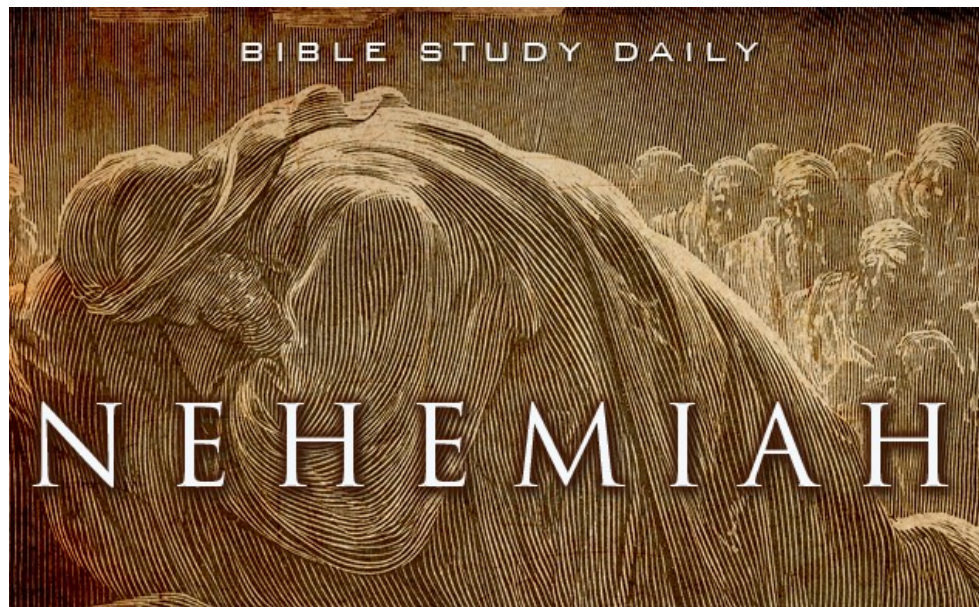




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Nehemiah as well as my study notes for the book.

Name

The book of Nehemiah is named for Nehemiah, the central character of the book. The Talmud and the Hebrew Bible combine the books of Ezra and Nehemiah into a single volume. However, there is evidence that they were originally written and intended to be separate books. The lists in [Ezra 2](#) and [Nehemiah 7](#) are basically the same and it would be unusual to include to of the same lists in the same book.

Author

Authorship of Nehemiah is attributed to Nehemiah himself based on fact that most of the book is a first-person memoir.

Genre

History

Literary Form

Narrative

Time Frame

Ezra's return and his reforms in Jerusalem began in 458 B.C. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem 14 years later in 444 B.C. The book was probably written shortly after the conclusion of the events described in the book, or approximately 430 B.C.

Emphasis

The emphasis of Nehemiah is on:

- To document the return of the Jews from captivity led by Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem.
- To document the restoration of the Jewish nation under Nehemiah's leadership.
- To trace the genealogy of the returned exiles.
- To document the reforms undertaken, the spiritual rebirth, the backsliding, and the revival of the people.

Outline

- Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem 1:1 – 6:19
- Restoration of the Community and Reforms 7:1 – 13:31

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 1-3)

Nehemiah 1

Note: Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. At the time when the book of Nehemiah opened, he was serving the king in the winter capital of Susa.

In verses 1-3 in the month of Chislev (November-December) of the 20th year of Artaxerxes (444 B.C.) some men from Jerusalem came to Susa and reported that Jerusalem remained in poor condition with the walls broken down and the gates burned.

In verse 4-11 this news upset Nehemiah greatly. He fasted and prayed for days to the Lord asking God to forgive the people for their sins and grant him success in his plan.

Verse 5 Nehemiah acknowledged the greatness of God and His covenant with the people.

Verses 6-7 Nehemiah confessed the sins of the people and himself, referring to himself as God's servant.

Verses 8-11 Nehemiah reminded God of His promise to restore those who repented and asked God to give him success.

Nehemiah 2

In verses 1-4 in the month of Nissan (4 months later) King Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah was depressed and asked him what was wrong.

In verses 4b-6 Nehemiah prayed to God and asked Artaxerxes permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city.

- The king asked how long Nehemiah would be gone and Nehemiah gave him a specific time (we don't know what).

In verses 7-8 additionally, Nehemiah asked for letters for safe travel, and timber to be provided from the king's forest.

- Artaxerxes granted all of Nehemiah's requests, because as Nehemiah says, "the good hand of my God was upon me" (Nehemiah 2:8).

In verses 11-20 Nehemiah went to Jerusalem and stayed three days without saying why he was there.

- Then at night, he took a small group out on a tour around the city to assess the work that needed to be done.
- After completing the assessment, he gathered the priests, nobles, officials, and Jews to challenge them to begin the rebuilding process in

earnest.

- There were detractors (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem) who opposed the work, but Nehemiah prevailed in securing the agreement of the people to rebuild.

Nehemiah 3

Nehemiah 3 lists the people who participated in the repair and rebuilding of the city walls and gates.

In verses 1-2 the record begins with Eliashib the high priest and the other priests who rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They also rebuilt part of the city wall.

In verses 3-5 the sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. Meremoth, Meshullam, Zadok, and the Tekoites made repairs next to Hassenaah.

In verses 6-12 repairs made on the West Wall:

In verses 6-8 Joiada and Meshullam repaired the Old Gate. Next to them repairs were made by Meliath, Jadon, and the men of Gibeon and Mizpah. Next to him was Uzziel, and Hananiah who made repairs to the wall.

In verses 9-12 Next to them was Rephaiah, Jedaiah, Hattush, Malchijah, and Hasshub. Beside him was Shallum.

In verses 13-14 repairs made on the South Wall:

- Hanun and the people of Zanoah rebuilt the Valley Gate, 500 yards of the wall, and the Dung Gate.

In verses 15-27 repairs on the Southeast Wall:

- In verses 15-16 Shallun repaired the Fountain Gate and repaired part of the wall. Next to him, Nehemiah (son of Azbuk) repaired part of the wall.
- In verses 17- 19 Levites repaired part of the wall, and Hashabiah repaired walls in his district. Next to him, other Levites made repairs and Jeshua made repairs up to the armory.
- In verses 20-27 Baruch, Meremoth, some priests, Benjamin, Hasshub, Azariah, Binnui, Palal, Pediah, the temple servants, and Tekoites each repaired a section of the wall.

In verses 28-32 repairs on the Northeast Wall:

- In verses 28-30 priests made repairs on the wall opposite their own houses. Next to them Zadok, Shemaiah, Hananiah made repairs to another section of the wall.
- In verses 30b-32 next to them Meshullam, Malchijah, the goldsmiths, and merchants completed repairs on the wall up to the Sheep Gate.

Note: Those who participated in the rebuilding included the high priest and other priests, gatekeepers, women, families, temple servants, merchants, and goldsmiths. Only a few of the nobles refused to help in the



work.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Once again, the Lord's hand was on Nehemiah in securing permission to rebuild Jerusalem and to obtain provisions from the king's resources. I am impressed by Nehemiah humbling himself before the Lord, praying on behalf of the people and the city of Jerusalem. Leaders today would do well to imitate this humble man of God!*

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 4-6)

Nehemiah 4

In verses 1-3 when Sanballat (a Samaritan official in Persia) heard about the rebuilding he mocked the Jews. Tobiah (an Ammonite who was possibly governor and a Jew) also taunted the people rebuilding the wall.

Note: There are two long prayers in Nehemiah (1:4-11 is private, and 9:1-37 is public). There are also six short prayers in Nehemiah (4:4-5, 5:19, 6:9, 6:14, 13:14, 13:22). Nehemiah's short prayers were either to ask God for help or to ask God to note the effort of the people to fulfill God's purpose.

In verses 4-5 Nehemiah prayed to God asking for the insults of Sanballat and Tobiah to be returned to them.

In verse 6 the people continued rebuilding the wall.

In verses 7-9 Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites were angry about the work continuing so they surrounded Jerusalem plotting to fight against the exiles.

- Nehemiah prayed and set in place guards to protect the city.

In verses 10-14 the people themselves became discouraged because there was so much work to do and they were being attacked by their enemies.

- Nehemiah stationed guards to protect the workers at the lowest points of the wall.
- Nehemiah reminded everyone they were building for the Lord.

In verses 15-21 as if external issues were not enough, even some of the Jews started to lose confidence in their ability to finish the wall.

- Nehemiah encouraged the people and took precautions against a surprise attack by having half of the people stand guard while the other half worked.
- Nehemiah also put in place a warning system so if they were attacked a trumpet would sound an alarm for the people to gather for the fight.

Nehemiah 5

Nehemiah 5 describes an issue of social injustice that Nehemiah had to face.

In verses 1-5 the wealthy Jews had taken advantage of the poorer people by charging them interest on loans, which led to people losing their land and being sold into slavery.

Note: Jews charging interest to other Jews was a direct violation of Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-38, and Deuteronomy 23:19-20.

In verses 6-11 Nehemiah was angry and confronted the nobles and officials telling them they needed to restore the people's land and repay interest.

- He had them swear an oath to the Lord that they would do as they had promised, and even called out a curse on those who did not keep their promise.

In verses 12-13 the people agreed that they would return the property and the interest. He even summoned the priests and made the people take an oath before the Lord.

In verses 14-19 Nehemiah set an example to the nobles and officials in that for 12 years as governor of Jerusalem he did not take a salary that was due him for being governor of the people.

- Instead, he paid for his own expenses, and even personally paid for the care of his servants and some 150 men who ate at his table.

Nehemiah 6

The plot to assassinate Nehemiah.

In verses 1-9 when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Nehemiah's other enemies heard that the work on the wall had been completed, they conspired against Nehemiah pretending to befriend him.


- Four times they sent a messenger asking to meet, and Nehemiah told them he could not stop working to meet with them
- Then they sent a letter accusing the Jews of planning a rebellion against the king of Persia and asked to meet to discuss the issue. Nehemiah told them they were only spreading rumors trying to intimidate the people into not finishing the work.

In verses 10-14 then Sanballat and Tobiah hired a Shemaiah the prophet, to scare Nehemiah into hiding in the temple so they could speak out against him.

- Nehemiah refused to be intimidated, knowing that Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him to make him look weak and discredit him as the people's leader.

In verses 15-19 despite all the taunts, threats, conspiracies, and false accusations the people under Nehemiah's leadership had rebuilt the walls of the city in only 52 days.

- During the time of the rebuilding, many of the nobles of Judah sent letters to Tobiah, and he sent letters to them.
- The nobles kept trying to influence Nehemiah on Tobiah's behalf saying he was a good man. All the while, Tobiah had been sending letters to Nehemiah to intimidate him.



Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *How often when God gives us a grand vision of the work He has for us do we endure opposition! We should anticipate the opposition and realize that it comes in many forms as the enemy is always trying to keep us from fulfilling God's purpose in our lives.*

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 7-8)

Nehemiah 7

In verses 1-3 still concerned for the people's safety Nehemiah put Hanani (his brother) in charge of Jerusalem, and Hananiah commander of the fortress because he feared God more than most men.

- Nehemiah ordered guards be at the city gates at all times, and that the gates not be opened until late morning and closed again in the evening.

In verses 4-7a God put it in Nehemiah's mind to register the people of Jerusalem by genealogy.

- He started with those who had returned first (exiles deported by King Nebuchadnezzar) with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bihvai, Nahum, and Banaah.

In verses 7b-65 the balance of chapter 7 records the names of the families of exiles of the people, the priests, the Levites, temple servants, and those who could not prove their lineage.

- The assembly was 42,360 people (v. 66), not including 7,337 slaves, and 245 singers.
- The family leaders gave a significant amount of gold and silver to the temple treasury.


Nehemiah 8-10

These three chapters reflect the form of a typical suzerain-vassal treaty of the ancient Near East: Nehemiah 8 the covenant is read, Nehemiah 9 their sin is confessed, and Nehemiah 10 the promise of obedience.

Nehemiah 8

In verses 1-12 the seventh month, which was an important month with the New Year's celebration, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths the people gathered together in front of the Water Gate.

- Ezra, the priest, brought the people together in an assembly to read from the book of the Law.
- The assembly included all those who could understand (this would likely include children of a certain age).
- When Ezra opened the book the people stood out of respect.
- They bowed their heads and worshiped.

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- Levites helped the people understand as the Law was being read.
 - Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites taught the people that this was a Holy day; they should not mourn or weep, but be joyful.

In verses 13-18 on the second day, the heads of households, priests, and Levites came together to study the Law with Ezra.

- They found instructions in the Law to celebrate the Festival of Booths (Leviticus 23:37-43) which was to be celebrated from the 15th to the 22nd of the seventh month.
- So the people built booths and lived in them for seven days with great rejoicing and Ezra read from the Law each day.
- On the eighth day, they held a solemn assembly.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *I love the scene as we see it in Nehemiah 8 with the entire assembly of people including older children coming together to hear the word of the Lord. The people stood as the Word was being read and worshiped the Lord. The Word was read with leaders ensuring the people understood what they were being taught. Finally, the household leaders, priests, and Levites all came together to study the Law, then took action with the people based on what they learned.*

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 9-10)

Nehemiah 9


In verses 1-5 on the 24th day of the seventh month, the day after the Festival of Booths, the people remained another day.

- They were fasting with sackcloth and dust on their heads as a sign of mourning over the sin in their lives and their spiritual condition.
- They spent a quarter of the day confessing their sins, a quarter of the day reading from the book of the Law, and a quarter of the day worshipping the Lord.
- Eight different Levites stood on a platform before the people and cried out loudly to the Lord.
- Then they instructed the people to stand and praise Yahweh.

Note: Nehemiah's public prayer in verses 9-37 is a penitential prayer (a prayer expressing regret or sorrow for sin). The prayer recognizes God's grace and mercy in caring for the Israelites and confesses their sin in rejecting God.

In verses 6-31 the Levites pray on behalf of the people:

- v. 5b is the call to worship.
- v. 6 recognizes God as the creator of the universe.
- vv. 7-8 God selects Abraham, established the covenant.
- vv. 9-11 Exodus from Egypt.
- vv. 12-15 Description of the wilderness wanderings.
- vv. 16-17 Israelites rebelled against God.
- vv. 18-21 The mercy of God & leading His people.
- vv. 19-25 The giving of the promised land.
- vv. 26-31 Israelite's rebellion and disobedience.
- In verses 32-37 the Levites conclude the prayer with a petition to God:
- v. 32 God is gracious in keeping His covenant with His people.
- vv. 32-35 God is righteous and faithful despite the unfaithfulness of His people.
- vv. 36-37 the people are in great distress. They are slaves in the land because of their sins.



In verse 38 the leaders, Levites, and priests made a written binding agreement to be faithful to the Lord.

Note: In the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah 9:38 is the first verse of Nehemiah 10 since it clearly relates to the establishment of the covenant.

Nehemiah 10

Nehemiah 10:1-29 begins with a list of 84 individuals with their families who agreed to the covenant. The list begins with the governor, priests, Levites, leaders of the people, then the rest of the people who swore the oath.

In verses 30-39 the balance of Nehemiah 10 describes the details of the vow; their commands and prohibitions:

- v. 30 Do not intermarry with foreigners.
- v. 31a Do not work on the Sabbath.
- v. 31b The land is to rest on the seventh year.
- v. 32 Taxation for the upkeep of the temple.
- v. 34. The fire must be kept burning on the altar.
- vv. 35-39 A tithe of the first-fruits and first-born.

Note: Ultimately, the people swore not to neglect the house of God (v. 39). The people had done everything they could to get right with God, to restore their relationship. In this oath, they were promising to continue to obey the Laws of God.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *The people of Israel that returned to Jerusalem faced great opposition, yet they persevered in their work. That determination and faith that God's hand would remain on them brought success. But all this work to rebuild their relationship with God would mean little if they did not continue to honor God and keep His commandments.*

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 11-12)

Nehemiah 11

Note: The memoir of Nehemiah resumes in Nehemiah 11.

Note: Because the city had been destroyed very few people actually lived in Jerusalem. Now that the walls and gates had been repaired the city could support a larger population.

In verses 1-4 the leaders of the people stayed in Jerusalem and the people cast lots for one in every ten people to remain in Jerusalem. The remaining exiles returned to live in their original family towns.

- The heads of the province, the priests, Levites, and temple servants lived in surrounding towns and came to Jerusalem when it was their time to serve.

In verses 4b-21 is a record of the people of Judah and Benjamin's living in Jerusalem, along with the priests, Levites, and gatekeepers.

- vv. 4b-6 the descendants of Judah.
- vv. 7-9 the descendants of Benjamin.
- vv. 10-14 the priests.
- vv. 15-18 the Levites.
- vv. 19-21 the gatekeepers.

In verses 22-24 Uzzi was head of the Levite singers in Jerusalem and Pethahiah was the king's agent for the people.

In verses 25-36 the people who lived in the villages of Judah and Benjamin are listed:

- vv. 25b-30 Judah's descendants who lived in surrounding villages.
- vv. 31-36 Benjamin's descendants who lived in surrounding villages.


Nehemiah 12

In verses 1-11 is a list of the priests and Levites who accompanied Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 3:2) to Jerusalem.

- vv. 1-7 the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.
- vv. 8-11 the leaders of the priests in the days of Jeshua.

Note: The priests listed in Nehemiah 12:10-11 are all high priests.

In verses 12-21 is a listing of the leaders of the priests in the days of Joiakim.



In verses 22-22 the leaders and families of priests and Levites were recorded while Darius lived.

Note: There are three Persian kings named Darius and scholars are unsure which Darius verse 22 refers to. Most likely the reference is to Darius II who ruled Persia from 423-404 B.C.

In verses 23-26 the leaders and families of the Levites were recorded in the book of Historical Records.

Verses 27-43 records the triumphant dedication of the wall of Jerusalem.

- Nehemiah gathered the people together for the dedication.
- He brought the leaders to the top of the wall along with the singers.
- They gave thanks to the Lord and then set out walking around the city.
- One group followed Nehemiah, the other group started out in the opposite direction following Ezra.
- They walked around the city on top of the wall going in opposite directions and met at the temple.
- They offered many sacrifices and sang songs of thanks to God.

In verses 44-47 on the day the wall of Jerusalem was dedicated, Hezekiah placed men in charge of the temple storehouse rooms.

- These rooms held the contributions from the people for the support of the priests and Levites.

Note: The order for the provision of offerings for the priests and Levites was established by King David some 500 years earlier, and put into practice by his son, Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:11).

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *God's hand was on the people of Israel as they labored to rebuild the temple. Once the work was completed they rightly celebrated with great joy the work that had been accomplished giving thanks and praise to God.*
- *How often do we run from one work of ministry to another without stopping to recognize God's hand in our lives? Whatever we accomplish we accomplish through His grace, and we should always stop to give thanks to God for His power and strength in our lives!*

What I Noticed Today (Nehemiah 13)

Nehemiah 13

Note: The opening of chapter 13 is a bit confusing. It says, “On that day” (some translations “At that time”) which makes you think it is connected to the previous chapter and the description of the dedication and service at the temple.

Note: However, we see in Nehemiah 13:6 that the events described in verses 1-5 occurred while Nehemiah was back in Babylon with King Artaxerxes. So at some point after completing the rebuilding of the wall and the dedication celebration, Nehemiah returned to King Artaxerxes.

In verses 1-3 during his absence, the people returned to some of their former practices.

In verses 4-5 Eliashib the priest, who was in charge of the storehouses allowed his relative, Tobiah the Ammonite to live in one of the empty storehouse chambers in the temple.

Note: Ammonites were not even supposed to enter the temple (Deuteronomy 23:3-6), much less be allowed to live there.

Note: The fact that the temple storehouse rooms were empty also speaks to the fact that the people had not been providing for the priests and the Levites the way they had promised.

In verses 6-7 Nehemiah had returned to serve King Artaxerxes in the 32nd year of his reign (432 B.C.)


- Nehemiah asked the king for a leave of absence to return to Jerusalem and when he arrived he found out about the evil Eliashib had allowed.

In verses 8-14 Nehemiah was greatly upset with what he learned when he returned to Jerusalem:

- Nehemiah had all of Tobiah’s things removed and the temple storehouse rooms purified.
- Then he confronted the leaders for neglecting the tithes and offerings that were promised.
- He put trusted men in charge of the storehouse and the distribution of food.

In verses 15-18 Nehemiah also discovered the people were working on the Sabbath.

- They were treading out grapes in the winepress, bringing stores into the city on donkeys, and buying and selling.

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- Nehemiah rebuked the leaders reminding them how their ancestors had angered God by profaning the Sabbath.

In verses 19-22 foreign merchants were allowed to enter the city with their wares on the Sabbath.

- Nehemiah had the city gates closed at the beginning of the Sabbath and told the merchants not to return until the Sabbath was over.
- Nehemiah had the Levites purify themselves and guard the gates to keep the Sabbath holy.

In verses 23-30 Nehemiah found the people had intermarried with foreign women again.

- Some of their children were speaking the language of their wives and were not even familiar with their native language.
- He reminded them how even Solomon, as great as he was, was led astray by foreign women who practiced other religions.
- He charged them once again not to marry foreign women, not to give their sons and daughters in marriage to foreigners.
- Even Eliashib, the high priest's, grandson had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite who had objected to the rebuilding of the city.

In verses 30-31 Nehemiah prayed for the Lord to remember His covenant with the priests despite the fact they had defiled the priesthood.

- Nehemiah purified the priests and Levites and re-established the requirement for the people to bring offerings in support of the priests and Levites.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Nehemiah worked so hard to rebuild the temple and restore the people's relationship with God. How frustrating it must have been to return after an absence of a few years to see so much of what had been put in place cast aside and forgotten.*
- *It reminds me that we are literally only one generation away from complete apostasy. If we fail to teach our children the language of God, they will grow up not knowing or understanding Jesus our Savior.*