



DAILY
B I B L E G U I D E

The Book of Nehemiah

Days 150-153 of a Yearly Bible Reading Program

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Daily Bible Reading Plan

Day	Passage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Day 150	Nehemiah 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 151	Nehemiah 6-7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 152	Nehemiah 8-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 152	Nehemiah 11-13	<input type="checkbox"/>

Welcome to the Book of Nehemiah!

The Book of Nehemiah was written to show God's continued blessing on the Jews attempting to reestablish their nation. Nehemiah was a trusted official in the court of Artaxerxes I who God used to help strengthen the attempt to restart Jewish civilization in Jerusalem. The most famous section of it deals with the rebuilding of Jerusalem's defensive walls in the face of hardship and opposition.

A few quick facts about Nehemiah:

- Ezra is the traditional author. Some sections are written in Nehemiah's perspective. These were likely taken from his account and preserved by Ezra.
- This book covers events from Nehemiah learning of the condition of Jerusalem in 455 B.C. to his cleansing of the Temple and priesthood in 441 B.C.
- The key verse is 2:20: " Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem."
- A brief outline:
 - Nehemiah's arrival – 1:1-2:11
 - The rebuilding of the walls – 2:12-7:4
 - The nation is reformed – 7:5-13:31
- Key events:
 - Construction of the walls begins – Chapter 3
 - Construction of the walls is completed – Chapter 6
 - Ezra leads in a revival – Chapter 9

Chapter 1 Notes

In this chapter Nehemiah grieves the broken state of Jerusalem.

vs. 1-3 – The ruler of Persia at this time is Artaxerxes I, who ruled from 465-424 B.C. It is the twentieth year of his reign, though some believe this may include some time as a co-ruler with his father Xerxes I. He notes that it is in the month Chisleu, which is our November or December. It has been about 60 years since the Zerubbabel built the Second Temple and less than 5 years since Ezra arrived in Jerusalem. Nehemiah learns of the sad state of Jerusalem, and is especially moved by the report that its walls and gates still lay in ruin.

vs. 4-11 – Nehemiah takes his burden to the Lord in prayer. He confesses his sins and that of his people and calls on God to honor the promises of Deuteronomy 30:1-5 to restore Israel in the Promised Land. The last verse indicates that he had determined to take his cause to the king but trusted in God for the timing. He gives his position as “cupbearer”, which would mean he was close the king and highly trusted, as it dealt with in part ensuring the kings safety from possible assassination.

Chapter 2 Notes

In this chapter Nehemiah receives permission and goes to Jerusalem.

vs. 2:1-8 – It is now the 1st month (Nisan) according to the Jewish calendar but still the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes. This means Nehemiah has been praying for two months for such an opportunity as this. The king inquires about his troubled mind and so he tells him of his grief over the state of Jerusalem. The king asks what he would want, to which Nehemiah quickly prays in vs. 4 before answering. By the end of the conversation, Nehemiah is appointed by Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem, rebuild the walls, and return to the royal court when finished.

vs. 9-16 – Opposition awaits Nehemiah in the form of Sanballat and Tobiah. These will try many ploys to slow or halt Nehemiah's mission. He goes out alone at night to survey the condition of the city. The places he visits are on the south end of Jerusalem.

vs. 17-18 – Nehemiah calls for action to rebuild the walls, and the people are stirred to join in the project.

vs. 19-20 – Sanballat, Tobiah and newcomer Geshem make their first attempt to stop Nehemiah by mocking the endeavor and accusing them of treason. This will not stop Nehemiah.

vs. 68-70 – The settlers gather first at the Temple site and make an offering for its construction. 1,000 drams of gold (\$730,000), 5,000 minas of silver (\$60,000), and 100 priestly garments are given out of a free will from the people.

Chapter 3 Notes

In this chapter is the roster of the wall builders.

vs. 1-32 – Here is the roster of the teams of men that worked on the walls and the sections they were assigned to. The description begins in the northeast corner and works its way counterclockwise around the walls. There are 10 gates listed here. 2 more are mentioned later: “the gate of Ephraim” in 8:16 and “the prison gate” in 12:39. Thus there are 12 gates total. It is a wonderful study to look at the gates and their purposes.

Chapter 4 Notes

In this chapter the work on the walls continues amid mockery and threats.

vs. 1-3 – Sanballat and Tobiah again attempt to stop Nehemiah by mocking the work, Tobiah even joking that a fox could knock the wall down.

vs. 4-6 – Nehemiah does not stop the work. He takes the problem to God in prayer and keeps pressing on.

vs. 7-14 – Sanballat and Tobiah again attempt to stop the work by leading a coalition of Canaanites to threaten an attack. In response Nehemiah places more guards to keep watch. The work is hard and the people are tired. It is a low point, but the work does not stop as the threats grow.

vs. 15-23 – Nehemiah takes many precautions against an attack. More armed guards are stationed. The workers are carrying weapons alongside their tools. They are encouraged to stay within the defenses that are available in Jerusalem and remain alert at all times.

Chapter 5 Notes

In this chapter Nehemiah deals with the issue of his workers being abused by their fellow Jews.

vs. 1-5 – The men that worked on the walls evidently did so without pay. This puts a strain on the care for their families. Some of the wealthier Jews were taking advantage of the situation by making loans and mortgages. It is one thing to fight an enemy outside your camp, and another to fight one within it.

vs. 6-13 – Nehemiah calls for an assembly and shames the people that were abusing the workers and their families. To ensure that they keep their word to stop, the priests are brought in to make them swear solemnly to God.

vs. 14-19 – Nehemiah is made governor over the region of Judah and holds this position for 12 years. He sets a personal example by personally paying for not only his expenses but also those of the men working for him. In ancient times, someone that held such a position would use it to enrich themselves at the expense of their subjects.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 150

Nehemiah is a favorite book of many because it is a book of faith in action. He saw a need and worked with all his might to accomplish the task. The secret was not his drive or his work ethic. The secret was his faith in God. Nehemiah accomplished much because he allowed God to use. Too often we do things in our own strength and forget that the greatest victories are won when we surrender ourselves to God's mighty hand.

Hymn for Day 150

Today's hymn is "Work, for the Night is Coming" by Anna Louisa Coghill, is a call to work on while we have the opportunity before us.

*Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.*

*Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon.
Give every flying minute,
Something to keep in store;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man works no more.*

*Work, for the night is coming,
Under the sunset skies;
While their bright tints are glowing,
Work, for daylight flies.
Work till the last beam fadeth,
Fadeth to shine no more;
Work, while the night is darkening,
When man's work is o'er.*

Chapter 6 Notes

In this chapter the enemy attempts to hamper Nehemiah's work but cannot stop it from being completed.

vs. 1-4 – As work on the wall is nearing completion, the trio of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem resort to conspiracy to stop the work. They ask for Nehemiah to come and meet them. It was of course a trap. Nehemiah's response in vs. 3 is tremendous and should be the practice of any Christian worker.

vs. 5-9 – The next scheme by Sanballat is to threaten to report lies about Nehemiah to the king. Considering the king knew and trusted Nehemiah it is doubtful this would have worked. The work continues as Nehemiah prays for strength to finish the task.

vs. 10-14 – The next attack comes from within. A priest named Shemaiah tells Nehemiah that assassins are coming and he needs to lock himself in the Temple for safety. Shemaiah is said to be "shut up", meaning either he is confined to his home or is practicing some kind of asceticism. Nehemiah correctly discerns that the man has been bought off by Sanballat and Tobiah and ignores the false prophecy. In vs. 14 it is hinted that multiple prophets and a prophetess were likewise employed by the enemy. It is a cunning trap, as Satan presents it in a religious package.

vs. 15-16 – It is only by the power of God that the work was finished at all, let alone in 52 days!

vs. 17-19 – We see here the depth of the conspiracy of Tobiah and the web he has spun among the Jewish leaders. Tobiah, who you must recall is an Ammonite, was married to a descendant of Arah, who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel in Ezra 2:5. Tobiah's son had also married the daughter of one of the wall builders named Meshullam (see 3:4). We learn later in 13:4 that a priest named Eliashib was also allied with Tobiah. It is strange to see these intermarriages because it has been only a few years since Ezra dealt with the issue. It appears that Tobiah was a powerful official under Sanballat, and the Jewish aristocracy believed allying with him was beneficial, even to the hurt of their own people.

Chapter 7 Notes

In this chapter Nehemiah begins to face the probably of the intermarriage of the Jews and the pagans around them.

vs. 1-4 – The work is now completed and turns over the command of Jerusalem to his brother Hanani. The inhabitants were safe behind the walls, but the space enclosed for the walls certainly built for a larger population. Defensive precautions were still necessary.

vs. 5-69 – This chapter parallels Ezra 2. It is now 80 years after those initial settlers arrived that Nehemiah works to untangle the genealogies of the Jews in his time.

vs. 70-73 – There are differences between Ezra 2 and this section. The totals differ greatly 61,000 gold darics versus 41,000, 5,000 mina of silver versus 4,200, and 100 priestly garments versus 597. I think the key to understanding these differences is the end of vs. 73 (“...and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their cities.”). This is obviously not part of Ezra 2 and transitions to into Nehemiah 8. What this shows it that at some point the narrative shifts from repeating the historical record of Ezra 2 to the current day of Nehemiah. That shift is not in vs. 73, but in vs. 70. Comparing vs. 70 to Ezra 2:68-69 shows this is where the two parallel accounts diverge. Instead of reporting the previous offering made when Zerubbabel first came to Jerusalem, this is recording an offering in Nehemiah’s day celebrating the finishing of the wall. This easily explains the difference and the inclusion of the offering by the Tirshatha (governor), who at this time is Nehemiah.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 151

It amazes me that the issue of intermarriage is still an issue for the Jews for Nehemiah. It was clearly taught for them in the Law and Ezra had just dealt with the issue a few years prior. It illustrates again the depravity of the human heart. The people were choosing to willfully sin. It was not an education problem, nor was it a case of something that was forgotten in history. They knew better and yet they could not help themselves. Before we start casting stones at them, may I remind you that the Bible often acts like a mirror to reveal our own shortcomings? I can just about guarantee that your issue is not the same as theirs. The ban on intermarriage is for the Jews. For believers we are warned to not be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers, but nowhere does it say to divorce an unbelieving spouse. Paul deals with this issue in I Corinthians 7. No, our sins are personal to us. We all have those impulses that we fail to keep in check. The secret? Do not rely on yourself but rather on God to sanctify you.

Hymn for Day 151

Today’s hymn is “Nehemiah’s Request”. It was written by John Collins and appears in The International Lesson Hymnal of 1878.

*My father’s graves lie desolate,
Jerusalem is waste,
Broken and burnt is ev’ry gate,
Her glory all defaced.
How can I, then, but deeply mourn
My exiled people’s doom,
Or pray that they may yet return
To their Judean home.*

*Wilt thou no send me the to build
The city of my sires?
For prophecy yet unfulfilled
Enkindles my desires;
I long to see its fallen wall
Again in beauty stand,
I Long to hear from Zion’s hill
Praise echo o’er the land.*

*Hear my request, my lord, O king!
Tho' captive I may be,
End these long years of suffering,
And set our nation free.
So shall the peace of God be thine,
Obeying this his will,
While trusting in his word divine,
Thy throne shall prosper still.*

Chapter 8 Notes

In this chapter Ezra leads in a revival by teaching the Scriptures.

vs. 1-8 – The Water Gate is on the southeast of Jerusalem, and there was an area inside the wall there large enough for the Jews to assemble. It is the month of Tisri, our September/October. Ezra reads the words of the Mosaic Law, perhaps the entire Pentateuch. He and a team of Levites teach the people about the contents of the Law. There is a great need for such Bible teaching today.

vs. 9-12 – The response of the people is to mourn at their sin and condition. Nehemiah and Ezra step in and encourage the people to rejoice that they now had heard and understood the Law.

vs. 13-18 – The immediate result of the teaching of Scripture to the people is the realization that the Feast of Tabernacles was only two weeks away on the 15th. The people zealously celebrate this feast like no other time since the days of Joshua. This is interesting in that Joshua's people would have directly understood the meaning of the feast, which remembered the wilderness journey to the Promised Land. Here the Jews could not only remember that but also their own journey through the Captivity to their return to the Promised Land. Note also that in vs. 18 that the Scripture is taught throughout the week.

Chapter 9 Notes

In this chapter the Jews confess their sins before God as part of the revival.

vs. 1-4 – This is two days after the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews gather in the Temple and mourn and confess their sins. We note in vs. 3 that this included more reading of the Law.

vs. 5-38 – This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible. It begins in praise in vs. 5-6, then transitions into recalling God's providence in the history of Israel in vs. 7-29. The final section of vs. 30-38 is confession of sin and a call for mercy. The last verse speaks of a covenant, which will be explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 10 Notes

In this chapter the leaders of the people enter a covenant to ensure the Jews continued serving God.

vs. 1-27 – In the last verse of the previous chapter a covenant was mentioned. Its content is given at the end of this chapter, but first those that pledge themselves to keep it are listed. 84 individuals are named. It begins with Nehemiah the governor, then lists the priests, Levites, and chiefs of the people.

vs. 28-39 – The covenant is made up of seven parts. First, they would keep the commands of the Law. Second, that they would not marry women that were not Jewish. Third, that they would keep the weekly Sabbath. Fourth, that they would observe the Sabbath year (Exodus 23:10-11). Fifth, they would give yearly 1/3 shekel (.13 ounces, roughly \$10) to finance the work of the Temple, Sixth, that they would supply wood to burn on the altar. Seventh, that they would pay to finance the work of the priests through the tithe.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 152

These chapters are some of my favorites. I am fascinated by the revival that begins by the teaching of Scripture. In our day there is a woeful lack of knowledge of the what the Bible contains. Most bemoan this void in our modern society, but the larger issue is in our churches. Too many pastors fail to properly teach the Scriptures to their congregations. Every church I have seen that has placed great emphasis on educating its members about the Word of God has seen tremendous spiritual growth. This is one of the main reasons I took up this project. The Bible is not just for the preacher, it is for every Christian.

Hymn for Day 152

Our hymn today is “Out of the Deep I Call”, written in 1868 by H.W. Baker. It is prayer of confession that would fit well in the themes of Chapter 9.

*Out of the deep I call,
To Thee, O Lord, to Thee,
Before Thy throne of grace I fall;
Be merciful to me.*

*Out of the deep I cry,
The woeful deep of sin,
Of evil done in days gone by,
Of evil now within.*

*Out of the deep of fear
And dread of coming shame;
All night till morning watch is near
I plead the precious name.*

*Lord, there is mercy now,
As ever was, with Thee,
Before Thy throne of grace I bow;
Be merciful to me.*

Chapter 11 Notes

In this chapter we see the names of the Jewish settlers and where they lived.

vs. 1-2 – 1/10 of the of the Jewish leaders were chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem. It was necessary to populate the city, which still was mostly in ruins though now surrounded by its defensive wall. The people celebrated these because it was both a sacrifice and an honor to dwell in Jerusalem at this time.

vs. 3-24 – The roster of those that lived in Jerusalem. This passage parallels I Chronicles 9:1-34.

vs. 25-36 – A list of the cities and villages where Jews settled outside of Jerusalem.

Chapter 12 Notes

In this chapter are the roster of the priests and the dedication of the walls.

vs. 1-9 – The roster of the priests that returned with Zerubbabel. Joshua/Jeshua is the high priest at that time.

vs. 10-11 – The succession of High Priests from Jeshua, who was a contemporary of Cyrus the Great, to Jaddua, who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. This covers a period of about 200 years.

vs. 12-21 – A roster of the heads of the priestly families during the time of Joiakim. This is the second generation of leaders after the return from captivity. The formula used is to give the name of the father from the time of Jeshua and then the son from the time of Joiakim. Two families, those of Hattush and Miamin, have no son listed. This could be that they had no eligible male heirs or that the original head was still alive and active.

vs. 22-26 – An overview of further records, some included some not. Darius the Persian in vs. 22 is believed to be Darius III, the final ruler of the Persian empire who was defeated by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C.

vs. 27-43 – An account of the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem. The people are divided into two companies to march on top of the walls while singing praises to God. It is believed that Nehemiah and Ezra led the two divisions. It looks like they started in the southwest or far south, somewhere between the valley gate and the dung gate. with one moving clockwise and the other counterclockwise around the walls. The two groups meet in the Temple to the north.

vs. 44-47 – In the spiritual fervor of revival and completing the walls, the care of the Levites and priests is properly met.

Chapter 13 Notes

In this chapter Nehemiah returns from an absence to deal with the backslid people.

vs. 1-3 – The opening verses harken back to Chapter 8. In that day the Jews had heard the Word of God (Deuteronomy 23:3-5) and had separated themselves from the pagans around them. As we will see, this did not last long.

vs. 4-9 – Despite his office and the clear knowledge of the Scripture against it, the high priest Eliashib had allied with Tobiah the Ammonite and provided him space within the Temple. Nehemiah had returned to the king's court and was absent while this happened. Most think this lasted only a year or two. Now he returns and immediately evicts Tobiah and his possessions from the Temple. The space is cleansed and reverted to its sacred use.

vs. 10-14 – Nehemiah's next order of business is to restore the salaries of the Levites, which had lapsed in his absence. It is strange to see this considering what a big deal was made about it in the closing of the previous chapter.

vs. 15-22 – Yet another problem is the desecration of the Sabbath by labor and trade. Some of the chief offenders were traders from Tyre. Nehemiah literally locks them out of the city on the Sabbath and threatens to arrest them if they do not go away. They learned their lesson and stopped trading on the Sabbath. Nehemiah charges the priests to better monitor the observance of the Sabbath.

vs. 23-29 – The problem of intermarriage is raised yet again. Nehemiah observes children born into these mixed marriages that are unable to speak the language of the Jews (Aramaic). He takes a stand again and calls out the people for this sin. He even has to deal with the high priest's son, and future high priest himself, Joiada had married the daughter of Sanballat.

vs. 30-31 – The final recorded acts of Nehemiah are to put an end to the many sins listed in this chapter and to support the work of the Temple.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 153

Most of the time when we read Nehemiah we focus on the work of rebuilding the walls. The rest of the story is of revival, reverses, rebuke, and restoration. It is astounding to lay the book out and consider how fast revival turns to reverses as the people backslide. Most of the time you will note that it is the aristocracy leading the decline. But God raised men like Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuke the people of their sins and to bring about restoration. Holiness among God's people is important, though it is a struggle for us. It is a consequence of our depravity and brokenness of our nature. Thank God there will come a day when all will be made right and the children of God will no longer struggle with sin. For that heavenly time we should all long for.

Hymn for Day 153

Our hymn today is "O Thou, From Whom All Goodness Flows", written in 1791 by Thomas Haweis. It connects well with Nehemiah's closing prayer: "Remember me, O my God, for good."

*O Thou, from whom all goodness flows,
I lift my heart to Thee;
In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,
Dear Lord, remember me.*

*When groaning on my burdened heart
My sins lie heavily,
My pardon speak, new peace impart;
In love remember me.*

*Temptations sore obstruct my way,
And ills I cannot flee:
O give me strength, Lord, as my day;
For good remember me.*

*Distressed with pain, disease, and grief,
This feeble body see;
Grant patience, rest, and kind relief:
Hear and remember me.*

*If on my face, for Thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If Thou remember me.*

*The hour is near; consigned to death,
I own the just decree;
Savior, with my last parting breath
I'll cry, Remember me.*