

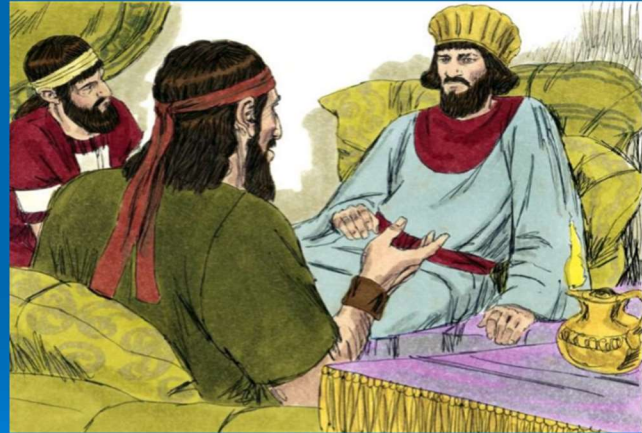
# The Book of Nehemiah

## Chapter 1

To Pray Like This, You Must Know Your God

### NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

- Nehemiah is in Shushan, about 446 or 447 B.C.
- His brother arrives from Judah in the month of Kislev, 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes' reign
- **Ach** = brother
- No reason given why Nehemiah has a concern for Judah and the Judeans
- He had always been free to go to Judah but he had chosen to stay in Shushan
- Why the sudden interest?
- Why would he want to give up palace life for a tougher life in Judah?



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### Persian Control

In summary we can say that when King Artaxerxes agreed to send his cupbearer Nehemiah to Jerusalem with his blessing, it was because it was to his and his empire's benefit. The Persian Empire was now so vast that some of the larger nations that made up the empire had become very difficult to control. Egypt, for instance, had a heritage of being a superpower in its own right and had always held dreams of creating its own empire. Being subjugated to a Persian King whose capital was a thousand miles away, and whose culture was so vastly different from Egypt's, was intolerable. So Egypt was in a nearly constant state of rebellion and they possessed the means and ambition to be quite a problem for Artaxerxes. However the Jews of Judah were generally friendly towards the Persians, and King Artaxerxes badly needed to maintain and even strengthen the loyalty they showed towards him. After all, the Jews had been rescued and released from their captivity in Babylon by the Persians.



### Jerusalem Lay In Ruins

The King of Babylon destroyed the walls of Jerusalem circa 600 B.C. and they had NOT been rebuilt (or at least anything but partially); but Nehemiah was about to make it happen. The lack of protective walls also explains the poor economy of what should have been a prosperous city, and it also explains why so few people lived in Jerusalem that Nehemiah would have to nearly compel some country folk to move there.

### Nehemiah Prays (Verse 4 – 11)



## NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

- Born in Persia
- Not just “religious”, but knew the Torah
- “Please, **YHWH, Elohe ha’Shamayim...**”
- Based on God’s covenants and grace
- Despite living in a gentile world, with Jews embracing early Judaism, he turned to God’s commandments
- Many modern Believers beginning to do the same!!

The Prayer begins as a prayer of supplication and confession by Nehemiah and we see that this powerful man in the Persian government who had been born and assimilated into the Persian culture (or he would not have remained living in Persia but rather would have migrated to Judah), was not only religious, but the prayer shows that he was quite familiar with the Torah. I suspect this was probably due to Ezra's teaching and influence; after all, Ezra was also in some type of service to King Artaxerxes and Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries.

Even more, we see Nehemiah speak of the Lord in both Hebrew terms and in Persian terms. Where in our Complete Jewish Bible the first words of verse 5 are translated as: "I said, Please Adonai, God of Heaven", what it actually says is, "Please YHWH, Elohe ha-Shamayim". That is, Nehemiah first calls God by His formal Hebrew name (Yehoveh) but then continues with the standard Persian term for the highest god of their pantheon of gods, God of Heaven. Nothing wrong with this; it only indicates that Nehemiah was as much Persian as Hebrew in his ways and thoughts.

Nehemiah understood that the formula is that those who have been redeemed are obligated to follow the Torah commandments. For those who obey those commandments and teach others to obey the commandments, their status in God's Kingdom will be elevated. For those who disobey those commandments and teach others to disregard them, their status in God's Kingdom will be severely reduced to the lowest level. The exiles of Judah didn't lose their redeemed status as members of God's Kingdom for disobedience; and as Believers we don't typically lose our redeemed status as members of God's Kingdom for disobedience.

Thus Nehemiah understood that the only hope for himself and for his fellow Jews was a return to obedience to God's Torah; nothing else would substitute. It is obvious that almost all of what Nehemiah claimed in his prayer were paraphrases (and some were close to verbatim) of from the book of Deuteronomy 30:1-4..

Nehemiah acknowledges his and his people's sin, and the covenant relationship that is the basis of their personal relationship with God, and that God keeps His promises whether those promises are negative or positive.

### **Nehemiah Answers The Call**



## THE KING'S PERSONAL ATTENDANT

- A substantial personal achievement
- Why would Nehemiah ever want to give this up to throw in his lot with the Jews of Judah?
- The news of Jerusalem's and the Jew's condition overwhelms Nehemiah
- Aware his life is going to radically change
- He is going to give up luxury, prestige, and security
- He knew it was God calling him; his only choice was to say YES or NO !



- Out of the blue comes a thought that captures your interest in an entire new direction
- God has been preparing you, undetected, for a new adventure with Him
- Only hindsight reveals how it happened
- Nehemiah probably experienced this
- He was put in the right position, with the right qualifications, for the right time by the Lord

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Nehemiah has a sudden awaking to the plight of God's holy city of Jerusalem and its Jewish residents swept over him like a Tsunami of living water, he immediately knew to turn to God. And he also realized that turning to God meant coming to Him on His terms, and within the context of God's commandments and instructions.

### End Of Notes

(Content adapted from A Study of Nehemiah by Tom Bradford)