

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 7

Nehemiah having built the wall, and set up the doors, appointed two persons to take the charge of the city, and set watches for the safety of it, and to take special care about opening and shutting the gates of it, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 7:1-3), and concerned he was for the peopling of it, and having found a register of the first comers to it, gives their names, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 7:4-69) and some account of the freewill offerings made for the work they came about, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 7:70-73).

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors,* etc.] Which was not done when Sanballat sent his first letter, but now was, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 6:1),

and the porters and the singers, and the Levites were appointed; not to attend the doors of the gates of the wall, but to return to their service in the temple, who had been employed in one thing or another, while the wall and gates were building and repairing; (see ^{<K00>}Nehemiah 3:17).

Ver. 2. *That I gave my brother Hanani,* etc.] Who first brought him the melancholy account of the state of Jerusalem, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 1:2,3),

and Hananiah the ruler of the palace; the king's palace, in which the viceroy of the king of Persia dwelt, and now Nehemiah; to these two men he gave

charge over Jerusalem; committed it to their care during his absence, who may be supposed now to return to Persia, as he had promised, (^{<K00>}Nehemiah 2:6),

for he was a faithful man; this is said of Hananiah, and given as a reason why such a trust was committed to him; Hanani's character was well known, and his journey from Jerusalem to Shushan was a full proof of his hearty concern for the interest of it:

and feared God above many; Hananiah was exemplary in his fear of God, few were equal to him, and none exceeded him; or of many days, as Jarchi; of a long time he had feared the Lord, and served him many years.

Ver. 3. *And I said unto them, let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot*, etc.] Or until the heat of the day, or near noon; at least not till the sun had been up some time, and shone out clearly, and caused much heat; that if any enemies were near, or lying in wait, they might be discovered, and the inhabitants also up and ready to defend themselves:

and while they stand by; according to Aben Ezra, Hanani and Hananiah were to be present at the opening and shutting of the gates, and so Grotius; but these being the chief rulers, it is not likely; but rather those whom they appointed to look after them, these were to stand by while their servants did it; they were not to leave it wholly to them, but to see it done themselves:

let them shut the doors, and bar them; or “lay hold”^{f39} on them, handle them to see whether they are shut fast or not:

and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, everyone in his watch, and everyone to be over against his house; no foreigners were to be of the watch, only inhabitants, and those everyone in their turn, and to be placed over against where they dwelt; and so it might be thought would be the more careful and diligent in their watch.

Ver. 4. *Now the city was large and great*, etc.] The circumference of it, all within the wall; for that was built on its old foundation, and enclosed as much ground as ever it did: Hecataeus^{f40}, an Heathen writer, says the circumference of Jerusalem was fifty furlongs, which was more than six miles; but Josephus^{f41} makes the circuit of it but thirty three furlongs or about six miles:

but the people were few therein; in comparison of the largeness of the place; for though there were 42,360 that came up at first with Zerubbabel, and many more with Ezra, yet a great number chose to settle in the towns and cities in the country, Jerusalem being in such a desolate condition:

and the houses were not builded; some were, but they were but few, many of them still lay in ruins.

Ver. 5. *And my God put into mine heart*, etc.] Every good motion in him, and whatever he thought of that was conducive to the good and welfare of Jerusalem, Nehemiah always ascribed it to God; (see ^{<407>}2 Corinthians 3:5)

to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy; that their number might be known, and of what families they were, and in what cities they formerly dwelt; and this was not only of use for the present purpose of Nehemiah, but was of service hereafter to show the pedigree of families, and that it might be clearly known from whence the Messiah sprung:

and I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first; from Babylon to Jerusalem, along with Zerubbabel, as appears from (^{<407>}Nehemiah 7:7), and this was of great use to him, whereby he would know not only their names and number, but to what city they belonged, and who to the city of Jerusalem, that they might be called upon to come, and rebuild their houses, and take up their residence there:

and found written therein; the names of the persons and families after mentioned.

Ver. 6-69. *These are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity*, etc.] Who were of the province of Judea, as it was now reduced, and came up out of the captivity of Babylon through the edict of Cyrus; (see ^{<407>}Ezra 2:1), where the same preface is given to the list of names as here; and from hence to the end of (^{<407>}Nehemiah 7:69) the same account is given of persons and families as there, with some little difference of numbers and names; in some instances there are more in this list, in others fewer, which may be thus accounted for; that list was made in Babylon, when, upon the edict of Cyrus, the Jews, who intended to go up with Zerubbabel, gave in their names, and they were registered; but this was made when they came to Jerusalem; now some of those that gave in their names changed their minds, and tarried in Babylon, and some might die by the way, which makes the numbers fewer in some instances; and others who did not give in their names at first, but, being better disposed towards their own country, followed after and joined those which were returning, and increased the number of others; to which may be added what Abendana observes, that in Ezra an account is given of those that came out of the captivity by the companies, in which they came not genealogized, and had a mixture of persons of other families in them, and some that had no genealogy; but afterwards, when they were genealogized according to

their families, a register of their genealogies was made, and is what Nehemiah now found, and here gives; and, as for difference of names, that may be owing to the carelessness of copiers, or to the different pronunciation of names, or some men might have two names; the matter is of no great moment.

Ver. 70. *And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work*, etc.] Of building the city and the temple, and for that service, (^{<15188>}Ezra 2:68),

the Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drachms of gold; each of which was one pound sterling, and so amounted to so many pounds: of these “dracmons”, or “darics”, a Persian coin, mention is made in (^{<15189>}Ezra 2:69), they were golden staters, or shekels and had their name as is said, not from Darius, the father of Xerxes, though it is certain, from Herodotus ^{f42}, that he coined golden money; but from some other king of the same name, more ancient ^{f43}, which must be Darius the Mede; and if they are the same with the Adarcon in (^{<15187>}Ezra 8:27) as they seem to be, then those in (^{<15187>}1 Chronicles 29:7) were pieces of money not so called in the times of David, but of Ezra, the writer of that book: whether this Tirshatha was Zerubbabel, or Nehemiah, is not easy to say, since this donation is not the same with that in Ezra, not made at the same time nor are the gifts the same, nor the persons that gave them. Zerubbabel was Tirshatha when the Jews came out of Babylon, and Nehemiah now:

fifty basins; which were vessels, in the which the blood of the sacrifices was received and out of which it was sprinkled:

five hundred and thirty priests' garments; which were laid up in the wardrobe, and used on occasion.

Ver. 71. *And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work*, etc.] To be put into the treasure, out of which the expenses of the temple, and service of it were defrayed:

twenty thousand drachms of gold; which were so many pounds of our money, and somewhat more: for, according to Bishop Cumberland ^{f44}, a drachm of gold was of the value of twenty shillings and four pence: and 2200 pounds of silver; “the maneh”, or pound, with the Jews, was of the value of sixty shekels, (^{<23512>}Ezekiel 45:12) and so is reckoned by our Brerewood ^{f45} to be of our money seven pounds and ten shillings; he reckoning a shekel at half a crown, whereas it was little more than two shillings and four pence; and so sixty of them, or a “maneh”, came to about

seven pounds; wherefore this sum here was seven times so many pounds of silver.

Ver. 72. *And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drachms of gold*, etc.] Worth as many pounds of our money, and somewhat more:

and two thousand pound of silver; of which (see Gill on “^{<1677>}Nehemiah 7:71”):

and threescore and seven priests’ garments; having been so long in Babylon, and no use of sacrifices, and so not of garments to minister in, no care was taken to provide any; which seems to be the reason why so many were given, when they returned to their own land, and sacrificed.

Ver. 73. *So the priests and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities*, etc.] The same is said in (^{<1570>}Ezra 2:70), (see Gill on “^{<1570>}Ezra 2:70”),

and, when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities; the month Tisri, answering to part of September, in which month was the feast of tabernacles; at this time of the year they were in their cities when they came forth out of Babylon, and so they were now; (see ^{<1580>}Ezra 3:1).