

**Sanballat Tries to Hinder Nehemiah (July 31–September 21, 444 BC)****Nehemiah 4****Opposition by Ridicule**

1 Now when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he became angry and was quite upset. He derided the Jews,  
 2 and in the presence of his colleagues and the army of Samaria he said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they be left to themselves? Will they again offer sacrifice? Will they finish this in a day? Can they bring these burnt stones to life again from piles of dust?”  
 3 Then Tobiah the Ammonite, who was close by, said, “If even a fox were to climb up on what they are building, it would break down their wall of stones!”  
 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised! Return their reproach on their own head! Reduce them to plunder in a land of exile!  
 5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not wipe out their sin from before them. For they have bitterly offended the builders!  
 6 So we rebuilt the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height. The people were enthusiastic in their work.

**Opposition by Plot**

7 When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod heard that the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem had moved ahead and that the breaches had begun to be closed, they were very angry.  
 8 All of them conspired together to move with armed forces against Jerusalem and to create a disturbance in it.  
 9 So we prayed to our God and stationed a guard to protect against them both day and night.

**Internal Opposition: Discouragement and Fear**

10 Then those in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers has failed! The debris is so great that we are unable to rebuild the wall.”  
 11 Our adversaries also boasted, “Before they are aware or anticipate anything, we will come in among them and kill them, and we will bring this work to a halt!”  
 12 So it happened that the Jews who were living near them came and warned us repeatedly about all the schemes they were plotting against us.  
 13 So I stationed people at the lower places behind the wall in the exposed places. I stationed the people by families, with their swords, spears, and bows.  
 14 When I had made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the great and awesome Lord, and fight on behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families!”  
 15 It so happened that when our adversaries heard that we were aware of these matters, God frustrated their intentions. Then all of us returned to the wall, each to his own work.

**Diligence and Readiness in the Work**

16 From that day forward, half of my men were doing the work and half of them were taking up spears, shields, bows, and body armor. Now the officers were behind all the people of Judah  
 17 who were rebuilding the wall. Those who were carrying loads did so by keeping one hand on the work and the other on their weapon.  
 18 The builders to a man had their swords strapped to their sides while they were building. But the trumpeter remained with me.  
 19 I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “The work is demanding and extensive, and we are spread out on the wall, far removed from one another.  
 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather there with us. Our God will fight for us!”  
 21 So we worked on, with half holding spears, from dawn till dusk.  
 22 At that time I instructed the people, “Let every man and his coworker spend the night in Jerusalem and let them be guards for us by night and workers by day.  
 23 We did not change clothes—not I, nor my relatives, nor my workers, nor the watchmen who were with me. Each had his weapon, even when getting a drink of water.

**Oppression Within the Remnant (July 31–September 21, 444 BC)****Nehemiah 5****Extortion by the Rich**

1 Then there was a great outcry from the people and their wives against their fellow Jews.  
 2 There were those who said, “With our sons and daughters, we are many. We must obtain grain in order to eat and stay alive.”  
 3 There were others who said, “We are putting up our fields, our vineyards, and our houses as collateral in order to obtain grain during the famine.”  
 4 Then there were those who said, “We have borrowed money to pay our taxes to the king on our fields and our vineyards.  
 5 And now, though we share the same flesh and blood as our fellow countrymen, and our children are just like their children, still we

have found it necessary to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have been subjected to slavery, while we are powerless to help, since our fields and vineyards now belong to other people.”

#### **Nehemiah Rebukes the Creditors**

6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints.

7 I considered these things carefully and then registered a complaint with the wealthy and the officials. I said to them, “Each one of you is seizing the collateral from your own countrymen!” Because of them I called for a great public assembly.

8 I said to them, “To the extent possible we have bought back our fellow Jews who had been sold to the Gentiles. But now you yourselves want to sell your own countrymen, so that we can then buy them back!” They were utterly silent, and could find nothing to say.

9 Then I said, “The thing that you are doing is wrong! Should you not conduct yourselves in the fear of our God in order to avoid the reproach of the Gentiles who are our enemies?”

10 Even I and my relatives and my associates are lending them money and grain. But let us abandon this practice of seizing collateral!

11 This very day return to them their fields, their vineyards, their olive trees, and their houses, along with the interest that you are exacting from them on the money, the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil.”

#### **The Creditors Heed Nehemiah’s Rebuke**

12 They replied, “We will return these things, and we will no longer demand anything from them. We will do just as you say.” Then I called the priests and made the wealthy and the officials swear to do what had been promised.

13 I also shook out my garment, and I said, “In this way may God shake out from his house and his property every person who does not carry out this matter. In this way may he be shaken out and emptied!” All the assembly replied, “So be it!” and they praised the LORD. Then the people did as they had promised.

#### **Nehemiah’s Unselfish Leadership**

14 From the day that I was appointed governor in the land of Judah, that is, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes—twelve years in all—neither I nor my relatives ate the food allotted to the governor.

15 But the former governors who preceded me had burdened the people and had taken food and wine from them, in addition to forty shekels of silver. Their associates were also domineering over the people. But I did not behave in this way, due to my fear of God.

16 I gave myself to the work on this wall, without even purchasing a field. All my associates were gathered there for the work.

17 There were 150 Jews and officials who dined with me routinely, in addition to those who came to us from the nations all around us.

18 Every day one ox, six select sheep, and some birds were prepared for me, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance.

Despite all this I did not require the food allotted to the governor, for the work was demanding on this people.

19 Please remember me for good, O my God, for all that I have done for this people.

### **Sanballat’s Final Attempt to Thwart Nehemiah (July 31–September 21, 444 BC)**

Nehemiah 6:1–14

#### **Opposition by Trickery**

1 When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and no breach remained in it (even though up to that time I had not positioned doors in the gates),

2 Sanballat and Geshem sent word to me saying, “Come on! Let’s set up a time to meet together at Kephirim in the plain of Ono.” Now they intended to do me harm.

3 So I sent messengers to them saying, “I am engaged in an important work, and I am unable to come down. Why should the work come to a halt when I leave it to come down to you?”

4 They contacted me four times in this way, and I responded the same way each time.

5 The fifth time that Sanballat sent his assistant to me in this way, he had an open letter in his hand.

6 Written in it were the following words: “Among the nations it is rumored (and Geshem has substantiated this) that you and the Jews have intentions of revolting, and for this reason you are building the wall. Furthermore, according to these rumors you are going to become their king.

7 You have also established prophets to announce in Jerusalem on your behalf, ‘We have a king in Judah!’ Now the king is going to hear about these rumors. So come on! Let’s talk about this.”

8 I sent word back to him, “We are not engaged in these activities you are describing. All of this is a figment of your imagination.”

9 All of them were wanting to scare us, supposing, “Their hands will grow slack from the work, and it won’t get done.” So now, strengthen my hands!

**Opposition by Intimidation**

10 Then I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel. He was confined to his home. He said, “Let’s set up a time to meet in the house of God, within the temple. Let’s close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. It will surely be at night that they will come to kill you.”

11 But I replied, “Should a man like me run away? Would someone like me flee to the temple in order to save his life? I will not go!”

12 I recognized the fact that God had not sent him, for he had spoken the prophecy against me as a hired agent of Tobiah and Sanballat.

13 He had been hired to scare me so that I would do this and thereby sin. They would thus bring reproach on me and I would be discredited.

14 Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat in light of these actions of theirs—also Noadiah the prophetess and the other prophets who were trying to scare me!

**Jerusalem’s Walls Completed (September 21, 444 BC)**

Nehemiah 6:15–19

**The Walls Completed**

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in just fifty-two days.

16 When all our enemies heard and all the nations who were around us saw this, they were greatly disheartened. They knew that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

**Opposition Still Continues**

17 In those days the aristocrats of Judah repeatedly sent letters to Tobiah, and responses from Tobiah were repeatedly coming to them.

18 For many in Judah had sworn allegiance to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah. His son Jonathan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.

19 They were telling me about his good deeds and then taking back to him the things I said. Tobiah, on the other hand, sent letters in order to scare me.

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