

# Nehemiah

## Original Historical Setting

**Author:** Probably Ezra

**Written:** Perhaps around 425 B.C

**Audience:** Probably Israelites living in Jerusalem who have returned after being exiled.

**Occasion:** To record the events occurring in the land of Israel at the time of the return from captivity and subsequent years, continuing from the end of the period covered in Ezra.

### **Timeline:**

- 458 BC – Ezra leads second wave of returning exiles
- 444 BC – Nehemiah leads third wave of returning exiles
- 443 BC – Jerusalem walls reconstructed
- 425 BC – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem after being away in Persia

## World Events that occur simultaneously

- 448 BC – Pericles rebuilds Greek Parthenon after it was destroyed by the Persians in 480 BC
- 445 BC – 30 year truce between Athens and Sparta begins
- 441 BC – The Athenian prize for drama is won by the playwright, Euripides
- 440 BC – Greek philosopher Heracleitus is the first man to declare that dreams are not journeys into the supernatural but retreats into a personal world

## Genre/Literary style

Mainly Nehemiah's memoirs and official lists written in Hebrew

## Key text(s)

2:17 – Come, let us rebuild the walls

8:6 – The people respond with “Amen, amen!” upon hearing Ezra read the laws God had given them through Moses

## Features and Structure

- Along with the book of Ezra there are many striking lists: Wall builders Ch 3; Exiles who returned Ch 7; Covenant signers Ch 10; Citizens of Jerusalem and other towns Ch 11; Priests and Levites Ch 12
- Nehemiah can be divided into **3 sections:**
  - Ch 1-7 Return with Nehemiah and rebuilding of walls**
  - Ch 8-10 Ministry of Ezra and covenant renewal**
  - Ch 11-13 Dedication of walls and Nehemiah's 2<sup>nd</sup> term as governor**

## What to look for

- Make note of how many times and in what situations Nehemiah prayed.
- Notice the leadership skills exhibited by Nehemiah. Many point to Nehemiah as an extraordinary example of what skills a good leader should possess.
- It is amazing that with outside opposition and internal conflicts and apparent plans to attack and kill Nehemiah, the walls were built in just 52 days!

## Interesting facts

- There are ancient records outside the Bible that identify two of Nehemiah's opponents—Sanballat and Tobiah—as well as Nehemiah's brother, Hanani.
- A cupbearer often did more than bring the king his wine and taste it to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Many became trusted confidants of the king and wielded considerable influence.
- This book recounts the fulfillment of prophecies made by Daniel (roughly 100 years before) and Zechariah (roughly 40 years before) concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.
- Nehemiah Niccum goes by the nickname, Nemo.

## Memory Verse: Nehemiah 9:6