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Some First Century A.D. Events as  
Reflected in Our Massoretic Book of Nehemiah

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Hebrew Union College  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for ordination

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## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	I
Table of Contents.....	II
Digest.....	III
Acknowledgements.....	V
Chapter I:	
Nehemiah's Historical Value.....	1
Chapter II:	
Some of the Hebrew Nehemiah's Enigmatic Qualities.....	11
Chapter III:	
<u>Pesher</u> Nehemiah: Some First Century A.D. Events as Reflected in our Massoretic Version of Nehemiah.....	36
Chapter IV:	
Classical Perspectives on Nehemiah.....	75
Bibliography.....	85
Abbreviations.....	95

### Digest

This thesis tests the hypothesis that certain elements in our massoretic Nehemiah reflect some crucial historical events of the early tannaitic period, primarily surrounding the outbreak of the great revolt (65-72 A.D.), as they are described in Josephus' Wars, and, to an extent, in his autobiography.

Ex hypothesi, these events were "encoded" into Nehemiah by employing a number of well-known rabbinic hermeneutical devices and thus can be retrieved by an exegesis which utilizes these same hermeneutical keys. In other words, it is possible that the early rabbis in some instances derived meanings from the Old Testament which they themselves buried there for "safe keeping," and that their exegetical methods are not as fanciful as is sometimes thought.

In studying the history of the text of Nehemiah, it is discovered that there is ample reason not to rule out a massive tannaitic redaction of Nehemiah. Thus the central hypothesis of this thesis can not a priori be rejected.

A tannaitic reworking of the Nehemiah traditions would account for a number of long standing problems and "enigmas" in our received text. These problems and enigmas are discussed herein, and many of them are explained to be a result of pseudepigraphic (covert) writing, not dissimilar to other examples of this genre of literature from roughly the same period.

This thesis concludes with an examination of the early rabbinic attitudes towards Nehemiah the man and the book, which is riddled with ambivalences and ambiguities. These seemingly contradictory pronouncements are quite possibly another indication of some covert rabbinic agenda afoot in our Jewish text.

Because of the nature of this subject, this writer has had little help from the standard works on Nehemiah, although, most recently, the phenomenon of tannaitic covert writing is receiving ever widening attention by scholars of rank. Moreover, even though it is clearly impossible to prove the hypothesis of this thesis, he hopes that the results which appear herein will justify his preoccupation with this important subject.

### Acknowledgements

Ve'al hehatumim, as one list of acknowledgements started almost exactly two millennia back, must be the Presence of the One whose eyes are ever ranging over the whole world. For me, these eyes are my teachers, friends and helpers, who accompany me on the path of self-realization. Such individuals do not require or even want my gratitude, for they are what they are, and thus they do what they do.

If there are thanks to be dispensed, let them be extended to you, the reader, for climbing the dimly lit and sometimes treacherous stairs of the old wing of the library to read this page and others. You are reading my Nefesh, and this gives my lips a moist sweetness, making me very happy.

Bruce Diamond  
St. Louis Missouri  
February 24, 1978  
5977 la'or

## Chapter I

### Nehemiah's Historical Value

Frank Moore Cross noted, not long ago, that "the literature dealing with the fifth and fourth centuries in Palestine appears to expand by geometric progression."<sup>1</sup> A large part of this literature represents an attempt to correlate the significant archeological findings of this century, such as the extensive finds of Aramaic and Greek papyri from Elephantine, as presented by Cowley<sup>2</sup> and Porten,<sup>3</sup> the more recent discoveries in 1962 of fourth century legal papyri executed in Samaria,<sup>4</sup> findings at Wadi Tumeilat<sup>5</sup> and other artifacts with the information presented in Nehemiah and other biblical works.

For the student of Bible, this sort of work is very gratifying, since only rarely is such a student fortunate enough to have external literary supports which both emanate from a period described in the Bible, and, what is more, tend to assist in nailing down the biblical information in question. This is doubly true in the case of our massoretic Nehemiah. We actually have in our possession documents and inscriptions which corroborate some historical details in Nehemiah, and also shed some light on its essential historical accuracy.

This has hardly surprised those scholars who have studied this little book, for it is their general consensus that the bulk of Nehemiah reflects vivid first hand memoirs from the period it describes.<sup>6</sup> Thus, unlike its more complex sister book, Ezra, which is considered by some to be more the fictitious creation of a pious chronicler's vivid imagination,<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah must be regarded as resting on a rock-hard foundation of historical fact.

Such certainty concerning the essential historical truth of Nehemiah, however, does not imply that the book is not without its problems, both literary

and historical. Of course, the most obvious problem has been that of the historical relationship which might have existed between the men Ezra and Nehemiah. While the massoretic Nehemiah at one point portrays Ezra and Nehemiah working side by side, nowhere in the book of Ezra does Nehemiah appear. It is widely held that Ezra and Nehemiah did not coexist, and that their presence together in Nehemiah is the work of a redactor who had a certain idealized religious vignette in mind. Myers and others regard Ezra as arriving on the scene after Nehemiah.<sup>8</sup> Others, holding to the more traditional point of view, place Ezra before Nehemiah in time.<sup>9</sup> This position is in line with Josephus' view of the problem.<sup>10</sup> Those who might argue for the essential ahistoricity of Ezra can derive support from the fact that he is not included for honorable mention by Ben Sirah, who does praise Nehemiah for his building efforts.<sup>11</sup> The problem of the historical relationship of Ezra to Nehemiah is one that has drawn most attention, although it is by no means the only one.

Another persistent problem in biblical scholarship has been the textual history of Ezra-Nehemiah. This problem is generated by the existence of what is now known as the apocryphal I Esdras, which we have only in the Greek. The perplexing question of the relationship of this apocryphal work to our massoretic Ezra-Nehemiah has drawn the attention of C.H. Torrey, who has offered the most extensive treatment of this issue.<sup>12</sup> Torrey has raised the possibility that our massoretic Nehemiah and Ezra for some reason was preferred by the tannaitic sages, who removed I Esdras from their canonical list. As will be seen in the next two chapters, the text history of Nehemiah is of crucial importance for accurate exegesis of the book.

Within our massoretic works themselves there exist a number of smaller



yet no less irritating problems. One such problem is the existence of practically identical gola-lists in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7. This problem has been taken up by Kurt Gallig, who raises the possibility that the repetition of the list is conveying some sort of covert information.<sup>13</sup> Of course, this raises the more general question as to just how much covert writing is taking place "between the lines" of these and other biblical works, although such an issue is nearly impossible to resolve.

Another standing problem in Nehemiah research has to do with the identity of Sanballat, Nehemiah's nemesis. The difficulty concerning Sanballat stems from the fact that Josephus presents us with a character of the same name whose actions almost completely parallel those of our biblical villain.<sup>14</sup> This Sanballat, however, seems to be living roughly a century or so after our biblical Nehemiah. This problem has attracted the attention of a number of scholars.<sup>15</sup> Although this question as to the real historical context for Sanballat seems to be more properly directed at Josephus rather than to our biblical author, it still represents a challenge to Nehemiah scholarship.

Yet another issue in this field of research has to do with the actual historical framework for the exploits of Nehemiah. The book starts off roughly a century and a half after the neo-Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, yet we find Nehemiah quite agitated when he receives the news that the walls and gates of Jerusalem are in a shambles. Apparently there must have been some intervening crises between the Chaldean siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the time of Nehemiah which would make such a report newsworthy. Both Morgenstern and Blank posit a catastrophe which overtook Jerusalem around the year 485 B.C., when, at the death of Darius I, Jerusalem started a revolution which was completely crushed by the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites with the support of

the Persians.<sup>16</sup> Rowley, who suspends judgement on this point, does note however, that, "The disaster postulated by this view is held to have been comparable to that suffered in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135."<sup>17</sup> Even so, this would place the time that Nehemiah received the news more than four decades after the event itself, which still does not qualify it as being newsworthy. If there was no such intervening catastrophe of the magnitude of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem which could account for the opening sections of Nehemiah, then the real historical Sitz im Leben is anybody's guess. Of course, one could hypothesize that there simply is no real historical backdrop to the Nehemiah story, and that it is something akin to pious fiction and fantasy, with the reconstruction of Jerusalem as its image. In other words, the story told in Nehemiah would then be a narrative expression of the hope for binyan yirushalayim which is a common theme in post-destruction Jewish liturgy.

Needless to say, to regard Nehemiah as pure fantasy would seem to go against all the findings in the field, and seem to lack any solid cornerstone. Without a doubt, our Persian romance is as historical as the other, even more famous example of this genre of literature, the Scroll of Esther. It would also seemingly contradict the not inconsequential amount of archeological data we have on hand. Besides, although this is subjective, Nehemiah sounds far too colorful, detailed, and adventurous to be considered pure literary fiction. Nehemiah has the aura of truth about it, possibly beyond a shadow of a doubt.

While there are many smaller details in Nehemiah which have generated questions, the overall verdict concerning the bulk of the book has been that it reflects the actual events which took place in Jerusalem around the middle of the Fifth century B.C..

There is, however, one intriguing phenomenon which merits consideration. There can be little doubt but that Nehemiah should properly be the last book in the Bible. Thus the very last words of the Jewish Scriptures should be Nehemiah's plea, zakhrah li 'elohay letovah, and not the words of a Persian king that we find in fact serving as the closing words. One would expect the Bible to end with some sort of prayer or appeal, as it does for the Christians, whose Bible ends with the words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all." Instead, we find Nehemiah sandwiched in between Ezra and Chronicles, obviously out of sequence, with his poignant appeal all but covered over. It seems that disjunction was deliberately done, yet the reason for this does not meet the eye. As will be discussed in the final chapter, this burying of Nehemiah seems to be consistent with the more general classical rabbinic tendency to push him into the background, for reasons which are equally obscure.

It is perhaps because of its simplicity and lack of real theological significance that the Synagogue has consigned Nehemiah to the shadows, to the point where most Jews have not read, and in many cases not even heard of this little book. While a kindred work, the Scroll of Esther, is carefully read twice each year in a halakhically sober manner, where great care is given to even the manner in which the scroll is to be held, it is only in the American Reform tradition to read from Nehemiah on Rosh Hashannah, the second most important day of the year for many rabbis and their congregations. Nehemiah thus comes out of its literary and liturgical lacuna for Reform Jews on the High Holidays, and then returns to the shadows.

Yet there are some indications that Nehemiah was not always sub-umbra. As will be seen later on in this thesis, Nehemiah traditions exerted a measurable influence on liturgies of the synagogue<sup>18</sup> and, apparently, had an impact

even on the marginally significant thinkers in Qumran, who regarded Nehemiah as containing the enumeration of the "ancient saints," hagedoshim hari'shonim.<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted in passing that Moses Hadas assumes a priori that Nehemiah had a marked influence on the author of Aristeas to Philocrates. Citing no fewer than eight clearly parallel details and themes between this Hellenistic forgery and our own work, Hadas writes:

Insofar as Aristeas is an account of a new promulgation of the Law, it is reminiscent of the story told in Ezra and Nehemiah...There are, of course, significant differences in the stories...Such alterations, it may be argued, are to be expected in a writer like Aristeas, who makes no pretense of writing exact history and who would thus freely adapt details to suit his own framework... If Aristeas were to be read as history, the similarities to Ezra-Nehemiah would...be disturbing, and a defense of Aristeas' historicity would entail a denial of the possibility of influence. But if Aristeas is read as the edifying romance it is, then there can be no objection to supposing that its author was influenced by memories of Ezra-Nehemiah. Indeed the hypothesis of such reminiscences supplies a missing piece in the pattern; as a whole and in detail Aristeas is,...a Greek book, composed according to Greek "rhetorical" rules, and this Jewish source may well be a pattern for the subject matter...For purposes of dating the assumption of the use of Ezra-Nehemiah is a little help, for these books were early translated into Greek.<sup>20</sup>

Leaving aside Hadas' final premise, which will be examined in depth in the next chapter, his general assumption concerning the organic bond which exists between Ezra-Nehemiah and Aristeas shows that Nehemiah's influence was once greater than it is presently. Although Hadas summons a great deal of evidence which might lead us to conclude that Aristeas is a later Herodian work,<sup>21</sup> he nevertheless proposes a mid-second century B.C. dating for the work, based largely upon philological conjectures. Thus it could be asserted, without much fear of being too far off target, that the cloth from which Aristeas is cut is stitched in some manner to Nehemiah, so it seems, be it in the Hasmonean period or in the first century A.D..

It might be noted, also in passing, that Nehemiah's influence can be seen in some of the gospel literature. For example, Christ's driving out the merchants and exploiters from the Temple calls to mind actions attributed to Nehemiah. A passage from Luke shows something of an affinity with Nehemiah:

When he came in sight of the city, he wept over it and said, 'If only you had known' on this great day, the way that leads to peace! But no; it is hidden from your sight. For a time will come upon you, when your enemies will set up siege-works against you; they will encircle you and hem you in at every point; they will bring you to the ground, you and your children within your walls, and not leave you one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize God's moment when it came.'

Then he went into the temple and began driving out the traders...

Of course, we find Nehemiah weeping for Jerusalem and her desolation, then appearing on behalf of the city and driving out the scoundrels who infested her temple. Soon afterwards, certain elements start plotting against Nehemiah and these elements are in league with the High Priest in their desire to destroy him. We see in Luke 20:19 that the "lawyers and chief priests" used secret agents "in the guise of honest men," to attempt to entrap Jesus, although, as Luke 20:23 reports, "He saw through their trick." This might be an expression of the same sort of thing we can read about in Nehemiah 6:1-13.

That Nehemiah was perhaps seized upon by some followers of Jesus Christ in the second part of the First century A.D. need not come as a surprise, since, as Gaster notes, there is some indication that Nehemiah was regarded in certain circles as a "prototype of the Arabic Mahdi." <sup>22</sup>

Thus it can be seen that Nehemiah had a significant impact in the Herodian period, if not before, an impact which is belied by its place in Judaism after the Bar Kosba revolt. Its drop in popularity wants for a satisfying explanation; some guesses will be ventured in the final chapter of this thesis.

Summing up this brief survey, we can note that Nehemiah, a biblical work which affords us a vivid and apparently accurate first hand perspective on the tumultuous and heroic days of the restoration of Zion, captured the imagination of classical Jews roughly two thousand years ago in a way which is belied by the book's brevity, its somewhat obscured location in the canon, its absence from the classical cycle of synagogue readings, and its overall insignificance to the present day casual reader of the Bible. Yet, as was noted in the outset of this chapter, interest in the time of the Restoration is growing geometrically, as is the consciousness of its importance to the development of classical rabbinic Judaism. This thesis is an expression of this expanding stream of consciousness. Hopefully it will be recognized for what it is, a modest attempt at probing the hermeneutical techniques at play in Nehemiah, and in the literature of the rabbis about Nehemiah, with an eye on these techniques as they show up in our other classical Jewish literature of the times.

1. Frank Moore Cross, "A Reconsideration of the Restoration," JBL 94, (March 1975) page 4.
2. Cowley, Aramaic Papyri.
3. Bezalel Porten, Archives from Elephantine, Berkeley (1968).
4. F.M. Cross, "Papyri of the Fourth Century B.C. from Deliyeh: A Preliminary Report on their Discovery and Significance," New Directions in Biblical Archaeology, eds. D.N. Freedman and J.C. Greenfield; Garden City: (Doubleday, 1969), pages 41-62.
5. As published by Issac Rabinowitz, "Aramaic Inscriptions of the Fifth Century B.C.E. from a North-Arab Shrine in Egypt," JNES 15 (1956) pages 1-9.
6. Such assumptions are made by Rowley in "Nehemiah's Mission and its Background," BJRL 37, (March 1955), pages 528 ff.; by Myers, The Anchor Bible: Ezra and Nehemiah, pages LI ff.; Torrey, Ezra-Nehemiah, page 1; Also Bentzen, with some modifications in Introduction to the Old Testament, page 209, where he follows Mowinkel's theory that the "Memoirs of Nehemiah" is more like an extended memorial inscription than a simple autobiography. Also see Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, page 828, where he states: "...the autobiography of Nehemiah...is admittedly genuine beyond the shadow of a doubt."
7. This position has been championed first and foremost by Torrey.
8. J. Myers, op. cit., above note 6, page XLV: Torrey, op. cit., above note 6, pages 558-559; and Pavlovsky, Biblica 38 (1957), pages 275-305, 428-456.
9. For example Morgenstern in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 10 (1943), page 356, and more recently Cross, "A Reconstruction etc.," above note 1, pages 16-17.
10. Antiquities, XI, v.
11. Ecclesiasticus 49:13.
12. C.H. Torrey, Ezra Studies.
13. K. Galling, "The Gola List," JBL 70, (1951), page 154.
14. Antiquities XI vii-viii.
15. F.M. Cross, op. cit., above note 4, page 6. Also see H.H. Rowley, "Sanballat and the Samaritan Temple," BJRL, Volume 38, (September 1955), pages 166-198, for a more extensive treatment of this problem.

16. See Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 10 (1943) page 356, for Morgenstern's views, and HUCA 11 (1936), pages 172, 174, 182 for Blank's position.
17. Rowley, "Nehemiah's Mission," pages 557-558.
18. See page 57.
19. For a discussion of this, see Issac Rabinowitz, "A Reconsideration of 'Damas' and '390 years' in the 'Damascus' ('Zadokite') Fragments," JBL, 73, (1954), pages 16-18.
20. Moses Hadas, Aristeas to Philocrates, New York, (Harper Brothers, 1951), page 40.
21. Ibid., 39-40.
22. T. Gaster, The Dead Sea Scriptures, Garden City (Anchor Press, 1976), page 29.



## Chapter II:

### Some of the Hebrew Nehemiah's Enigmatic Qualities

Careful readers of our massoretic Nehemiah are sensitive to many literary and historical problems implicit in the work. These problems have led scholars to characterize it as an "enigma."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to highlight these enigmas, review the scholarship which has attempted to resolve them, and then note what has up until now remained unresolved. Having thus underscored the standing problems in Nehemiah, the next section of this thesis will posit and test an hypothesis which might explain these enigmatic qualities in Nehemiah.

The scholarly consensus holds that the Hebrew Ezra and Nehemiah were regarded as one volume up until the middle of the fifteenth century, when, following the Vulgate division, it was separated into two books. However, the non-Hebrew editions of Nehemiah, dating back to the second century A.D., have tended to regard Nehemiah as a separate literary work. Origen called the book corresponding to our massoretic Nehemiah II Esdras, while Jerome, following this tradition, titled the work Liber Nehemiae qui et Esdrae secundus dicitur. The general septuagintal tradition tends to follow the Hebrew tendency and combine Ezra and Nehemiah under the heading II Esdras, and include I Esdras, which the Jewish tradition regards as apocryphal. That the LXX combines Ezra and Nehemiah, consistent with the Jewish tendency of the tannaitic period can be explained by the fact that, as Torrey had demonstrated,<sup>2</sup> the septuagintal version of Nehemiah follows the Theodotian translation which was generated in the middle of the tannaitic period, and which strove to harmonize the Jewish and Greek textual traditions. It is evident from a number of proto-canonical lists from roughly the middle of

the tannaitic period (Josephus, Against Apion 1:8; Baba Bathra 15a), that the Jewish tradition of that time combined Ezra and Nehemiah under the heading of Ezra.

The undeniable fact that this combination in the Jewish tradition was taking place at the end of the first century A.D. has tended to belie the results of careful text criticism which was undertaken by Howorth and Torrey<sup>3</sup> at the turn of this century, and confirmed recently by Cross.<sup>4</sup> Cross holds that Nehemiah was as an independent work which for a time circulated independently of the Chronicler's work. Only in the last recension of Chronicles was Nehemiah appended to the series.<sup>5</sup> He believes that this appending of Nehemiah to Chronicles took place around 400 B.C..<sup>6</sup>

Howorth and Torrey agree in substance that Nehemiah was an independent work, as does Myers.<sup>7</sup> The significant difference between Cross and the Howorth - Torrey thesis is that the latter regards our massoretic Nehemiah as

...a result of a thoroughgoing and arbitrary re-arrangement of the text, undertaken by the Jewish rabbis (sic.), who... had various prejudices which led them to make deliberate and extensive alterations in the story of Nehemiah.<sup>8</sup>

Thus while Cross holds that Nehemiah was affixed to the Chronicles series rather early in the history of the text, Howorth and Torrey see this appendage as taking place around the tannaitic canonization period. Torrey holds that the proto-canonical tradition, coming into the first century A.D., had what is now the apocryphal I Esdras as its "Ezra material," and that the sages expurgated this section, and in its place put our massoretic Ezra, differing primarily in that it incorporated Nehemiah, which, in its present form is very much their own handiwork.<sup>9</sup>

This could account for the early rabbinic nomenclature, which called the works of Ezra and Nehemiah simply the book of Ezra. Change in nomenclature

tends to lag behind actual changes in the objects being named. In the beginning of the first century A.D. all there was in the proto-canon was Ezra (now, according to Torrey, I Esdras, which exists only in the Greek). This popular name persisted, even though two books were in fact the case.

This could also account for the non-Jewish recognition of two books in early Christian circles, since, of course, Christianity, in the person of Origen, knew of a Jewish proto-canon which already had the tannaitic Nehemiah, in fact, if not in name, as part of the list.

Philological analysis has tended to confirm the literary independence of the massoretic Nehemiah. As Myers writes,

It has been shown fairly conclusively that the Ezra memoirs present the same linguistic and literary characteristics found elsewhere in the work of the Chronicler. The memoirs of Nehemiah, on the other hand, reflect quite different characteristics. <sup>10</sup>

Myers, however, assumes that the reason for this difference is because Nehemiah, for the most part, is older than the Chronicler's creation, and in fact served as a source. There is some evidence, however, which could indicate that the opposite might be the case, and that the linguistic and literary difference between the work of the Chronicler and the writer of Nehemiah is a result of Nehemiah being composed, for the most part, after the bulk of the Chronicles. This evidence will be brought to bear presently.

Torrey also holds for the linguistic uniqueness of those long tracts of Nehemiah which he asserts as essentially a result of tannaitic redaction:

The language and style throughout these long sections are totally different from those of the Chronicler, and it would be out of the question to think of him as the author of any extended passage. <sup>11</sup>

It is certainly possible for the tannaim to have written pseudepigraphically in the "biblical mode." The literary ability of the Qumran community bears this out. J.A. Emerton, in his article, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus," writes:

The language of these (Qumran) scrolls is essentially the same as that in which most of the Old Testament is written, and it is probable that the authors chose to write in an archaic form of the Hebrew because they believed it to be suitable for religious literature.<sup>12</sup>

This could also be the case for the writers of Nehemiah, if, as Howorth and Torrey have claimed, it is also a product of the Qumran period.

Moreover, literary forgeries and pseudepigrapha seemingly abounded in the first century A.D. As Metzger, in his discussion of this phenomenon, writes: "In times when freedom of speech stood at a premium, many an author escaped censure and even martyrdom by concealing his identity behind a pen name."<sup>13</sup> The literary history of early Christianity abounded with pseudepigrapha, such as the Gospel of Peter, Epistle to the Hebrews, Acts of Paul and Thecla, and others. Jerome and Tertullian are fully aware of this phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Some of our sages, for their part, held that Job never existed historically,<sup>15</sup> and seriously questioned the Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Song of Songs.<sup>16</sup>

One Jewish pseudepigraphical work, IV Ezra (the Ezra apocalypse), has been dated almost certainly to the middle of the First century A.D..<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, like our massoretic Nehemiah, it oscillates between the first and the third person.

While the tannaim might have been infallible in some respects, no matter how skillful their command of pseudepigraphic Hebrew, they could not transcend some of the idiomatic peculiarities of their times, nor could they have been

archaeologically sensitive to the differences in the topography of the Jerusalem which they knew, as compared to the Jerusalem in the times of the historical Nehemiah, in which they were couching their story. Thus there are certain linguistic telltales in the massoretic Nehemiah which might be "giving them away," so to speak.

One possible anachronistic telltale might be the use of v' ašer for "moreover" in Nehemiah 10:31. As Driver notes,<sup>18</sup> this is possibly the only time this "peculiar" use of v' ašer takes place in the Old Testament. It is a regular feature, however, of the Dead Sea Scrolls which are datable to around the first century A.D..<sup>19</sup>

Another possible telltale of tannaitic authorship is the meaning of the term ne'emanim in Nehemiah 13:13. A ne'eman in the first century A.D. is a technical term for a haver who is reliable in matters concerning proper tithing, as Neuser<sup>20</sup> and Buchanan<sup>21</sup> have noted. The term is used in this manner in Tosephtha Demai II: 2-3, 11. This is precisely the way Nehemiah uses this term, and it is also the only place in the Old Testament that it functions in this fashion.

Yet another possible linguistic anachronism in Nehemiah seemingly occurs in 5:18 with the expression yayin leharbeh. This peculiar use of harbeh to indicate the communal table occurs only once in the Old Testament. However, it seems to be closely linked with the tannaitic expression harabim, which in Bavli Bekhoroth 30b and Tosephtha Demai II means the communal food and drink.

While there are other examples of this phenomenon, such as the function of the radical rkl, these three citations must suffice for now as possible philological confirmation of the tannaitic hand in our massoretic Nehemiah.

The topographical descriptions of Jerusalem in our massoretic Nehemiah which are fairly detailed and extensive, might also provide us with additional indications that the book reflects the tannaitic period. In other words, the descriptions of the city might be completely anachronistic for the fifth century B.C., describing, instead, the Jerusalem with which the tannaitic author was himself familiar. While Torrey takes the topographical details in Nehemiah to be the product of the Chronicler in the third century B.C., whose work was incorporated into the second century A.D. rabbinic revision, he does note:

He [the Chronicler] understood the great value of "local color" for enlivening historical narratives, and...followed his usual custom of projecting into the past the things (in this case topographical features) which he saw with his own eyes. <sup>22</sup>

Torrey's statement is a reflection of his view that Nehemiah is a product of the author's literary imagination, to a large extent. While the present writer agrees that our massoretic Nehemiah does contain a significant element of fantasy, and does present us with a Jerusalem topography different from the one for which the historical (fifth century B.C.) Nehemiah was responsible, it is possible that the eyes which are responsible for the Nehemiah topography, in all likelihood, had gazed upon a city which was the result of the building efforts of a much later period.

There is little reason to deny that the historical Nehemiah did build walls. The Restoration period wall uncovered by Kenyon on the Ophel <sup>23</sup> seems to testify to this. Moreover, Ben Sirah (Ecclesiasticus 49:13) and Josephus (Antiquities XI v 8) present a tradition which has the walls of Jerusalem as "an eternal monument" to the Persian-Jewish overseer. Yet, as has often been noted, <sup>24</sup> the author of Chronicles had an extremely vague notion of the Jewish

history of the Persian period, as indicated by his apparent confusion concerning the Persian kings and other facts. This being the case, it would not be unreasonable to assert that his knowledge of the topographical details of Nehemiah's Jerusalem would be equally vague. However, it does seem rather unreasonable to claim that such extreme vagueness about such important details could have set in three or four generations, as would be implied by those who claim that our Nehemiah is essentially the product of the mid-third century B.C. It is even more unlikely that a fifth century B.C. document would embody such historical confusion about the main facts of its own period.

The archeology of Jerusalem in the Persian period has little to contribute to the problem of anachronistic topographical descriptions in our Hebrew Nehemiah. As Myers writes, "...its contributions have been limited because of the lack of extensive excavations."<sup>25</sup> A survey of the excavations in and around Jerusalem from 1867 to roughly the present indicates that the small segment of an Ophel wall to the southeast of the present walled city is the only element of a fifth century B.C. wall which has been uncovered.<sup>26</sup> Even this wall appears to be largely the product of the Hashmonean period, when the earlier structure was incorporated into a rather imposing tower complex.

Thus, archeology, at the present, cannot aid in confirming the historical accuracy of the description of Nehemiah's city as we find it in the Hebrew Bible. If anything, it does offer us a preliminary indication that any author living after the beginning of the Hashmonean period would be hard pressed to describe the parameters and details of the Nehemiah wall, which looms so large in our massoretic work.

The map of "the ancient walls of Jerusalem," reproduced by Myers,<sup>27</sup> is an artistic rendition of the city supposedly being represented in Nehemiah. Since the extraordinarily large number of gates mentioned in Nehemiah, at least eleven, are strategically inappropriate for the security of such a small, banana-shaped city, the cartographer has placed a number of them inside the outer wall, as entrances to the inner temple fortress complex. This placement has no justification from the text of Nehemiah itself, and is, rather, an attempt to resolve the problem of Nehemiah's topography which is created by conceptualizing Jerusalem as a banana.

This artistic would-be solution is entirely unnecessary if we take the description of the walls, towers and gates in Nehemiah to be corresponding to the city as it existed after the Hashmonean period.

A careful although preliminary survey of the walls of Jerusalem in Second Temple times raises the real possibility that this might very well be the case,<sup>28</sup> although the final verdict must await the considerations of professional archeology. This topographical comparison seems to confirm Torrey's and Howorth's general theory concerning the late first century, early second century A.D. tannaitic revision of the book of Nehemiah. When coupled with some of the philological quirks noted above, it points to the essential soundness of this point of view. The "local color" in Nehemiah is that of Jerusalem prior to the Great Revolt, or so it seems.

Granting the soundness of the Howorth-Torrey theory, one central question emerges. Why did certain first century personalities feel compelled to revise the Nehemiah traditions which they received in order to produce our massoretic work? Since they elected to write pseudepigraphically, what information, apparently important enough to them that they resorted to this



literary technique, is being covertly transmitted in our Hebrew Nehemiah? Since they chose to rework, apparently, the received traditions of Ezra and Nehemiah, what was it about these traditions that made them attractive to the tannaitic authors and conducive to their less than obvious agenda or agendas? Apparently Nehemiah and Ezra, for the tannaim, are types of some sort. What, then, is being typified? Since, as was noted earlier, covert writing generally reflects an environment of persecution and perhaps even of potential martyrdom, what is it about the information esoterically contained in this tannaitic document that would make it dangerous and subversive to the censors, who must be assumed to be either Romans, or Roman sympathizers?

It has been often noted that the question of the historical relationship between Ezra and Nehemiah, as portrayed in Nehemiah, poses a serious critical problem. The "traditional view," recently supported by Cross<sup>29</sup> has Ezra appearing in Jerusalem roughly a decade and a half before Nehemiah. The "Van Hoonacker position"<sup>30</sup> holds that Ezra came after Nehemiah. The "Kosters-Bertholet view"<sup>31</sup> maintains that Ezra arrived on the scene between Nehemiah's first and second "mission," as is apparently described in the last chapter of Nehemiah. A fourth position, put forward by Torrey, claims that Ezra is a fictitious creation of the Chronicler's imagination.<sup>32</sup>

Given these widely varying theories, one point clearly emerges. The portrayal of Ezra and Nehemiah standing side by side during the historic haqhel ceremony described in Nehemiah, chapter eight, whether in fact historically it occurred or not, is serving some important literary function. The apparently tannaitic melding of the Ezra and

Nehemiah traditions at this point would appear to be fulfilling a crucial tannaitic tradition or vision, which for the tannaitic writer was, as Emerton would put it, "suitable for religious literature."<sup>33</sup> Since we seem to be dealing here with a vision or tradition, it is not surprising that real historical chronology is not of paramount concern for the writer. As the great commentator Rashi himself, citing the chronological problems in Nehemiah, remarks in his comments on 1:1: "...I cannot resolve it... there is no 'sooner and later' ('en muqdam ume'uḥar bahem), thus I cannot resolve this matter...." The 'en muqdam ume'uḥar principle of the irrelevance of chronology for the real information being presented in sacred literature is one of the hallmarks of tannaitic biblical exposition. Thus the problem of the historical relationship of Ezra to Nehemiah fades, and the question of the literary function of Ezra and Nehemiah for the tannaitic author comes to the forefront. This question is subsumed under the broader question of the overall motives for this example of tannaitic literary creativity.

Another critical problem which has occupied Nehemiah investigations concerns the nature of Sanballat "the Horonite."<sup>34</sup> While our massoretic text features this Sanballat as Nehemiah's prime antagonist, he is completely absent from Josephus' account of Nehemiah's activities (Ant. XI v 6-8). Yet, according to Josephus, a Sanballat does figure centrally in the difficulties which the Jewish community faced roughly a century after the historical Nehemiah's activities. In Antiquities(XI vii-viii), this Sanballat, a Persian official, subverts the religious and political life of Jerusalem, enlists the support of certain priestly factions with whom he intermarries, financially supports the dissenting elements in

Jerusalem, and in general plays havoc with Jerusalem. In other words, Josephus' Sanballat behaves, almost point for point, exactly as does the Sanballat of the massoretic Nehemiah.

Various attempts have been made in explaining the apparent chronological disjunctions concerning Sanballat in Josephus. One theory suggests that Josephus, for some reason, was off one entire century in his chronology in the matter of this Sanballat, and that the massoretic account is historically accurate.<sup>35</sup> More recently, Cross, armed with the findings from the Samaritan papyri from the fourth century, discovered in 1962, claims that there were a number of Sanballats. Sanballat I, as he calls him, was the villain in Nehemiah. Sanballat III, the grandson of our "Horonite," was the one described by Josephus.<sup>36</sup> Josephus according to Cross, telescoped these Sanballats into one character. Again, Cross would agree to the essential historic reality of a Sanballat in the days of Nehemiah. His circumstantial support for this point of view is derived from an inscription found on a silver bowl datable to a time not later than 400 B.C., where an Arabian nobleman named Gašm is mentioned. This Gašm, Cross notes, must be identified as the Gasmu mentioned in our massoretic Nehemiah, who was Sanballat's crony.<sup>37</sup>

Cross' historical reconstruction of a history of at least three Sanballats in a period of one hundred years has some merit, especially when coupled with the Sanballat reference in the Elephantine papyri,<sup>38</sup> which can be dated to the last decade of the fifth century B.C.. Yet this restoration of the Restoration is not without its own problems.

First, a reasonable explanation must be offered for how and why Josephus telescopes the "Sanballatids" into one character, and disassociates him from the prime Sanballat, who looms so large in our massoretic

Nehemiah. While it is almost a given in Nehemiah research that Josephus did not (and if Howorth and Torrey are right, could not) use our massoretic Nehemiah as one of his sources, instead utilizing I Esdras, and other, as yet unidentifiable sources, for his Nehemiah account, did those other sources not carry a Nehemiah-Sanballat controversy? Judging from Josephus, they did not; if they did, then the reason for Josephus' editing them out of his history is less than obvious. To assert that he was reluctant to reuse the name twice in one hundred years' history would be inconsistent with Josephus' historiographical method in general. He had no reluctance in reusing names time and time again in his cycles of history. It would seem, then, that Josephus was not confused about Sanballat, and simply did not know of one who coexisted with Nehemiah. He knew only of one archvillain, the one whom Cross calls Sanballat III, who was responsible for the much despised Samaritan temple in the middle of the fourth century B.C., around the time of Alexander the Great.

Since it is highly unlikely that "Sanballat I" and "Sanballat III" both could have perpetrated such extremely similar mayhem against Jerusalem, down to almost the smallest detail, a choice must be made for the historical Sitz im Leben of the miscreant's activities. To follow Cross' reconstruction would seem to be in direct violation of Occam's Razor, which warns the investigator away from the "unnecessary creation of entities." While Gašm or Gasmu was no doubt part of the original Nehemiah historical tradition, it would seem that our tannaitic revisionists inserted the tradition of Sanballat into their Nehemiah story. Apparently, for them, Sanballat was a character who functions like Amaleq, that is to say, as an arch enemy. They knew at least as much about the Persian period as did Josephus.

What they extracted from this period, among many other things, was Sanballat as an archetype for schismatics who actively worked for the undoing of Jerusalem and its cult. In this respect, Sanballat functions in our massoretic Nehemiah much in the same way as does Haman, the descendant of the Amaleq king Agag, in the scroll of Esther.

Again, the tannaitic principle of 'en muqdam ume'uḥar appears to be at work in the massoretic Nehemiah's treatment of Sanballat. While Cross may very well be correct in identifying the provincial governor at the time of the historical Nehemiah's mission as a man named Sanballat, it is only coincidental to his appearance in our biblical work. His appearance in all likelihood is typological, in the same way that Ezra's relationship to the biblical Nehemiah is typological.

Thus the problem of chronology, which is generated by a comparison of Josephus' history of the Persian period with our massoretic text's account of Nehemiah's story turns out to be a literary rather than an historical one. Sanballat, like Ezra and Nehemiah, was not really meant to be understood as a fifth century B.C. political hack by the tannaitic authors of Nehemiah. Sanballat is a code name for some person or persons which the author of our Hebrew Nehemiah wished to villify for his or their activities aimed at keeping Jerusalem in a state of ḥerpah, of captivity. Sanballat really is referring to an enemy of Jerusalem whom the author, for reasons of safety, cannot come out and name publicly. The problem is, then, the question of the real identity of Sanballat for the tannaitic author. Once more, this question is subsumed under the broader one of overall motives for this example of tannaitic creativity.

There are several other problems presented by an exoteric reading of Nehemiah, such as the unreasonably short period of time reportedly required (52 days) to reconstruct the walls of Jerusalem, the seemingly pointless near duplication of the so-called gola list <sup>39</sup> in Ezra and Nehemiah, the apparent confusion in the enumeration of high priests, <sup>40</sup> the finding of an explanation for what seems to be the extremely high impact of Nehemiah on tannaitic liturgies, <sup>41</sup> the peculiar structure of the book as a whole, and the general absence of patronyms in the list of the 'amanah signatories, to name just a few.

The following chapter will present a theory which, if accepted, might resolve some of these enigmas. It will, hopefully, be shown that these problems can be regarded as examples of pseudepigraphic writing designed to convey covert, perhaps subversive information. Ex hypothesi, this information was extremely important in some tannaitic circles, so important that it prompted these circles to "write Scripture," so to speak, and, eventually, to "canonize" their own inspired handiwork.

Without a doubt the hakhamim regarded themselves as possessing a modicum of Ruah Haqodesh, one of whose key functions it was to generate holy writ. The amora R. Avdimi of Haifa, in Baba Bathra 12a, offered one of the clearest formulations of this view:

R. Avdimi of Haifa: From the time that the temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the sages. (Is not, then, a sage a prophet?! Rather, this is what he meant. Even though it was taken from the prophets, it was not taken from the sages!) Amemar said: Moreover, a sage is superior to a prophet...

Elsewhere, this same R. Avdimi elevated the Patriarch to the station of Moses (Bab. Kiddushin 33b). If fact, we find Gamliel II, a leader of questionable religious stature, being portrayed being directed by the

Ruah Haqodesh (Bab. Erbin 64b). Rabbi Alec H. Friedman, in summing up his study on prophetism, writes concerning the sages: "Their consciousness of divine revelation shows clearly that they regarded themselves as part of the tradition of prophetism."<sup>42</sup>

Dr. Alexander Guttman has offered up a similar, if somewhat tempered observation. "The Talmud recognized the continuance of revelation in its own time. It emphasizes however, the inferior quality of post prophetic revelation...."<sup>43</sup>

On the surface, this view must contend with the well-known pronouncement in Tosefta Sotah (XII 2, 318) paralleled in Bab. Sotah 48b, Yer. Sotah 24b, Bab. Yomah 9b, and Bab. Sanhedrin 11a: "When Haggai, Zachariah and Malacai, the latter day prophets died, the Ruah Haqodesh was taken from Israel." Dr. Jacob J. Petuchowski has attempted to resolve this contradiction.

The fact, however, that the Ruah Haqodesh is described as operating long after the times of Haggai, Zachariah and Malacai, is only an apparent contradiction, and rests upon a different meaning of the term...<sup>44</sup>

Petuchowski's resolution of this "apparent contradiction" is to ascribe to the term Ruah Haqodesh multiple meanings. He asserts that sometimes the term refers to the force attending our "canonical" prophets, and other times it simply means the force assuaging and aiding those righteous souls who lived after the death of Malacai, supposedly after the reign of Darius II.

While this attempted resolution is attractive, it involves a certain circularity. It starts with a theological position generated from the Tosefta Sotah passage cited above, and attempts to resolve the contradiction by simply reasserting the same theological position in a different guise. Moreover, this attempted resolution runs afoul of the Razor by needlessly

"multiplying entities" without any clear textual support. Rabbi Petuchowski is also proceeding on the possibly questionable assumption that over five hundred years of talmudic thinking is theologically consistent.

One might be on safer ground to let the contradiction stand, and assert, rather, that the sages taught and behaved in contradictory ways, anticipating Emerson's judgement that "foolish consistencies are the hobgoblins of little minds." Our great tannaitic minds did in fact regard themselves as teaching, working, and living in the Holy Spirit, the one and the only Ruah Haqodesh. Armed with this inviolate authority, they acted, as they often put it, lešorekh ḥaṣa'ah, in accordance with the pressing needs of their day. If there was some pressing need to rearrange or even to create holy writ, they did so, as is seemingly the case with their book of Nehemiah. Yet, unwilling to condone and encourage other circles who would and did claim a similar authority for themselves, they publically stated that the Ruah Haqodesh had departed mankind after the reign of Darius II. It could be precisely for this reason that their massoretic Nehemiah seems to leave off at exactly this point in time, as can be seen in Nehemiah 12:22. This phenomenon of public and private teaching is well attested to by our tannaitic sources. On innumerable occasions the masters tell an "outsider" one thing, and their own disciples another.

That the tannaim regarded themselves as possessed of sufficient authority to actually alter or emend "biblical" passages in accordance with their own private understandings is well attested to in our sources. In Bab. Menahot 110a we can note that the expression 'ir haḥeres in Isaiah 19:18, as we presently have it in the massoretic version, is an emendation made by the sages from the original 'ir haḥeres, "city of the sun," or



"city of the lion," (Bet Šemeš being Leontopolis) to suit their midrashic needs. As Weiser notes, a comparison of the treatment of Joshua passage in Bab. Megilla 3ab with a treatment of the same passage in Bab. Erubin 63b demonstrates the same point, that the sages were capable of making emendations in the sacred texts to suit their own doctrinal needs.<sup>45</sup> Weiser also cites a passage in Bab. Erubin 13a, where the sages admit to such deliberate alterations, citing R. Meir's emendation of masa' romi for masa' domeh in Isaiah 21:11 as their justification.<sup>46</sup>

In commenting on the many variant readings in the Dead Sea Great Isaiah Scroll, Weiser writes:

Many variants in the biblical readings of the hidden scrolls from the wilderness of Judah as compared with the massoretic biblical readings can be explained not as copiest's errors, and not as taken from a more ancient biblical source, but rather as exegesis and simplification at places where a popular reader would be likely to encounter difficulty... It appears that this approach of exegesis and simplification built in to the copying of the original was indeed ancient, and it is this phenomenon which served as a cause of biblical variants in general.<sup>47</sup>

While we must factor out this scholar's private religious presuppositions for the sake of objectivity, his observations concerning the reasons for certain variants seem to be sound, allowing that there are a number of other causes for so-called variants. Isaiah Sonne has reached a similar conclusion.

The copies [of scriptural text] in circulation among students and preachers may probably be best characterized by the words of Origen when describing the various texts of the Septuagint of his time: 'Great differences have arisen in the transcripts, from the carelessness of the scribes...or from those who neglected the emendation of the text, or also from those who made additions to the text, or omissions from it as they thought fit.' Not much different must have been the picture of the Hebrew texts prepared by the various teachers for scholastic purposes.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the Howorth-Torrey theory concerning the tannaitic revision of the "biblical" tradition is hardly unique. Dr. Dupont-Sommer has suggested that

certain events of the first century B.C. inspired the "Suffering Servant" passages in Isaiah, the prophecies of grace at the end of Zachariah, and such great passion psalms as Psalm 22.<sup>49</sup> While Driver, citing Rowley, claims that Dupont-Sommer's position is "incredible," owing to the appearance of these passages in the Septuagint,<sup>50</sup> Dupont-Sommer's critics might themselves be laboring under certain rather uncritical assumptions concerning the nature of the Septuagintal texts. While Dupont-Sommer's theory might require some emendation, it cannot be dismissed out of hand, especially in light of the findings which will be brought forward in the next chapter.

Another interesting possibility for a massive "pan-biblical" redaction undertaken during the Roman period has been raised by J. Meysing and G. Larson. Meysing, in his article "L'enigme de la chronologie biblique et qumranienne dans une nouvelle lumiere," while admitting to the possibility of older chronological redactions of biblical literature, holds that there can be detected in Scripture "une chronologie redactionnelle secunda manu," a later, eschatological redaction datable to the Roman period, reflecting calendrical controversies.<sup>51</sup>

Larson, responding to Meysing in his piece, "Is Biblical Chronology Systematic or Not?", while not agreeing with Meysing as to the extensiveness of this later redaction, never the less finds that in many cases

...biblical chronology reflected some fundamental elements of the philosophy of antiquity and that there are strong reasons for thinking that these elements had been inserted later by scribes who were perhaps contemporary with the Qumran sect.<sup>52</sup>

Larson reached a startling conclusion that interlocks rather tightly with the theory put forward in this thesis:

...in several...cases, the creators of the chronology made use of very formal solutions, in which the reader's thoughts are led into the wrong track, apparently deliberately. Perhaps we may regard this as part of an obvious endeavor to keep the system secret. This particular method-of not concealing what appear to be chronological contradictions but rather emphasizing them-is also typical...The chronologist seems to wish to emphasize that there is a mystery and a secret which only the initiated can solve. 53

If Larson is correct, then we can possibly infer two things about the chronological disjunctions in our massoretic Nehemiah. First, it might very well be a telltale of tannaitic redactional activity. Second, the chronological contradictions and obvious confusions noted above could be deliberate indicators of an esoteric reading of Nehemiah.

#### Summary

The chronological and contextual problems in Nehemiah seem to bear out the text critical findings of Howorth and Torrey, that this massoretic work, as we have it, is the product of a thoroughgoing tannaitic redaction of the Nehemiah traditions which they inherited, be they literary or oral. This redactionary effort indicates the possibility that the tannaitic author had some covert, esoteric agenda in mind. He is telling his story under the cover of an adventure garbed in the color of the historical Nehemiah. It may be inferred, owing to this pseudepigraphic style, that the tannaitic story is in some way inimical and subversive to either the political powers that be, the controlling religious point of view, or perhaps both.

It can be demonstrated that the tannaim saw themselves as possessing sufficient religious (spiritual) authority to, in effect, "write scripture." In fact, there are a number of examples of tannaitic tampering with the "sacred text" which indicates that they exercised this authority. Some scholars hold

that the exercise of this authority was not confined simply to isolated words or expressions, but was, rather, quite extensive.

It has also been shown, based upon linguistic studies of the Dead Sea literature, that, without a doubt, the tannaim possessed the literary sophistication to write in the biblical Hebrew mode.

Having established these points, one central question comes to the forefront. What were the tannaim doing when they revised the Nehemiah story, and why were they doing it? A possible answer to this question is offered in the following chapter. It is by no means the only possible answer, yet, it is hoped, it will provide a starting point for unlocking the peshet of Nehemiah.

1. J. Myers, Ezra-Nehemiah (The Anchor Bible), Garden City, (Doubleday, 1965), page xlvi.
2. C.C. Torrey, Ezra Studies, Chicago, (Chicago University Press, 1910), pages 70-81.
3. Ibid., pages 1-63; H. Howorth, Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archeology, May 1901, pages 147-159; November 1901, pages 305-330; June 1902, pages 147-172, November 1902, pages 332-356.
4. F.M. Cross, "A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration," JBL, 94, (March 1975), pages 4-18.
5. Ibid., page 18.
6. Ibid., page 18.
7. Myers, op. cit., page xxxviii, xli.
8. C.C. Torrey, op. cit., pages 17-18.
9. Ibid., page 82.
10. Myers, op. cit., page li.
11. Torrey, op. cit., page 224.
12. J.A. Emerton, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus," Journal of Theological Studies, 24, part 1, (April 1973), page 3.
13. Bruce M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," Journal of Biblical Literature, 91, (1972), page 5.
14. Ibid., page 13.
15. Bab. Baba Bathra 15a.
16. Tosefta Yadayim II:14 (Zuckerman 683).
17. L. Ginzberg, "Tamid: The Oldest Treaties of the Mishnah," Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy, 1, page 34.
18. G.R. Driver, The Judean Scrolls, Oxford, (Blackwell, 1965), page 436.
19. Ibid., page 436.
20. J. Neusner, "HBR and N'MN," Revue de Qumran, 5, (October 1964), pages 119-122.
21. G.W. Buchanan, "The Role of Purity in the Structure of the Essene Sect," Revue de Qumran, 4, (October 1963), pages 403-405.

22. Torrey, op. cit., page 217.
23. K. Kenyon. Digging Up Jerusalem. New York: Praeger Publishers, (1974), pages 180-187. K. Kenyon. Jerusalem. Kieve: Thames and Hudson, (1967), pages 107-112.
24. C.C. Torrey. Ezra-Nehemiah. Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, (1896), page 65; A. Bentzen. Introduction to the Old Testament. Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, (1957), page 208. H.H. Rowley. The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament. London: Lutterworth Press, (1952), page 138. R.H. Pfeiffer. Introduction to the Old Testament. New York: Harper and Brothers, (1941), pages 818-819. Myers, op. cit., page LII.
25. Myers, op. cit., page 112.
26. Jerusalem Revealed. Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, (1975), pages 133-135.
27. Myers, op. cit., page 118.
28. Avi-Yona's map of "Jerusalem in Second Temple Times," Jerusalem Revealed, page 10, suggests that there were roughly a dozen openings in the major walls of Jerusalem around the period of the Great Revolt, including the first, second, and third walls which were not completed until after Agrippa I.

Assuming Avi-Yonah's alternate course for the third wall, Nehemiah's Sheep Gate (3:1) would be the opening suggested in the third wall just to the east of where it meets the second wall. The designation Sheep Gate can be explained by the obvious fact that it leads to the Sheep Pool. Moving westward along the second wall, we arrive at a tower complex protecting a gate pointing north and west. This gate would be the Fish Gate (3:3). Its eastern tower would be the Hundred (Centurion?) Tower (3:1) and its western one of the Tower of Hananel (3:1). Following the second wall as it turns south we arrive at a gate complex where it joins the first wall. This gate complex would be the Old Gate (3:6). The Broad Wall (3:8) runs on the west side of Herod's Palace. Since the Broad Wall was shared by the builder's palace, it is reasonable to assume that it would be of special strength and width to protect a king to whom personal security was of paramount importance. Moving south we come to a tower on the northern side of a gate. This tower would be the Furnace Tower (3:11), and the gate the Valley Gate (3:13). The name Valley Gate can be explained by the fact that it leads to the Hinnom Valley. The distance between the Valley Gate and the Dung Gate in Nehemiah is said to be one thousand cubits (3:13). According to Avi-Yonah's map this is almost exactly the distance from the gate we have identified with Nehemiah's Valley Gate to the opening on the southernmost point of the Herodian City. This southern gate would, then, be Nehemiah's Dung Gate. Nehemiah next mentions a gate complex associated with the Royal Pool and steps leading to the old City of David (3:15). The next gate and wall complex

to the northeast of our Dung Gate on Avi-Yonah's map is in front of the Siloam Pool, which Kenyon identifies with Nehemiah's Royal Pool. [Digging Up Jerusalem], page 181. Nehemiah's gate is designated the Spring Gate, since, no doubt, it lead to the Gihon Spring. Next Nehemiah mentions Davidic tombs which were in front of the wall. Excavations at this precise spot have uncovered what have been identified as aristocratic tombs from the First Commonwealth period, [H. Shanks. The City of David. Jerusalem: Bazak (1973), pages 68-69], precisely where the text places them, only if we follow the course of the Herodian wall. Nehemiah also places in this location the palaces of the warriors (3:16), which could be understood as the Palaces of the Kings of Adiabene. That Nehemiah calls the palaces of the rulers of Adiabene the warriors' or champions' residence is completely consistent with its tannaitic Sitz im Leben. As Josephus reports in Wars II xix 2, among the most valiant warriors in the Great Revolt were the Adiabene aristocrats, who, following the lead of Queen Helene of Adiabene, converted to Judaism. This reference might be an important telltale.

The next topographical reference is "where the wall heads up from the corner seam" (3:19). This seems to be describing that point in the Herodian Wall just south of the temple where it abruptly turns up from its easterly course. The next stretch of the wall is under the control of the priestly families, since, of course, it is contiguous with the temple's eastern parameter. The next reference is to that span which stretches until the "the corner" (3:24), which could be that corner on the northeastern section of the third wall. There is also a reference to a tower complex associated with a "target court," obviously a military bastion. This complex is just north of "The King's House" (3:25). Apparently the "King's House" is the temple, the abode of the "King of kings;" there is no temporal king of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah, be it during the Restoration or during the Revolt. The fortress described in Nehemiah to the north of the temple, must almost certainly be the Antonia, to which a special detachment of Jewish "builders" were detailed. The Nehemiah description now backtracks to describe the population near the Ophel, which is the western slope of the Kidron Valley. In this description the Water Gate is apparently being substituted for the Spring Gate, and the "Great Extending Tower" for the spot "where the wall heads up from the corner seam." Next comes the curious reference to the Horses' Gate (3:28), above where the priests were stationed. As was noted above, the priests were in charge of the wall which was shared with the Temple. The Horses' Gate apparently was below the Temple's eastern wall, just above the "Great Extending Tower." This is exactly where we find "Solomon's Stables," as that cavernous sub-structure is called today, and which was used as stables until the Crusader period. This huge chamber, without a doubt, was created by Herod's engineers. It apparently did not exist before the Herodian period. This could also be another important tannaitic telltale. The next gate in

Nehemiah is the Eastern Gate (3:29). This would be the Herodian gate next to the Israel Pool. the closest gate to the temple. Right near this gate is the Muster Gate (3:31). The obvious military connotation of the gate would lead us to claim that it was the eastern entrance to the Antonia Fortress. Following the Second Wall as it heads north we come to angle which heads slightly to the west. This would be Nehemiah's 'aliyat hapinah (3:32). The final span of this second wall, after the angle, leads us to the point where it meets the third wall, right beside the Sheep Gate, where the description began. This section of the second wall was the only interior wall to which Jews were detailed because of its proximity to the Antonia, which, during the first phase of the Great Revolt, remained in Roman hands.

29. F.M. Cross, op. cit., above note 4, pages 3, 15-17.
30. Ibid., page 3.
31. Ibid., page 3.
32. C.H. Torrey, Ezra Studies, page ix.
33. see note 12.
34. F.M. Cross, op. cit., above note 4. It is generally assumed that horoni, refers to Sanballat's village, possibly Beth Horon. However, it might be that this word is a pun description of the man's character as one of vile temper. For a similar interpretation of the root HRN, see Philo's allegorical treatment of the village of Haran in On Abraham.
35. H.H. Rowley, "Sanballat and the Samaritan Temple," BJRL, 38 (September, 1955), pages 170-171.
36. F.M. Cross, op. cit., page 6.
37. Ibid., page 7.
38. AP 30 (in Cowley's Aramaic Papyri).
39. Kurt Gallig, "The Gola List," JBL, 70, (1951) pages 154 ff.. While Gallig is operating on a different historical assumption, he does suggest that, in order to make it intelligible, the Gola list in Nehemiah must be read as an esoteric political statement designed to circumvent the attention of foreign officials. In his words:

It is only from this point of view that the gola list becomes intelligible in every detail...According to the official statement they (the Jews) had no political aspirations: amphictyonic Israel was headed by the "Twelve."



The significance of this number might conceivably escape the satrap, but not so with the congregation... Since all twelve were listed without reference to title or rank, the sequence of names was the only means by which individuals could be made to stand out... The listing of the dubious cases is an elucidation intended for the Persians. They were supposed to be impressed by this severity- which was quite genuine and to be taken very seriously- since it afforded them a means of exercising control...

In principle, I would maintain that Galling is correct in finding an esoteric teaching in this list. However, I feel that this covert message was planted roughly 500 years after the time Galling suggests.

40. See H.H. Rowley, The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah, page 137 for a discussion of this complex problem.
41. See L.J. Liebreich, "The Impact of Nehemiah 9:5-37 on the Liturgy of the Synagogue," H.U.C.A. 32, (1961), pages 227-237.
42. A.H. Friedman. Psychic Phenomena in the Bible and Talmud. London: Baeck (1971), page 150.
43. A. Guttman. Studies in Rabbinic Judaism. New York: Ktav, (1976), page 367.
44. J.J. Petuchowski. The Idea of Ruah Haqodesh. Cincinnati: H.U.C., (1951), page 48.
45. A. Weiser. Miqra' Velashon. Tel Aviv: Neev, (1961), page 272.
46. Ibid., page 272.
47. Ibid., page 270.
48. I. Sonne, "Final Verdict on the Scrolls?," JBL, 70, (1951), page 40. For additional discussion of deliberate textual emendations, see J. Liver, "The Sons of Zadok the Priests," in the Dead Sea Sect, Revue de Qumran, 6, (February 1967), pages 3-30: also, Driver, The Judean Scrolls, pages 434-445.
49. For a discussion of this theory, see Driver, op. cit., pages 152-153.
50. Ibid., page 153.
51. J. Meysing, "L'enigme de la chronologie biblique et qumranienne dans une nouvelle lumiere," Revue de Qumran, 6, (January 1969), pages 240-250.
52. G. Larson, "Is Biblical Chronology Systematic or Not?" Revue de Qumran, 6, (March 1969), pages 449-515. For a more general examination of this issue, see K. Stenring. The Enclosed Garden. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, (1966).
53. G. Larson, op. cit., page 514.

### Chapter III: Pesher Nehemiah

#### Some First Century A.D. Events as Reflected in Our

#### Massoretic Version of Nehemiah

The central question posed by the last chapter was one of literary motive. Since it has been claimed by leading scholars in the field that Nehemiah has the ring of history about it, and that in many details it gives the appearance of describing the reality of the conditions in Judea around the middle of the fifth century B.C., what considerations might have possibly prompted major revisions in the story at a considerably later date; as suggested by Torrey and Howorth?

Why did the Sages reconstruct the tradition of Nehemiah as they received it, and then purge the now apocryphal I Esdras, which contained nothing explicit about the great builder and architect? Since their motive is never clearly stated in our received Hebrew text, it can be regarded in some way as being esoteric. This could possibly make our massoretic version of Nehemiah something akin to covert communication from the tannaitic school of writing.

This chapter can be regarded as an attempt to discover the reason for this example of classical Jewish literary creativity. It is possible that a careful exposition of certain elements in the Hebrew Nehemiah story might help us uncover the tannaitic motive for reworking the text. Since the Sages might characterize such an exposition of these biblical passages as a pesher, this chapter bears the title "Pesher Nehemiah."

Concerning the technical term pesher, Issac Rabinowitz has written:

The notion that peshet, the key technical term of the group of Qumran Scroll-texts which it defines, means "meaning" or "interpretation" in some expository sense is the basis of the regnant view of these texts: that they comprise a particular, though peculiar, type of Scriptural interpretation, exegesis or exposition...the idea is still generally accepted that a peshet is an ancient writer's attempt to indicate what he believed to be the "true meaning" of a particular portion of Scripture. 1

While Rabinowitz himself prefers the term "presage" as a description of peshet, indicating that it is a prediction based upon the text as omen, there is much evidence that the consensus opinion, as is generally the case, is closer to the truth, that peshet is the exposition of the true meaning perceived to be stated covertly in the biblical text.

As Bruce notes, the word peshet appears in its Hebrew equivalent only once in the Old Testament (Eccles. 8:1). Even though the root psht is not found in the Hebrew part of Daniel, we find the same idea conveyed by the common roots byn, yd', skl, and ngd.<sup>2</sup> In these cases the peshet is understood as an interpretation which is beyond the ability of human reason, that it is given by Divine illumination. In Daniel the raz (enigma) is given to one person, while its peshet is given to another. It is not until this mystery and the interpretation are brought together that the sacred communication can be properly understood.

Leaving aside the question of Divine illumination for the moment, the overall technical nature of the peshet is clear. It involves two sources, one scriptural, and the other contemporary facts. This understanding of the peshet is used by the Soviet scholar Joseph Amusin, in his soon to be published article entitled "First Century Events in the Qumran Commentaries (4Q161; 4Q169; 4Q166)." <sup>3</sup> While Amusin examines the possibility that the events elliptically described in the Qumran exposition of Habakkuk have as their Sitz im Leben either Pompey's invasion of Israel or Vespasian's march

on Jerusalem, he contends that the Dead Sea Pesher Habacuq is a correlation of the Scriptural text with the events surrounding Alexander Janneus' reign, events with which the pesharist had some intimate if not first hand knowledge.

The primary method which Amusin employs in his article is to use the relevant passages in Josephus' Antiquities which seem to match up with the historical and geographic allusions in the pesharim. In a manner of speaking, Amusin's article is a second generation pesher on Habakkuk, where the Qumran pesher is the raz and Antiquities is the key. Of course, it is practically unthinkable to assert that the Habakkuk passages appearing in the Qumran fragments under examination are in fact actual references to events from the first century B.C. or A.D., since it would leave us, as Rowley might put it, in "Topsy-Turvy Land,"<sup>4</sup> in our understanding of biblical chronology. In order to remain on the other side of the looking glass, we must assume, along with Amusin, that the Qumran pesharist's sense of biblical history is naive and overly pietistic, and that his historicizing tendencies represent one of the earliest cases of Dr. Sandmel's "parallelomania."<sup>5</sup>

This chapter will employ this same method which appears in the Amusin piece, except that it is, so to speak, a first generation pesher on the masoretic Nehemiah, since, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, we have no first century pesher or subsequent targum for this text. In as much as it seems that our received Hebrew text for Nehemiah can be traced to the tannaitic period, and since it appears to be telling a story that is out of line with Persian chronology and events, the hypothesis to be explored is that the "true meaning," the pesher of Nehemiah, relates some historical event or events of a period other than the reign of Artaxerxes I or II, which are discussed more openly, if not more accurately, by Josephus. This approach, for convenience's sake, will be called the Amusin method in this chapter.

The Amusin method in many ways is analogous to assembling a jig-saw puzzle, as Theodor Reik might characterize this approach.<sup>6</sup> Ex hypothesi, the overall big picture has to do with period surrounding the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. The overall color is Jerusalem. In this case, the general theme is some great and heroic project having to do with the deliverance of Jerusalem, and the recovery of her honor which is being debased by Gentiles without, the collaborators within. The central figure is the imperious Nehemiah.

Since there is no character in Josephus named Nehemiah or Nehemias who figures prominently in the drama at Jerusalem, selection of the central piece of the puzzle must begin with a guess.<sup>7</sup> Could the true identity of Nehemiah be a leader whose name can be readily called to mind by the biblical name? Such guessing would put us on a dangerous and slick footing, since judicious scholarship allows for precious little guesswork, especially in dealing with a problem such as this.<sup>8</sup> It is almost impossible to determine what a reader living two thousand years ago would associate with the name Nehemiah. In order to help make such a determination, we must first turn to the primary sources roughly datable to the periods which Amusin has suggested, and see what the sources, themselves, associated with Nehemiah.

Gaster, in his treatment of the "Zadokite Document" from the Dead Sea, writes:

In the "Zadokite Document"...we are told that God raised up a "teacher of Righteousness" some twenty years after the beginning of a 390 period of his displeasure, calculated from the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This evidently refers to Nehemiah, or- perhaps more probably, seeing that he was a priest- to Ezra.<sup>9</sup>

Leaving aside Gaster's notion that Ezra is a more likely candidate for the title "teacher of Righteousness," we can see that Nehemiah is the prototype for what Gaster calls a mahdi type character. What enables him to make this association is the figure twenty years in the Qumran document, which he matches up with the same figure in Nehemiah 2:1.

This would imply, according to Gaster, that at least in certain literary circles the name Nehemiah in the tannaitic period meant something of a savior.

That Nehemiah is a prototype, at least in Qumran circles, is evidenced by the "Zadokite Document," in the following passage translated by Rabinowitz and containing his parenthetical remarks:

The "priests" are the Captivity of Israel who went forth from the land of Judah, (the "Levites" are) those who were joined with them; and the "sons of Zadok" are the chosen ones of Israel, those called by name, who are to arise in the end of days. Behold (this is the author's way of referring his reader to the written work, in this case Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah) the specific mention of their names in their genealogies, the period when they arose, the account of their troubles, the tears of their quarreling, and the specification of their deeds. (They are) the ancient saints, whom God pardoned and who "justified the righteous and condemned the wicked." And all who came after them, in acting in according to the specific statement of the Torah, by means of which the ancients disciplined themselves, until the completion of the period (to the number of) these years (haqes hashanim), just as the covenant which God fulfilled for the ancients, namely, in pardoning their iniquities, so shall God pardon them, and with the completion of the period to the number of these years, it will no longer be necessary to attach oneself to the household of Judah, but to stand over his own stronghold (heheziq haqoq) 10

Concerning the period of twenty years referred to in the "Zadokite Document," Driver writes:

In 46-48 A.D. Judah's (the Gallilean) two sons James and Simon rose against the Romans, and, being caught, were executed, whereas their brother Menahem, the "teacher of wisdom," who was ex hypothesi the Rightful Teacher, succeeded to the leadership of the party (of Covenanters); he then went apparently into hiding in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea for 20 years (although Menahem was perhaps organizing it behind the scenes for the coming struggle), i.e., (the community) was "groping like blind men, until he emerged at the end of these 20 years," i.e., in A.D. 66, to claim the leadership of the Revolt. The 20 years, too although they are factual, are also symbolical; for the teacher's active mission will have begun in the twentieth year of his becoming leader of his party as that of Nehemiah is said to have begun (Neh. 1:1), while they can at the same time be regarded also as half a Messianic period. 11

Lacking any solid leads, we will follow Driver's lead and use Menahem ben Yehudah as a peg on which to hang our problem, although very tentatively. We must, however, reject the observation that Menahem ben Yehudah, the ring-leader of the early stage of the Revolt (66-72 A.D.) is necessarily Gaster's Nehemiah-mahdi figure, even though Menahem is the numerological equivalent to the biblical name Ṣemah, whom the Sages identified to be the messiah.<sup>12</sup> We must also reject as overly facile the observation that the names Nehemiah and Menahem are derived from the same root. Even though Naḥum Ish Gamzu and Nehemiah the 'Amsuni are the same individual, judging by a comparison of Genesis Rabbah I:19 was Bab. Qidushin 57a, we would be hard pressed to find him called Menahem, even though Porten identifies these three names as equivalent.<sup>13</sup> Although Menahem might very well be the name of the messiah, and, as will be noted in the following chapter, the sages cast Nehemiah in a somewhat messianic mold, we are still not justified in declaring the biblical Nehemiah to be a "cover" for Menahem ben Yehudah, whom Driver assumes to be the Moreh Ṣedeq of Qumran. He is simply the peg which we have chosen for want of a more likely candidate. Hopefully, this peg is nailed "in a trustworthy place." Even so, if, according to Driver, Menahem was seen as "another Nehemiah," much in the same way that John the Baptizer was regarded as "another Elijah" in certain circles, then the choice of the pseudonym Nehemiah for Menahem might aid us in penetrating the exegetical difficulties in the body of text, and therefore need not be rejected out of hand. Still, this cornerstone requires additional support if we are to be vindicated by our choice of it.

Incidentally, the Zadokite fragment cited above uses the expression haqes hashanim to express the type-antitype relationship between the qedoshim ha(ri')shonim and the covenanted community which generated it. This is

almost exactly the same expression which Nehemiah employs concerning his mission, uleqes yamim nish'alti min hamelekh (Neh. 13:6). Also, the term for fortifying in the fragment, heheziq, also frequently appears in the second chapter of our massoretic Nehemiah. This could indicate one of two things. Either the covenanteer author is echoing Nehemiah, or Nehemiah reflects covenanteer-like language. (The hypothesis of this thesis would lean on the latter possibility).

Driver, in the passage cited above <sup>14</sup> raises the possibility that Menahem went underground for twenty years, and perhaps from the underground planned the Revolt. If this was the case, and if Nehemiah was Menahem, then the opening passage in Nehemiah might be telling us where that hiding place was.

"Nehemiah" states that he was in Shushan Habirah (the same setting for the opening passage of the First century A.D. pseudepigraphical II Esdras). According to a passage in Bab. Menahoth (98a), Shushan Habirah was a gate complex in the eastern wall of Herod's temple. This gate and tower complex roughly corresponds, so it seems, to the location of today's St. Stephen Gate. It apparently was also the gate through which the sages entered the Temple complex. It is also possible that this is the location of what Josephus calls the "Essene Gate," since it is the only one in the city which leads almost directly into the Temple, and would thus enable the Essenes to avoid the contamination of the city. Since Herod built his temple complex with elaborate underground chambers and labyrinths, which eventually enabled hundreds of refugees to hide from the Romans who had to literally dig them out in 70 A.D., it would be an ideal hideout for a hero of the underground. If the covenanteers were akin to the Essenes, what better place could the chief covenanteer Menahem have chosen in the city



as his lair? Since his followers would pass through this gate on the way to the Temple, it would be a simple matter for him to communicate with his agents, as we find him doing with brother Hanani in 1:2. In this verse, Yehudah would be the pseudonym for the House of Judah as Driver understands it in the Qumran pescharim, namely, the Covenanters.<sup>15</sup>

In any event, we have sufficient evidence from first and second century sources to indicate that in that period Shushan Habirah did not necessarily mean a royal fortress in Persia, and could indicate a location in or around Jerusalem. If Nehemiah is understood to be Menahem, and if Shushan Habirah is taken to mean a location in or around the Temple, then the reference to epistles being sent to the officials instructing them to aid Nehemiah (Neh. 2:7-8) takes on a different light entirely. We know from the archive at Elephantine that such epistles were dispatched from the Temple to the Diaspora, and that they apparently carried a great deal of authority.<sup>16</sup> Josephus describes the Temple priesthood as a hot-bed of anti-Roman sentiment in the time of Agrippa I (Antiquities XIX vi 1,2, vii 4) and tells how the High Priest's family actually triggered the outbreak of the Great Revolt (Wars II xvii). It is not unlikely, therefore, that Menahem found ready support in the Temple leadership in organizing the revolt from the underground while taking refuge in the Temple precincts. Such support would likely take the form of epistles sent out under the Temple seal urging the Diaspora to hold itself in readiness for a massive aliyah during the pilgrim festivals just before the break with Rome. Such an aliyah did in fact take place.

Moreover, solemn temple adjurations sent to Agrippa I and Agrippa II would not be surprising. In Nehemiah 2:8 we find Nehemiah seeking special epistles to Asaf, the keeper of the royal pardes, asking him for timber.

We know that Agrippa II was given control of the Temple administration by the Romans. The pardes is hardly an unlikely term for the Temple. Asaf would also not be an unlikely pseudonym for Agrippa, who was the agronomos, the overseer of Judea's produce markets. The Talmud portrays him as bringing bikurim, the reshit ha'asif to the Temple during the Pentacost celebration.

It is particularly telling that Asaf is asking to supply timber for Nehemiah's great project. In Wars (V i 5), Josephus writes:

...John abused the sacred materials, and employed them in the construction of his engines of war; for the people and the priests had formerly determined to support the temple, and raise the holy house twenty cubits higher; for king Agrippa had at a very great expense, and with very great pains, brought thither such materials as were proper for that purpose, being pieces of timber very well worth seeing, both for their straightness and their largeness: but the war coming on, and interrupting the work, John had them cut, and prepared for building him towers, he finding them long enough to oppose from them those his adversaries that fought him from the temple that was above him. He also had them brought and erected behind the inner court over against the west end of the cloisters, where alone he could erect them...

Consistent with one of his overall agendas, Josephus could be covering up any royal implication in the revolt, although there is more than ample evidence to indicate that Agrippa II supported it. If Nehemiah's Asaf is Agrippa, then we can induce that his real reason for assembling building material, and especially timber, was in preparation for the uprising, and that Temple building was only a cover. Such a pretense would also explain why Nehemiah's adversaries were so taken by surprise by his project, since it is difficult to build a massive wall without first assembling a tremendous amount of material for several months if not years in advance. The work in Nehemiah is actually the revolt.

Warfare as work is expressed in the Qumran literature of this period. In IQSa the terms 'avodah, masa', milhamah, and riv are used practically interchangeably. Battle is 'avodat ha'edah, also called avodat hamas, in this document.

Leaving aside the other rather cryptic references to a Menahem character in Josephus <sup>17</sup> and the Talmud <sup>18</sup> for the moment, it would seem that his selection as the central piece in the Nehemiah "jig-saw puzzle" is not a bad guess. This piece must now be tested by trying to fit other pieces with it, seeing if they interlock.

The next piece is the time frame which provides the context for the story of Nehemiah and for the story of Menahem ben Yehudah. In both cases, the context seems to be the days leading up to the Feast of the Tabernacles.

Josephus writes that the initial outbreak of the revolt was around the festival of Xylophory, "upon which the custom was for every one to bring wood for the altar." (Wars II xvii 6). The qurban ha'esim (Neh. 10: 35: 13:31) is an event which is stressed in Nehemiah. In explaining this event, Nehemiah writes:

Now we cast lots concerning the qurban ha'esim, the priests, Levites and the people, for the House of our God, the House of our Ancestors, for designated seasons each year, for burning on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Torah.

Josephus parenthetically inserts a very similar explanation, "that there might never be a want of fuel for that fire which was unquenchable and always burning." (Wars II xvii 6).

It could be that the massoretic Nehemiah's double mention of qurban ha'esim might be an allusion to the tradition concerning the historical Nehemiah's rediscovery of the supernatural fire as described in II Maccabees 1:9-23. However, this tradition has apparently been reinterpreted by the

massoretic author. This reference in Nehemiah to qurban ha'ešim must be discussed in a very circumspect manner.

Although Nehemiah claims that the qurban ha'ešim is specifically mentioned in the Torah, there is no reference to a qurban ha'ešim per sé in the Books of Moses, at least not literally. Moreover, Nehemiah is the only place in the Hebrew Scriptures where qurban takes the place of qorban. If qurban reflects the pu'al, then it could mean "the one who is sacrificed." Yet what sense can we make of "the one who is sacrificed of the trees" in the Jewish Bible? Also, qurban in Nehemiah seems to reflect Targum Aramaic, as evidenced in Tar. O. Gen. 4:4. This could be some oblique reference "the sacrifice of the trees" being something which certain circles in the first century A.D. understood to be discussed in the Torah, but not literally. The peshet of this term might be those martyrs who were crucified by the Romans during the revolt. A similar peshet is offered by the writer of Galatians (Ga. 3:13-14).

This would explain why lots were used in Nehemiah to select those people who would hazard outside of Jerusalem. Lots in Josephus' time were employed by the rebels to select martyrs, or those who would run the Roman gauntlet. We can see this in Wars III viii 7 and VII ix 1. In Qumran around this time, the goral was the preferred method of selecting men to assume crucial positions, as is evidenced by IQSa I:9,16,20. This was especially the case when military leaders were selected, yavo' begoral lehityašev 'al 'adat yisrael lari(v mi) špat velas'et masa' 'edah ulehityašev bamilhamah lehakhni'a goyim (IQSa I:20-21).

Leaving aside the thorny issue of the true meaning of qorban ha'ešim, it is enough to mark it as an event of interest both in Nehemiah and in Josephus' description of the outbreak of the Great War.

The climax of the Nehemiah story takes place with the account of the solemn social covenant, the 'amanah', which takes place around the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, in response to some great peril which faces the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Neh. 9:37).

We know from Wars that Cestius' legion marched from the coast to Jerusalem to suppress the revolt during the Feast of Tabernacles (Wars II xix 1). From the passage in Josephus we can note that the Roman general found all of the outlying towns abandoned:

But when Cestius had marched from Antipatris to Lydda, he found the city empty of its men, for the whole multitude were gone up to Jerusalem to the feast of the tabernacles...

In Nehemiah 8:17 it is written: "Now all the assembly, those who turned away from the captivity, made Sukot, and they dwelled in the sukot, so that they had not done such from the time of Yeshua bin Nun, the people Israel, until that time, so that there was very great celebration." No doubt the exhilaration in Jerusalem was tremendous for that particular Sukot, since, at least for the moment, the honor of Jerusalem was upheld, and her herpah abolished.

This exhilaration was changed into grief as the people under Nehemiah's command were suddenly plunged into mourning on the twentieth-fourth day of that month, right around Shemini Aseret (Neh. 9:1). Although no reason is stated for this sudden change of mood aside from the expression uvešarah gedolah anahnu, (Neh. 9:37), Josephus may provide us with some enlightenment:

But now Cestius, observing that the disturbances that were begun among the Jews afforded him a proper opportunity to attack them, took his whole army with him, and put the Jews to flight, and pursued them to Jerusalem. He pitched his camp upon the elevation called Scopus, which was distant seven furlongs from the city; yet did he not assault them in three days' time, out of expectation that those within might perhaps yield a little...

on the fourth day, which was the thirtieth of the month Hyperberetus (Tishri), he put his army in array, and brought it into the city...Now as for the people, they were kept under by the seditious, but the seditious themselves were greatly affrighted at the good order of the Romans...

(Wars II xix 4)

Thus the time frame for the events in Nehemiah coincides with the timetable for the events surrounding the outbreak of the Great Revolt. What is more, Agrippa's remarks in Wars II xvi 5 allude to the fact that the revolt started around the sabbatical year. In Nehemiah 10:32 there is a similar allusion to the events taking place in the sabbatical year. Ibn Ezra, in commenting on 5:9, draws the same inference.

Having established a coinciding time frame around the activities of Nehemiah and Menahem, we can now assemble some other pieces of the puzzle.

In the very beginning of his Menahem account, Josephus writes:

In the meantime one Menahem...took some of the men of note with him, and retired to Masada, where he broke open king Herod's armoury, and gave arms not only to his own people, but to other robbers also. These he made use of them for a guard, and returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem.

(Wars II xvii 8)

In Nehemiah 2:9 we find: "I came to the governors of Trans-Jordan and I gave them the royal epistles, and the king dispatched with me officers and cavalry."

In 6:7 we find Sanballat echoing a very similar sentiment as that of Josephus, that Nehemiah harboured royal pretensions. This same sort of sentiment is re-echoed by Josephus in the following section, section nine.

Since Nehemiah specifically mentions cavalry joining Nehemiah on instructions from the king, it opens the door to some speculation concerning the king's horsemen in the Josephus account. We find Agrippa dispatching his own cavalry to seemingly put down the revolt (Wars II xvii 4;xviii 9). As was noted in the issue of the timber, there is a possibility that Agrippa was covertly in league

with the rebels. This possibility could also be in effect in the matter of the horsemen. This would explain the following curious passage in Josephus, concerning Cestius' initial thrust against Jerusalem:

...had he but at this very time attempted to get within the walls by force, he had won the city presently, and the war had been put an end to at once; but Tyrannius Priscus, the muster-master of the army, and a great number of the officers of the horse, had been corrupted by Florus, and diverted him from that his attempt; and that was the occasion that this war lasted so very long, and thereby the Jews were involved in such incurable calamities....he retired from the city without any reason in the world.

(Wars II xix 6-7)

It is possible, given the scenario of Agrippa's collusion with the rebels, that what we have here is an "Ahitophel gambit" of sorts, as reflected in the story of the Absalom revolt in II Samuel 15: 31-34. Tyrannius Priscus seems to be playing the same role as Hushai Ha'arki.

Given this scenario, it is possible to exposit the reference to Daryaveš Haparsi in Nehemiah 12:22. At the end of what appears to be an enumeration of the priestly line, we find the statement:

haleviyim biymay "Elyashiv Yodaya' vYohanan vYadua' ketuvim ra'shay 'avot, vhakohanim 'al malkhut Daryavesh Haparsi. This is generally taken to be a reference to Darius the Mede, although the question of whether it is Darius I or II has thrown scholars into a chronological quandry.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there is a discrepancy between the spelling of Darius' name in Nehemiah and in the Elephantine documents which has led Rowley to remark, "It is quite certain that we do not have here the original form of any sixth or fifth century... documents. " 20

According to our present hypothesis, it could be contended that the reference to Daryavesh Haparsi has nothing at all to do with a Persian ruler from the Restoration period, and is instead an allusion to a well-known character in the drama of the Great Revolt. If this is the case, then a good

guess as to his true identity might lead us to Darius, the master of Agrippa's cavalry (Wars II xvii 4). The reference in Nehemiah would then be an alliterative pun, substituting haparsi for haparashi, the horseman. This would be a form of the " 'al tiqra' " exposition which was current in the first centuries of the new epoch. W.H. Brownlee cites this technique as one of the expository peshar methods, shared by Qumran and the other tannaitic schools.<sup>21</sup>

It might be added at this point that IQSa seems to be a manifesto for the events actually carried out in the massoretic Nehemiah. We will also presently return to other examples of the Qumran-like alliterative exposition which seem to be operative in Nehemiah.

Yet for now it can be noted that both Nehemiah and Menahem were accused of harboring royal pretensions, that they both arrived at Jerusalem with a royal mounted escort.

One of the first things Nehemiah did when he arrived in Jerusalem was to take a tour of the walls, as it were. The verb used in 2: 13-14 is sover. It has caused differences of opinion between Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra believes it to be a form of the rabbinic verb sover with a samekh, indicating to study and consider. Rashi seems to understand it as shover, meaning to break and undermine. This leads the French commentator, Rashi, to claim that Nehemiah actually assaulted the walls of Jerusalem and in some place toppled them, in order to elevate the sense of crisis in Jerusalem.

I think they are both correct, since we might very well have here a case of 'al tiqrah coupled with a tarte mashma, a double entendre.

The first thing that Menahem did when he came to Jerusalem was attack and undermine the walls of the upper city protecting the Romans and their sympathizers (Wars II xvii 8).



Nehemiah's "tour" also seems to be an exact mirror image of a similar tour taken by a Roman official not long before the outbreak of the war.

Describing Neopolitanus' tour, Josephus writes:

They then persuaded Neopolitanus, by means of Agrippa, that he would walk round the city, with only one servant, as far as Siloam...So he walked round, and had sufficient experience of the good temper the people were in, and then went up to the temple, where he called the multitude together, and highly commended them for their fidelity to keep the peace...

(Wars II xvi 2)

Nehemiah, covertly touring by night, a small number of men with him, follows the route round to apparently the same point, beraykhat hamelekh, which is thought to be the Siloam Pool, according to Kenyon.<sup>22</sup> He then returns and gathers the people, exhorting them to redress the disgrace in which Jerusalem finds herself (Neh. 2:17).

This Nehemiah passage would then be a satire of Josephus, while at the same time subtly alluding to the Jewish leader's attack on Jerusalem herself.

Nehemiah himself does not appear to be involved with the initial phases of the work itself, according to the beginning of chapter three. The leadership of the project seems to have been in the hands of the High Priest Elyashiv. Nehemiah himself seems to directly take charge of the project in chapter four, with the assault planned by Sanballat and his allies in Samaria. Josephus reports that the first phases of the revolt were actually carried out by Eliezer, the son of Ananias the High Priest, who first rose up against the Romans. The verb in Nehemiah describing Elyashiv's action is vayaqom, which could be indicating an uprising.

Moreover, the proposed Samaritan attack on Jerusalem at the very beginning of the revolt is described by Josephus in Life, section six. There he mentions that the inhabitants of Scythopolis forced the local Jews to take up arms against their Jewish brethren in the south, and then slew them.

This is also mentioned in Wars II xviii 3.

Nehemiah, in describing a very similar event, urges his followers to fight " 'al aḥeikhem, benotekhem, neshekhem, uvatekhem. " (Neh. 4:8) This can be a double entendre, a tartay mishma', since 'al can mean both for and against, in conjunction with laḥam, to make war. Again, Nehemiah seems to be reflecting certain first century events.

According to Josephus (Wars II xvii 6), one of the first things the rebels did was to "set fire to the place where the archives were repositied, and made haste to burn the contracts belonging to their creditors, and thereby dissolve their obligation for paying their debts; and this was done, in order to gain the multitude of those who had been debtors, and that they might persuade the poorer sort to join in their insurrection with safety against the more wealthy; so the keepers of the records fled away, and the rest set fire to them."

Nehemiah portrays a remarkably similar event in chapter five, verses one through thirteen, where he supports the poorer sort against the wealthy. Verse thirteen is particularly telling:

gam- housni na'arti va'omrah kakhah yena'er ha'elohim  
'et-kol-'is 'asher lo yaqim 'et-hadavar hazeh mibeto  
umiyegi'o vekhakhah yihiyeh na'ur vareq...

This is a curious verse for a number of reasons. Nehemiah seems to be shaking out his linens as a symbol to the wealthy indicating how they will be left impoverished as a punishment for their predatory fiscal practices. This passage is reminiscent of Isaiah 1: 21-31, where the prophet indicts the wealthier sorts for extorting the poor. It could be that Nehemiah 5:13 is a paraphrase of Isaiah 1:31:

vehayah heḥason line'oret upho'alo lenisos uva'aru  
sheneyhem yaḥdav ve'en meḥabeh.

Isaiah's heḥason would be paralleled by Nehemiah housni; lene'oret...

uva'aru echoed in yena'er...na'ur. Nehemiah seems to be alluding to DSS

Isaiah's reading of uba'alav for the massoretic upho'alo, since the idea of this passage is that the owner class will be impoverished. This might be an indication of a textual affinity between Qumran and Nehemiah, although it is hardly conclusive, even though there are several other affinities between the two which will be presented further on in this thesis.

The radical hsn in the targum period often refers to wealth and possessions.<sup>23</sup> A hisnah is a store-house.<sup>24</sup> Although it is not completely

legible, DSS Isaiah seems to have maḥsanhem in place of heḥason in 1:31.

Thus the Qumran reader might understand this verse to read: "Now your store-houses will be like a flaxen wick and its owners will serve as the spark, so that both will burn together so that no one can extinguish it." This would certainly be seen as having been "fulfilled" by the rebels' burning of the mortgage archives. It also reflects a passage in Wars V i 4:

...he (John) set on fire those houses that were full of corn, and of all other provisions...Accordingly it came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down...and almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years.

N'ar can mean to shake out and can also mean to burn, as can be seen from Judges 16:9. A hosen can be a fringe on a garment, and can also call to mind a store house. Thus Nehemiah could be plucking the fringes off his garment and kindling them to remind his audience of the well known passage in Isaiah. He could be alluding to the setting on fire of the store houses and granaries. It is also possible that he could be shaking out his hem and pockets as a sort of taṣlikh gesture. Josephus portrays exactly this same type of gesture in his account of the revolt, where a certain man mounts a wall and shakes out his garments as some sort of a signal.

If the sense of this verse in Nêhemiah is that he is in fact committing some sort of incendiary gesture, then the use of the term peham in the next verse could be a pun. Ibn Ezra takes the word to mean pehah shelahem, their governor, but he immediately adds that the correct way to state this is pehtam, indicating that there is something wrong with the word in the massoretic text. A peham is that which is used for kindling, or charcoal. This would be completely consistent with the view that Nehemiah was either Menahem, or someone like him, namely, an incendiary. It can be added, by way of speculation, that the naphhumim such as Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcannus were not simple blacksmiths. Perhaps the conflict between Gamliel II, the Roman collaborator, and Eliezer and Joshua, as described in Bab. Berakhot 28a and elsewhere, requires some reevaluation. Peham as incendiary might help explain not only Eliezer ben Hyrcannus' actions, but would also put the activities of his greatest disciple, Aqiva, in a better perspective. <sup>25</sup>

Returning to our jig-saw puzzle, we can compare the canard Josephus levels against Menahem with the response of Nehemiah. In Wars II xvii 9, the historian writes:

Now the death of the high priest Ananias so puffed up Menahem that he became barbarously cruel...they made an assault upon him in the temple; for he went up there to worship in a pompous manner, and adorned with royal garments, and had his followers with him in their armour. But Eleazar and his party fell upon him, as did also the rest of the people, and taking up stones to attack him withal, they threw them at the sophister...Now Menahem and his party made resistance for a while; but when they perceived that the whole multitude were fallen upon them, they fled every way every which one was able...As for Menahem himself, he ran away to the place called Ophla, and there lay sulking in private...

Turning to Nehemiah 6:10b-13, we find Shemay'ah ben Deliah suggesting to Menahem that they gather in the temple and close the doors, since there was a plot to murder Nehemiah. Nehemiah answers:

Shall a man the likes of me flee? And who of my status can enter the shrine and live? I will not come! For I realized that he is not sent of God, that the oracle that he pronounced over me was payed for by Tuviah and Sanballat. For this purpose he was hired, in order that I might be afraid and do thus and then sin, so that I might get for them a bad reputation, so that they could revile me.

According to this thesis, this Nehemiah passage could very well be refutation of Josephus' Wars account. Nehemiah would be stating that he never would even consider entering the hekhal itself, since he was not a priest, and that in fact such impiety was suggested by his adversaries in order to besmirch his good name. He is as careful with his reputation as he is with the linens he wears (Gen. R. s. 19). Most of all, he is not a coward, and he did not flee and sulk in the royal tombs cut into the Ophel, not a man with his standards of purity.

Another point of interest which emerges from a comparison of Nehemiah with Josephus has to do with one of Nehemiah's responses to the traitors, the ones who mingled with the Gentiles among the ruling classes of Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> In 13:25 he states: "I battled these people, pronouncing curses against them; I smote their men and I shaved them, and I pronounced a solemn adjuration against them by God not to intermarry with them."

In Life, section 11, the priest writes:

Phillip, the son of Jacimus, who was their governor under king Agrippa, had been unexpectedly preserved when the royal palace at Jerusalem had been besieged; but, as he fled away, had fallen into another danger; and that was of being killed by Menahem, and the robbers that were with him; but certain Babylonians, who were of his kindred,

and were then in Jerusalem, hindered the robbers from executing their design. So Phillip stayed there for four days, and fled away on the fifth, having disguised himself with fictitious hair, that he might not be discovered; and when he was come to one of the villages... he sent to some of those that were under him; but God hindered that his intention, and this for his own advantage also; for had it not so happened, he had certainly perished; for a fever having seized upon him immediately, he wrote to Agrippa and Bernice, and gave them to one of his freemen to carry them to Varus, who at that time was the procurator of the kingdom, which the king and his sister had entrusted him while they were gone to Berytus with an intention of meeting Gessius. When Varus had received these letters of Phillip, and had learned that he was preserved, he was very uneasy at it, as supposing that he should now appear useless to the king and his sister, now Phillip was come. He therefore produced the carrier of the letters before the multitude, and accused him of forging the same; and said, that he spake falsely when he related that Phillip was at Jerusalem fighting amongst the Jews against the Romans. So he slew him.

While it appears that forced shaving was a universal sign of disgrace in the Near East in many epochs, Nehemiah's forced shaving of his adversaries could be a response to their use of "fictitious hair" as escape disguises. While he claims that he smote many of them, he adds that he exiled rather than killed the highest ranking of his enemies (13:28). One could speculate that there is some connection between Nehemiah's actions and the Ezekiel oracle where he is commanded to shave (Ez. 5). If Nehemiah is Menahem, and if Driver is right about him being the head of the Qumran covenanters, then we can see a figure very much like him in Ezekiel chapter nine, "one man dressed in linen, with pen and ink at his waist," drawing crosses on the foreheads of the faithful, and defiling the Temple with the corpses of those who do not bear the mark. Such a scene would fit very well into the picture of the tumultuous internecine clashes in the temple itself during the revolt.<sup>27</sup> Yet for the present time, it would be well advised to return to the detailed comparison

of Nehemiah with Josephus, which might put us on safer ground. The literary activities of the sofrim Eliezer and Joshua must be treated somewhere else.

Unquestionably, the climax of the massoretic Nehemiah is the confessional statement in chapter nine, followed by the 'Amanah (pact) presented in chapter ten. This section, according to several scholars, seems to have been transposed for some reason from the end of the book of Ezra to its present location, perhaps by accident, or perhaps for some other reason which is less than obvious.<sup>28</sup> In any case, it is clearly an independent unit unto itself around which the book of Nehemiah is crafted.

Leon J. Liebreich, in his article "The Impact of Nehemiah 9:5-27 on the Liturgy of the Synagogue,"<sup>29</sup> has shown the tremendous affinity in content and language which exists between our Nehemiah passage and synagogue worship, which, according to Heinemann, received its general characteristics in early Tannaitic period.<sup>30</sup> Citing Y. Kaufmann, who detects in Nehemiah 9 "affinities with the nascent synagogal liturgy,"<sup>31</sup> Liebreich sets about describing the precise nature of these affinities in his study.

Liebreich's assumption is that the massoretic Nehemiah passage in question predates the Tannaitic period, and that it formed much of the later tradition of prayer. While he is certainly correct in his detection of a great affinity between the two, I believe that he has drawn the wrong inference. It seems to me that Nehemiah 9 reflects rather than causes the tannaitic style of worship. The author of Nehemiah as we presently have it in the Jewish Bible was no doubt well versed in the liturgical life of his synagogue where he prayed around the destruction of the great builder's Temple. It is this awareness which is expressed in Nehemiah 9.

Nehemiah 9-10 could function as a response to the speech which Josephus puts in Agrippa's mouth just before the uprising, where he attempts to discourage his countrymen from rebelling against Rome (Wars II xvi 4).

The central theme of this speech is that the Jews have no hope of succeeding in such an endeavor, when greater nations, such as the Greeks and the Gauls, would not even dare to oppose the might of Rome and her empire which has been given her by Providence. He indicts the Jews for their unruliness, comparing them to refractory slaves rather than to genuine lovers of liberty. He then goes on to point out that such a revolt would never succeed, since they could not fight on the Sabbath, and that such a handicap enabled Pompey to take Jerusalem in the previous century. If the Jews change their attitude concerning the Sabbath, they will alienate their God and the spirits of their ancestors, and will certainly be defeated. He ridicules their method of planning a revolt, their entering into an agreement, which is unheard of in history. Finally he exhorts them to desist from their folly for the sake of their wives, children, their metropolis, and, most of all, for the sake of the security of their holy temple and its sacred furniture. Finally, he calls the sanctuary and the holy angels as witnesses against the rebels.

Nehemiah's counterclaim is that Providence has Israel and not Rome as the object of her attention, that Israel's sinfulness and rebellion against God has placed her in her present predicament, and that repentance will be efficacious in reversing their fortunes.

In order to get around the problem of combat on the Sabbath, which seems to disturb Josephus throughout his account of the Great Revolt, the covenanters agree to establish a one third sheqel kofer to cover up for the sins they are



committing (10:34). They agree not to tolerate incursions on the Sabbath and to abandon the observance of the sabbatical year under the present emergency conditions (10:32).

In response to Josephus' remark: "But certainly no one can imagine that you can enter into a war as by an agreement," Nehemiah presents just such an agreement, the 'Amanah of chapter ten. Since Agrippa calls the temple itself and the holy angels to witness against such a proposed covenant, Nehemiah's signatories are headed up by Nehemyah Hatirshatah ben Hakhalyah, the Consolation of God and Overseer of the hekhal.<sup>32</sup>

We can note from the inscription of the ossuary of Simon the Temple Builder found at Giv'at Hamivater,<sup>33</sup> that in the Herodian period the Temple was called either Hekhalah or Hekhalah. The he and the het are used interchangeably. The inscription, which appears twice on the ossuary, reads as follows:

Smon bn' hkhllh

Smon bnh hkhllh<sup>34</sup>

Following the signature of Nehemiah the Overseer,<sup>35</sup> builder/son of the Sanctuary, we find the Sidiqiyah, which perhaps should be vocalized as the Aramaic Sadiqayah, the righteous saints, followed by Serayah. A sar, in early tannaitic language, is an angelic prince or guardian angel.<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that the sadiqim come before the angels in the tannaitic hierarchy. The term sar indicating angel also appears in the Dead Sea documents. A survey of this list leaves room for the possibility that it is in fact an invocation of angels for protection.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most intriguing possibilities is offered by verse twenty-five of this chapter. Haloqesh pilha' shoveq could mean a number of things, and

perhaps intentionally so. It could mean that the Whisperer, someone who is transmitting a secret of the Torah, is leaving this work. It could also mean that anyone who expositis or reveals the true nature of this list is a renegade or a traitor. It might mean that the person who is transmitting this secret doctrine is under the ban, or in prison. All these senses are derivable from verse twenty-five.

Without going into any further detail at this time, if this roll of signatories on the 'amanah in fact is an angel list containing a warning against the giving away of the secret, it might point us in the direction of the Essenes or a group very much like them. In describing some of the practices of the Essenes, Josephus writes:

...he [the Essene] swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself... and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels (or messengers). These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

(Wars II viii 7)

The Qumran literature is replete with angelic references. The centrality of angels among certain groups is expressed by Paul in Coloss. 2:8.<sup>38</sup>

Haloresh could be a proper name of an individual or it could be a title, although the latter possibility would be consistent with the possibility that what we are dealing with is an incantational angel list.

A loresh is someone who is either transmitting a secret doctrine or pronouncing an incantation in tannaitic parlance.<sup>39</sup> It could mean an angelic or demonic speaker, since supernatural beings communicate in whispers.<sup>40</sup>

Thus the famous bat qol could be best understood as an angelic oracle. If

Haloresh is the pseudonym for a sofer of the early tannaitic period, we might look for our author in a man such as Eliezer ben Hyrcannus, who was a sorcerer, could invoke the bat-qol, and who was put under the ban in the

late first century. Such a man was also privy to the events surrounding the outbreak of the revolt in Jerusalem, since he was in the city when it took place. Like Nahum Ish Gamzu, he was a master exegete who taught Aqiva how to find angels lurking in the sacred text. It is curious that Nahum taught in the lehishah manner, and Eliezer was a lohash, and both are claimed to be Aqiva's mentor. They might be the same person, or perhaps kinsmen, although this would be impossible to prove at the present time. It is also curious that lahash can also mean "to flame," or "the glow of coals." This would be consistent with Nehemiah calling himself a Peham, as was discussed earlier. Although it is obviously very tempting, it would also be unproductive to speculate that Nehemiah/Menahem was in fact Nahum/Nehemiah Ish Gamzu, who resubmerged into the underground after his revolutionary leadership was rebuffed in Jerusalem. This would mean that Josephus, who was not an eye-witness to the Menahem phase of the revolt, being sequestered in the Upper City at the time, was either misinformed purposely about Menahem's death, or for some reason was deliberately covering up his escape from the Roman reader of Wars. This, of course, would raise the very thorny issue of Josephus' hidden agenda in writing Wars, which might be as covert as anything we have seen in the massoretic Nehemiah.

While such sleuthing about is very exciting, it is, however, not directly germane to this thesis. For now it doesn't really matter who was the literary genius behind our Nehemiah, although such questions might serve as the bedrock upon which a revised understanding of the tannaitic period might rest. The tannaitic mahloket might often be indicative of kulturkampf, whose battleground could very well be the literature of the Jewish canon: For our purposes it would be more than sufficient to establish that our massoretic Nehemiah is a form of covert writing generated by the events surrounding the Great Revolt,

designed to get around tight post-war Roman censorship on one hand, and stiff internecine conflict on the home front. In other words, the warring factions, forced to drop the sword, took up the 'et sofer mahir. The canonization controversies on the eve of the Bar Kosba revolt might be seen in this light.

If Nehemiah is covert first century communication, then many of the enigmas cited in chapter one would dissolve. The chronological order of Ezra and Nehemiah, a very serious problem which Nehemiah raises and has drawn so much attention <sup>41</sup> might be resolved as follows:

Ezra is a type, not an historical character per se, in our Massoretic Nehemiah. In the tannaitic period, Ezra was regarded as the hakham par excellance, the restorer and defender of Torah, just as the "Men of the Great Assembly" served as a type for the tannaitic bet din. If Nehemiah is the nasi, then Ezra would be the priestly av bet din, whose function it was to preside over the public Torah reading in the presence of nasi or king.

In IQS ix:11 we find the formula: 'ad bo' navi' umeshihey 'aharon veyisreal. In IQSa, in the section designated "The Rituals of Benediction," we can find a section dealing with the High Priest and one dealing with the Nasi. In I:5 we find that the priest has consort with the angels, an image which is at the heart of the first century A.D. II Esdras. In I:20 we can note the fragment (t) dorshehu ki 'el hekhin kol 'osey, language highly reminiscent of Ezra 7:10, which seems to be organically linked with this DSS passage. Further on we read:

The formula of benediction for the [initiate (maskil) levarekh] the Sons of Zadoq the priests whom God has elected to strenghten his covenant (forever) and to apply his laws in the midst of his people, and to instruct them as he commanded...

(I:22-24)

This is precisely the image presented by Ezra in Nehemiah, teaching Torah in the context of defending the covenant, in a public assembly.

Further on in this document, we find the role of the Nasi spelled out:

Lamaskil, to bless nesi ha'edah...to raise up the dominion of his people forever (to judge the poor in equity), to ejudicate correctly all the meek of the land...to establish his holy covenant...May the Lord exalt you to the heights of the world, and like a mighty tower on a high wall (!), that you might smite nations with the strength of your mouth, and with your scepter lay waste to the land and with the breath of your mouth you will slay the wicked, with cosmic heroism, the spirit of knowledge and fear of God...

(V:20-25)

All in all, this is not a bad description of Nehemiah, Gaster's mahdi figure. Either the Qumran community derived this image from a proto-massoretic Nehemiah, which is doubtful for reasons discussed in chapter two, or the character in our massoretic Nehemiah is the embodiment of the Qumran author's vision of the nasi, which seems to be more probable at this point.

In any event, the images of Ezra and Nehemiah in Nehemiah correspond rather closely with the Qumran vision of the ideal priest and nasi. Such an understanding of the relationship of our Nehemiah with the Qumran ideal would easily resolve the problem of chronology in the text, since these are types operating in an 'en muqdam umeuḥar ambient. Based upon the comparison with Josephus, I would conclude that our massoretic Nehemiah is a late first century fantasy based upon certain events surrounding the Great Revolt, echoing the expectations reflected in Qumran literature.

The problem of the chronology of Sanballat, discussed by Rowley and others <sup>42</sup> can be resolved in the same way. No doubt Sanballat was a real historical character who flourished at the end of the fifth century B.C. or perhaps in the middle of the fourth century, just prior to Alexander's

conquest. In this respect Antiquities is probably accurate. Yet apparently in the first century the name Sanballat functioned like Amaleq, as a re'shit goyim (Numbers 24:20), the archtypical schismatic. Hence a man like Paul might be considered to be a Sanballat type, for example. While we have no precise way of determining what Paul's role might have been during the Great Revolt, we can safely assume that his sympathies would not be with the defenders of Jerusalem and her Temple, from which he was excluded for attempting to bring in Gentiles (Acts 21:27-28). He is apparently connected in some way with Gamliel, who was, so it seems, pro-Roman and anti-zealot, as was the Hillelic dynasty. This connection might be implied by the Nehemiah account of how Sanballat had intermarried into the upper classes of Jerusalem. Bet Hillel practiced these marriages for political purposes, so far as can be determined. The expulsion of Gentile sympathizers in Nehemiah might be a reflection of the banishing of such characters as Yohanan ben Zakai from the besieged city by the biryonim, although the account appears to be somewhat glamourized in the rabbinic literature which was controlled, to an extent, by Bet-Hillel.

Yet we must leave aside this train of speculation, since the identity of Sanballat, or Elyashiv, for that matter, is as irrelevant for this thesis as is the identity of the Lohesh. What can be noted in passing, however, is that Yehudah I's Mishnah seems to reflect an anti-angel position, while the Lohesh seems enamoured of them. St. Paul decries the reverence for angels, while the Qumran covenanteer zealots held them in a position of great prominence in their spiritual lives. In downplaying the sanctity of the Law in Galatians, Paul says: "It was promulgated through angels, and there was an intermediary; but an intermediary is not needed for one party acting alone, and God is one (Gal. 3:19-20). The Qumran writer delights in the

angelic quality of the Torah. Paul finds the herpah of Jerusalem to be an advantage to him: "Sinai is a mountain in Arabia and it represents the Jerusalem of today, for she and her children are in slavery" (Gal. 4:25). It is against this condition of herpah that Nehemiah takes action, bemoaning her fate just as the covenanters condemned the mamlekhet benay ha'ol and pledged to overturn it.

If one was predisposed to historicize this peshet on Nehemiah using well-known first century A.D. personalities, one would not be too hard pressed to come up with a cast of characters. While, as Roth notes, "Josephus' accounts of the zealots are as historically reliable as Vichy reports concerning the Partisans,"<sup>43</sup> the names which he uses often pose tantalizing possibilities for association with those in Nehemiah. Wars II xvii 10; xxi 7, describes a certain Ananias "Sadouki," who, together with his faction, fled Jerusalem after the ousting of Menahem. This Ananias, after organizing a massacre of a Roman garrison, soon set out for the Galilee with the intent of murdering Josephus the renegade.

Ex hypothesi, one of the motives for the composition of our Nehemiah was to vindicate Menahem, who had been denigrated by Josephus. Apparently there was bad blood between the historian and Menahem's group. Could this Ananias be Nehemiah's brother or kinsman Hanani, whose Greek name would almost certainly be Ananias? This Hanani was appointed prefect of the city of Jerusalem by Nehemiah (7:2). He would thus be in an excellent position to organize the above-mentioned massacre, which Josephus found most barbarous.

There are a number of High Priests listed by Josephus who served after the death of Herod whose names seem to be echoed in Nehemiah. Of course, it is not unusual for names to reoccur in the priestly line over many centuries,

yet the concentration of these names in Nehemiah could be significant for this thesis. For example, Jesus son of Damneus, one of the priests around the revolt, could readily be represented by Jesu ben Qadmi'el in Nehemiah (12:24). 'Elyo'enai (12:21) is likely the Hebrew rendition of Aljoneus, one of the last High Priests before the revolt. The brothers Yehudah and Matanyah in Nehemiah 12:8 could correspond to the high priestly brothers Matthias and Theophilus in Josephus. Hadas, in his examination of the list of elders appearing in Aristeas (page 119) notes:

Wendland sees in the recurrence of names associated with Hashmonean heroes (Judah, Simon, Jonathan, Mattathias) an argument for a post-Maccabean date. The names are predominantly Hebrew, and the Greek names such as were common among Jews. They are theophoric, and literal translations of familiar Hebrew names: Theodosius or Dositheus - Mataniah; Theodotus - Nathaniel; Theophilus - Jedediah. Even the Hebrew names are given a Greek form, a usage which Josephus, Ant.1.129 speaks: "With a view to euphony and my readers' pleasure these names have been Hellenized, the form in which they here appear is not used in our country."

Undoubtedly the priestly names which appear in Nehemiah's list are as they were "used in our country." The issue is when in fact this succession of names occurred. Hananiah in Nehemiah 12:12 could be one of a number of priests named Ananus or Annas before the revolt, as could Jonathan and Joseph, who appear in both lists. Elyaqim in Nehemiah (12:41) could be Josephus' Camithus or Camydus. Yizrahyah (12:42) might be Phanas, the last High Priest, since Pinhas, according to the current midrash, was in fact also known as lapidot, whose countenance shined with the Holy Spirit, as implied in the name Yizrahyah. In Nehemiah, this Yizrahyah is called the paqid, the overseer of all the other head priests at the time of the pincer move around the city which converged on the Temple.



While this name comparison is hardly persuasive on its own, it does fit into our general hypothesis concerning the real agenda in our massoretic Nehemiah.

#### Summary

Josephus' account of the outbreak of the Great Revolt coincides in time frame, detail of events, descriptive language, central issues, and names with the account of Nehemiah's activities in the massoretic text. Since there are more parallels than can be accounted for by coincidence, it should be adduced that the two accounts are in some way related. The most likely conjecture, especially in light of the textual history of Nehemiah around the destruction, would be that the massoretic Nehemiah is echoing some major events of the first century A.D. surrounding the Great Revolt. This is sustained by certain similarities which exist between the Qumran literature of roughly that period and literary characteristics of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's wall-building was in fact a coded way of discussing the struggles in Jerusalem at the outbreak of the revolt. "Building the Wall," as evidenced in the Qumran literature, was somehow tied up with the struggles with the Wicked Priest and his cronies.<sup>44</sup> Driver understands "building the wall" in Qumran as

...a double entente of the kind so frequently occurring in the scrolls...On one hand, an indirect allusion may be intended to those who seem elsewhere to be denounced for rebuilding the fortifications of Jerusalem in order to gain an ephemeral advantage in the unceasing quarrels between the rival parties during the First Revolt...<sup>45</sup>

This image would reappear in the account in Nehemiah, where Elyashiv starts the wall building project, yet in the end is discovered to be in league with Nehemiah's adversaries.

In all probability, Nehemiah's account of the Revolt is as partisan as

Josephus'. One seems to be the foil for the other. The Jewish underground, living in the post-war atmosphere of repression, censorship and persecution, could not tell their story openly. They could not publically defend their heroes from the renegade's apparent slurs. Thus they chose to resort to the art of writing for the careful reader, since, like Leo Strauss, they must have felt that "thoughtful men are careful readers," and "thoughtful men, as such, are trustworthy and not cruel, "while" thoughtless men are careless readers." 46

Why did the authors of Nehemiah take the risk of setting this covert work to writing, even to careful writing? Here, again, perhaps Strauss might have the answer. He writes:

All books of that kind owe their existence to the love of the mature philosopher for the puppies of his race, by whom he wants to be loved in turn. All exoteric books are 'written speeches caused by love.' 47

1. Issac Rabinowitz, "Peshar/Pittaron: Its Biblical Meaning and Its Significance in the Qumran Literature, "Revue de Qumran, 5 (October, 1964), page 224.
2. F.F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts, Grand Rapids, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), page 8.
3. Joseph Amusin, "First Century Events in the Qumran Commentaries (4Q161; 4Q169; 4Q166)," soon to be appearing in HUCA, 47 (1978). I am indebted to HUCA's associate editor, Dr. David B. Weisberg for allowing me an advance reading of this article.
4. H.H. Rowley, "Nehemiah's Mission and its Background," BJRL, 37 (March, 1955), page 530.
5. S. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," JBL, 81, (1962) pages 1-13.
6. Theodor Reik, The Temptation, George Braziller Inc., New York (1961), page 118. What Reik writes about his investigation of the aqedah is also descriptive of this chapter:

When we return to our particular problem of the Genesis tale, we are confronted with a jigsaw puzzle made of many fragments. Some pieces are missing, some are in the wrong place, and others, we discover, obviously belong to another puzzle. It has been our task to find the missing pieces, to correct the mistakes made in inserting some pieces into the wrong place and to remove those others that don't belong. This last work has been especially laborious since several fragments seemed at first to fit well into the picture, and we as well as other inquirers were long deceived until we discovered that they were misplaced.

7. Reik's discussion of his method, Ibid pages 90-91 touches on our problem of presentation.

What follows is an adventure in...discovery. It would perhaps be advantageous to follow carefully all the steps leading to the discovery; that means the thought associations from their point of departure in the study of the Biblical material to the point of arrival at a surprising idea. This would, however, lead us too far away, and since the method and purpose of this book claim to be scientific, it might give too subjective a character to the investigation...

...Tennyson wrote: "Science moves but slowly, slowly creeping from point to point." Let me preface this demonstration by saying that an investigation such as the one presented here can hardly be undertaken without what L.J. Henderson used to call "an intuitive feel for one's material."

8. However, as Strauss has written concerning the way of reading esoteric literature, even the most careful readers must begin his investigation "by guessing," (Persecution and the Art of Writing, page 62).
9. Theodor H. Gaster, The Dead Sea Scriptures, Garden City (Anchor Press, 1976) page 27.

10. Isaac Rabinowitz, "A Reconsideration of "Damas" and "390 years" in the Damascus" ("Zadokite") Fragments," JBL, 73 (1954), pages 16-18.
  11. G. Driver, The Judean Scrolls, page 315.
  12. Ibid, page 477. It is well worth noting the following DSS passage, A Flc 10-17 (also Y Fl 10-17) where Semah is mentioned: "Moreover, the Lord hath told thee that 'He will build thee a House," and 'I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his royal throne forever. 'He is the shoot (semah) of David, who will stand with the Interpreter of the Law who will arise in Zion at the end of days, as it is written: 'I will raise up the Tabernacle of David that is fallen' that is the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and afterwards he will arise to save Israel."
- As is noted further on in this thesis, the diad of Semah and the Interpreter of the Law is very much apparent in the massoretic Nehemiah, which seems to be related to the Qumran eschatological vision. Moreover, the reference to tabernacle could be very telling, since both Nehemiah and Menahem redeem Jerusalem at the Tabernacles season.
13. B. Porten, Archives at Elephantine, page 140.
  14. Above Note 11.
  15. Driver, op. cit., above note 8, page 279. Driver understands House of Judah to refer to Judah the Galilean, the father of Menahem. For a differing view of the meaning of this expression in Qumran, see Amusin, op. cit., above note 3.
  16. See B. Porten, Archives at Elephantine, page 317 for his discussion of document C44. Also see Cowley's Aramaic Papyri, documents AP 39 and AP 21 for the centrality of Temple-generated oaths and epistles.
  17. Antiquities XV x 5. It might be worthy of note that here Menahem foretells Herod's kingship, and gives him a backslap. Even today the backslap, administered in the proper way, is a method of recognition in a certain secret society.
  18. M. Hagigah II:2. See M.R. Lehman, "Talmudic Material Relating to the Dead Sea Scrolls," Revue de Qumran, 1, (Feb. 1959), pages 391-404, for a discussion of this intriguing passage describing a schism in Bet Hillel led by Menahem.
  19. H.H. Rowley, "Nehemiah's Mission and Its Background," BJRL, 37 (March 1955), pages 537-538.
  20. Ibid., page 536.
  21. W.H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation Among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," BA, 14 (1953), pages 60-63.
  22. K. Kenyon, Digging Up Jerusalem, page 181.
  23. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Talmud, page 489.

24. Ibid. page 489.
25. Tangentially, even well into the Middle Ages alchemists were called "charcoal burners," Alchemy can be traced at points to Alexandria in the first century B.C.-A.D., to the Pythagorean and other Neo-Platonic traditions which had wide currency in the region. I am presently tracing these alchemical traditions in our tannaitic literature, with an eye on publishing a paper on this subject in the near future.
26. It can be noted here that the issue of rokhlim, traitors, was a lively one for the author of Aristeas to Philocrates 167, Hadas writes: "Graetz saw in this an allusion to the execution of delatores by Tiberius in 33 CE (Taritus, Annals 6:19) and dated Aristeas accordingly." As was noted in the first chapter, Hadas detects a strong affinity between Nehemiah and Aristeas.
27. This, obviously, would raise a question of dating in regards to the book of Ezekiel, which, while it is directly germane to this thesis, would take us too far afield. The same could be said of the book of Zechariah, which seems to be another perspective on the events in fact described in Nehemiah, centering around the activities of Semah and Jesus the High Priest, who also appears in a similar light in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which as De Waard has shown shows a high level of affinity with the Qumran textual traditions (See J. De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament, Leiden, (E.J. Brill, 1965) pages 81-82), and perhaps not coincidentally. This would raise a very interesting question about the real identity of the covenanters which, however, must be treated very circumspectly, all things considered. It would also return us to the hidden agenda and nature of the revisionary work of certain tannaitic circles around the time of the messianic Bar-Kokhva revolt preached by Aquiva.
28. It is possible that this section was transposed from its "Original" location at the end of the massoretic Ezra to its present more "insulated" position with the intention of "protecting" it and shielding it from the eyes of the casual, less-than-careful reader. This, then, would be an instance of "bracketing," a well known technique employed by writers of covert information in the Bible and elsewhere.
29. Leon J. Liebreich, "The Impact of Nehemiah 9:5-37 on the Liturgy of the Synagogue," HUCA 32 (1961), pages 227-237.
30. Yosef Heinemann, Tephilot Yisra'el Vetoldotehen: Leqet Meqorot, Jerusalem (1970), page 3.
31. Liebreich, op. cit., above note 29.
32. For the expression "God the Overseer," see Hadas, Aristeas to Philocrates, page 101.
33. V. Tzaferis, "The Burial of Simon the Temple Builder," in Jerusalem Revealed, the Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem (1975), pages 71-72.

34. Of course, although, according to Bab. Qidushin 57a, Nehemiah the Amsuni's name also seems to have been Simon, we have no justification for assuming that the ossuary contains the remains of Nehemiah bn' HKhlh, the great builder, since this Simon most likely was just a mason with a high degree of authority.
35. Concerning the title "overseer," Driver writes (The Judean Scrolls, 522): The Covenanters' 'censor' or 'inspector who is over the many'...is probably identical with the 'officer (paqid) at the head of the many'; and so he seems to have been, as his title implies, the principal officer of the Society. As such, he has not unnaturally been regarded as holding the same sort of position as the 'bishop' (ἐπισκοπος) in the New Testament; and this identification has been illustrated by a passage in the Old Testament in which the Hebrew word for "Officer" (paqid) is translated 'overseer' (ἐπισκοπος) by the Septuagint [Nehemiah (2 Esdras) X:1 9, 14, 22], Of course, calling a Nehemiah or a Simon Bishop of Jerusalem could be very misleading.
36. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Talmud, page 1627.
37. The next signatory is 'Azariyah, an alias which the archangel Raphael assumes in Tobit (5:12). While the next name, Yirmiyah, does not appear per se in any known list of angels, the Second Commonwealth form Jeremiel is considered an archangel equated with Remiel and with Uriel, described as the "lord of all souls awaiting resurrection." [G. Davidson, A Dictionary of Angels, page 159]. Such an equation is made in II Esdras 4:36.

It is also possible that the triplet serayah 'azaryah yirmiyah might also allude to the belief that the angels will raise the 'azarah, the temple complex, if it is threatened with destruction, an image which is reflected in Jewish folklore of that period. In any event, such a reading of this part of the list of signatories would make it a precise response to Agrippa's appeal to desist from rebellion for the sake of the sanctuary and the holy angels, who have a stake in its preservation.

Continuing down the list, we can identify Pashur as one of the seven exalted throne angels who guards the veil of the Seventh Heaven. (Ibid., page 221). While 'Amaryah is not a known angel, 'Imriel is the angelic ruler of the month Sivan, (page 149). Malkiyah [and Malkiel] are also identifiably angels (page 182).

Harim is not recognizable as an angel in any extant list, although Harariel, Hariel, and Haris are known angelic names, (page 135). Mememoth could very well be Mermeoth, one of the nine courier angels, (page 191). While 'OVadyah does not appear in any known angel list, he is, of course, one of the Twelve, and is also mentioned as a divinely sent leader in II Esdras 1:40. Daniel, besides being a crucial biblical figure in late Second Commonwealth Jewish thought, is also a high holy angel, (page 95). While Ginton is not a known angel name, gen and jinn

are frequent elements in angelic names. Barukh is the chief guardian angel of the Tree of Life (page 71). Meshulam can not be presently identified as an angel, although 'Avia might be Avial, who is stationed before the entrance of the Seventh Heaven (page 62). While Miyamin is not a presently known angelic name, it might well be a designation of position or station. Ma'azyah is not a known angel name per se, although it could be a form of Shem-'azya, which is known as such (page 65). While Vilgai is not a recognizable angel name, Phalgus is mentioned by Apollonius of Tyana (page 224). Shem'ayah could be Shem'ael, an archon angel (page 273).

It is interesting to note that no patronym appears in connection with any of these supposed priests in the list of signatories. The only ben in the entire list appears next as a Levite, Yeshu'a ben 'Azanyah, followed by benui mibenay hendad Qadmi'el. Who this Jesus is, is not clear. His father's name seems to mean the Ear of the Lord. If what follows after his father's name is a description, then it might mean "the son among the sons of grace in the presence of God." Qadam 'Eloha was an extremely common way for the targumist to express the manifest God. Yet since this line is possibly garbled, either accidentally or otherwise, it is better to be very circumspect in deciphering it. Jesus, according to first century sources, was a leading angel or archangel, identified with the Logos or the Word (page 159). If this Jesus is a supernatural being, he is apparently being singled out for special treatment by the compiler.

Shevani'yah could be the angel Shevniel (page 271). Hadiyah possibly Hodi'el (page 143). Qelita' is unknown, although the prefix keli appears in four known angelic names. The Aramaic sense of this name seems to be implying some sort of protection. Pelayah might be Peli'el (page 222), or might be a rendition of the term pel'i which is associated with an angel in the Scriptures (Judges 13:18). Hanan could either be Hananel or Hananiel (page 134). Mikha'rehov hashavyah would actually mean Micah is an important comforter, i.e., prophet, whose name appears as a divine leader in II Esdras 1:40. Judging from the aleph in this character's name, we might be in fact dealing with the angel Michael, a key archangel and one of the two psychopompoi, angels sent to comfort the soul of the deceased and escort it to the next world. Zakur could either be Zacharael or Zacharel (page 323). Shereviah would be Serefiel or Sarfiel, whose function it also was to escort souls to the netherworld (pages 258, 267). Shavniyah would be Shebniel. Again Shevaniyah is followed by Hadiyah, possibly indicating that this list is an invocative incantation of some sort. Par'osh might be the angel Farris (page 112). Zatu' would be Zatu'el, one of the twelve angels of vengeance (page 326). Although 'Azgad is not immediately identifiable, no less than twenty-seven angelic names begin with the prefix 'az. Adoniyah would be Adoniel (page 8). Hizqiyah would be Hizkiel, the chief aid to Gabriel in battle (page 141). Hariph is another name for the angel Raphael (page 135). Magpi'ash is unknown, although the prefix mag is fairly common in angelic names, while pi is a root often associated with Raphael and Gabriel (page 226). Pelatyah could be a form of Palit, a title for the angel

Michael (page 220). Hosea is one of the Twelve mentioned in II Esdras I:40.

38. For a discussion of the place of angels in Qumran, see Y. Yadin, Megilat Milhemet Benay 'OR Bivenay Hoseh, Jerusalem, Bialik (1955), pages 209-221. Of crucial interest to our proposed angel list in Nehemiah is Yadin's discussion on page 215, concerning the role of the angels, and the divine Overseer himself, in the battles of the faithful. This, I contend, is precisely the implication of this list in Nehemiah.
39. Jastrow, op. cit., above note 36, page 704.
40. Sifre Numbers 48.
41. For a summary of the problem see H.H. Rowley, "The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah," appearing in the Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume (part 1) Budapest (1948), pages 117-149.
42. H.H. Rowley, "Sanballat and the Samaritan Temple," BJRL, 38 (September, 1955), pages 166-198.
43. C. Roth, "The Zealots and Qumran: The Basic Issue," Revue De Qumran, 2 (November, 1959), page 82.
44. C. Rabin, Qumran Studies, Cambridge, (Oxford University Press, 1957), page 56.
45. G. Driver, op. cit., page 309.
46. Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing, Glencoe, (The Free Press, 1952), page 25.
47. Ibid., page 36.



## Chapter IV

### Classical Perspectives on Nehemiah

The character of Nehemiah as presented in the massoretic work bearing his name is certainly quite a heroic one. He is a pious Jew, an arch-nationalist, a brilliant administrator, a courageous fighter, and a shrewd judge of politics. His writing is moving and poignant, communicating the passions of a man and his times. The author of Nehemiah's memoirs is also something of a man of letters, demonstrating an extensive knowledge of "biblical literature," and an intimate familiarity with the so-called "Holiness Code" in Leviticus, Deuteronomic prose and poetry, and major prophetic themes as found in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Our Nehemiah also shows himself to have a familiarity with the halakha of his day, such as the laws of the Sabbath, the sabbatical legislation, laws of tithings and other sacred taxation, laws governing personal status, ta'anit practices, liturgical modes, the laws concerning the proper way of expanding Jerusalem, the prescribed ways of imposing the ban, the ways of validating priestly purity, details of sacrificial law, and other fairly technical points of rabbinic law.

Considering this, one would expect the sages to have embraced Nehemiah as one of their own, as a talmid hakham, to say the very least. Surprisingly enough, however, they do not, at least not apparently. On the contrary, the hakhamim often give the impression that he was rather unworthy of distinction and memorialization, despite what is said of him in Ben Sirah and by Josephus. Thus we find in Bab Sanhedrin 93b:

...all the words of Ezra were said by Nehemiah ben Hakhaliyah. Yet concerning Nehemiah ben Hakhaliyah, what is the reason for a (biblical) book not being named for him? R. Yirmiyah bar Abba said: Because he held himself in esteem, as it is written: 'Remember me, O my God, for good!' (Neh. 13:31)...R. Yosef said: Because he spoke detrimentally against those who had come before, as was said, 'Now the earlier governors who were before me...' (5:15).

Apparently the sages held his apparent immodesty against him, applying the maxim which can be found in Bab. Rosh Hashanah 32b: "One does not memorialize the memory of a single individual, even for the good, as, for example, 'Remember me, O my God, for the good!'" Perhaps another rabbinic criticism of Nehemiah can be inferred from their treatment of Mordecai. In Bab. Megillah 16b, in commenting on the Esther passage: "And esteemed by the majority of his brethren" (10:3), the Talmud remarks that the word "majority" implies that an element of the Sanhedrin in his day broke with him, seemingly because he became involved in politics. This point is substantiated by their comparison of Ezra 2:2 with Nehemiah 7:7. In Ezra, Mordecai, assumed to be the same character who appears in Esther, is mentioned after four other names, while in Nehemiah, he appears after five, indicating a drop in status. It is possible that the sages held certain of Nehemiah's political exploits against him.

This "snubbing" of Nehemiah the man is quite apparent in the rabbinic sources. On a number of occasions, such as in Bab. Sukah 37a, Tanhuma<sup>1</sup> and Bab. Yebamoth 86b, Nehemiah's deeds and actions are attributed to Ezra, whom the sages held to be their archetype. The Sanhedrin passage cited above clearly indicates that the sages understood it to be Nehemiah who was speaking and acting in the massoretic work which currently bears his name, yet it seems that whenever they cite this work for authority, they attribute it to Ezra. In one curious passage found in Tanhuma<sup>2</sup> the sages even go so far as to interpret the name and title Nehemiah hatirshata' in 10:2 to be referring not to Nehemiah but, rather, to God himself! This is consistent with their general tendency to push him into the background whenever possible.

There appears to be only one location in the Bavli where halakha is linked with the name Nehemiah. Referring to the braitha which severely limits those items which can be handled on the Sabbath, R. Hanina' says: "This mishnah

was taught in the days of Nehemiah ben Hakhaliyah, as it is written: 'In those days I saw in Judea those who were treading in the wine presses and bringing heaps...' (Neh. 13:15). The implication is that Nehemiah established a "fence" around the Sabbath labor regulations in response to blatant violations of the spirit of the day.<sup>3</sup>

It can be noted that Rashi picked up on this general rabbinic tendency concerning Nehemiah. In general, he attributed Nehemiah's words and deeds likewise to Ezra, as can be seen in his comments in Bavli Makot 23b, Bavli Hulin 131b, and in Bavli Sukah 12a.

While the sages overtly and deliberately cover up Nehemiah's personal glory, even going so far as to not name his book after him, they demonstrate what appears to be a pronounced predilection for the book itself. In very many instances the rabbinic sources present the reader with extended citations of Nehemiah. In Bab Rosh Hashanah 3a-b we find Nehemiah 1:1-3 and 2:1-6 quoted in full. In Bab. Qidushin 69b-70a there appear no less than three verses from Nehemiah in their entirety. In Bab. Megillah 3a and 23b we likewise find extended citations from the massoretic Nehemiah. Bab. Besa 15b presents us with R. Eliezer (ben Hyrcannus) quoting Nehemiah 8:10 in full, as if they were his own words. Bab. Sukah 37a, while attributing the quote to Ezra, cites an entire verse from Nehemiah 8, while Bab. Megillah 30b reproduces Nehemiah 9:3 practically in toto. This citation is also presented in full in Bab. Ta'anit 12b. The Tanhuma'<sup>4</sup> cites the complete reading of Nehemiah 10:38. Strikingly, a mishnah in Bab. Shevu'ot 14a offers a nearly word-for-word paraphrase of elements in Nehemiah 12, describing the halakhic way of expanding Jerusalem. In this editorially unusual section of the Talmud we also find a fascinating rabbinic description of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah, indicating an upper and lower city, and a second wall

extending beyond the bounds of the city of First Temple times (Shevu'ot 15b). It seems, the sages are projecting their Herodian city back to the days of the Restoration, completely oblivious to the actual topography of that period as revealed by modern archeology.

Thus, while the sages give the appearance of not liking Nehemiah the man, they certainly seem to have taken to his little book.

Although they gave the impression of not liking Nehemiah, the sages do cast him in a somewhat messianic mold. Bab. Sanhedrin 93b-94a, itself often a rather eschatological work, joins Nehemiah with two other favorite rabbinic messiah-types, David and Hezekiah, and by implication assigns him a certain degree of celestial significance. Bavli Yoma' 69b, by intertwining passages from Nehemiah 8 with Zachariah, gives the strong impression that Nehemiah exorcised the Evil One from the Holy of Holies. This story is also taken up by Bab. Sanhedrin 64a. Baba Bathra 25a implies that it was Nehemiah and his party who discovered the proper direction in which to pray, accounting it for them as merit. In Bab. Benakhot, bar Abbin and bar Zebeda' imply that Nehemiah was a navi, a prophet (13a). Nehemiah's words are repeatedly cited as important sources for even more important halakha.<sup>5</sup>

We are left, then, with an enigmatic phenomenon. The sages say that Nehemiah was not a good example of proper behavior, and present some rather flimsy justifications for their attitude. They then proceed to cite copious amounts of Nehemiah's words, and surround him with some of the most illustrious figures from the Jewish past as they understand it.

It can be argued that this is but an example of an inconsistency of talmudic thinking, as was discussed in a previous chapter.<sup>6</sup> The sages say one thing about Nehemiah, and then turn around and seem to treat him in another way. Their system appears to be very unsystematic, to say the very least.

In trying to account for the sages' disdain for Nehemiah, the man, one must keep in mind that he was, after all, a layman. He was not a king, a priest or a prophet. He could be considered, in rabbinic parlance, a parnas, or even one of the gedolay hador. Nevertheless, despite his zeal and his unquestionable piety, he was not a hakham, not a "sophister." His authority was derived from the rashut, the civil government of his day. While this was also the case with Ezra, Ezra was a priest and a doresh batorah to boot. He was thus analogous to men like Nichodemus and Kalba Savua who were the social and economic elite of the early tannaitic period. On one hand, the sages begrudgingly acknowledged these men's influence and even piety, yet, on the other hand, told some fairly nasty things about them and their families. The same can be said of their attitude towards Hyrcannus, the father of R. Eliezer the Great.

As can clearly be seen in our massoretic Nehemiah, this great layman came and "stole the show" from Ezra, the darling of the Restoration. This also happened towards the end of the Second Commonwealth, when certain "laymen" took control of the religious life of Jerusalem from Yohanan ben Zakai, Shimon ben Gamliel, and their Pharisees, and set Judea on a collision course with Rome. Of course, no one would contend that our Nehemiah was a biryon. On the contrary, he was a great builder and warrior. Nevertheless, while he certainly was not an 'am ha'arets, as the term is commonly used, he was not what the sages would consider to be one of their own, and a model fit for emulation.

The sages understood that Nehemiah tampered with the halakha, and perhaps for this reason they disapproved of him. In Tanhuma Veyehi 8, Yehosua ben Levi remarked that at the time of the Restoration the Holy One sought to cancel the tithing laws, but, citing a passage from Nehemiah 10, the earthly authorities

reimposed tithing on their own authority, and only afterwards was this action endorsed by heaven. Leaving aside the problem this creates in understanding Malachai 2:8, judging from the copious tannaitic declaration concerning the consumption of demai, the sages on the one hand must certainly have approved of this voluntary reimposition of tithing which they by implication attribute to Nehemiah. Yet on the other hand, one of the key facets of Yohanan ben Zakai's efforts in Yavneh was to undo these priestly and levitical prerogatives. Certainly, according to the Pharisees, it would have been better had Nehemiah not acted with such zeal, for it would have spared them a great deal of aggravation. Perhaps this could be one reason why the post-destruction Jewish establishment did not care for Nehemiah.

Rashi, in his comments on B. Makot 23b and on B. Hullin 131b, notes that Ezra in fact elevated the levitical tithings to the level of the priestly terumah. The tosaphists' remarks in B. Yebamot 86b also endorse this point of view, and, following B. Megillah 15a, identify Ezra with Malachai, who, as noted in the previous paragraph, was quite concerned with tithing, as can be seen in Malachai 3:10. Of course, it is quite clear to even the most casual reader that Ezra's name does not appear as such in the list of 'amanah signatories in Nehemiah 10, where the revision in the tithing halakha takes place, elevating the Levites to the status of priests in fiscal matters. Yet heading the list is Nehemiah hatirshata ben Hakhaliyah. No doubt the sages understood Nehemiah to be responsible for this halakhic revision.

That the Pharisees found this bolstering of the tithing system to be oppressive is well attested to in the Talmud and in Josephus' Antiquities.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Josephus openly laments the elevation of levitical status by Agrippa II just before the outbreak of the Great Revolt.

Now, as many of the Levites...persuaded the king to assemble a sanhedrim, and give them leave to wear linen garments as well as the priests: for they said this would be a work worthy the times of his government that he might have a memorial of such a novelty, as being his doing. Nor did they fail to obtain their desire; for the king, with the suffrages of those that came into the sanhedrim, granted these singers of hymns this privilege, that they might lay aside their former garments, and wear such a linen one as they desired; and as part of this tribe ministered in the temple, he also permitted them to learn those hymns as they had besought him for. Now all this was contrary to the laws of our country, which whenever they have been transgressed, we have never been able to avoid the punishment of such transgressions. 8

Josephus, who openly identifies himself with the pharasaic persuasion, decries Agrippa II's levitical novelties, seeing the punishment of Jerusalem as a necessary consequence. It would seem that Nehemiah's levitical novelties were no laughing matter for the Pharisees, for they were strikingly similar to the ones perpetrated by another layman of their own day, Agrippa II, the overseer of the temple of Roman appointment. One wonders why Agrippa's actions were regarded with such dismay, considering that Nehemiah was doing the same in biblical times. Moreover, such levitical abuses are clearly cited in Ezekiel 44:9-14, with the second part of verse twelve neatly echoing the closing lines of the Josephus passage noted above. Ezekiel 44:17-19 dwells on these same linen garments referred to by Josephus, which are to be worn by the Zadokite levitical priests, the ones who did not participate in the levitical abuses. In any event, this matter of the elevation of the levitical prerogatives by Nehemiah could provide an underlying reason why they didn't care for him. Of course, this is just speculation. Even though the sages regarded Nehemiah as in some ways being in the tradition of David and Hezekiah (B. Sanhedrin 94a), not by any stretch of the imagination was he an Herodian tyrant or an Hashmonean sadouki.

Nevertheless, the real reason why the sages did not care for Nehemiah is still wanting. The stated reason, that he held himself in esteem, seems just to be a flimsy pretense, as flimsy as the proffered justifications for Moses not being permitted to enter the Holy Land.

In B. Shevu'ot 15b-16a, between the discussion of the lohesh 'al hamakah and R. Eliezer ben Hyrcannus' description of temple building procedures, another possible reason for the sages' downplaying of the role of Nehemiah can be observed. Nehemiah did his building without the benefit of of Urim and Tummim (and thus, according to Rashi, without the Ruah Haqodesh), without the authority of a King, and possibly without the guidance of a prophet and a sanhedrin. While the saboraic editorial remarks indicate that Nehemiah acted lesorekh hasha'ah, in effect, the result was that many pilgrims to Jerusalem ate their ma'aser sheni and their other godashim qalim within his walls, yet not within the precincts of the older city which were in fact the only locations of 'admat qodesh, since they were consecrated legitimately. In other words, the Talmud is implying that Nehemiah in some way caused the 'amey ha'arets to sin, even though he was acting in accordance with the needs of the day. Differing with this point of view is R. Eliezer the Great, who teaches that the building efforts of the 'olay hagolah were accomplished in such a way as to insure a complete sanctity to their work. Disagreeing with him is R. Yehosuah ben Perahyah, the spokesman for ben Zakai's regime in Yavneh, who contends that the builders' work did not impart a sanctity to their expanded Jerusalem. Subsequent amoraic discussion of this issue indicates a genuine confusion.

In any event, leaving aside the heretical R. Eliezer's opinion, we can note that the official view, as expressed by R. Yehosuah, is that Nehemiah's



building efforts led Israel astray. This could be another possible reason why he has not been held in high esteem by the rabbis. Of course, this also is simply conjecture, especially since Nehemiah's name is not specifically mentioned in this sugyah, even though he is quoted and even paraphrased in the relevant mishnah.

Yet lacking any solid evidence concerning why the sages did not care for Nehemiah the man, it must remain a mystery. We can paraphrase the preacher who speaks in Tanhumah Vayehi 8, who immediately prior to his discussion of R. Yehosua ben Levi's teachings concerning Restoration halakha, cites Proverbs 25:

The glory of God is to keep things hidden but the glory of kings is to fathom them... Be in no hurry to tell everyone what you have seen, or it will end in bitter reproaches from your friend. Argue your own case with your neighbor, but do not reveal another man's secrets, or he will reproach you when he hears of it and your indiscretion will then be beyond recall... Like a city that is breached and left unwalled is a man who cannot control his temper.

The preacher then goes on to cite Proverbs 11: Holekh rakhil megaleh sod, vene'eman ruah mekhaseh davar.

The present writer would welcome assistance from anyone who can fathom why the sages did not like Nehemiah. Although we have guessed at some possible reasons, such speculation wants for a cornerstone.

1. Shelah 5; Vayehi 8.
2. Veyehi 8.
3. See Weisberg, "Rare Accents, etc." (below, note 5), part II, page 237, for a discussion of the verse.
4. Vayehi 8.
5. As Weisberg has noted in his article "The Rare Accents of the Twenty One Books," JQR 56, (July 1966), pages 313-336; JQR 57, (January 1967), pages 227-238, Nehemiah contains more rare accents (5) than any other massoretic work outside of the Emet triad. Weisberg would contend that this is because Nehemiah has the densest concentration of midrashay halakha in Scripture.
6. See discussion in Chapter II, pages (15-16).
7. XX ix 2-7.
8. Antiquities XX ix 6.

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# Abbreviations

ANT.	<u>Antiquites</u>
A.P.	Aramaic Papyri
ASTI	Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAB	Babylonian Talmud
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
DSS	Dead Sea Scroll
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IGMV	<u>Ignace Goldhizer Memorial Volume</u>
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
Neh.	Nehemiah
PEFQS	Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly
RQ	Revue de Qumran
VT	Vetus Testamentum

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New Testament Citations are from the New English Bible. Old Testament references are the author's rendition. All Josephus passages and citations follow the Whiston edition. Dead Sea Scroll passages, unless otherwise indicated reflect the author's translation.

