


## INTRODUCTION

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The book of Nehemiah was called "Nehemiah" first by Jerome. **It was known to Wycliffe as Esdras.** The Geneva Bible first set the name of Nehemiah above the book in this country.

The book of Nehemiah is famous for the work of the wall-builder who denied himself a soft life and a country ranch in favour of solidarity with the people of God in their extremity.

**As Tirshatha** or governor Nehemiah was a stem man and when the need arose he would call a conclave and manoeuvre around the schemes and self-seeking of the nobles.

Politically, Queen Esther's influence began in the Persian court 60 years after the first return under Zerubbabel in 536BC which was 17 years before Ezra and 30 years prior to Nehemiah's labours. Esther lived to see the temple founded in 520BC at the encouragement of Haggai and probably was still acting as an adviser to Artaxerxes her step-son 30 years later. In all probability she was personally acquainted with both Ezra and Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was a man who was given to meditation and amid his busy life "arrow" prayers were the order of the day. You will find seven such prayers in the book together with one fine lengthy prayer of thanksgiving. Let it not be forgotten that Nehemiah spent 4 months in prayer prior to his plea to the king for his city. (Nehemiah 1.1, 2.1)

The expedition with which the solid walls were erected (52 days) speaks volumes on how effective Nehemiah was as a leader in galvanising the people to work. His own example was of course in large part a massive model and incentive to the people.

The twelve gates of Jerusalem which Nehemiah repaired and erected new in many cases on the completion of the walls have supplied material for numerous pastoral addresses to inspire Christian people to a godly way of life. The third chapter must for that reason remain a hot favourite among the 13 chapters of the book. I commend two other themes to preachers. Think about a series on the divine providences that fell into place in

the life of this praying man - there are 24 such detailed in the commentary (though I have included the additional strange providence of Nehemiah feeling "sick" making 25). Think about the theme of "Prayer" also and consider how the "arrow prayers" of Nehemiah fit alongside the cyclone of prayer that preceded all his work and the thanksgiving that occupies a large part of Chapter 9 in parallel with the preaching of Ezra. Think how this latter prayer is combined with the name of Yahweh the God of Covenant in 9.2, 3, 4, 5 and 7)

Josephus informs us that Nehemiah lived to a great age and was governor of Judah all his life. He was a man of faith and that faith stirred within him confidence in God, concern for his will and continual co-operation with the will of God.

This is the 16th commentary in the Westgate Series. As in the other CD commentaries notes are interspersed throughout the translation. I have to say that in rendering the sense into our language I have sought to be clear whilst retaining as much idiom and detail from the Hebrew as is commensurate with translation. There are Hebrew words strewn through the English text - for readers who can avail themselves of the Hebraica 11 font these words will show up.

### **A SIGNIFICANT PROPHECY**

And the Tirshatha (governor) said to them (The Nethinims) that they must not eat from the Holy of Holiest until the priest with Urim and Thummim should stand to minister. (7.65) This prophecy stands in the book to show that none in the O.T. era could integrate the Jew and Gentile. We bless God that "in Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus ["One New Man or Humanity" (Galatians 3.28)

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# NEHEMIAH

## CHAPTER 1

*The book of Nehemiah has 13 chapters. It has 5 NT references and several allusions (cf the valley or Nahal Kidron walk 2.13) It has 24 "statements about important "occurrences" introduced by the Hebrew word יהוה which signify events in the hap of divine providence. One example of these spiritual lessons is "I happened to be the King's cup-bearer". This duty warrants comparison with Gen.40.15 and the comparison shows how vital it is to remember. Seven of Nehemiah's 11 prayers begin "Remember me". On the question of dating the Babylonian captivity was in 606B.C. The Return from Babylon is dated at 536. From 536 79 further years elapsed before Ezra and his party of 2,500 men and their dependents came back in 457-8 and Nehemiah joined him in 445-4B.C. Cyrus' decree to re-build the temple had been given on or shortly after 539 B.C. Waite Scott reckoned that Ezra's historical notes covered from 516 down to the 436 i.e. 8 of the 12 years before Nehemiah returned to the Persian court (13.6). He notes that Ezra 4.8-6.18 is Aramaic/ Chaldee as is 7:12-26. In Daniel 9.25 we learn that it was to take 7 hebdomads (490years) from the command to rebuild Jerusalem and Ezra's return (458 B.C. to Messiah "the prince" or claimant king - who presented to Israel in 32A.D. The second temple was built over four years.*

### **1. LETHARGY OR PRODUCTIVITY 1-3 (cf month of sowing or inertness) NEHEMIAH STUDIED THE HEART**

The words or affairs of Nehemiah son of Hacilah as **IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.1)** in the month Chisleu the twentieth year (of Artaxerxes) when I was in Shushan the palace. And Hanani, one of my brothers, came and men from Judah and I enquired about the Jews who had escaped - the separate remnant from the captives and about Jerusalem. And they told me that the remnant torn from the captives were still there in the province in famine or a bad state and in reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is broken and the gates consumed [ *txy*] by fire.

*It is not strange that God should move Nehemiah deeply in the ninth month of Chisleu which means "languor" or "inertness." It was the month of sowing - but there .was no such enterprise in Jerusalem because Hanani "whom the Lord favours" visited Nehemiah "whom the Lord comforts". These were sons of Hacaliah which name means "hope belongs to the Lord". Nehemiah lived then in the royal seat/metropolis *tyrb* His brother is one of several biblical people named alike. The first was father to King Jehu and may have given his name to the tower near the temple in Jerusalem; another was Daniel's friend - a prince of the house of Zedekiah. Nehemiah's first brother [ *dj* ] was already returned or more likely had made a pilgrimage. He was accompanied by other men *vma* ("men of wealth") Nehemiah's questioning *lav* was of a spiritual sort-the word is used in prayer. He had been told that "men of Judah" had been saved *alp* from dangers and knew that "they caused themselves to be a remnant from captivity"-and they were *l* ["at" or "ruling" or "protecting" Jerusalem. He was told "they count their souls of little worth" *prj* He was told the walls are divided *xrp* and the gates are burned with fire (The Hebrew Niphal tense speaks of "utter destruction")*

### **2. MOVED TO TEARS 4-5 NEHEMIAH STUDIED GOD-cf Exodus 3.14**

**IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.2)** to me "when" or "'after" [Hebrew *k"as'*] I heard these words I Sabbath-ed or rested. *The reaction was to spend time with God. He testified to fasting and mourning with his head down *lka* - there were five elements - he worshipped wept mourned fasted and prayed - for days - I belonged to the*

face of the God of Heaven. *It is most notable that he says "Yahweh". That is his first word. It was in his name - it was the name of the God of the Bush and the Lord of the future. "Great God" he said "cause yourself to be revered" ׀ [from this word comes the "fire & light" associated with God-the word "awe" and the "menorah" of seven lights]. He needs light. Then he reminds the LORD of His covenant of Love dsj or mercy with those who love Him as His friends bha*

*Frequency of use of various names of God in the writing of Nehemiah*

- (1) Elohenu 10 Elohe 5 Elohim 28(Ch 11-13) Elohai 4, El Hanan 1 (God of Grace) (9.32) Eloah (9.17) 1=49
- (2) Yahweh - God of Covenant 6 (Ch9) 5 (Ch8). 1 (Chi: 5) = 12
- (3) Adonai Ch 1.1 &Ch 10.311=2

### **3. LET YOUR EAR BE SHARP NEHEMIAH GIVES ATTENTION TO EZRA'S RE-WRITTEN PENTATEUCH: NEHEMIAH STUDIES PROPHECY 6-8**

**LET IT HAPPEN (Providential Grace No.3)** please that Your ear will be sharp to listen and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant. *Nehemiah began by seeking a reversal of "happenings" through prayer. Wesley said "Nothing ) without prayer. Prayer changes things and people. Nehemiah wants God's ear and eye. He is used to speaking to a king. Kings are pro-active and change things - and God is a Great King. Nehemiah is aware when he has audience .with God. "I confess", he says, "praying day and night concerning the sins of the sons of Israel - and of my father's house (cf brothers especially 4.23) Paul says "having been justified we have peace and a platform of prayer" (Romans 5)*

We have **twisted and writhed** /bj against You and not obeyed your laws, decrees and judgments which Moses commanded. Remember now the word you commanded Moses your servant saying" 'If they are covert or unfaithful I will scatter them among all nations' (cf the curses of Deuteronomy 28. 64 & the prosperity of Deuteronomy. 30.4-6-upon circumcision of heart) but if you return I will gather them: from there and bring them to the place I have chosen for my name"

### **4. THE REDEEMED PEOPLE: NEHEMIAH STUDIES REDEMPTION 9-10**

They are your servants or ministers and people whom you redeemed by cutting free ii18. You redeemed them by your great strength and with your powerful hold. *Of all the lessons that Nehemiah had studied since Ezra's teaching so popular since the full Torah was made more widely available and synagogues began to emerge the message of redemption was clearly foremost cf especially Exodus 6. 6-8.From this context comes the concept of Israel as "God's people". The use of the word ;77E is found in many place - Deuteronomy 7.8, 9.26, 13.5, 15.15, also Jeremiah 31.11 and Psalm 49.7 and 15*

### **5. O LORD: NEHEMIAH STUDIED ACCESS TO EL SHADDAI-PRAYER!**

Nehemiah uses the word we would use for the "Lord" Jesus - for him "The Lord - Yahweh". "Let y/h your ear be sharpened to the prayer of your servant and of your servants who delight to fear your name-and prosper your servant this day and give mercy before the face of this man. **I HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.4) TO BE yt/h cup-bearer to the king.**" *The latter expression reminds us of Genesis 40.14 where the butler of Pharaoh was asked by Joseph to "remember me and show me kindness"/ "offer my ministry of desire or love" It would seem that Joseph was willing to pray for those in peril whom the Lord put there in order that He might illumine them and use His servant Joseph. This throws light on the 7 "remembers" in the prayers of Nehemiah in this book.*

## NEHEMIAH 2

*This chapter takes us to the valley of the Mount of Olives where the desire of Nehemiah matches that of Christ to secure the people of God within the walls of salvation. There are five "personal experiences of God" registered under the writers "divine providence" view of his life and progress of faith cf vv1, 11, 13, and 15. Here is the shadow of the cross*

### THE MAN WHO WAS NEVER SAD (1) NISAN THE MONTH OF THE CRUCIFIXION

*This lovely man with all the comforts of God in his life was a servant of Artaxerxes "Longimanus" 465-425 - son of Xerxes by another wife-the "Great Warrior" (atsvh trḥ) of Herodotus. Since Xerxes was son of Esther - still an effective queen mother - the current king was step-son of the revered Jewess - associated with the previous home affairs minister – Mordecai – and friend of many Jews of rank in Babylon. It all happened in the month of Nisan. This was 4 months after the visit of Hanani in Chapter 1. In between the rain and snow and almond blossom; now the Passover and barley harvest 'with fresh new fragrant bread. He took the wine to an acutely observant King. Jews in Babylon would celebrate Passover with cups of wine - which symbolised the Exodus of God's people and also their redemption, adoption and appropriation - Exodus 6 6-8. 42,000 Jews had returned. The king was aware of that history.*

### THE SAD MAN (2) THE MAN OF SORROWS! 2-6

**AND IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.5)** in the month Nisan in Artaxerxes the king's 20th year that wine was set before his face and I took the burden of tasting the wine and gave it to the king. Now **IT NEVER HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.6)** BEFORE that I had been sad in his presence.

The king asked- "Why is your countenance evil unless it is ill intention of heart (Jeremiah 3.17or 7.24) - unless it is an evil heart?" Nehemiah says, "I was very frightened". "I said, 'O King live for ever' (Daniel's word) 'Why should I not when the city of the sepulchres of my fathers is in ruins and its gates consumed with fire'. And the king said to me 'For what reason *cqb* do you seek the face of God?' *The king was competent to connect fasting and prayer. And I said to the king, "If it sounds good to the king and if your servant has found agreement before your face - would you send me to Judah you who would send me to Judah to the city of the sepulchres of my fathers and I will build it."* And the king said to me - the queen *l[v* (his wife- well-known to Esther) sitting by him, "How long will you be away and when will you return?" And it was good before the King's face and I set him a time *mz* or feast day- cf 13.6 - adding up to a twelve year absence-after the preparations for harvest at that time (12.44)

### PROVISIONS REQUESTED AND GRANTED 7-10

Also I said to the king, "If it seems good to the king let letters be given me to the governors *jp* commanders, allies of trans-Euphrates that they assist my passage till I come to Judah. Also a letter shall be given to Asaph - keeper of the king's garden - literally "paradise"(a place of birds and trees) that timbers are given me to make or build *ilip* the gates of the fortress that belongs to the house and for the walls of the city and the house in which I shall dwell. And the king provided this according to the good hand of God upon me. I came to the governor across the river and gave them the letters of the king and the king sent me *coml* anders with forces and cavalry. And Sanballet (*a satrap "whom Bel favours"*) the Horonite (*cf Mount Hor in Moab-"mount of caverns"*) and Tobiah (*cf 6.1-14*) his minister, the Ammonite heard they were fearful of great evil since a man *mda* had come to **strive or pray for** *vpb* the welfare of Israel. *The*

*idea is that ADAM was going to possess and keep the place and make it a paradise. Some hold that the tryst with God in the original Eden was at Jerusalem.*

### **JERUSALEM AND THE NIGHT RIDE 11-13.**

1. "I came to Jerusalem and **HAPPENED (Providential grace No7)** to be there *only* three days. *It parallels the humiliation of Christ - from a palace to a broken world. His use of the verb 'to be' has the effect of expressing his extraordinary joy that this had come to pass*
2. I rose in the night - and a few soldiers *mycma* with me. I had not solved the enigma or **riddle** *tdgh* i.e. "shown to any man what God placed in my heart **to do** [*hv*] *through sacrifice*] for Jerusalem. *There was no beast of burden with me save the donkey on which I was mounted. Nehemiah on his donkey foreshadows the Saviour and indeed Jesus coming was dark and enigmatic for some.*
3. **I went out** [*haxa* from *azy*] the gate of the valley (Tyropolean) as a Shepherd inspecting the flock in the direction of the well of the jackals (*cf valley of shadow in Psalm 23 - Shepherds led their sheep for water despite danger*)
4. To the gate of the dung- hill or *place of dire poverty* and **IT HAPPENED (Providential event No.8)** to be there examining the **severed walls** *myxwrp* of Jerusalem like a doctor looking at a wound.
5. *I passed to the gate of the fountain towards the upper pool of the king (cf Hezekiah's channel and the surface water-supply* *lhm* *from the second outflow earlier blocked and there was no place for my beast to go up from the lower ground (for inspection of the eastern wall)*
6. **v14 So I HAPPENED TO BE THERE (Providential Grace No 9** by grace going up the stream-where the Gihon waters flowed to. *He was going up the waters of Siloam- "the sender". Like Christ he was a man sent by God for a purpose.*
- 7 **v14 And I HAPPENED TO BE THERE (Providential Grace No 10)** viewing with hope (*rbv* from the root *rbs* "hoping to change") Nehemiah like Christ came **to change and convert**. *So Nehemiah returned to the valley gate*
- 8 The speedy change 16-20 - the unity and power foreshadows Pentecost *The officials did not know where he was or what he did to those of Judah-priests, leaders, officials or the rest. "I said to them 'You see the unfavourable situation - Jerusalem ruined, its gates burned. Come let us build the walls of Jerusalem and we will no longer feel bad about ourselves* [*prj*] - *"be ridiculed and plucked off like autumn fruit"*). *So when we compare 6.15 we find the wall finished in 52 days afterwards. This is uncannily alike the space between the resurrection & Pentecost. From the offering of the barley wheat at the beginning of Passover was fifty days. It took 2 months more to complete the gates 7.1 March-May or June saw the task complete. Nehemiah inspired them by revealing the mystery of the palace - the hand of God - the king's support. They said "Let us rise and build" - and they joined their hands in the good work. The Horonite Sanballet, the Ammonite minister Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian mocked* *q[l* *from qm* (*the English equivalent is "mock"*) and ridiculed saying, "What is the thing these rebels who take possession do against the king". I sent back a word saying "The God of heaven will give us success and we his servants will rise and build and you have no share or just right or historic in Jerusalem *hpdx* and *mrrkz*

### **NEHEMIAH 3**

#### **THE WALLS STRENGTHENED, GATES REBUILT & SECURED INTRODUCTION**

*There are 47 building directors in 20 teams - 10 directors are recognisable as sons of those who first returned. An enlarged city owed no little to Shallun & his daughters for the West wall and Hanun & Zanoah's folk for the south stretch.*

*Baruch's enthusiasm took the internal wall due north from the Ephraim gate. Great public houses existed in the old east part-the temple, the house of shelter (fountain gate), merchant hotel (by Siloam) military HQ (near the temple), the armoury (NE corner) Eliashib's house, the house of Azariah & higher palace and prison fortress-nine in all. The bolts, bars & doors were "leaved" and modelled on the tabernacle interlocking idea. The city was secured as Gods house. The twelve gates have each a telling spiritual significance for the building of the defences and life and conduct of the people of God in every age.*

### **SHEEP GATE 1-3**

*The area signifies atonement & entrance to the faith.*

*Builders: Eliashib (God shall restore); men of Jericho (city under curse) Zacchur and Imri ("remembrance", "my word"). The high priest prefigures Christ. He and his fellows built as far as the tower of Meah (the "hundred" or "tribute tower") (the gift of many) and set it apart even to the tower of Hananel ("the gift of a benefactor" - a man who is a sign of our gracious God). These are both watch towers and associated for the Christian with the Shepherd care of Christ. He will watch over us. The area was counted holy. As we look to our high priest, and his watch-care we are saved from the curse. We are sons of the word who remember Him.*

### **FISH GATE 3-5**

*The area signifies testimony to those without builders: Senah ("Bush"-cf burning not consumed); Meremoth, Uriah, Hakkoz ("raised high""God's Light", "aroused from death"); Meshullam, Berekiah, Meshezabel ("at peace" or "mended", "the Lord blessed") "God delivered"); Zadok, Baana ("Righteous", "the house of answer to Prayer"); Men of Tekoa ("Pitching tents"). We learn that we must have the gospel of the living God-a message & calling. Believers are conscious that "love lifted us"- we have seen a marvellous light and are awakened from death. This "deliverance or salvation" we preach. We are made righteous by faith and all this calls for prayer - especially for household salvation - and to outreach we must be ready to "pitch our tent" abroad.*

### **OLD GATE (YESHANAH) 6-12**

*The area signifies "tried principles"- that which "feeds" the Lord's people .The gate had literally "fallen asleep" The builders were: Joiada, Paseah ("whom the lord knew", "the lame man") Meshullam, Besodeiah ("in friendship", the secret of the Lord"). They made its bolts bars and doors stand and minister. With men from Gibeon & Mizpah-Melatiah & Jadon of Meronoth ("whom God made escape"& "whom God will judge" from "the water of songs") they repaired to the throne of the governor. Ezra had been made the viceroy by Artaxerxes.*

*Also Uzziel, Harhaiah...a goldsmith ("the strength of God", "there was drought") and Hananiah, an apothecary. ("God has graciously given")*

*Between them they continually fashioned Jerusalem's zigzag section to the Broad wall (this strategic NW sector over the Tyropean needed regular review) **Rephaiah**, Hur ("whom the Lord heals", "freeborn or noble"). The first is an Old Testament nobleman's son healed by the Lord & ruler of a half-orb of Jerusalem (the settlements being formed for access drainage & defence reasons in circles). Jedaiah, Harumaph ("May the Lord care for him or flat-nosed") - though weak he built by his house) Hattush, Hashabneiah ("congregated", "Meditated on God") Malkijah, Harim ("The Lord is king", "consecrated") and Hasshub, Pahath-Moab ("Esteemed") "Gate of Moab") worked "another" or NEW section & the tower of the ovens; Shallum, Hallohesh ("Recompense, "enchanter") - overcoming a bad background with his daughters executed the work of the whole West wall - he was ruler of Jerusalem's "half orb". It*

*seems that before the walls a globular settlement was in place. Multiple tried principles appear here for exposition'*

### **VALLEY GATE 13**

*The "Valley Gate" signifies managing sin that leads to death. Sin is a life hazard-the next step is Hinnon-death valley. Hanun ("the favoured") and residents of Zenoah the "foul smelling fen"(cf sewerage) completed 1000 cubits...500yards of a new south wall above Hinnon. This was a welcome re-development with in-fill and possibly piped effluent) There was no dragging of feet here. The problem associated with increased population dictated wider walls and attention to health.*

### **DUNG GATE 14**

*The "dung gate" signifies the "squalid nature" of our lives. What a change for Nehemiah who had lived in a palace. Like Christ's in His advent he made that change for the sake of the people.*

*Malkijah, Recab... ("the Lord is king", "the rider")... who was ruler of the circular district of Beth-Haccarem ("house of the vine"). It is through the death of Christ the "true vine" that our filthy lives are changed. The lesson for Christian readers is that of Christ's humiliation.*

### **FOUNTAIN GATE 15-21**

*The "fountain gate" signifies cleansing and refreshment by the word of God. Shallun, Col-Hozeh ("quiet", "whoever was in need" or "seeking refuge"). This man ruled the orb or circle settlement of Mizpah-the watch-tower. He built a gate with a fine roof of beams and planks so people got shelter here. He improved access-restoring the walls of Siloam's pool - by the King's garden - and the steps in the area. This is the S-E section inclusive of Gardens and Siloam.*

### **INTERNAL WORK SOUTH**

*Nehemiah, Azbak ("God comforts", "merchant trader') - the latter ruled the half-orb of Beth-Zur. He repaired to opposite David's tombs-E-S-E of the present city then on to the man-made pool south of Gihon and the house of heroes. This took the east wall towards the water gate.*

### **INTERNAL WORK CENTRAL**

*The Levites under Rehum and Bani ("Beloved", "my house built') built & Hashabiah ("whom the Lord esteemed') prince of the half-orb of Keilah ("gathered together') repaired his district. After them their relatives built on directed by Binnui and Henadad ("Building" in him", "favour is departed') ruler of a semi-orb of Keilah. This took the internal wall repairs to the same level opposite the water gate.*

### **INTERNAL WORK NORTH**

*Next Ezer, Jeshua ("treasure laid up is of God" ruler of the watchtower Mizpah) strengthened the city by a new or changed section from the ascent to the armoury to the angle - this continued the Tyropoean wall uphill westward from the angle It was a changed or new section. There are five long changed or transferred sections *tym* *hrm* of wall in the scheme. You will read of one in v.11. This second changed section of the westward wall linked to the ovens and Millo and enabled a further section to be built protecting the western flank and Zion. Beyond this the foul fen was filled and a wall thrown across the Tyropoean southwards with infilling to end the long-running health hazard of the foul fen. Here the second internal section south of the temple wall is built up by Baruch, Zabbai ("blessed " son of "the just") It was done with zeal and included a third new or changed section of work from the angle to the High Priest's house. The completion of this internal section was a fourth new or changed wall from*



the gate of Eliashib's house along its length as its rear was probably an inner defensive wall-completed by Meremoth, Uriah, Hakkoz (*"One raised high", "Light of God", "thorn"*).

**ALONG THIS STRETCH OF WALL STOOD THE EPHRAIM ("doublefruit") GATE & MISHNEH GATE** (*"different" or "changed" - what might be called the "new" gate "*).

An urban "circle" development was now well protected. Further repairs were then made from the north along the priestly quarters west of the temple-a section running almost due south from near the Tower of Hananel. Benjamin & Hasshub and Azariah, Maaseiiah, Ananiah... (*"Son of the right hand", "man who was restored", "whom the Lord helped, "work of the Lord", "one whom the Lord protects")... of these the first two strengthened the wall in front of their houses the latter Azariah strengthened the side of his house. Then Bennui, Henadad ("my building", "favour is departed") whose activities in v.18 were south of the water gate now add a new or changed section to complete an inner defensive wall west of the temple - to the angle and corner by Ophel.*

Palal, Uzai (*"the judge", " Strong one"*) took the work on in view of the corner and the watchtower on the west side of the palace enclosure – which has become the prison. This work joined the wall then running south to the Water Gate.

**THE WATER GATE v26** - *significant of the "word."* The water gate was repaired by Pedaiah, Parosh (*"Whom the Lord redeems", "flea"*) and the Nethinims or bondservants of the temple - descendants or prisoners or men held under the law! (*They even repaired east from opposite Gihon to the projecting tower on the NE of the Kidron Valley.*) *Their work was taken forward by men of Tekoa who brought the work in sight of the Horse Gate - to where the external bulwark joined the Ophel guard wall.*

#### **THE HORSE GATE 28-29a**

*This gate signifying from the "leaping" of horses or "joy." Those - who minister to Him as "priests unto God" were to be marked by joy. From above the horse gate the priests repaired each before his house. Zadok, Immer ("Righteous", "Word of promise") an important priest did his part.*

#### **THE EAST GATE 29b-30**

*The East gate famously signifies the return of Christ.*

Shemaiah - with Shecaniah (*"The Lord hears", "the Lord abides "*) - as keeper or watcher of the gate he repaired it. *This gate led directly into the temple area and it signifies the return of Christ whose feet shall stand on Olivet - according to the prophet Zechariah.*

Next by Hananiah, Shelemiah (*"Whom the lord graciously gave ", " Retribution of the Lord"*) and Hanun (*"graciously given "*) - the 6th son of Halaph (*"fracture"*) repaired a new or changed section. Next by Meshullam, Berekiah (*"at peace ", " divine blessing"*) repaired his wooden house or booth. *He was living lightly as to the things of this world (Note his activities in v.4 He builds both gates of "outreach" and "expectation ")*

#### **THE INSPECTION GATE 31-32**

*This gate signifies God's judgment.*

Opposite the gate of inspection of visitors and beyond the NE corner by the sheep gate the goldsmith Malkijah (*"Jehovah is my king"*) made repairs to the house of the temple servants and the room of the corner - which good example brought in the goldsmiths as a company with the merchants to finish the work. This Malkijah is one

of three - cf verses 11&14 - he is not the first goldsmith to be energised for the work - in v8 Uzziel was "continually" fashioning Jerusalem. *Thus the unending work of the kingdom goes on until the great day of inspection or 'Judgment.'* This final gate speaks of a time when God's servants shall be as refined gold.

## CHAPTER 4

*Chapter 4 in English begins at 3.33 of the Hebrew text though the chapter-and-verse difference is resolved by the end of Chapter 4.*

*There are SEVEN historical notes recorded in this chapter:*

- 1. Enemies mock - the Jews pray*
- 2. The report that came to Sanballat Tobiah & Gershem that the wall was complete.*
- 3. The wall was all raised but only half fully joined.*
- 4. The watch was set and prayer made daily.*
- 5. Judah reports serious tiredness and almost insurmountable rubbish.*
- 6. Half the men laboured and half became guards.*
- 7. All the builders and burden bearers held a weapon in one hand*

### **SANBALLET BELIEVES THE SPEED BUILT WILL PROVE WEAK AND COLLAPSE UNDER ASSAULT-THE JEWS SEEK GOD 1-3**

**AND IT OCCURRED (Providential Event No 11)** that when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall that he burned with anger and would cause himself to be agitated in great wrath and mocked the Jews in his language. And he spoke face to face with his brothers and the army of Samaria and said "What are these feeble sickly Jews doing? Will they leave? Will they make sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they cause stones to come into being from the heaps of rubble as these are burned? *Sanballat suggested the Jews might simply flee and be gone. They might put in a Herculean effort and finish in one day! They might miraculously create stones out of dust.*

### **PRAYERFUL RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION 3-6**

Tobiah the Ammonite was next to him and he said "Even that which they build if a fox goes up he would break down their wall of stones.

**"HEAR, O OUR GOD, FOR WE ARE AN OBJECT OF CONTEMPT AND TURN THEIR SCORN ON THEIR OWN HEADS AND MAKE THEM AN OBJECT OF CONTEMPT IN A LAND OF CAPTIVITY. AND DO NOT COVER THEIR INIQUITY AND MAY THEIR SIN NOT BE WIPED AWAY FROM BEFORE YOUR FACE FOR THEY HAVE CAUSED PROVOCATION BEFORE THE BUILDERS."** *The Jewish prayer asked God to give the adversaries a taste of being under the rule of a powerful foe.*

So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined up to the half of its length and there was spirit or heart in the people for the task.

### **SANBALLET ACTS TO RUIN THE "WORK 7-11**

**BUT IT OCCURRED (Providential Grace No 12)** when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabians Ammonites and people of Ashdod heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going on apace for the broken spaces in need of repair were made strong or fortified [*l'hj from l'j*] they were very angry. So they all joined together in a conspiracy [*rbq*] to come to fight against Jerusalem to do harm to it. But we had been praying to our God and caused a watch to be active working against their appearance day and night.

### **THE DANGER OF DIRT - ENABLING ATTACK**

But Judah said "The power of the porter is grown feeble to the point of stumbling

[lvk] and there is a huge amount of dust or rubble and we are not able to build in beside the wall. Thus our adversaries said "They will not be aware - they will not spot us until we arrive in their midst and slaughter them so we will make the work cease".

#### **OUTLYING JEWS GIVE SEVERAL WARNINGS 12-14**

**BUT IT OCCURRED (Providential Grace No 13)** that when the Jews living remote and near them came and said to us ten times "From every locality you will turn away against us or you **should make us a consideration**" [bmv]. So I made the people to stand ready in family groups with their swords spears and bows from the (dark or damp?) lower parts at places behind the walls to the dry sunny places along the walls. And I surveyed and rose up and said to the leaders and the "chiefs" [myngs - the leaders from Babylonian days] and to the rest of the people "Do not fear-remember that the LORD is the great and awesome one - fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters your wives and your homes."

#### **THE ATTACK THAT NEVER CAME 15**

**SO IT OCCURRED (Providential Grace No 14)** that when our enemies heard that we had become aware and that God had broken or demolished their counsel [xrp - "broken down" or "breached" like a wall" - a pun on their intent] that we went back every man to his work on the wall.

#### **SCHEME FOR SIMULTANEOUS PROTECTION AND BUILDING I6-20**

**SO IT OCCURRED (Providential Grace No 15)** from that day that the half of my young servants laboured in the work and the other half took strong hold of their spears, shields and coats of mail [gyrv] and the rulers supported the whole house of Judah. *The effect of the rulers support was that the "weakness cited by Judah" was well understood and the measures devised to meet the exigency were effective commanding universal support and tending to bring to prominence the fact that Judah could command support from its forward thinking.*

(a) The builders of the wall and (b) those carriers with a burden (c) with those who set things in one of his hands laboured in the work and the other hand held a spear.

Besides each of the builders had his sword on a belt by his side and went on building and he who sounded the shophar was beside me. *Nehemiah is writing in the first person. He is the undisputed author of this narrative.*

And I said (a) to the leaders (b) to the old chiefs from Babylonian times and (c) to the rest of the people "The work is vast and widespread and we are spreading ourselves apart on the wall - each man far from his brother. Wherever you hear the signal of the shophar gather there close to us - our God will fight for us."

#### **A WORKERS' CAMP ESTABLISHED IN CENTRE CITY 21-23**

So we worked at the task and half of them had firm hold on their spears from the rising of the morning till the coming out of the stars. Also at that time I said to the people "Every man with his servant shall lodge in the midst of Jerusalem.

And it shall happen that they shall be a guard to us at night and there will be the work by day." So none of us-neither I nor my brethren nor the sturdy men of the guard that followed me stripped off our clothes. Each man got himself washed or shot into the waters. *Jews are fastidious about cleanliness - but in the austere extremes of these days they appear to have washed by diving into the pool (s) at Jerusalem. We might reasonably say they were by practice and confession proto-Baptists!*

## CHAPTER 5

### JEWISH GIRLS HOPELESSLY BOUND IN BONDAGE 1-5

**AND IT TOOK PLACE. (Providential Grace No 16)** there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their brothers the people of Judah [*the city folk benefiting by reason of proximity to Jerusalem*] for there were those that said "Our sons and our daughters are many so may we take corn so that we may eat and survive." And there were those that said "We have given in surety our lands and vineyards and houses in order that we may buy in the famine." Indeed there were those that said "'We have borrowed [*hwl* - "*loini*" like our "*taking a loan*"] silver for the tax of the king on our lands and vineyards. Still our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers - our sons as their sons and behold we are subduing our sons and daughters to be servants and there are those of our daughters already humbled or ravished [*vbc*] and power is out of our hands - and our fields and vineyards belong to others.

### NEHEMIAH'S CONTEST AGAINST SLAVE DEALING 6-11

But I was burning with anger on hearing their cry and these words. So I took kingly counsel with my hemi on my own and I had to strive with the princes and prefects or chiefs and I said to them 'Every one of you is raising a burdensome tax against his brother and I set up a great gathering against them'. I also said to them "We are redeeming our brothers the Jews who were sold to the Gentiles as ours - and will you even sell your brothers and shall they be traded back to us?" But they were silent and couldn't find a word *to reply*. And I said "This thing you are doing is not good. Is it not the case that you should be walking in the fear of the LORD from before the face of our Gentile enemies? I also with my brothers and servants could raise taxation of silver and corn on them. I ask you please to forsake this usury. I implore you to restore to them to-day their lands and vineyards and olive plantings and houses and one hundredth part of the silver grain wine and oil that you are taking from them in tax."

### A POSITIVE RESPONSE 12-15

And they said "We will make the return to them and not make further demand - so we will do as you say" so I called the priests and caused them [*the nobles*] to swear to act on this promise. I also shook out the fold of my garment and said "'In this manner may God shake out any man who will not make good this promise from his house and from his work and **wealth** [*[gy]*] and may he be thus shaken and empty". *Nehemiah shook the money out of his pocket and as it spilled out on the ground he gave the nobles a parable lesson on how their wealth would diminish suddenly if they broke their word. And all the gathering said 'Amen' and praised the LORD and the people acted on this promise. Also from the day the command was issued that I was to be their governor in the land of Judah - from the 20th year to the 32nd year of Artaxerxes the king - twelve years in all - I and my brothers have not eaten the bread allocation of the governor. But the former governors before my time were sore on the people and would take bread and wine from them on top of 40 shekels of silver - even their young servants held authority over the people. But I did not do thus in face of the fear of God. A God-fearing man does not follow the trends of the day or the priority of getting rich quick in which mould others before him and around him conducted their lives.*

### NEHEMIAH PRESSES AHEAD - WITH TOTAL COMMITMENT 16-19

And also I pressed on with the work of this wall and we did not buy land and all my young servants were gathered in community there close by the work. Besides, there were at my table 150 Jews and rulers and Gentiles which were in the vicinity. *Nehemiah showed kindness to the neighbouring Gentiles and gave them what help*

*and food he could.*

So that which was prepared for me for a single day was one ox and six select sheep of the flock. Fowl were also prepared for me and with ten day intervals every sort of wine. But with this huge supply I did not seek my allocation as governor for the tax was heavy upon this people. (1) **REMEMBER ME** for all the good, O my God, that I have done for this people.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **NEHEMIAH IS TEMPTED TO DEFER FROM THE WORK 1-4**

**SO IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No 17)** at the opportune moment afforded Sanballat and Tobiah to Gershom the Arabian and to the residue of our enemies when they were hearing that I was building the wall and that there was no remaining broken section in it even though until then I had not set up doors for the gates. At that opportunity Sanballat and Gershom sent to me saying "Come let us arrange an agreed time to meet unitedly in the villages of the valley of Ono" [*"his strength"*] -so they planned to do me harm. But I sent messengers to them saying "I am engaged in a great work - I am not able to come down to you. Why should the work stop at the time I relax and become lazy?" [*hpr literally "hands become slack"*] But they sent to me four times after this tenor and I replied to them in precisely the same manner.

### **THE ENEMY LIES ABOUT NEHEMIAH'S INTENT 5-9**

But Sanballat sent me a servant and a missive with this word a fifth time and there was an open letter in his hand. It was written in it that "it was reported among the nations and Gashmu says that you and the Jews are thinking about breaking off the yoke [*hpr literally "wandering like an animal that breaks out"*] - for which reason you are building the wall and you are acting as their king according to these words. And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim you in Jerusalem saying that you are king in Judah and now after the tenor of these words there will be a report to the king. But you come now and we will deliberate on these matters." But I sent to him saying "There is nothing like these things going on but you are devising *them [adb]* from your heart." For they were all frightening us saying "Their hands are tired or weak from the labour and they will not do it." Now (2) **STRENGTHEN MY HANDS.**

### **A CONTACT - SHEMAIAH THE BAD ADVISOR 10-13**

So I went to the house of Shemaiah [*"the one whom the LORD hears"*] the son of Delaiah [*"the one the LORD delivered"*] the son of Mehetabeel [*God is good or "benefactor"*] who was detained or recluse or a man under house arrest and he said "in the future we will arrange a meeting at the house of God in the very heart of the temple and we will shut the doors of the temple for they are coming to slay you like an offering and they will come to slaughter you at night. *The very idea of a "sleep in" at the temple was not in order. The temple ought never to be closed from God's people. Besides it was to be the scene of service of the priests as they called on God for the people. Did Shemaiah figure that even in the night quiet he could thrust open the doors so that Nehemiah's murderers might enter? But I said "Should a man like me flee?"* Added to that - who is there in my position that would go and live or to stay alive in the temple? I will not go! *This unusual man who had a good name and a wonderful family background was a maverick. He may have been the "loner" type that easily forms ties with the enemy and from what follows it appears clear that he had been put under disciplinary house arrest for contact with outsiders. If his detention was in the temple periphery a visit by Nehemiah as governor would be essential. Shemaiah is said to have been "sent" so he is a type of 5th columnist in the pay of the enemy - a Sanballat sympathiser. But, look, I was coming to recognise that God had not sent him for he prophesied this word to me but he was in the pay of Sanballat and Tobiah. For this reason he was hired - that I might become fearful and do*

this and sin and that they might have a "name" to ruin that they might expose my life.

### **THE ENEMY SPREADS FEAR 14-16**

**(3)MY GOD, REMEMBER TOBIAH AND SANBALLAT ACCORDING TO THESE WORKS AND ALSO THE PROPHETESS NOADIAH AND THE REST OF THE PROPHETS WHO WERE INDUCING ME TO BECOME AFRAID.** So the wall was completed [m/v "whole" "sound" "restored"] on the 25th of Elul on the 52nd day. *This August-September finish meant the people could rejoice with security at the feast of the Atonement and during the festival of Tabernacles within the city. The building of a secure defence within 7 weeks was a magnificent feat.*

**AND IT CAME TO PASS (Providential Grace No 18)** as soon as all our enemies heard and all the Gentiles that were around us saw they were lowered in their own eyes and knew it was from our God that this work had been done.

### **WRITTEN JIBES-WRITTEN REPLIES - INSIDIOUS TACTICS 17-19**

Also in those days the nobles of Judah who were in contention sent a growing flow [j|h] of letters to Tobiah - also the letters of Tobiah flowed in their direction. This on account of the fact that there were a large number in Judah who were sworn to him because he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah and Johanan his son took the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah to wife. Also there were good aspects of him they spoke of in my presence and my words were coming to him. Tobiah engaged in letter writing to frighten me.

### **NEHEMIAH 7**

*The wall-building complete, Nehemiah speedily finalised defences by hanging the city gates-which were 12 in all [Their detail and accompanying doctrine which can now be derived from them is to be found in Chapter 3] The Levites kept order above the merchants and saw to it that a worshipful and joyous life of faith was maintained so far as possible. Nehemiah's brother was in overall charge of the city and God's favour and human graciousness was the stamp of life under Nehemiah.*

### **GODLY MEN PUT IN CHARGE OF THE CITY 1-3**

**AND IT CAME TO PASS (Providential Grace No 19)** as soon as the wall was built I was also placing doors and the doorkeepers and singers and Levites were being set in charge. *The unified administration of the city meant that while the city was being secured the staffing of the temple service was being refreshed so that the city would be established to the glory of God. And I charged and appointed my brother Hanani over Jerusalem along with Hananiah ruler of the palace of the temple. The appointment is specific of Hanani but of necessity in the city of the Great King the ruler of the temple was also esteemed to be in charge and so the authority was collegiate but the everyday running of the city fell to Hanani. It is of interest that "grace" and the "favour of God" marked the leadership at this wonderful time. "The Lord has graciously provided" and "He has been gracious to me" are the meanings of the names Hananiah and Hanani. There was no king so there was no palace - but as in 1 Chronicles 29.1 the temple was the palace of the great king. I put him in charge because he was living a life of the quality of [k] a man of truth and revered God more than most*

So I said to them "The gates of Jerusalem shall not be opened till the heat of the sun and until those who serve are in position let the gates be shut [pmg literally "dead" as to activity] and securely fastened and let them appoint watches of the residents of Jerusalem - each for his watch [i.e. the "hours of duty"] - each watching his own house.

#### **THE TEMPLE ASIDE THE CITY CENTRE WAS EMPTY 4**

But the city had great wide space sectors [*literally "broad hands"*] and the people in the centre were few in number and there were no houses built. *It appears contradictory that each man guarded his home when there were apparently no homes to guard. The Hebrew text is, however, at pains to point out that the city centre was as yet derelict. The homes appear to have been nearer the walls.*

#### **THE REGISTER OF EARLIER IMMIGRANTS RECOVERED**

##### **THE TWELVE PRINCIPLE NAMES 5-7**

But my God gave me inspiration of heart and I gathered together the nobles and the prefects [*ngs*] "*deputies-a role modelled on Babylonian government - cf Daniel 4.27*] and the people to have them registered by male family line [*vjj*] and I discovered the book of the former registrations and found *the following* written in it "These are the children of the province (of Babylon) that went up from the settlers of the captivity which captives Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon carried away - and which returned to Jerusalem and Judah - each to his city".

Those that came up with Zerubbabel [*Nehemiah was speaking of a period 80 years earlier than his return in 457 B. C.*] Yeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, **Mordecai**, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigani, Nehum, Baanah aside from the number of the men of the people of Israel. *It is of interest that Mordecai was among those who returned - though perhaps through family misadventure he had to return to care for Esther. Esther for her part may well still have been living when Nehemiah returned and continued to have a steady hand on the throne of Artaxerxes I.*

##### **NINETEEN FAMILIES 8-25**

The number of the sons of Parosh was 2172. The sons of Shephatiah, 372. The sons of Arah, 652. The sons of Pahath-Moab of the house of Yeshua and Joab, 2818. The sons of Elam, 1254. The sons of Zattu, 845. The sons of Zaccai, 760. The sons of Binnui, 648. The sons of Bebai, 628. The sons of Azgad, 2328. The sons of Adonikam, 667. The sons of Bigvai 2067. The sons of Adin, 655. The sons of Ater [*"left handed" or "with impediment"*] of the house of Hezekiah, 98. The sons of Hashum, 328. The sons of Bezi [*"intense" or "trodden down"*]. The sons of Hariph [*"autumn rain"*], 210. The sons of **Gibeon**, 95.

##### **FAMILIES IN 13 LOCATIONS REMOVED FROM THE CITY 26-33**

The men of Bethlehem and **Netopah**, 188. The men of Anathoth, 128. The men of Beth-Azmaveth, 42. The men of Kirjath-Jearim, Cephirah and Beeroth, 743. The men of Ramah and Geba, 621. The men of Michmas, 122. The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. The men of the other or **later Nebo**, 52. [*Not Jebel Osha or Nebo as we know it- which was in Moab or present day Jordan but rather a town curiously named after the Babylonian God*].

##### **SEVEN OTHER FAMILIES WITH FURTHER LOCATIONS 34-38**

The children of the other Elam, 1254. The sons of Haim, 320. The sons of Jericho, 345. The sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 721. [*This triad of cities were set in the Shephelah in the locale of Lod to which general area Nehemiah had been induced to consider conferencing with Sanballat*]. The sons of Senaah, 3930.

##### **PRIESTS OF YESHUA'S FAMILY 39**

The priests, sons of Iedaiah belonging to the house of Yeshua, 973. [*It is of note that the priests sprang from the house of a Levite named "Salvation" or "Jah saves" - after the same style we say "Jesus saves"*]

### **THREE LARGE FAMILY UNITS 40-42**

The sons of Immer, 1052. The sons of Pashur, 1247. The sons of Harim, 1017.

### **RELATED LEVITES FROM YESHUA 43**

The Levites, the sons of Yeshua belonging to Kadmiel and sons of Hodevah, 74.

### **SINGERS OF THE ASAPH FAMILY 44**

The singers, the sons of Asaph, 148[*For the purpose of considering the titles of the Psalms we have to note that the Ezraite era was deeply involved in song and compilation if not composition of spiritual songs. The school of Asaph "the collector" continued through the centuries much like the school of prophets or scribes.*]

### **PORTERS 45**

The porters, sons of Shallum; sons of Ater; sons of Talmon; sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita; sons of Shobai, 138 *in all*.

### **NETHINIMS 46-60**

**The Nethinims**, sons of Ziha; sons of Hashupha, Tabbaoth, Keros, Sia, Padon, Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmal, Hanan, Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, Uzza, Phaseah, Besai, Meunim, Nephisfiesim, Babbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, Bazlith, Mehida, Harsha, Barkos, Sisera, Tamah, Neziah, Hatipha (**The sons of Solomon's servants**: the sons of Sotai, Sophereth, Perida, Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth of Zebaim with the sons of Amon. The entirety of the Nethinims along with the servants of Solomon was 392. *These persons were descendants of ancient captives from the wars of David. They may originally have been sons of the women captured from early Jewish wars and converts from pagan peoples who were circumcised and afforded work as servants of the temple Levites. These persons remained loyal for centuries to the faith of the Jews and at this time they are represented by this number. It is of note that Solomon in his time numbered "strangers" in Israel and the total was 153,600 - many of whom he originally put to work as labourers hewing wood for the first temple. (2Chronicles 2.17) Their number is dramatically reduced after the captivity - but loyal descendants still cleave to Israel.*

### **NETHINIMS REPRESENTED 5 JEWISH AREAS IN BABYLON 61-64**

So these (fore-going) went up from Tel-Melah Tel-Haresha, Cherub, Addon and Immer though they were unable to give explicit information about the house of their fathers and whether they were from the seed of predecessors from Israel

### **PERSONS OF DOUBTFUL HEREDITY-MUST AWAIT A NEW DAWN FOR ASSIMILATION 65**

The sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda *numbered 642 in all*. And from the priests the sons of Habaiah, **the sons of Haqotz** [*"The thorn"*] the sons of **Barzillai** who took to wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and were called after their *paternal* name. *This Barzillai may like Jacob have had two wives from one household. These sought written proof of the man of their register but did not find themselves in it so they were bought out of the priesthood. And the Tirshatha (governor) said to them that they must not eat from the Holy Place until the priest with Urim and Thummim should stand to minister. The discernment needed was of the Spirit of God and could not be afforded at this time. The choice of a Sanhedrin in the time of Ezra who preceded Nehemiah by 13 years cannot be presumed to have elected a High Priest from among its numbers. Now Josephus mentions in "The Antiquities of the Jews" 20.10.1 that "Jesus son of Josadek took the high priesthood over the captives when they returned home" This reference is genuine as confirmed in Haggai 2.2 but despite Josephus reference to 15 lineal successors of Josadek there*



*appears either to have been an intermission after 80 years or these high priests did not use the URIM AND THUMMIM so the matter of the service of the Gentiles significantly awaited sine die for the coming of Messiah.*

#### **POPULATION OF THE CITY AND ENVIRONS 66-67**

The entire congregation as one numerical unit was 42,360 apart from man servants and maidservants who numbered 7,337 and among them were 245 male and female singers.

#### **THE MARGINAL HEBREW ON "HORSES" 68**

Their horses 736 - their female mules 245.

*In the numbering this verse was found as a verbal addendum*

#### **CAMELS AND ASSES 69**

Their camels numbered 435. Their asses numbered 245.

#### **GIVING TO THE WORK 70-73**

And part [*"the extreme part"*] of the leadership of the fathers gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury a thousand drachma of gold, fifty dishes for sprinkling, and five hundred and thirty priestly garments. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasury of the work twice twenty thousand [*t#br*] gold drachma and two thousand two hundred pounds weight of silver. That which the residue of the people gave was twenty thousand drachma of gold and silver to the sum of two thousand pound with sixty seven priests' garments. Thus the priests and Levites porters and singers with some of the people and the Nethinims and all Israel resided in their cities and when [*literally "touched" the homes*] the seventh month arrived the sons of Israel were in their cities. *They were ready for the blowing of trumpets and the celebration of the feast of tabernacles.*

### **CHAPTER 8**

#### **IN GOD AND CHRIST THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE 1-2**

And the entirety of the people gathered in the open space that was in front of the water gate and they told Ezra **the scribe** to bring **the written book** of the Torah of Moses which the LORD commanded Israel. And Ezra **the scribe** brought the Torah before the faces of the congregation of men and Women and all that could listen and understand on the first day of the seventh month. *In second temple times the first presentation of scripture was to men women and children-the whole vulgar multitude without legal dividing of men from women and youth. It is also notable that the word "writer" or "writing" occurs four times in three verses of the Hebrew. The work of Ezra is represented in his previous transcription of the scrolls of the law which now enters the traffic lanes of humanity as the Gideon's aptly put it. Scripture is well able to do its unique work. The Spirit of God gives "the hearing" and lives are deeply changed through the operation of the self-same Spirit on mind and heart and conscience.*

#### **THE ORIGINS OF BIBLICAL EXPOSITION 3-4**

And he read aloud in it before the faces in the open street before the water gate from it when it became light until midday before men women and those who could understand. And the acute listening ears of the entire people were towards the book of the Torah. And Ezra **the scribe** stood to minister on a "giant structure of wood bound together." [*ldgm*] *What we today call a "pulpit" is not so much a raised platform but a union of wood constructed as a platform. It is three dimensional and the Scribe stood upon it. It did not necessarily encompass him. The foundation on which he stood was constructed from the "tree" and its "union" was achieved by "twisting together". It*

may well have been roped together more like a raft than a pulpit. The wood and the ropes remind us of Calvary more than the modern pulpit. Preachers minister from having been raised by the work of the cross. This they had made for the discourse. And on his right were standing Mattithiah and Shema and Anaiah and Urijah and Hilkiah and Maaseiah and on his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchiah, Hashum, Hashbadanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. There were six supporting scribes on either side and on his left also the prophet Zechariah - a great Ezraite and a writing prophet besides. Like our LORD Ezra had twelve disciples who acted as deacons and carried the scrolls of the Torah.

#### **THE GLORIOUS REPOSE TO GOD'S WORD 5-6**

And Ezra opened the written scroll before all the people for **HE HAPPENED TO BE (Providential Grace No20)** away above all the people and when he unsheathed and untied it all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed Yahweh the great God and the entire people answered "Amen, Amen" - by lifting up their hands and they worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. *It is a question whether they bowed their heads or actually kneeled.*

#### **THE PRIESTLY EMPHASIS BRINGS SOLEMNITY 7**

Also Yeshua [*possibly the High Priest*], Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethal, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Henan, Pelaiah and the Levites caused the people to understand the law so the people were standing or trembling. *Like the Puritan preachers these 12 leaders - another eminent group pointed out the relevance of Torah for life - probably stressing the matter of God's holiness and man's sin as demonstrated to the people at Sinai. It appears they were priests possibly pointing out the means given in the law for the putting away of sin.*

#### **BY READING & EXPOSITION THE SPIRIT GIVES UNDERSTANDING 8**

So they read through the written Law of God making clear [*vrp a word used for horsemen "spreading out their legs" so expanding or expanding and dividing*] and setting out instruction so they (the people) understood all the reading. *The manner of Ezra's readers was to read and then expound section by section and also to lay emphasis on detail by contrast.*

#### **THE HISTORIC IDIOM OF SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT 9-10**

And Nehemiah who was Tirshatha (*a word built on the Hebrew root "severe" or "austere" roughly translates "His Severity"*) and Ezra the priest - the scribe and the Levites that taught the people said to all the people "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not lament! Do not weep! This was because the entire people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. And he (Nehemiah) said to them, "Go off-eat and digest the fatness and drink in the sweetness and send portions (of your abundance) to those who are not standing or who have nothing prepared. *This was a terse but illuminating statement- dismissing the crowd at noon for eats but bidding them digest the matters taught, drink it in deeply and share it around. For this day is holy to our Lord - do not toil or be grieved for* **THE JOY OF THE. LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.**

*This very well known idiom straight from Nehemiah is hugely comfortable. It means "the smile on the face of the LORD is your strength" (cf Psalm 21.6 where David says "You have made the king exceeding glad with the joys [hdj] of your countenance." The underpinning of this sort of joy is the fact that God "sharpens" man's understanding as "iron sharpens iron" Proverbs 27.27. When the face of God and His smiling providence entered the hearts of these people they simply effused with*

joy - hmv or "radiance"

### **THE BLESSING OF LEVITE QUIETISM 11**

And the Levites said "Let all the people be quiet-be quiet for the day is holy-don't toil and put yourselves to grief and pain." *The Levites were servants of the temple along with the priests. They served quietly - they emphasised that quiet reflection could be most beneficial.*

### **FEASTING ON THE WORD AND SHARING WHAT THEY HAD 12**

And all the people went off to eat and drink and to send portions [*i.e. part of what they learned with part of what food they had*] and to produce great radiant joy [hmv] because they were caused to understand by discourse or the oracular word of the LORD what was expounded to them. *The explanations were given and the oracles as they related to them had become precious. The parallels with the early church in Jerusalem is easily drawn.*

### **DAY TWO-LEADERS CONVENE 13**

So on the second day the heads of the fathers of the whole people, the priests and the Levites gathered together to Ezra the scribe so that they also should be caused to turn their mind to the oracular promises [*rbd - the word is highly suggestive of a prophetic handling of the Torah*] of the Torah. *And they discovered that it was written in the law that the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses that the children of Israel should live in booths during the seventh month. Ezra had convened this national conference at Jerusalem in the "seventh" month and through the reading of day 2 Ezra the leader fastened on what they learned in Exodus 23 14-17& Leviticus 23.23-44*

### **THE FIRST FEAST OF TABERNACLES FOR NEARLY 700 YEARS**

They discovered also that they should cause it to be heard and cause the proclamation to be voiced in all their cities and in Jerusalem to say "Go to the mount and bring branches of the olive and branches of the pine and myrtle and palm and branches of thick and foliated trees to make booths according to what is written. So the people went *out from the city* and brought *them* and made booths for themselves -each man on his roof and in their courtyards and in the courts of the house of God and in the broad place of the water gate and the broad area by the Ephraim gate. *The water gate was located mid-way along the Tyropoean valley whereas the Ephraim Gate was about 500 yards north-west in the Mishneh quarter on higher ground and closer to the rear wall of the temple. The city of Nehemiah's day could be described as a lion's head facing due west with a narrow neck like urban strip stretching south-quite like a head ready to be mounted on a walking stick. They constructed booths just about anywhere it was permissible and possible. It was a time of immense wood-cutting and inventive building - a great diversion from wall construction.*

### **THE FOLD OF GOD 17-18**

The whole congregation returned from captivity made booths for themselves and lived in booths for not since the days of Yeshua son of Nun to that day had the children of Israel done the like. **SO THERE HAPPENED TO BE. (Providential Grace No.21)** very great radiant happiness. And in addition day after day from the first day to the last he (Ezra) read in the book of the law of God and they kept the feast seven days and in the eighth day there was a gathering together in accordance with what was set up. *The high point of all feasts was the gathering to God and the coming of His people before him. This was called a "shutting up" or a "detaining"[rx[]] as if the LORD wanted to bring His people close to him as a Shepherd shuts his sheep closely in a fold.*

## NEHEMIAH 9

### A GREAT DAY OF COVENANT FOLLOWING TABERNACLES 1-3

In the twenty-fourth day of this month [*Tisri or the "seventh month"*] the children of Israel was collected together in fasting and in sackcloth and they had earth on them. *The picture is very different from the previous gathering of people in white linen and pleasant coloured garments. Now they are in sacking and pose as those deserving of burial - on account of their consciousness of sin. The concept is not too different from Paul's "dead in trespasses and sins" ((Ephesians 2 & Colossians 2) or indeed his "buried with Him by baptism "(Romans 6.4). And the seed of Israel separated them from all the foreign stock and remained [as if ministering priests] until they had confessed [Hithpael htj] their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they arose where they had stood and they read in the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth part of the day and for a fourth they were apart in confessing and worshipping the LORD their God. It was by now the habit of the people to meet early and have the Torah scrolls read to them during the first hour of the day (6-9am) and then spend the second hour (9am to 12 noon) in prayer and worship. This is equivalent to what Christians today would call a half-day of prayer. The ardent godliness and spirit of revival at that time is evident. Social cohesion was absolute - if somewhat constrained under the Tirshatha.*

### THE COVENANT ENGAGEMENT -CENTRED ON THE TEMPLE 4

Then the Levites Yeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Chenaniah rose up on the steps [*of the temple?*] and cried out with a great voice to the LORD their God. *The Levite Yeshua [described by Josephus as "high-priest" had gathered about him on this occasion 3 of the Levites of the first day and 5 new men and they joined to lead the people as they implored the LORD for grace.*

### GOD'S ETERNAL NAME GLORIFIED 5

The Levites Yeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabeneiah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah and Pethathiah [*eight in all*] said "Arise and bless the LORD your God who is from ages (past) to ages(to come) and they blessed Your glorious name but it is far above all blessing and praise.

### A LONG THANKSGIVING PRAYER FOR GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH 6

(5) IS YOU O LORD AND YOU ALONE THAT CREATED THE HEAVENS - the heaven of heavens and all their host; the earth and all that is upon it; the seas and all that is in them, and you sustain them and the whole host of heaven worships you. *In the LXX this prayer begins "And Ezra said" - suggesting that it is his prayer. It is certainly an epic prayer and if anyone could approach the LORD with the heart and solemnity patently in the utterances Ezra could have done.*

### GOD OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT 7-8

You are He - the LORD God who made choice by Abraham and caused him to emigrate from Ur of the Chaldees and appointed his name ABRAHAM. You found his heart faithful before Your face and cut a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perrizites, the Iebusites and the Girgashites to his seed and You have raised up Your word for You are righteous.

### LORD OF THE EXODUS 9-11

And you saw the affliction of our fathers throughout Egypt and you heard their despairing cry at the Red Sea. And You gave signs and wonders [*twa mytm*] for Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land - for You knew that they boiled in insolence against them and You made You a name as *You have done* at this

day. And You cut the sea open [*qb "to cleave with a hatchet" or "break open an egg "*] before their faces and they passed over through the midst of the sea on dry land and those who chased after them you sent to the depths like a stone in mighty seas.

#### **LORD OF SINAI & THE TABLE IN THE WILDERNESS 12-15**

- a. And by a lodging or ministering rising cloud by day and a ministering rising fire by night to give them light for the way where they should walk.
- b. And You came down above Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven
- c. And You gave them right judgments and TORAHS of truth - good statutes and commandments and commanded the Torah for them by the hand of Moses your servant.
- d. And You supplied them bread from heaven for their hunger and You brought out water from the Sela or Petra rock for their thirst.
- e. And You promised that they would go to possess the land which you lifted up your hand to swear to give them.

#### **CONFESSION OF FAILURE UNDER MERCY DESPITE THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT 16-23**

But they and our fathers were proud and were obstinate of neck [*Like a beast refusing a collar or harness*] and they did not obey Your commandments.

And they were unwilling to listen and they did not recall your wonders which you did with them and they made their necks impudent and in their resistance they provided a leader to return to their bondage but You are **ELOAH SIL YAHOTH** [*a God of "pardons"*] **gracious** merciful longsuffering and great in love and You would not forsake them.

Indeed when they made the molten calf and said "These are your gods that brought you from Egypt" and produced great insults still **in great mercies** You did not forsake them in the desert.

You did not take away [*rwS the word for "apostasy" - the LORD did not finally leave them*] the rising cloud from over them by day to give them rest in the desert the rising ministry of the fire at night for light on their way which they should go.

**YOU GAVE THEM YOUR GOOD SPIRIT** to skill them and You did not deny Your manna for their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.

For forty years You continued to maintain or endure them in the desert so they were not deficient. The garments in which they wrapped [*lmc*] did not waste to rags [*h/b*] and their feet did not become calloused [*qxb*].

And You gave them *victory over* Kingdoms and Peoples and their inheritance to the extreme. [*Literally "edges of the field"*] and they came into possession of the land of Sihon and the King of Heshbon and the land of Og King of Bashan.

You multiplied their sons as the stars of heaven and brought them into the land of which You said to their fathers "they were to come to possess it.

#### **CONFESSION OF SIN WHILST IN THE LAND 26-29**

So their sons came and possessed the land and they subdued [*Literally "Canaan-ed" - the word Canaan means "subdue so the writer introduces a "pun"*] it before the face of those who dwelt in the land - the "Canaanites". So You gave them and their kings and peoples into their hand that they might do with them according to their pleasure. And they captured [*dkl*] fortified cities and a fertile land and houses full of all good things and wells hewed out of stone vineyards and trees with fruit ready to eat. So they ate and were filled and radiantly happy and they were back in Eden [*nd[ ty]*] in Your great goodness. But they were disobedient and they rebelled against You and cast down your Torah behind their backs and they slaughtered Your prophets who explained it to them to turn them back to You and they engaged in great insults or blasphemies.

So You gave them into the hand of their adversaries and they distressed  
*[Literally rxy "formed them in the image they wanted"] and at the time of their adversity they cried to You and You heard them from heaven and in line with Your great mercy You gave them Saviours [MOSHIAIM] and they saved them from their adversaries. But as they had rest for themselves they returned to doing evil before Your face so You abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they subdued them [ddr "overlaid with metal" - the idea is they were under heavy oppression]. But they returned and cried to You and You heard from heaven and delivered them according to Your great mercies among [myt []] them. This is the second time the word "with" is used. It tends to show that even when the LORD seemed to "forsake" them He was "with them"*  
 And You witnessed against them to bring them back to Your TORAH but they were insolent *[Literally "like a pot boiling over"]* and would not listen to Your commandments and judgments (which if a man fulfils he will live by them) and sinned against them and they gave a shoulder of refusals and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

### **CONFESSION OF FAILURE UNDER THE PROPHETS 30-31**

But for many years You held out Your hand *[j vm]* and testified against them **BY YOUR SPIRIT** by the hand of Your prophets but they did not listen so You gave them into the hand of the people of the lands. *Nehemiah is deeply committed to prophecy and the God of Covenant-Yahweh.*

### **PRAYER FOR GRACE AND COVENANT RENEWAL 31-38**

But **because of Your great mercy** You did not utterly destroy them and You did not forsake them for **You are a God of grace and mercy.** You are our God - the great and mighty and awesome One who keeps covenant and **covenant love** let not all the suspense *[hal "labour" "vexation" ""labour in vain "]* which we have discovered was the lot of our kings and nobles and priests and prophets and fathers and the entire people seem little before You - from the days of the kings of Assyria till this day.

**BUT YOU ARE JUST OVER ALL THAT COMES UPON US FOR YOU HAVE ACTED FAITHFULLY BUT WE HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF WICKED ACTION AND GUILT.**

And our kings and nobles priests and fathers have not acted in accordance with your TORAH and they have not listened to Your commands and Your testimonies which You testified against them.

And they have not served You in their Kingdoms and through Your great goodness or for Your great success which You gave them in the broad and fertile land which You gave before their face but they have not turned from their abominations and evils. Behold we are servants today and the land You gave our fathers to eat its fruit and the good of it - behold we are servants on its soil. But it brings great revenue for the kings that You set over us because of our sins. They rule also over our bodies and our beasts according to their pleasure and we are in great adversity.

*This historical chronicle with spiritual overtures ends at v.37 in the Hebrew. The next chapter enshrines the names of the principal signatories of the covenant and its detailed provisions. However the writer of the historical snapshot translated above is devoutly contrite and deeply conscious of the debt Israel owes to divine mercy and grace. The seven references to God's love and mercy and grace are the highlight of the passage.*

## CHAPTER 10

### **SIGNATORIES-THE PRIESTS 1-8 (24 Priests in all-Nehemiah being first to sign)**

But on account of this we are subscribers of TRUTH and our nobles Levites and priests are at the signing or were writers and at **the sealing** [mtj]. And above or on the upper part of those who sealed were **Nehemiah** the Tirshatha son of Haciliah and Zidkiah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, Haram, Meremoth, **Obadiah**, Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, Maaziah, Bilgai and Shemaiah: these were priests.

### **SIGNATORIES-THE LEVITES 9-13 (3 leading Levites with 14 brethren)**

And the Levites signed; both Yeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel. Their brothers cousins also signed-Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Bani and Beninui.

### **SIGNATORIES-THE LEADERS 14-27 (44 Chiefs)**

The leaders of the people also signed: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani, Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezar, Meshhezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua, Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek, Rehum, Hashabnah, Mahaseiah, Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, Maluch, Harim and Baanah.

*It is of interest that the sum of the names of priests and leaders with the leading Levites is 71 which allowing for one being the High-Priest and chairperson would give us the first Sanhedrin who appear to have sealed the covenant on behalf of the people.*

### **POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE COVENANT 28-39**

And the residue of the people, priests, Levites, porters singers and Nethinims and all who had set themselves apart from the peoples of the lands to the TORAH of God - their wives, their sons and their daughters-all who were aware and understood - these held fast to or **helped** [qzj] their brethren the nobles or leaders and entered into a curse and oath

(1) To walk in the TORAH of God which was given by the hand of Moses the servant of God and all the commandments of the LORD our Lord to be observed and acted upon - also His ordinances and judgments.

(2) And that we would not give our sons to the people of the land nor take their daughters for our sons.

(3) And when the people of the land bring **merchandise** [twhqm] and all goods for sale on the Sabbath to market them we would not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day.

(4) And we would leave (*the land*) fallow [vfn] on the seventh year and lift every debt.

(5) We also established for ourselves laws that we would provide a third of a shekel per annum for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread and the prolonged meat-offering and for the continual burnt offering; for the Sabbaths, new moons, feasts and holy things; and for sin offerings to atone for the whole of Israel and for all the undertakings of the house of God.

(6) And we cast lots over QERBAN *This is a Chaldee term and means "among ourselves (in the midst) but it may also relate to such avoidance of religious obligation as CORBAN represented since some in the resulting settlement avoided provisioning. So we cast lots among the priests Levites and the people concerning bringing wood for the house of God from the house of our fathers at the appointed*

times year on year to kindle on the altar of our God as was written in the TORAH.

(7) And to bring the first fruits of the fertile ground and to bring the fruit of all fruit trees year on year to the house of God.

(8) And that we should bring the first fruits of our sons and our cattle as is written in the TORAH and to bring the firstlings of our herds and flocks to the house of our God for the priest that have charge over the house of our God.

(9) And that we bring the first of our grain or mixed dough [*sr*] and our heave offerings and the fruit of all our trees and wine and new oil to the check-point [*Jvl-joined" buildings*] of the house of our God and the tithes of our arable ground to the Levites that the Levites might have the tithes in all cities of our farming work. And it shall be so that the priest - the son of Aaron with the Levites who have the tithes of the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of God to the chambers - to the treasury of the house. For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the heave offering of corn wine and new oil to the adjacent storerooms where the vessels of the sanctuary are and where the priests that minister with fire and the porters and singers are - and we will not forsake the house of our God.

## CHAPTER 11

### RESIDENCE IN JERUSALEM-A LOTTERY 1-2

So the nobles of the people were resident in Jerusalem but the remainder of the nation cast lots to bring one in ten to rest or Sabbath in Jerusalem the holy city and nine parts of the lot in cities. And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to rest or remain in Jerusalem. *The lists that follow in this chapter give the core of occupants of Urban Jerusalem. These men and their families are the leaders of the nation and the heart of re-settled Israel. Many more men of the various tribes are scattered through the land. Having regard for the fact that the next group of men who fit this description were from the line of Pharez and as we read in v.24 a man descended from Zarah was in absolute authority under Artaxerxes this blessing is remarkable. It consents to the manner in which the LORD overruled in historical matters so that He blessed the seed of Judah and Tamar whom Judah formerly slighted. So these that live in Jerusalem are the leaders of the province-but in the cities of Judah each man lived in his holding and they dwelt in their cities - namely Israel - the priests the Levites the Nethinims and the sons of the servants of Solomon.*

### THE MEN OF JUDAH RESIDENT AT JERUSALEM 3-6

But at Jerusalem lived some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin. From the children of Judah Athiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shepatiah, the son of Mahalaleel from the sons of Pharez. Also Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Colhozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. All the sons of Pharez who were resident in Jerusalem were 468 men of valour.

### THE MEN OF BENJAMIN RESIDENT AT JERUSALEM 7-9

And these are the *resident* sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joel, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. And after him Gabbai, Sallai - 928. And Joel the son of Zichri was in charge and Judah the son of Senuah was second in command over the city. *These were the joint commanders of the defence force within Jerusalem-a citizen army approaching 1,500 strong.*

### THE CITY COMMUNITY 10-14

#### PRIESTS

Of priests *those resident* were Jedaiah the son of Joiarib-Jachin.



Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ashitub was over the house of God.

### **MESSENGERS**

And their brothers who did the messenger-type work [*Jal m*] of the house of God were 822.

### **PATRIARCHS**

And Adaiiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah and his brothers - chiefs of the fathers- 242.

### **WARRIORS**

And Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, and their brothers, were mighty warriors - 128. And Zabdiel a son of great *unnamed men was in charge of them.*

### **THE LEVITES 15-18**

Also of the Levites Shemaiah son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni and Shabbethai and Iosabad from the chiefs of the Levites were over the out-of-door or "outside the camp" messenger-work of the house of God. *This ministry involved the ministry of the Scapegoat and the provisions for the Red Heifer Atonement and many other tasks.*

**AND MATTANIAH THE SON OF MICHA, THE SON OF ZABDI, THE SON OF ASAPH, WAS COMMONLY FIRST [*h l j t j*] TO LEAD THANKSGIVING IN PRAYER** and Bakbukiah [*"pouring out "*] the second among his brothers and Abda [*Chaldee for "servant "- shortened form of "Obadiah'*] the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

All the Levites in the holy city were 284.

### **THE PORTERS 19**

And the porters-Akkub, Talmon and their brothers who kept watch in the gates were 172. *Note the larger list incorporating outside helpers given in 1 Chronicles 9.22*

### **THOSE IN THE CITIES 20**

And the remainder of Israel (*as a nation*) and priests and Levites dwelt in all the cities of Judah - each man in his heritage.

### **THE NETHINIMS RESIDENT AT OPHEL 21**

But the Nethinims (descendants of other nations incorporated in Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon but without record of lineage) were resident in Ophel and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the Nethinims.

### **LEVITE LEADERSHIP 22**

And the person in charge of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micha.

### **THE SONS OF ASAPH 22-23**

The singers from the sons of Asaph were attached to the presence and fronting of the ministry of song of the house of God for from the commands of the king [*David-see 2 Chronicles 14*] there was a sure ordinance [*Derek Kidner in the Tyndale Commentary has "A day's matter on the day"*] for the singers day by day. *It may also be true that*

*Artaxerxes Longimanus* hallmarked the provision of King David which was wellknown to Esther - who by all accounts survived into this era in royal circles.

#### **A PREMIER AND DEPUTY PREMIER ROLE 24**

And Pethahiah son of Meshezabeel from the sons of Zerah [*The same as Zarah - who was Tamar's son by Judah*) the son of Judah, was empowered by the king [*Literally "at the king's hand*] in every matter that concerned the nation.

#### **JEWS WERE LIVING RIGHT FROM BEERSHEBA TO HINNOM 25-30**

And on the matter of the villages with their associated fields-some from the sons of Judah lived in Keriath Arba and its built-up environs and Dibon and it's built up surrounds and Jekabzeel and its build up. Also at Yeshua (salvation) and at Moladah and at Beth Palet (House of Escape); at Hazar-Shual and Beersheba and its surrounding built areas; at Ziklag and Mekonah and surrounding built up areas. They dwelt also at Enrimmon and Zareah and Jarmuth; at Zanoth, Adullam and the houses built thereabouts. They lived at Lachish and the countryside around, at Azekah and it's built up environs - so **they were living from Beersheba to the Valley** of Hinnom.

#### **BENJAMIN SPREADS NORTH AND WESTWARD 31-36**

Also sons of the tribe of Benjamin *originally* from Geba lived at Michmash, Aija and Bethel and the surrounding build up. They lived at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, Hadid, Zeboim and Neballat. They dwelt at Lod and Ono the valley of smiths, builders, artificers and carpenters [*vrj*] and from the Levites land was allotted in Judah even to Benjamin.

## **CHAPTER 12**

#### **THE LEADING PRIESTS OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT 1-7A**

So these are the priests and Levites that went up with Zerubabel son of Shealtiel and Yeshua: Jeremiah, Ezra, Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Amariah, Malluch, Hatthush, Shechaniah, Rhenum, Meremoth, Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, Miamin, Maadaih, Bilgah, Shemaiah and Joiarib, Jedaiah, Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the leaders among the priests and their brethren in the days of Yeshua.

#### **LEVITES AND SINGERS 7B-8**

There were also the Levites Yeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah and Mattaniah - who **was over the thanksgiving - he** and his brothers. Also Bakbukaiah and Unni, their brothers were **antiphonal singers** in their regular duties.

#### **FIVE GENERATIONS OF THE HIGH-PRIESTLY FAMILY 9-11**

And Yeshua was father to Joiakim, Joiakim to Eliashib, then Eliashib to Joiada. Joiada was Jonathan's father and Jonathan was Jaddua's father. *When the throne of David was unoccupied eras of the theocracy were recorded under the reign of the High Priest not the king.*

#### **SECOND GENERATION PRIESTLY LEADERS 12-21**

**And in the days of Joiakim** the priests that were chiefs of the fathers were Meraiah belonging to Seraiah, Hananiah to Jeremiah, Meshullam to Ezra, Jehohanan to Amariah, Jonathan to Melicu, Joseph to Shebaniah, Adna to Harim, Helkai to Meraioth, Zechariah to Iddo (*his grandfather*) Meshullam belonging to Ginnethon, Zichri to Miniamin, Piltai to Moadiah, Shammua to Bilgah, Jehonathan to Shemaiah, Mattenai to Joiarib, Uzzi to Jedaiah, Kallai to Sallai, Eber to Amok, Hashabiah to Kilkiyah, Nethaneel to Jedaiah.

### **THIRD TO SIXTH GENERATION LEVITES 22**

And the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada and Johanan and Jaddua were recorded by leaders of their fathers' households as were the priests down to the reign of Darius the Persian. [*Darius 11 No thus 423-408BC*]The sons of Levi the chiefs of their fathers' houses were recorded in the book of the "Acts of the days" [*Chronicles*] and that till the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. [*Eliashib was High Priest at the arrival of Nehemiah and Johanan his son succeeded him.*]

### **LEVITE SONG CONTINUED AFTER DAVID'S DIRECTION 23-24**

And the sons of Levi – chief Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah and Yeshua son of Kadmiel with their brethren in antiphonal order were to conduct praise and thanksgiving in successive order of duty according to the direction of David the man of God.

### **LEVITE PORTERS 25**

Mattaniah and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were the porters who kept successive watch duties at the assembly area of the gates.

### **PEOPLE NEHEMIAH WORKED WITH AND KNEW 26**

These were *in office* in the days of Joiakim the son of Yeshua, the son of Jozadak and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

### **THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL 27-30**

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they looked for the Levites from all known places to make the dedication a joyful *event* of both thanksgiving and song with cymbals stringed instruments and harps. And the sons of singers gathered from the countryside around Jerusalem and from the villages of Netophahi - from the House of Gilgal and the fields of Geba and Azmaveth for the singers had built protected villages [*rxj*] for them around Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, the people the gates and the wall with water. *Natural dust and mortar spillage added to the aggregate of adjacent dirt and debris which had long despoiled the walls.*

### **THE PROCESSION UNDER EZRA 31-37**

Then I brought the princes of Judah up on to the wall and I caused two great companies to minister thanksgiving praise.

*Derek Kidner makes a valuable observation that Nehemiah is likely to have repeated his night ride of chapter 2 only this time on foot. Thus commencing from the Valley gate and proceeding east the first party under Ezra travelled past the dung gate and the water gate to the sheep gate and temple rendezvous while from the self-same starting point Nehemiah went north on the high ground and along the wall to the North West furnaces and to the Fish Gate and Tower of Hananel to join Ezra's group at the sheep gate and proceed to the temple.*

One *procession* walked to the right upon the wall to the dung gate. After them walked Hoshaiiah and half of Judah's princes - so Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam. Judah and Benjamin, Shemaiah and Jeremiah went with them. Also some sons of the priests with Trumpets - Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Michaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph and his brothers Shemaiah and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel and Judah, Hanani [*fourteen in all*] with the musical instruments of David the man of God and Ezra the scribe before their faces. *In order Ezra followed by 6 priests with trumpets and 8 priests with musical instruments then the princes, then Hoshaiiah and half of Judah 's princes Judah and Benjamin and their leaders.*

So at the gate of the fountain which was facing them as they went up over the stairs of the city of David where the wall ascends to the house of David which is towards the

water gate eastward.

### **THE PROCESSION UNDER NEHEMIAH 38-42**

And the second procession of thanksgiving went up in the opposite direction and I followed after *those who lead the praise* and half of the people moving towards the tower of the furnaces and on toward the broad wall. So passing the Ephraim gate and the "Old" or "Changed Gate"... [*Mishnah Gate-extensively renovated*]... and passing the Fish gate, the Tower of Hananeel and the Tower of Meah... [*possibly a tower that had been standing where the Damascus Gate now is but at a lower level for 100 years - from 20 years before Zerubbabel arrived at any rate a most ancient landmark in the immediate vicinity of the sheep gate*]... we came to the Sheep Gate and they stood ministering in the Gate of the Prison. Earlier we learn that some 5th columnists were incarcerated and no doubt others as well. For the first this music and these trumpets heralded the ruin of their schemes - for other Jews who fell foul of the law this rejoicing was an up lift to them even though they could not play a full part in it. In the heart of Nehemiah was something of that compassion which brought hope to the captive. So the two praise companies ministered by the house of the LORD and I was there and half of the rulers were with me. Also with me were the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with trumpets. These seven trumpeters accompanied Nehemiah. And Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchiajah, Elam and Ezer - and the singers made themselves heard. The effect is that despite the trumpets and the noise they sang and though others took up the song - their lead remained strident. And Jezrahiah was the lead musician-cum-singer.

### **A DAY OF GREAT JOY 43**

And that day they sacrificed very many sacrifices and rejoiced for God continually made them rejoice with great joy. Even the wives and children rejoiced and the rejoicing was heard a long distance from Jerusalem. *Not only the enemies in prison but the enemies far away heard the happy song and loud trumpets of this exultant people. This "exceeding joy" is not spoken about in scripture until in the New Testament we are told of the song of the angels and the joy of the Shepherds and wise men. The occasion stands out as one among only a handful of such deep occasions of spiritual ransom in the entire Old Testament.*

### **THE LABOURER IS WORTHY OF HIS HIRE 44**

And in that day men were appointed over the gathering of interest for the treasury, men *with responsibility* for large gifts or heave-offerings, with oversight of first fruits offerings and tithes-to collect from the fields of the cities on the behalf of the priests and Levites that provided by the TORAH for Judah rejoiced (*that day*) on account of the priests and the Levites that stood to minister. *The tremendous musical and psalm singing lead that the priests and Levites gave was never forgotten.*

### **THE PRIORITY OF PRAISE 45-47**

And the singers and porters watched in their successive order of duty to God and of purification according to the command of David and his son Solomon. *The Hebrew has no connective between the nouns "David" and "Solomon." This rather loose grammar can be sampled through the writing. Another example is "Ezra priest scribe." Because the LXX has the connectives we are entitled to believe that the text became corrupt in minor details. It would be extraordinary if Nehemiah or his scribe wrote in such a manner. For in the days of David and Asaph anciently singers were a first consideration and the song of praise and thanks to God. The point being made in the text by Nehemiah himself is that this day finished with a resumption of the priority of praise and the support of the choir who in David's time were at the heart of the*

worship of God and temple service. Priests were not silent but vocal messengers of joy. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave portions of the singers and porters - the word or act of the day for that day and they set apart the holy things for the Levites and the Levites from the sons of Aaron. The concept of gate-keepers in this chapter is not separated from song. So those who were charged with duties at the gates would also sing to God's glory. The very seat of business was imbued with God's praise. Also the gifts were first given on account of God's praise and distributed in a second round to those who conducted the duties of the temple or presented the offerings. No one was under any illusion that the priests were paid for offering on account of the sin of the Jew. Their maintenance was on account of the appreciation of the praise of God.

## CHAPTER 13

***We sometimes underestimate how hard it is to put things right that gradually build up in a direction contrary to good order and God's will for a community. Nehemiah tells us that it was not the wall-building that gave him the most trouble - it was the unguarded affections of the spiritual leaders that concerned him far more. Much of this developed during an absence of some time when Nehemiah was back in Babylon. The fact that he successfully navigated these troubled waters and redirected the life of the nation was critical to the preservation of the Messianic blood-line and the priesthood of Israel.***

### **BALAAHITE NATIONS NOT INCORPORATE 1-2**

On that day there was a reading in the book of Moses in the hearing of the people and they found it written in it that neither the Ammonite nor Moabite should come into the congregation of the LORD until the age to come. [m][d] This was on account of the fact that they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water but they gave reward to Balaam in antipathy in order that he should continually curse or diminish Israel but our God changed the curse to blessing. *This significant note on Moses' teaching on "the Age to come" - the golden age of Messiah is indicative of the maintenance of prophetic emphasis and awareness of a time reserved for Gentile blessing.*

### **THE HIGH PRIEST BECAME SUBVERSIVE 3-5**

**AND IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.22)** as they listened to the TORAH that they caused the nomadic Arabians to be separated from Israel. Added to this Eliashib the priest who had been given responsibility over the suite attached to the house of our God was close to or joined [by marriage] to Tobiah. So he made for him [Tobiah] a great suite where before **IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.23)** they set aside meat-offering and the frankincense and the vessels and corn tithes, new wine and oil mandated for the Levites and the singers and porters and the heave offerings of the priests.

### **NEHEMIAH'S ABSENCE 6-10**

But during all this **AS IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.24)** I was not living in Jerusalem for in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king and after the end of those days I petitioned the king. So I came to Jerusalem and I was given to understand the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah to make him a dwelling in the courts of God's house. And it was very wrong to me so I caused the entire household effects of the house of Tobiah to be thrown out the door of the chamber. *Twice in the ministry of our LORD the encroachment of secular and business interest was opposed and the temple courts similarly cleared.*

So I told them that they should purify the suite and I returned there the vessels of the

house of God the meat offering and frankincense. And I knew that the allocation of the Levites had not been given to them for the Levites and the singers had fled like fugitives each to his own land.

#### **NEHEMIAH'S FIRST STRUGGLE 11-14**

So I strove with the prefects [*mqS* - a Babylonian term for "chiefs"] and said "What is the reason that the house of God is forsaken? So I gathered them together and they ministered at their place of ministry. Then all Judah brought the corn tithe new wine and oil to the treasury. And I appointed over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe and of from the Levites Pedaiah and under his authority Hanan son of Zaccur the son of Mattaniah-because they were counted faithful and upon them devolved the *duty of allotment* to their brethren. **(6) REMEMBER ME O MY GOD OVER THIS MATTER AND DO NOT BLOT OUT [hjm]MY COVENANT LOVE [ydsj]** that I have done for the house of my God and for keeping it *right*.

#### **NEHEMIAH'S SECOND STRUGGLE 15-18**

In those days I saw those in Judah that trod the winepress on the Sabbath and bringing in heaps of grain and lifting burdens on asses and indeed wine grapes figs and they were bringing each load into Jerusalem on the Sabbath and I witnessed [*usually with another companion*] *through the day the selling of game and food [dwx]* Phoenicians of Tyre were settled there who brought fish and all kinds of merchandise and they were selling to the children of Judah in Jerusalem. So I strove with the white clad nobility [*rwj*] of Judah and said to them "What is this evil thing that you are doing and you are making the Sabbath day common or detestable. Was it not thus that your fathers acted and God brought upon us and upon this city all this evil. But you are causing the kindling of anger against Israel for the defiling of the Sabbath."

#### **MEASURES TO STOP SABBATH TRADING 19-21**

**AND IT HAPPENED (Providential Grace No.25)** when the gates of Jerusalem were shadowed before the beginning of Sabbath I said that the gates should be closed and I ordered that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath. *The sudden closure on Friday about 5-5.30p.m. along with the re-opening on Sunday at first light must have shaken the Phoenicians and the local marketers. And I placed my young men at the gates that no portable wares entered on the Sabbath day. But the traders and sellers of various merchandise camped at the gates of Jerusalem once or twice. But I witnessed against them and said "Why are you camping in front of the wall? If you continue to do it I will act speedily with authority against you."* From that time they ceased to come on the Sabbath.

#### **LEVITE PORTERS RE-INSTALLED 22**

And I spoke to the Levites that they should make themselves clean and presentable and come to watch the gates to keep the Sabbath day holy. **(7) MY GOD ALSO REMEMBER THIS OF ME** and pity me according to the wealth of your covenant love.

#### **NEHEMIAH'S THIRD STRUGGLE.23-27**

Also in those days I saw Jews who had caused wives of Ashdod and Ammon and Moab to live with them and their children were semi Ashdod in speech and were not able to recognise Jewish speech and interpret from one language to another. And I strove with them and shamed or reviled them (A.V.) and struck some of the men and made them bald and caused them to swear by God that "You will not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters as wives for your sons. Was it not over these matters that Solomon King of Israel sinned? Still among the nations there was not a king like him and he was beloved of God. [*wyhl al bwha*] and God gave him to be king over all Israel. But foreign women made even him sin. So should we listen to

you that you should do all this great evil in order that you may plan and purpose against God in marrying foreign wives?

### **NEHEMIAH AND THE FALSE GOEL 28-29**

But one of the sons of Joiada who was son of Eliashib the high Priest was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite and I made him clear away from me. Remember them O God because they have purchased the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. *The scripture makes serious play on the 'word GOEL [Kinsman Redeemer]. These men had bought the office of the high priest by their own craft and turned away the Levites and cleared out their provisions and allowed the Sabbath to be profaned - in a word subverted the faith of Israel. The most lamentable concept had it gained ground among the citizens and all the people would have prejudiced the seed of Abraham and endangered the promise of God - but that was not to be allowed to happen. The true Goel and Kinsman of later days would come and establish a better priesthood by a better sacrifice. Jesus would die to atone for sin.*

### **PRIESTLY COURSES - WOOD FOR KINDLING AND FIRSTFRUITS 30-31**

Thus I **cleansed** them from the whole foreign thing and **established the ministry** of the courses for the priests and Levites - each man in his task, and established the ministry of offering or bringing nigh of wood at the appointed times and for first fruits. **(8) REMEMBER ME O GOD FOR GOOD.** *This last sentence looks anticlimactic but Nehemiah made a vital contribution to the mind-set and values of Judaism for all time. His ministry has to be judged in the light of the true nature of Redemption and its provision by a Kinsman Redeemer from the line of Abraham and David. He was effective in taking measures to preserve the Messianic bloodline of Israel at this time. He was also effective in maintaining the priesthood which was in danger of fading out of the national life. He was effective in putting measures in place which for the next 450 years meant that practical provision for the spiritual leadership of Israel was in place till the final prophet John the Baptist emerged and the holy Levite Simeon set his eyes on the Goel Kinsman of God - our LORD JESUS CHRIST*

**THE END**

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**A Bible Companion**