

# Nehemiah 13:4-31

## Tobiah in a Chamber on the Temple Court

Nehemiah 13:4 – Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah,

7138 [e] qā·rō·wb קרוב [was] allied Adj-ms	430 [e] 'ē·lō·hē·nū; אלהינו of our God N-mpc   1cp	1004 [e] bēt- בית of the house N-msc	3957 [e] be·liš·kaṭ בלשכת over the storerooms Prep-b   N-fsc	5414 [e] nā·tūn נתון having authority V-Qal-QalPassPrctpl-ms	3548 [e] hak·kō·hên, הכהן the priest Art   N-ms	475 [e] 'el·ya·šîb אלישיב Eliashib N-proper-ms	2088 [e] miz·zeh, מזה this Prep-m   Pro-ms	6440 [e] wə·lîp·nê ולפני Now before Conj-w, Prep-l   N-cpc
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"allied" or "related" from *qarob* /kaw-robe/meaning "near", "close relative", "kinsmen"

2900 [e]  
le·tō·w·bî·yāh.  
לטוביה  
with Tobiah  
Prep-l | N-proper-ms

1. Eliashib was High Priest
  - a. One of his responsibilities was to store and distribute the tithe.
  - b. Apparently, there was no tithe to store and so no need for this empty store house
  - c. The storehouse on the temple mount was given to a gentile Tobiah the Ammonite
2. The high priest had failed by:
  - a. Allowing a gentile to be and dwell in the temple courts
  - b. Not collecting the tithe
  - c. Not maintain temple worship, daily temple worship
  - d. Removing the vessels for the Temple and temple mount use from the store chamber
  - e. Allowing the temple court to be restructured and repurposed
3. The high priest Eliashib allowed his grandson to marry the governor of Samaria Sanballat's daughter who was a Samaritan
4. "Related" means "allied", "near", "close relative", "kinsmen"
  - a. Used in Ruth 2:20 to say that Boaz was "related" to Naomi and Ruth.
5. Tobiah had always had support among the elite and leading Jews in Judah. And, had been working with the Jews against Nehemiah and Ezra
  - a. He was an Ammonite
  - b. Neh. 6:17-19
  - c. He had married into a leading Jeish family
  - d. His son had married into another leading Jewish family according to
    - i. Ezra 2:5 – "
    - ii. Nehemiah 3:30 –

13:5 – prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

13:6 – While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king

1. Nehemiah had been governor of Judah for 12 years 445-433
2. Nehemiah then returned to Artaxerxes
  - a. How long was he back in Persia?
  - b. What year did he return to Jerusalem
  - c. Nehemiah had been in Persia (Susa) for 2-5 years? Long enough for Nehemiah's reforms to have been overthrown
  - d. Nehemiah may have returned in 431-428?
  - e. Nehemiah's second term as governor had to be over by 407 BC because according to the Elephantine papyri Bagohi (Bagvai) was then the governor of Judah.
  - f. Nehemiah had left his brother Hanani in charge while he was away. Hananiah is recorded in the Pssover Papyrus of 419 BC.

3. The storeroom was in the inner court of the temple.

4. The 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes is between April 1, 433 to April 19, 432 BC.

5.

**13:7 – and came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.**

**13:8 – And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber.**

1. In another shocking situation Ezra sat appalled in Ezra 9:3, but here Nehemiah was physically violent and very temperamental expressing his indignation
2. This parallel Jesus action on the temple mound with the moneychangers
3. "Household goods" is vessels, equipment, implements and basically his movable property.

**13:9 – Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.**

1. Out of the chamber into the courtyard or out into the street outside the temple courts
2. Tobiah probably accepted some aspect of the Lord and Jewish tradition, but it was in a heretical form that twisted Jewish religion

### **Levites Not Supported and Temple Neglected**

**13:10 – I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field.**

1. Basically Nehemiah found the Levites broke. Their storehouses depleted and no one refilling them with the tithe.
  - a. This is part the problem of the people
  - b. Second, this is the fault of the Levites for not collecting
  - c. Ultimately it is the failure of the High Priest and the leadership (elites) in Judah
  - d. These people didn't care, or where more concerned about some other commitments or taxes that may have been influenced by Tobiah and Sanballat?
2. The Levites who were hesitant to return to Judah from Persia are shown here to be in tune with the commitment of the people. They may have known no one would take care of them and they were better off working for a living in Babylon, Susa, etc.
3. The Levites were in the rural areas working secular jobs and working in their fields as farmers to supply for themselves and their families, instead of working in the Temple of the Lord.
4. Nehemiah went out to the rural areas to retrieve the Levites

13:11 – **So I confronted** the officials and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” And I gathered them together and set them in their stations.

1004 [e] bêt-	5800 [e] ne-’è-zab	4069 [e] mad·dû·a’		559 [e] wā-’ō-mə·rah,	5461 [e] has·sə·gā·nīm,	854 [e] ’et-		7378 [e] wā-’ā·rī·ḇah	
בֵּית־	נֶעְזַב	מָדוּעַ		וַאֲמַרְהָ	הַסֹּגְנִים	אֶת־		וַאֲרִיבָהּ	11
the house	is forsaken	why		and said	the rulers	with		so I contended	
N-msc	V-Nifal-Perf-3ms	Interrog		Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs   3fs	Art   N-mp	Prep		Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs   3fs	

*“to take one’s stand”; the Levites were reinstated in their positions*

	5977 [e] ’a-mə·dām.	5921 [e] ’al-		5975 [e] wā-’a-’ā-mi·dēm		6908 [e] wā-’eq·bə-ṣēm,	430 [e] ha-’ē-lo·hîm;
	עַמְדָם:	עַל־		וַאֲעִמְדֵם		וַאֲקַבְּצֵם	הָאֱלֹהִים
	their place	in		and set them		and I gathered them together	of God
	N-msc   3mp	Prep		Conj-w   V-Hifil-Conseclmperf-1cs   3mp		Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs   3mp	Art   N-mp

1. Nehemiah confronts the officials, and the wealthy
2. “Confront” or “Contend” is rib or rub which means “to strive”, “to contend”.
  - a. This refers to a legal case or a law suit
  - b. Nehemiah is not merely chewing them out and calling them names
  - c. Nehemiah is pressing legal charges (backed up by the Persian court system and the Jewish Law of the Land) to hold the leadership responsible for failure: Failure before:
    - i. The Lord
    - ii. Artaxerxes
3. Haggai had rebuked the people 100 years before for also neglecting the rebuilding of the temple.

13:12 – **Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.**

1. This was the Jewish tithe and offering of the Law of Moses
2. The people were still paying a tax to Persia
3. This verse addresses the giving and receiving of the tithe.
4. The next verse addresses the organization and distribution of that tithe

13:13 – **And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for they were considered reliable, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers.**

1. Nehemaih appointed as treasurers over the storehouses to organize and distribute the tithe:
  - a. Shelemiah the priest
  - b. Zadok the Scribe
  - c. Pedaiah the Levite
  - d. And, assistant Hanan

13:14 – Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

1004 [e] bē-bēt	6213 [e] 'a-sî-tî	834 [e] 'ā-šer	2617 [e] hă-sā-day,	4229 [e] te-mah	408 [e] we'al-	2063 [e] zōt;	5921 [e] 'al-	430 [e] 'ē-lō-hay	li	2142 [e] zā-ke-rāh-
בֵּית	עָשִׂיתִי	אֲשֶׁר	חֲסֵדִי	תִּמְחָה	וְאֵל-	זֶאת	עַל-	אֱלֹהֵי	לִי	זְכֹרְהָ 14
for the house	I have done	that	my good deeds	do wipe out	and not	this	concerning	my God	me	Remember
Prep-b   N-msc	V-Qal-Perf-1cs	Pro-r	N-mpc   1cs	V-Hifl-Imperf.Jus-2ms	Conj-w   Adv	Pro-fs	Prep	N-mpc   1cs	Prep   1cs	V-Qal-Imp-ms   3fs

*hesed* is "covenant love". Nehemiah's good deeds were his response to the covenant relationship he had with YHWH

4929 [e] ū-bē-miš-mā-rāw.	430 [e] 'ē-lō-hay
וּבְמִשְׁמָרָיו:	אֱלֹהֵי
for its services	of my God
Conj-w, Prep-b   N-mpc   3ms	N-mpc   1cs

1. Nehemiah was doing this for the Lord and his hope was in a future reward. Meaning, Nehemiah was not doing this for favor from men and was losing out on position and power in this age for being faithful to God.
2. Nehemiah's strength to obey was reinforced by the fact and the prayer that God would remember and reward him according to his sacrifice and commitment to the plan of God.

## Sabbath Violated

13:15 – In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food.

1. Out in the countryside of Judah people were not observing the Sabbath
  - a. They were treading grapes on Sabbath
  - b. They were taking product to market on Sabbath
  - c. They were setting up shop in Jerusalem on Sabbath
2. Tyre is about 12 miles north of the Israel's northern border in Phoenicia (Lebanon)

13:16 – Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself!

1. The Phoenicians were seafaring traders with North Africa, Greece, the islands and as far a way as Tarsish (Spain) and more.
2. So, not only did they Tyrians have fresh fish to sell, they had goods, wares and commodities from all over the Mediterranean world.
3. In many cases The Tyrians were the only source of these goods coming to Judah and Jerusalem from the Sea.
4. The fish would have been sardines either dried, smoked or salted

13:17 – Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day?"

1. Once again, Nehemiah goes after the leaders, the elite which are the "nobles"
2. "Confront" is once again "rib" which refers to a legal case or a law suit against the nobles.
3. "profaning" or "desecrating" means to turn what is sacred, holy and set apart for the Lord into common use for normal, personal, human purposes.

- a. It does not mean to use it in a profane way other than to use it in a common way after it has been set apart for the Lord.

13:18 – **Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”**

1. The people are repeating the sins of their forefathers from which the nation is just recovering.

13:19 – **As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day.**

7676 [e]	6440 [e]	3389 [e]	8179 [e]	6751 [e]	834 [e]	1961 [e]
haš-šab-bāt,	lip-né	ye-rū-šā-lim	ša-‘ā-ré	ša-lā-lū	ka-‘ā-šer	way-hī
הַשַּׁבָּת	לִפְנֵי	יְרוּשָׁלַם	שַׁעְרֵי	צָלְלוּ	כְּאֲשֶׁר	וַיְהִי 19
the Sabbath	before	of Jerusalem	at the gates	it began to be dark	as	So it was
Art   N-cs	Prep-l   N-cpc	N-proper-fs	N-mpc	V-Qal-Perf-3cp	Prep-k   Pro-r	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms

3808 [e]	834 [e]	559 [e]	1817 [e]	5462 [e]	559 [e]
lō	‘ā-šer	wā-‘ō-mə-rah,	had-də-lā-tō-wt,	way-yis-sā-gə-rū	wā-‘ō-mə-rah
לֹא	אֲשֶׁר	וְאָמַרְהָ	הַדְּלֹתוֹת	וַיִּסְגְּרוּ	וְאָמַרְהָ
not	that	and charged	the gates	and to be shut	that I commanded
Adv-NegPrt	Pro-r	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmpf-1cs   3fs	Art   N-fp	Conj-w   V-Nifal-Conseclmpf-3mp	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmpf-1cs   3fs

3808 [e]	8179 [e]	5921 [e]	5975 [e]	5288 [e]	7676 [e]	310 [e]	5704 [e]	6605 [e]
lō-	haš-šə-‘ā-rīm,	‘al-	he-‘ē-maḏ-tī	ū-min-nə-‘ā-ray,	haš-šab-bāt;	‘a-ḥar	‘ad	yip-tā-ḥūm,
לֹא-	הַשַּׁעְרִים	עַל-	הָעֵמֶדֶתִי	וּמִנְעָרַי	הַשַּׁבָּת	אַחַר	עַד	יִפְתְּחוּם
no	the gates	at	I posted	And [some] of my servants	the Sabbath	after	till	they must be opened
Adv-NegPrt	Art   N-mp	Prep	V-Hifil-Perf-1cs	Conj-w, Prep-m   N-mpc   1cs	Art   N-cs	Adv	Prep	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp   3mp

7676 [e]	3117 [e]	4853 [e]	935 [e]
haš-šab-bāt,	bə-yō-wm	maš-šā	yā-bō-w
הַשַּׁבָּת:	בְּיוֹם	מִשָּׂא	יָבֹוא
the Sabbath	on day	burdens	[so that] would be brought in
Art   N-cs	Prep-b   N-msc	N-ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms

1. Nehemiah enforced the law, but also practically made it impossible to break the law by locking the gates and guarding the gates

1. Days were counted from sunset to sunset (as did Babylon; Egypt counted from sunrise to sunrise.)
2. The priest would announce the beginning of the Sabbath with a trumpet blast

13:20 – **Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.**

13:21 – **But I warned them and said to them, “Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.**

1. Some tried to set up outside the gates so the Jews would come out to them.
2. Nehemiah threatened physical violence against them if they did it again.
3. Nehemiah was the governor and had Persian power plus Levitical forces to enforce the Law

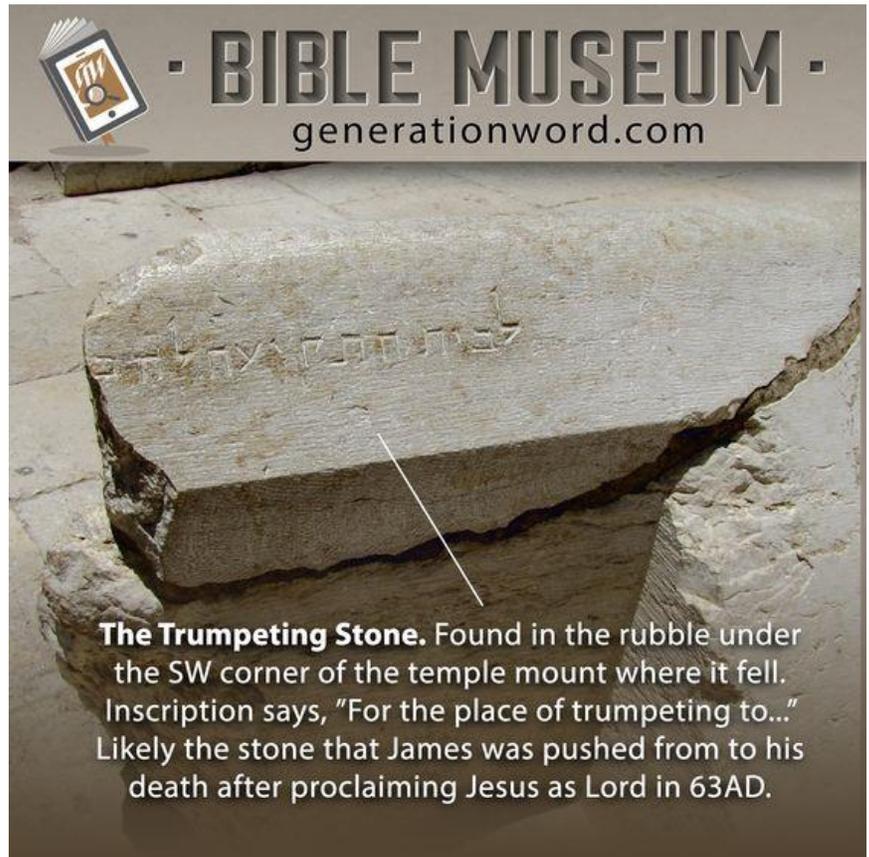
13:22 – **Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.**

### **Intermarriage with Foreign Women and Children Who Did Not Speak Hebrew**

13:23 – **In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.**

13:24 – **And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.**

13:25 – **And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.**



**13:26 – Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin.**

**13:27 – Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?”**

### **Priesthood Challenged through Marriage to Sanballat's Daughter**

**13:28 – And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me.**

1. Sanballat was the Governor of Samaria

## **Summary of Nehemiah's Work and Closing of Book**

**13:29 – Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.**

**13:30 – Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work;**

**13:31 – and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits.**

**Remember me, O my God, for good.**