

Dr. Tiberius Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 6, Nehemiah 1-2

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 6, Nehemiah 1-2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Tiberius Rata's teaching on Ezra and Nehemiah focuses on Nehemiah chapters 1-2. **It highlights Nehemiah's response to news of Jerusalem's destruction**, including his **emotional reaction, prayer, and fasting**. The lecture then **explains Nehemiah's obtaining permission from the king to rebuild the city walls**, emphasizing his trusted position and the role of God in influencing the king's decision. Finally, it **discusses Nehemiah's initial efforts to rebuild, the opposition he faced, and his leadership style**. The lecture uses biblical and historical context to illustrate Nehemiah's faith and actions.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Rata, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Ezra/Nehemiah).



**Rata_Ezra_Neh_Sess
ion06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 6, Nehemiah 1-2

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided source, "Rata_Ez_Neh_EN_Session06.pdf", focusing on Nehemiah chapters 1-2:

Briefing Document: Nehemiah 1-2

Overview: This session focuses on the introduction of Nehemiah in the biblical book of the same name, specifically covering chapters 1 and 2. Dr. Rata highlights Nehemiah's initial reaction to the news of Jerusalem's dilapidated state and his subsequent actions, drawing parallels with Ezra and emphasizing key principles of godly leadership.

Main Themes & Key Ideas:

1. The State of Jerusalem and Nehemiah's Initial Response:

- **Bad News:** The session begins with Nehemiah receiving distressing news from Hanani about the condition of Jerusalem: "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." (Nehemiah 1:3).
- **Physical and Spiritual Restoration:** Just as with Ezra, Nehemiah's story involves both physical and spiritual restoration, but he starts with the physical destruction of the city. This physical destruction symbolizes a spiritual breakdown.
- **Emotional Response:** Nehemiah is deeply affected by the news, demonstrating a sensitive heart: "As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days. And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven." (Nehemiah 1:4).
- **Weeping as a Sign of Care:** Dr. Rata emphasizes that weeping is not a weakness but a sign of genuine care and concern, citing Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul as examples.
- **Importance of Identifying Problems:** Like Hanani, leaders should not minimize, ignore, or deny problems but rather face them head on.

1. Nehemiah's Prayer and Dependence on God:

- **Prayer and Fasting:** Nehemiah combines weeping with prayer and fasting, a recurring theme in the book (12 recorded prayers, but likely more).

- **R.A. Torrey Quote:** The session highlights the importance of prayer, quoting R.A. Torrey: "It was a master stroke of the devil to get the church and the ministry to lay aside the mighty weapon of prayer." The devil, according to Torrey, is not worried by many church activities, but is greatly concerned with prayer.
- **John Chrysostom Quote:** Dr. Rata shares a quote from John Chrysostom, noting the value of fasting for spiritual discipline and growth. "Fasting is as much as it lies in us, an imitation of the angels, a condemning of things present, a school of prayer..."
- **Identification with the People:** Nehemiah identifies with his people's sins: "Even I and my father's house have sinned." (Nehemiah 1:6). Similar to Ezra, he doesn't place blame, but humbly admits his part in their sin.
- **Confession and Affirmation:** Nehemiah acknowledges God's greatness, covenant faithfulness, and ability to forgive sins. He understands God is not just the God who *makes* covenant, but the God who *keeps* covenant.
- **Prayerful Planning:** Nehemiah first shares the problem with God through prayer before taking action.
- **God's Sovereignty:** Nehemiah sees all that happens, including the king's actions, as ultimately being under the control of God and His sovereignty.

1. **Nehemiah's Position and Sacrificial Leadership:**

- **Cupbearer to the King:** Nehemiah's role as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes was a position of great trust and influence, not simply that of a waiter. He risked this for his people.
- **Sacrifice:** Nehemiah gives up his secure and respected position to return to Jerusalem, mirroring Jesus' sacrifice. "Nehemiah's attitude reminds us of Jesus Christ, who saw our need for salvation and gave up the glory of heaven..."
- **The "Third Class Passengers":** Dr. Rata uses the analogy of horse-drawn carriages and "third-class passengers" to illustrate the active role in ministry: "First-class passengers stay in their seats. Second-class passengers get out and walk. Third-class passengers get out and push." The church needs active workers not passive observers.

1. Nehemiah's Interaction with King Artaxerxes:

- **Sad Countenance:** Nehemiah's sadness is noticeable, despite court etiquette that demanded joy. "Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" (Nehemiah 2:3)
- **Appeal to Ancestral Tombs:** Instead of directly mentioning Jerusalem or the Temple, Nehemiah appeals to the king's sympathy by mentioning his ancestors' graves.
- **God's Influence on Kings:** God moves the heart of King Artaxerxes, similar to how he moved the heart of Cyrus. "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord, he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1)
- **Prayer Before Request:** Nehemiah prays before answering the king's request of what he wants, highlighting his continued reliance on God.

1. Nehemiah's Planning and Action:

- **Asking for Letters and Materials:** Nehemiah requests letters of passage and resources to rebuild, demonstrating planning and foresight. "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River...and a letter to Asaph...that he may give me timber..." (Nehemiah 2:7-8).
- **God's Hand:** All these events are credited to the "good hand of God." "And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me." (Nehemiah 2:8).
- **Secret Survey:** Upon arrival, Nehemiah secretly surveys the city at night, displaying strategic planning.
- **Inspiring Others:** Nehemiah challenges the people to join him in rebuilding, highlighting his leadership skills. "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." (Nehemiah 2:17)

1. Opposition and Faithful Work:

- **Opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah:** The opposition increases from two to three men when joined by Geshem the Arab. Nehemiah faces opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, which is common with God's work.
- **Opposition as a Sign of Doing Right:** Dr. Rata says that opposition is not necessarily a bad thing, but often a sign that you're doing something right.

- **Wise Response:** Nehemiah doesn't directly answer his opponents, but continues doing God's work, demonstrating discernment.

Conclusion:

Nehemiah's story in chapters 1 and 2 exemplifies a God-centered approach to leadership. It is a story about a sensitive heart, prayerful reliance on God, sacrificial service, strategic planning, and steadfast faithfulness in the face of opposition.

Nehemiah's actions serve as a model for leaders to:

- Identify needs.
- Pray fervently.
- Act decisively.
- Inspire others.
- Stay committed despite challenges.

Dr. Rata emphasizes the importance of prayer and actively engaging in ministry, rather than just being passive observers. Nehemiah is a model of a leader who "pushes" the work of God forward.

4. Study Guide: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 6, Nehemiah 1-2

Nehemiah 1-2 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What was Nehemiah's position in the Persian court, and why was it significant?
2. What news did Hanani and his companions bring to Nehemiah?
3. How did Nehemiah react upon hearing this news, and what does this reveal about his character?
4. According to Dr. Rata, what is the significance of Nehemiah's weeping in light of modern views on crying?
5. What actions did Nehemiah take immediately after hearing the bad news?
6. In his prayer in chapter 1, what does Nehemiah confess to God?
7. What did Nehemiah request from King Artaxerxes, and how did the king respond?
8. What does the story about the carriage and its passengers illustrate about ministry, according to Dr. Rata?
9. What steps did Nehemiah take to assess the situation in Jerusalem before announcing his plans?
10. How did Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem respond to Nehemiah's plan to rebuild Jerusalem, and what does this show about opposition?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king, a highly respected and trusted position. It was significant because cupbearers were responsible for tasting the king's wine to ensure it wasn't poisoned, thus earning their employer's utmost trust.
2. Hanani told Nehemiah that the remnant of Jews in Judah were in great trouble and shame, and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and its gates destroyed by fire. This news highlighted both physical and social devastation.

3. Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed upon hearing the news. This reveals his deep care and concern for his people and his faith in God as his source of hope.
4. Dr. Rata explained that in modern culture, weeping is often viewed as weakness, while in the Bible, it's a sign of care and concern for others, as seen in figures like Jeremiah and Jesus.
5. Nehemiah immediately sat down, wept, mourned for days, and then engaged in prayer and fasting, demonstrating the depth of his emotional and spiritual response.
6. In his prayer in chapter 1, Nehemiah confesses the sins of the people of Israel and identifies himself as part of their sin, acknowledging his and his father's house's transgression.
7. Nehemiah requested permission to go to Judah to rebuild the city of his fathers' graves and asked for letters to the governors and resources to complete the task. King Artaxerxes granted him all he asked.
8. The carriage story illustrates that there are different levels of engagement in ministry, and that we should strive to be "third-class" passengers who actively push and participate in the work rather than just observing from the sidelines.
9. Before revealing his plans, Nehemiah conducted a secret night inspection of the city walls to assess their condition personally and understand the work needed, demonstrating a strategic approach.
10. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem jeered and accused Nehemiah of rebelling against the king. This shows that opposition can often be a sign that one is doing the right thing in the face of challenges to God's plan.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the roles of Ezra and Nehemiah in the restoration of Jerusalem, highlighting their individual strengths and approaches.
2. Analyze the significance of prayer in Nehemiah's leadership and explain how it shaped his actions and interactions with both God and man.
3. Discuss how Nehemiah's position at the Persian court and his willingness to give it up for his people demonstrates the theme of sacrifice.
4. Explore the concept of God's sovereignty as presented in Nehemiah 1-2, with attention to how God works through individuals, circumstances, and even foreign rulers.
5. Examine the types of opposition Nehemiah faced and discuss strategies for responding to opposition when working to achieve goals centered around faith.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Artaxerxes:** The Persian king during the time of Nehemiah, who granted Nehemiah permission and resources to rebuild Jerusalem.
- **Cupbearer:** A highly trusted position in the royal court responsible for tasting the king's wine to ensure it wasn't poisoned.
- **Chislev:** The ninth month of the Jewish calendar, occurring in late November/early December.
- **Hanani:** Nehemiah's brother or kinsman who brought news about the state of Jerusalem.
- **Susa:** The capital city of the Persian Empire where Nehemiah was serving in the royal court.
- **Sanballat the Horonite:** A key opponent of Nehemiah who tried to obstruct the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- **Tobiah the Ammonite servant:** Another opponent of Nehemiah, who worked alongside Sanballat.
- **Geshem the Arab:** A later opponent of Nehemiah who joined Sanballat and Tobiah in opposing the rebuilding.
- **"Beyond the River":** The name given to the province west of the Euphrates River that included Judah during the Persian Empire.
- **Covenant:** A formal agreement or promise, in the biblical context, it refers to God's sacred promises to his people.

5. FAQs on Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 6, Nehemiah 1-2, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Nehemiah 1-2

1. **What was the initial problem that prompted Nehemiah's actions?** Nehemiah was deeply disturbed by the news that the city of Jerusalem was in ruins, with its walls broken down and gates destroyed by fire. This physical devastation was also seen as a sign of the shame and trouble the exiled Jewish community was facing. Unlike the temple's rebuilding under Ezra, the city's defensive wall had not been addressed.
2. **How did Nehemiah respond to hearing about Jerusalem's condition?** Nehemiah's response was characterized by a profound emotional and spiritual reaction. He sat down, wept, and mourned for days. He also engaged in fasting and fervent prayer to God, showing his deep concern and care for his people and their situation. His behavior was a biblical example that weeping can be a sign of care, and this was coupled with prayer.
3. **What is the significance of Nehemiah's role as cupbearer to the king?** Nehemiah's position as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes was not merely that of a waiter. It was a highly respected and trusted role at the Persian royal court. Cupbearers were responsible for tasting the king's wine first to ensure it wasn't poisoned, making it a position of significant trust and status. Nehemiah gave this up to pursue God's calling.
4. **How did Nehemiah approach the King with his request to rebuild Jerusalem?** Nehemiah displayed both boldness and wisdom. He first acknowledged the king's authority and longevity, but his sadness was evident and recognized. Instead of directly mentioning Jerusalem or the temple, he appealed to the king's universal respect for ancestral tombs by focusing on the ruined state of his fathers' graves. This approach helped gain the king's sympathy and support. Importantly, before making his request, Nehemiah prayed.

5. **What specific resources did Nehemiah request from King Artaxerxes?** Nehemiah requested several important provisions from the king. He asked for letters of safe passage to the governors of the province, allowing him to travel to Judah. He also sought a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, for timber to rebuild the city gates, walls, and his own residence. The king's generosity was due to God's hand at work.
6. **What role did prayer play in Nehemiah's approach to the rebuilding effort?** Prayer was a central element in Nehemiah's actions. He prayed extensively in response to the bad news about Jerusalem, and sought God's guidance and intervention before speaking to the king. Prayer was a continuous theme in his life as a leader. It was not an afterthought, but a first step. He also identified with his people and confessed his own and corporate sin in his prayers.
7. **How did Nehemiah rally the people of Jerusalem to participate in rebuilding the wall?** After inspecting the damage himself, Nehemiah presented the situation to the people of Jerusalem, emphasizing the disgrace and suffering they were experiencing. He shared how God had moved the king to support his cause. By highlighting both the severity of the problem and the evidence of God's favor, he was able to motivate the people to take on the rebuilding project, causing them to respond with the unified statement, "Let us rise up and build."
8. **What kind of opposition did Nehemiah face, and how did he respond?** Nehemiah faced opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem who scorned and ridiculed the rebuilding effort. They also accused Nehemiah and the Jewish people of rebellion against the king. Nehemiah wisely did not engage in debate with his opposers, instead affirming that God would make them prosper and then continuing with his work. He demonstrated that opposition is not necessarily a sign you are doing something wrong, but might in fact indicate you are doing the right thing.