

## Nehemiah 1: 1-11

### *Week 2 - Becoming People of Prayer and Praise*

#### Learning Objectives:

- Continue understanding why Israel was in captivity/exile and how that relates to us today as Christians
- Understand the significance/meaning behind the broken walls around Jerusalem
- Understand God's covenant love and ear to our prayers
- Develop a perspective that hearts and minds should be engaged with issues in and around the church

#### Steps to prepare for leaders:

- We're linking a Bible Project video for you to show. Please be prepared to have a computer or some way to access this YouTube link ready for your small group.
- Pray for your time together!

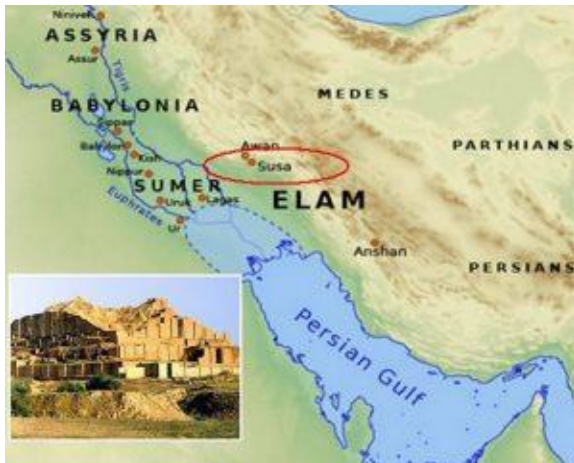
#### Nehemiah's Prayer

##### Nehemiah 1:1-11

<sup>1</sup>The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,<sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." <sup>4</sup>When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you." <sup>7</sup>We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

<sup>8</sup>"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup>but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.' <sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.



*Leader's Note: This is a map of the city of Susa and then specifically the temple in Susa Nehemiah references*

The Jewish remnant who survived exile – watch: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/exile/>

? Why were the Jewish people in exile?

*Possible answers: They broke God's promises, conquered by the Babylonians, lost the war, etc; (1 Chronicles 9:1: All Israel was listed in the genealogies recorded in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. They were taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.)*

? Why is exile so disruptive and difficult for the Jewish people? How can you relate to exile knowing that as Christians our home is not on this earth?

*Possible answers: The Jewish people are accustomed to a close relationship with God, however this closeness is not felt while in exile. Religious beliefs, practices, culture and traditions are all separate/different, which can make identity difficult to determine for the people groups in exile.*

*As Christians we can feel a similar pull away from our identity and home in Jesus to an identity to the world.*

"I can relate to this. I have a great home but it's situated in a world scarred with pain, broken relationships, death, tragedy done by others but also done by me. In the Bible exile is the human condition"  
The Bible Project: Exile

? What is the significance of "The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire" from verse 3?

*Possible answers: Jerusalem was the Jew's holy city representing Jewish national identity, the broken walls brought shame. Furthermore the walls represented safety from other nations. The walls symbolize strength and peace.*

? Where else do we see weeping, fasting and praying as a response in the Bible?

*Possible answers: Jesus hears of Lazarus' death (John 11), Hannah for a child (1 Samuel 1-2), Job while suffering...*

## **Covenants & Corporate Responsibility**

Read verses 5-11 again AND Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." <sup>3</sup>Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup>The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."



What is God's covenant of love?

*Possible answer: God's commitment to love all who love him and keep his commands (Exodus 20:6, Daniel 9:4)*



Why was it important that God made this initial covenant with Abraham?

*Possible answer: This is a foreshadowing of Jesus' coming and ultimate sacrifice.*

The Bible has a category for corporate responsibility. Culpability for sins committed can extend to a large group *if virtually everyone in the group was active in the sin* (it is telling, however, that the apostles don't seem to think they killed Jesus, even though they were in Jerusalem at that time). We can also be held responsible for sins committed long ago *if we bear the same spiritual resemblance to the perpetrators of the past*.

*"Toward a Theology of Apology" by Kevin DeYoung, 6/7/18*

Read aloud:

**Nehemiah addresses corporate responsibility when confessing to the Israelites sin and grouping himself in with his people.**



What do you think is the significance of Nehemiah referencing Moses, another exilee, in his prayer to the Lord?

*Possible answers: He is drawing the parallel of two individuals uniquely situated in foreign courts to bring liberation to God's people.*

? What sins do you think we as Hope Community Church, or other churches you've been involved with, have corporate responsibility for?

*Possible answers: Social injustices, neglecting our call to care for the least of these, prioritizing comfort over living Biblically and authentically...*

*Leader's Note: It would be important here to keep this conversation around the motives and heart behind things, and not simply individual preferences.*

### Bringing This 'Home'

? Seeing how Nehemiah prayed, what aspects of his prayer could still be true to us today?

*Possible answers: Recognizing God's holiness, asking to be heard, confessing sin, asking for specific help in approaching the king.*

**Cupbearer:** Cupbearer to the king may sound like a lowly position, but it was actually considered a high office. The cupbearer's job was to taste any wine brought to the king, in case it was poisoned. The king had to trust his cupbearer with his very life. Because of their trusted position, many cupbearers, such as Nehemiah (1:11), were able to exert political influence in the royal court.

(Taken from <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/facts-nehemiah-1/>)

? What do we make of Nehemiah referring to himself as a "servant" eight times during his prayer?

*Possible answers: Nehemiah understands his position relative to his king on earth and his ultimate king in heaven.*

### For Discussion and Accountability

? How often do you pour out your heart to God? What does this look like for you?

? How often do you give him a specific request to answer? What are you burdened with now that you need to bring to him?