

5:14-19 Nechemiah's self-defense

1. Metzudat David to Nechemiah 5:14

גם הטובה הזאת עשיתי עם ישראל כי מעת אשר צוה המלך אותי להיות מושל להם בארץ יהודה...

I also benefited Israel in this way, for from the time that the king commissioned me as their ruler in Judea...

2. Malbim to Nechemiah 5:14

שלא לבד שהטיב לעניים לא הכביד גם על העשירים ולכן שמעו לקולו.

Not only did he benefit the needy, but he did not burden the wealthy, and so they listened to his voice.

3. Ralbag to Nechemiah 5:15

אחר שלקחו מהם כסף שקלים ארבעים לשנה או לחדש או לשבוע והוא היותר נראה היו לוקחים עוד בעבור לחם ויין שיספיק להוצאתם.

After they took from them forty silver shekel per year, month, or most likely week, they also took for bread and wine for their expenditures.

4. Metzudat David to Nechemiah 5:16

אף הטובה הזאת עשיתי כי אחזתי במלאכת החומה ר"ל מזרז הייתי את הבונים לבל ירפו ידיהם מן המלאכה:

Also this benefit I provided, for I took hold of the work on the wall, meaning I energized the builders lest their hands be weak in working.

5. Ralbag to Nechemiah 5:16

וגם במלאכת החומה הזאת החזקתי להשלימה בכל עז והתעסקתי בענינה: ושדה לא קנינו יצא ממנו לחם חקי כדי שלא נצטרך לטרחה בעבודת השדה:

"And I also strengthened the work on this wall" – To complete it, full-strength, and I was involved in building it. "And we did not purchase fields" – from which to produce our daily bread, so that we would not need to work in the fields.

6. Talmud, Sanhedrin 93b

מכדי כל מילי דעזרא נחמיה בן חכליה אמרינהו, ונחמיה בן חכליה מאי טעמא לא איקרי סיפרא על שמיה? אמר רבי ירמיה בר אבא, מפני שהחזיק טובה לעצמו שנאמר "זכרה לי אלקי לטובה [כל אשר עשיתי על העם הזה]. (נחמיה ה:ט)" ... רב יוסף אמר מפני שסיפר בגנותן של ראשונים שנאמר "והפחות הראשונים אשר לפני הכבידו על העם ויקחו מהם בלחם ויין אחר כסף שקלים ארבעים וגו'. (נחמיה ה:טו)" ואף על דניאל שגדול ממנו סיפר...

But Nechemiah son of Chakaliah recorded all of Ezra's deeds; why wasn't the book named for him? Rabbi Yirmiyah bar Abba said: Because he took credit for himself, as in Nechemiah 5:19... Rav Yosef said: Because he degraded earlier ones, as in Nechemiah 5:15... And even of Daniel, who was greater, he spoke thus...

7. Prof. Moshe Tzvi Segal, Encyclopedia Mikrait V pg. 820

אפשר שחיבורו נועד לשמש כתב-מגן נגד אויביו הרבים. ומכאן תפילתו הרגילה בחיבור זה שד' יזכור לו לטובה את מעשיו הטובים, ולאויביו יזכור לרעה את מעשיהם הרעים.

Perhaps his composition was meant to serve as a defense against his many enemies. This was the reason for his customary prayer in this composition, that Gd remember for the best his good needs, and remember for the worst for his enemies their bad deeds.

8. Malbim to Nechemiah 5:19

ויל"פ שר"ל ג"כ שד' יזכור לו זכות זה לא בעבורו רק כדי שזכות הזה יזכור ד', "על העם הזה", שזכות הצדיקים מגין על העם:

One could explain that he meant also that Gd should remember this merit for him, not for himself but so that Gd should remember this merit for the nation, for the merit of the righteous protects the nation.

Chapter 6: Intrigue

9. Ambushes and false charges

Gedalyah Jeremiah 40:13-41:2 Chananiah, Mishael, Azaryah Daniel 3:9-12

Daniel Daniel 6:12-14

10. Outline

- 6:1-4 Attempt #1
- 6:5-9 Attempt #2
- 6:10-13 Attempt #3
- 6:14-15 Nechemiah's prayer
- 6:16-19 A letter-writing campaign

6:1-4 Attempt #1

11. Malbim to Nechemiah 6:1

שלכן היה להם עוד תקוה לבטל המלאכה כי אח"כ נפלו בעיניהם כמ"ש בפסוק ט"ז:

Therefore they still held hope of halting the work, for later they fell in [their own] eyes, as in 6:16.

12. R' Dov Zakheim, Nehemiah pg. 114

Significantly, Tobiah did not join in the invitation to Nehemiah. He may have shrunk from the idea of murdering a fellow Jew. He may also have been assigned to attack the city while Nehemiah was at Kephirim. Leaderless, the Jews might have been expected to panic and, heeding the likes of Tobiah's kinsman Eliashiv, who after all wielded considerable authority as High Priest, to surrender without a fight.

6:5-9 Attempt #2

13. Dr. Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Artaxerxes Correspondence of Ezra 4, Nehemiah's Wall, and Persian Provincial Administration*, Archaeological, Historical and Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel, pg. 50

If the proposed letter of Sanballat is original to the memoir, then it explains the letter from Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes, quoted in Ezra 4. As Wright demonstrates, the events reported in the correspondence could not have taken place prior to Nehemiah's visit, since neither the king nor Nehemiah, nor Hanani for that matter, seem to know about it. Nor could it have been written after Nehemiah's governorship, for either Nehemiah's wall had already been completed by then, in which case the correspondence could not have occurred, or we'd have to suppose that Nehemiah's attempt was aborted and that a second attempt recorded in the correspondence was also aborted. The latter option strains credibility. This leaves Nehemiah's tenure as the most likely time for the correspondence to have been written... Elsewhere I have tried to show that local governors like Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gashmu the Arab, members of the Achaemenid administration of Beyond-the-River, were the type of people whom the author of Ezra 4 had in mind when he used the term עַם הָאָרֶץ to refer to the people who had bribed Rehum and Shimshai to send the letter to the king. Only people of the rank of these provincial governors would have had the access and the means to bribe the בעל טעם, the deputy satrap of Beyond-the-River, and his secretary to write the slanderous letter quoted in Ezra 4.

14. Metzudat David to Nechemiah 6:5

ומלבד הדבר הזה שלח עוד בידו אגרת פתוחה מבלי חותם, וכאומר 'לא בסתר דברתי וכל הרוצה לקרות יבוא ויקרא'.

Aside from this matter, he sent another open letter in [his youth's] hand, as if to say, "I did not speak in secret, and anyone who wants to read it may come and read it."

15. Rashi to Nechemiah 6:7

נביאים - בעלי לשון כמו בורא ניב שפתים (ישעיה נ"ז):

Neviim – people of the tongue, like Isaiah 57:19, "The One who creates the *niv* of the lips".

16. Malbim to Nechemiah 6:7

שטוביה וסנבלט שכרו את שמעיה שהיה נביא שקר שהוא יבא שיהיה מלך בירושלים, ושנחמיה יהיה המלך... והם שכרו את הנביאים שבעת הצורך יאמרו שנחמיה שכרם לזה לנבא כן וזה מרידה...

For Tovia and Sanballat hired Shemayah, a false prophet, to prophesy that there will be a king in Jerusalem, and Nechemiah will be the king... And they hired the prophets to say, when necessary, that Nechemiah hired them to prophesy, and this would be an act of rebellion...