

## **Dr. Tiberius Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 8, Nehemiah 5-6**

### **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 8, Nehemiah 5-6, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. Tiberius Rata **examines** Nehemiah chapters 5 and 6. **Chapter 5 details** an internal conflict within the Jewish community, where the wealthy exploited the poor, violating God's law. **Nehemiah, filled with righteous anger**, confronts this injustice and compels the wealthy to repay their debts and release enslaved people. **Chapter 6** depicts Nehemiah's **successful resistance** against external enemies who attempted to derail the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls through various schemes, including lies and false prophecies. The lecture **concludes** by highlighting Nehemiah's leadership and faith in God's power.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Rata, Session 8 – 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).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 8, Nehemiah 5-6

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Rata\_Ez\_Neh\_EN\_Session08.pdf," focusing on Nehemiah chapters 5 and 6:

#### Briefing Document: Nehemiah Chapters 5-6

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Rata's teaching on Nehemiah chapters 5 and 6, highlighting the shift from external opposition to internal conflict, and detailing the strategies Nehemiah employs to address injustice and threats. The main topics covered include:

1. **Internal Socioeconomic Injustice (Nehemiah 5):** The chapter opens with a significant internal problem of socio-economic injustice among the Jewish people. This involves exploitation of the poor by the wealthy, contrary to God's law.
2. **Nehemiah's Righteous Anger and Action:** Nehemiah responds with righteous anger to this injustice and takes immediate steps to rectify it.
3. **Leadership by Example:** Nehemiah's leadership is characterized by his commitment to setting an example of selfless service, sacrificing personal gain and comfort for the good of the people.
4. **External Opposition and Deception (Nehemiah 6):** After dealing with internal strife, Nehemiah faces renewed external opposition, this time marked by deceptive tactics, false accusations, and threats.
5. **Discernment and Reliance on God:** Nehemiah displays wisdom and discernment in recognizing the enemy's deceptive schemes, refusing to be drawn into traps. He maintains his focus on the work at hand, relying on prayer and God's strength for resilience.
6. **Completion of the Wall and Recognition of God's Work:** Despite all obstacles, the wall is completed in record time, a testament to God's intervention, leading even the enemy to acknowledge that it was accomplished through God.
7. **The Ongoing Threat and Internal Betrayal:** Even after success, the threat from the enemy continues, compounded by internal betrayals stemming from family ties and personal interests which are not aligned with Godly principles.

## Key Themes and Ideas:

### 1. Internal Socioeconomic Injustice (Nehemiah 5):

- **Problem:** The Jewish community faces internal crisis due to socioeconomic issues. Four groups are identified:
- Those who lack land and need food.
- Those who own property but struggle to feed families, forcing them to mortgage their assets.
- Those who borrowed money for taxes at exorbitant interest rates and can't repay.
- Wealthy Jews exploiting their brethren, taking land and children as collateral.
- **Violation of God's Law:** This exploitation is a direct violation of the spirit of the Law of Moses, particularly Leviticus 25, which aimed to protect the poor. "They were exploiting their brothers and sisters."
- **Injustice towards the poor:** The wealthy were not only not taking care of the poor but exploiting them, forcing Jewish parents to choose between starvation or servitude for their children. "Jewish parents had been forced to choose between starvation or servitude for their children."
- **The internal conflict being more difficult to address than external conflict:** Dr Rata asks, "Now which one is harder to fight? Opposition from the outside or opposition from the inside? Sometimes it's probably harder to fight the opposition from the inside."

### 2. Nehemiah's Righteous Anger and Action:

- **Nehemiah's Anger:** Nehemiah responds with righteous anger upon hearing about the injustice. "I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words." His anger is similar to Jesus' anger toward the mistreatment of the poor and the corruption in the temple. He is not reacting selfishly.
- **Confrontation:** Nehemiah confronts the nobles and officials, accusing them of exacting interest from their brothers. "You are exacting interest, each from his brother."
- **Demand for Restitution:** Nehemiah demands they stop exploiting their brothers and sisters, that they return what was taken, even the interest that was charged. "Let us abandon this exacting of interest."

- **Resolution:** The nobles agree to Nehemiah's demands and the injustice was rectified. "The wrong has been identified. The wrong has been addressed. And now the wrong has been made right."

### 3. Leadership by Example:

- **Selflessness:** Nehemiah, as governor, does not take advantage of his position for personal gain. He doesn't claim his legally allowable food allowance. "Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people."
- **Identification with the people:** Nehemiah identifies with his people's suffering, contrasting himself with dictators who live in luxury while their people suffer. "He didn't think that was fair for him to live in luxury when his people lived in poverty."
- **Servant Leadership:** Nehemiah embodies the concept of servant leadership. "He didn't think that was fair for him to live in luxury when his people lived in poverty."

### 4. External Opposition and Deception (Nehemiah 6):

- **Enemy's Tactics:** The enemies try to lure Nehemiah into a trap by requesting a meeting in the plain of Ono. "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. "
- **False Accusations:** When this fails, they spread false rumors about Nehemiah intending to rebel against the king and wanting to make himself king. "It is reported among the nations, and Geshema also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king."
- **Intimidation:** They use lies and intimidation to try to get Nehemiah to stop his work. "For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, 'Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.'"

- **Exploiting Religion:** They hire a false prophet, Shemaiah, to try to convince Nehemiah to seek sanctuary in the temple, which would make him look bad and possibly violate God's law. "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night."

## 5. Discernment and Reliance on God:

- **Discernment:** Nehemiah discerns the enemy's plots, recognizing their true intentions. "God gives Nehemiah discernment to understand that the enemy intended to harm him."
- **Focus on the Work:** Nehemiah refuses to be distracted from the task at hand. He says, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"
- **Prayer:** Nehemiah relies on prayer for strength and wisdom. "But now, O God, strengthen my hands."
- **Trust in God:** He understands that victory is from God alone. "Nehemiah's cry echoes that of the psalmist who desires God's strength when his soul is weakened by sorrow."

## 6. Completion of the Wall and Recognition of God's Work:

- **Miraculous Completion:** The wall was finished in 52 days, a testament to the power and grace of God. "So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days."
- **Recognition of Divine Help:** Even the enemies recognize that the work was accomplished with God's help. "for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God."
- **Unity and Leadership:** The success was a result of working in unity, under Nehemiah's leadership. "Again, in unity, under great leadership, they accomplished this great thing."

## 7. The Ongoing Threat and Internal Betrayal:

- **Continued Opposition:** Despite the completion of the wall, the opposition to Nehemiah and his work continued, though it was now a hidden and more insidious form.

- **Family Ties over Faith:** The text reveals that some were more loyal to family than to the Lord, supporting Tobiah due to family connections. "For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah."
- **Church and Nepotism:** Dr Rata highlights the dangers of nepotism and the importance of loyalty to God's Word over family preferences in church leadership. "How many churches today have been damaged and even destroyed, because the leadership of the church fears their family members, instead of fearing God and trusting in His word."

### **Conclusion:**

Nehemiah chapters 5 and 6 provide valuable lessons on leadership, integrity, and reliance on God. Nehemiah's example demonstrates the importance of addressing injustice, leading with integrity, discerning spiritual attacks, and trusting in God's power to overcome all obstacles. The text serves as a reminder that the true work of God requires faithfulness in both internal and external matters. It challenges us to prioritize the needs of others over our own, and to put God's will before family loyalty or personal gain.

## 4. Study Guide: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 8, Nehemiah 5-6

### Nehemiah 5-6 Study Guide

#### Quiz

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

1. What internal problem does Nehemiah address in chapter 5 and what four groups of people are involved?
2. How did the wealthy Jews exploit their poorer brothers and sisters? What law were they violating?
3. What does Nehemiah do in response to the injustice he observes? What is the outcome of his actions?
4. What does the text suggest is the church's responsibility in relation to the poor?
5. How does Nehemiah demonstrate leadership by example in chapter 5?
6. What is the first way that Nehemiah's enemies try to stop him in chapter 6?
7. How does Nehemiah respond to the invitation to meet and why?
8. What accusations do Nehemiah's enemies make in their open letter and what is the intended result?
9. Why does Nehemiah refuse to go into the temple with Shemaiah? What does that reveal about his character?
10. What is the significance of completing the wall in 52 days, and how does the completion affect their enemies?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Nehemiah addresses a socioeconomic problem of injustice where some Jews were exploiting others for financial gain. The four groups involved were those needing food, those mortgaging property for food, those borrowing for taxes with high interest, and the wealthy exploiting others.
2. The wealthy Jews were taking land and children as collateral due to debts, violating the spirit of Leviticus 25, which aimed to protect the poor and ensure

land and people were returned. They were not honoring the year of Jubilee or the Sabbath year.

3. Nehemiah becomes angry at the injustice, confronts the nobles and officials, holds a great assembly, and demands they return what they had taken and abandon charging interest. The people agree and the wrong is made right.
4. The text suggests that the church, not the government, is primarily responsible for taking care of the poor and needy as Jesus always made provision for the poor. This is implied through Nehemiah's actions.
5. Nehemiah leads by example by not taking the governor's food allowance, because it would burden the people and by not acquiring land for himself. He also provides food for others at his own expense, which shows his empathy and willingness to share.
6. The enemies first try to stop Nehemiah by inviting him to a meeting in the plain of Ono. This is a ruse to draw him away from the wall and harm him.
7. Nehemiah refuses the invitation because he recognizes it as a trap, stating he cannot interrupt his great work for a meeting. He recognizes the enemy's malicious intent and refuses to be distracted.
8. The enemies accuse Nehemiah of planning a rebellion against the king and wanting to become king himself. They also accuse him of hiring prophets to preach in his favor, hoping to incite fear and cause the people to stop working on the wall.
9. Nehemiah refuses because he is a leader who does not run away and understands he would sin by entering the temple, which is forbidden for him. He fears God more than he fears people and will not compromise his integrity.
10. The wall's completion in 52 days was a remarkable feat that demonstrated God's help. This led to fear and a loss of esteem among their enemies, who acknowledged that the work was accomplished with God's assistance.



## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the different types of opposition Nehemiah faces in chapters 5 and 6, and discuss how his responses to each type reveal his leadership qualities and faith.
2. Discuss the socioeconomic problems outlined in Nehemiah chapter 5. How do they connect to broader themes of justice and ethics and what lessons might be relevant for modern society?
3. Explore the theme of leadership in Nehemiah 5-6. How does Nehemiah's example of leading by example and his response to threats contribute to our understanding of effective leadership?
4. Compare and contrast Nehemiah's handling of internal conflict in chapter 5 with his handling of external opposition in chapter 6. How does each situation reveal different aspects of his character and his reliance on God?
5. The concept of "righteous anger" is seen in Nehemiah's response to the injustices in chapter 5. Explore the biblical concept of righteous anger and how Nehemiah exemplifies its appropriate use in this passage.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Levirate Servanthood:** A practice mentioned in Leviticus where impoverished Jewish individuals could sell themselves into servitude to a fellow Jew for a limited time to pay off debts, with the expectation of release in the Jubilee or Sabbath year.
- **Jubilee Year:** A year proclaimed every 50th year in ancient Israel, during which land was returned to original owners, debts were forgiven, and slaves were released to restore social and economic equity.
- **Sabbath Year:** A year observed every 7th year in ancient Israel where the land was to lie fallow, debts were forgiven, and slaves were released; a time of rest and renewal.
- **Exacting Interest:** Charging interest on loans. This was forbidden among Jewish brothers in the Old Testament because it was considered a form of exploitation, especially for the poor.
- **Righteous Anger:** Anger that is not self-centered but is a passionate response to injustice, oppression, or sin and in alignment with God's will.
- **Nepotism:** The practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs.
- **Slander:** The action or crime of making a false and damaging statement about someone.
- **False Prophet:** Someone who claims to speak in the name of God but does not speak truth and deceives others. In ancient Israel, this was considered a serious offense.
- **Discernment:** The ability to judge well, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, or right and wrong.
- **Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem:** Key opponents of Nehemiah in his efforts to rebuild Jerusalem's wall. They used various tactics to try and stop him and undermine his efforts.

## 5. FAQs on Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 8, Nehemiah 5-6, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Nehemiah Chapters 5-6

- **What internal conflict arose in Jerusalem during Nehemiah's time, and what were its causes?**
- An internal socioeconomic conflict emerged where some Jews were exploiting their fellow Jews. This was due to a combination of factors: Some people lacked land and needed food; others had to mortgage their property due to famine; still others were unable to repay loans taken to pay royal taxes with high interest, and finally wealthy individuals were exploiting their brothers and sisters by taking their land and children for collateral. These actions were in direct violation of God's law as outlined in Leviticus 25, which made provisions for the poor and did not allow for the perpetual enslavement or exploitation of Jewish people.
- **How did Nehemiah respond to the injustice and exploitation he witnessed?**
- Nehemiah was deeply angered by the injustices. He confronted the nobles and officials who were exploiting their brethren, accusing them of exacting interest from their own people, an action that was not supposed to happen in God's law. He called a great assembly and demanded they stop this practice of charging interest and forcing their brothers and sisters into servitude, telling them to return the properties and people they had unjustly taken. He led by example, abandoning his right to a governor's food allowance. Nehemiah did not just identify a wrong, but he also took the necessary steps to make it right.
- **What does the text suggest about the nature of "righteous anger" and its place in leadership?**
- The text shows that Nehemiah experienced righteous anger in response to injustice. The speaker argues that this is a Godly anger akin to the anger Jesus displayed when people were exploiting the poor or turning the temple into a marketplace. Nehemiah's anger was not self-serving but was directed at the oppression of his people. The text highlights that righteous anger, when properly motivated, can be a catalyst for addressing and rectifying wrong situations. It also shows that it is not enough to just identify a problem, you must also take steps to fix it.

- **What external opposition did Nehemiah face, and how did his enemies try to hinder his progress?**
- Nehemiah faced external opposition from enemies like Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Initially, they tried to distract him with a proposed meeting in Ono. When that failed, they resorted to lies and slander, accusing him of rebellion and of aspiring to be king. They also hired false prophets like Shemaiah and the prophetess Noadiah to threaten him and undermine his leadership. These actions aimed to instill fear, stop the work on the wall, and ruin Nehemiah's reputation.
- **How did Nehemiah respond to the various external oppositions he encountered?**
- Nehemiah's approach was multifaceted: he did not fall for the trap of the proposed meetings, he refuted the lies and slander with the truth, he refused to be intimidated by the false prophecies, and he continually sought God's strength through prayer. He discerned the true motives behind the opposition, focused on the task at hand, and demonstrated unwavering faith in God. He also showed exemplary character by asking, "Should such a man as I run away?"
- **What is the significance of the completion of the wall in 52 days, and what does it reveal about God's work and the enemies of God's people?**

The completion of the wall in just 52 days, despite continuous opposition, is depicted as a miracle of God. It showcases the power of unity, dedicated leadership, and the unwavering faith in God among the workers. The swift completion of the wall not only rebuilt a physical barrier but also undermined the enemies' morale. The enemies even recognized that the wall had been completed because God helped the people, therefore validating God's work in the process.

- **What lessons can be learned from Nehemiah's leadership regarding the balance between personal interests and the welfare of the community, and his relationship with God?**
- Nehemiah's leadership exemplifies a life of selflessness. He did not take advantage of his position for personal gain but identified with his people in their suffering. He led by example, refusing to accept the governor's food allowance to avoid burdening the poor. He prioritized the needs of his people above his own comfort, embodying the two greatest commandments: loving God and loving others. Furthermore, he demonstrated a dependence on God through prayer, relying on God's strength and guidance, particularly in the face of intense opposition.
- **What does the text suggest about internal threats within a community of faith, specifically regarding family ties?**
- The text reveals that internal threats can arise from misguided loyalties, even within a community of faith. Some members of the community allowed family ties to influence their behavior, aligning themselves with Tobiah instead of the righteous work being done under Nehemiah's leadership. This shows that familial connections should not take priority over faithfulness to God's word and principles. It also points to a potential problem, such as that of nepotism, where family ties are valued above the principles of God, and that this can even occur in churches. The text warns against allowing such family influences to compromise faith and integrity.