

Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week 13: 16 to 22 April, 2018 (pp.106 – 114)

Context

From chapter 8:1 onwards till 12:31, it was Ezra who played a more prominent role and Nehemiah is barely mentioned (8:9, 10). Ezra had gone to Jerusalem about thirteen years before Nehemiah (Ezra 7:9), and had had a weary time of fighting against the corruptions which had crept in among the returned captives. Nehemiah's arrival brought a renewed enthusiasm as he had the Persian king's authority. No mention was made of Ezra while the wall was being built. It could be that Ezra, after accomplishing the reforms (Ezra 9 & 10), returned to Babylon for 12 years before he revisited Jerusalem in time to witness the completion of the city walls led by Nehemiah. He renewed his former practice of expounding the Law in public as requested by the people in recognition of his role as both 'scribe' and 'the priest' (8:1, 2, 9).

16 to 22 April, 2018: Nehemiah Chapters 7 – 8

Watch videos

- Effective Delegation (6:15-7:3), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0475/> (10.41 min)
- Reverence and Response (8:1-6), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0476/> (13.16 min)
- Communicating Clearly (8:7-12), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0477/> (8.02 min)
- Obeying God's Word (8:13-18), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0478/> (13.54 min)

Review Verse of the Week **Nehemiah 8:8**

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

Date/Read/Watch	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<p>Mon. 16 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 7:1–3 {Nehemiah 7:1-3}</p>	<p>While the wall was complete, the work was not finished. Measures had to be taken for the security of the city. The comparative thinness of the population (7:4) taxed the governor's resources, and the result appears at a later stage. Nehemiah delegated responsibility and authority to Hanani and Hananiah as leaders. He did not want Jerusalem to be caught unprepared for an enemy attack, so he ordered the gates closed until well after sunrise (the usual time when city gates were opened, enabling merchants to enter and set up their tent stores). In addition to appointing gatekeepers, singers and Levites, Nehemiah assigned each family the task of protecting the section of wall next to their home. Nehemiah, having finished the wall, returned to the Persian court, and came to Jerusalem again with a new commission.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why were Hanani and Hananiah chosen by Nehemiah to govern Jerusalem? If you were in a position to select leaders, what qualities would you look for? Recall how the seven men were chosen to 'wait on tables' (taking care of the widows' welfare) in the Jerusalem church (Acts

	<p>6:3). Imagine what would have happened had leaders not been trustworthy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we tempted to relax our guard and rest on our past accomplishments after we have completed a large task? Remember our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, always ready to pounce on us (1 Peter 5:8). <p>Notes: 7:1 – The ‘gatekeepers’ were a guild whose ordinary duty it was to guard the entrances and defences of the Temple. In the unsettled state of affairs, Nehemiah entrusted the protection of the whole city to this body of trained ‘police,’ and augmented their force by other available trained bands, i.e. the musicians and the main body of Levites, who assisted the priests in the Temple services. The priests and Levites formed nearly one half the population of Jerusalem and hence it was not unusual for them to be enlisted.</p> <p>7:2 – Hanani was the person who first reported dismal situation in Jerusalem (1:3). He probably returned to Jerusalem with Nehemiah from Susa. Hananiah was in the direct service of the Persian king, like Asaph (as the gatekeeper of the forest, 2:8).</p>
<p>Tue. 17 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 7:4–69 <i>{Nehemiah 7:66-69}</i></p>	<p>As much of the city consisted of open spaces where no houses had yet been built (7:4), Nehemiah contemplated how they might best be populated. He knew that the safety of a city depends more upon the inhabitants than upon its walls. He attributed to divine prompting the idea of taking a census of the people (to pave the way to transfer some of those staying in the country districts into the capital). This would strengthen the city, and lessen the desolate appearance of its streets and squares, which had so pained him.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God gives knowledge, He gives grace. Do we ascribe what is done by human prudence to the His direction as Nehemiah did? • How can we ensure our Christian heritage (genealogy) as descendants of Abraham too (Gal 3:6–9), get passed down to our younger generations? <p>Notes: 7:4 –The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in Nehemiah’s time very few compared with the number before the captivity (11:1-2). Of the 50,000 or so who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel (42,360 cited in Ezra 2:64; Neh 7:66) and Ezra (about 1,500, cited in Ezra 8:1-20), a very large proportion were settled in the country and towns near Jerusalem.</p> <p>7:5-69 – Because the genealogical record found by Nehemiah is almost identical to Ezra’s (Ezra2), it was likely that it was the genealogy stored in the Temple archives. The slight discrepancy could be due to the different circumstances in which the two registers were taken: that of Ezra having been made up at Babylon, while that of Nehemiah was drawn out in Judea, after the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. The differences could also be due to death or other causes, e.g. the same person having different names.</p>

	Genealogies were greatly valued because it was very important to prove oneself a descendant of Abraham and hence part of God’s chosen people (7:61).
<p>Wed. 18 Apr Nehemiah 7:70–73 {Nehemiah 7:70-73}</p>	<p>Nehemiah and some heads of families gave liberally to the Temple treasury and also garments for the priest. When all the business was finished, the people were sent back, by Nehemiah’s direction, to the several cities to which they belonged where they remained till the seventh month came. This was five days after the wall was finished, that being on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...woe to those who turn back from the Lord, loving this present world! and happy those who dedicate themselves, and their substance, to his service and glory!” (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary). Which group do you belong to? How much of your time or financial resources have you given to further God’s kingdom? • Praise God that the sum collected for the extension of the Community Service work at Blk 50 has exceeded target. Pray for the equipping of personnel to carry out the work to touch lives. <p>Notes: 7:70-73 – Compared with Ezra 2:69 there is considerable difference between the totals for gold, silver, and garments. This could be because Ezra did not separate Zerubbabel's offering from that of the other heads of families. 7:73a – Having completed the account of what happened in the sixth month, Nehemiah proceeds to relate events belonging to the seventh month, switching from first person narrative (which ended in 7:5 – “...what I found written...”) to third person till 12:31 when he resumed with first person singular “I had ...”.</p>
<p>Thu. 19 Apr Nehemiah 8:1–12 {Nehemiah 8:1-3,5-6,10}</p>	<p>The Israelites had developed a great respect and appreciation for the "Book of the Law of Moses" (probably the first five books of the Old Testament). Note how the people responded to Ezra’s public reading of the Book (probably Deuteronomy only) aloud from day break to noon with joy and tears (8:9) as the Law revealed their sin. Translation (8:8) and explanation (8:12) were needed as the people spoke Aramaic instead of original Hebrew language of the Book.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezra and Nehemiah wanted to make sure that Israelites of all ages understood the Law of Moses. What steps can we take today to ensure we ourselves as well as our listeners understand what God intended when He inspired men of old to record His message? Do we correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim 2:14-19) and understand how His message should impact our lives? • We are so blessed this day and age with so many different versions of the Bible and in our own language to aid our understanding. But how can we keep the ready availability of the Scriptures from causing us to take its divine message for granted?

	<p>Notes: 7:73b – The second clause introduces a new section. Very similar words occur in Ezra 3:1 after the register of names.</p> <p>8:1 – With the city walls completed and their national integrity safeguarded the people’s pride in their distinctiveness as ‘a peculiar people’ was rekindled. Ezra responded to the people’s wish to have the Law read in their hearing as they gathered to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:24). Neither Ezra nor Nehemiah originated the gathering together.</p>
<p>Fri. 20 Apr Nehemiah 8:13–18 <i>{Nehemiah 8:16-18}</i></p>	<p>The Israelites, taught by Ezra in the law of God on the first day of the month, returned to him on the second day, hungering and thirsting after the Word of life (8:18). Note in particular that the heads of the families, the priests and the Levites also humbly sought further instruction by Ezra in ‘the law’. They too possibly were ignorant of the full contents of ‘the law’ which had hitherto been chiefly known by oral tradition or disconnected writings but which was mastered by Ezra. Apparently Ezra went beyond mere profound interpretations of the Law and focused on positive applications as in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (8:14-15).</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Psalm 34:8). How can we continuously feast on God’s Word and not tire of reading it day after day (Neh 8:18)? <p>Notes: 8:13 The Feast of the Tabernacles was revived and celebrated for seven days with great joy on the 15th day of the seventh month (Lev.23:33). It had been hitherto not been celebrated in this manner since Joshua’s time.</p>
<p>Sat./Sun. 21-22 Apr</p>	<p>“...Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10)</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on how we can appropriate this promise in our life whenever we face the vicissitudes of life, from coping with our own or our loved one’s serious illnesses to an unexpected bereavement or turn of events that leave us asking “Why God” or “How long” (Psalm 13)?

References

G A Getz, **Life Essentials Study Bible: Biblical Principles to Live By**, Holman Bible Publishers, 2011.

<https://bibleprinciples.org/pf-search-book/> (search videos by book and click on Nehemiah)

Tyndale House Publishers, **Chronological Life Application Study Bible**, 2004.

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/8-18.htm>