THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
"Thou Art a God"
Nehemiah 9:15-21

Introduction
1. This entire chapter is a response of praise to the Lord. Provoked by the Levites, the congregation joined with them to review their history and praise the Lord. It should be with us also (Psa. 40:5).
2. Already, they have given thanks for creation (v. 6), His covenant with Abraham (vv. 7, 8), the exodus (vv. 9-12), the giving of the law (vv. 13, 14), and the promise of the land (v. 15). There is more! It all relates to God's provision for the nation. Listen to the reasons for praise.

1. God's PHYSICAL provisions.
      1) Bread. This is a reference to the manna provided by the Lord (Ex. 16). Israel did not know what this was and said so (Ex. 16:15). It is variously described in the Bible (Ex. 16:14; Psa. 78:24, 25; Num. 21:5). At one time it tasted like honey (Ex. 16:31) and another like fresh oil (Num. 11:8). It was God's provision for the nation in the wilderness. There was another provision which is not mentioned here—the quails (Ex. 16:13; Num. 11:31 ff.). This is probably included in the word "bread."
      2) Water. Here is a glorious provision of the Lord in the wilderness (Ex. 17). Right out of a rock, God gave water! Interestingly, it is pointed out that the bread was "for hunger" and the water "for thirst." The needs of the people were met!
   b. Clothes v. 21.
      Two amazing things are mentioned about the clothes: they did not wear out, nor did the shoes cause physical problems for the feet (Deut. 8:4; 29:5). Think of it: no calloused feet in a single pair of shoes for 40 years—that is what the word "swell" teaches. Glory to God. It is no wonder it is recorded that God "sustained them in the wilderness" (v. 21).
That verb means to "nourish." He did just that! This same God is our God!

2. **God's SPIRITUAL provision. v. 20.**

God provided the Holy Spirit for their direction in the wilderness. He was "given" just like He is today (Rom. 8:9). He is a Person, just like He is today (Acts 5:1-11). He instructed, just like He does today (John 16:12-15). The verb "instruct" means to "make wise" (Joshua 1:7, 8). The manifestation of this spiritual provision is seen in the two pillars: cloud by day and fire by night (v. 19). They never got lost with this divine compass!

3. **God's PERSONAL provision. vv. 17, 19.**

Just the rehearsal of the communicable attributes of God here provokes praise to the Lord. Mark them:

a. He is "ready to pardon."
   The major thought here is that God is ready to life up and take away sin! He only has this right (Mark 2:7).

b. He is "gracious."
   This is the Hebrew word which means God is favourably disposed. How glorious a character of our God.

c. He is "merciful."
   This word has its root in a word meaning to soothe or soften. It means to cherish as a mother her infant. What a tender expression about the Lord.

d. He is "slow to anger."
   The verb for "defer" is joined with the noun "anger" (which is really the word "nose") to show that God is long suffering and patient.

e. He is "of great kindness."
   The word here means good will and expresses a zeal toward one, hence, to love a person.

   Note: God did not forsake Israel (v. 17), nor allow her to lack anything (v. 21). This proved His blessed person!

**Conclusion** The saddest commentary on God's provision is that Israel did not respond favourably to it. Israel is described as "dealing proudly, hardening the neck, hearkening not, refusing to obey, not being mindful, appointing a leader other than God, and making an idol" (vv. 16-19). It is hard to believe that such a magnanimous provision should have been so diabolically rejected. Unfortunately, the same grace of God is being despised today by the non-believer and misrepresented by carnal Christians. May this order of events be changed!