

Outline of Nehemiah

The book of Nehemiah continues the account of the return of the exiles by covering the third phase of the return. Following is the timeline of events that help to locate Nehemiah in the larger historical context.

Three Phases of Exile	Three Phases of Return
605 B.C. (Daniel)	538 B.C. (Zerubbabel)
597 B.C. (Jehoiachin)	458 B.C. (Ezra)
586 B.C. (Zedekiah)	444 B.C. (Nehemiah)

In the third phase of the return the rebuilding of the city and the especially the wall is the focus. Nehemiah enacted reforms in the political and economic system as well. The book begins in late 445 B.C. in chapter 1. The decree “to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25) was given shortly later in 444 B.C. You recall that this date is important in Biblical prophecy because 483 prophetic (360-day) years from this decree, Daniel prophesies that “Messiah the Prince” will appear and will be killed (9:25-26).

- I. Third phase of return: Nehemiah leads in rebuilding the wall..... 1:1-7:73
 - A. Nehemiah’s prayer to re-gather Israel around Jerusalem 1:1-11
 - B. Artaxerxes I grants favor to Nehemiah to rebuild the city..... 2:1-10
 - C. Nehemiah convinces the people to build, and opposition..... 2:11-20
 - D. The list of people who built 3:1-32
 - E. Opposition and Nehemiah’s response..... 4:1-23
 - F. Economic reforms (in Nehemiah’s first term as governor) 5:1-19
 - G. More opposition and completion of the wall 6:1-19
 - H. The people who returned in the first phase (Zerubbabel)..... 7:1-73

- II. Further Reforms involving Ezra and Nehemiah 8:1-13:31
 - A. Reading of the Law; re-institution of feast of booths 8:1-18
 - B. Prayer of Levites (review of God’s goodness, confession) 9:1-38
 - C. Resolve to keep the law and provide for Levites 10:1-39
 - D. Census of people living throughout Israel 11:1-36
 - E. Records of priests and Levites who came in the first wave.. 12:1-26
 - F. Walls Dedicated; temple functions re-instituted..... 12:27-47
 - G. More reforms of Nehemiah in his second term 13:1-31

Notes

- ❑ The first 12 chapters cover about one year, 445 B.C. Then there appears to be a long gap, perhaps 20 years, between chapters 12 and 13. Nehemiah served his first term as governor from 445-433 B.C.) and his second term from 424 to possibly as late as 410 B.C. (5:14, 13:6).
- ❑ A set of historical documents called the Elephantine Papyri, discovered in 1903, mention Sanballat and Johanan and also show that Nehemiah was not the governor of Judah after

408 B.C. There are *many* other confirmations of Biblical information—no need to be ashamed of the Bible!

- ❑ Note *how* Nehemiah prays in 1:8-9. What do you notice? Notice also that he is not focused on the land or the city, but on their relationship with God. Yes, the sad state of Jerusalem is the occasion for his prayer, but he hardly mentions that in his prayer.
- ❑ Notice Nehemiah's response (4:4) to the opposition in 4:1-3.
- ❑ Chapters 4-6 are interesting because they give a view of external as well as internal conflict. Nehemiah faced both. See also 6:17-19 for more complicated problems.
- ❑ In chapter 6, the opposition makes up the claim that Jerusalem will revolt against the king (6:5-7). Does this sound familiar? (Ezra 4:12-13).
- ❑ Notice the relationship of Nehemiah 7:64-65 and 2:62-63 (and surrounding verses).
- ❑ Significant verses: 8:8.
- ❑ Notice the emphasis on *understanding* in chapter 8: verses 2, 3, 7, 8, 12. Upon their understanding, they wept (8:9). They also had joy.
- ❑ Nehemiah demonstrates an understanding of history and a desire not to repeat it (13:23-27).
- ❑ There are a number of occurrences of the phrase "Remember...O my God..." Why are these here? See 5:19, 13:14, 22, 29, 31.
- ❑ Also notice some other little prayers Nehemiah offers: 2:4, 6:9.