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The Completion of the Walls

Nehemiah 6: 15-19

The completion of the walls DIG: How was it possible that the wall which lay in ruins for over a century be rebuilt in 52 days? What effect did finishing the wall in only 52 days have on the enemies of Isra'el? How did they interpret the completion of the walls? What was so unusual about it? Although most of his enemies had given up, how did Tobiah continue to attack Nehemiah? What was Nehemiah's overall approach to being manipulated, intimidated, and discredited? What effects did the enemies' efforts have on the work of rebuilding the wall? How did the completion of the wall affect Nehemiah's opposition? What situation did Nehemiah have to deal with then?

REFLECT: What importance do you place on setting goals and achieving them? Why? Are you accountable for those goals? To Whom? Do you "fear God more than most?" Explain. In what ways did Nehemiah demonstrate the qualities of a strong, godly leader in this passage? What leaders have you known who were like him? How can you improve the way you handle conflict?

445 BC During the ministry of Nehemiah (to see link click [Bt](#) - The Third Return).
Compiled by: The Chronicler from the Ezra and Nehemiah Memoirs. Later, as Nehemiah wrote his memoirs (see [Ac](#) - Ezra-Nehemiah from a Jewish Perspective: **The Nehemiah Memoirs**) of his years in Jerusalem, he evidently inserted these observations about his perspective during his time as **governor of Judah**. Apparently, he included these verses here in the narrative because of their relationship to the events described in **6:1-14**.²⁶⁸



Finally, the entire task was completed despite two desperate efforts to kill **Nehemiah** using deception (**6:1-9**) and to have **him** sentenced to death using the Torah (**6:10-14**). **So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul** (corresponding to the months of August-September), **in just 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15)**. Remarkably, the walls of **Yerushalayim** that had been neglected for nearly a century-and-a-half were rebuilt in less than **two months** when **the people** were spurred into action by the catalyst of **Nehemiah's** leadership.²⁶⁹

When all our enemies heard, all the surrounding nations were afraid and fell greatly in their own eyes, because they realized that this work had been accomplished by our God (Nehemiah 6:16). Only divine intervention could account for the fulfilment of the task in the face of influential opposition. Judah's enemies tried to make **Nehemiah** and **the Jews** afraid. But in the end, **they** were the ones who **feared** (Deuteronomy 2:25; First Chronicles 14:17; Psalm 126:2; Malachi 1:11 and 14) because **they** realized **ADONAI** had done something astonishing in **the City of David**. The phrase **fell greatly in their own eyes** means *lost their self-confidence*. **Their pride** had suddenly vanished (**Proverbs 16:18, 29:23**). Though the enemies increased because of **Sanballat**, the result was that more people were impressed with the power of **YHVH**.²⁷⁰

Also, throughout the period that the wall was being built, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, one of Nehemiah's enemies, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them (Nehemiah 6:17). In the days of building the wall, the nobles of Judah who refused to work (Nehemiah 3:5) were actually in alliance and correspondence with Tobiah, because - though his ancestors were Ammonites - he had married into a respectable Jewish family.²⁷¹

For many in Judah were under oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah (Nehemiah 6:18). The mention of mixed marriages should

not be overlooked. The continuing nature of this threat, which had previously taken up so much of **Ezra's** time and energy (**to see link click Bs - Those Guilty of Intermarriage**), is here presented as a foreshadowing of **Nehemiah's** own grappling with that issue in the postexile **Jewish** community (see **Cr - Nehemiah's Final Reforms: Nehemiah's handling of mixed marriages**).

Local businessmen whispered on the street corners of their distrust in **Nehemiah's** leadership. Some questioned **his** judgment of **Tobiah**, saying, "I have found **Tobiah** to be an honest, decent man." **Moreover, they kept telling me about his good deeds and then reporting my words to him.** **Tobiah** must have had many good traits, and some of the people were led astray by **him**; nevertheless, **he** was trying to hinder **Nehemiah's** leadership. **Also Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me (Nehemiah 6:19).** According to **Nehemiah 13:4, the high priest, Eliashib**, was allied with **Tobiah**. The meddling of those **nobles**, by trying to play both side through **the reports** to both **Tobiah** and **Nehemiah**, had only widened the breach as **Tobiah** had escalated **his** efforts to murder **Nehemiah**, either outside **the City** (see **Ci - Attempts to Snare Nehemiah**), or inside the Temple (see **Cj - The Hiring of False Prophets**).

Nehemiah never allowed the rumors and political intrigue to deter **him** from **his** mission. I don't see that **he** even took the time to respond unless forced to do so. **He** merely shrugged off the accusations, stayed on task, focused on the needs of **the people**, and allowed the results to speak for **him**. **He** organized more than one trip from Persia to **Judah (Nehemiah 13:6-7)**, gathering all the materials and resources needed to undertake the mighty work of rebuilding the city walls. **He** also governed with wisdom, leading **God's people** through some difficult circumstances. But one of the strongest elements of **his** leadership was **his** own life, as **he** demonstrated through **his** own example of what it means to be a godly man.

When some of the people sinned and took advantage of their brothers and sisters, **Nehemiah** took a firm stand by confronting the wrongdoers and leading them back to obedience (see **Cg - Nehemiah's Unselfish Example**). The key word, however, is **leading**. **Nehemiah** did not **force** them into submission but *led* them into godliness through his own example. **Nehemiah** not only told the nobles and officials to stop charging interest but also demonstrated the right way to give generously and lend freely. **He** set that example **before** it became a problem with **the people**.

A good teacher does not simply give lectures on how to master a skill but also demonstrates that mastery by performing the skill in front of the students. In that way, the students can

learn by *imitation*. **Yeshua** did this to perfection with **His** apostles, both teaching them and setting an example for them to imitate. This is also the prime quality of a godly teacher. The godly teacher does not say, “Go and do likewise,” but, “Watch me, and do the same.”²⁷²