



## **Nehemiah**

The city of Jerusalem is in bad shape structurally, so Nehemiah rebuilds the wall around the city.

**Author:** Nehemiah contemporary of Ezra, he was in Persian captivity.

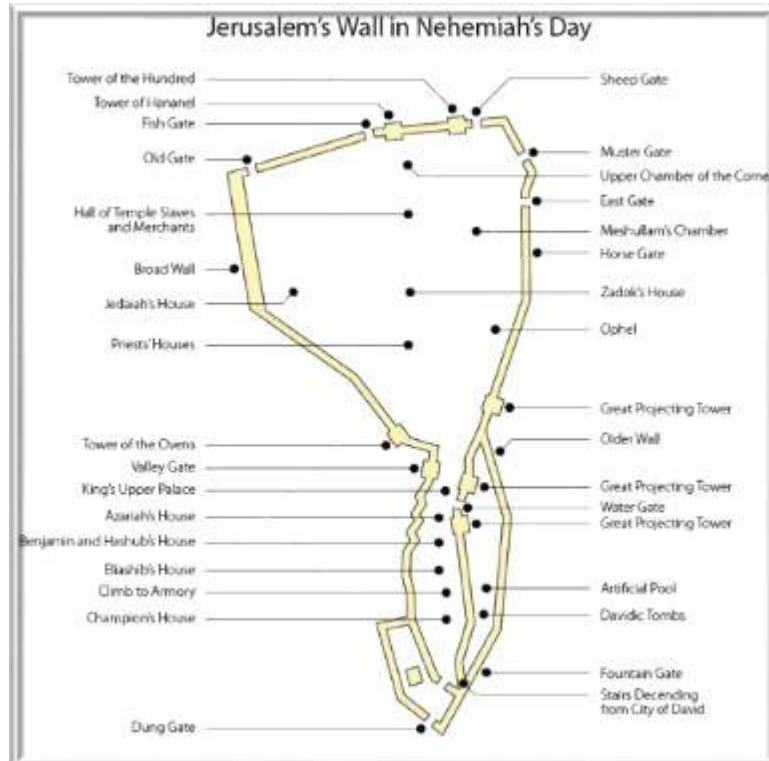
**In Nehemiah – Jesus is the One who restores what was broken down**

Nehemiah 9:5

"Stand up and praise the LORD your God,  
who is from everlasting to everlasting."



Actual picture of Nehemiah's wall still standing today.



TEACHER: 13 CHAPTERS

Nehemiah and Ezra combined are the main literary resources available to the scholar researching the period known as the restoration. The time after the Babylonian captivity up to the end of Old Testament Canon. Haggai and Zechariah are co-conspirators with them in scripture, and Zerubbabel is the Governor, with Joshua as the High Priest. Nehemiah is a Jew living and serving in Persia as "Cupbearer to the King." (Artaxerxes I)



To the left, a relief of Artaxerxes I, from Iran (Persia). Nehemiah served him during the Jewish Diaspora. Below, lft.-rt. are the 4 tombs of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I, and Xerxes I. all 4 are biblical kings.



CH. 1

STUDENT:

I, Nehemiah, was in the capital city of Susa. <sup>2</sup> One of my brothers named Hanani came with some other men from Judah. I asked them about Jerusalem and the Jewish people who lived through the captivity.

<sup>3</sup> They answered me, "Those who are left from the captivity are back in Judah, but they are in much trouble and are full of shame. The wall around Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned." (NCV)

TEACHER:

Nehemiah was in the Persian capital serving the King, but his heart aches for his people who have returned to the land promised by God to his people. Anxious he talks to his brother who just came back from Israel with some of his friends. They tell him what we just read. The walls are broken, and the gates are burned. In other words, Israel is defenseless. Listen carefully to Nehemiah's response below. He goes to God in prayer.

STUDENT:

<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and cried for several days. I was sad and fasted. I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> "LORD, God of heaven, you are the great God who is to be respected. You are loyal, and you keep your agreement with those who love you and obey your commands. <sup>6</sup> Look and listen carefully. Hear the prayer that I, your servant, am praying to you day and night for your servants, the Israelites. I confess the sins we Israelites have done against you. My father's family and I have sinned against you. <sup>7</sup> We have been wicked toward you and have not obeyed the commands, rules, and laws you gave your servant Moses. (NCV)

TEACHER:

This 1<sup>st</sup> chapter is always an eye-opener for me. In our age of blame avoidance, Nehemiah repents for what happened over 80 years ago, caused by someone else. He takes responsibility. He says, "my father's family and I have sinned against you." Nehemiah continues his prayer.



STUDENT:

<sup>8</sup> "Remember what you taught your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations. <sup>9</sup> But if you return to me and obey my commands, I will gather your people from the far ends of the earth. And I will bring them from captivity to where I have chosen to be worshiped.'

<sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you have saved with your great strength and power. <sup>11</sup> Lord, listen carefully to the prayer of your servant and the prayers of your servants who love to honor you. Give me, your servant, success today; allow this king to show kindness to me."

I was the one who served wine to the king. (NCV)

TEACHER:

If you are looking for someone to pattern your prayer life after, Nehemiah isn't a bad choice. A beautiful man, praying a beautiful prayer, to a beautiful God, with a beautiful attitude. In chapter 2 we see that Nehemiah was prepared to add works to his faith.

CH. 2

STUDENT:

He wanted some wine, so I took some and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before. <sup>2</sup> So the king said, "Why does your face look sad even though you are not sick? Your heart must be sad."

Then I was very afraid. <sup>3</sup> I said to the king, "May the king live forever! My face is sad because the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire."

<sup>4</sup> Then the king said to me, "What do you want?" (NCV)

TEACHER:

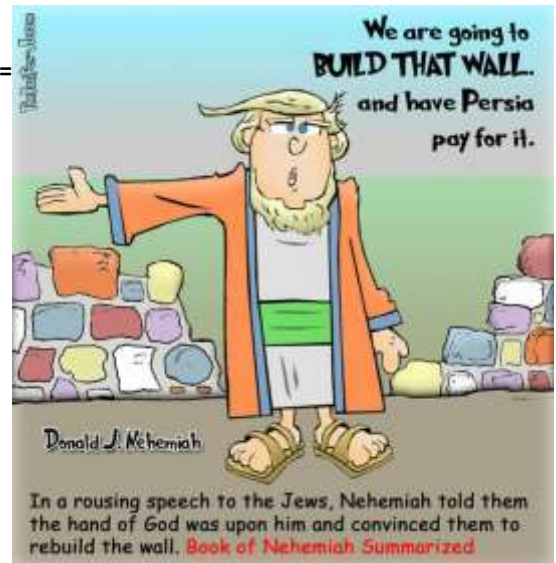
His faith not wavering, Nehemiah asks for the farm.

STUDENT:

First I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I answered the king, "If you are willing and if I have pleased you, send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so I can rebuild it."

<sup>6</sup> The queen was sitting next to the king. He asked me, "How long will your trip take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me, so I set a time.

<sup>7</sup> I also said to him, "If you are willing, give me letters for the governors of Trans-Euphrates. Tell them to let me pass safely through their lands on my way to Judah. <sup>8</sup> And may I have a letter for Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, telling him to give me timber? I will need it to make boards for the gates of the palace, which is by the Temple, and for the city wall, and for the house in which I will live." So the king gave me the letters, because God was showing kindness to me. (NCV)



TEACHER:

Nehemiah spends 3 days in Jerusalem incognito, (as cup bearer to the king, he was very famous). He rides the circle of the entire wall without letting anyone know he is there. After 3 days, he calls a meeting.

STUDENT:

<sup>5</sup> So I went up the valley at night, inspecting the wall. Finally, I turned and went back in through the Valley Gate. <sup>16</sup> The guards did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. I had not yet said anything to the Jewish people, the priests, the important men, the officers, or any of the others who would do the work.

<sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "You can see the trouble we have here. Jerusalem is a pile of ruins, and its gates have been burned. Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so we won't be full of shame any longer." <sup>18</sup> I also told them how God had been kind to me and what the king had said to me.

Then they answered, "Let's start rebuilding." So they began to work hard. (NCV)

TEACHER:

Sanballat sees what's going on and he is upset. He hates God and God's people.

STUDENT:

<sup>19</sup> But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite officer, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they made fun of us and laughed at us. They said, "What are you doing? Are you turning against the king?"

<sup>20</sup> But I answered them, "The God of heaven will give us success. We, his servants, will start rebuilding, but you have no share, claim, or memorial in Jerusalem." (NCV)

CH. 3

TEACHER:

Chapter 3 documents who worked on every part of the wall. They worked on the towers and the Gates as well.

TEACHER:

Chapter 4 shows that the work has progressed at a pretty good clip, and is starting to attract unwanted attention.

CH. 4

STUDENT:

When Sanballat heard we were rebuilding the wall, he was very angry, even furious. He made fun of the Jewish people. <sup>2</sup> He said to his friends and those with power in Samaria, "What are these weak Jews doing? Will they rebuild the wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Can they finish it in one day? Can they bring stones back to life from piles of trash and ashes?"...

"If a fox climbed up on the stone wall they are building, it would break it down." (NCV)

TEACHER:

Nehemiah prays again, and the wall progresses to the ½ way mark.

STUDENT:

<sup>7</sup> But Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people from Ashdod were very angry when they heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls were continuing and that the holes in the wall were being closed. <sup>8</sup> So they all made plans to come to Jerusalem and fight and stir up trouble. <sup>9</sup> But we prayed to our God and appointed guards to watch for them day and night.

<sup>10</sup> The people of Judah said, "The workers are getting tired. There is so much trash we cannot rebuild the wall."

<sup>11</sup> And our enemies said, "The Jews won't know or see anything until we come among them and kill them and stop the work." (NCV)

TEACHER:

The people who lived near their enemies around the borders warned Nehemiah on 10 different occasions. So Nehemiah set armed guards at the base of the wall, and provided swords and spears and bows.

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STUDENT:

“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and powerful. Fight for your brothers, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

<sup>15</sup> Then our enemies heard that we knew about their plans and that God had ruined their plans. So we all went back to the wall, each to his own work.

<sup>16</sup> From that day on, half my people worked on the wall. The other half was ready with spears, shields, bows, and armor. The officers stood in back of the people of Judah <sup>17</sup> who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and carried a weapon with the other. <sup>18</sup> Each builder wore his sword at his side as he worked. The man who blew the trumpet to warn the people stayed next to me. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The work went from sun up to sun down.

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STUDENT:

<sup>19</sup> Then I said to the important people, the leaders, and everyone else, “This is a very big job. We are spreading out along the wall so that we are far apart. <sup>20</sup> Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, assemble there. Our God will fight for us.” <sup>21</sup> So we continued to work with half the men holding spears from sunrise till the stars came out. <sup>22</sup> At that time I also said to the people, “Let every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night. They can be our guards at night and workmen during the day.” <sup>23</sup> Neither I, my brothers, my workers, nor the guards with me ever took off our clothes. Each person carried his weapon even when he went for water. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Some of the poor people in Jerusalem complain about the usury they are being charged by the Governor while the work is being done. They have lost their lands, homes and even children to the government lenders through high usury (interest). Nehemiah forces a stop to the practice and makes the government leaders return the lands and homes to the people.

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STUDENT:

<sup>6</sup> When I heard their complaints about these things, I was very angry. <sup>7</sup> After I thought about it, I accused the important people and the leaders, “You are charging your own brothers too much interest.” So I called a large meeting to deal with them. <sup>8</sup> I said to them, “As much as possible, we have bought freedom for our fellow Jews who had been sold to foreigners. Now you are selling your fellow Jews to us!” The leaders were quiet and had nothing to say. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

As a result, Nehemiah is made Governor of Israel.

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STUDENT:

Then the whole group said, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. So the people did what they had promised.

<sup>14</sup> I was appointed governor in the land of Judah in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' rule. I was governor of Judah for twelve years, until his thirty-second year. During that time neither my brothers nor I ate the food that was allowed for a governor. <sup>15</sup> But the governors before me had placed a heavy load on the people. They took about one pound of silver from each person, along with food and wine. The governors' helpers before me also controlled the people, but I did not do that, because I feared God. <sup>16</sup> I worked on the wall, as did all my men who were gathered there. We did not buy any fields.....

<sup>19</sup> Remember to be kind to me, my God, for all the good I have done for these people. (NCV)

TEACHER:

Nehemiah has finished all the brick laying and tower repairs, but the gates have not yet been hung, and his enemies plot against him with a feverous pitch. But Nehemiah prays in verse 9, "God, make me strong."

CH. 6

STUDENT:

<sup>15</sup> The wall of Jerusalem was completed on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul. It took fifty-two days to rebuild. <sup>16</sup> When all our enemies heard about it and all the nations around us saw it, they were shamed. They then understood that the work had been done with the help of our God. (NCV)

TEACHER:

It took 2 months, with the Sabbath days off, to complete the wall. Chapter 7 lists the results of the current families in Israel, so Ezra could verify candidates for the Priesthood. Everyone who could understand Hebrew came to listen to Ezra read from the Book of the Law.

STUDENT:

CH. 8

All the people of Israel gathered together in the square by the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the teacher to bring out the Book of the Teachings of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.

<sup>2</sup> So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought out the Teachings for the crowd. Men, women, and all who could listen and understand had gathered.

<sup>3</sup> At the square by the Water Gate Ezra read the Teachings out loud from early morning until noon to the men, women, and everyone who could listen and understand.

All the people listened carefully to the Book of the Teachings. (NCV)

STUDENT:

<sup>4</sup> Ezra the teacher stood on a high wooden platform that had been built just for this time....

<sup>5</sup> Ezra opened the book in full view of everyone, because he was above them. As he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people held up their hands and said, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground..... (NCV)

TEACHER:

Nehemiah takes the stage.





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**STUDENT:**

<sup>9</sup> Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher, and the Levites who were teaching said to all the people, "This is a holy day to the LORD your God. Don't be sad or cry." All the people had been crying as they listened to the words of the Teachings.

<sup>10</sup> Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy good food and sweet drinks. Send some to people who have none, because today is a holy day to the Lord. Don't be sad, because the joy of the LORD will make you strong."

<sup>11</sup> The Levites helped calm the people, saying, "Be quiet, because this is a holy day. Don't be sad."

<sup>12</sup> Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send some of their food to others, and to celebrate with great joy. They finally understood what they had been taught. (NCV)

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**TEACHER:**

Ezra spends time with all the leaders from the government to the Priesthood, and to the family leaders who would teach their clans the Law. They come to the feast of tabernacles, and take care to perform its requirements.

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**STUDENT:**

<sup>17</sup> The whole group that had come back from captivity built shelters and lived in them. The Israelites had not done this since the time of Joshua son of Nun. And they were very happy.

<sup>18</sup> Ezra read to them every day from the Book of the Teachings, from the first day to the last. The people of Israel celebrated the feast for seven days, and then on the eighth day the people gathered as the law said. (NCV)

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**TEACHER:**

All the things from building the wall, hanging the gates, and assembling together to study the Law under Ezra, and the feast of tabernacles, lead them to this next point.

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**STUDENT:**

CH. 9 On the twenty-fourth day of that same month, the people of Israel gathered. They fasted, and they wore rough cloth and put dust on their heads to show their sadness. <sup>2</sup> Those people whose ancestors were from Israel had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood and confessed their sins and their ancestors' sins. <sup>3</sup> For a fourth of the day they stood where they were and read from the Book of the Teachings of the LORD their God. For another fourth of the day they confessed their sins and worshiped the LORD their God. (NCV)

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**TEACHER:**

The next prayer is the people's prayer. It is over 30 verses long. Let's read segments of it.

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**STUDENT:** From the beginning

"Blessed be your wonderful name.

It is more wonderful than all blessing and praise.

<sup>6</sup> You are the only LORD.

You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, with all the stars.

You made the earth and everything on it,

the seas and everything in them;

you give life to everything.

The heavenly army worships you. (NCV)

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STUDENT: From the middle

You are a kind and merciful God.  
<sup>32</sup> “And so, our God, you are the great and mighty and wonderful God.  
You keep your agreement of love.  
Do not let all our trouble seem unimportant to you.  
This trouble has come to us, to our kings and our leaders,  
to our priests and prophets,  
to our ancestors and all your people  
from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.  
<sup>33</sup> You have been fair in everything that has happened to us;  
you have been loyal, but we have been wicked. (NCV)

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STUDENT: From the end

<sup>36</sup> “Look, we are slaves today  
in the land you gave our ancestors.  
They were to enjoy its fruit and its good things,  
but look, we are slaves here.  
<sup>37</sup> The land’s great harvest belongs to the kings you have put over us  
because of our sins.  
Those kings rule over us and our cattle as they please,  
so we are in much trouble.  
<sup>38</sup> “Because of all this, we are making an agreement in writing, and our leaders, Levites, and priests are putting  
their seals on it.” (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The people then agree to a signed oath. Governor, Priests, Leaders, and Families all signed to a sworn oath.

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CH. 10

STUDENT: The agreement they signed to God.

1. No mixed marriages
  2. No commerce on the Sabbath Day
  3. No farms planted every 7<sup>th</sup> year
  4. Forgiveness of debt every 7<sup>th</sup> year
  5. They will pay tithes and finance temple functions
  6. They will offer the 1<sup>st</sup> born to the Lord
  7. They will attend the Temple functions as required by the Law. (NCV *reformatted by author*)
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CH. 11

TEACHER:

All of the leaders of Israel lived in Jerusalem, but it was very under populated, so each family drew lots and 1 out of 10 people moved to Jerusalem. You can read the layout in chapter 11 at home if you like. In chapter 12 the wall is blessed with singing and music.

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CH. 12

STUDENT:

<sup>27</sup> When the wall of Jerusalem was offered as a gift to God, they asked the Levites to come from wherever they lived to Jerusalem to celebrate with joy the gift of the wall. They were to celebrate with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres.....

<sup>30</sup> The priests and Levites made themselves pure, and they also made the people, the gates, and the wall of Jerusalem pure....(NCV)

STUDENT:

<sup>45</sup> They performed the service of their God in making things pure. The singers and gatekeepers also did their jobs, as David had commanded his son Solomon. <sup>46</sup> Earlier, in the time of David and Asaph, there was a leader of the singers and of the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. <sup>47</sup> So it was in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. All the people of Israel gave something to the singers and gatekeepers, and they also set aside part for the Levites. (NCV)

TEACHER:

It must have been a wonderful experience with the wall completed, the sacrifices ensuing, and the music filling Jerusalem! Nehemiah returns to his office as the King of Persia's cupbearer until he retires and returns. When he does, he finds it necessary to clean house a bit, and prays. This closes chapter 13 and his book.

CH. 13

STUDENT:

<sup>29</sup> Remember them, my God, because they made the priesthood unclean and the agreement of the priests and Levites unclean.

<sup>30</sup> So I purified them of everything that was foreign. I appointed duties for the priests and Levites, giving each man his own job. <sup>31</sup> I also made sure wood was brought for the altar at regular times and that the firstfruits were brought.

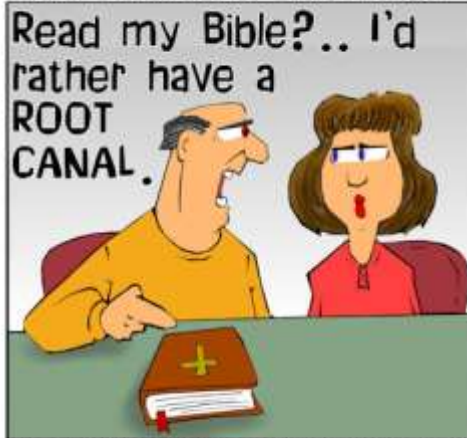
Remember me, my God; be kind to me. (NCV)

NEXT LESSON ESTHER

*"The joy of the Lord will be my strength."*

Nehemiah 8:10

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



The WORD OF GOD is a roadmap to a happy life. Reading it should NOT be treated as a BURDEN. Ps 119:9, 11, 16, 105, Jo 1:1, 31, 51



INSPIRED ROGER TO ADD ON A FRONT PORCH



How ironic Brod suffers a paper cut while reading ...the Word of God is sharper than a 2-edged sword

## HISTORY BOOKS

H R S A B I G A I L J E Z J S  
A E E L E U M A S E L A H E E  
I H C A X A C I H I H A T H G  
M O O F M E S O K A N J U O D  
E B N H D O S A O A E Z R A U  
H O D R L H N H K K I N G S J  
E A O O A S E L C I N O R H C  
N M M P F J E S A L E H H Z H  
S O H J E D U T H U N E A E A  
N A M A R O H E J E M S M D J  
T J U A H A Z I A H M S A E I  
S E B L L A U H S O J A Z K H  
R H A I K E Z E H C A N I I A  
I U A J E C O N I A H A A A Y  
F H A R O B E D A G A M H H H

ABIGAIL  
AHAZ  
AHAZIAH  
AHIJAH  
AMAZIAH  
AMON  
ASA  
ATHALIAH  
CHRONICLES  
DEBORAH  
ELI  
ELKANAH  
EZRA

FIRST  
GAD  
HEZEKIAH  
JECONIAH  
JEDUTHUN  
JEHOAHAZ  
JEHOASH  
JEHOIAKIM  
JEHORAM  
JEHOSHAPHAT  
JEHU  
JOSHUA  
JUDGES  
KINGS

MANASSEH  
MORDECAI  
NEHEMIAH  
REHOBOAM  
RUTH  
SAMUEL  
SAUL  
SECOND  
SHEMAIAH  
SOLOMON  
ZEDEKIAH



