

Nehemiah

Memoirs, Part I: Rebuilding the Wall

52.

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah:

Now it happened in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”

[1:1-3]

53.

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, “I beseech You, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’ They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man.”

[1:4-11b]

54.

Now I was the cupbearer to the king. And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

[1:11c-2:1]

55.

So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.”

Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?”

Then the king said to me, “What would you request?”

So I prayed to the God of heaven. I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”

Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

[2:2-8]

56.

Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

[2:9-10]

57.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work.

[2:11-16]

58.

Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”

I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.

[2:17-18]

59.

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”

So I answered them and said to them, “The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem.”

[2:19-20]

60.

Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana also made repairs. Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.

[3:1-5]

61.

Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor of the province beyond the River. Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another

section and the Tower of Furnaces. Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.

Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the Refuse Gate.

Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.

[3:6-14]

62.

Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He built it, covered it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden as far as the steps that descend from the city of David. After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as a point opposite the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men. After him the Levites carried out repairs under Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. After him their brothers carried out repairs under Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of the other half of the district of Keilah. Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the Angle. After him Baruch the son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest. After him Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the doorway of Eliashib's house even as far as the end of his house. After him the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs. After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house. After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah as far as the Angle and as far as the corner. Palal the son of Uzai made repairs in front of the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs. The temple servants living in Ophel made repairs as far as the front of the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.

[3:15-27]

Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house. After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. And after him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, carried out repairs. After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters. After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as

far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner. Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.

[3:28-32]

63.

Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?” Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!”

[4:1-3]

64.

Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.

So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

[4:4-6]

65.

Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

[4:7-8]

66.

But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

Thus in Judah it was said,
“The strength of the burden bearers is failing,
Yet there is much rubbish;
And we ourselves are unable
To rebuild the wall.”

[4:9-10]

67.

Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”

When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, “They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,” then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in

families with their swords, spears and bows. When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.”

[4:11-14]

68.

When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah. Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

[4:15-20]

69.

So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.” So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.

[4:21-23]