### Nehemiah

## Chapter 5

1Then, many of the people (especially their wives) started complaining loudly about their brothers, the Judeans.  
  
2Some were saying:  
  
 ‘Even though we have many sons and daughters, we still have enough grain to eat and to get by.’  
  
3But others were saying:  
  
 ‘We had to mortgage our fields, vineyards, and houses to buy enough grain to eat.’  
  
4And others were saying:  
  
 ‘Because we had to borrow money to pay the king’s taxes on our fields, vineyards, and houses, our flesh now belongs to our brothers… Our sons have become their sons, and our daughters have become their daughters!  
  
 5‘And look! They’re tyrannizing our sons and they’re using our daughters as though they were slaves… Many of them are being tyrannized, and there’s nothing we can do [to help them], because our fields and vineyards now belong to the important ones!’  
  
6Well when I heard the things they were saying in their outcries, I was deeply disturbed, 7and my heart moved me to do something... So I confronted the important ones and the rulers, and said to them:  
  
 ‘Should any man ask the things of you that you’re asking of your brothers?’  
  
Then I called for a great assembly against them, 8at which I said to them:  
  
 ‘We once had to ask you for contributions in order to buy back many of our Judean brothers who had been sold to the gentiles... So are you now going to sell your brothers back, or do you think that they should all be returned to us?’  
  
Well... No one said a word!  
  
9Then I said:  
  
 ‘What you’re doing here isn’t good, because it doesn’t reflect a fear of our God!  
  
 ‘Should we be giving our enemies from the nations even more reason to treat us with contempt?  
  
 10‘Why, my own friends, brothers, and acquaintances have [had to lend these people enough] of their own money and grain money to repay you!  
  
 ‘However, I’m now bringing an end to these exacting accounting practices, 11and you must return these people today… Along with their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses.  
  
 ‘Also, you must provide them with some money, some grain, some wine, and some olive oil.’  
  
12And they replied:  
  
 ‘We’ll give it all back and we won’t ask any more of them…  
  
 ‘We’ll do just as you’ve said.’  
  
Then I called the Priests up and I made them swear with an oath that they’d be sure that these people did what they said.  
  
13And I shook off my cape and added:  
  
 ‘This is how God will shake off any man who doesn’t stand by his word on this matter… His house and everything he’s worked for will be shaken off like this!’  
  
Well at that, the entire assembly said:  
  
 ‘May it be so!’  
  
Then they praised Jehovah, and the people did just as they’d agreed to do.  
  
  
14Also, on that day, they appointed me to be their ruler in the land of Judah… From the 20th year to the 32nd year of the reign of King ArthaSastha (for the next 12 years). And during that entire period, my brothers and I who governed didn’t accept any [compensation].  
  
15But before that, those who’d been the rulers actually oppressed the people by taking the last of their bread and wine, and by applying a tax of 40 silver coins!  
  
So, although they and their servants had once dominated over the people, I didn’t do that, because of my fear before the Face of Jehovah.  
  
16I also worked on repairing the walls myself, and I didn’t acquire any land… I sent my [household] servants and field workers there to do the work! 17In addition, I allowed many of the Judeans and the rulers (about 150 men) who had returned to us from the nations roundabout, to eat at my table.  
  
Each day, they consumed:  
  
 • 1 calf,  
 • 6 choice sheep, and   
 • 1 winter-yearling goat.  
  
18I also needed huge quantities of wine to be delivered every 10 days.  
  
Yet I didn’t seek any compensation for my work, because everyone else was slaving so hard. 19Please remember me, O my God, for all the good that I’ve done for these people!