I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Man

1. The name , means "Comfort of Yhwh" or "(Whom) Yhwh has comforted"

2. A government official, in contrast to Ezra, who was a priest.
   a. His important position allowed him to ask for the position of governor over Judah as a personal favor, and get it.
   b. His character indicates he was willing to take on complicated burdens for the greater good of his people — a 2nd Moses

3. There are a number of similarities between Ezra and Nehemiah.
   a. Both prayer intercessory prayers for the people.
   b. Both rest for 3 days on their arrival in Jerusalem.
   c. Both describe opposition by the Samaritans and their neighbors.
   d. Both deal with the problem of intermarriage with foreigners.
   e. Both books consist of two halves, with a time lapse between

B. The Book

1. The title is taken from its opening sentence and from its chief character.
   a. Some versions it is titled 2 Esdras, and and Ezra is called 1 Esdras.
   b. These are one book in the Hebrew text

2. The book deals with Nehemiah's:

Throntveit, 59. Throntveit argues that chapter 5 should be relocated to the end of the book. This is a highly complex and much disputed issue among scholars. The information provided by T.’s structure makes a strong case. Compare his comments at 51-62 and 122-124. However, it does not offer a satisfactory explanation as to why the material was put in its present location in the first place — something T. admits,

"Why the editor decided to move the concluding episode of this second memoir [i.e., chap. 5; rcb] following Nehemiah 4 is difficult to assess. Perhaps he thought the economic burden of the community, so poignantly portrayed in chapter 5, contributed to the impress of self-sacrifice and diligence evoked by the whole wall-building enterprise"

(124)

Even this problematic solution recognizes the present arrangement of the text "meant something to someone," thus negating the scholar's "right" to revise it. T.’s case is strong structurally, but does not deal with the other issues. Therefore, it has been used above, but with the modifications. His "Ch. 5: Problems of Nehemiah's second period)" has been deleted and chapter 5 has been combined with his "F."
A Hanani's report, Nehemiah to rebuild city, 1:1b-2:8

B Letters to governors vouch for Nehemiah, 2:9

C Opposition, 2:10

D Inspection by night, Jerusalem: reproach, 2:11-18

E Opposition, Geshem charges sedition, 2:19-20

F Wall building, 3:1-32

G Opposition, 4:1

H Ridicule, 4:2-3

I Prayer, 4:4-5

J Wall "joined together," 4:6

J’ Opposition "joined together," 4:7-18

I’ Prayer, 4:9

H’ Ridicule's effect, 4:10-14

G’ Opposition, 4:15

F’ Wall building with defense, 4:16-23

E’ Internal (ch. 5)/external opposition, Geshem charges Sedition, 6:1-9

D’ Nehemiah: threats by night, reproach, 6:10-14

C’ Opposition, 6:15-16

B’ Letters to Tobiah defame Nehemiah, 6:17-19

A’ Hanani placed in charge of rebuilt Jerusalem, 7:1-3

2. By Chapter:

a. The Wall is Rebuilt, and Reforms are Instituted at Nehemiah’s First Visit, 1-7

(1) Ch. 1 Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem’s helplessness.

(2) Ch. 2 Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem.

(3) Ch. 3 The rebuilding of the wall, section by section, is described.

(4) Ch. 4 The enemies try ridicule and rumor to block construction

(5) Ch. 5 Internal difficulties arise and are overcome.

(6) Ch. 6 The enemies resort to tactics of diversion, but the wall is completed.

(7) Ch. 7 Nehemiah finds the list of the first exiles to return.

b. The Law is Read in Public, and its Ceremonies are Resumed, 8-10
(1) Ch. 8 The Law is read, and the Feast of Booths is kept.
(2) Ch. 9 The Levites lead in a psalm of confession
(3) Ch. 10 The people make vows of faithfulness

c. Persons Bound by Vows are Listed, and Reforms on Nehemiah’s Second Visit are Described, 11-13

(1) Ch. 11 The genealogies of residents of Jerusalem and names of other cities are listed.
(2) Ch. 12 The genealogies of priests and Levites are given, and the wall is dedicated
(3) Ch. 13 Foreigners are expelled and religious reforms are instituted to purify the nation.

II. NEHEMIAH HEARS OF JERUSALEM'S HELPLESSNESS, 1:1-11B.

A. Preliminary Questions

1. What were Nehemiah’s feelings toward his brethren in Israel?
2. What was his view of the character of God?
3. What pattern do you see in his prayer that could be of help to you in your prayers to God?
4. What was the immediate objective of his prayer?

B. Outline: Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem helplessness, 1:1-11b

1. Report on Jerusalem, 1:1-4
2. Nehemiah’s prayer, 1:5-11a
3. Identity of Nehemiah, 1:11b

C. Report on Jerusalem, 1:1-4

1. Verse 1: The words of Nehemiah begins autobiographically
   a. Chislev is the 9th month; corresponds with December

4
b. **Twentieth year** (explained more fully in 2:1) is the that of Artaxerxes Longimanus I (465-424) — 445 BC.

   (1) This is 13 years after Ezra’s start for Jerusalem
   (2) Or 12 years after the conclusion of Ezra’s book
   (3) 35 years from Esther
   (4) 141 years from the 3rd Exile in 586

c. **Susa** was located in Elam, 200 miles east of Babylon — Persian kings maintained a residence ruled from their

2. **Verse 2: Hanani** — Nehemiah’s own brother, Cf. 7:2 — Nehemiah asked 3 part question:

   a. **The Jews that survived**
   b. **Those who had escaped the captivity**
   c. **About Jerusalem**

3. **Verse 3: the answer**

   a. Combines the 1st two — **The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame**

   b. Shifts to the 3rd — **the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire**

   c. This could not reference the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar 141 years before (586), contra Ratzlaff, because it does not explain Nehemiah’s response

   (1) "Rather, we must look to the events resulting from the correspondence in Ezra 4:7-23 and dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I. The destruction reported to Nehemiah must have taken place sometime after Ezra's mission in the seventh year of that reign and before the delegation headed by Hanani came to Susa. This . . . would fully account for Nehemiah's surprise and distress in that he would
immediately realize that his Persian master was responsible for the condition of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. ³

(2)  "Was 'the broken wall' the result of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587? Or were some walls built at a later time, such as in the episode mentioned in Ezra 4:12? Nehemiah seems to have been surprised and appalled; therefore it is reasonable to suppose that Ezra 4:12 refers to a partial building of walls at some time after the first return in 538 that had been destroyed, perhaps by Rehum and Shimshai when they interceded according to Ezra 4:23." ⁴

4.  Verse 4: Nehemiah's reaction — I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying — is perfectly understood — because without walls the city would have no defenses

D.  Nehemiah's Prayer, 1:5-11a — is a noble as Ezra's, Ezra 9:6-15

1.  This prayer is probably "a summary of Nehemiah's struggles with God over the four-month gap between his conversation with the delegation from Jerusalem and his audience with Artaxerxes." ⁵

2.  The prayer's structure

   A  Invocation, 5-6a
   B  Confession: Israel's sin, 6b-7
      X  Appeal to the covenantal promise of return, 8-9
   B'  Confession: God's redemption, 10
   A'  Invocation with supplication, 11a

3.  This is the first of many of Nehemiah's public/private prayers

   a.  1:4-11: upon hearing the news of Jerusalem —days in prayer

³Throntveit, 66-67; cf.

⁴Breneman, 170.

⁵Throntveit, 65; structure, 64
b. 2:4: prayer before answers the question, **What do you request?**

c. 4:4-4: imprecatory prayer response to Sanballat and Tobiah’s ridicule

d. 4:9: prayer for protection at the threat of attack

e. 4:19: prayer requesting God remember his work

f. 6:9: prayer for success in building the wall

g. 6:14: imprecatory prayer requesting the enemies reap what they sowed

h. 13:14: prayer for God to remember his deeds

i. 13:22: prayer for God to remember his deeds

j. 13:29: intercession for the Levites and their duties

k. 13:31: prayer for God to remember him.

4. **Verse 5:** Nehemiah praises

   a. God's greatness — the **great and awesome God**

   b. His character of loving kindness — who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments

5. **Verse 6** speaks of Nehemiah’s persistence in prayer — **before you day and night** — and his identification with their sins — we have sinned against you. **Both I and my family have sinned.**

6. **Verse 7** enumerates their sins of both commission and omission — offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments

7. **Verses 8-9** Nehemiah, showing great familiarity with the Torah, reminds God of his promises
a. If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you, Lev 26:3
b. But if you return to me . . ., Deut 30:2-3
c. I will gather them from there and bring them, Deut 30:4; 9:29
d. To the place at which I have chosen to establish my name, Deut 12:5

8. Verse 10 recalls past deliverances — whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand

9. Verse 11 mentions your servants which, in the context, reminds God of his obligations

E. Identity of Nehemiah, 1:11b — cupbearer to the king — a very responsible and trusted position, since he would be the taster who would assure that the food was safe and that no poison had been added, by his enemies

1. He risked his life on the king’s popularity or unpopularity at every meal
2. He was the most trusted person in the whole empire.
3. He had access to the entire palace
4. His position was next to that of the crown prince himself.

F. Word Studies

1. Susa, vs. 1, שׁוּסָה, lily, something brightly colored.
   a. It was named possibly from the lilies growing in its pools, or from the beauty Of the city as the king’s residence.
   b. Its root is the origin of the names, Susan, or Susanna, and of the headings for Psalms 45 and 80.

2. Commandment, vs. 7, מְצוּדָה, what has been set up, or put, or placed — a monument.
   a. Something established, confirmed, appointed, ordained — commanded
b. By keeping these, one is enabled to stand, or endure, Exod 18:23

c. *Bar Mitzvah*, "son of the commandment"

3. *Statute*, vs. 7, כָּרָה, to cut in, hew, hack; engrave, or carve; something decreed, prescribed, appointed, because it is carved in stone.

4. *Ordinance*, vs. 7, מָצָא, to set upright, or erect, or render justice; to govern or rule; hence, judgments.

G. **Summary**

1. Nehemiah was a Jew in a position of great responsibility and trust within the Persian government.

2. His brother came on a visit with other Jews, and in reply to Nehemiah's question briefed him regarding the defenseless, impoverished conditions in Jerusalem.

3. Nehemiah, wept, prayed and recalled God's greatness, his lovingkindness to Israel in the past.

4. He confessed that he and Israel had sinned and had violated God's commandments.

5. He asked that God keep his promise and restore them, as they were his servants.

6. He asked that God would cause the king to respond favorably to the request which he was about to make before him.

H. **Review Questions**

1. Where was Nehemiah at the beginning of the book?

2. Who was Hanani, and how did he influence Nehemiah?

3. What were the conditions in Jerusalem at the time?

4. What position did Nehemiah occupy?

III. **NEHEMIAH COMES TO JERUSALEM, 2:1-20**
A. **Preliminary Questions**

1. What was the occasion on which Nehemiah brought his request before the king?

2. How was the king informed that Nehemiah wanted to make a request?

3. What was included in the request that Nehemiah made?

4. Why do you suppose Nehemiah made his tour of inspection by night?

B. **Outline: Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem, 2:1-20**

1. Nehemiah is given permission by Artaxerxes to make the trip, 2:1-10

2. On his arrival, he secretly inspects the city’s walls, 2:11-20

C. **Nehemiah is Given Permission by Artaxerxes to Make the Trip, 2:1-20**

1. **Verse 1: Nisan** — the 1st month of the year, March; the **twentieth year**
   a. 1:1 spoke of **Chislev**, which is the 9th month.
   b. This indicates 4 months had passed since Nehemiah had received the news about Jerusalem
   c. He had been praying awaiting the propitious moment to introduce his subject
   d. This was Nehemiah's first opportunity to present his case and the delay would have heightened his tension and concern.

2. **Verse 2:** The king observed, **Why is your face sad?**
   a. Nehemiah was **very much afraid** because he was required to be cheerful
   b. It could mean his life!
   c. Cf. Esther 4:11: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king
inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death.

d. Such strict rules for those who entered without permission may also extend to improper decorum as the "cupbearer" carried out his duties?

3. **Verse 3** the answer
   
a. Begins with the proper address — **May the king live forever!**

   b. But quickly moves to what would strike a response in the Oriental king — *when the city, the place of my ancestors' graves, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?* — because there ancestors must always be respected

4. **Verse 4**, I prayed, indicates Nehemiah's recognition of God's constant presence

5. **Verse 5** again Nehemiah recognizes court decorum — **If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor**
   
a. The request is based on Nehemiah satisfactory past performance

   b. Requests — *that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, so that I may rebuild it.*

6. **Verse 6** spells out the details
   
a. The queen’s presence indicates she added her influence

   b. **How long will you be gone?**— was a way of granting permission.

   c. **When will you return?** — indicates the trip is temporary

7. **Verse 7**: requests the necessary for the trip; they represent the authority and backing, of the Persian court

8. **Verse 8** requests supplies to accomplish his objective
a. To make beams for the gates of the temple fortress
b. For the wall of the city
c. For the house that I shall occupy

9. **Verses 9-10** indicate the hostility to Nehemiah

a. **Gave them the king's letters** — authority beyond theirs

b. **The king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me** — enforcement of Nehemiah's decisions

c. **Sanballat . . . and Tobiah . . . heard this, it displeased** — loss of power

(1) **Sanballat** was the governor of Samaria

(a) His name appears in contemporary literature, the Elephantine Papyri from Egypt

(b) The Jewish colony there asked for his support in building a temple to Jehovah there, but received no assistance.

(c) The name means "Sin (an Assyrian moon god) gives life"

(d) It is not clear whether he worshiped the god Horon, or whether "Horonite" indicates that he was from Horonaim, in Moab

(2) **Tobiah**, "Pleasing to Jehovah,"

(a) A similar name, **Tabeel**, "Pleasing to God," is in Ezra 4:7

(b) Possibly a half-descendant of the Jews

(c) Appointed to govern the Ammonites north and east of Judah.
(d) Ruins of a place with his name carved into the stone by the doorway has been located east of the Jordan.

(e) From here his descendants, many with the same name, continued to rule for several centuries.

d. **Someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel** — did not want the Jews to prosper

e. **Officials**, literally, "the slave," in this context would represent high rank, as a head of province, though he was still subservient to the Persian king.

D. **On His Arrival he Secretly Inspects the City’s Walls, 2:11-20**

1. **Verse 11** indicates Nehemiah arrived one day, rested the next, and after sundown (beginning of the third day) began his inspection.

2. **Verse 12** describes the complete secrecy of this part of the operation.
   
   a. Went at night
   b. Took only a few
   c. Told no one he was going
   d. Took only 1 animal

3. **Verses 13-15** apparently cover locations south Jerusalem, where two valleys converge to a narrow point.

4. **Verse 16** reemphasizes his secrecy — *I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to do the work.*

5. **Verse 17** Nehemiah's suggestion shares with the people — **You see the trouble we are in. . . . Come, let us rebuild** — 2 possible goals.
   
   a. To improve their physical situation
   b. To improve their morale

6. **Verse 18** records 2 items Nehemiah used to influence the people to decide, **Let us start building:**
The hand of my God had been gracious upon me
The words that the king had spoken to me

Verses 19 records mocking and ridicule of the enemies
Verses 20 replies in hope in the future and assurance of his relationship to God

a. The God of heaven is the one who will give us success
b. We his servants

E. Word Studies

1. Forest, vs. 8, פארג, "paradise":

a. A park or pleasure ground, a place planted with trees, pleasure-garden, enclosed hunting-ground, a park with wild animals, around the residence of the Persian monarchs; a region of surpassing beauty; park around the house.

b. The word is used only here and in SoS 4:13 and Ecc 2:5.

2. Disgrace, vs. 17, הֵרָע, "reproach," contains the idea of of pulling, plucking, picking or gathering (fruit).

a. We pick at people, and pull them apart.

b. Our descriptive words, "carp" and "harp" (criticize, reproach, upbraid), may be derived from it.

c. Since the picking of fruit also implies the approach of winter, it speaks of a frigid treatment, a scornful attitude.

F. Summary

1. After about 4 months, Nehemiah served wine to Artaxerxes

2. The king observed his dejected expression and asked the reason for it.
3. Nehemiah replied that the city, gates, and cemetery of his ancestors lay in ruins.

4. He asked that the king allow him a leave of absence and an appointment to go and help rebuild.

5. He would also need supplies from government preserves.

6. The wishes were granted and Nehemiah made his way from Persia through Ammon and Samaria to Jerusalem.

7. Once there he became aware of the enmity of Tobiah and Sanballat, governors of the two lands.

8. In complete secrecy he journeyed by night around a part of the city’s ruined walls.

9. Then he returned to the city and announced to some of its leaders a plan to restore the walls, with God’s direction.

10. The plan was adopted, the enemies responded with ridicule and accusation of plotting rebellion.

11. Nehemiah predicted that God would crown their project with success.

G. **Review Questions**

1. Who was the king of Persia?

2. What was the first thing Nehemiah did when he was asked to make his request?

3. Who heard of Nehemiah’s trip, and what was there reaction?

4. What proposal arose out of Nehemiah’s tour of inspection?

IV. **THE BUILDERS, WHAT THEY BUILT, AND HOW THEY BUILT, 3:1-32**

A. **Preliminary Questions**
1. Do you think the people repaired the part of the wall they chose; or that they were assigned the part they were to work on? Would they have cast lots, so that they could not blame anyone else if their part was more difficult than others?

2. How do you suppose the work was financed?

3. Where did the materials come from?

4. Do you suppose they all had the same motives for what they were doing, or the same enthusiasm?

B. **Outline** is topical under three headings;

1. Who the builders were
2. What part they built
3. How they built.

C. **The Builders were from Many Backgrounds**

1. **Religious people:**
   a. *Verse 1* mentions Eliashib and his fellow priests.
   b. They may have been the first to begin the project.
   c. *Verse 4* mentions Meremoth, identified with the priesthood in Ezra 8:33
   d. Verses 22 and 28 mention other priests, possibly indicating residence in other quarters of the city.
   e. *Verse 17* mentions Levites
   f. *Verse 26* mentions temple servants

2. **Government officials** located not only at Jerusalem (vss. 9, 12), but in nearby cities as well (vss. 14-19).
   a. These would have many persons under their pay or authority.
b. Since the entire function of government could be improved by good walls these men helped.

3. **Businessmen:**
   a. *The goldsmiths* (vss. 8, 13, 32) would compare with, our jewelers.
   b. *The perfumers* (vs. 8) would be similar to our druggists.
   c. *Merchants* (vs. 32) would be our grocers, tailors, hardware dealers, storekeepers in general — walls of security would be vital to them

4. **People from other districts and cities:**
   a. *Jericho* (vs. 2), *Tekoa* (vss. 5, 27), *Gibeon and Mizzpah* (vs. 7), and many others (vss. 13-19).
   b. Their survival would be more likely with a strongly fortified city close by.

5. **Women** (vs. 12) participated as they always have in history at crisis times

D. **They Built in Many Different Environ**

1. People seem to have worked in places close to their homes, which implies they had a choice of where they worked.

2. Gates are most prominently mentioned — there are 10:
   a. Sheep, vss. 1, 32
   b. Fish, vs. 3
   c. Old, vs. 6
   d. Valley, vs. 13
   e. Dung/Refuse, vs. 14
   f. Fountain, vs. 15
   g. Water, vs. 26
   h. Horse, vs. 28
   i. East Gate, 29
   j. Muster/Inspection, vs. 31
k. Two other gates are mentioned later — the Gates of Ephraim and of the Guard, 12:39

l. So the city had 12 gates in Nehemiah’s time

m. Cf. John's reference to 12 gates in the Heavenly Jerusalem, Rev 21:12

3. Gates were often more than entrance ways.
   a. They could be large rooms with walls subdividing them
   b. They contained benches where elders and other conducting business sat; cf. Neh 13:19-21
   c. Defensively, gates were the weakest point in the walls — thus the attention to them here

4. Others worked close to the official seat of the governor of the province when he visited the city, v. 7
   a. The king’s garden, vs. 15
   b. The upper house of the king and the court of the guard, i.e., prison, vs. 25

5. Some oversaw the wall closes to their houses, vss. 10, 23, 28, 29, 30.

6. Business interests or industry as the Tower of Furnaces, (vs. 11) — is descriptive of baking ovens rather than smelting furnaces

7. The graves of David, v. 16

8. The ascent of the armory, vs. 19)

9. The high priest’s doorway (vs. 20, and to the residence of the temple servants (vs. 31).

10. The Artificial Pool (vs. 16) and the steps that descend from the City of David (vs. 15)
E. **There Were Differences in How They Built**

1. *The priests consecrated their work*, v. 1

2. **Baruch** is remembered for building zealously, v. 20

3. *The Tekoites* built in spite of lack of co-operation from their leaders, vs. 8

4. **Meremoth** (vv. 4, 24) and the *Tekoites* (vv. 4, 27) did more than their sare

F. The above shows that the careful organization and the willingness of each group to do its small part, made an impossible task possible.

G. **Word Studies**

1. **Support**, vs. 5, רואך, "put necks to."
   a. On the neck or shoulders are placed burdens (yoke: Gen. 27:40).
   b. When an ox braces itself to pull, it thrusts its neck or shoulders forward against the yoke
   c. The Tekoite nobles were not doing this
   d. They hadn’t "knuckled down" to shoulder their part of the burden.

2. **Wall**, vs. 8, צומח, that which is brought together, as well as that which is kept out. City walls were barriers against enemies for the protection of citizens.\(^6\)

H. **Summary**: These people divergent professions and social levels, worked in a variety of environments, and showed a variety of temperaments

I. **Review Questions**

1. What part did priests take in the work?

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\(^6\)Bailey, ch. 2.
2. Why do you suppose they consecrated what they built? Why didn’t they consecrate all of it?

3. Were there some who did more than others?
4. Were there people from outside the city who helped?

V. ENEMIES TRY RIDICULE AND RUMOR TO BLOCK CONSTRUCTION, 4:1-24

A. Preliminary Questions

1. Why do you suppose Sanballat didn’t want a wall around Jerusalem?
2. How many times did Jerusalem’s enemies attack the city?

3. What do you think was Israel’s most important tool for overcoming obstacles?

4. What percentage of the men worked, and what percentage were on military duty?

B. Outline: The Enemies Try Ridicule and Rumor to Block Construction, 4:1-24

1. The enemies try ridicule, 4:1-6
2. They spread rumors of impending attack, 4:7-14
3. Work progresses in spite of these attempts, 4:15-23

C. The Enemies Try Ridicule, 4:1-6:

1. Verse 1: When Sanballat heard of the progress he was angry and greatly enraged perhaps because:
   
   a. Because the wall's completion would make difficult an attack
   b. Strong defenses could pose no threat to the safety of Samaria,
   c. He saw his power base weaken
   d. Consequently he mocked the Jews

2. Verse 2 gives the details of his mockery

   a. What are these feeble Jews doing? Subtly suggests if they had been tending their crops instead of working on the walls, they wouldn’t be as weak from hunger now.
b. **Will they restore things?** Literally, "will they restore/leave [it] for themselves?"

(1) "Leave it for themselves" Is a tacit admission of Sanballat's weakening power base

(2) If they complete thee walls his power as governor is diminish

c. **Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day?** May be interpreted in 2 ways:

(1) Imply the Jews would be foolish to think that by making sacrifices to God they could gain His favor and be able to finish their work quickly, "in a day"; i.e., worship is futile; and such ideas are nonsense.

(2) Imply that since the wall is not needed to enable them to make sacrifices, they must be building it to lead to a rebellion, but they would loose heart in this endeavor

d. **Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish — burned ones at that?** Indicates the magnitude of the work was enough to discourage anybody.

3. **Verse 3** points to the close ties between Samaria and Tobiah — **Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, while any fox going up on it would break it down!** — is pure derision spoken publically to destroy confidence

4. **Verses 4-5** Nehemiah’s instantaneous prayer in response to the public ridicule requests that God be conscious of this event

   a. Similar to the imprecatory psalms (7, 35, 58, 69, 83, 109, 137, 139)

   (1) **Def.:** an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse against one's enemies, or the enemies of God

   (2) Various imprecations in psalms

c. **NT Imprecations:** Acts 13:10-11; 23:3; 1 Cor 22::; Gal 1:8-9; 5:12; 2 Tim 4:14; Rev 6:9-10

d. **NT Quotations of Imprecatory ψ Passages:**
   2. Rom 11:9-10 quotes ψ 69:22-23

e. **Problem with Imprecatory Psalms is ethical:**
   1. "How can a Christian use imprecatory ψ?"
   2. "Can a Christian pray imprecatory prayers?"

f. **Proposals:**
   1. These are really statements of the enemies, but cf. 10:15, "Break their arm" is psalmist
   2. These are directed at spiritual not physical enemies, but cf. Job 4:8; Hos 8:7; Gal 6:7
   3. These are prophetic, but ψ 137 describes the satisfaction of the psalmist when evil are judged
   4. These reflect the psalmist's humanity; this does deal with the Christian's humanity

g. **Possible Answers—Imprecatory Psalms:**
   1. Establish the righteous; concern for righteous is foundation to such ψ, cf. 7:8-9
   2. When righteous delivered, God is praised & rejoicing occurs, cf. 7:17; 35:18,28; 58:10
(3) Such judgments against wicked will show them God is sovereign judge, cf. 58:11; 59:13

(4) Such judgments prevent wicked from enjoying the same blessings as the righteous, cf. 69:28

(5) Such judgments will cause the wicked to seek the Lord, cf. 83:16-18

h. **Attitude of the Imprecator:**

(1) The psalmists never seek to be the avenger; rather that God take vengeance, cf. 7:6; 35:1; 58:6; 59:5

(2) Different between "vindication" & "vindictiveness"

(3) The humanity of the psalms may cause such cries to originate in "vindictiveness"

(4) But the psalmists desire to be "vindicated"

i. **Conclusion—What do you think in light of the following verses?**

(1) **NRS Romans 12:14** "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."

(2) **NRS Romans 12:19** "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"

(3) **NRS 2 Timothy 4:14** "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds."

(4) **NRS 1 Timothy 1:20** "among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme."

(5) These psalms, recognizing the impotence of God's people before their enemies, pray that justice be done to these enemies
(6) True, Christians are "to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44)

(7) At the same time, as per Nehemiah's example, we may pray that God will punish those who hinder the progress of the gospel

5. **Verse 6** indicates the failure of these taunts
   a. **All the wall was joined together to half its height**
   b. **Height** is not in the Hebrew text
   c. The wall reached its "halfway" completion point
   d. **For the people had a mind to work** — they "put their heart into it," maybe as a reaction to it, cf. v. 10

D. **Rumors of Impending Attack, 4:7-14**

1. **Verse 7** indicates the opposition comes from 4 directions
   a. **Sanballat** and the Samaritans in the north
   b. **Tobiah** and the Ammonites in the northeast
   c. **Arabs** would include Edom and the southeast
   d. **Ashdodites** on the southwest and the coast

2. **Verse 8** states specifically the plans **to come and fight against Jerusalem** was **to cause confusion in** — not to destroy

3. **Verse 9** records that Nehemiah and the people **prayed** about the situation while they did what they could to alleviate the problem — **set a guard as a protection against them day and night**

4. **Verse 10's** poetic form indicates that the statement was continually repeated
   a. Myers attempted poetic structuring

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The Strength of the burden bearer is drooping,  
The rubbish heap so vast;  
And we are unable by ourselves  
To rebuild the wall

b. Rather than perceiving it as reflective of discouragement it probably is "a kind of chorus chanted during the work. Despite its rather negative tone it may actually have had the function of keeping the men going—not unlike the 'spirituals' which encouraged enslaved labourers of more recent times."8

c. The people "worked with all their heart," cf. v. 6.

5. Verse 11 reflects the enemies' secret planning, which somehow was reported to the Jews, that they would appear from nowhere and destroy the builders and the work.

6. Verse 12 indicates that the enemies' secret plans were revealed ten times (figurative for "continually repeated") by the workmen who came from outlying towns.

7. Verse 13 describes how Nehemiah stationed people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows at the more vulnerable locations.

8. Verse 14 reflects Nehemiah's efforts to reassure and encourage the people; his arguments were good

a. Remember the power and greatness of God — who is great and awesome

b. Remember you are fighting for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes

E. The Work Progresses in the Midst of Precautions, 4:15-23

1. **Verse 15:** Reports that when the strategy ended in failure Nehemiah, though he had done what he physically could, recognized that God had frustrated it and all returned to the wall, each to his work.

2. **Verse 16:** half of my servants may have been Nehemiah's bodyguard of Persian soldiers who were with the leaders posted . . . behind the whole house of Judah — support, whether physical or moral.

3. **Verse 17** indicate the workers labored on the work with one hand and with the other held a weapon.

4. **Verses 18-20,** indicate that communication was provided for — a loud signal was needed to summon everyone to one's defense, though Nehemiah again gives God credit for their defense — Our God will fight for us.

5. **Verse 21:** with the work force cut in half — half of them held the spears — they increased the length of their work day — from the break of dawn until the stars came out.

6. **Verse 22:** additional efficiency was created by keeping all the workers within the city each night.
   a. Extra security would be provided for.
   b. The workers living outside the city would no longer hear the subversive remarks.
   c. Defections would be prevented.
   d. Travel time would be eliminated.

7. **Verse 23** has been problematic for interpreters.
   a. Hebrew literally says, "Neither I, nor my brothers, nor my young men, nor the guards who followed me removed our clothes a man his weapon the water."
b. Whether this is interpreted "his weapon in his right hand" (NRSV), or "took his weapon even to water" (NASV), etc., the meaning is the workers were ever-ready for battle.

F. **Word Studies**

1. **Wealthy**, v. 2, יִלְיֶח, (1) strength, might, valor; (2) forces, army; (3) ability, wealth; (4) integrity, virtue.
   
a. Usually translated “army,” but “wealth” in Ruth 2:1, where it describes Boaz.
   
b. The 2 most important letters in the word are the "h" and "l"; these appear in our words "heil," "hale," "heal," "health," "whole," and even "holy": words having the same sense as the Hebrew, in certain contexts.

2. **Trumpet**, v. 20, נֵרַש, "scratch, scrape, rub, polish," which leads to the idea of brightness, brilliance, and a brilliant tone

G. **Summary**

1. Israel's enemies sought to block progress on the wall by ridicule and rumor.
   
a. Sanballat of Samaria made fun of these feeble people trying by themselves to push stones around; stones which already had been pushed over and burned, showing their ineffectiveness.
   
b. Tobiah joined in by saying it wouldn't support a fox.
   
c. Nehemiah prayed, and the people kept on working till the wall was half built.

2. Then their enemies came from 4 directions and threatened to do battle.
   
a. Again Nehemiah prayed, and this time he set a guard.
   
b. The workers were becoming tired and discouraged.
c. A rumor of ambush spread, and as the people became frightened
d. Nehemiah calmed them and encouraged them to be willing to fight for God and home.
e. Half of the workers were put on guard while the other half worked; even these had their weapons in their hand or within reach.
f. At the sound of a trumpet, all were to rush to that point to defend their fellows.
g. They worked from dawn to dusk, they remained close to theft work instead of going home, some slept in their clothes, and they stayed alert.

H. **Review Questions**

1. When did these events happen, compared to the previous chapter?
2. What methods were used by Israel’s enemies to prevent building?
3. What tribes of people opposed them?
4. What is the 1st thing Nehemiah did to overcome them? The 2nd thing?

VI. **INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES ARISE AND ARE OVERCOME, 5:1-19**

A. **Preliminary Questions**

1. What were the reasons for the people’s distress?
2. What had they done to relieve their hardships?
3. What would have been the result if no further solution were found?
4. How much expense was Nehemiah willing to go to?
5. How do interest rates compare, then and now?

B. **Outline:** Internal difficulties arise and are overcome, 5:1-19

1. The problem stated, 5:1-5
2. The solution, 5:6-13

C. **Background**
1. A new kind of problem
   a. The work was threatened by internal dissension, which is not identified exclusively with the rebuilding of the wall.
   b. The only mention of the wall in this chapter is in verse 16
   c. With great numbers of workmen busy from dawn to dusk repairing the wall in the shortest time, and with their being forbidden even to go out of the city to take care of crops, some would begin to suffer hardship.
   d. Apparently, the workers received no income, and this kind of toil produced no consumer goods; hunger was the inevitable result.
   e. Opportunists arose and took advantage of the situation to make themselves wealthy at the expense of the hard pressed.

D. The Problem Stated, 5:1-5

1. Verse 1 likely, the great outcry . . . against their kin, reflected that the more wealthy were taking advantage of their poorer brethren.

2. Verse 2 the statement we are many, we must get grain, is either a request for food or a threat to steal food in order to provide for their large families.

3. Verse 3 indicates that many had gone in debt and mortgaged their property, and were in danger of default and the loss of everything. The famine, therefore, may have been artificial.

4. Verse 4 indicates that people were going further into debt to pay Persian tribute — the king's tax.

5. Verse 5, and its description of their oppression — slavery, rape, appropriation of property — is based on the assumption that the creditors would not tolerate such for their families — our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children.

E. Nehemiah Protests and Offers a Solution, 5:6-13
1. *Verse 6* reflects Nehemiah's personal, emotional response — *I was very angry*

2. In *verse 7* takes 2 actions
   a. *I brought charges against the nobles and the officials* — i.e., the persons making the loans at excessive interest, and buying the slaves
   b. *I called a great assembly to deal with them* — in which he gave the people making the complaint a public hearing.

3. *Verse 8* indicates that Nehemiah and others had bought Jews back from slavery to foreigners, but now their fellow-Jews were selling them back into slavery.

4. *Verse 9* makes the appeal that their actions aided their enemies — *the taunts of the nations our enemies*

5. *Verse 10* shows that Nehemiah as well as his *brothers and . . . servants* — family, associates and soldiers — had been making loans interest free loans and appeals for the nobles to do the same.

6. *Verse 11* requests that all property be returned and interest be restored
   a. *Restore . . . their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses*
   b. *Restore . . . the interest [H., hundredth] of the money and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil* — indicating Nehemiah may asked them to drop all interest requirements, cf. NASV

7. *Verse 12* records the noble's agreement to Nehemiah's proposal, whereupon Nehemiah *made them take an oath to do as they had promised.*

8. *Verse 13:* Nehemiah employed a "visual aid," in which God would shake out the property of those who did not honor their word in a way similar to how Nehemiah shook the folds of his garments.
F. Nehemiah Vindicates his own Conduct, 5:14-19

1. **Verse 14**, written after Nehemiah’s 2nd trip to Judah (cf. 13:6ff.), indicates Nehemiah lived on his income as a Persian official and did not draw on his salary as governor of Judah.

2. **Verse 15** describes former administrations' in contrast to Nehemiah's, which was based on his **fear of God**.

3. **Verse 16** lists 3 more things to his credit
   a. I devoted myself to the work on this wall
   b. [I] acquired no land
   c. All my servants were gathered there for the work

4. **Verse 17** records the considerable expenses created by his position.

5. **Verse 18**, lists a daily amount that some say would feed 400 to 500 people, though Nehemiah insists **I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because of the heavy burden of labor on the people**.

6. **Verse 19** Nehemiah’s only request was that God **Remember . . . all that I have done for this people**.

G. **Summary**

1. Some had been forced by the economic situation to borrow money, mortgaging and losing their property.
   a. Others had sold their children into slavery.
   b. Still others had encumbered their property to borrow the money to pay their taxes.

2. When Nehemiah heard how they were abusing one another he went to their creditors and politely insisted
   a. They return the slaves and things taken in security
   b. They eliminate the usurious interest rate
c. They agreed and took an oath to continue this policy into the future.

d. Nehemiah himself assessed no tax on the land to pay his salary or his lavish hospitality bills.

e. He required similar generosity of his associates and soldiers, and he and they actually assisted in the construction of the wall.

H. **Review Questions**

1. Who had caused the people’s distress?
2. How did Nehemiah propose that this be relieved?
3. What example did Nehemiah himself set?
4. Was the solution successful?

VII. **THE ENEMIES RESORT TO TACTICS OF DIVERSION, BUT THE WALL IS COMPLETED, 6:1-19**

A. **Preliminary Questions**

1. Can you find two occasions when Nehemiah prayed?
2. What was the basis of the information which his enemies had?
3. What saved Nehemiah from their plots?
4. How long did it take to repair the wall about Jerusalem?
5. What were the results to their enemies?

B. **Outline:** The enemies resort to tactics of diversion, but the wall is completed, 6:1-19

1. Sanballat and Geshem plot treachery through invitation to a conference, 6:1-4

2. They try again through spreading rumors of rebellion, 6:5-9

3. Tobiah tries his hand at discrediting Nehemiah, 6:10-14

4. Success is achieved in spite of some differences with Tobiah, 6:15-19

C. **Sanballat and Geshem plot treachery through invitation to a conference, 6:1-4**
1. **Verse 1** — Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies

   a. Lists all of the enemies found in 2:19 plus the addition of some who remain unnamed.

   b. The statement — **had not set up the doors in the gates the doors had not been hung in the gates** — indicates that chapter 3 is an overview of the entire project, while chapters 4-6 go back and fill in the details.

2. **Verse 2** mentions **Sanballat and Geshem** but omits Tobiah

   a. No explanation is given. Perhaps (1) he refused to be implicated in a plot against a Jewish ruler, or (2) he may have been waiting his turn with his own scheme.

   b. Apparently the **intended . . . harm** was to single Nehemiah out from the city to a secluded spot, and assassinate him, or at least give him a sound beating.

3. **Verse 3** gives Nehemiah’s reply; he would not be diverted from his work.

4. **Verse 4** indicates similar ploys with similar results.

D. **They Try Again by Spreading Rumors of Rebellion, 6:5-9**

1. **Verses 5-7**, the 5th attempt at discouragement — the letter is unsealed; it contains definite charges

2. **Verse 5**: **an open letter in his hand**

   a. An attempt to frighten Nehemiah
   b. People of the city would know its contents
   c. Some might attempt to get rid of Nehemiah
   d. The resultant rumors might force Nehemiah to abandon his work

3. **Verse 6**: **It is reported among the nations — and Geshem also says** highlights the charges that follow — **that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this**
report you wish to become their king — are rumors — both of which were treasonous

4. Verse 7 embellishes the general rumor — You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, "There is a king in Judah!"
   a. The inference is that the rumors would get to the Persian court unless Nehemiah came to them
   b. Nehemiah's complete confidence in his standing with the Persian king kept him from making a mistake.

5. Verse 8 indicates Nehemiah's confidence allowing him to dismiss Sanballat's charges as inventions out of your own mind

6. Verse 9 concludes with one of Nehemiah's prayers for success — O God, strengthen my hands.

E. Tobiah Attempts to Discredit Nehemiah, 6:10-14

1. Verse 10: Shemiaiah son of Delaiah son of McHetabel is not identified further.
   a. Some suppose that he was a priest\(^9\) since he proposed Let us meet together in the house of God . . . for they are coming to kill you
      (1) This would have been fine for Shemaiah if he were a priest
      (2) But Nehemiah could have been executed for such an infraction of the law
   b. Others perceive him to be a false prophet since his suggestion is arranged in poetic parallelism and v. 12 designates it a prophecy

   Let us assemble at the house of God
   Inside the temple itself,
   And shut the doors of the temple;
   For they are coming to kill you,
By night they are coming to kill you.\(^{10}\)

c. Just why Shemaiah was confined in his house is not stated, though several reasons have been put forward:\(^{11}\)

1. It was a hint that Nehemiah should do the same for safety
2. Shemaiah was ceremonially unclean
3. He was having an ecstatic prophetic experience

2. **Verse 11**, Nehemiah refused — I will not go in — trusting in his position as a Persian official — Should a man like me run away?

3. **Verse 12** indicates that Nehemiah recognized this was a false prophecy — I perceived . . . that God had not sent him . . ., but he had pronounced the prophecy . . . because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

4. **Verse 13** records that the prophecy was an attempt to intimidate me and make me sin

5. **Verse 14** records the imprecation requesting God take vengeance

F. **Success is Achieved in Spite of Tobiah, 6:15-19**

1. **Verse 15** reports the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days — the middle of September/October depending upon whose chronology is followed

2. **Verse 16** records the result

   a. All the nations around us were afraid
   b. The all fell greatly in their own esteem
   c. They perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God

\(^{10}\) Myers, *Anchor Bible: Ezra-Nehemiah*, 136, 139

\(^{11}\) Myers, 139
3. **Verses 17-19** are parenthetical describing the general tenor of the opposition during Nehemiah's days

   a. *Verse 17* shows the influence of Tobiah — the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiaq, and Tobiaq's letters came to them

   b. *Verse 18* indicates the reason for this influence was that

      (1) Tobiah was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son Arah

      (2) His son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son Berechiah

   c. *Verse 19* reflects Nehemiah’s internal problems — many people were loyal to Tobiah and **reported** Nehemiah's words to him

G. **Word Studies:**

1. **Remember**, vs. 14, יָדְנָה, "remembering, recalling, considering."

2. **Strengthen**, v. 9, לְעַל, "to bind fast, to gird tight, to cleave, to adhere to firmly."

   a. Things are strengthened by being bound together

   b. A spear may be made stronger by winding a cord around it

   c. Ones strength seems greater, the back stronger, when a back brace is worn

H. **Summary**

1. Sanballat and Geshem tried to lure Nehemiah into a trap, but he would not leave his work.

2. They used rumors to try to frighten him, or bring him to them, or discourage the workers, but this did not work either

3. They hired Shemaiah to trick him into violating a law of God
4. Because Nehemiah saw through their schemes, trusted in God, and continued to work, the wall was finished in 52 days

5. Tobiah's relatives, who were among the leaders and priests, communicated frequently with the Jewish in an ongoing attempt to hinder and frighten Nehemiah

I. **Review Questions**

1. Who were the 3 neighboring rulers who plotted against Nehemiah?
2. How many times did they communicate with Nehemiah?
3. What was different about the last letter?
4. Who was the man hired to destroy Nehemiah by trickery, and who hired him?

VIII. **NEHEMIAH FINDS THE LIST OF THE 1st EXILES TO RETURN, 7:1-73**

A. **Preliminary Questions**

1. Why do you suppose Nehemiah appointed his brother to an important government post?
2. Who else besides his brother was appointed?
3. How thickly was Jerusalem populated at this time?
4. Why did Nehemiah stress that God put it into his heart to take a census?

B. **Outline:** Nehemiah Finds the List of the 1st Exiles to Return, 7:1-73

1. Nehemiah makes arrangements for the continued defense and administration of the city, 7:1-4
2. He retraces the genealogies of the first returning exiles, 7:5-73

C. **Nehemiah makes arrangements for the continued defense and administration of the city, 7:1-4**

1. **Background:** Nehemiah’s activity was probably prompted by his anticipated return to Persia
2. **Verse 1**: the appointment of the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites was extremely important in light of Nehemiah's return to Persia.

3. **Verse 2**: the appointment of Hanani . . . over Jerusalem and Hananiah the commander of the citadel are extremely significant in light of Nehemiah's upcoming absence, so he needs men who are faithful man and feared God more than many.

4. **Verse 3** describes the tense situation in which the city found itself:
   a. The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot.
   b. While the gatekeepers are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors.
   c. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem
      (1) Some at their watch posts,
      (2) Others before their own houses.

5. **Verse 4** reminds how much smaller the population was now when compared to its past — city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been built.

D. **Nehemiah Retraces the Genealogies of the 1st Returning Exiles, 7:5-73**

1. Most of the remainder of this chapter is a repetition of Ezra 2; only the major differences will be discussed.

2. **Verse 5**: Nehemiah took a census, probably to determine their strength of numbers when he found the book of the genealogy of those who were the first to come back.
   a. Then my God put it into my mind reminds of David's difficulties when taking a census based on pride, 2 Sam 24.
   b. Finding the older list would be useful
      (1) As a beginning point, as a means of comparison.
(2) As a tool to arouse interest in increasing the population

3. **Verse 6-7** begins repeating Ezra 2:2-3, slight differences in spelling and the addition of the name of **Nahamani** (v. 7)
   
   a. This additional name was on the genealogical list which Nehemiah consulted, and brings the number of men who had led the returning expedition to 12
   
   b. This parallels the Numbers 1, where 12 men had been chosen to share leadership
   
   c. In this manner the text highlights the new beginning made by these spiritual descendants of the Exodus group
   
   d. However, this list does not identify each name with a specific tribe.

4. Other small discrepancies may be accounted for by the following
   
   a. Spelling variants
   
   b. Numerical variants based on possible different accounting practices

5. **Verse 73** has no parallel in Ezra, but really belongs topically with chapter 8 since it anticipates these events, and gives the date (seventh month, our September or thereabouts) when they began.

E. **Summary**

1. As preparation for his return to Persia, Nehemiah appointed leaders
   
   a. The gates were not to be opened in the morning till it was safe
   
   b. They were to be bolted when shut
   
   c. Guards were posted on the wall and throughout the city.

2. Nehemiah sought to increase the number of the city’s residents;
   
   a. He found the list of the 1st returnees from 91 years before
b. This would be helpful in tracing down the present population.

c. The remainder of the chapter duplicates this list, with variations.

F. **Word Studies:** Hanani (הַנָּנִי, 7:2; cf. 1:2) and Hananiah (חַנָּניאָה, 10:28)

1. These names are identical except for the ending.

2. The ending on Hananiah means "Yahweh".

3. The first two consonants הַנָּנִי mean "grace, favor, kindness."

4. Nehemiah's brother Hanani's then means "Gracious is Yhwh," or the like.

G. **Review Questions**

1. What precautions were taken regarding the gates?

2. How did Nehemiah run across the genealogical list included here?

3. Where else in the Bible is the list substantially recorded?

**IX. THE LAW IS READ IN PUBLIC; ITS CEREMONIES ARE RESUMED, 8-10**

A. **Preliminary Questions**

1. Whose idea was it to read the Law?

2. How long did the reading continue, on the first day? Any other days?

3. What happened when the Law was read? What did it cause the people to do?

4. What do you suppose a visitor to the city would have noticed during this time?

5. What do you think made the people humble and willingness to confess?

6. Who is more prominent, Ezra or Nehemiah? Why?

7. What were the major points in the Levites' prayer?

8. Why do you think so much time was taken tracing their history?
9. What was included in the oath which the people took?

10. How were you to observe every 7th year?

11. What provisions were made for the support of the Levites?

12. Why was so much emphasis placed on getting firewood?

B. **Outline: The Law is Read in Public; its Ceremonies are Resumed, 8-10**

1. The Law is Read and the Feast of Booths is Kept, 8:1-18
   a. Ezra instructs the people in the Law, 8:1-8
   b. The people celebrate with joy and feasting, 8:9-12
   c. The Feast of Booths is rediscovered, 8:13-18

2. The Levites Lead in a Psalm of Confession, 9:1-38
   a. Introduction: the occasion of the prayer, 9:1-5
   b. God is praised for his power in creation, 9:5b-6
   c. His goodness to Abraham, 9:7-8
   d. His hand in the Exodus, 9:9-15
   e. Israel's rebellion in the wilderness, 9:16-21
   f. God's compassion takes them into Canaan, 9:22-25
   g. Disobedience, punishment, and repentance Judges-Kings, 9:26-31
   h. Prayer for present mercy, 9:32-38

3. The People Make a Vow of Faithfulness, 10:1-39
   a. List of signaturees, 10:1-27
   b. The vow of purity from the pagan, 10:28-31
   c. Pledge to support the Temple, 10:32-33
   d. Pledge to support the Levities, who pledge to support the priests, 10:34-39

C. **The Law is Read and the Feast of Booths is Kept, 8:1-18**

1. **Verse 1:** the people gathered together into the square, not the Temple, suggesting this was a popular demand rather than a religious one

   a. They requested of Ezra (the 1st mention of him in Nehemiah) the book of the Law of Moses

   b. The people's reverence the Law is seen in their conviction that their Lord had given it to Israel
c. They were the People of the Book

2. **Verse 2** says that all who could hear with understanding listened to this reading — The first day of the seventh month
   
   a. Was the date for the Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:23ff.; Ezra 3:1)
   
   b. The first day of the month was holy and marked by the sound of trumpets (Num 10:10)

3. **Verse 3**, from early morning until midday, implies the book of the law was quite lengthy
   
   a. It required 5 or 6 hours to read it.
   
   b. The ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law commends the people and offers special comment in vv. 4-8

4. **Verses 4-8** expand the information given in verse 3

5. **Verse 4** is the first mention in the Bible of a raised platform constructed for speaking.
   
   a. The 14 men it accommodated were laymen
   
   b. They are not identified as priests or Levites as the men in verse 7
   
   c. Their names do not appear in any of the lists of priests or Levites
   
   d. This was a popular meeting rather than a religious one, and the leaders therefore were probably from among the people.

6. **Verse 5**: all the people stood up indicates the reference thee people had for the Law

7. **Verse 6**: the great God, whether or not it indicates Babylonian influence, designates reverence, which was also exhibited in their bodily movements
   
   a. Lifting up their hands
   
   b. Bowed their heads and worshiped
   
   c. With their faces to the ground
8. **Verse 7**: Gives the names of the teachers

9. **Verse 8** indicates that these 13 people gave explanations or translations as needed

10. **Verse 9**: *All the people wept*, as a result of learning their shortcomings, but the Levities reminded them this was *holy day*, of joy
   a. All of Israel's holy days were feasts, not fasts
   b. Worship of God has always been more celebration

11. **Verse 10**, *eat the fat and drink sweet wine*
   a. Fits the pattern of the Jewish festivals, sharing
   b. The *fat* part of the meat would be regarded as the daintiest morsels

12. **Verse 11** portrays the Levites as marshals — *Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved*

13. **Verse 12** indicates that the people caught the significance of the command to rejoice — *great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them*

14. **Verse 13** describes a more restricted session — *all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law*

15. **Verse 14** reports their discovery they had not observed the *Feast of Booths*
   a. According to Ezra 3:4 they had observed this feast
   b. Evidently the people had not been building their temporary living quarters as specified in Leviticus 23:40-43

16. **Verse 15** records the gathering of the branches for this celebration
17. *Verse 16:* made booths for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim describes the amazing transformation that occurred to Jerusalem by the observance of this feast.

18. *Verse 17:* And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity, indicates the total participation of everyone

19. *Verse 18:* And day by day indicates the daily reading of the Law throughout the feast

D. *The Levites Lead in a Psalm of Confession, 9:1-38*

1. *Overview:*
   a. The people are the main characters — Ezra/Nehemiah not mentioned
   b. The real heroes, the people, initiated the events recorded here, 8:1
   c. They come together to make a great confession

2. *Verse 1,* twenty-fourth day of this month, reenforces this date fits no requirement of the Law
   a. They met because they wanted to, not because of any command
   b. They had already had 9/10 days of Scripture reading and worship
   c. Yet they would not go home.
   d. The twenty-fourth day allows one day’s rest since the close of chapter 8
   e. Fasting, wearing sackcloth, and with dirt upon them are progressively more intense signs of grief and repentance

3. *Verse 2* the separation from foreigners was a ritual symbol of their purification
   a. It portrayed in action what their shunning marriage to foreigners was designed to accomplish.
b. Their standing and confessing summarizes the rest of the chapter

4. **Verse 3**, they stood . . . and read from the book of the law . . for a fourth part of the day, and for another fourth they made confession and worshiped = 6 hours of reading + 6 hours of confessing + 12 hours of sleeping, cf. 8:3

   a. In 8:3 the action had begun at daybreak and continued to noon

   b. The new confessing activities would take place from midday till sundown (12–6)

5. **Verse 4** returns to the scene in 8:2, with the platform above the people occupied by Levites

   a. Probably all the names in this list are Levites, as they are in the next verse.

   b. A prayer follows, but is recorded; evidently it was a spontaneous

6. **Verse 5a** is a 2nd list indicating that those of verse 4 may have participated in the morning and those here participated in the afternoon

7. **Verse 5b**

   a. The people were then called on to stand in preparation for the prayer that follows.

   b. The Levites who were presiding may have read it in unison, or one may have voiced it as the representative of the group.

8. **Verse 6 — Creation:** all creation worships its creator; here begins the longest prayer in the Bible and it reveals a great knowledge of previous scripture.\(^{12}\)

9. **Verses 7-8 — History:**

\(^{12}\)Myers, *Anchor Bible: Ezra and Nehemiah*, 167-169
a. History was of great significance to Israel’s religion

b. God had taken action in their affairs

c. *Verse 7*: the God who chose Abram he history

(1) God brought Abraham to this land
(2) He brought nation to this land
(3) He has now brought these people to this land

d. *Verse 8* records God generosity in giving this land to Abraham and his descendants; thus God *fulfilled* his *promise*, and is doing so again

10. *Verses 9-21 — Exodus/Law/Wilderness:*

a. As the Cross and Resurrection are the focal points of the NT, so the Exodus is the central event of the OT

b. *Verses 9-12*: Deliverance from Egypt

(1) *Verse 9*, you saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt, recalls Exod 3:7, *I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters*

(2) *Verse 10*, made a name for yourself, recalls Exod 9:16, *to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth.*

(3) *Verse 11*, like a stone into mighty waters recalls Exod 15:5, *they went down into the depths like a stone*

(4) *Verse 12* reminds of the Pillars of Fire and Cloud

c. *Verses 13-14* recalls the Decalogue, especially the *Sabbath*

(1) It reinforces Deut 5:15, that the Sabbath commemorated their slavery in Egypt

46
(2) There is no record of Sabbath observances prior to Exod 20:11 and Deut 15:5
d. Verse 15 describes the provision God made for them in the wilderness

(1) Bread from heaven, and for their thirst you brought water for them out of the rock

(2) Jesus is our bread from Heaven, John 6:48-51

(3) And our Rock, 1 cor 10:4

(4) action for possession of the land. We think of our bread from heaven(Jn. 6:48-51), and of our rock; which is Christ (I Cor. 10:4).

11. God blesses Israel even during her rebellion in the Wilderness, 9:16-21

a. Twice these verses repeat Israel’s rebellion and God’s graciousness

b. Verses 16-17: acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks

(1) Citing Num 14:7, they determined to return to their slavery in Egypt Their stubborness and short memory caused them to appoint a leader to replace Moses

(2) Yet God’s graciousness and for giveness prevented His forsaking them.

c. Verses 18-21: even in the matter of the Golden Calf God was compassionate.

(1) The cloud and pillar of fire

(2) God's spirit of instruction, e.g., the Tabernacle

12. God's compassion takes them to Canaan, 9:22-25
a. **Verse 22** describes the conquest of the East Bank — **Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan**.

   (1) Sihon and the Amorites inhabited the land by the Dead Sea
   (2) Heshbon was One of their cities.
   (3) **Og of Bashan** was closer to the Sea of Galilee

b. **Verse 23** describes how God multiplied the nation, as he promised Abraham in Gen 15

c. **Verse 24** moves to the West Bank, i.e., west of the Jordan river to the sea.
d. **Verse 25** describes their success in both areas.

13. Verses 23, 25 fit both situations, Their growing fat is an indication of their prosperity; in a culture where hunger was the rule, fat was beautiful (Prov. 13:4). The word “revel” in Hebrew has the name, Eden, in it; it speaks of delight and pleasantness. Under God, their Eden was being restor

14. **Disobedience, punishment, and repentance characterize the period of the judges and kings, 9:26-31**

a. **Verses 26-29**

   (1) Relate primarily to the period of the judges, though the pattern in Kings is similar.

   (2) The cycle of disobedience, suffering oppression, and God’s hearing, and deliverance occurs frequently in the book of Judges.

b. **Verses 30-31** relate more fully to Kings — God's patience, his prophets, their deafness, the inevitable Captivity, and God’s compassionate preservation and deliverance of his people are all summarized here.

15. **Prayer for present mercy, 9:32-38**

a. **Verse 32**: Now brings them to the present
(1) 3 attributes of God are given
   (a) Majesty — great, mighty, awesome
   (b) Faithfulness — keeping covenant
   (c) Mercy — steadfast love/lovingkindness

(2) Hardship . . . since the time of the kings of Assyria until today reverently omits accusing God for this, though Isaiah Isa. 10:5 states that he used them for this purpose
   b. Verses 33-35 use this information to justify God's hand in these acts of punishment and correction
   c. Verses 36-37 describe their present condition
      (1) Verse 36: slaves in the land that you gave our ancestors
      (2) Verse 37 speaks of the nature of that burden
         (a) The land's rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us
         (b) They have power also over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure
         (c) We are in great distress.
   d. Verse 38 they have determined to place their names on a document pledging their loyalty to God

E. The People Make a Vow of Faithfulness, 10:1-27
   1. Verses 1: Upon the sealed document are the names — 2 methods of sealing official papers
      a. The imprint of the thumbnail
b. The impression of the person’s private seal on a ball of moist clay attached directly to the document

c. These signatures were voluntary

d. **Nehemiah the governor** is the 1st and most prominent name

e. **Zedekiah** may be another spelling of Zadok, who may have been Nehemiah’s secretary (scribe, 13:13).

2. **Verses 2-8** are the names of the priests who signed, being next in status to Nehemiah, Persia’s representative.

   a. They seem to be listed by family names

   b. Several are repeated this way in 12:12-15

   c. By giving only their family names they may be saying that the priest’s office and ancestry is more important than his individual identity

3. **Verses 9-13:** list the Levites

   a. 6 of the 17 names are those who were on the speaker’s platform in 9:4-5

   b. 3 others may have been there if we allow for variations in spelling.

   c. These also may have been names of families, though this is not certain.

   d. Part of the problem is that more than one generation used the same names.

4. **Verses 14-27:** lists the names of the leaders of the people

   a. 16 of these names are also in Ezra 2

   b. Some may be the names of ancient families and others of individuals of newer families.
5. **Verses 28-31**: a vow purity

a. *Verse 28* takes note of the categories of persons — all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands . . . who have knowledge and understanding

b. *Verse 29* shows their solidarity — join with their kin in the oath — 3 kinds of material

c. *Verse 30* deals again with the problem of foreign intermarriage

d. *Verse 31* enforces the strictness of their observance of the Sabbath day and holy days

   (1) They would not buy or sell with foreigners

   (2) The Sabbatical year would be observed with equal strictness

      (a) Crops were not to be planted, Lev 25:3f.; Exod 23:10ff.

      (b) No one was to be pressured for payment on his debts.

6. **The people pledged additionally to support the Temple, 10:32-33**


   (1) If the Persians had introduced different standards of weight then what had been a half shekel was now a third shekel

   (2) This was to be used for the public services of the Temple.

b. *Verse 33* They also pledged to take care of these expenses also

7. **Support for the Levites and Priests, 10:34-39**

a. *Verse 34* makes provision for a supply of wood.
(1) A fire was to be kept constantly burning on the altar, Lev 6:12f.

(2) Wood was always in short supply in Israel;

b. Verse 35 they accepted a similar obligation to supply food.

c. Verse 36 reflects their knowledge of the law that all firstborn belonged to the priests, Num 18:15f.

d. Verse 37 indicates that certain rooms of the Temple were used the storage of these crops.

e. Verse 38 adds a new detail to facilitate these collections. A priest would be on hand so that the Levites could quickly take a 10th of the tithe which they received and pass it along to the priests, Num 18:26

f. Verse 39 the people pledged to relieve the priests of the responsibility of collecting or transporting the contributions

(1) They would bring them to the storage chambers of the Temple where all the utensils used in the service of worship (see Ezra 1:9, 10) were kept

(2) Priests, gate keepers, and singers would be available to add in handling the produce.

(3) The pledge is closed with the people’s promise not to neglect any of these things, which would be tantamount to neglecting the house of God.

F. Word Studies

1. Amen, 8:6, אָמֵן, pronounce4 in Hebrew the same as in English
   a. The basic idea of something firm, a foundation or support
   b. Something built on a firm foundation
   c. "durable" and "lasting"
2. **Understand**, 8:2, 8, יָדַע, separate, distinguish, "indicating "discerning," or "understanding"

   a. Dependent on the power of separating or distinguishing or discriminating.

   b. The preposition translated "between" is derived from this word.

G. **Summary**

1. After the completion of the wall, the people gathered at a public square within the city and asked Ezra to read God’s Law to them.

   a. This was the fall, the 1st day of their 7th month

   b. The 7th month contained more religious holy days than any other.

   c. Ezra and others read and explained the Law

   d. They began beginning at dawn and continued till noon

   e. The rest of the day was occupied with feasting and fellowship

2. The next day the leaders assembled with Ezra for specific instruction

   a. They discovered a command concerning the Feast of Booths

   b. They had neglected this month

   c. They gathered branches and built temporary brush shelters.

3. The next day the people in humility and purity

   a. The Law was again read and the Levites led a prayer of confession.

   b. They praised the incomparable God of creation who had chosen Abraham and had covenanted to give him and his descendants the land on which the people were standing.

   c. They reviewed God’s hand in the Exodus events:

      (1) Miraculous deliverance from Egypt

      (2) Giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai

      (3) Directions to enter Canaan.

      (4) When Israel was stubborn and disobedient, God forgave.

      (5) God forgave the golden calf incident
(6) God enabled them to defeat Sihon and Og

d. Entering Canaan, as recounted in Judges-Kings they had alternating periods of rebellion, oppression, repentance, and God’s gracious deliverance

e. Now they recognized the justness of what God had done

4. A document was drawn and sealed with the names of the people, in behalf of all the adult religious community, male and female

a. This pledged them to walk in God’s Law,
b. To keep all His commandments
c. Not to intermarry with foreigners
d. Not to violate the Sabbath or holy days
e. They were to observe the Sabbatical year.
f. They pledged to support the Temple

(1) With money and materials
(2) With wood for the continual fire on the altar
(3) By bringing the first fruits of their crops and herds
(4) By offering their tithes to the Levites
(5) They in turn would give a 10th to the priests

H. Review Questions

1. Who read the Law to the people?
2. What special preparations were made for the occasion?
3. What feast in particular was mentioned?
4. What was unusual about the manner in which they kept the feast?
5. Who led the people in their prayer?
6. What is the character which Israel consistently demonstrated?
7. What character traits did God show?
8. What was the immediate result of the prayer?
9. What part did Nehemiah take in these proceedings?
10. How much was each man to give for the service of the Temple each year?
11. How did they decide who was to supply wood for each portion of the year?
12. Were the Levites, who received tithes, also to tithe?
X. THE GENEALOGIES OF RESIDENTS OF JERUSALEM'S POPULATION, 11:1-36

A. **Outline:** The genealogies of residents of Jerusalem's population, 11:1-36

1. An effort is made to increase Jerusalem's population, 11:1-2
2. People of Israel, 11:3-9
3. Priestly leaders, 11:10-14
4. Levites, 11:15-19
5. Other groups, 11:20-24

B. **Preliminary Questions**

1. Why do you suppose new residents were wanted in Jerusalem?
2. What was the method used to get them?

C. **An effort is made to increase Jerusalem's population, 11:1-2**

1. This chapter resumes chapter 7
2. After the revival Nehemiah used the genealogical list to help trace the people’s whereabouts
3. People were encouraged to reside in Jerusalem
   
   a. The city's walls had been repaired making it safer
   b. A strong Jerusalem would be a refuge in time of danger
   c. It would help build a stable economy for the entire area.
   d. People were needed to man the fortifications.
4. **Verse 1:** One out of ten to live in the holy city Jerusalem, while nineteen-tenths remained in the other towns
   
   a. Indicates that government officials were the largest part of its residents
   b. The were responsible for the government buildings and agencies
   c. Evidently the city had been almost empty city before the walls had been constructed.
d. None wanted to live there, so they cast lots

5. **Verse 2:** Blessed all those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem indicates that some were willing to take the risk
   
a. These may be those who willingly moved thus reducing the number for whom lots were cast
   
b. It may also be those who willingly allowed their names to be included in the drawing.
   
c. Since we hear nothing of those chosen by lot (the results), the latter is likely
   
d. At any rate, those move their found the respect of the others.

D. **People of Israel, 11:3-9**

1. **Verse 3:** The leaders of the province are not the same as the leaders found in v. 1

2. They are those who moved to Jerusalem (vss. 4-19) or lived in the cities of Judah and Benjamin (vss. 20-36).

3. **The priests, the Levites, the temple servants** are the classifications of the names which will follow
   
a. The descendants of Solomon's servants does not appear
   
b. They may be that they are synonymous with the gatekeepers in verse 19.
   
c. All these groups are named in Ezra 2, in the same order
   
d. There the gatekeepers are associated with the sons of Solomon’s servants, and with the temple servants, Ezra 2:42, 55, 58
   
e. Israelites, or Israel corresponds with "people of Israel" in Ezra 2:2, where also it is placed first after the rulers.
4. **Verse 4** divides the group further — **Judahites** and **Benjaminites**
   
   a. Leaders from Judah are listed in verses 4-6
   b. Leaders from Benjamin are listed in 7-9

E. **Priestly leaders, 11:10-14** — paralleled by 1 Chron 9:10-13

1. We can supplement this description from that
2. 1 Chron 9:13 designates them "qualified for the work of the service of the house of God."
3. **Verse 10** is almost identical to 1 Chron 9:10
4. **Verse 11**: is nearly identical to Ezra 7:1-2
   
   a. It is a condensed list
   b. Similar things occur in other lists; no two are alike, or complete
   c. Each is tailored to its particular context.

5. **Verses 12-13**: the two priestly lines are similar in length — Ezra 2:59-62 explains the difficulty some had establishing their genealogy.

F. **Levites, 11:15-19** — these verse also parallel 1 Chron 9:14-16

1. **Verse 16** — **who were over the outside work of the house of God** probably included are probably distinguished from the other duties of the Levites (v. 22; cf. 1 Chron 23:4) — singers, officers, judges, teachers
2. **Verse 19**: The gatekeepers are evidently synonymous with the descendants of Solomon's servants (cf. v. 3)

G. **Other groups, 11:20-24**

1. **Verse 20** describes the situation in the rest of Judah, which is detailed in verse 25ff.
2. **Verse 21**: The location of the residence of the Temple servants (cf. Ezra 2:43; Neh 3:26) is described as being outside the city walls
a. Ophel at other times was within the city boundaries, 2 Chron 33:14

b. The size of a city would fluctuate

c. The circumstances in which this wall was built would dictate they built it as quickly as possible, which would also dictate the shortest distance possible and still provide adequate protection

3. **Verse 22** speaks Uzzi . . . in charge of the work of the house of God — Ezra 2:41 also lists *singers*

4. **Verse 23** explains that King Artaxerxes had decreed regarding them, cf. Ezra 7:24

5. **Verse 24**: Pethahiah was probably at the Persian court, serving as the people of Israel’s representative there.

H. **Towns occupied in Judah and Benjamin, 11:25-36**

1. **Verses 25-30** list the populated towns of Judah, south of Jerusalem.

   a. Kiriath-arba is the ancient name for Hebron

   b. Many of these towns are found in Joshua 15, when Israel first entered the land.


3. **Verse 36** speaks of the necessity of transferring Levites occasionally to serve both areas.

I. **Word Study: Lot**

1. אֶבָּן, v.1, is a small stone, sometimes a number of stones, including one or more of an odd color
2. They were shaken in a container and thrown onto the ground thus deciding matters by chance.

3. Alternatively, they were shaken together and thrown into a vase, and each person drew one out, seeking for the odd-colored one.

4. Eventually they were made into cubes and the faces numbered to form dice.

5. Cf/ the modern game, "Yahtzee."

J. **Summary**

1. In order to increase the population and strengthen the situation of Jerusalem (where no one seemed to want to live), lots were cast and one tenth of the people were chosen as residents.

2. The others remained in the villages.

3. Names are given of families of the people of Israel, priests, Levites, and gatekeepers of the Temple.

4. Temple servants lived just outside the wall.

5. The Persian king furnished aid for the Levites, and the people had a representative at the Persian court.

6. A list of settlements, both in Judah and Benjamin, follows.

7. Levites were stationed in both areas.

K. **Review Questions**

1. What proportion of the people were asked to move to Jerusalem?

2. Who were already living there?

XI. **PRIESTLY AND LEVITICAL GENEALOGIES AND THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL, 12:1-47**

A. **Preliminary Questions**
1. Are all these lists of names from the same time?

2. Why do you suppose the dedication service did not follow the completion of the walls in 6:15?

3. Do you see any reason for the choral procession around the entire length of the walls?

4. What would be the value of a dedication service, anyway?

B. Outline

1. The genealogies of priests and Levites, 12:1-26
   a. Priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel, 12:1-9
   b. Names of high priests, from the Return from Captivity to the end of Nehemiah time, 12:10-11
   c. Priests’ families at the time of Joiakim, 12:12-21
   d. Levites in the time of Joiakim, 12:22-26

2. Levites assembled for dedication of the wall, 12:27-30
   a. Processional and dedication ceremonies, 12:31-43
   b. Concern about support of the Levites, 12:44-47

C. Priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel, 12:1-9

1. We already know from Nehemiah 7:39-42 that there were 4000+ priests

2. These verses provide a longer list, though still from Jeshua’s and Zerubbabel’s time

3. Between 8 and 11 of the these 22 names were also affixed to the document in chapter 10.

4. Verses 8-9 add the names of Levi from Zerubbabel’s day.
   a. Of the 8 names, 4 are on the document in chapter 10
Their associates stood opposite them in the service is probably an antiphonal arrangement of choirs, cf. 11:17 and Ezra 3:10

D. The high priests descended from Jeshua are traced to the end of Nehemiah’s life, 12:10-11

1. Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib
   a. Jeshua was high priest at the time of the 1st return and during the days of Haggai and Malachi
   b. Eliashib was high priest in the time of Nehemiah
   c. The other names, when compared with v. 22 and the Elephantine letters, have been used to deal with differing chronological issues.  

E. The priests’ families are listed at the time of Joiakim, 12:12-21

1. Verse 12: Joiakim succeeded Jeshua (v. 10), indicating this entire list is from the next generation after the list in verses 1-7

2. So Ezra in verses 1 and 13 do not refer to the Ezra of the previous book — the date is a little too early

F. Levites are listed from the time of Joiakim, 12:22-26

1. Verse 22 indicates records were kept of the Levites from the time of the 2nd high priest after the Return from Captivity until into the 4th century B.C. — in the days of Eliashib . . . until the reign of Darius the Persian, cf. vv. 10-11
   a. Jaddua may have lived to the time of Alexander the Great.
   b. Darius the Persian "is a unique expression" which may have been used "to distinguish Darius I from Darius the Mede mentioned in Daniel"  

\[\text{Brenemen, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 261.}\]

\[\text{Brenemen, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 262; cf. Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah, 364}\]
late date, Dr. Ironside also calls this a later insertion: cf. comments on vss. 10, 11. The later hand is only verifying that the records were still being kept in his day.

2. **Verse 23 Book of the Annals until the days of Johanan son of Eliashib**
   a. Refers to a register kept in the Temple, not the biblical book of Chronicles
   b. **Johanan** may be another spelling for Jonathan, who was the grandson of Eliashib

3. **Verse 24 with their associates over against them** again describes antiphonal arrangement of choirs.

4. **Verse 25 standing guard at the storehouses of the gates** refers to the Temple storehouses, not the gates of the city.

5. **Verse 26** dates the above list of Levites to the time of Joiakim, a generation later than the previous list of Levites (vss. 8-9)

G. **The Levites were assembled for the dedication of the wall, 12:27-30**

1. The rest of the chapter describes the service of dedication for the wall
   a. The wall was completed in 6:15 — Why the delay?
   b. Perhaps the reading of the law?
   c. Perhaps they wanted to wait until the city was occupied, Ch. 11

2. **Verse 27** indicates that many Levites lived in surrounding towns
   a. Perhaps they taught the Law in their respective towns
   b. Perhaps they were earning a living in light of their inadequate support.
   c. Either or both is possible

3. **Verses 28-29** indicates the singers were a subclass of the levites.
4. **Verse 30** before dedication there is a need for purification from defilement — such is extremely important for an unholy people attempting to approach/worship the Holy God.

H. **The processional and dedication ceremonies, 12:31-43**

1. **Verse 31** describes the processional of dignitaries and choirs in two columns almost the entire length of the wall, around the city.

2. **Verses 32-36** give the personnel and instruments included in 1 column

3. **Verse 37** traces their route from a point south of the city to another on the east.

4. **Verses 38-39** traces the 2nd column from the same southern point along the West wall and circling more than half of the city.

5. **Verse 40** indicates both columns arrived at the Temple

6. **Verses 41-42** list the priestly participants and the choir leader, and mention the singers and the instrumental accompaniment.

7. **Verse 43** there is one more word for joy in the Hebrew text than in English

   a. 5 times they are stated to rejoice — **They . . . (1) rejoiced, for God had made them (2) rejoice, (3) rejoiced greatly, the women and children also (4) rejoiced. The (5) rejoicing of Jerusalem was heard far away.**

   b. **Sacrifices were offered**

I. **Concern for the support of the Levites, 12:44-47**

1. **Verse 44**: appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them refers to the organization of the contributions and storage so that the feasts could be performed

2. **Verses 45-46**: describe further the actions of David and Solomon's reorganization of the Temple services, cf. 1 Chron 25:1; 2 Chron 8:14
3. **Verse 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah**

   a. Theses names are linked together to stress the continuity and obedience of the nation during their administrations

   b. Reminds of *Joshua 24:31*: Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.

J. **Word Studies**

1. **Purify**, ἁπαλά, v. 30: the basic is cleanse, become clear; 3 reasons to purify

   a. **Physical purity**: Ezek 39:12 describes the cleansing of the land from corpses; Num. 8:6-7 speaks of washing and completely shaving the Levites to prepare them for God’s service.

   b. **Ceremonial purity**: Ezek 43:26 speaks of cleansing the altar for the new Temple; a leper who had been healed would be purified in a ceremony administered by a priest, Lev 14:11

   c. **Moral purity**: Mal 3:3 uses the figure of purifying metal from dross as parallel to a person's moral cleansing; Jer 33:8 speaks of cleansing through God's forgiveness.

2. **Dedication**, יָשַׁב, v. 27: "Dedication, inauguration. The term occurs eight times in Hebrew and twice in each of the Aramaic portions of Ezra and Daniel. The noun is most famous because of its intertestamental use for the reestablishment of worship in the temple after the excesses of Antiochus Epiphanes. This Hanukkah feast is mentioned in Jn 10:22. It falls in late December."^{15}\n
K. **Summary**

1. This chapter records the names of families of priests and Levites who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel

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^{15} *TWOT*, 1:301-302
a. The names of successive high priests covering about two centuries are listed

b. Then follows a list of Levite families, about a generation after the return.

2. The description of the dedication of the completed wall surrounding Jerusalem is given, which included

   a. The assembling of Levites from many communities
   b. The purification of the priests, people, gates, and wall
   c. The two columns of Levite choirs, dignitaries, priests, trumpeters, and more singers
   d. Ezra and Nehemiah served as parade marshals for the two columns
   e. The converging at the Temple for numerous sacrifices and a service rendered by the priests and Levites.
   f. Everything was done according to patterns established by David and Solomon — Should this have been done?
   g. The people continued to give the prescribed portions to the Levites on the specified days, and the Levites gave their portion to the priests when Nehemiah was governor as they had when Zerubbabel been their governor

L. Review Questions

1. Who were the leaders of the two processions that circled the city?
2. Where did the parade end?
3. What sacrifices were made?
4. How did the people show gratitude to the Levites for this impressive service?

XII. FOREIGNERS ARE EXPELLED; RELIGIOUS REFORMS ARE INSTITUTED, 13:1-31

A. Preliminary Questions
1. Where have we seen Tobiah before?
2. How many prayers of Nehemiah can you count in this chapter?
3. How did Nehemiah handle the problem of mixed marriages? Is this how Ezra would have handled it?
4. What was Sanballat’s last method of attack on Israel, in the book of Nehemiah?

**Outline:** Foreigners are expelled; religious reforms are instituted, 13:1-31

1. Foreigners are expelled, 13:1-3
2. Tobiah is driven out, 13:4-9
3. Support for the Levites is renewed, 13:10-14
4. Labor and merchandising is forbidden on the Sabbath, 13:15-22
5. Nehemiah deals with the problem of mixed marriages, 13:23-29
6. Nehemiah summarizes his reforms, 13:30-31

**Foreigners are expelled, 13:1-3**

1. These events were probably during Nehemiah's 2nd visit, cf. 13:6ff.
2. The occasion on which the Law of Moses was being read is not identified.
3. Evidently, reading the Law had become a tradition.
4. The passage being read was Deut 23:3-6
5. The particular passage which they read was Deut 23:3-6
6. **Verse 1** — no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God is from Deut 23:3 and refers to foreigners, not descent.
7. Ruth was from Moab — when such people gave up their idolatrous practices and became a worshiper of God they were accepted into the community.

**Tobiah is driven out, 13:4-9**

1. **Verse 4,** Now before this, refers to the time when Nehemiah had returned to Persia.
   a. The extent to which intermarriage had increased.
b. The priest Eliashib . . . who was related to Tobiah, prepared for Tobiah a large room where they had previously put the grain . . .

c. So even the priesthood was affected. The household of Eliashib, the priest.

2. *Verse 5* indicates the purpose of rooms — previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

3. *Verse 6* sets the limit of 12 years for Nehemiah’s 1st term as governor — in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes I went to the king — we do not know how long intervened before he returned to Jerusalem.

4. *Verse 7* indicates that when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he learned of these new problems.

5. *Verse 8* Nehemiah became so angry he threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the room — these rooms were for the exclusive use of those worshiping God, not living quarters, or storage facilities for pagans.

6. *Verse 9* describes the cleansing of the rooms to purify them for service.

E. Support for the Levites is renewed, 13:10-14

1. *Verse 10:* because the portions of the Levites had not been given the Levities had gone back to farming — had gone back to their fields.

2. *Verses 11-13* show Nehemiah’s effectiveness in dealing with the problem:

   a. 1st is a reprimand — "Why is the house of God forsaken?"

   b. 2nd he searched out the Levites — gathered them together and set them in their stations.

   c. 3rd he restored the contributions — Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.
d. 4th reorganized with reliable people — I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses

e. Verse 14: Nehemiah prays that God will remember his deeds

F. Labor and merchandising is forbidden on the Sabbath, 13:15-22 — a direct violation of the vow the people made in 10:31

1. Verse 15, Nehemiah, over a period of time observed people violating the Sabbath

   a. Treading wine presses on the sabbath
   b. Bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys
   c. Wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens . . . they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day

2. Verse 16 Tyrian merchants brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath

   a. Tyre's history involved trade
   b. The intermarriages encouraged families to violate the Sabbath law — the pagan family member would see nothing wrong with this

3. Verse 17, Nehemiah remonstrated with the nobles of Judah about the violation

4. Verse 18 recalls the connection between Israel’s violation of the Sabbath and their suffering captivity and humiliation, Lev 26:35; 2 Chron 36:21

5. Verse 19, Nehemiah took more direct action, barring the doors at the beginning of the Sabbath and setting up guards to enforce the decision

6. Verse 20 indicates that he did not retract these policies under pressure and risked offending the tradesmen.
7. **Verse 21**, when the people stayed outside, he threatened the use of force, Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you, which convinced them not to come on the Sabbath.

8. **Verse 22** Nehemiah made this not only a religious issue but an act of service and worship to God, requiting the Levities to guard the gate on the Sabbath.

G. *Nehemiah deals with the problem of mixed marriages, 13:23-29.*

1. **Verse 23**, records the various people Israel with whom Israel was intermarrying — Ashdod [Gaza Strip], Ammon [Amman], and Moab [south end of Dead Sea]

2. **Verse 24**, indicates the children were closer to their mothers through most of the day, so they spoke their language more than Hebrew.

3. **Verse 25**, contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair indicates Nehemiah knew extreme actions were warranted. Often, Christians have difficulty with such actions.

4. **Verses 26-27**: holds up the bad example of Solomon — Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women?

5. **Verse 28**: Eliashib, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite
   a. The high priest is practicing this sin
   b. This may/may not be the same Sanballat who Josephus (*Antiquities*, 11:306-12) mentions stating "Manasseh, brother of Jaddua the high priest, who was married to Nikaso, daughter of Sanballat."16
   c. There were many Sanballat's during this period, all of which caused trouble for the Jews

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16 Breneman, 278.
d. **Verse 29**, is not for himself directly but against those of the Levitical line, priests and Levites alike, who had violated the covenant (Num. 25:12) which God had made originally with their forefathers because they had stood more firmly against intermarriage and defilement with foreigners than any of the other tribes.

H. **Nehemiah summarizes his reforms, 13:30-31**

1. Note his attention to detail

2. Nehemiah, the praying man, appropriately concludes his book with a prayer.

I. **Word Studies**

1. **Ever**, v. 1, לָבוּשׁ, basically means:
   a. The past, or antiquity, time long past or even only a lifetime, the days of old, Mic 7:14; or of a long time, Isa 42:14
   b. The future, i.e., of the end of one's life, Deut 15:17
   c. End of an age or race or dynasty, limited by the length of their obedience, 1 Sam 2:30
   d. The laws are "forever," "Passover," Ex. 12:14, yet they are superseded now.
   e. The earth and universe are forever (Psa 104:5), though we know they will pass away
   f. Only when the term is used of God does it have the idea of absolute eternity, Psa 90:2

2. **Beloved**, vs. 26, אַהֲבָּת, to breath after, long for, desire; akin to ἀγάπη in the NT.

J. **Summary**
1. The public reading of the Law revealed that God had forbidden the entrance of Moabites or Ammonites into their religious assemblies, so the people barred all foreigners.

   a. Nehemiah discovered on his return from Persia that space had been given to Tobiah, governor of Ammon, in some of the Temple rooms.

   b. He threw Tobiah’s belongings out and restored the rooms to the Levites for their intended uses for storage of supplies.

2. He also observed that people were not supporting the Levites with their tithes, and he corrected that, appointing reliable people to make distributions of these goods to the Levites.

3. Sabbath observance had become neglected, so he complained to the public officials and offending tradespeople from Tyre doing business at the gate on the Sabbath, eventually barring the gates and threatening to use force to prevent their entrance on the Sabbath.

4. He observed that children were losing the ability to speak Hebrew because many of them were the products of marriages with foreigners and he got the people to agree to stop that practice.

5. The high priest had a grandson who had married the daughter of Sanballat the Samaritan; Nehemiah drove him away.

6. He summarized his achievements in purifying the people of foreign influences, restoring priests and Levites to their duties, seeing that wood was provided for their offerings, and restoring the offering of first fruits to them.

7. In all these things he prayed for God’s approval on his work.

K. **Review Questions**

   1. What objection did Moses have against Ammonites and Moabites?
   2. Who were especially involved in the desecration of the Sabbath?
   3. What did Nehemiah do to prevent continued desecration of the Sabbath?
   4. With what nations in particular were the Jews intermarrying?
XIII. REFLECTIONS ON NEHEMIAH

A. Nehemiah was a frequent prayer, offering “instant prayers”

B. He saw the value of the community

C. He was a natural leader
   1. He foresaw dangers and prepared for them
   2. He was able to getting people to cooperate
   3. He used stern methods when necessary

XIV. REMEMBERING THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

A. Chapters 1-7
   1. Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem's helplessness, ch. 1
   2. He gets permission to go to Jerusalem, ch. 2
   3. The rebuilding of the wall, ch. 3
   4. Specific details are given, chs. 4-6
      a. The enemies ridicule and create rumors to hinder the work, ch. 4
      b. Internal difficulties of indebtedness/mortgage foreclosures, ch. 5
      c. The enemies began diversionary tactics, ch. 6
   5. Republishing the list of the 1st returnees, ch. 7; cf. Ezra 2

B. Chapters 8-13
   1. The great revival affecting the intellect — the law is read, ch. 8
   2. The great revival affection the emotions — psalms and confessions, ch. 9
   3. The great revival affecting the will — vows of faithfulness, ch. 10
   4. Lists of the residents of Jerusalem and the surrounding settlements, ch. 11
   5. Genealogies of priests and Levities, ch. 12
   6. Expulsion of foreigners and religious reforms instituted, ch. 13