

Handout: Nehemiah Lesson 3

“[Nehemiah] himself made the rounds of the city by night, never tiring either through work or lack of food and sleep, neither of which he took for pleasure but as a necessity” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5.8).

The territories of Nehemiah’s enemies:

1. Sanballat’s Samaritans were north of Judah, occupying what had been the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
2. Tobiah’s Ammonites held lands to the east of Judah across the Jordan River.
3. Geshem’s Arabs controlled territory south of Judah in the Negev (north of Egypt) and southeast across the Jordan River.
4. The Ashdodites were from Ashdod, one of the Philistine cities southwest of Judah on the Mediterranean coast (see Josh 13:3).

Enemies surrounded the covenant people of Judah and God was their only protection. It is the continuing plight of the modern-day nation of Israel.

In 4:3-7, Nehemiah responded in two ways to the threat of invasion and a planned massacre of his city:

1. He had the people pray to God for protection.
2. He organized a twenty-four-hour guard on the walls.

Nehemiah’s plan to protect the walls, people, and city in 4:8-17:

1. He formed an armed guard for the builders.
2. He armed the workers.
3. He appointed a trumpeter to sound an alarm in case there was an attack.
4. He kept the workers within the walls overnight for the security of the city and to prevent the enemy from intimidating them from returning to their work.

4:15 *And so we went on with the work from break of day until the stars came out.*

They worked from dawn to sunset, a seasonal twelve hours until the beginning of the next day. See Jesus definition of the daylight hours in John 11:9.

Nehemiah 5:1-11:

Mosaic Law offered a clear distinction between usury and making a pledge against a loan:

- The law forbidding usury: *If your brother becomes impoverished and cannot support himself in the community, you will assist him as you would a stranger or guest, so that he can go on living with you. Do not charge him interest on a loan, but fear your God, and let your brother live with you. You will not lend him money on interest or give him food to make a profit out of it* (Lev 25:35-37; also see Ex 25:22; Dt 23:19-20).
- The law concerning a pledge for a debt: *If you are making your brother a loan on pledge, you must not go into his house and seize the pledge, whatever it may be. You must stay outside, and the man to whom you are making the loan must bring the pledge out to you.* (Dt 24:10-11).

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Nehemiah defends his actions as governor of Judah in 5:14-18:

1. He never levied the governor’s assistance allowance against the people.
2. He did not use his position to acquire land.
3. He fed the city’s magistrates and officials who worked with him and the Jews who came from surrounding nations to assist in the rebuilding project.
4. He did not allow his assistants to oppress the people.
5. For supplies to feed himself and his officials, he only took what was necessary and nothing more.

In 6:1-14 Nehemiah’s enemies employed three successive plans to eliminate him:

1. They tried to lure him to a remote site far from Jerusalem where they could assassinate him (verse 2).
2. They made a second attempt to convince him to meet with them outside Jerusalem by threatening to inform the Persian king that Nehemiah intends to make himself King of Judah, an act of treason (verses 5-7).
3. When they saw that Nehemiah couldn’t be coaxed to leave Jerusalem, they hired a false prophet to warn him that his life was in danger and to come with him into the Temple’s Holy Place in violation of the Law for a layman (verses 10-14).

6:10 The law pertaining to priestly descendants of Aaron stated: *You and your sons will undertake the priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and all that lies behind the curtain. You will perform the liturgy, the duties of which I entrust to your priesthood. But an unauthorized person approaching will incur death* (Num 18:7).

Scripture mentions eleven prophetesses in the Old and New Testaments: nine are true, and two are false:

Prophetess	Scripture Reference
Miriam, sister of Moses	Exodus 15:20
Deborah Judge & Prophetess	Judges 4:4
Hulda	2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22
Isaiah’s wife	Isaiah 8:3
Noadiah the false prophetess	Nehemiah 6:14
New Testament Prophetesses	
Anna	Luke 2:36
Philip’s four daughters	Acts 21:9
Jezebel the false prophetess	Revelation 2:20

6:16 *When all our enemies heard about it and all the surrounding nations saw it, they thought it a wonderful thing, because they realized that this work had been accomplished by the power of our God. Several ancient manuscripts read When our enemies heard about it, they were afraid because they realized this work had been accomplished by the power of our God.” Other versions read: our enemies lost much face in the eyes of the nations (NAB), or they were very much lowered in their own eyes, since the Hebrew word wayyippelu means “they fell” (IBHE, vol. page 1275).*

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