

- Recap of last week: Ezra goes back to Israel to study and teach while he oversees the rebuilding of the temple and the return of riches ([Ezra 7](#)). About 1300 people go back with Ezra, but he still must send for priests from the tribe of Levi. The priests and people follow Ezra's instructions to guard the temple riches, fast, pray and offer sacrifices. ([Ezra 8](#)) Ezra grieves that the people have chosen to intermarry with the locals, prays to God, and the people leave their foreign wives and families. ([Ezra 9 and 10](#)). Nehemiah is serving in the court in Persia when he hears that the wall of Jerusalem is in disrepair, so he asks for leave and is granted it, and he goes to Jerusalem to oversee the rebuilding of the wall. ([Nehemiah 1-3](#))
- There is powerful adversary developing in Samaria and their king named Sanbalat makes fun of the efforts of the Israelis to rebuild their wall with a man named Tobias who was with him. ([Nehemiah 4:1-5](#))
- The wall was finally fully enclosing the city and was half its full height because "the people had a mind to work." Notice he says "we" indicating Nehemiah was personally involved ([Nehemiah 4:6](#))
- There is a (non-biblical) common proverb that is probably African in origin "many hands make light work." Remember that the work was divided up into discrete tasks ([Nehemiah 3](#)).
- The Arabs, Ammonites and Ashdodites, led by Sanbalat and Tobias, see that the Israelites are succeeding so they determine to attack pre-emptively. ([Nehemiah 4:7-8](#))
- The Israelites pray to God and set a guard. ([Nehemiah 4:9](#))
- The attackers plan to use construction materials which have been piling up to attack. Nehemiah senses this and stations half the people as soldiers while the other half are building the wall. Then he gives them a pep talk. Even those who are working on the wall now keep their swords with them. Everyone stays in the city and no one even bothers to change clothes. ([Nehemiah 4:10-22](#))
- The people of Israel are experiencing famine, so the wealthy are lending money to the poor and even enslaving them. Nehemiah tells them they shouldn't do this because they just got out of debt and slavery and other nations could call them hypocrites for doing this to themselves now. So, the people agree and cancel all their debts and to stop slavery. ([Nehemiah 5:1-13](#))
- Nehemiah explains that, unlike former officials of Israel, he and his peers never levied taxes on the people or took land. ([Nehemiah 5:14-19](#))
- Sanbalat of Syria, Tobias the Ammonite, and Geshon the Arab send Nehemiah a letter about his work to ask him to meet in a town outside Jerusalem where they plan to kill or arrest him. But Nehemiah always responds that "he is involved in a great work and cannot stop." That happens four times. ([Nehemiah 6:1-6](#))

- Geshon the Arab then sends a letter explaining his concern in more detail, that he is afraid Israel will revolt after they finish the wall. Nehemiah tell him he is just making things up. (Nehemiah 6:7-8)
- Nehemiah writes that they were just trying to scare them and prays for strength. (Nehemiah 6:9)
- A man named Shemaiah warns Nehemiah that his enemies are coming to kill him that night and he should hide and lock himself in the temple. But Nehemiah refuses and perceives that the man was hired by Sanbalat and Tobias. (Nehemiah 6:10-14)
- The wall is finally completed, and Israel's enemies are afraid. (Nehemiah 6:15-19)
- The wall is finished and the same people building the wall are set out as guards, but there were still not that many Israelites and no one was living in the city yet. (Nehemiah 7:1-4)
- There are still so few people that there is a complete list by family of all the people there. In the land, there were about 42,360 free people and 7,337 servants. (Nehemiah 7:5-74)
- That makes sense. Remember after the first big group to return, people were coming back in waves. The first big group was recorded in (Ezra 2:63-70) and the numbers are close already. About 1300 went back with Ezra when he went back. (Ezra 8:1-14). There were probably some deaths and births in between, and probably not everyone was present every time (sickness, travel, etc.)
- Nehemiah (whose title was "governor") gets the people together and has Ezra (the scribe) to read aloud to the people from the law. (Nehemiah 8:1-9)
- The priests declare the Festival of the Booths should be celebrated. (Nehemiah 8:9-18)
- The people confessed their sins publicly. Ezra recounts the history of the Exodus and Israel's breaking of the covenant relationship with God. (Nehemiah 9)

Questions:

1. Who are Sanbalat and Tobias?
2. Why were the Israelites able to rebuild their wall relatively quickly?
3. What three nations determine to attack Israel pre-emptively? Why do they do that?
4. What two things does Israel do when they hear an attack is coming?
5. What do the attackers plan to use as cover?
6. What is Nehemiah's response when he figures out what the attackers' plan probably is?
7. Why does Nehemiah say that debt and slavery are particularly bad at that time?
8. How do the Israelites respond to Nehemiah's indictment of debt and slavery?

9. How does Nehemiah contrast his ruling style with the recent officials of Israel?
10. What happens four times involving a letter to Nehemiah and how does he respond?
11. What does Geshon finally say to Nehemiah and how does Nehemiah respond?
12. What does Nehemiah say about Geshon's tactic?
13. What does Shemaiah try to get Nehemiah to do? Why?
14. What happens when the Israelites finish building the wall at Jerusalem?
15. When the wall is first built, how many Israelites houses are inside?
16. How many Israelites were there in the land?
17. What does Nehemiah get Ezra to do in front of the people?
18. What festival do Ezra, Nehemiah, and the priests have the people celebrate?
19. What does Ezra describe publicly to all the people of Israel?