

Author - STEVEN R. DOUGLAS 2017

# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**OLD TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 16**

**NEHEMIAH**



**Nehemiah sees the rubble in Jerusalem by Tissot**

## SUMMARY

Begins fifteen years after Ezra ends. Nehemiah was the cup-bearer of king Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah hears of Jews' struggle to rebuild Jerusalem. He fasts and prays to God, confesses sins on behalf of the Jews, asks God for mercy and help. He recalls Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30, where the Lord says that if the exiled nation remembers Him, He will not forsake them in their distress.

Nehemiah is sad and gets permission from the king to return to Jerusalem ('the place of my fathers' tombs') to help rebuild it. He returns (with appropriate royal letters of permission to pass through the region), inspects the city secretly, meets with the leaders of Jerusalem and proposes to build a wall around the city. The rebuilding restarts, despite some local opposition.

The wall of Jerusalem and gate are rebuilt by Levites, priests, and other Jewish people. The chapter lists the sections of the wall and who built them.

Sanballat, Tobiah and Ammonites mock the Jews as they rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah prays as a form of defense against them. Sanballat and others are angered when the wall nears completion, and plan to attack. The Jews prepare defenses (there are people on guard as the wall is built), and the plan to attack comes to nothing.

Some Jews have to mortgage their houses to eat and borrow money to pay taxes. Jews have become slaves to others because of financial difficulties. Nehemiah calls a meeting, urging lenders to cancel debts and not practice usury. Nehemiah does not tax the people and prays that God may remember his good deeds.

Sanballat and others invite Nehemiah to the plains of Ono, with the intention of killing him. Sanballat spreads a rumor that Nehemiah is planning to rebel against Persia and become king. Shemiah, a false prophet sent by Sanballat, unsuccessfully urges Nehemiah to take refuge in the temple. The wall is completed in 52 days, despite some who were friends with the enemy Tobiah. Tobiah sends threatening letters.

Nehemiah gives orders to guard Jerusalem. A list is given of the leaders, priests, Levites, singers and animals who returned from Babylon.

Ezra reads the law to the Jews in Jerusalem, with teachers on hand to help explain to the people. The Jews worship and weep. The Jews observe the Feast of Tabernacles, not done since the days of Joshua.

The Jews gather, separate themselves from foreigners, fast, repent, read law, and hear a summary of Israel's history and deliverance from Egypt. A covenant is made.

A lot of the people who sign their covenant is given. Further laws to be obeyed: no selling of wares on the Sabbath, cancellation of debts every seven years, tithes and regulations concerning offerings and temple administration.

Leaders live in Jerusalem; of the rest, a tenth live in Jerusalem, and the rest in other cities. The distribution of people is decided by lot. Lists of people who stayed in Jerusalem, and a list of other towns and villages in Judah are given.

## SUMMARY Continued

Records of priests, Levites and temple duties is given. The Jerusalem wall is dedicated with marching, music and sacrifice. People contribute to the temple.

The law is read. It is stipulated that no Ammonite or Moabite shall come into the temple, because Balak sought to curse them. Nehemiah journeys back to Persia; when he returns to Jerusalem, he is horrified to discover that Eliashib, the priest charged with managing the storerooms of the temple, had rented a room out in the temple courts to Tobiah.

Tobiah is expelled. Nehemiah also realized that the Levites have not been granted their due portions, and that business is being conducted on the Sabbath. Nehemiah forbids the children of interracial marriages from marrying Jews. The son of Eliashib has become Sanballat's son-in-law. Nehemiah cleanses Judan life from everything Pagan and asks God to remember him.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 9:6** You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.
- 9:10** You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land. For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day.
- 9:11** And You divided the sea before them, So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; And their persecutors You threw into the deep, As a stone into the mighty waters.
- 9:12** Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, And by night with a pillar of fire, To give them light on the road Which they should travel.
- 9:13** You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.
- 9:15** You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them.
- 9:20** You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst.
- 9:21** Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell.

## CHARACTER Definitions

**NEHEMIAH** - Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, and they both wrote about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which occurred many years after its destruction by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezra wrote about the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel, while Nehemiah wrote concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

From ancient times, the cities located in the Middle East were surrounded by stone walls with gates that were guarded for the protection of the citizens.

## CHARACTERS Continued

The important men of each city would gather at the gate where they would conduct the business of the city, share important information, or just pass the time of day.

Nehemiah's account begins in 445 B.C., and this date is important because the prophet Daniel, a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, wrote the "70 weeks of years" prophecy based on a very specific date—March 15, 445 B.C. This date is crucial to the beginning of the prophecy; it kicks off the start of the timeframe, which ends with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

This prophecy was written long before Jesus came the first time, but it continues through those years leading up to His being "cut off." It gives details about the antichrist, how he will come onto the world scene, and how he will move against Israel in his final assault on God and His people.

Daniel's prophecy is found in Daniel 9:25: "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble."

Little did Nehemiah know that he was fulfilling the prophecy written by Daniel, but this faithful servant, who was also captive in Babylon at the time, begins his writings with intercessory prayer for his people, Israel, just as Daniel constantly prayed on their behalf, beseeching God to have mercy on them and return them to their homeland.

Nehemiah listed specific dates, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in order that there might be a written record as to the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Before he asked the king's permission to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, Nehemiah prayed, and God granted his request. As he was leaving Babylon, he met some Arab men who mocked him for what he was about to do.

Nehemiah 2:20 records his statement, which stands even today as a testament to who has the right to the city known as Jerusalem: "I answered them by saying, 'The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.'"

Nehemiah continued in his quest to rebuild Jerusalem. God provided all the necessary workers, and the building began. However, they were not without enemies, those who desired to stop the rebuilding. But God intervened as He had done with Moses.

Nehemiah 4:20 records, "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" This was God's pre-ordained plan to bring His people out of bondage and back into their land to worship in the temple once again.

We can learn from the life of Nehemiah valuable lessons in restoring and maintaining a relationship with God. As the people returned to the rebuilt city, the first order of business was to make certain that they understood the Law of Moses. Ezra, a priest, spent many hours reading the Law before the assembly, making sure they understood what God desired.

## CHARACTERS Continued

Nehemiah 8:18 records what should be part of every believer's life, the daily reading of God's Word: "Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly."

Nehemiah stands as a testament to faithfulness and perseverance. He lived far away from his home, yet he never gave up hope that someday he would return to it. He spent most of his life in exile in a pagan land, yet he never wavered in his faith and trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He was a prayer warrior, putting everything before the Lord in prayer, interceding on behalf of his people, and he was rewarded for his diligence and perseverance.

Nehemiah cared so much for his people that he never gave up the hope of their restoration, not only to their homeland, but to the God that first called their forefather, Abraham, out of the same area and made a covenant with him, one which Nehemiah believed would stand forever.

**SANBALLAT** – Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem were three enemies of the Jews who made several attempts to stop Nehemiah from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Sanballat and Tobiah are upset about Nehemiah's work: When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

In verse 19, they, along with Geshem the Arab, mock Nehemiah saying What is this you are doing? . . . Are you rebelling against the king? When the construction was taking place, their anger grew: When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews.

The Horonites and Ammonites were two of the people groups God had driven from the Promised Land for the Israelites. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem were regional governors serving under the king of Persia.

Sanballat, called a Horonite, was probably from Horonaim, a city of Moab. Tobiah the Ammonite was governing an area east of the Jordan River. Geshem the Arab was most likely from the region south of Judah. Generations after Israel had first possessed the Promised Land, some of their old enemies were back, seeking to keep Jerusalem in ruins.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem used various ploys in their attempt to disrupt the Jews' work. These three men sought to harm Nehemiah; intimidate him with false reports; deceive him with false prophets; and influence the nobles of Judah. Nehemiah adds that Eliashib the high priest was related to Tobiah and one of his grandsons was the son-in-law of Sanballat.

The efforts of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem were futile for the simple reason that they were fighting God's plan. The wall of Jerusalem was completed in record time. Nehemiah's response to his enemies is instructive to us.

## CHARACTERS Continued

Rather than fear or worry or seek revenge, Nehemiah took the matter to the Lord: Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me.

**JERUSALEM WALLS** – After the Babylonian Captivity, a remnant of the Jewish people had returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. These returned exiles had rebuilt the temple, but they were now in need of protection. The lack of fortified walls around the city left the people defenseless against enemies. Weather, wild animals, opposing people, and other opponents could easily enter and cause “great trouble” to the people.

According to the report Nehemiah received, the remnant in Jerusalem was shamed. A city with broken walls revealed a defeated people. The Jews who had returned to their homeland were both in unsafe conditions and humiliated at living in a destroyed city. Nehemiah told the Jewish leaders, you see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.

Also, the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls would show God’s blessing upon His people again. Nehemiah quoted God’s words to Moses in his prayer, saying, If you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.

Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was an important sign to the enemies of Israel. Nehemiah told their enemies, The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

445 BC	Nehemiah's Prayer for the Exiles	Nehemiah 1
444 BC	Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem	Nehemiah 2
444 BC	Builders of the Walls Named	Nehemiah 3
444 BC	Builders Overcome Ridicule	Nehemiah 4
444 BC	Nehemiah Abolishes Debt and Bondage	Nehemiah 5
444 BC	Sanballat's Plot	Nehemiah 6
444 BC	Completion of the Wall	Nehemiah 6:15
444 BC	Census of Returned Exiles	Nehemiah 7
444 BC	Ezra Reads the Law	Nehemiah 8
444 BC	Israelites Fast and Repent	Nehemiah 9
444 BC	Israelites Seal the Covenant	Nehemiah 10
444 BC	People Settle in Jerusalem	Nehemiah 11, 12
432 BC	Nehemiah Restores Laws	Nehemiah 13

## MAP REFERENCES

