

NEHEMIAH: Revival From The Ruins

AUTHOR: Nehemiah and Ezra are believed to have co-authored this book¹. Nehemiah's name means "Yahweh comforts"

- Nehemiah serves as governor of Jerusalem twice (445-433 and 424-410BC); Ezra serves as the priest of Israel.

DATE: The events in this book take place over a span of nearly 20 years, from roughly 445-420BC.

AUDIENCE: Ezra and Nehemiah were written to the people of Israel who returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile.

PURPOSE: To encourage Israel to persevere in hope, repent in humility, and joyfully honor God by obeying His Law.

KEY TERMS / PHRASES: These terms are repeated in Nehemiah and are important to understanding the book.

- "wall" [x32] a wall provided Israel protection from their enemies, it had been torn down, Nehemiah's mission is to rebuild it.
- "work" [x24] Nehemiah rallies the nation to diligently invest their efforts into rebuilding Jerusalem's wall.
- "law" [x23] ignoring God's Law led to captivity, but embracing it is central to the restoration process.
- "pray" [x4] Nehemiah is a man of prayer who constantly turns to God for wisdom, assistance and praise.²
- "enemies" [x8] God and His people are constantly opposed by those who hate righteousness and love evil.
- "my God / our God" [x30] Nehemiah and the people have been brought back not only to the land, but personally to God

HISTORICAL TIMELINE FROM EZRA TO NEHEMIAH

605-586BC – Judah taken into captivity in 3 waves by Babylon King Nebuchadnezzar; temple destroyed (586BC; 2 Chron. 36:17-21)

539BC – King Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonian King and took over his vast empire (Dan. 5:30-31)

538BC – King Cyrus issued a decree that the Jewish exiles were free to return to their ancestral home (2 Chron. 36:22, Ezra 1:1)

537BC – The 1st group of 49,897 exiles (Ezra 2:64-65) returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6) led by Zerubbabel, Sheshbazzar and Jeshua

536-515BC – Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem (prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the work - Ezra 5:1)

485-464BC - Events in the book of Esther took place in Persia to recount God's faithfulness to the Jews who remained there.

458BC – Ezra led a 2nd smaller wave of a few thousand Jewish exiles out of Babylon and back to Jerusalem (Ezra ch. 7-10).

446/444BC – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem with a 3rd small group of exiles (2:11), rebuilds the wall (6:15), sees revival (ch. 7-12)

433BC – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to continue the work for Artaxerxes I (Neh 13:6)

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING NEHEMIAH'S DAY

1. Israel's capital is Jerusalem which is a vassal state under the control of the Persian King.
2. Most, but not all Jews were exiled to Babylon / Persia. Some were left behind and remained in the land.
3. When the Jewish exiles returned to the land, they faced opposition from enemies, particularly the Samaritans who lived there.
4. When the exiles returned to the land, they discovered that the distinctiveness of the Jews who were not deported had been compromised. Many had intermarried with non-Jews, which was forbidden in the Law (Ezra 9-10, Nehemiah 13:23-29).
5. God called Ezra (priest) to bring the community back to covenant faithfulness as given in the Torah.
6. God called Nehemiah (governor) to rebuild Jerusalem's wall, giving the city security from its enemies.
7. The repopulation of the Promised Land was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy (Isa. 40:1-11, Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10)

¹ The 1st person pronoun "I" shows up x113 (ESV) and Nehemiah is referred to in the 3rd person x4 in Ch. 8-12.

² Nehemiah's prayers: 1:4-11, 2:4, 4:4, 4:9, 5:19, 6:9, 6:14, 9:1-38, 12:40-43, 13:14, 13:22, 13:29, 13:31

OUTLINE OF NEHEMIAH: RETURN, REVIVAL, REJOICING

(1:1-7:73) NEHEMIAH'S RETURN AND RECONSTRUCTION

1:1-11 – Nehemiah's Prayer for God to Pardon Sin and Provide Success

2:1-8 – Nehemiah's Prayer Answered and Preparations Awarded

2:9-20 – Nehemiah Inspects the Wall and Inspires the Workers

3:1-32 – Nehemiah Entrusts the Work to the People

4:1-6:14 – Nehemiah Faces Opposition with Faith and Courage

6:15-7:4 – Nehemiah's Completion of the Wall Brings Praise and Persecution

7:5-73 – Nehemiah Recalls the Return Under Zerubbabel

(8:1-10:39) EZRA'S REVIVAL AND RENEWAL

8:1-12 – Ezra Proclaims the Law to the People

8:13-9:37 – The People Recount God's Faithfulness and Confesses their Rebellions

9:38-10:1-39 – The People Renew the Covenant with God

(11:1-13:31) ISRAEL'S RESETTLEMENT AND REJOICING

11:1-12:26 – A Record of Repopulated Jerusalem

12:27-47 – Nehemiah Dedicates the Wall with Great Rejoicing

13:1-31 – Nehemiah's Final Reforms

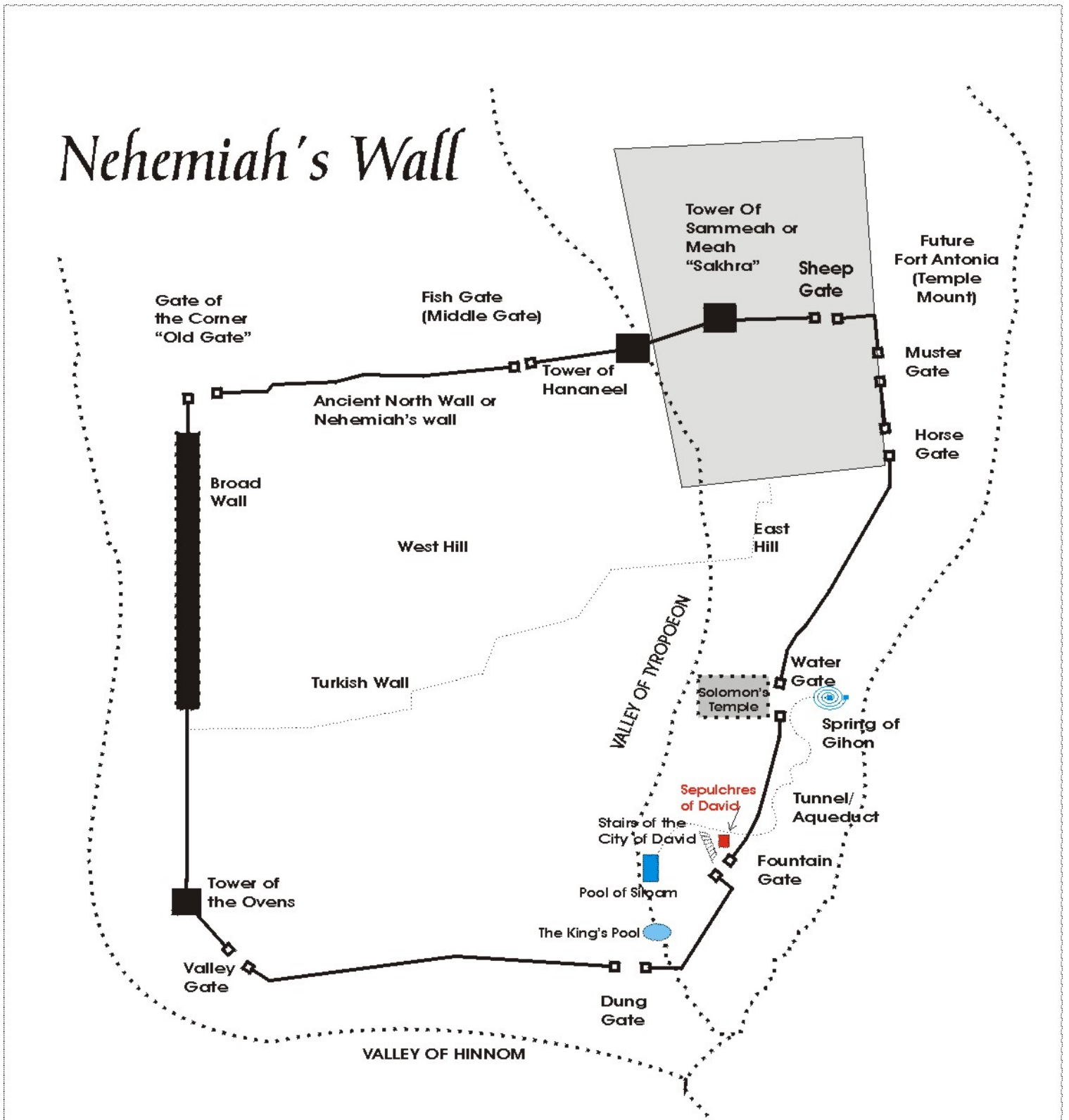
HEBREW CALENDAR OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Hebrew Month	Modern Month	Farm Season	Climate	Feasts / Festivals
Nisan / Abib (Religious New Year)	March/April	Barley Harvest	Latter rains	14 th - Passover (Feast of Unleavened Bread) 21 st - First Fruits
Iyyar	April/May	General Harvest		
Sivan	May/June	Wheat Harvest Vine Dressing	Dry Season	6 th – Pentecost (Feast of Weeks)
Tammuz	June/July	Early Grape Harvest		
Ab	July/August	Harvest: Grapes, Figs, Olives		9 th - Destruction of Temple*
Elul	August/Sept	Summer Fruit		
Tishri (Civil New Year began on 1 st)	Sept/October	Plowing, Olive Harvest		1 st – Feast of Trumpets 10 th – Day of Atonement 15 th -21 st – Tabernacles (Feast of Booths)
Marchesvan	Oct/Nov	Olive Harvest, Grain Planting	Early Rains	
Chislev	Nov/Dec	Grain Planting		25- Feast of Dedication* (Festival of Lights, Hanukkah)
Tebeth	Dec/January	Late Planting, Spring Growth	Rainy Season	
Shebat	January/Feb	Late Planting, Winter Figs		
Adar	Feb/March	Pulling Flax, Almonds Bloom		14 th -15 th - Purim*

*indicates that these celebrations were added later and not part of the original biblical mandate

THE CITY OF JERUSALEM DURING NEHEMIAH'S DAY

Nehemiah's Wall



Notes

- Chronology – Joshua (), Judges (), 1 Samuel-2Chronicles (), 586BC (), Ezra (some exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem), Nehemiah (where OT history ends, walls rebuild 440BC)
- Litsts
- Foreground – leaders, priests, levites, Ezra (scribe / priest), Nehemiah ()
- Walls – essential to city for protection (Prov.25:28)...in the East was a picture of the city's glory and the God of that city's glory...but it being torn down was a picture of reproach upon the city and that God.
- Nehemiah was a praying leader
- Nehemiah was an acting leader
- Nehemiah faced great opposition (ch.4) → Zerubbabel had felt this after the foundation of the temple was laid (4:1-3)...Nehemiah was a courageous leader courageous

2nd half of the book of Ezra

Godly Leadership