### Nehemiah

## Chapter 13

1Well on that day (when they were reading the scroll of Moses before the ears of the people), they came to understand that it was written that the AmMonites and MoAbites were not to enter the gathering of God throughout the ages, 2because they hadn’t greeted the sons of IsraEl with bread and water, but hired BalaAm to curse them (which our God turned into blessings).  
  
3And when they heard this read in the Law, they separated such people who had been mixed among the IsraElites.  
  
4Before that time, however, the Priest EliAshib had assigned TobiJah to be in charge of the treasury of the Temple of our God, 5[and he had moved into] the large room in the treasury where the sacrifice offerings, the frankincense, the sacred utensils, the tithe grain, the wine, and the olive oil was supposed to be stored (as it was commanded) for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, along with the first fruits for the Priests.  
  
6I wasn’t in JeruSalem when he did this, for (because it was the 32nd year of the reign of ArthaSastha the ruler of Babylon) I had gone to see the king, and then (after some time) I asked the king for a few things 7before returning to JeruSalem.  
  
But when I [got back and] saw the wicked thing that EliAshib had done for TobiJah by giving the treasury to him there in the courtyard of the Temple of God, 8this looked very wrong to me.  
  
So, I took all of TobiJah’s things out of the treasury and threw them outside!  
  
9Then I gave the order and they cleansed the treasury, and I had the Temple of God’s sacred utensils, sacrifice offerings, and frankincense all brought back.  
  
10I also realized that the Levites weren’t being given their portions, so the Levites, singers, and workmen had all returned to their own fields! 11Therefore, I had a heated exchange with those who were in charge, and I asked:  
  
 ‘Why has the Temple of God been abandoned?’  
  
And afterward, I called everyone back and assigned them to their stations, 12as everyone in Judah once again started bringing their tithes of the wheat, wine, and olive oil to the treasury. 13I then put all of this into the hands of the Priest ShelemiJah, the scribe ZaDok, and PedaiAh and Hanan (the sons of ZacCur and grandsons of MatTaniJah) who represented the Levites, since I thought that they could be trusted. And I left it up to them to divide it all among their brothers.  
  
14Remember me for this, O my God, and don’t forget my acts of mercy on behalf of the Temple of my God Jehovah and [the assignment of] His watches!  
  
15Well, it was then that I noticed that the people of Judah were treading their wine vats and collecting sheaves of grain and loading them on their burros (along with wine, grapes, figs, and everything else) and carrying them into JeruSalem on the Sabbath day!  
  
Yes, I can testify to the fact that they were even selling these things on that day!  
  
16People from Tyre were also bringing in fish and all sorts of things, and they were sitting there offering them for sale to the sons of Judah in JeruSalem on the Sabbath!  
  
17So I quarreled with the free men of Judah and asked:  
  
 ‘Why are you doing this wicked thing… Why are you profaning the day of the Sabbath?  
  
 18‘Isn’t this the same thing that your fathers did that caused God to bring all the evils down upon this city and upon us?  
  
 ‘Now you’re adding to His anger upon IsraEl by profaning the Sabbath!’  
  
19Well, after I said that, they started locking the gates of JeruSalem before the Sabbath, and I told them not to unlock them until after the Sabbath.  
  
Then I had some of my young men stand at the gates to make sure that no one carried loads on the Sabbath day, 20and that all the traders were forced to find lodging.  
  
Oh, some did business outside of JeruSalem’s walls once or twice, 21but I spoke to them and asked:  
  
 ‘Why are you lodging so close to the city wall?  
  
 ‘If you do this a second time, I’ll be forced to take action against you!’  
  
Well from that time on, they no longer came on the Sabbath.  
  
  
22Thereafter, I had a talk with the Levites who were being cleansed and with those who had come to guard the gates, about the need to keep the Sabbath day holy.  
  
Remember me, O my God, and protect me by Your great mercy!  
  
23Back then, I saw Judeans that had settled in with women who were AshDodites, AmMonites, and MoAbites… 24They were even speaking the AshDod language and they weren’t learning Judean, for they were speaking the languages of these people and those people!  
  
25So I quarreled with them and I cursed them… I hit some of the men, pulled their hair, and made them swear before God not to take those people’s daughters for their sons or for themselves.  
  
26[I said]:  
  
 ‘Isn’t this how Solomon the king of IsraEl sinned?  
  
 ‘Yet among all the nations, there wasn’t another king like him, because God loved him and God appointed him to be the king over all IsraEl.  
  
 ‘But it was this thing that turned him aside… Foreign women!  
  
 27‘So, should we allow you to do such wickedness and break your relationship with God by taking foreign women?’  
  
28[I said this to] the sons of JoiAda and to EliAshib (who was the High Priest and a relative by marriage of SanBalLat)… Then I threw them all out!  
  
29Remember them, O my God, because they opposed the rights of inheritance of the Priesthood [as was set forth in] Your Sacred Agreement for the Priests and the Levites!  
  
30I cleansed them of all their connections with foreigners, then I established the daily rotations for the Priests and Levites, so that every man had an assignment among the Priests, 31whether it was just to provide gifts of wood for the offerings by seasons and times, or [to bring in] the first fruits.  
  
Please remember me, O our God, for the goodness that [I’ve shown]!

# Esther

Esther is a short story about how the Jewish girl Esther (possibly Damasphia) became the wife of the Persian Emperor (called ArtaXerxes in the Greek text), and of how she saved the Jews from a plot to destroy them, which led to the creation of the Jewish Feast of Purim.  
  
This ArtaXerxes appears to be ArtaXerxes I of Persia, and the account tells us that these events happened in the 3rd year of his reign (by our calculations, around 472 BCE).  
  
  
Additional material  
  
Although this version is from the Greek Septuagint, we don’t include the six pieces of additional material that were added to the Septuagint’s version (the ‘Old Greek’ version) several centuries after the original writing. These six pieces of extra material are not fake texts pretending to be original, no, they seem to have always been understood as additional, unoriginal, and uninspired material – added to help readers by giving them background information and extra context.  
  
Our translation of Esther only includes the original material; these happen to be the same passages that appear in the Hebrew manuscripts.  
  
However, the additions are probably (more or less) accurate in what they say. For example, some claim to be copies of the king’s letters that are mentioned in the main text. The last addition even tells us when it was added (the 1st century BCE) and who translated it (someone called Lysimachus)!  
  
So while these additions are not part of the original text, they were commonly attached to Esther in ancient times and were likely familiar to Greek-speaking Early Christians and the Apostles.  
  
In the future, we’ll add the additional material to this translation of Esther, but make it clear that the six additions are uninspired.