

NEHEMIAH

For proper chronology, the books Ezra and Nehemiah should be read as follows:

Ezra 1-4, Ezra 7-8, Nehemiah 7:72-8:18, Ezra 5-6, Ezra 9:1-6, Nehemiah 9:6-38, Ezra 9:10-44, Nehemiah 9:1-5, 1:1-6:14, 12:27-43, 6:15-19, 7:1-71, 11:1-12:26, 12:44-13:31, 10

- 1) Chronologically the penultimate prophet in our canon. The book was probably written c. 445, approximately 70 years after the completion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, though the book Nehemiah was probably written in Babylonia. (The book of Joel was the last written, c. 400.) Nehemiah was probably written by Ezra ("the Chronicler") and could be called 2 Ezra, though it contains scattered autobiographical notes by Nehemiah himself (and called "The Memoirs of Nehemiah"). His name means "Yahweh is my consolation." Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras could be named 1,2,3,4 Ezra or Esdras. The extant 1 and 2 Esdras are apocryphal; they tell of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, plus much more.
- 2) 1:1 – Susa was once the capital of Elam, in Nehemiah's time part of the Babylonian Empire and its summer capital. It lay in SW modern Iran. The date is 445-444 B CE.
- 3) 2:10 – Sanballat was a Samaritan, from Beth-horon, ten miles nw of Jerusalem. Tobiah was a Jew from Transjordan, where he was a governor. Geshem was an Arab from Petra, in Edom, not yet a prosperous kingdom.
- 4) 3:1 – Eliashib was a grandson of Jeshua (Joshua) who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel in 521, in the second wave of migrants. See Neh 12:10. Also Ezra 1:1 (note #1) for all four migrations.
- 5) 4:1 – Ammonites were Transjordan, the Ashdodites from the region around Ashdod, once a Philistine country. For a detailed map of Jerusalem at this time, see Azimov, p. 454.
- 6) 13:1 – Nehemiah's reforms differed from all previous ones in that he now had the written Torah. This made it impossible for the Jews to ever again waver from Judaism.