

**13** On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God,<sup>2</sup> because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup> So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, *was* allied with Tobiah. <sup>5</sup> And he had prepared for him a large room, where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded *to be given* to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests. <sup>6</sup> But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, <sup>7</sup> and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the *house* of God. <sup>8</sup> And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. <sup>9</sup> Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

### 1. Purity of worship

- a. Ch. 13 begins with a reading from the Law of Moses
  - a1. Dt. 23:3-5 prohibits Moabites from entering the temple
  - a2. Moab had prohibited Israel from crossing their territory to go into Canaan
- b. King Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel
  - a1. Balaam was a prophet of God from northern Mesopotamia (near Assyria)
  - a2. God allowed Balaam to go, but forced him to speak only blessings upon Israel (3 times)
  - a3. Finally, Balaam instructed Balak how to make Israel sin through Moabite harlots, which led to God punishing Israel at Baal Peor
- c. There is no time mentioned here, but it probably happened before Neh. left to report to the king
- d. The prohibition of Moabites entering the temple apparently involved Moabites who practiced idolatry
  - a1. Ruth was a Moabitess who was accepted into the community of believers & entered into the lineage of Jesus Christ
  - a2. True believers were accepted from all people

- e. The reason this segment is here is obvious
  - a1. When Neh. comes back from reporting to the king, the pagan Tobiah has a room in the temple
  - a2. *On that day...* probably refers to the day of the celebration of dedicating the wall
  - a3. As they worshipped in the temple courtyard, the Levites were reminded that pagans had no place in the temple (Samaritans & others had tried to convince Ezra to allow them to help build the temple)
- f. Israel had come out of Egypt with a *mixed multitude* who were worshippers of YHWH, but foreigners who kept both their pagan worship & worship of God were barred

### 2. The return of Nehemiah

- a. After 12 years as governor (445-433 BC) Neh. returned to report to the king, leaving his brother, Hananiah, to rule
  - a1. We don't know how long the absence was
  - a2. After a while Neh. asked permission to return
- b. Neh. expected Jerusalem to be as he left it
  - a1. Neh. & Ezra had set up worship & renewed cov.
  - a2. Provision was made for priests, Lev., & singers
- c. Upon arriving in Jer., Neh. found Tobiah in a temple storeroom, large enough for grain, wine, oil, & utensils
  - a1. Tobiah & his son had married into prominent Jewish families
  - a2. He now had several rooms in the inner court
- d. Tobiah had much support among Jews (6:17-19)
  - a1. Friendship with the world is enmity against God (Jm. 4:4)
  - a2. By allowing Tobiah in the temple court in the rooms set apart for provisions, worship & the covenant were compromised
- e. Tobiah had a connection to the High Priest Eliashib (same word used that Boaz was *closely associated* with Naomi & Elkanah in Ruth 2:20)
- f. Neh. commanded that all of Tobiah's possessions be tossed out & that the rooms would be cleansed

### 3. Compromise to ruin

- a. Any compromise with the world would bring corruption of faith (syncretism = worship of multiple god + God)
- b. The Law set a rigid standard for worship & fellowship
- c. The fact that Tobiah was a friend & relative was immaterial to his exclusion from the fellowship of believers