

More Opposition to the Remnant During Artaxerxes' Reign (c. 456–446 BC)

Ezra 4:8–23

Rehum's Letter to Artaxerxes

8 Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes as follows:

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues—the judges, the rulers, the officials, the secretaries, the Erechites, the Babylonians, the people of Susa (that is, the Elamites),

10 and the rest of nations whom the great and noble Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and other places in Trans-Euphrates.

11 (This is a copy of the letter they sent to him:) “To King Artaxerxes, from your servants in Trans-Euphrates:

12 Now let the king be aware that the Jews who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and odious city. They are completing its walls and repairing its foundations.

13 Let the king also be aware that if this city is built and its walls are completed, no more tax, custom, or toll will be paid, and the royal treasury will suffer loss.

14 In light of the fact that we are loyal to the king, and since it does not seem appropriate to us that the king should sustain damage, we are sending the king this information

15 so that he may initiate a search of the records of his predecessors and discover in those records that this city is rebellious and injurious to both kings and provinces, producing internal revolts from long ago. It is for this very reason that this city was destroyed.

16 We therefore are informing the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, you will not retain control of this portion of Trans-Euphrates.”

Artaxerxes' Reply

17 The king sent the following response: “To Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and other parts of Trans-Euphrates: Greetings!

18 The letter you sent to us has been translated and read in my presence.

19 So I gave orders, and it was determined that this city from long ago has been engaging in insurrection against kings. It has continually engaged in rebellion and revolt.

20 Powerful kings have been over Jerusalem who ruled throughout the entire Trans-Euphrates and who were the beneficiaries of tribute, custom, and toll.

21 Now give orders that these men cease their work and that this city not be rebuilt until such time as I so instruct.

22 Exercise appropriate caution so that there is no negligence in this matter. Why should danger increase to the point that kings sustain damage?”

Rehum Brings Work on Jerusalem's Walls to a Halt

23 Then, as soon as the copy of the letter from King Artaxerxes was read in the presence of Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their colleagues, they proceeded promptly to the Jews in Jerusalem and stopped them with threat of armed force.

Nehemiah Learns of the Remnant's Adversity (Kislev [December] 445 BC)

Nehemiah 1

1 These are the words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: It so happened that in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year, I was in Susa the citadel.

2 Hanani, who was one of my relatives, along with some of the men from Judah, came to me, and I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and had survived the exile, and about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, “The remnant that remains from the exile there in the province are experiencing considerable adversity and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem lies breached, and its gates have been burned down!”

4 When I heard these things I sat down abruptly, crying and mourning for several days. I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 Then I said, “Please, O LORD God of heaven, great and awesome God, who keeps his loving covenant with those who love him and obey his commandments,

6 may your ear be attentive and your eyes be open to hear the prayer of your servant that I am praying to you today throughout both day and night on behalf of your servants the Israelites. I am confessing the sins of the Israelites that we have committed against you—both I myself and my family have sinned.

7 We have behaved corruptly against you, not obeying the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments that you commanded your servant Moses.

8 Please recall the word you commanded your servant Moses: ‘If you act unfaithfully, I will scatter you among the nations.

9 But if you repent and obey my commandments and do them, then even if your dispersed people are in the most remote location, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen for my name to reside.’ [cf. [Deut 4:25–31](#); [30:1–10](#)]

10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your mighty strength and by your powerful

hand. [\[Deut 9:29\]](#)

11 Please, O Lord, listen attentively to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who take pleasure in showing respect to your name. Grant your servant success today and show compassion to me in the presence of this man.” Now I was cupbearer for the king.

Artaxerxes Authorizes Nehemiah to Rebuild Jerusalem’s Walls (Nisan [April] 444 BC)

Nehemiah 2:1–8

1 Then in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought to me, I took the wine and gave it to the king. Previously I had not been depressed in the king’s presence.
 2 So the king said to me, “Why do you appear to be depressed when you aren’t sick? What can this be other than sadness of heart?” This made me very fearful.
 3 I replied to the king, “O king, live forever! Why would I not appear dejected when the city with the graves of my ancestors lies desolate and its gates destroyed by fire?”
 4 The king responded, “What is it you are seeking?” Then I quickly prayed to the God of heaven
 5 and said to the king, “If the king is so inclined and if your servant has found favor in your sight, dispatch me to Judah, to the city with the graves of my ancestors, so that I can rebuild it.”
 6 Then the king, with his consort sitting beside him, replied, “How long would your trip take, and when would you return?” Since the king was amenable to dispatching me, I gave him a time.
 7 I said to the king, “If the king is so inclined, let him give me letters for the governors of Trans-Euphrates that will enable me to travel safely until I reach Judah,
 8 and a letter for Asaph the keeper of the king’s nature preserve, so that he will give me timber for beams for the gates of the fortress adjacent to the temple and for the city wall and for the house to which I go.” So the king granted me these requests, for the good hand of my God was on me.

Nehemiah’s Nocturnal Inspection (July 444 BC)

Nehemiah 2:9–20

9 Then I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, and I presented to them the letters from the king. The king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.
 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard all this, they were very displeased that someone had come to seek benefit for the Israelites.
 11 So I came to Jerusalem. When I had been there for three days,
 12 I got up during the night, along with a few men who were with me. But I did not tell anyone what my God was putting on my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no animals with me, except for the one I was riding.
 13 I proceeded through the Valley Gate by night, in the direction of the Well of the Dragons and the Dung Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem that had been breached and its gates that had been destroyed by fire.
 14 I passed on to the Gate of the Well and the King’s Pool, where there was not enough room for my animal to pass with me.
 15 I continued up the valley during the night, inspecting the wall. Then I turned back and came to the Valley Gate, and so returned.
 16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had been doing, for up to this point I had not told any of the Jews or the priests or the nobles or the officials or the rest of the workers.
 17 Then I said to them, “You see the problem that we have: Jerusalem is desolate and its gates are burned. Come on! Let’s rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that this reproach will not continue.”
 18 Then I related to them how the good hand of my God was on me and what the king had said to me. Then they replied, “Let’s begin rebuilding right away!” So they readied themselves for this good project.
 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard all this, they derided us and expressed contempt toward us. They said, “What is this you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”
 20 I responded to them by saying, “The God of heaven will prosper us. We his servants will start the rebuilding. But you have no just or ancient right in Jerusalem.”

Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem (July 31–September 21, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 3

Repairing the Northern and Western Walls

1 Then Eliashib the high priest and his priestly colleagues arose and built the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and erected its doors, working as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.
 2 The men of Jericho built adjacent to it, and Zaccur son of Imri built adjacent to them.

- 3 The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars.
- 4 Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakoz, worked on the section adjacent to them. Meshullam son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel worked on the section next to them. And Zadok son of Baana worked on the section adjacent to them.
- 5 The men of Tekoa worked on the section adjacent to them, but their town leaders would not assist with the work of their master.
- 6 Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah worked on the Jeshanah Gate. They laid its beams and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars.
- 7 Adjacent to them worked Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, who were men of Gibeon and Mizpah. These towns were under the jurisdiction of the governor of Trans-Euphrates.
- 8 Uzziel son of Harhaiah, a member of the goldsmiths' guild, worked on the section adjacent to him. Hananiah, a member of the perfumers' guild, worked on the section adjacent to him. They plastered the city wall of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.
- 9 Rephaiah son of Hur, head of a half-district of Jerusalem, worked on the section adjacent to them.
- 10 Jedaiah son of Harumaph worked on the section adjacent to them opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah worked on the section adjacent to him.
- 11 Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab worked on another section and the Tower of the Fire Pots.
- 12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, head of a half-district of Jerusalem, worked on the section adjacent to him, assisted by his daughters.
- 13 Hanun and the residents of Zanoah worked on the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars, in addition to working on fifteen hundred feet of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.
- 14 Malkijah son of Recab, head of the district of Beth Hakkerem, worked on the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars.
- 15 Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, head of the district of Mizpah, worked on the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it, put on its roof, and positioned its doors, its bolts, and its bars. In addition, he rebuilt the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the royal garden, as far as the steps that go down from the City of David.

Construction of the Eastern Wall

- 16 Nehemiah son of Azbuk, head of a half-district of Beth Zur, worked after him as far as the tombs of David and the artificial pool and the House of the Warriors.
- 17 After him the Levites worked—Rehum son of Bani and after him Hashabiah, head of half the district of Keilah, for his district.
- 18 After him their relatives worked—Binnui son of Henadad, head of a half-district of Keilah.
- 19 Adjacent to him Ezer son of Jeshua, head of Mizpah, worked on another section, opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress.
- 20 After him Baruch son of Zabbai worked on another section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.
- 21 After him Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, worked on another section from the door of Eliashib's house to the end of it.
- 22 After him the priests worked, men of the nearby district.
- 23 After them Benjamin and Hasshub worked opposite their house. After them Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, worked near his house.
- 24 After him Binnui son of Henadad worked on another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress and the corner.
- 25 After him Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the buttress and the tower that protrudes from the upper palace of the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh
- 26 and the temple servants who were living on Ophel worked up to the area opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the protruding tower.
- 27 After them the men of Tekoa worked on another section, from opposite the great protruding tower to the wall of Ophel.
- 28 Above the Horse Gate the priests worked, each in front of his house.
- 29 After them Zadok son of Immer worked opposite his house, and after him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, guard at the East Gate, worked.
- 30 After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, worked on another section. After them Meshullam son of Berechiah worked opposite his quarters.
- 31 After him Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, worked as far as the house of the temple servants and the traders, opposite the Inspection Gate, and up to the room above the corner.
- 32 And between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and traders worked.

Scripture quoted by permission. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996–2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://bible.org> All rights reserved. This material is available in its entirety as a free download or online web use at <http://netbible.org/>.