

## 4 – THE BURDEN FOR THE CITY (NEHEMIAH 1:1-3:32)

### I. The Report from Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-11)

#### A. The Report (Nehemiah 1:1-3)

- Nehemiah was in the city of Shushan in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes I.
- Nehemiah asks Hanani concerning the condition of the remnant and Jerusalem.
- Hanani reported that the remnant was in distress and in reproach because of the city's walls.
- The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates of the city were burned.

#### B. Nehemiah's Prayer (Nehemiah 1:4-11)

- When Nehemiah heard the report, he sat down and wept as he mourned for many days.
- As he mourned for many days, he fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven.
- As Nehemiah began his prayer, he recognized God as one who keeps covenant and is merciful.
- He asked God to hear his prayer as he confessed the sins of Israel against the Lord.
- He confesses that they had not kept the commandments and ordinances that Moses was given.
- Nehemiah recalled the words of Moses concerning unfaithfulness and returning to the Lord.
- Nehemiah reminded the Lord concerning his promise to regather Israel to the land.
- He calls for the Lord to give attention to his people who have returned to the Land.
- He calls the Lord to hear the prayers of his servants who fear his name and let them prosper.
- Nehemiah identifies himself as the king's cupbearer.

**Cultural Note:** Cup Bearer (Butler)

A cupbearer was an official of considerable responsibility who attended ancient middle-eastern kings. The cupbearer was required to taste the foods and wines before serving them to the king. They served as a pledge the food or drink was not poisoned. A cupbearer enjoyed the esteem and confidence of their royal masters.

See: Genesis 40:1,2,5,9,13,20,21,23; 41:9; Nehemiah 1:11.

# The Return To The Land: A Survey of Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther

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## II. Nehemiah's Request (Nehemiah 2:1-8)

### A. Nehemiah's Appearance (Nehemiah 2:1-4)

- Four months later, Nehemiah was performing his duties by setting wine before the king.
- The king noticed that Nehemiah was sad and that it was sorrow of heart.
- When the king questioned Nehemiah about his sadness, Nehemiah became dreadfully afraid.
- When the king asked Nehemiah what his request was, he prayed to the God of Heaven.

### B. The Request (Nehemiah 2:5-8)

- Nehemiah asked the king to be sent back to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem if he had found favor.
- The king wanted to know how long Nehemiah will be gone and when he will return.
- Nehemiah then requested letters from the King granting him passage and supplies for the task.

## III. Preparations for Rebuilding the Walls (Nehemiah 2:9-3:22)

### A. The Survey of the Walls (Nehemiah 2:9-20)

#### I. The Regional Governors (Nehemiah 2:9-10)

- Nehemiah, accompanied by Persian horsemen, presented the king's letters to the governors.
- Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite were displeased by the plan to help the Jews.

**Historical Note:** Sanballat the Horonite

Sanballat was a man of Beth Horon. He was a very influential Samaritan who tried unsuccessfully to defeat Nehemiah's plans for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He then plotted to assassinate Nehemiah by inviting him to a conference in Ono. His daughter had married into the family of the High Priest. He was the governor of Samaria.

See: Nehemiah 2:10,19; 4:1,7; 6:1,2,5,12,14; 13:28.

**Historical Note:** Tobiah the Ammonite

Tobiah was an Ammonite who tried to hinder Nehemiah in his efforts to rebuild Jerusalem with Sanballat the Horonite. Tobiah plotted with a Jewish priest named Eliashib to use storerooms as his private quarters in the Temple. Nehemiah threw him out of the Temple and purified the storerooms.

See: Nehemiah 2:10,19; 4:3,7; 6:1,12,14,17,19; 7:62; 13:4,7,8.

#### 2. The Survey (Nehemiah 2:11-16)

## The Return To The Land: A Survey of Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther

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- Three days after his arrival in Jerusalem, he went at night to survey the walls of the city.
- Nehemiah told no one the plan that God had placed on his heart concerning the city.
- He surveyed the walls on horseback and then on foot at places the horse could not pass.
- The officials and priests did not know where Nehemiah went as he surveyed.

### 3. Nehemiah's Purpose Revealed (Nehemiah 2:17-18)

- Nehemiah met with the leaders and pointed out the distress that the city was enduring.
- He called them to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, so that the reproach would be removed.
- He also told them about the favor of the Lord that was shown through the king.
- The leaders agreed to rise up and build as they set themselves to begin the work.

### 4. The Opposition (Nehemiah 2:19-20)

- Sanballat and the other enemies mocked the Jews and stated that they were rebelling.
- Nehemiah responded that the God of Heaven will help them and that they have no claim.

### B. The Division of the Work (Nehemiah 3:1-22)

- The writer lists the various leaders and their families who repaired certain sections of the wall.