigation of Ezra (10 22)

**“the son of Malchiah”** — Sig *Yah is King*

## VERSE 13

**“And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two”** — See notes, v 12

**“and Amashai”** — Sig *Spoil-Bearer*

**“the son of Azareel”** — Sig *El Hath Helped*

**“the son of Ahasai”** — Sig *To Seize Upon* He is named Jahzerah (*Protection*) in 1Chr 9 12

**“the son of Meshillemoth”** — Sig *Recompense*

**“the son of Immer”** — Sig *Talkative* His family returned with Zerubbabel (1Chr 9 12, Ezra 2 37, Neh 7 40), and put away their foreign wives (Ezra 10 20)

## VERSE 14

**“And their brethren, mighty men of valour”** — The Hebrew for “mighty” is *gibbowr*, “strong men of ability” Thus they comprised a group of “very able” men dedicated for the work of the service (cp 1Chr 9 13) They represent those of all generations who devote their energies to “wage the warfare of faith” (1Tim 1 18, cp Num 8 24)

**“an hundred twenty and eight”** — See notes verse 12

**“and their overseer was Zabdiel”** — Sig *El has Given*

**“the son of one of the great men”** — Rotherham and the RV have these words as a proper name “Haggadolim” (see margin, AV)

## The List of the Levites — vv. 15-18.

*The Levites were also divided into 24 divisions, as shown by the 24 names listed in 1Chr 23 7-23, and the statement of verse 24 They were perhaps heads of families*

## VERSE 15

**“Also of the Levites: Shemaiah”** — Sig *Yah has Heard* From the lineage of Merari (1Chr 9 14)

**“the son of Hashub”** — Sig *Intelligent*

**“the son of Azrikam”** — Sig *My Help has Risen* Among the first to return (1Chr 9 14)

**“the son of Hashabiah”** — Sig *Yah Reckons*

**“the son of Bunni”** — Sig *Built*

## VERSE 16

**“And Shabbethai”** — Sig *Restful or Sabbath-Born* A Levite who had assisted in the matter of those who had taken strange wives (Ezra 10 15) He explained the Law read to the people by Ezra (Neh 8 7)

**“and Jozabad”** — Sig *Yah has Endowed*

**“of the chief of the Levites”** — An interpreter of the Law read by Ezra (Neh 8 1)



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## Nehemiah ch. 11:17 to 13:31

A **LOGOS**

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NUMBER ONE

## From the Editor...

January 1995.

Dear Reader,

This issue concludes our exposition of the diary of Nehemiah. It has been a thrilling experience, a personal delight, a challenging encounter, and a stimulating exhortation, as we have travelled with Nehemiah through his dramatic experiences of life, to observe his emotions, to share his trials, to listen to his prayers to the Father and to be impressed by his capable leadership. Through this record of his life and times, the Spirit has invited us to "fellowship his sufferings" and to rejoice in his victories. In this he stands as a wonderful type of the perfect Governor and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. What Nehemiah accomplished for a short period, the Lord will achieve for eternity.

In reading his record and considering the principles that develop from it, we can all be inspired to a better service in the days of our opportunity.

I hope you have enjoyed the exposition provided, and wish to thank you for your support of this magazine. Whilst we intend to issue each *Expositor* series in a bound volume, we acknowledge the financial and moral help that our magazine subscribers provide, by reducing the cost of the bound set. At the same time readers should be aware that their subscriptions provide the necessary finance to continue this work, and I hope that you will remain with us until our Master ends our service, according to his will.

We are now commencing on our next exposition. Alternating between the Old and New Testaments, we have selected *THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES*. Having just completed marking this book in my Bible, I believe that the exposition will provide a stimulant to our spiritual development, as we follow the apostles, converted from their previous doubts and confusions, going forth boldly proclaiming the saving message in the Lord's name. The drama will be equal to that of Nehemiah's days; the pathos of their challenges as moving; the principles just as powerful. I hope that you enjoy it, and that you will recommend a subscription to others who do not yet receive *The Expositor*. I anticipate that this exposition of Acts will continue for a number of years — hoping to be interrupted by the appearance of its key figure himself: the "Lord of glory." It is in that hope that we labor to strengthen one another in the work of the Truth.

May Yahweh bless this activity, as we have experienced from His goodness in the past.

Fraternally, In the service of the Truth,

*Isaiah E. Mangfield*  
Editor

**FIVE GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS — THE FOUNDATION FOR A SOUND ECCLESIA**

Nehemiah's Diary reveals five dominant features, each relating to our personal responsibilities in these closing days of Gentile times. Nehemiah's carefully considered and developed plan of activities sets out a sound and positive approach to maintaining soundness and wise development within ecclesias:

**1. *The people were exhorted to labor diligently in the service of the Truth.*** This principle contains exhortation with a wide-ranging application. It involves a call to study the Scriptures with a dedicated love for Yahweh and His Word; to faithfully expound it within the ecclesia and without, speaking forthrightly and warmly concerning the things of the kingdom and the things of the Name (Acts 8:12). It is a reminder to fulfil the everyday responsibilities of ecclesial life, whether it be the duties of an arranging brother, the preparation of the memorial table, the caring of the ecclesial premises, encouraging brethren and sisters, or whatever avenue of labor we see open to us in the service of our Lord and King.

**2. *The services of the temple were restored.*** This feature of Nehemiah's work highlights the principle of sound worship. "Give unto Yahweh the glory due unto His Name; worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2). There is an urgent need for all who have been called to be saints to establish a close and intimate relationship with their Creator. This can only be achieved upon the basis of a realization, on our part, of the glory, majesty, righteousness and holiness — the absolute perfectness — of the One whom we worship. Such a conception of the Deity will incline to fill us with awe and reverence, and draw each individual, in all humility, before the throne of Grace. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before Yahweh our Maker" (Psa. 95:6). And let us never neglect the necessity and privilege to "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23-24).

**3. *The defensive walls had been soundly and thoroughly rebuilt.*** The fortifications which protect the ecclesia are sound doctrine and an upholding of correct principles of spiritual standards and morality. If these are weakened, the "walls" protecting the ecclesia will be breached, and the enemy — apostate ideas and philosophies — will enter in, corrupting the ecclesia. The necessity of dedicated brethren laboring to keep the "walls" of the ecclesia strong and secure, cannot be over-emphasized.

**4. *The people were thoroughly and correctly instructed.*** This state will only be evident when the ecclesia has wise, knowledgeable, mature leadership. Members of the flock will be made aware of their responsibilities and obligations, and will be carefully and objectively educated and encouraged in all the ways of the Truth. "Every Word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him" (Pro. 30:5).

**5. *The population of the city was increased.*** This indicates the necessity of drawing the ecclesia together with one mind and purpose. When members of the ecclesia have such a right disposition, based upon a sound knowledge of the Truth, they will be moved to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

Nehemiah had arrived in the city to find its walls broken down, its gates burned with fire, a scene of disorder and havoc. Desiring to end this disastrous situation, Nehemiah initiated his fivefold program of attack against apathy, ignorance and lack of competent, dedicated leadership. With "the good hand of his God upon him," he was able to rejuvenate the city and transform the people. Only a vigorous application of divine principles and commandments, as found in the Word of God, can direct men and women into ways of activity and mental comprehension that will lead to their eternal wellbeing. — *J. Ullman.*

**“(had) the oversight of the outward business of the house of God”** — Berkeley has “the outside work of the house of God” Jozabad controlled the secular and financial matters of the temple, which related to external matters. In this he “served tables” (Acts 6 2-5), having a special capacity for such matters

### VERSE 17

**“And Mattaniah”** — Sig *Gift of Yahweh* A Levite singer of the family of Asaph, resident at Jerusalem after the captivity (1Chr 9 15). As leader of the temple choir after its restoration in the time of Nehemiah (cp Neh 12 8), he took part in the musical service which accompanied the dedication of the walls (v 35), and is listed among the Levites of the second rank, “keepers of the thresholds” (12 25)

**“the son of Micha”** — Sig *Who is Like Yah* A Levite of the family of Asaph. Probably the same as sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (10 11)

**“the son of Zabdi”** — Sig *Giving* Called Zichri in 1Chr 9 15

**“the son of Asaph”** — Sig *The Collector* Keeper of the King's Park in Judea by authority of the kings of Persia (Neh 2 8)

**“(was) the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer”** — He determined the timing, and set the pitch of the tune. Thus considered the Master-Singer, the leader of the choir. This provided for harmony in the worship (1Cor 14 7-8)

**“and Bakkukiah”** — Sig *Yah Empires or The Wasting of Yah*

**“the second among his brethren, and Abda”** — Sig *Servant or Worshiper* One of the chief Levites in the temple service, he is called Obadiah in 1Chr 9 16, and there is numbered among the first of the returning exiles. He held third place

**“the son of Shammua”** — Sig *Renowned* In 1Chr 9 16 his name is given as Shemaiah, the father of Obadiah

**“the son of Galai”** — Sig *Rolling*

**“the son of Jeduthun”** — Sig *He who Honors or Worships* Known as Ethan in 1Chr 6 44

### VERSE 18

**“All the Levites in the holy city (were) two hundred fourscore and four”** — The proportion of Levites to priests was very small. Ezra found them loathe to leave their comfortable positions in Babylon (Ezr 8 15), and only 341 Levites returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2 40-42)

### The List of the Porters — v. 19.

*A list of 24 orders of gatekeepers is set out in 1Chr 26 1-12. Their orders of service are called “watches” (Neh 12 9), or “wards” (13 30). The Hebrew is “musereth,” from “mushmar,” a guard or sentry, a military term frequently rendered “charge” (see Num 8 23-26)*

### VERSE 19

**“Moreover the porters, Akkub”** — Sig *Insidious, Cunning* He founded a family of hereditary porters (Neh 7 45), and assisted Ezra to expound the Law to the people (8 7)

**“Talmon”** — Sig *Oppressor or Violent* A Levite gatekeeper, who returned with his descendants under Zerubbabel (1Chr 9 17, Ezra 2 42, Neh 7 45). He still retained this position under Joiakim (Neh 12 25)

**“and their brethren that kept the gates, (were) an hundred seventy and two”** — See 1Chr 9 22, which records 212 brethren, but the discrepancy is probably due to the 172 being related to those on duty in Jerusalem, whereas the larger number includes those “chosen” “in their villages”

### The Dwellers in

### Other Cities — vv. 20-21.

*Nehemiah now lists various families residing in other parts*

### VERSE 20

**“And the residue of Israel, of the priests, (and) the Levites, (were) in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance”** — These groups, not listed previously, were scattered throughout the land, protecting their divine right of inheritance. The total listing of those in

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Jerusalem is: Judah 468, Benjamin 928, Levi: priests 1192, Levites 284 and porters 172 — a total 3044.

### VERSE 21

**“But the Nethinims”** — See notes, ch. 7:46.

**“dwelt in Ophel”** — See note on ch. 3:26. This was a suburb of the main city of Jerusalem, accessible by the water gate (3:26), and a southern extension of the temple hill. It was a convenient position for the Nethinim, who were employed in menial services about the temple.

**“and Ziha”** — Sig. *Drought*. The founder and head of a family of Nethinim who returned under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:43; Neh. 7:46). He became ruler of the Nethinim in Jerusalem.

**“and Gispa”** — Sig. *Attentive*.

**“(were) over the Nethinims”** — He represented the leading Nethinim “family” (Ezr. 2:43).

### The Singers — vv. 22-23.

*Songs were an important element of worship, originally appointed by David for the temple services (1Chr. 15:16). Paul reminds his readers that hymns should express the emotion, attitude and understanding of the singer, not merely the quality of sound presented (Eph. 5:19). If the music of the Word is not in the heart, there will be neither melody nor power in the life. Thus singing becomes evidence of the Word believed (Col. 3:16); its influence is seen in the example of Christ (Heb. 2:12), and it becomes a characteristic of the saints (Rev. 5:9).*

### VERSE 22

**“The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem (was) Uzzi”** — Sig. *Strong*.

**“the son of Bani”** — Sig. *Built*.

**“the son of Hashabiah”** — Sig. *Yah*. *Reckons*.

**“the son of Mattaniah”** — Sig. *Gift of Yah*. See v. 17.

**“the son of Micha”** — Sig. *Who is Like Yah*.

**“Of the sons of”** — The RV continues the sentence: “...Micha, of the sons of

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

Asaph, the singers over the business...” However, Bro. E. Wilson comments: “This is incorrect. Verse 17 gives Mica as the son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, and Mattaniah as his son. Now we have Uzzi the great grandson of this Mattaniah, son of Mica. Then the statement that the singers were of the *whole* family of Asaph, of whom Zabdi’s line was but one of several. Thus, see ch. 12:46.”

**“Asaph”** — Sig. *Collector*.

**“the singers (were) over the business of the house of God”** — Contrast verse 16. This relates to the internal affairs of the temple. Uzzi probably attended to the distribution as listed in v. 23.

### VERSE 23

**“For (it was) the king’s commandment concerning them”** — The singing was associated with prayer, and in this king Artaxerxes was particularly interested (Neh. 2:4; cp. Ezra 6:10), probably having assigned a certain stipend from the royal revenue to support this work. In this he represents the interest of heaven’s King in the harmonious expression of prayer by His servants (Psa. 146:1; 148:1-5).

**“that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day”** — Rotherham: “to a fixed provision for the singers, the need of a day upon its day”; or, “as each day required.”

### The Liaison Officer — v. 24.

*This man held an important position in the nation, being responsible for the allocation of various funds and to ensure that proper attendance was given to all commercial matters.*

### VERSE 24

**“And Pethahiah”** — Sig. *Yah hath Opened (or Revealed)*.

**“the son of Meshezabeel”** — Sig. *God Delivers*. See also ch. 3:4; 10:21.

**“of the children of Zerah”** — Sig. *Sunrise*. The name is translated “Zarah” in Gen. 38:30, being the son of Judah by his daughter-in-law, Tamar.

**“the son of Judah”** — Sig. *Praise*.

**“(was) at the king’s hand”** — He



was liaison officer between the Jews and the Persian Court. Perhaps he fixed, levied, and received the tribute.

**"in all matters concerning the people"** — Having charge of all civil matters, as distinct from religious responsibilities. Moffatt translates "all business connected with the people was in the hands of the king's representative."

### **The List of the Villages Occupied — vv. 25-26.**

*There were 32 cities of Judah. In addition, other communities lived in the areas from Beersheba in the south to the Valley of Hinnom (v. 30), besides all the villages mentioned in connection with the major cities. Settling the 50,000 returned exiles throughout all these places would not make any of them largely populated. This condition explains why Jerusalem had to be strengthened in population to some extent, by lots being cast to bring one out of ten from other places, and shows the reason for not many houses being built there (vv. 1-2, 7-4).*

### **VERSE 25**

**"And for the villages, with their fields"** — Describing unwallled villages, such as are mentioned in Lev. 25:31.

**"(some) of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba"** — This signifies *City of the Four* (see Gen. 13:18). This was the original name of the village, but it later became better known as Hebron (sig. *Between the Neck, i.e., Burden Bearer*). However, during the captivity its old name had reasserted itself (see Josh. 14:15).

**"and (in) the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and (in) the villages thereof"** — Sig. *Pining*, and is identified with Dimonah in the south.

**"and at Jekabzeel, and (in) the villages thereof"** — Sig. *El will Gather*. Identified with Kabzeel.

### **VERSE 26**

**"And at Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yah will Save*. An unidentified locality.

**"and at Moladah"** — Sig. *Origin, Birth*. A city in the extreme south of

Judah, assigned to Simeonites (Josh. 15:26, 19:2).

**"and at Beth-phelet"** — Sig. *House of Escape*. In the area of the Simeonites (Josh. 15:27).

### **VERSE 27**

**"And at Hazar-shual"** — Sig. *Village of Jackals*. Unidentified, but on the south border of Judah (Josh. 15:28) and assigned to Simeon (ch. 19:3).

**"and at Beersheba, and (in) the villages thereof"** — Sig. *Well of the Oath*. Mentioned in Josh. 15:28.

### **VERSE 28**

**"And at Ziklag"** — Sig. *Measure of Oppression*. This was the town given to David by Achish, king of Gath (1Sam. 27:6), and soon afterwards taken by the Amalekites (ch. 30:1).

**"and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof"** — Sig. *Base, Foundation*. An unidentified locality.

### **VERSE 29**

**"And at En-rimmon"** — Sig. *Foundation of a Pomegranate*. See Josh. 15:32. Identified with the modern Umm-er-num-mamin, 14 km north of Beersheba.

**"and at Zareah"** — Or known as "Zerah," signifying *Stroke, Scourge, Hornet*. Birthplace and burial place of Samson, and thus in the Shephelah, or low coast tract. Assigned to both Dan and Judah (Josh. 19:41, Jud. 18:2).

**"and at Jarmuth"** — Sig. *Elevation, Height*. Its king joined the confederacy of Adonizedec which challenged Gibeon for uniting with Israel (Josh. 10:3-5, 15:35).

### **VERSE 30**

**"Zanoah"** — Sig. *Rejected*. Josh. 15:34. About 15 km west of Jerusalem.

**"Adullam, and (in) their villages"** — Sig. *Enclosure*. It was in this vicinity that David's cave was located (1Sam. 22:1). It had its own king in the time of Joshua (Josh. 12:15), was later fortified by Rehoboam (2Chr. 11:7), and remained a significant city under the Maccabees (2Mac. 12:38).

**"at Lachish, and the fields thereof"**

— Sig *Tenacious* It was a powerful fortress city, from which Joshua was challenged by a confederacy of kings (Josh 10 5), and was later fortified by Rehoboam (2Chr 11 9) It was besieged by Sennacherib (2Chr 32 9), and was of strategic importance as a fortress city, protecting the southern entrance to the land

**"at Azekah, and (in) the villages thereof"**

— Sig *Tilled* The confederate Ammonite kings' army was destroyed here by hailstorm, as they attempted to flee from the forces of Joshua (Josh 10 10-11)

**"And they"** — The children of Judah

**"dwelt from Beersheba"** — Sig *The Well of the Covenant* See v 27

**"unto the valley of Hinnom"** —

Boundary of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Josh 15 8, 18 16)

## VERSE 31

**"The children also of Benjamin from Geba"**

— Sig *Hill, Height* The RV translates this phrase "dwelt from Geba onwards, at Michmash" Geba was considered a city of Benjamin to the extreme west, and consequently occurs last in the first list of Joshua (ch 18 24) The northern extremity of the plateau will be formed by the great earthquake when Christ and the saints stand upon the Mount of Olives (see Zech 14 10)

**"(dwelt) at Michmash"** — Sig *Something Hidden* Located close to Geba

**"and Aija"** — A variation of Ai, signifying *Ruin* Therefore these three towns were adjacent to Bethel

**"and Bethel, and (in) their villages"**

— Sig *House of El* Originally called Luz, and noted for its importance in the days of Abraham (Gen 12 8, 13 3) and Jacob (28 19)

## VERSE 32

**"(And) at Anathoth"** — Sig *Answers [to Prayer]* Hometown of Jeremiah (Jer 1 1), and located on the road from Geba to Jerusalem (Isa 10 30)

**"Nob"** — Sig *Fruit* Near the capital, and could be seen from it (Isa 10 32) It

was infamous for the massacre of the priests by Doeg (1Sam 22 18-19)

**"Ananiah"** — Sig *Protected by Yah* Unidentified locality

## VERSE 33

**"Hazor"** — Sig *Castle, Enclosure* A city of Benjamin which is only mentioned here

**"Ramah"** — Sig *Height* Just to the north of Jerusalem (Josh 18 25, Jud 4 5, 1Kgs 15 17, Isa 10 29, Jer 31 15)

**"Gittaim"** — Sig *Two Winepresses* A Benjamite town (2Sam 4 3)

## VERSE 34

**"Hadid"** — Sig *Sharp-Pointed* Probably modern Haditheh, 5 km east of Lod [Lydda], in the Shephelah

**"Zeboim"** — Sig *Gazelles* Only reference as a town, perhaps in the area of the valley of Zeboim (1Sam 13 18), to the east of Michmash in the bleak country towards the Jordan

**"Neballat"** — Sig *Foolish Secrecy* Unidentified

## VERSE 35

**"Lod"** — Sig *Contention, Strife* Called Lydda in Acts 9 38

**"and Ono"** — Sig *Strong* See also Neh 6 2

**"the valley of craftsmen"** — An extension of the valley of Sharon

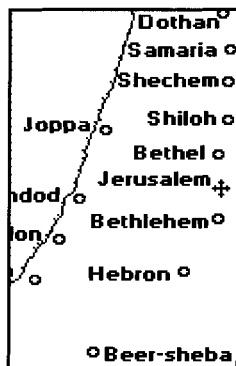
## VERSE 36

**"And of the Levites (were) divisions**

**(in) Judah, (and)**

**in Benjamin"** —

The Levites were divided between Judah and Benjamin Thus the best was done with the scanty population and inadequate numbers of priests and Levites, to lay the foundation for the State on divine principles



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE GREAT DAY OF DEDICATION

#### Revealing:

#### The Final Grand Act of Worship before Nehemiah returns to the King to Report on His Work

#### THE DEDICATION OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

**A** GATHERING of the ecclesia in Jerusalem revealed unity in diversity. There are seen high priest, priests and Levites; chiefs and subordinates; singers and musicians; gate-keepers and guards of the treasure-houses. They had come from the city of Jerusalem, the outlying villages and the country towns beyond, to rejoice together in the great privilege of divine worship. It was not an unkept and slovenly community. The people had “purified themselves,” and prepared in attitude and conviction for the solemn offering of thanksgiving and rejoicing. The effect was magnetic, and they recognized that all they were and had, was due to the goodness of Yahweh. So they gladly “rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy” (v. 43). Not only did the ecclesia respond enthusiastically, but the “joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.” It was, therefore, a token of the greater day when the work of the Truth will find a ready response in the whole world, and when the sanctity of Yahweh will be recognized by all.

#### Heads of the Priests in the Days of Joshua — vv. 1-7.

*Nehemiah records a list of the religious leaders of Israel who came from the captivity with the first exiles under Zerubbabel.*

#### VERSE 1

**“Now these (are) the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel”**

— His name signifies *Shoot of Babylon*, thus indicating his origins in exile from Jerusalem, but was known also as Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14-16) which means *Joy in Affliction*. He was a descendant of the royal line of David (Ezra 5:14; Mt. 1:12). He led the captives back to the

land following the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 2:1-64; Neh. 7:5-7), and co-operated with Joshua, the high priest, in restoring the temple services (Ezra 3:1-9). With Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, and Joshua, the high priest, he assisted in rebuilding the temple (ch. 5:1-2; Zech. 4:9). His official title under the Persian authorities, was that of “Tirshatha,” or “Governor” (Neh. 8:9; Hag. 2:21-23).

However, Bro. E. Wilson considers that Sheshbazzar is otherwise known as Shenazar, the “prince of Judah,” and the uncle of Zerubbabel. He was therefore the one to whom the “precious things” were entrusted, being the “site controller” in the overall sense, whereas Zerubbabel had

## CHAPTER TWELVE

control of building operations, and after Shenazar (Sheshbazzar) died or returned to Persia, he was given full control as "governor" (Hag. 1:1; 2:2).

**"the son of Shealtiel"** — Sig. *Asked of God*. He was son of Jeconiah, the king, and regal ancestor of Christ (Mt. 1:12; Lk. 3:27).

**"and Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yah Will Save*. A different man to Jeshua (Joshua, the high priest) of v. 10.

**"Seraiah"** — Sig. *Yah Hath Prevailed*. Perhaps the son of Hilkiah (ch. 11:11).

**"Jeremiah"** — Sig. *He whom Yah Appoints and Exalts* (ch. 10:2; 12:12, 34). Not, of course, the renowned prophet (Jer. 1:1) who was not taken into Babylon with the exiles.

**"Ezra"** — Sig. *Helper*. He assisted in the dedication of the walls (v. 33). Nothing further is known of him. He is not the scribe of v. 36, or of ch. 8:1, but appears to be called Azariah in ch. 10:2 (cp. the listings in 12:1-7 and 10:1-8).

### VERSE 2

**"Amariah"** — Sig. *Yah hath Promised* (see v. 13; 10:3).

**"Malluch"** — Sig. *Reigning*. He sealed the covenant (10:4).

**"Hattush"** — Sig. *Contender*.

### VERSE 3

**"Shechaniah"** — Sig. *Yah has Dwelt*. Given as Shebaniah in ch. 10:4; 12:14.

**"Rehum"** — Sig. *Compassionate*.

**"Meremoth"** — Sig. *Elevation*. Son of Uriah the priest (Ezra 8:33; Neh. 3:4, 21; 10:5).

### VERSE 4

**"Iddo"** — Sig. *Timely*. His sons ministered in the services of the temple (v. 16).

**"Ginnetho"** — Sig. *Gardener*. (v. 16; 10:6).

**"Abijah"** — Sig. *Yah is My Father* (10:7; cp. 12:17). Possibly the course to which Zachariah, father of John the Baptist, belonged (Lk. 1:5).

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

### VERSE 5

**"Miamin"** — Sig. *Fortunate* (10:7).

**"Maadiah"** — Sig. *Ornament of Yah*.

**"Bilgah"** — Sig. *Breaking Off; Bursting Forth* (10:8; 12:18).

### VERSE 6

**"Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yah has Heard* (1Chr. 3:22; Neh. 3:29). Identified by some as Semei (Lk. 3:26).

**"and"** — This conjunction marks off those who sealed the covenant. Sixteen did so; the following six, for some unknown reason, did not (see 1Chr. 25:7; Ezra 2:36; Neh. 7:39; 11:10). Perhaps they had died. A similar division is made in v. 19.

**"Joiarib"** — Sig. *Yah Contends* (11:10; 12:19).

**"Jedaiah"** — Sig. *Yah has been Kind* (v. 19; 1Chr. 9:10; 24:7; Neh. 11:10; 12:6; Zech. 6:10, 14).

### VERSE 7

**"Sallu"** — Sig. *Weighed* (1Chr. 9:7; Neh. 12:20).

**"Amok"** — Sig. *Deep*. Father of Eber (v. 20).

**"Hilkiah"** — Sig. *Inheritance of Yah* (8:4; 11:11; cp. 12:21).

**"Jedaiah"** — Sig. *Yah has been Kind* (v. 21).

**"These (were) the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua"** — There were twenty-four orders established by David (1Chr. 24:18). These here listed seemed to be heads of those courses in the days of the restoration.

### List of the Levites — vv. 8-9.

*The first three names appear as the leading Levitical families at the sealing of the covenant (ch. 10:9).*

### VERSE 8

**"Moreover the Levites: Jeshua"** — Sig. *Yah Saves* (8:7; 9:4; 12:24).

**"Binnui"** — Sig. *Built*. He assisted in repairing the walls (3:24), and in sealing the covenant (10:9).

**"Kadmiel"** — Sig. *El is of Old* (Ezra 2:40; 3:9; Neh. 7:43; 9:4-5; 10:9). His son, Jeshua, was also associated in the work (12:24).

**"Sherebiah"** — *Sig Yah has Brought to Heat* (or, *Caused to Glow*) He sealed the covenant (10 12, 12 24)

**"Judah"** — *Sig Praise*

**"(and) Mattaniah"** — *Sig Gift of Yah* Of the family of Asaph (1Chr 9 15), and son of Mica (Neh 11 17, 12 35) He lived in Netophath, adjacent to Jerusalem (12 28-29), and was a leader in the temple choir established in the restoration (11 17, 12 8 See 12 25, 35)

**"(which was) over the thanksgiving"** — Rotherham has "the choirs" They had direction of the music and singing performed during the ceremony

**"he and his brethren"** — He and his two assistants (11 17) The RSV has "and who, with his brethren, were in charge of the songs of thanksgiving"

## VERSE 9

**"Also Bakkukiah"** — *Sig Emptying or Wasting of Yah* Second in charge of the temple choir (11 17, 12 25)

**"and Unni"** — *Sig Afflicted* Perhaps as a result of death he was subsequently replaced by Abda as second assistant to Mattaniah in singing (cp 11 17)

**"their brethren, (were) over against them in the watches"** — Officiated in the timing and arrangements of the occasion Rotherham has "over against them in ward," i e, "stood opposite to them in their place of service" (Berkeley) See note on the word "ward" in v 24

## The Succession of the High Priests — vv. 10-11.

*The line of descent in the high priestly family of the time from Jeshua to Jaddua Whether all of them actually exercised the office is uncertain, although this is suggested by Josephus*

## VERSE 10

**"And Jeshua"** — *Sig Yah Saves* This is a different man from the one mentioned in v 1 This high priest was of outstanding faith, who returned with Zerubbabel, rebuilt the altar, led the people in worship, stimulated them in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 2 2, 3 2-9, 4 3, 5 2,

10 18, Neh 7 7, 12 1)

**"begat"** — Thus establishing the line of succession for the priesthood

**"Joiakim"** — *Sig Yah Establishes* (vv 12, 26) He also ministered during the days of Nehemiah

**"Joiakim also begat Eliashib"** — Eliashib signifies *El Restores* He energetically repaired a portion of the wall, but was spiritually lax (cp 3 1, 12 10, 22, 23, 13 4, 7), establishing an alliance with the apostate Tobiah (13 4-5, 28)

**"and Eliashib begat Joiada"** — *Sig Yah hath Established* Called Judas by Josephus (*Ant Jud* 11 7 1) His son married the daughter of Sanballat, and was expelled by Nehemiah (v 22, 13 28)

## VERSE 11

**"And Joiada begat Jonathan"** — *Sig Yah hath Given*

**"and Jonathan begat Jaddua"** — *Sig Knowing* The last high priest mentioned in the Old Testament (v 22) According to Josephus, he was high priest when Persia was overthrown by Alexander the Great and went out from Jerusalem to Sapha to meet the conqueror

*The Romance of Bible Chronology* makes the following point concerning the age of Jaddua "Jaddua went out from Jerusalem to meet Alexander the Great at Sapha, in BC330 This fact must be accepted, but not the chronology, which makes him 158 years old (448-330)"

If the chronology of the period of the Persian Empire from the decree of Cyrus (BC536) to the last year of Darius who was slain by Alexander the Great (BC330) is reduced from the 205 years of Ptolemy's canon to the 123 years of Daniel's prophecy, Jaddua's age would be reduced by 82 years (205-123) This would make him 76 (158-82) years of age when he went out to meet Alexander at Sapha This is probably the true chronology of the period between the last recorded date of the Old Testament history and the first reliable date in Greek history"

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### List of the Priestly Courses in the time of the High Priest Joiakim — vv. 12-21.

*It seems that under his authority special attention was paid to the formation of lists, especially of the chief priests and Levites, and that the temple service was regularly celebrated (vv. 24-26)*

#### VERSE 12

**“And in the days of Joiakim”** — Sig *Yah Establishes* (v. 10)

**“were priests, the chief of the fathers”** — This list of the family names of the priestly courses follows the order of the same names in vv. 1-7, except in minute differences of spelling, and in one omission (that of the name of Hattush) which would appear to be accidental, as it appears in ch. 10:4

**“of Seraiah”** — Sig *Yah hath Prevailed* (v. 1)

**“Meraiah”** — Sig *Rebellion*

**“of Jeremiah”** — Sig *He Whom Yah Appoints and Exalts* (v. 1)

**“Hananiah”** — Sig *Yah has Favored* One of the trumpeters used for celebrating the completion of the walls (12:41)

#### VERSE 13

**“Of Ezra”** — Sig *Helper* He assisted in the dedication (vv. 1, 13, 33)

**“Meshullam”** — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied* (v. 33)

**“of Amariah”** — Sig *Yah hath Promised* (vv. 2, 13, 33)

**“Jehohanan”** — Sig *Yah is Favorable* (vv. 13, 42)

#### VERSE 14

**“Of Melicu”** — Sig *Reigning* Known as Malluch (v. 2, 10:4)

**“Jonathan”** — Sig *Yah hath Given*

**“of Shebaniah”** — Sig *Yah hath Grown (or Prospered)* See 10:4

**“Joseph”** — Sig *He will Increase*

#### VERSE 15

**“Of Harim”** — Sig *Consecrated* (3:11, 10:5)

**“Adna”** — Sig *Pleasure*

**“of Meraioth”** — Sig *Rebellious*

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

**“Helkai”** — Sig *Yah's Portion*

#### VERSE 16

**“Of Iddo”** — Sig *Timely* (v. 4)

**“Zechariah”** — Sig *Yah hath Remembered*

**“of Ginnethon”** — Sig *Gardener* (v. 4, 10:6)

**“Meshullam”** — Sig *Associate Friend, Allied*

#### VERSE 17

**“Of Abijah”** — Sig *Yah is My Father* (v. 4, 10:7)

**“Zichri”** — Sig *Famous, Renowned*

**“of Miniamin”** — Sig *From the Right Hand* (vv. 5, 17, 10:7) In v. 5 his name appears as Miamin. He acted as a trumpeter at the dedication (12:41)

**“of Moadiah”** — Sig *Ornament or Festival of Yah* Known as Maachiah in v. 5

**“Piltai”** — Sig *Yah Delivers*

#### VERSE 18

**“Of Bilgah”** — Sig *Breaking Off Bursting Forth* (v. 5, 10:8)

**“Shammua”** — Sig *Renowned*

**“of Shemaiah”** — Sig *Yah hath Heard* (vv. 6, 36, 10:8)

**“Jehonathan”** — Sig *Yah hath Given*

#### VERSE 19

**“And”** — See notes on the division of the verses v. 6. The conjunction again appears only once in the whole list, and before the name, to show that the two documents (vv. 1-7, 12-21) are from the same record

**“of Joiarib”** — Sig *Yah Contends* (vv. 6, 19, 11:10)

**“Mattenai”** — Sig *Gift of Yah*

**“of Jedaiah”** — Sig *Yah has been Kind* (1Chr. 9:10, 24:7, Neh. 11:10, 12:6, 19, Zech. 6:10, 14)

**“Uzzi”** — Sig *Strong* (v. 19)

#### VERSE 20

**“Of Sallai”** — Sig *Weighed* He is called Sallu in v. 7

**“Kallai”** — Sig *Yah is Light*

**“of Amok”** — Sig *Deep* (v. 7)

**"Eber"** — Sig *To Cross Over*

## VERSE 21

**"Of Hilkiah"** — Sig *Inheritance of Yah* (8 4, 11 11, 12 7)

**"Hashabiah"** — Sig *Yah Reckons*

**"of Jedaiah"** — Sig *Yah has been Kind* (v 7)

**"Nethaneel"** — Sig *El hath Given* A priestly musician who assisted at the dedication of the wall (v 36)

## Record of the Levites — vv. 22-26.

*This section interrupts the listing of the officials in the time of Joiakim, which commenced in v 12 and concludes in v 26 These verses should be bracketed*

## VERSE 22

**"The Levites in the days of"** — Berkeley translates this "As for the Levites in the days of Eliashib a record was kept of the heads of fathers' houses, also this was true for the priests during the reign of Darius the Persian" The RV text has "In the reign " while Bullinger includes "Darius Hystaspes"

**"Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua"** — See notes on verse 22

**"(were) recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian"** — A title of Persian royalty The king is not actually identified by name It could have been Darius II Nothos, who, according to Ptolemy, commenced to reign about 77 years after Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem The last Persian king, Darius Codomannus, was defeated by Alexander at the Battle of Granicus

## VERSE 23

**"The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, (were) written in the book of the chronicles"** — The official records, which were important to maintain genealogies and to keep account of times

**"even until the days of Johanan"** — Sig *Yah hath Given* The Jerusalem Bible has "but only" instead of "even"

**"the son of Eliashib"** — The man

who defected from the Truth (see notes on ch 3 1)

## VERSE 24

**"And the chief of the Levites"** — A list of the chief Levitical families during the time of Joiakim and later, is now presented

**"Hashabiah"** — Sig *Yah Reckons* See ch 3 17, 11 22, 10 11, Ezra 8 19

**"Sherebiah"** — Sig *Yah has Brought to Heat* (or *Made to Glow*) See v 8, 10 12

**"and Jeshua"** — Sig *Yah Saves* See ch 8 7, 9 4-5, 12 8

**"the son"** — Instead of the usual Hebrew word *ben*, "a son," some texts read *Bani*, a common Levitical name, sometimes translated *Binnui*, as in ch 8 7, 9 4-5, 10 13

**"of Kadmiel"** — Sig *El is of Old* (v 8, 7 43, 9 4-5, 10 9, Ezra 2 40)

**"with their brethren over against them"** — Those associated with the choir, where singing was antiphonal (v 9)

**"to praise (and) to give thanks, according to the commandment of David"** — See 1Chr 15 16, 23 5, ch 25 Every attempt was made to restore the priesthood and Levites in conformity with the previous order established by David However, a lack of numbers prevented this from being fully achieved

**"the man of God"** — See v 36, 2Chr 8 14

**"ward over against ward"** — The Heb *mishmereth* (from *mishmar* *guards, sentries*) is a military term indicative of service by regulation (cp v 9) The word is frequently rendered "charge" (see Num 8 23-26)

## VERSE 25

**"Mattaniah"** — Sig *Gift of Yah* (v 8)

**"and Bakkukiah"** — Sig *Emptying or Wasting of Yah* (11 17, 12 9)

**"Obadiah"** — Sig *Servant of Yah*

**"Meshullam"** — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied*

**"Talmon"** — Sig *Opposition, Violent* He returned with Zerubbabel (7 45, 11 19)

**"Akkub"** — Sig *Insidious, Cunning*  
See notes on ch 7 45, 8 7

**"(were) porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates"** — The RSV has "gatekeepers keeping guard at the storehouses of the gates" The chambers above the gateways may have been used for storage

## VERSE 26

**"These (were) in the days of Joiakim"** — See v 10

**"the son of Jeshua"** — See v 10

**"the son of Jozadak"** — Sig *Yah hath Cleansed* He is called *Josedech* in Haggai and Zechariah, being the father of Joshua the high priest (Ezra 3 2, 8, 5 2, 10 18, Neh 12 6)

**"and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe"** — During the early part of Nehemiah's ministry, Joiakim, the son of Joshua, was high priest (12 26), whilst Eliashib was high priest elect (13 4), as in Lk 3 2

## The Great Day of Dedication

— vv. 27-43.

*The wall had already been sanctified (ch 3 1) Apparently, on completion after the fifty-two days of construction, the workers had returned home for a short respite before being gathered together for the celebration The Law had been presented to them (ch 8), so that they were able to enter into the religious services with understanding The covenant of sanctification put them under the protection of God (ch 10), so that now the dedication service placed the city wall into the hands of the people for protection*

## VERSE 27

**"And at the dedication"** — Heb *chanukkah* to initiate, to consecrate It comes from *chanak* to make narrow (i e., to restrict) Figuratively, to discipline, regulate into a confined area (see Deu 20 5, 2Chr 7 5)

**"of the wall of Jerusalem"** — The dedication of the walls represented the offering to God of that which it encom-

passed the centre of worship, seen in the altar (Num 7 84) which was the highlight of the House of God (Ezra 6 16) The city walls were but an extension of the altar, as will be represented in the House of Prayer for All Nations, of the future It is figuratively represented in the ecclesial city of Truth, the "house" of God (1Tim 3 15)

**"they sought the Levites out of all their places"** — From all the surrounding districts the people converged on Jerusalem bearing their musical instruments, joyfully excited at the impending ceremony which would consecrate all their labors in the city to Yahweh, making it in every sense *The Holy City*

**"to bring them to Jerusalem"** — There was a wonderful moment of rejoicing as all the nation gathered together in harmony and unity They "set their face to go to Jerusalem" (cp Lk 9 51) for dedication

**"to keep the dedication with gladness"** — Heb *simchah blithesomeness, glee* The occasion was an outstanding expression of the people's happiness It represented the joy of liberty from bondage and oppression, and the glorious opportunity to render thanksgiving to God

**"both with thanksgivings"** — Heb *towdah an extension of the hand* There was mutual acknowledgement of the goodness of God in the provision of His blessings upon the work accomplished

**"and with singing"** — Heb *shiy'r a song* Choristers were selected and appointed to add to the harmony of this wondrous time, as they will in the dedication of the future great temple at Jerusalem (Rev 5 9-14)

**"(with) cymbals, psalteries, and with harps"** — Following the pattern of Solomon's dedication of the temple (2Chr 5 13) All these great moments of the past will be eclipsed by the majesty and drama of the future day of dedication in Zion (Psa 2 6-7)

## VERSE 28

**"And the sons of the singers"** — See 1Chr 9 16

**"gathered themselves together, both**



**out of the plain country** — Lit “the circle,” referring to the “plain” or “circuit” of the country (see ch 3 22)

**“round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi”** — Sig *Dripings* (2Kgs 25 23) Netophah was about 6km south of Bethlehem

### VERSE 29

**“Also from the house of Gilgal”** — Sig *Circle of Stones, Rolling* Both Rotherham and RV give “Beth Gilgal” *The House of Rolling*

**“and out of the fields of Geba”** — Sig *Hill* A locality north of Jerusalem (Josh 21 17, 1Chr 6 60)

**“and Azmaveth”** — Sig *Strong unto Death* Identified as Hizmeh, near Gibeah (Ezra 2 24)

**“for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem”** — See ch 11 25

### VERSE 30

**“And the priests and the Levites”** — No preference for Levites over priests as formerly (2Chr 29 34, Ezra 6 20) This is the first occurrence of combined titles since Ezra 7 24 Thus it would seem both classes were equally zealous, and equally forward to purify themselves Compare Exo 19 10

**“purified themselves”** — Probably by careful ablutions of water (Exo 19 10) or blood (Heb 9 19-22) Notice that their own cleansing was necessary before they could minister on behalf of the people — typical of the perfect offering of Christ, which was designed “first for himself, then for the people” (Heb 7 27)

**“and purified the people”** — Probably by sprinkling (Num 18 13-19), typical of the laver principle in the tabernacle, and appropriate for the Bride of Christ (Eph 5 26)

**“and the gates, and the wall”** — Inanimate things which might be considered ritually defiled (Deu 23 14, Lev 14 34-53) by contact with a sinful people The method of purification is not given,

but it could have been either by water or blood (Heb 9 19-22, Zech 13 1)

### VERSE 31

**“Then I brought up”** — Nehemiah organized and marshalled two processions, leading one himself, whilst Ezra led the other In each group there were found priests with trumpets, Levites with cymbals, psalteries and harps, princes and some common people Each company was preceded by a choir

**“the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great (companies)”** — Rotherham has “large choirs” These two groups were to lead the whole congregation in the dedication of the walls They typify the two sections of the ecclesia Jew and Gentile, united together under the terms of the Abrahamic covenant (cp Eph 2 14), or the two elements of the Law and the Prophets (as seen in Moses and Elijah Mat 17 3) that comprised the whole oracles of God

**“(of them that gave) thanks, (whereof one) went on the right hand upon the wall”** — This was upon the western wall Those with Ezra would march south, then east along the southern wall, then north along the eastern wall, where, adjacent to the temple, they would meet the other group (cp Psa 48 11-14)

**“toward the dung gate”** — See ch 2 13, 3 13-14

### VERSE 32

**“And after them went Hoshaiiah”** — Sig *Yah hath Saved*

**“and half of the princes of Judah”** — To be ultimately united with their fellows (v 39), and thus represent the completed community

### VERSE 33

**“And Azariah”** — Sig *Helped by Yah*

**“Ezra”** — Sig *Help* He was head of one of the 22 courses that returned with Zerubbabel (ch 12 1, 13)

**“and Meshullam”** — Sig *Associate, Friend, Allied* A priest of the family of Ezra (ch 12 13)

## VERSE 34

**"Judah"** — Sig. *Praise*.

**"and Benjamin"** — Sig. *Son of the Right Hand*. He put away his foreign wife (Ezra 10:32), and assisted in repairing the wall (Neh. 3:23).

**"and Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yah has Heard*. A priest who returned under Zerubbabel (v. 6), signed the covenant under Nehemiah (10:8), and whose son ministered under Joiakim (12:18).

**"and Jeremiah"** — Sig. *He Whom Yah Appoints and Exalts*. He sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (10:2), returned with Zerubbabel (12:1), and his son ministered under Joiakim (v. 12).

## VERSE 35

**"And (certain) of the priests' sons with trumpets"** — The Hebrew is *char-sotserah*: the silver trumpets, used to call together the whole assembly (Num. 10:2-3).

**"(namely)"** — Better: "also," as Zechariah was a Levite, not a priest, being of the family of Asaph.

**"Zechariah"** — Sig. *Yah Hath Remembered*. As overseer of the first company, he corresponded to Jezrahiah (v. 42) on the other.

**"the son of Jonathan"** — Sig. *Yah hath Given*.

**"the son of Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yah hath Heard*.

**"the son of Mattaniah"** — Sig. *Gift of Yah* (1Chr. 9:15; Neh. 11:17; 12:8, 25).

**"the son of Michaiah"** — Sig. *Who is Like Yah?*

**"the son of Zaccur"** — Sig. *Well Remembered*. He was head of a course of musicians originally established by David (1Chr. 25:2, 10).

**"the son of Asaph"** — Sig. *The Collector*.

## VERSE 36

**"And his brethren, Shemaiah"** — Sig. *Yah hath Heard*.

**"and Azarael"** — Sig. *El hath Helped*.

**"Milalai"** — Sig. *Yah is Eloquent*.

**"Gilalai"** — Sig. *(Yah) hath Rolled*

*Away*.

**"Maai"** — Sig. *Yah is Compassionate*.

**"Nethaneel"** — Sig. *El hath Given*.

**"and Judah"** — Sig. *Praise*.

**"Hanani"** — Sig. *Gracious*.

**"with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them"** — The Jerusalem Bible has: "walked at their head." The spiritual dedication of the people had been strengthened in the revival under Ezra, and this represented the first restoration of Jerusalem, and the "remnant" of Israel (Isa. 1:9) to the full favor of God since the days of Hezekiah and Isaiah. Compare the circumstances in the days of David: 1Chr. 23:5; 2Chr. 8:14. We should observe the importance given to the music established by David. This was based upon the honor and praise of Yahweh, and was entirely opposed to the songs and music of the world.

True Israelites refused to compromise their position by indulging in the "songs of Babylon," even though they were encouraged to join in the mirth of the people (Psa. 137:3). Worldly entertainment should be avoided, and the use of hymns and spiritual songs for personal amusement and entertainment especially so (Amos 6:5). All such music by the saints must be of the kind referred to in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, as was represented in the companies on the wall in the days of Nehemiah.

## VERSE 37

**"And at the fountain gate, which was over against them"** — The words "which was" are not in the original. It was not the gates, but the steps, that were "over against them." The steps that led up to the city of David could be seen from the fountain gate. So the company would ascend the eastern hill, to continue the walk along the wall.

**"they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward"** — Rotherham has "...and over the fountain gate, and straight before them, they went up..."

## VERSE 38

**"And the other (company of them)"** — This group was accompanied by Nehemiah

**"(that gave) thanks went over against (them), and I after them"** — Nehemiah led the general company, following the choir, as the counterpart of Ezra with the other group

**"and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces"** — See notes on ch 3 11

**"even unto the broad wall"** — See ch 3 8 This describes the progress of Nehemiah as site after site of the familiar areas of the wall came into view. It must have been an exciting and wonderful experience of triumph for Nehemiah, as he walked round about Zion and "told the towers thereof" (Psa 48 1-2, 12)

## VERSE 39

**"And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate"** — See notes, ch 3 6

**"and above the fish gate"** — See 2Chr 33 14

**"and the tower of Hananeel and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate"** — For these three locations see notes ch 3 1

**"and they stood still in the prison gate"** — See ch 3 25 This was the site of Jeremiah's dungeon, and the scene of a remarkable prophecy. When, years before, the old prophet was thrown into the cell, knees in mud, his voice boldly declared that "God would build the walls at a time of rejoicing" (Jer 31 4). This remarkable prophecy was now given meaning as the two companies met at this significant spot upon the walls of Jerusalem! It was certainly a moment of "rejoicing."

## VERSE 40

**"So stood the two (companies of them that gave) thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me"** — The word "in" should be "at" or "near." Rotherham has "So the two choirs came to stand at the house of God" (see v 31)

## VERSE 41

**"And the priests; Eliakim"** — Sig *El doth Establish*

**"Maaseiah"** — Sig *Work or Activity of Yah*

**"Miniamin"** — Sig *From the Right Hand* (cp v 5, 10 7, 12 17)

**"Michaiah"** — Sig *Who is Like Yah?*

**"Elioenai"** — Sig *Towards Yah are Mine Eyes* He was a son of Pashur, a priest who put away his foreign wife, offering a ram as a trespass offering (Ezra 10 19, 22, 44)

**"Zechariah"** — Sig *Yah hath Remembered*

**"(and) Hananiah"** — Sig *Yah hath Favored* (see v 12)

**"with trumpets"** — Heb *chatsotser-ahim*, the silver trumpets mentioned in v 35 (see also Num 10 2)

## VERSE 42

**"And"** — The following are probably Levites answering to the nine priests' sons accompanying Ezra, as mentioned in vv 35-36

**"Maaseiah"** — Sig *Work or Activity of Yah*

**"and Shemaiah"** — Sig *Yah hath Heard*

**"and Eleazar"** — Sig *El is Helper*

**"and Uzzi"** — Sig *Strong*

**"and Jehohanan"** — Sig *Yah is Favorable*

**"and Malchijah"** — Sig *Yah is King*

**"and Elam"** — Sig *Hidden*

**"and Ezer"** — Sig *Help* Perhaps the one mentioned in ch 3 19

**"And the singers sang loud"** — Here the combined choirs merged into one glorious anthem of praise, the sound of which echoed far over the Holy City

**"with Jezrahiah (their) overseer"** — Sig *Yah Shines Forth* The overseer of the singers in Nehemiah's choir, corresponding to Zechariah, the overseer in Ezra's company (v 35)

## VERSE 43

**"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced"** — A time of tremendous joy (see Psa 51 18-19). The

**GOD HAD MADE THEM REJOICE (v. 43)**

The climax to this momentous occasion was reached when "great sacrifices" were offered up to Yahweh — somewhat reminiscent of Solomon's dedication of the temple. With the culmination of all that had been envisaged, and for which the people had labored so keenly and assiduously, Nehemiah is happy to record that "God had made them rejoice with great joy." Rotherham gives this as "God had *caused* them to rejoice." How had He done this? By granting His blessing upon their dedicated labors. Why did He do this? Because the earnest prayers of a faithful man such as Nehemiah had come up before Him acceptably (ch. 1), because the people were moved by the power of the Truth, and had "a mind to work" in the cause of Yahweh (chs. 2-4), because they were prepared to respond to sound, uncompromising leadership (chs. 5-6), because they appreciated their Israelitish origin (ch. 7), because they showed deep reverence for Yahweh's Word (ch. 8), because they united their minds in faithful prayer to the throne of Grace, and bound themselves to Him in a renewed covenant (chs. 9-10). When a community of believers "continues in the faith, grounded and settled," Yahweh will grant His rich and generous blessing upon them, thereby "causing them to rejoice."

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sacrifices were offered as an evidence of thanksgiving and service, after the example of former kings. It was with sacrifices that David earlier inaugurated the tabernacle constructed to temporarily house the ark of the covenant at Jerusalem (2Sam. 6:17), with sacrifices he had consecrated the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite (24:25). Solomon had sacrificed innumerable animals at his dedication of the temple (1Kgs. 8:5). Zerubbabel had followed this example (Ezra 6:17). Now Nehemiah completed the dedication by the entire cir-

cuit of the walls with many sacrifices.

This action typified the great offering of Christ. Notice the development mentioned in Heb. 2:9-12, thus illustrating the importance of such sacrifices, with which "God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). Verse 9 speaks of Willing Labor, v. 10 of the Offering, v. 11 of the company of the Redeemed gathered together, v. 12 of the great Rejoicing undertaken. When the important elements of sacrifice are understood, then the perfect offering, made by Christ for himself and his people (Heb. 7:27), becomes the basis of continual joy.

**"for God had made them rejoice with great joy"** — Nehemiah manifested an attitude of continual rejoicing in the work of his God (2:18), recognizing that it was Yahweh's mercy and forethought which brought the whole matter to a wonderful and satisfying conclusion (Psa. 9:2, 92:4). The antitype will be fulfilled in the kingdom Age, when the saints will gather with their Master around the sacrifices of the Temple (Eze. 43:27), and experience the fullness of joy.

**"the wives also and the children rejoiced"** — An evidence of the universal joy throughout the families, and a token fulfillment of Zech. 8:4-6, which will be witnessed in Jerusalem's greater day!

**"so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off"** — Even in their enemies' ears. It must have caused such as Sanballat great consternation and anger to witness the completion of Nehemiah's labor, and the strengthening of the walls of the city. Similarly, in the day of judgment, the joy of the redeemed will be resound against the background of the frenzy of the deposed (Lk. 13:28, Psa. 2).

### **The Temple Order and Services — vv. 44-47.**

*It was important to ensure that the tithes and offerings were properly provided, so that the work of the Truth might not be endangered.*

### **VERSE 44**

**"And at that time"** — The time of the Agreement (ch. 10:29-39). Nehemiah

made careful arrangements for it to be carried out, thus he provided for his absence (as did the Lord Jesus Jn 16 8-16)

**“were some appointed over the chambers”** — Similarly the Master is preparing “chambers” in his Father’s house, in which the faithful will eternally abide (Jn 14 2)

**“for the treasures”** — Certain Levites were made responsible for securing all necessary requirements, others as custodians of the chambers to see that they contained sufficient stores for the maintenance of the temple personnel

**“for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields”** — RV “according to the fields” That is, alluding to certain arrangements for storage The tithe was God’s portion to be allocated for the support of the work of the Truth (Lev 27 30) Thus the people were taught the need to sacrifice of their own possessions to provide for the spiritual development of the ecclesia

**“of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites”** — This was the proportion of the produce required by the Law to be set aside for the work of the Truth and to maintain the temple services

**“for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites”** — They were all to receive their correct portion If they provided food for the priests (God’s house and work), then the whole of Judah would be blessed accordingly (Hag 1 8-9)

**“that waited”** — Notice the margin “that stood” They “stood” in Yahweh’s service, to do His Will The portions represent many parts of the one offering Israel was taught that they were interdependent on each other, whilst all were dependent on the House of God (2Cor 9 6) Starve the priests and everyone starves! Neglect the study of the Word, and the whole ecclesia is affected

#### VERSE 45

**“And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God”** — The word “ward” signifies “charge” (cp

v 24, 1Tim 1 18, 3 15) Rotherham translates this “So they kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, and [so did] the singers and the doorkeepers, according to the commandment” They diligently maintained the temple service as appointed them (Mal 2 7)

**“and the ward of the purification”** — They kept the laws for purification of holy things according to the rules established

**“according to the commandment of David, (and) of Solomon his son”** — The Vulgate and Septuagint versions translate this “And they [i.e., the priests and Levites] maintained the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, and the singers, and the porters [i.e., their institutions] according to the ordinance of David and of Solomon his son” Regular services were preserved, anticipating the future (Amos 9 11)

#### VERSE 46

**“For in the days of David and Asaph of old (there were) chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God”** — As will be re-introduced in the millennium (Rev 5 9-10, 19 1-2)

#### VERSE 47

**“And all Israel in the days of Zerubabel, and in the days of Nehemiah”** — Both are mentioned as of equal importance, thus “in the days of Nehemiah no less than in the days of Zerubbabel” The covenant was preserved by true leadership (2Tim 2 2)

**“gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion”** — cp ch 10 38

**“and they sanctified (holy things) unto the Levites”** — The people set apart for the Levites what the law required in tithing (cp 2Cor 9 6-7)

**“and the Levites sanctified (them) unto the children of Aaron”** — The Levites provided the priests their due share “the tithe of the tithe” (Num 28 26), so adding their support to the services of Yahweh

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## THE SECOND REFORMATION

THE FINAL JUDGMENT AGAINST APOSTASY  
AND THE CONFIRMATION OF THE FAITHFUL

## Revealing:

The Return of the Governor to Inspect His House and to  
Establish the Wisdom of the Word throughout the City

**D**URING Nehemiah's absence deterioration had set in. Ezra was absent, or had died, as Josephus records, "an old man." He represented the "law of the ready scribe," but now his voice was forgotten as the people in Jerusalem settled down to their normal way of life without the personal presence of the two great leaders of the past. Most likely the warning voice of Malachi had been raised during this period — but where was the high priest Eliashib?

The circumstances of Nehemiah's journey almost suggest those of the *Parable of the Nobleman* (Lk. 19:12-28) described by the Lord Jesus Christ. Nehemiah had been recalled to the Persian Court and had to seek authority from the king to return to Jerusalem (Neh. 13:6). On his second coming to the city, he found his work undermined. Vigorously he set about punishing those responsible for this condition, and promoting those who proved faithful (v. 8).

This seems to be the period of *Malachi* who, prior to Nehemiah's return, denounced with vigor the very sins mentioned in the record of Nehemiah: intermarriage with foreign wives, the repudiation of loving Jewish wives who bathed the altar with tears (Mal. 2:13); robbery against the temple services by withholding tithes and offerings (3:8-9); demoralizing of the priesthood (1:6; 2:1-10); the general state of irreligion and laxity (1:13-14; 2:17; 3:2, 5).

Malachi's words echo Nehemiah's condemnation in even stronger terms. He told the priests that they "despise and profane" God's Name (1:6, 12); that they had "departed out of the way" (2:8); had corrupted the covenant of Levi and been partial in their exposition of the Law (v. 9). He called the people "thieves and robbers" (3:8-9); "adulterers, sorcerers, false swearers" (v. 5); "treacherous dealers" (2:14); "committers of abominations" (2:11). He told them that they were "cursed with a curse" (3:9).

But Malachi did not only upbraid and denounce. He had a lofty vision of glory to reveal. He represented *the Messenger*, to prepare the way before the

Lord (3 1) who would turn the hearts of the people (4 6) — and of the Greater than him the Lord Jesus Christ who “would suddenly come to his temple” in order to purify the sons of Levi, and to offer a sacrifice in righteousness. The prophet saw in vision the wicked consumed by the Sun of Righteousness, and the faithful delivered from oppression. This was all revealed typically in the actions of Nehemiah on his second advent to Jerusalem.

The vigorous judgments that Nehemiah brought upon his enemies in Jerusalem demonstrated that sin must be cured, not condoned. It was not possible that those who had apostasized in his absence could remain in control, and therefore he immediately disciplined the nation and removed the leprous elements.

Malachi's words would have sounded forth to the people of Jerusalem in preparation for Nehemiah's return. His labor was a preparation for the coming of Nehemiah, so that the Prophet and Governor co-operated together to perform the work of restoration that typically represented what the Messiah will yet accomplish. Thus Malachi foreshadowed the forerunner of the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ (John the Baptist Mat 3), and of his second coming (Elijah Mal 4 5).

### **Separation from the Mixed Multitude — vv. 1-3.**

*The first work of Nehemiah on his return from Persia was to establish the fundamental principles of divine acceptance. It was a judgment against the tolerance previously permitted in the Brotherhood. Now the “just ones” were to be identified and honored, and the “unjust” were to be excluded.*

### **VERSE 1**

**“On that day”** — The day after Nehemiah's return (v 6), concerning which he is now to record his further experiences. Obviously, on his return he had assessed the situation in the city, as he had done at his first appearance (ch 2), and now revealed the precise condition of the ecclesia. This answers the two inspections of the temple undertaken by the Master, in which he examined the attitudes of the people to the principles of the law (ch 2), and discovered the precise condition of the ecclesia.

**“they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people”** — It was essential that the Word be reiterated, for upon that basis judgment was to be made

### **THE BOOK OF MOSES (v. 1)**

Returning to find his earlier work almost totally undermined, Nehemiah assumed command of the situation, and assembled the people to hear a public reading of the Word of God. This was designed to point out to them with utmost clarity those areas of the Law in which they were now gravely offending. He doubtless applied the principles found in Deu 4 1-10 and ch 6. Nehemiah knew that there was nothing more powerful than the Word of God, if people are ever to be convinced of what is right and what is wrong. Bro Thomas possessed a similar disposition, for in his preface to *Elpis Israel* he makes reference to the absolute “authority” of the Word, “without which nothing can or ought to be determined.” When serious problems confront an ecclesia, there is only one basic approach to such matters: “What saith the Word?” This was how Nehemiah dealt with the issue — and rightly so — J U

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

(cp Jn 12 48) The public presentation of the Word will also introduce the judgment seat of the Lord, so that the responsibilities of each individual in regard to the Scriptures given into their hand, might be clearly revealed (Mat 25 31)

**“and therein was found written” —**

These words are similar to those describing the action of the Lord Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4 17), who selected an extract from Isa 61 1-2 to testify concerning his ministry and the responsibility that rested upon those who heard him. In Nehemiah's case, he saw the spiritual decline evident in the nation, and called the people together for a public reading of the Law, to reinforce the principles of the divine covenant into which they had previously entered (Neh 10). This was the best way to move the people, seeing that the High Priest himself was compromised by his association with error and could not be depended upon to give proper leadership

**“that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God” —** The Law required this to the “tenth generation for ever” (Deu 23 3-5, see *The Expositor Deuteronomy* for further details) Some of Moab were accepted into the nation (e.g., Ruth, who was the eleventh generation from Abraham), but this was to be only after the most careful consideration of attitude and beliefs, and by a wholehearted acceptance of the Mosaic Covenant and a rejection of Gentile association (see Ruth 1 16). However, Tobiah was an unconverted Ammonite (Neh 4 3), and his evil influence was still felt (see ch 13 4)

**“for ever” —** The Law concerning the exclusion of enemies of God from the company of the faith was to be an eternal principle, always to be maintained. Such enemies represent a “reproach upon all Israel” (1Sam 11 2). The Hebrew *olahm* means the *hidden or concealed period*, and relates “to the age” (the millennium). This implies a continual prohibition until such a class of people have been removed from the earth (see Exo 17 14 in regard to the Amalekites). Significantly, there are no

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

further references to Ammonites or Moabites in Scriptures after the time of Nehemiah

### VERSE 2

**“Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water” —**

This was the attitude of Nehemiah's opponents (ch 2 10), and that of the enemies of the Truth. It will be one of the principles of judgment that will determine attitudes and characteristics opposed to the Truth (Mat 25 35)

Such care and assistance will be offered to the Jews fleeing from Jerusalem at the time of the Gogian invasion. The Arabian tribes will have been converted by the saints, and instructed to fulfil the role defined for them in Isa 21 13-14

**“but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them” —** The incident recorded in Num 22 6 and Josh 24 9, by which king and prophet endeavored to defeat the divine purpose with Israel. The philosophy of Balaam is reflected in the doctrine of toleration of evil and error (2Tim 3 8, Jude 11, Rev 2 14)

**“howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing” —** Because He loved the nation (Deu 23 5) and refused to allow the designs of Balaam and Balak to succeed. This was according to the terms of the Abrahamic covenant: “I will curse him that curseth thee” (Gen 12 3), and in so doing, the purpose of Balaam was reversed. Yahweh similarly defeated the curses of Sanballat and company (Neh 4 4, 7, 15), the judgment being a manifestation of divine righteousness (Mic 6 5)

### VERSE 3

**“Now it came to pass” —** See the comments on this repetitive phrase: ch 1 1, 4, 2 1, etc

**“when they had heard the law, that they separated” —** As they should properly have maintained before (Neh 9 2, cp Jas 1 27). This probably was a lengthy process, like that pursued by Ezra (10 10-19). Note the emphasis on separation indicated in vv 3, 8, 19, 21, 22, 28 and 30



**“from Israel”** — There was an immediate response to their obligations. This will be re-enacted at the judgment seat, as those described as “goats” are removed from the “sheep” which constitute the “true Israel” (Mat 8 12, 25 32, Lk 13 28).

**“all the mixed multitude”** — This group (symbolic of an attitude) is always a danger, especially when they cling to their heathen practices. They came out with Moses (Ex 12 38), but soon murmured at the restrictions of the way and presented an example of a disgruntled community, which does not recognize the goodness of Yahweh sometimes expressed in adversity (Num 11 4, cp Ex 23 2).

### **Nehemiah’s Vigorous Rebuke of Eliashib — vv. 4-9.**

*The immediate work of Nehemiah on his return to Jerusalem, was to confirm the faithful in the community, and to oppose those who were not prepared to support the work of the Truth in sincerity and honesty. Prominent among this group of opponents was the high priest — as was his counterpart in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 3 2, Jn 18 13). The voice of the prophet Malachi had already been set before the people, and now Nehemiah typically fulfilled the prophecy of the messenger that should come to purify the house (see Mal 3 3).*

### **VERSE 4**

**“And before this”** — Before the day of the reading (v 1), and therefore during Nehemiah’s absence from the city (v 6).

**“Eliashib the priest”** — Originally one of the foremost in building the wall (3 1), but who later had defected from his bounden duty of properly maintaining the purity of the faith in Jerusalem.

**“having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God”** — He had the responsibility of keeping the “house of God” in a holy condition, so as to fulfil the priestly commission (Exo 28 36). This was a solemn commitment, for he represented Yahweh to the people, and was required to uphold the divine principles. A measure of this accountability devolves

upon leaders and teachers in the ecclesia today (Tit 1 7-9, 1Tim 3), who must fulfil their obligations to preserve the Truth in its purity, both in doctrine and practice (Tit 1 9).

The Hebrew for “chamber” is *lishkah*, a singular word, but here used collectively of the many chambers and “treasuries” mentioned in ch 12 44, 13 9, 12, 13. The RV has “chambers.” The greater high priest (our Lord Jesus Christ) has the oversight of the chambers in the ecclesial house of God (Jn 14 2), but will only allow those of faith and singular devotion to the Truth, to occupy them. Usurpers and those who would damage the cause of the Truth will be uprooted and removed. Therefore it is important that teachers and elders in the ecclesia recognize their commission to “feed the flock of God” (1Pet 5 2), and to maintain the purity of the faith under all circumstances, opposing compromise with worldly, social influences.

**“(was) allied unto Tobiah”** — Israel’s deadly enemy! This was an association of acute compromise. Tobiah represented the element of worldliness which threatens the spiritual vigor of the Truth (see 2 10).

### **VERSE 5**

**“And he had prepared for him a great chamber”** — What might have appeared to be a small concession became a “great” influence in the temple. Worldly influences are like leaven, whose small beginnings eventually affects the whole (1Cor 5 6, Gal 5 9).

**“where aforetime”** — The tithings, required under the Law, had been allowed to fall into decline (Mal 3 8-9).

**“they laid”** — Concern had previously been expressed to carefully observe Yahweh’s commandments, but, due to the influence of Eliashib and Tobiah, this was no longer the case.

**“the meat offerings”** — Lit *munchah*, or “meal offerings,” representative of the Lord Jesus, as “the bread of life.” The offering was of fine flour, seasoned with salt, and mixed with oil and frankincense (Lev 2 1).

**“the frankincense”** — Representing the incense of prayer (Exo. 30:30-38; cp. Rev. 5:8; 8:3). This is obtained from a spice tree which yields a white gum at the slightest scratch. It therefore speaks of the constant use of prayer on all occasions, and the ready response from the Father as a result. Nationally, prayer was offered twice a day, on the altar of incense. The Hebrew word *lebonah* signifies *whiteness*, and therefore frankincense stands as the symbol of purity. Thus, prayer should be pure, without false motives, or ostentation.

**“and the vessels”** — Indicating divine activity and service. It was these vessels of the temple that were desecrated in Belsazzar’s drunken orgy on his last night in Babylon (Dan. 5:3, 23). But now, Eliashib, the apostate high priest of Israel, had acted in a similar fashion, repeating the action of the worldly prince of Babylon. The “golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God, which was at Jerusalem” (Dan. 5:3) represent the principles of the Truth in God’s people which must be honored and preserved in their purity.

**“and the tithes of the corn”** — The firstfruits of labor given voluntarily to God.

**“the new wine”** — The reviving influence of devoted service, demonstrating lives willingly offered to God (cp. Eph. 5:18).

**“and the oil”** — Indicating the light of the Word (Zech. 4:12, 14; Mat. 25:4; Heb. 1:9).

**“which was commanded (to be given)”** — According to the Law. Contrast ch. 10:35.

**“to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests”** — But now Tobiah was in charge of the temple provisions, and the ecclesia was virtually leaderless, lacking true instruction and example, and consequently the worship of God was largely ignored. The faithful became a minority (Mal. 3:16), and the apostasy reigned supreme!

## VERSE 6

**“But in all this (time)”** — That is,

during the time while Tobiah was ingratiating himself with Eliashib, and the spiritual state of Judah declined. Nehemiah was absent during this period, having returned to Persia in accordance with his earlier contract with the king (5:14). This period therefore typifies the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ for two millennia, whilst he remains “in a far country” (Mat. 25:14; Lk. 19:12).

**“was not I at Jerusalem”** — He was absent from the area of his ministrations. His appointment with the king had only been for a limited time (2:6), and he had since been recalled. Then he requested a further time to return to Jerusalem. Perhaps Malachi, whose message seems to have been presented during the absence of Nehemiah, had informed him of the spiritual deterioration that had set in after the death of Ezra.

**“for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king”** — Thus Nehemiah had formerly been twelve years in Jerusalem (cp. 2:1).

**“and after”** — Lit. “at the end of the days” (see mg.); thus at the conclusion of a specified period of time.

**“certain days”** — The time is not specified; hence an unknown period. This typifies the absence of the Lord, for none know “the day nor the hour” of his return (Mat. 24:36; Acts 1:7; 1Thes. 5:2; 2Pet. 3:10).

**“obtained I leave of the king”** — See margin, and compare Psalms 102:13. Gese-nius has “I asked leave of the king.” Nehemiah was anxious to complete the work of reformation consequent upon the advice of Malachi (cp. Mal. 3, and consider 1Pet. 1:10-12).

## VERSE 7

**“And I came to Jerusalem”** — In this, Nehemiah foreshadowed the second coming of Christ (Mal. 3:1-2; Zech. 14:4).

**“and understood”** — Heb. *biyn*, *to mentally separate; to distinguish*. Thus, “to perceive.” It did not take Nehemiah long to accurately assess the situation. With characteristic vigor, he set about

### CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH (vv. 8-11)

Nehemiah did not mince matters when handling Tobiah. "I threw all Tobiah's belongings out of the chamber, and ordered the chambers to be purified" (Moff). Having done this, he then "reprimanded the officials" (NASB). The word literally means "to toss, to grapple, to wrangle." In this instance the word is not used of physical combat, but verbal contention. He had adopted a similar stand on a previous occasion (see ch. 5:7 where the same word occurs). Nehemiah was not a man of compromise. In view of the appalling spiritual state in which he found the affairs of the city at his second coming, he contended with the rulers (v. 11), the nobles (v. 17), and the people (v. 25). When Jude called upon brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith" at a time when the very survival of the Truth was at stake, he used a significant word *epagomizomat*, which Vine defines as meaning "to contend about a thing as a combatant." The word "agonise" is part of this word, indicating that those who would remain faithful to the Truth must be prepared to "contend" for it to the point of personal sacrifice and suffering. Had Nehemiah felt it prudent to observe political convenience he would have tolerated Tobiah and turned a blind eye to the destructive activities of wayward priests. He did not do so, because, together with other men of faith throughout the ages — including Jude — he maintained an uncompromising attitude toward the Truth, and was determined to uphold the righteousness of Yahweh and His Word, without any thought of self-interest or personal advantage. "This is the way! Walk ye in it!" — *J U*

important and necessary reforms

**"of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah"** — Eliashib was held responsible for the actions of Tobiah, that he had permitted. Similarly, if brethren allow tolerance, doctrinal error, or worldly influence, into ecclesial activities, they will be held personally responsible.

**"in preparing him"** — This constituted sabotage of the most flagrant kind! The high priest set the example of complete apostasy, which was followed by many of the people.

**"a chamber in the courts of the house of God"** — Notice the emphasis upon the terrible influence and impact of the act of Eliashib "chamber courts house." This was the area of his responsibility (cp. Jn. 14:2), but with the chamber defiled (v. 5), the "courts" would soon be empty of worshippers, and the "house of God" would eventually demise. Thus, to allow false doctrine and worldly affiliations ultimately results in spiritual tragedy.

### VERSE 8

**"And it grieved me sore"** — Previously the enemies were "grieved" because they were left outside the city, whilst Nehemiah was inside (2:10). Now Nehemiah feels "outside" and the enemy is housed inside the temple! Therefore, the governor imitated the attitude of the Psalmist (Psa. 69:9), prefiguring the attitude of the Master against the evil power of apostasy (Jn. 2:17).

**"therefore I cast forth"** — Flushed with indignation at the indifference of the high priest Eliashib and the impertinence of Tobiah, Nehemiah did not waste time with explanations or arguments. He immediately took the drastic action of judgment, and removed the offending articles from the area of the temple. Similarly the Master refused to allow the influence of enemy principles to disturb the holy precincts (Jn. 2:17, Mk. 11:15). This statement will be ultimately fulfilled when the Greater Nehemiah returns to "cast forth" from his presence all who refuse to allow the Spirit-Word to enter their heart and discipline.

their lives.

**"all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber"** — The evidence of apostasy was removed out of the place that was set aside for the worship and service of Yahweh. The governor showed scant respect for the high priest or his Ammonite friend.

#### VERSE 9

**"Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers"** — In order to purify them from the defiling influence of Tobiah (cp. Hezekiah's action: 2Chr. 29:5-18).

**"and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense"** — The true worship of Yahweh was restored. Bread and frankincense (see v. 5) were placed on the Table of Shewbread as a symbol of Israel's presence in the holy place of the tabernacle (Num. 4:7). Thus, Nehemiah's first urgent action on his return was to get Israel back into the holy place, and the enemies excluded. The judgment seat of Jesus Christ will similarly remove the rebels and establish his real friends in immortality.

#### The Reformer at Work — vv. 10-14.

*A constant labor is now undertaken to restore the former standards of true worship in the nation. In this, Nehemiah's work prefigures that of the Messiah at his return (Zech. 12:5-14).*

#### VERSE 10

**"And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given (them)"** — Being denied the tithes that sustained them, the Levites had returned to their homes to labor in their own fields, thus deserting Jerusalem and the temple. The covenant had been broken (ch. 10:35) through the effect of Eliashib's foolish example and action of associating with the enemies of the faith, and by his encouragement of compromise in the very arena of worship. Apparently the appeal of the prophet Malachi (Mal. 3:8) had been largely ignored (cp. 2Pet. 3:3-4).

**"for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field"** — Forced by circumstances caused by the wicked leaders. This was against the principles of the Law (cp. 1Tim. 5:17). Now, however, instead of merely occupying the cities divinely allocated to them (Num. 35:2), the work of God was delayed as the Levites were forced to work the fields for their own sustenance.

#### VERSE 11

**"Then contended I with the rulers"** — A necessary action of separation from the action and attitude of wicked workers (Pro. 28:4; Jude v. 3).

**"and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?"** — It had once been filled with dedicated priests and the centre of worship, as previously established by Nehemiah (ch. 12:44), but was now deserted through the impiety of Eliashib.

**"And I gathered them together, and set them in their place"** — Restoring the former things (cp. Acts 15:16-17). The energetic Nehemiah immediately sought to correct the abuses. A good leadership was established; an appointed form of worship instigated; the Levites set in their order; and worshippers flocked back to Yahweh (Isa. 2:2-4).

#### VERSE 12

**"Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries"** — There was a willing response by the people to the standards established by the governor.

#### VERSE 13

**"And I made treasurers over the treasures"** — These brethren were organized to distribute money among the Levites so that the work would continue unhindered. The Lord Jesus Christ will similarly arrange such matters in the administration of the kingdom (Isa. 60:6; Psa. 72:10).

**"Shelemiah the priest"** — This name means *Yah Repays*. It is a significant name in view of the actions and work of Nehemiah! It reveals the principle of Rom.

11 22, and the purpose of Christ's second advent (Isa 53 11)

**"and Zadok the scribe"** — Sig *Righteousness* Perhaps the same man as in ch 3 29 or v 29 After the judgment of flesh, the principle of righteousness must be established (Isa 3 10, 26 2)

Thus, appropriately, the *scribe* (the Word revealed) is associated with the *priest* (the Word applied)

**"and of the Levites, Pedaiah"** — Sig *Yah has Ransomed* He was the son of Parosh, repaired the wall (ch 3 25), and assisted Ezra in reading and explaining the Law (8 4) Ultimately salvation will be recognized as a "purchase" of God (Isa 53 12, Jer 31 11, Hos 13 14, Mat 20 28)

**"and next to them"** — A further appointment to assist the treasurers

**"(was) Hanan"** — Sig *Favor* A Levite who assisted in reading the Law (8 7), and sealed the covenant (10 10) The final principle of the four here indicated by the names recorded, is that divine *favor* results from *righteous judgment* upon sin

**"the son of Zaccur"** — Sig *Well Remembered*

**"the son of Mattaniah"** — Sig *Gift of Yah*

**"for they were counted faithful"** — After the fashion of Abraham the father of faith who was "counted" by God (Gen 15 6), these men had proved to be trustworthy, as is required in those who seek to represent Yahweh (1Cor 4 2) They had continued faithfully upholding the principles of the Truth whilst others had deserted the cause of Yahweh by indulging in apostasy (cp Mat 25 21, 23)

**"and their office (was) to distribute unto their brethren"** — Their brethren now benefited from the faithfulness of these here named So it will be in the future, when the righteous acts of the servants of God will be to the ultimate benefit of the mortal community over whom they will be placed

## VERSE 14

**"Remember me"** — A characteristic prayer of Nehemiah (see 1 8, 4 14)

repeated four times in this chapter, to reveal four aspects of the divine work to be manifested at the second coming of Christ To uphold the work of faith (v 14), to select and spare according to mercy (v 22), to judge and remove the faithless (v 29), to acknowledge and elevate those who "do good" (v 31)

**"O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof"** — This will be repeated in the future, when the Lord Jesus stands before his restored people, having re-established the work of faith

## The Sabbath Reform

**Established — vv. 15-22.**

*The daily application of the divine principles was important to the continuance of Nehemiah's reforms In this he foreshadows the "sabbatical rest that remains for the people of God" (Heb 4 9)*

## VERSE 15

**"In those days saw I"** — Nehemiah carefully examined the ecclesia, and brought to account the actions of those who labored in his absence This will be the basis of the judgment of Christ (Mat 12 36, 2Cor 5 9, 11) at his return

**"in Judah (some) treading wine presses on the sabbath"** — In contrast to the covenant to which they had bound themselves (10 31) Perhaps the excuse for defiling the sabbath was the extreme famine throughout the land, causing all foods to be processed urgently? However, Malachi identified the folly of the nation in their neglect of spiritual responsibilities (Mal 3 8), which brought divine judgment upon them Because they lacked faith, they acted as though God was to blame for their state In the future, Christ will identify those whose labor "for the Truth" was actually a manifestation of self-aggrandisement (Mat 7 22), by which they, in effect, "trod" their own wine presses on the sabbath

**"and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and**

**all (manner of) burdens**” — But even the excuse of deprivation could not “justify” the permitting of wholesale labor during the time which should have been given to Yahweh. In this they represent all who permit daily occupations to supersede what is properly given to Yahweh in spiritual responsibilities.

**“which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day”** — This was strictly forbidden (Jer. 17:21). However, the people allowed business and profit motives to override the principles of worship (Amos 8:5; Mal. 1:13). The sabbath therefore became an inconvenience, not a pleasure (Isa. 58:13). There is a need to see ecclesial work as a sacrifice to the honor of Yahweh, and not as a means for personal gratification.

**“and I testified”** — Notice the deliberate and positive action undertaken by Nehemiah when he returned in the role of judge. He “testified,” then “contended” (v. 17), then “commanded” (v. 19); again “testified” (v. 21) and “commanded” (v. 22).

**“(against them) in the day wherein they sold victuals”** — Nehemiah went to the market place at the busiest time of the day, to rebuke them openly. Similarly upon this basis, the Lord Jesus will rebuke the unrighteous in the day of judgment concerning their actions (Jn. 12:48).

#### VERSE 16

**“There dwelt men of Tyre also therein”** — Heretics in the ecclesia! The Tyrians were the merchants of the ancient world, and had established business houses in the holy city of Jerusalem — in the “ecclesial hall,” so to speak! Their standards were later adopted by the members of the ecclesia in Jerusalem, as was also the case in the days of the Master (Mat. 21:12).

**“which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem”** — Not only the basic needs, as in v. 15, but now also the goods of convenience and luxury. Thus, they contributed to the attitude of covetousness

amongst the brethren (Lk. 12:15; Col. 3:5).

#### VERSE 17

**“Then I contended with the nobles of Judah”** — The chief offenders, as they were also in the days of the Master (Mat. 23:8).

**“and said unto them, What evil thing (is) this that ye do”** — The protests of the prophets and others against the profanation of the sabbath were now levelled against the nation (Eze. 20:12, 20; 44:24; Isa. 56:4; 58:13). Their wickedness was to be brought to account in Nehemiah’s act of judgment, in order to bring about an attitude of remorse and repentance (Zech. 12:10-11; Acts 2:37).

**“and profane the sabbath day?”** — The priests redoubled their labor on sabbath days, and were yet accounted “blameless,” because they worked in the service of God (Mat. 12:5). These nobles could have avoided the condemnation of Nehemiah by working not as a noble, but as a priest. The Lord’s disciples desired to be “nobles” (Mk. 9:34), but the Master urged them to become a “priests” (v. 35).

#### VERSE 18

**“Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath”** — The example of wickedness and its result was already imbedded in their history. By so acting, those of the restoration were inviting divine retribution. Later the Lord similarly warned the people, that repeating the evil attitude of their forefathers would bring just retribution upon them (Mat. 23:35-36).

#### VERSE 19

**“And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath”** — Immediate action was required. The Law was to be observed absolutely (Lev. 23:32; Exo. 31:14-17) so that preparation for the sabbath should commence as it “began to be dark.”

**“I commanded that the gates should**

**be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath**” — This law of Nehemiah remained a continual observance for following generations, so that at the time of Christ he warned his followers that the closed gates of the city would not permit any to escape in the impending holocaust of AD70 (Mat. 24:20). Apparently, at certain times in their history, the Jews observed the sabbath law so strictly that they even allowed themselves to be massacred in Jerusalem, rather than desecrate the sabbath by defending themselves (see 1Maccabees 2:32-38).

**“and (some) of my servants set I at the gates”** — Nehemiah enforced the law by placing his own men in authority. These servants ensured that the city would be protected from the presence of the profane, and that the “Truth” (the doctrine of the sabbath) would be preserved (see 2Cor. 4:5; Rev. 1:1).

**“(that) there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day”** — The servants maintained the established law. They acted as have the prophets and apostles, to declare and enforce the divine requirements to the nation and individuals (Eph. 2:20; Mat. 16:18; 1Cor. 12:28).

## VERSE 20

**“So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware”** — Common traders. The name “Canaanite” describes a professional trader, and is so used in Zech. 14:21.

The word comes from the Hebrew *kana* which means to *bend the knee*; hence to grovel in mock humility as a trader. Spiritual traders are found in the church system developed from the Roman apostasy, and continue to “buy and sell” religious commodities, until they will be removed completely from the presence of the Lord (Rev. 18:3, 11, 15, 23). Then the Canaanite will be no longer permitted to exist in the “house of Yahweh” (Zech. 14:21).

**“lodged without Jerusalem once or twice”** — Doubtless to display their wares in opposition to the law of the sabbath. They might have argued that they were

only “lodging,” waiting for the coming of the day, but Nehemiah recognized that they were breaking the spirit of the law even if they were not actually “selling” (cp. Isa. 56:6)!

## VERSE 21

**“Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do (so) again, I will lay hands on you”** — So as to exact the penalty of the law for their disobedience. The authority of the governor provided him with the opportunity to imprison for infractions of the law, as will apply to nations in the millennium who act contrary to the instructions of the monarch (Isa. 60:12; cp. Zech. 14:16-20).

**“From that time forth came they no (more) on the sabbath”** — The threat had the desired effect! Jerusalem was thereby freed from the contaminating influence of the spiritual Canaanites.

## VERSE 22

**“And I commanded the Levites”** — Additional Levites were required for this duty, since others were already purified (12:30; cp. 1Tim. 1:18; Num. 8:24-25). They were a type of Gentile believers who are added to the flock of faith (Jn. 10:16; 17:20).

**“that they should cleanse themselves”** — A constant requirement for officiating priests and Levites. The Word must become a cleansing influence in the life of spiritual servants (Eph. 5:26; Jn. 3:5; 15:3; Heb. 10:22). This was the teaching of John the Baptist, who proclaimed the cleansing influence that comes from baptism (cp. Mk. 3:15).

**“and (that) they should come (and) keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day”** — It was a paradox of the sabbath law that the work of faith was increased on that day of rest (cp. Isa. 58:13). The labors of the priests were doubled, and yet they remained blameless (Mat. 12:5).

**“Remember me, O my God”** — See notes v. 14.

**“(concerning) this also, and spare me”** — The same word for “spare me”

(Heb *chuwc*) occurs in Mal 3 17, and may well have prompted this aspect of the governor's prayer. It was also the expression of the Master (Heb 5 7), who will extend that favor to those who seek him (Psa 72 13, cp Eze 20 17).

**"according to the greatness of thy mercy"** — Nehemiah's faithful works and consistent labor for Yahweh were recognized by him as merely a "reasonable service" (Rom 12 1). When all was performed, Nehemiah saw a need for mercy (Heb *cheded*, to bow down, as to an inferior).

### **Honesty Required in the Marriage Covenant — vv. 23-27**

*The sabbath law was designed to unite the people to their "husband" (Yahweh) as an expression of mutual co-operation designed to give spiritual life. Now this fundamental principle was to be acknowledged in the restoring of the divine marriage principles among the nation.*

### **VERSE 23**

**"In those days also saw I"** — Nehemiah makes a careful examination of all aspects of the people's condition (2Cor 5 10). He was not dilatory in this matter, realizing the importance of manifesting the divine principles in the circumstances of life.

This same principle will form the basis of the examination by the Lord Jesus Christ of those who have been invited to become part of the Bride of Christ. The Truth is a marriage covenant (Eph 5 32), and the Lord is anxious that that covenant should be upheld in faithful service. But there will be some who have "loved this present world" (2Tim 4 10), and thereby compromised their covenant. The judgment seat of Christ will determine the true character of our profession, as he "looks upon" those who are gathered before him (2Cor 5 9).

**"Jews"** — They had acted inconsistently with their holy calling, during the absence of Nehemiah.

**"(that) had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, (and) of Moab"** — The

covenant previously entered into by the nation had specifically prohibited marriages with foreign women (10 30, cp Ezra 9 10). This is equivalent to uniting with worldliness, and entering into "unequal" agreements (2Cor 6 14). The women had not acted with Ruth-like devotion (cp Ruth 1 16) by renouncing their foreign origin, but had maintained a spirit contrary to the Truth.

It is important to note that the Hebrew for "married" is *ishshah*, and can be literally rendered "dwelt with women" (see mg). The word is nowhere else translated "marry" (except v 27). Therefore this suggests that the "marriages" were actually *de facto* relationships in many cases.

### **VERSE 24**

**"And their children"** — Neglect of true family responsibilities resulted from these worldly alliances. The divine "language" had not been encouraged in the families, instead, the parents had allowed their children to continue in association with the foreign spirit of their mothers. Typically, this represents the influence of the "mother of harlots" (Rev 17 5), whose teaching develops an apostate spirit in those who might otherwise become the children of faith (see Mat 23 13 concerning those in the Lord's day who manifested a similar attitude).

**"spake half in the speech of Ashdod (and) of Moab"** — A kind of hybrid language, a mixture caused by the fathers speaking to the children in Aramaic, whilst the mother spoke in her native tongue creating the most insidious form of environment. Consequently, it was a mixture of truth and error (as was the serpent-tongue that turned the Truth into a lie, resulting in the Edenic transgression of Gen 3).

**"and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people"** — The Truth was hampered and twisted by the language of the world (cp Rev 3 15-17), until it retained no influence in their lives.

A similar attitude of speaking in a "mixed" language is unfortunately



repeated when the principles and expressions of worldliness are allowed to invade the family circle in our present times (Eph 4 17, 22) We need to “speak the Jews’ language” by conversing upon spiritual matters and divine truths (Col 3 16) The future policy of the Lord Jesus Christ will reverse present trends, and enforce true instruction, by turning to “the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one consent” (Zeph 3 9)

### VERSE 25

**“And I contended with them”** — He demonstrated and impressed the reality of their transgression upon them (cp v 27), reasoning with them on the basis of the Law, and drawing their attention to the results of disobedience All who embrace worldliness will face a similar response at the judgment seat of Christ We cannot take the “world” with us into the kingdom! Those, like Demas, who prefer the world which is “passing away” (2Tim 4 10, 2Pet 3 10-11) will suffer the condemnation of judgment (Rom 2 8-9)

**“and cursed them”** — Rotherham has “laid a curse upon them” Nehemiah announced the judgment of God upon such folly as had been allowed to influence the families of the Jews, and pronounced the condemnation of the Law against those who denied the covenant into which they had formerly entered (cp ch 10 29)

**“and smote certain of them”** — He had them punished according to the Law, by whipping (Deu 25 2, Ezra 7 26)

**“and plucked off their hair”** — Had them shaven as a mark of the greatest ignominy and shame (cp 1Cor 11 6, Phil 3 19) Those rejected at the judgment seat of Christ will similarly suffer the shame of condemnation (Rev 16 15, Mat 25 45)

**“and made them swear by God, (saying), Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves”** — There had to be a complete repudiation of their previous life of transgression, and a commitment to faithfully

endorse the principles of Yahweh (Jer 16 19) This instruction was to be upheld in the family environment so that the importance of separation from the elements of the world was recognized by the children It is in marriages with the alien that great stress is put upon families, and those involved face continual challenges to their faith For this reason the Scriptures instruct that “marriages should be only in the Lord” (1Cor 7 39)

### VERSE 26

**“Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?”** — As listed in 1Kings 11 1, Solomon ignored the instruction specifically recorded for kings, who were to become an example of faithfulness to the nation (Deu 17 16-18)

**“yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God”** — Solomon, the fourth son of David and Bathsheba (2Sam 5 14, 1Chr 3 5), was the evidence of Yahweh’s forgiveness for the sin that had united his parents, and for which he was given as a blessing to David (2Sam 12 24) His name means *Peaceable*, and reflects the unity gained through atonement

**“and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin”** — Rotherham translates the word “outlandish” (Heb *nokri*, rendered “strange” in 1Kgs 11 1, 8, etc) as “foreign” (see 1Kgs 11 1) For political advantage, Solomon contracted marriages with other nations, but, contrary to his expectations, this policy contributed to his downfall Solomon’s case shows that the greatest care should be maintained — for even this illustrious monarch, who received from God the blessing of an undoubted ability and remarkable wisdom, could fall Upon such examples Paul exhorts to “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Cor 10 12)

### VERSE 27

**“Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange**

wives?" — There appears to have been some argument in the ecclesia at Jerusalem. Evidently a group vigorously and boldly presented their case, endeavoring to justify their conduct, as some will again attempt at the judgment seat of Christ (Mat 7 21-23).

The word "marrying" is the Heb *yashab* — see notes in v 23.

### **The Enemy is Expelled from Jerusalem — vv. 28-31.**

*The final action of Nehemiah, recorded in the Old Testament scriptures prefigures that of the second advent of Christ. Sin is banished, the remnant is cleansed, the divine service is elevated. The record concludes with the ecclesia established in harmony, and Nehemiah in prayer to his God. It is a lovely picture foreshadowing the Messiah in eternal communion with the Father, surrounded by a company of faithful ones, cleansed from former impurity.*

### **VERSE 28**

**"And (one) of the sons"** — Josephus suggests that his name is Manasseh. This man boldly challenged Nehemiah, and refused to comply with the instructions given. He was supported by others of the priesthood (v 29). However, Nehemiah was equally uncompromising, and in his capacity as governor, he passed a sentence of exile, such as was given to Cain for rebellion against the law of God (Gen 4 5, 14-16).

This group of rebels represents those at the judgment seat of Christ, described as "workers of iniquity" (Lk 13 27). Although associated with the priesthood, being called to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1Pet 2 9), they had defiled their calling and will be denied residence in the royal city of Zion.

**"of Joiada"** — Sig Yah hath Established. He was the great-grandson of Joshua, the high priest (ch 12 10-11, 22). His son (Manasseh?) married the daughter of Sanballat, the enemy of Israel.

**"the son of Eliashib the high priest"**

— This is the saddest statement in the book! It speaks volumes about folly. Eliashib possessed great opportunities and awesome responsibilities, but not only neglected his spiritual obligations, but condoned the influence of the enemy to defile the holy things of God (see comments on ch 3 1). He was a master of compromise, and traded his eternal future for present benefits. He thereby disgraced his calling, and denied his God. Eliashib was the "Judas" of Nehemiah's days.

**"(was) son in law to Sanballat the Horonite"** — Thus this enemy of the Truth was now associated in a marriage covenant with the family of the high priest of Israel. This situation was reflected in the action of the leaders of Jewry in joining with the power of Rome to encompass the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus (Jn 19 15). It was again repeated in the spiritual compromise of the first century ecclesias who sought the companionship of the apostasy (cp Rev 2 15, 20).

**"therefore I chased him from me"**

— The recalcitrant priest took refuge with his father-in-law, and (according to Josephus) with his permission built a rival temple on Mt Gerizim, over which he presided as high priest.

For some centuries this continued to be a thorn in the side of Judah, a refuge for traitors and renegades, a centre of hostility and antagonism, a constant source of trouble and difficulty. Manasseh, the grandson of Eliashib, had his revenge, but in doing so made Nehemiah's reform more permanent. His attitude demonstrated how essential were the initiated reforms. The practical result was that, with Manasseh's withdrawal, opposition to the Truth ceased.

The reforms were established, the cleansed nation ultimately developed on the foundation laid by Ezra and Nehemiah, and not upon those designed by Eliashib and Manasseh.

So it will ultimately prove through the work of the greater governor, the Lord Jesus Christ, at his return — even although, at one time, it seemed that the example of the high priest, Caiaphas, and

his colleagues (Jn 18 13) would negate his work. But the faithful keepers of the covenant will ultimately be elevated, and the enemies of the Truth be dismissed (Lk 13 28)

### VERSE 29

**“Remember them”** — Nehemiah calls upon Yahweh to consider the attitude and actions of Manasseh’s party, thereby “committing himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1Pet 2 23). The words can be paraphrased “Thou wilt remember ” (cp Mal 4 3-4) for the divine judgment will inevitably fall upon all enemies of the Truth, and provide an answer to the continuing appeal of persecuted saints (see Hab 1 2, Rev 6 9).

This verse records the last historical act of the Old Testament: the temple cleansed, the priesthood reformed, the rebellious priests excluded from the city.

**“O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites”** — See Mal 2 4, 8.

### VERSE 30

**“Thus cleansed I them”** — In Mal 3 3 this same word “cleansed” (*Heb tahir to be bright, pure*) is translated “purify.” The people and temple were both separated and prepared for appointment as a bride (cp Rev 21 2, 9).

**“From all strangers”** — Rotherham “everything foreign.” The Hebrew is *nekarim*, “foreigners” (which also appears in ch 9 2). There was to be no offending principle of Gentilism or worldliness in the appointments of faith.

**“and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites”** — See notes on ch 12 9, 24. Nehemiah completed the assigning of appropriate offices to the work of the temple. They typically repre-

sent the future appointments to be made by the Lord Jesus Christ of various orders of Levites in the activities and arrangements of the kingdom (Ezek 44 10-16).

**“every one in his business”** — Rotherham has “work.” They were appropriately placed into service, as will be the saints of the future Age (Lk 19 17).

### VERSE 31

**“And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits”** — Mentioned as particularly valuable reforms, for they provided for the continuance of the temple service (cp ch 10 34). The wood offering was for the fires of the incense burning and altar sacrifices. The firstfruits were for dedication offerings and the priests’ portion. Thus it revealed a continual burnt offering of dedication, and typed the future joyous and continual offering of faithful devotion (Ezek 42 13, 44 29-30).

**“Remember me, O my God, for good”** — So closes the record of this faithful, diligent and generous man. It is historically the last prayer of the Old Testament: a plea to be included in the divine Book of Remembrance (Mal 3 16), and comprises the appeal of all faithful saints as they await the day of final fulfilment.

The next incident of Scripture is the birth of the FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST and DIVINE GOVERNOR, whose labors would be more effective and lasting than any other. The Lord Jesus Christ is about to return from a “far country” with a commission from the great Monarch of the heavens, to fulfil the eternal purpose of Yahweh upon the earth.

May the divine blessing continue in our own endeavors to maintain the faith, and to continue in service “day by day” as we await the new day of glory.



### CONCLUDING EXHORTATION

**T**HE example of Nehemiah remains to encourage, direct and stimulate those who desire to labor upon the walls of spiritual Jerusalem. In studying, reading and meditating upon his record, left for us by divine providence, we are helped to bear our witness to the Truth bravely, live our lives holily and blamelessly, do our work diligently and in the spirit of full consecration. If we are opposed by enemies, or those who would discourage us from our commitment, let us not be dismayed, deterred, or even checked by the absence of man's appreciation. We can continue to walk firmly, with psalms of hope within our hearts and upon our lips, steadfastly upon the path of spiritual dedication and service, because Yahweh our Saviour will "remember us for good," and will not "wipe out" our efforts. Instead He will, according to His mercy and favor, write them in a Book of Remembrance, which no hand may touch to blot out or to erase. Then, through His beloved Son, the greater Nehemiah, who has himself trodden the same path of service and sacrifice, Yahweh will give us a large reward, "abundance" of eternal joy, in the day of glory. Let this be our prayer and our determination, unto the end of our record!





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