

INTERACTIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

DESTINATION: *Nehemiah 1-13*

The book of Nehemiah continues where Ezra leaves off. Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the king, leads the third and final return to Jerusalem. Granted permission by the king, Nehemiah leads a group to repair and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah is met with much hostility and conflict, and he shows us that times of trial require strong spiritual leadership. This book combines the ideas of work and worship.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

586 B.C.

Babylonians take Southern Kingdom of Judah captive

539 B.C.

Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon

538 B.C.

The return of the Jews to Judea begins

536-515 B.C.

Rebuilding of the Temple

464-424 B.C.

Artaxerxes Longimanus reigns in Persia

458 B.C.

Ezra leads a group of returnees

444 B.C.

Nehemiah leads a group of returnees

443 B.C.

Jerusalem's wall is reconstructed

TRIP PLANNER:

Leaving off where the book of Ezra ends, the Temple had been rebuilt and dedicated, but the walls of the city are still in ruins. Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, is sent with the third and final group of returnees to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. The Book of Nehemiah can be divided into two sections.

Political Construction - Chapters 1-7

Spiritual Instruction - Chapters 8-13

PLACES OF INTEREST:

Beth Zur - A town in ancient Palestine, north of Hebron, on the Jerusalem road. Built by Rehoboam for the defense of his kingdom (2 Chronicles 11:7). Today it is the modern Khirbat Tubayyah, or the West Bank. Nehemiah, son of Azbuk was the ruler of half of this district (Neh. 3:16). During the Persian periods, it was a sparsely occupied area.

Kidron Valley - The Kidron Valley is near the city of Jerusalem and is mentioned several times in the Bible. It is named after the Kidron stream that flows through the region. The Kidron Valley runs along the eastern wall of Jerusalem, and separates the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. It then runs towards the east, cutting through the Judean Desert, and heads towards the Dead Sea.

The Wall of Jerusalem - The wall around a city was one of its most important features. The wall was the first line of defense for the people inside the city. It protected them during times of war and peace. Whenever the people returned to the city from the captivity, they were confronted with needed repairs at certain locations on the wall. (Neh. 1:3)

The Gates:

1. The Valley Gate
2. The Fountain Gate
3. The Sheep Gate
4. The Fish Gate
5. The Old Gate
6. The Refuse Gate
7. The Water Gate
8. The Horse Gate
9. The East Gate
10. The Gate of Miphkad
11. The Gate of Ephriam
12. The Prison Gate

Thirty-Two Cities of Judah

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|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Kirjatharba | 17. Azekah |
| 2. Dibon | 18. Geba |
| 3. Jekabzeel | 19. Michmash |
| 4. Jeshua | 20. Aija |
| 5. Moladah | 21. Bethel |
| 6. Bethphelet | 22. Anathoth |
| 7. Hazarshual | 23. Nob |
| 8. Beersheba | 24. Ananiah |
| 9. Ziklag | 25. Hazor |
| 10. Mekonah | 26. Ramah |
| 11. Enrimmon | 27. Gittaim |
| 12. Zareah | 28. Hadid |
| 13. Jarmuth | 29. Zeboim |
| 14. Zanoah | 30. Neballat |
| 15. Adullam | 31. Lod |
| 16. Lachish | 32. Ono |

PEOPLE OF INTEREST:

Four Treasurers - Once all of the tithes of grain, new wine and oil were brought into the storeroom, four people were put in charge of this treasury. For accountability, four people from four backgrounds were placed in charge.

1. Shelemiah: the Priest
2. Zaddock: the Scribe
3. Pedaiah: the Levite
4. Hannan: a Layman

Eliashib - He was the high priest after the captivity. In the true spirit of being a servant of God, he led some of the rebuilding projects, doing the physical work. (Neh. 3:1)

Hanani - Nehemiah's brother who reported the poor conditions in Jerusalem to Nehemiah while he was still in Persia (Neh. 1:2). Nehemiah placed him in charge of the military protection of the restored Jerusalem (Neh. 7:2)

Nehemiah - His name means "The Lord comforts." The son of Hachaliah, Nehemiah was the re-builder of the walls of Jerusalem. He was the royal cupbearer to King Artaxexes and would later become the leader and governor of Jerusalem.

Sanballat - A Horonite and one of the chief opponents of Nehemiah as he built the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat was also an enemy of the nation Israel and the returning Jews. His name had the meaning "sin has given him life."

Tobiah - An Amorite servant of Sanballat who ridiculed the Jewish efforts to rebuild the walls. His name means "The Lord is good."

Twenty-Five Leaders of the Provinces:

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|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Athaiah | 14. Shemaiah |
| 2. Masseiah | 15. Shabbethai |
| 3. Sallu | 16. Jozabad |
| 4. Gabbai | 17. Mathaniah |
| 5. Sallai | 18. Bakbukiah |
| 6. Joel | 19. Abda |
| 7. Judah | 20. Akkub |
| 8. Jedaiah | 21. Talmon |
| 9. Jachin | 22. Ziha |
| 10. Seraiah | 23. Gispah |
| 11. Adaiah | 24. Uzzi |
| 12. Amashai | 25. Pethahiah |
| 13. Zabdiel | |

FUN FACTS:

Booths - The Law stated that the people were to live in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles. These booths were simple, made of branches from all kinds of trees. They were similar to an island hut. This was to commemorate that while the Israelites were in the wilderness, they lived in temporary quarters. (Neh. 8:14)

Cupbearer to the King - The office of the royal cupbearer was a position of great honor and trust in the Persian court. One of the duties of the cupbearer was to choose and taste the wines to be sure that they were pleasurable and not poisoned. He was in the presence of the king daily and was able to watch as he directed the kingdom. This gave Nehemiah the knowledge that prepared him to lead the people back into the land.

Fasting - Fasting is part of the faith of old and new religions all over the world. Usually, the fast is to go without food for a specific period. When Nehemiah heard of the affliction of the previous group of captives who returned, he fasted. Look at the actions that surrounded his fasting. (Neh. 1:4)

High wooden platform - Ezra stood on this platform to read the Book of the Law. This was a raised stage or platform that was built specifically for this purpose. Thirteen priests stood with him on the platform. When the book was opened, the people stood and he blessed them. (Neh. 8:4)

King's tax - The people claimed that they had to borrow money to pay the King's tax (Neh. 5:4). Very little of the King's tax was returned to the local area. It was taken back to the home country. This took coined money out of circulation and left the people in an even poorer state. When the Persians foreclosed on the land, they took coined money out of production, causing a great rate of inflation which hurt the people.

Selling sons and daughters into slavery - This heartless act was legal in order to pay a debt. On the positive side, all slaves were to be released on the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee. Bitter feelings developed in families. For this reason, Nehemiah put an end to this practice.

Seven oppositions to rebuilding the wall - The work on the wall faced major opposition from the enemies. Our work for Christ faces similar opposition. Seven methods were used to discourage God's people:

1. Anger (Neh. 4:1)
2. Ridicule (4:1-3)
3. Conspiracy and war (4:7-8)
4. Continual threats (4:10-23)
5. Craftiness (6:1-4)
6. Accusation (6:5-9)
7. Treachery (6:10-14)

