

**Nehemiah 1:1-4**

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "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."

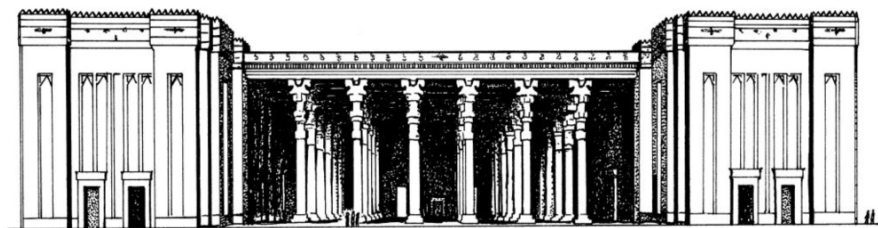
As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

**Introduction to Nehemiah:**

Nehemiah 1:1 - *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital*

- *Who is introduced?*
  - Nehemiah
    - Name means “The Lord has comforted”
      - God will use Nehemiah to revive the spirit of his people and to bring them hope.
  - Son of Hacaliah
    - Mentioning his father helps us to differentiate this Nehemiah from the ones we see mentioned in other places in Scripture
    - Nehemiah 3:16, Ezra 2:2
- *What do we have?*
  - The words of Nehemiah
    - Chapters 1-7, 12:31-13:31 are written in the first person, most likely Nehemiah’s personal journals.
- *When does this take place?*
  - Month of Chislev (November – December)
  - 445 BC
  - Artaxerxes I
- *Where is Nehemiah?*
  - Susa
    - Winter Capital
    - Daniel (Daniel 8:2)
    - Esther (Esther 1:2)

<u>Jewish Month</u>	<u>Modern Equivalent</u>
Nisan (Abib)	March–April
Iyyar (Ziv)	April–May
Sivan	May–June
Tammuz	June–July
Ab	July–August
Elul	August–September
Tishri (Ethaniam)	September–October
Marchesvan (Bul)	October–November
Chislev	November–December
Tebeth	December–January
Shebat	January–February
Adar	February–March



Susa was one of the Persian capitals. The picture shows the entrance of the palace of Susa.

## Big Doors and Small Hinges

*Like large doors, great life-changing events can swing on very small hinges (Warren Wiersbe)*

- Moses (Exodus 3)
- Ruth (Ruth 2)
- David (1 Samuel 16)
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Luke 5)

*You never know what God has in store, even in a commonplace conversation with a friend or relative; so keep your heart open to God's providential leading. (Warren Wiersbe)*

*Nehemiah 1:2-3 – one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "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."*

- *Who is involved?*
  - "One of my brothers"
    - Question
      - Is this a real brother?
      - Is this a relative?
      - Is this simply a fellow Jew?
    - Answer
      - Probably this is Nehemiah's real brother. I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. (Nehemiah 7:2)
  - "Men from Judah"
    - Folks from back home
- *What happens?*
  - Nehemiah asks
    - This begins to reveal Nehemiah's character
    - He cares enough to ask
  - The Response:
    - Remnant
    - Ruin
    - Reproach

## The Shocking Response

*Nehemiah 1:4 - 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.*

- The Big Question: Why does Nehemiah care?
  - *Time* (How long has Jerusalem been in ruins?)
  - *Distance* (How far is Susa from Jerusalem?)
    - 700 – 1000 miles
  - *Whose fault was this?*
    - Jerusalem was destroyed as a result of the sins of the Jewish people, long before Nehemiah was even born.
  - *Nehemiah's Situation*
    - He has a good job (Cupbearer to the King)
    - He has comfortable life
    - He has safety and security

- Why does Nehemiah care?
  - Why is he in tears over a city destroyed 141 years ago?
    - This is not new information but rather a new perspective
  - What is the new perspective?
    - It is a heart devoted to the will of God.
    - It is a heart that sees this destruction with fresh eyes and says, “This is not as it should be”
      - This city should stand as a witness to the nations of the power of Almighty God
      - Yet this city lies in ruins.
- This breaks Nehemiah’s heart
  - Jeremiah 15:5 "Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, or who will grieve for you? Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?"

### What about us?

- In many ways our story parallels Nehemiah’s story
  - His City
    - Essential to God’s plan for the world
    - A witness to the world
  - Our City
    - Essential to God’s plan for the world
    - A witness to the world
- The Big Question: What is the state of our city?
- How do we respond?
  - Ignorance
    - I don’t know so I don’t care
    - Ignorance never hurt anyone
  - Apathy
    - I just don’t care
    - This is an area where Nehemiah stands in stark contrast to many of us
      - We look at the church with a thought toward receiving
        - What can I get?
        - What do I deserve?
      - Nehemiah looks to Jerusalem with the thought of giving
        - How can I give my life, how can I use my position to move this city forward?
        - We say – “what do you offer to me?”
        - Nehemiah says – “what can I give?”
  - Wrong Motives
    - We often seek to be involved in God’s city, not for the advancement of his cause but for the advancement of our cause.
  - With a broken heart, because all is not as it should be