

Administrative Difficulties

Nehemiah 5

Nehemiah 13

Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:39

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The people of Jerusalem and Judah were in desperate straights because of the famine. Many had mortgaged their homes and property in order to buy food. Taxes were a burden. And some had even placed themselves or their children into slavery to other Jews simply to stay alive.

Nehemiah was appalled. He insisted the people stop charging interest to fellow Jews. He demanded the release of all Jewish slaves held by other Jews. He cancelled the burdensome taxes imposed by his predecessors, making up the loss of income out of his own personal fortune. He even refused to accept the wages he had earned by serving as governor, while at the same time feeding large numbers of people outside of his own household and hosting foreign dignitaries, again paying for it all out of his own pocket.

When his term as governor had expired, Nehemiah was recalled to Persia, but after a year of absence from Jerusalem he pleaded to be allowed to return. Artaxerxes once again commissioned him as governor and sent him back.

Upon his return, Nehemiah was horrified to discover a room in the Temple had been rented out as living space to a Samaritan leader. The man was immediately expelled. The room was purified and returned to its appropriate use.

During Nehemiah's absence the people had ceased to tithe. The Levites, left without means of support, went back to their own towns to work the land. People had begun doing business on the Sabbath. Many Jews had married foreign women and raised their children according to foreign customs.

Nehemiah reinstated the tithe, rebuked the people for desecrating the Sabbath, and forbade marriage with non-Jews.