

The Book of Nehemiah

Chapter 4

The Opposition is Great, Our God is Greater!

The Opposition Within (Con't)

Nehemiah 3:5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD.

In Nehemiah chapter 3 verse 5, we get the first negative comment that some members of the Jewish community refused to participate and contribute. It is said that the men from Tekoa made repairs but the Tekoa the nobles (leadership) wouldn't help. About all we can take from this is that some Jews didn't share the community's enthusiasm about the project or they thought they were about doing this types of task. The town of Tekoa lay to the southeast of Jerusalem and all we can do is speculate as to why the nobles of that town opted out. Note whom it was they were disappointing by their refusal: the passage says, they "...**would not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.**" In other words it was God they were disobeying and going against His will, not Nehemiah and the other members of the community.

Nehemiah 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

In Chapter 4 verse 10 the people of God are struggling again. The constant intimidation of the enemy, constantly being ridiculed by the enemy, constantly hearing negativity, trying to stay focused well under attack. This hostile situation is wearing on the minds of the people. The people of God is getting mentally discouraged and physically tired!

DISCOURAGED AND EXHAUSTED

- Constant intimidation, being away from home, unable to farm caused Jews to lose their zeal
- *"The strength of the people who carry loads away is starting to fail and there is so much rubble that we can't build the wall"*
- **Qinah** = a lament
- Nehemiah knows he must act or the people will lose their will to continue



Both of the situations above are examples of what we do as members of the congregation when some of us don't service, don't contribute or we allow the enemy to cause us to become weary or discouraged. But, we have to understand that it is all about "God". When we serve we are proving a service to the Lord, when we give we are giving unto the Lord and we have to walk by faith and not by sight. Our trust cannot be in man, we cannot allow fear to set in, we must trust God in all things.

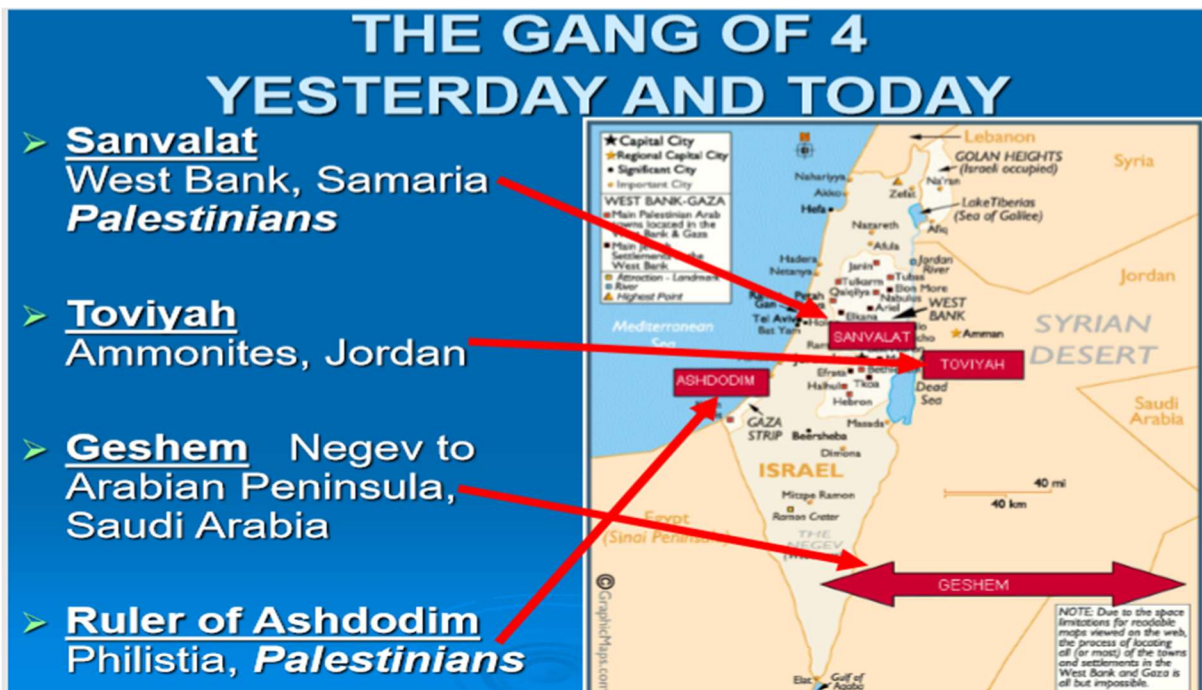
The Opposition without – The Gang of 4

We first meet 3 members of the "Gang of 4" in Chapter 2, Verse 10.

Nehemiah 2:10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Now, these enemies of God has reappears in Chapter 4, Verse 1. By Verse 7 they had added the final members, the Ashdodites making the "Gang of 4" completely formed.

Nehemiah 4:7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,



Ashdod was the newer name for what had been at one time a region called Philistia. Apparently this change of names occurred because the king of Ashdod, one of the 5 Philistine city states, had become the most dominant of the 5. So the Ashdodim were still the Philistines, just by a different name. So now we have 4 outraged rulers who

intend to do something about these Jews having the nerve to rebuild their own city, in their own province, without the approval or assistance of their neighbors.

Since the end of Chapter 2 we have watched as local and regional political leaders, gentiles of course, have steadily upped the ante of pressure and threats as they oppose the mission that Nehemiah was sent to accomplish by King Artaxerxes; a mission that, behind the scenes, was achieving God's will. But why are these various potentates that surround Judah and Jerusalem so against something as normal and typical and necessary as rebuilding the once formidable defensive walls of Jerusalem? Almost every city of consequence throughout the Middle East had defensive walls. In fact, in general, walls were requirement number 1 to even be classified as a city.

The precise political reasons for their immovable stance against the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem aren't stated, but Nehemiah seemed to have understood the enemy's historical position and their mindset quite well, which led him to say in Nehemiah to Sanvalat, Toviya and Geshem:

Nehemiah 2:20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah stated from the beginning that these guys had no heritage or legal right to the Jews or Jerusalem.

As we ended chapter 3 last week, Nehemiah had organized teams of Jews to work together on well defined sections of the wall that each team had chosen to take the responsibility to restore. Smaller families adopted small wall sections to rebuild; larger families, numerous members of nearby towns, even professional trade guilds chose larger sections to reconstruct.

This week Nehemiah took another rather extreme precaution; he had the entire workforce sleep in Jerusalem. This move accomplished a number of objectives both practical and strategic. It protected the workers from harm; eating and staying together as a group promotes camaraderie; it allowed the largest possible force to be ready to repel any attack; it allowed for shifts of watchmen to operate 24 hours a day; it saved time so that folks didn't travel back and forth between Jerusalem and their nearby villages; and people being people, it didn't allow some to drift away when the going got the toughest. In fact, at least a major portion of the people never took off their outer garments to sleep at night; they slept completely clothed so that they could spring into action at a moments notice.

GOD CALLS US TO BE BUILDERS AND WARRIORS



- Nehemiah: a well trained leader, planner & organizer, acted with confidence and authority
- Led in a Godly way, as a shepherd to his people and a servant of God
- Trained in the Torah
- In that day the Bible had given way to early Judaism: Scripture mixed with traditions and customs
- We must rid ourselves of passivity, indifference, fear, and willful ignorance of God's Word₁₀

In Chapter 4 we learn some valuable lessons about some of the enemies of God that will face as we put our hands to build:

- Attacks from our enemies
- Ridicule my our enemies
- Our enemies desire to wear us down
- Fear as a result of what we see and hear

Our response has to be one of Nehemiah's

- Prayer
- Service
- The Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

To be victorious we must have a brick in one hand to build the wall and a sword in the other (the Word of God).

(Content adapted from A Study of Nehemiah by Tom Bradford)