

they would walk in God's Law" (9:38, 10:29).

Note the seven provisions of this covenant:

(1) not to marry heathens, v.30; (2) to observe the Sabbath, v.31a; (3) to observe the Sabbath year, v.31b; (4) to pay temple tax; vv. 32,33. (5) to supply wood for temple altar, v.34; (6) to give the priests and Levites their due, vv. 35-38; (7) not to forsake God's house, v.39.

### III. Reforming the Nation -- chapters 11 - 13

**Ch. 11** Provision made to bring one-tenth of the population into the city to live.

**Ch. 12** The dedication of the wall.

(Apparently after this Nehemiah returns to Shushan; then returns to Judah a second time as governor in chapter 13).

**Ch. 13** Corrections of laxities about tithes, Sabbath, and marriages. (Note: The book of Malachi appears to be contemporary with Nehemiah's second term as governor.)

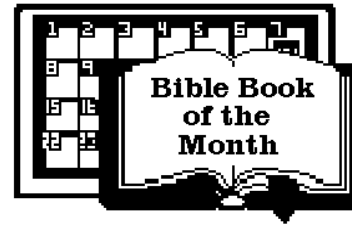
### IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah stands as perhaps the greatest book every written about leadership. From the book we learn the principles that every leader must strive to emulate, whether it is concerning "leadership" in the home; the church; the community; or the nation!

1. Nehemiah shows us how *to plan*--
2. Nehemiah teaches us how *to organize*--
3. Nehemiah teaches how to *integrate the duties* of various people.
4. Nehemiah shows the important (and how) of motivating people.

One dominating feature of the book is the importance of prayer and its factor in our daily life. The book contains the longest prayer in the Bible, and we learn much from it.

-- Windell Gann



# Nehemiah

## Background Study Sheet

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The northern ten tribes of Israel fell into Assyrian Captivity in 721 BC and the southern nation of Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC. Their wickedness and idolatry had brought this judgment of God upon them. Following 70 years of captivity thousands of exiles returned to Judah.

1. Zerubbabel led the first return and rebuilt the temple.
2. Ezra led the second return and rebuilt the people.
3. Nehemiah returned and rebuilt Jerusalem's wall.

In 536 BC the first group returned to Judah under the leadership of Zrubbabel (Ezra 1-6). Over a period of years and tremendous opposition from the Samaritans, the returnees eventually succeeded in rebuilding the temple in 516 BC.

About 57 years after the dedication of the temple a second group of Jews returned, led by Ezra (Ezra 7-10). Arriving on the scene he found the Jews in Israel in a state of spiritual and moral degradation. They had intermarried with pagan neighbors and were participating in their pagan practices. Through Ezra's faithful teaching the majority of these people turned from their sins and once again followed God's will for their lives.

About 444 BC (14 years after Ezra's return) Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and God used him to guide Judah in rebuilding the city's walls and in reordering the social and economic structure of the people. What he accomplished in a brief period of time was an incredible feat. How he accomplished this goal is one of the major emphasis in the book of Nehemiah.

**AUTHOR:** The author of the book is Nehemiah himself. Much of the book is a first-person account of the circumstances surrounding his return to Jerusalem. Nothing is known about Nehemiah's early years or family background except that his father's name was Hachaliah (1:1) and that he had a brother named Hanani (1:2).

Possibly Nehemiah's great-grandparents were taken into captivity when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Nehemiah was probably born in Persia sometime during or soon after Zerubbabel's governorship in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah had risen to a position of prominence in his pagan environment. He was serving King Artaxerxes as his personal cupbearer (1:11; 2:1). This important position in the king's court give insight into Nehemiah's life and character. A mighty monarch such as the king of Persia would select for that position a man who was wise and discreet, and consistently honest and trustworthy. Nehemiah's position alone reveals much about his intellectual capabilities and emotional maturity.

**DATE:** The book covers about a 12 year period of Nehemiah's first term as governor (ch. 1-12). Nehemiah returned to the King's service in Persia for an unknown number of years and then return for a second time as governor (ch. 13). Nehemiah probably wrote the book that bears his name soon after all its events were completed. This means the book was written about 430 BC or shortly thereafter.

**PURPOSE:** A great revival had taken place upon Ezra's arrival, but we again find the people in a very depressed condition. The temple had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel, beautified by Ezra, but the people are persecuted by their adversaries and unable to rebuild the wall of the city (Neh. 1:3). They are in "great affliction and reproach." Ezra is still present as a priest and teacher but now Nehemiah comes as governor with official instructions to rebuild the city (2:5). The first step is to rebuild the wall (2:17). The book tells how, under Nehemiah, the walls are rebuilt and the people revived.

**The Book of Nehemiah**

**THEME:** Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.  
1:3; 2:13; 4:6; 6:15; 12:27

**KEY VERSE:** 4:6 (6:15-16)

**KEY WORDS:** Wall = 32 times ; build = 23 times.

**OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH**

**I. Nehemiah Returns and Rebuilds the Wall-- ch. 1-6**

**Ch.1** Parts of the book are in the first person, being direct quotations from Nehemiah's official reports. Nehemiah learns of the affliction of his people in Judah.

Note: Nehemiah was a man of prayer, patriotism, action, courage, and perseverance. His first impulse always was to pray (1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 6:9, 14). He spent 4 months in prayer before making his request to the king (1:1, 2:1).

**Ch. 2** Nehemiah is sent to Jerusalem and makes his plans.

**Ch. 3** Building of the wall and gates.

Note: "Stairs that go down from the city of David" (v. 15) "bend in the wall" (v.25) "tower that stands out" (v.26) are remains that may now be clearly detected.

**Ch. 4** The old-time enemies of the Jews bitterly opposed the rebuilding of the wall. They mobilized their armies and marched against Jerusalem. But Nehemiah, with faith in God, skillfully arming and arranging his men drove straight ahead with the work day and night.

**Ch. 5** The work hindered by internal selfishness and greed that Nehemiah had to combat.

**Ch. 6** The wall was finished in a remarkable 52 days and Jerusalem was again a fortified city.

**II. Spiritual Revival (chapters 7-10)**

**Ch. 7 & 8** After the wall was built, Nehemiah and Ezra gathered the people together to organize their national life. Ch. 7 is about the same as Ezra 2 giving a list of those who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

Then for seven days every day from early morning till midday Ezra and his helpers "opened the Book of the Law, and read in the Law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." This public reading and exposition of God's Book brought a great wave of repentance among the people, a great "revival" and a solemn covenant to keep the Law, as noted in chapters 9 & 10.

**Ch. 9 & 10** In deep penitence and great earnestness, they "made a sure covenant, and wrote it, and sealed it, and entered into an oath and curse, that