

# 40.day2021

JUL 11

WEEK 3 | BLOCK BY BLOCK

## HOLY WORK

NEHEMIAH 3:1-5, 27 | Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. <sup>2</sup> And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. <sup>3</sup> The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. <sup>4</sup> And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. <sup>5</sup> And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord... <sup>27</sup> ...the Tekoites repaired another section...as far as the wall of Ophel.

**N**ehemiah rallies: *Come, let us build* (2:17). The leaders respond: *Let us rise up and build* (2:18).

And immediately, Eliashib the high priest rises up and builds the Sheep Gate (3:1).

Why does Eliashib make the first move? Being Israel's highest spiritual leader, it's only right that he and his fellow priests should set the pace. But why do they start at the Sheep Gate? Being near the temple, this is holy ground. In consecrating this segment of the wall, they sanctify the entire construction, making it holy work from the ground up. Well done, Eliashib!

But this high priest may have had other motives. In launching the next phase of Jerusalem's restoration, he is being true to his noble heritage. He is the grandson of Joshua the high priest who served with Governor Zerubbabel in the rebuilding of the temple (12:10; EZRA 3:2; ZECH 3). Furthermore, by starting in an area most exposed to Samaritan attack, he puts himself in harm's way. Thus, he sets the morale for everyone else.

By throwing his weight behind the newly appointed Nehemiah, Eliashib shows that he is no control freak. He is not too high and mighty to

cooperate with a newbie, and a layman at that! His humble posture and initiative spark a groundswell of unity and effort by God's people. Mount Zion awakes to a rattling of stones, like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. Blessed Eliashib! We need you today.

But there is a fly in the ointment. In striking contrast to Eliashib's humility, the leaders of Tekoa *would not stoop to serve their Lord* (5). Why like that? The Hebrew text literally says, they *did not bring their necks to the work*. This signifies pride. Apparently, the VIPs of Tekoa begrudge the influence of this new leader who speaks with a Persian twang. Shame, shame. So unlike Eliashib!

But there is a silver lining. In contrast to these stiff-necked nobles, the heartlanders of Tekoa stick their necks out and build, not one, but two sections of the wall (5, 27). Blessed Tekoans! We need more like you. You also gave us the humble shepherd and prophet, Amos. He would have been proud of you. Would he be proud of us?

## WALL OF DUTY

■ *Come, let us build!* Our government is pulling out all the stops to battle Covid, re-invent the economy, protect livelihoods, and prepare the road map to see Singapore through the endgame. Will the Church arise to match their zeal and pay attention to leaning walls and battered gates in our city? May we prioritise time, energy, and resources to protect life and rebuild lives:

- Ageing Population | Elder Care
- Culture of Life | Abortion
- Disadvantaged and Marginalised
- Guest Workers Welfare
- Marriage, Family and Home
- Mental Wellness and Suicide
- Next Generation | Youth at Risk
- Public Morality | Sexuality
- Vulnerable Children | Foster Care

■ Remember the Nehemiahs who bear these burdens of national concern on their hearts and on their shoulders. Acknowledge the hand of God on them: Champions-with-a-holy-cause. Restorers of broken walls. Repairers of breaches. Builders of hope. Beacons

of light. Pillars of Truth. Towers of righteousness. Not only are they true to the heritage of nation builders in the past, they are also privy to the real battles that must be fought in real time today. Such Nehemiahs deserve our wholehearted support. First and foremost, back them up in prayer. Pray: Lord, you know each one by name. Lavish on them your extravagant grace. Multiply their allies. Double their talent pool. Triple their resources. Sharpen their vision. Deepen their faith. Enlighten their minds. Energise their spirit. Strengthen their hands. Send favour from every direction. Reward their labour with phenomenal success!

■ *Let us rise up and build.* For each leaning wall and battered gate, ask God to raise up the Eliashibs to partner with the Nehemiahs: Secure leaders who make the first move regardless who is calling the shots. Top guns who put aside their differences and preferences, and throw their weight behind the new leaders sent from God, honouring their call and backing their every move. People of influence from all walks of life who catch the vision and take their cue from the Nehemiahs of the hour, promoting their cause as if they were their own. Motivators and mobilisers who believe, rally the ground, set the pace, boost morale, and spark a groundswell of holy work.

■ Don't be a fly in the ointment, lest we go down in history like those stiff-necked nobles of Tekoa who *would not stoop to serve their Lord* (5). Stick your neck out before it gets stiff. *If serving is beneath you, leading is beyond you* (TOBY MAC). May we never be so blinded by pride that we diminish ourselves by refusing to put our shoulders to the holy work. Be the silver lining instead. Allow God to stir our hearts to do double-duty—making up for others who shirk their responsibility. Round up family and friends. May we all persevere together without judging others or drawing attention to ourselves.