

## ROOT OF THE MATTER

NEHEMIAH 7:5-72 | Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it: <sup>6</sup> These were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. <sup>7</sup> They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua [the high priest].... <sup>66</sup> The whole assembly together was 42,360.... <sup>70</sup> Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver. <sup>71</sup> And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. <sup>72</sup> And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments.



enealogy is Theology. And we yawn. The Jews know better. The genealogy in

Nehemiah 7 also appears in Ezra 2. It documents the first generation of returned exiles who gave so generously of themselves and their wealth to rebuild the temple (<sup>70-72</sup>). But why pull up the old list now?

Nehemiah is not a contractor in wall construction. He came to restore and reform a nation whose mission was disrupted by invasion and captivity. He rebuilt Jerusalem's physical walls in 52 days. Rebuilding Israel's spiritual walls will take him 12 plus years. The wall of stone no longer stands. But the spiritual walls remain. They were built to last.

As a nation-builder, Nehemiah understands that continuity with previous generations is essential to the reconstruction of Jewish life in the new norm. The exile did not eradicate the old norm of Israel's identity, destiny, and mission. That must resume and continue from generation to generation.

Genealogy is Ecclesiology. The root is holy and so are the branches,

provided they stay true to their roots. Even in their homeland, Israel remains a small minority in a sprawling empire that is multiracial, multireligious, and multicultural. Nehemiah brings out the old genealogy in order to secure the spiritual and ethnic boundaries of the Remnant. Their destiny depends on that. Israel must remain Israel truly, set apart by God as a priestly nation to minister to all the other nations of the world (EX 19:5-6; AMOS 3:2).

Genealogy, therefore, is the root of the matter. It re-establishes the link between the pioneer generation that rebuilt the Temple and the present generation that rebuilt the wall. What Zerubbabel's generation started, Nehemiah's generation must continue. To break the link with the past would sever them from the roots that nourish them and the heritage that establishes them.

Therefore, let's not be arrogant. We don't support the root. The root supports us (ROM 11:18). Nehemiah was born in exile. But he never forgot his roots. Have we?

## WALL OF DUTY

■ Blessed are those who remember their roots. *As you move towards the future, have a good sense of your past. You cannot have a very tall tree without deep roots* (CÉSAR PELLI | ADAPTED). Alas for those who forget their roots! In identificational repentance, pray: Lord, forgive our arrogance. We ignore history. We have little or no appreciation for what previous generations have done. Instead of standing on their shoulders, we cling to thin air. Instead of building on their foundations, we start from scratch. Thus we shortchange ourselves and those who come after us. We repent. For the sake of future generations, restore us to our roots that nourish and establish us.

■ Blessed is the generation that is established in the faith, rooted and built up in Christ (COL 2:7). Blessed are those who declare with joy: O Lord our God, you are *the Ancient of Days* (DAN 7:9), *the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End* (REV 22:13). You are a God of the generations, the Sovereign Lord of history. You

weave together stories of men and women, families and clans, tribes and tongues, cities and nations into the tapestry of your grand purpose—from generation to generation.

We remember your pioneer missionaries who sowed the seed of the Gospel on our soil, giving their all and trusting you for the increase. We remember your faithful shepherds and overseers who continued in their footsteps to plant churches, make disciples, raise up leaders, and build institutions that last. We pledge to honour their legacy, deepen our roots, preserve our identity in Christ, and our rich heritage in you.

■ Blessed is Singapore whose Founding Fathers laid an excellent groundwork for nationhood, turning a daunting mess into a dazzling miracle, all within one generation. *This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes* (PS 118:23). We pledge to build on the solid foundations they have laid.

■ Blessed is Singapore whose leaders think in terms of generations. Reflect on the two quotes below:

• *To be clear, we prepare for the future, not only within our own lifetime, but our children's and our children's children... We must do our best to give them the best chance of a better life, whichever way the winds of change blow. What we have inherited in the past, we also owe to the future. This is our moral obligation* (DPM HENG SWEE KEAT).

• *In most advanced countries, citizens today pay for the spending of the past generations. In Singapore, it is the reverse. Citizens today enjoy the benefits of the savings from the past, thanks to the foresight and policies of our founding generation of leaders and people* (DPM HENG SWEE KEAT).

Give thanks to God. Pray for the 4G Team and successive generations: For the political will and wisdom to perpetuate the core values, sound principles, and great legacy of responsible, righteous stewardship.