**Nehemiah 1-4** - May 7th

Nehemiah’s Prayer

**1**The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, **2**Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. **3**They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.” **4**When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. **5**Then I said:

“Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who HIS covenant of love with those who love HIM and keep HIS commandments, **6**let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you.**7**We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

**8**“Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, **9**but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

**10**“They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. **11**Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.” I was cupbearer to the king.

Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

**2**In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, **2**so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was very much afraid, **3**but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” **4**The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

Then I prayed to the God of heaven, **5**and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.” **6**Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

**7**I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? **8**And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. **9**So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

**10**When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

Nehemiah Inspects Jerusalem’s Walls

**11**I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days **12**I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

**13**By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. **14**Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; **15**so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. **16**The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

**17**Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” **18**I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

**19**But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?”

**20**I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”

Builders of the Wall

**3**Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. **2**The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.

**3**The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. **4**Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. **5**The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

**6**The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. **7**Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah-Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth - places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. **8**Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. **9**Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. **10**Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. **11**Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. **12**Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

**13**The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. They also repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

**14**The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Rekab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place.

**15**The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Kol-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King’s Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. **16**Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.

**17**Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. **18**Next to him, the repairs were made by their fellow Levites under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. **19**Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle of the wall. **20**Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest. **21**Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib’s house to the end of it.

**22**The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. **23**Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. **24**Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah’s house to the angle and the corner, **25**and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh **26**and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. **27**Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.

**28**Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. **29**Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shekaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. **30**Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.**31**Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; **32**and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.

Opposition to the Rebuilding

**4**When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, **2**and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble burned as they are?”

**3**Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building - even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”

**4**Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. **5**Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

**6**So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

**7**But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. **8**They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. **9**But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

**10**Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”

**11**Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”

**12**Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

**13**Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. **14**After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

**15**When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

**16**From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah **17**who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, **18**and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

**19**Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. **20**Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

**21**So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. **22**At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.” **23**Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.