

# EZRA

ORDER IN OLD TESTAMENT

15

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

10

TYPE

HISTORY



## OVERVIEW

Ezra records the end of the Great Exile and the return of Jews to Jerusalem. Under Cyrus, the king of Persia, the people were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Another 60 years later, King Artaxerxes of Persia chose Ezra to lead more Jews back to Israel with funds and materials to beautify the Temple.



WRITTEN  
450 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED  
550–510 BC



AUTHOR  
Ezra the Scribe

1

STRUGGLE TO  
RESTORE THE TEMPLE

EZRA 1–6

King Cyrus of Persia aids in the return of the Jews to Jerusalem and instructs them to rebuild their Temple. The work begins, but after the altar is rebuilt and the foundation laid, construction is halted by the Samaritans who challenge the Jews. The Temple is finally completed when King Darius (of Daniel's lion's den) renews the decree of King Cyrus to build the Temple.

2

STRUGGLE WITH THE  
NEED FOR SPIRITUAL  
REFORM

EZRA 7–10

About 60 years later, King Artaxerxes offers support by sending Ezra back to Jerusalem with supplies to decorate the Temple. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Ezra learns that the Jew who had arrived earlier had intermarried with heathen nations, and he advises them to repent. The Jews repent and separate themselves from other nations.

# NEHEMIAH

ORDER IN OLD TESTAMENT

16

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

13

TYPE

HISTORY



## OVERVIEW

Nehemiah is living in exile as the cupbearer of Artaxerxes when he hears about the horrible condition of Jerusalem's walls. Inspired of the Spirit, he returns to oversee the renovation and help the people keep God's commandments. This is the only book in the Old Testament written in first person.



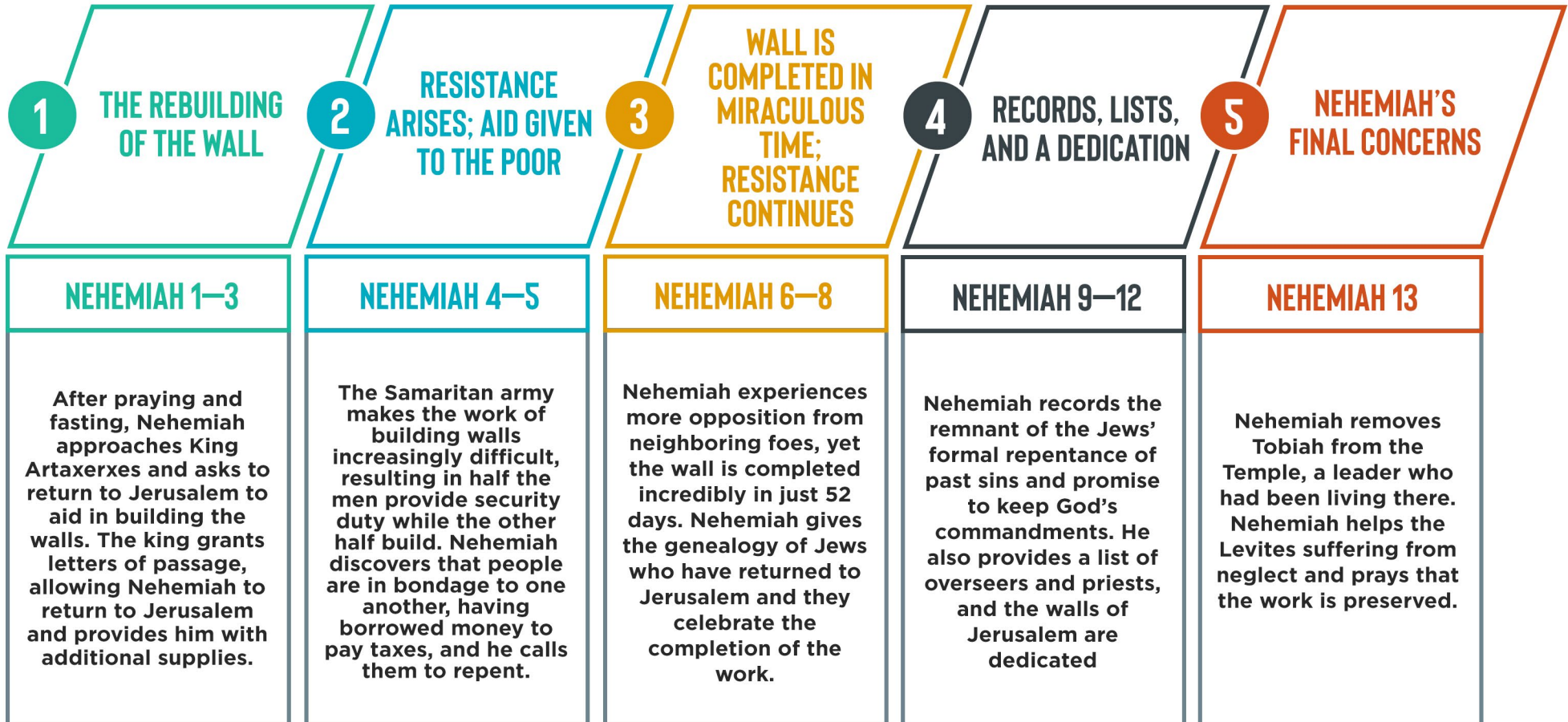
WRITTEN  
425-400 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED  
450-430 BC



AUTHOR  
Nehemiah



# EZRA

## AT-A-GLANCE

### BOOK(S) WRITTEN:

**Book of Ezra, 1 & 2 Chronicles**

### TYPE OF BOOK(S):

**Historical, the eighth, ninth, and tenth of 12 historical books**

### PROBABLE DATES OF WRITING:

**538-450 BC**



### AUTHOR BACKGROUND:

Ezra was living in exile in Babylon after the Babylonians invaded the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BC and destroyed the Jewish temple. As the 70-year exile ended, Ezra visited Jerusalem and reported on the condition of the city after returning to Babylon.

He reported that people were not following the Law, did not seem to remember or understand the Law, and were setting selfish priorities already. So Ezra went back to Jerusalem and started a religious reform focused on educating all the people about the Law of God.

Ezra 7:10 states that "Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel." He was extremely zealous about God's ways, which was a great asset in reforming the people.

Ezra was a direct descendant of Aaron the chief priest (Ezra 7:1-5), thus he himself was a priest. He is often known as Ezra the Priest or Ezra the Scribe. A scribe is someone who keeps important records.

The Chronicles were written initially as one book—a record of all leadership of the nation since Adam. The writing dates are earlier than the Book of Ezra. Both Chronicles were written during the Babylonian exile, likely between 538 and 533 BC. As the Jews were excellent scribes, Ezra probably used records that had been kept for centuries.



### UNUSUAL PLACES THIS AUTHOR WROTE:

Ezra wrote his Book of Ezra after returning to Jerusalem and seeing a place that was unrecognizable. The Temple was gone; the streets were in disarray. The signs of desertion were mixed with the rebuilding of the treasured city, giving the place a feeling of hope.



### UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS AUTHOR WROTE:

Ezra was probably under pressure for fear that existing records from Jerusalem could be lost or destroyed. The reason is that 200 years earlier, the Assyrians had invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and created an earlier exile of 10 tribes. The Assyrians had managed to have the majority of those Jews absorbed into the surrounding cultures, such that none of them remembered their ancestral history with zeal. Ezra would have been afraid of something like that happening to the remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and his eagerness to create new records and preserve the old may have been a driving force.



# NEHEMIAH

## AT-A-GLANCE

### BOOK(S) WRITTEN:

**Nehemiah**

### TYPE OF BOOK(S):

**Historical, the 11th of 12 Historical books**

### PROBABLE DATES OF WRITING:

**425-400 BC**



### AUTHOR BACKGROUND:

Not much is known about Nehemiah's youth, except that he was a Jew living during the Babylonian exile. In the book named after him, Nehemiah is an adult serving in the Persian royal court as the personal cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.

Though he remained in Persia after the exiles ended, he had been allowed to go home. He heard that the walls of Jerusalem were in desperate need of repair and followed his brother Hanani to that city to lead the rebuilding effort.

His writing in Nehemiah coincides with the goings-on in the Book of Ezra. Some people thought Nehemiah was a sequel of Ezra. The books go together well, covering the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Great Exile but with very different writing styles.



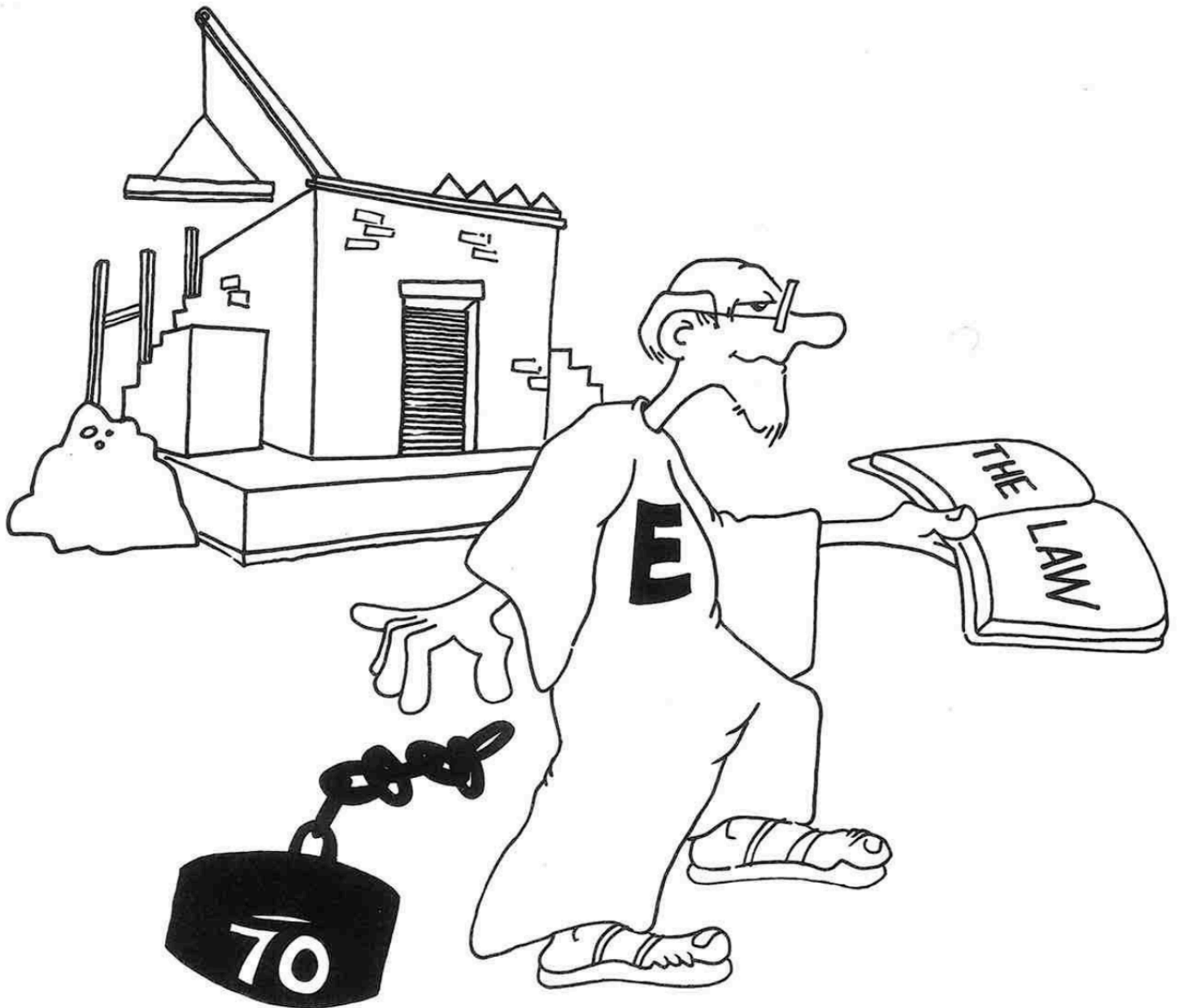
### UNUSUAL PLACES THIS AUTHOR WROTE:

Nehemiah and Ezra were the Biblical authors to write from Jerusalem after the exile ended.



### UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS AUTHOR WROTE:

Nehemiah wrote in first person. He is the only author in the Old Testament who was inspired to do that.

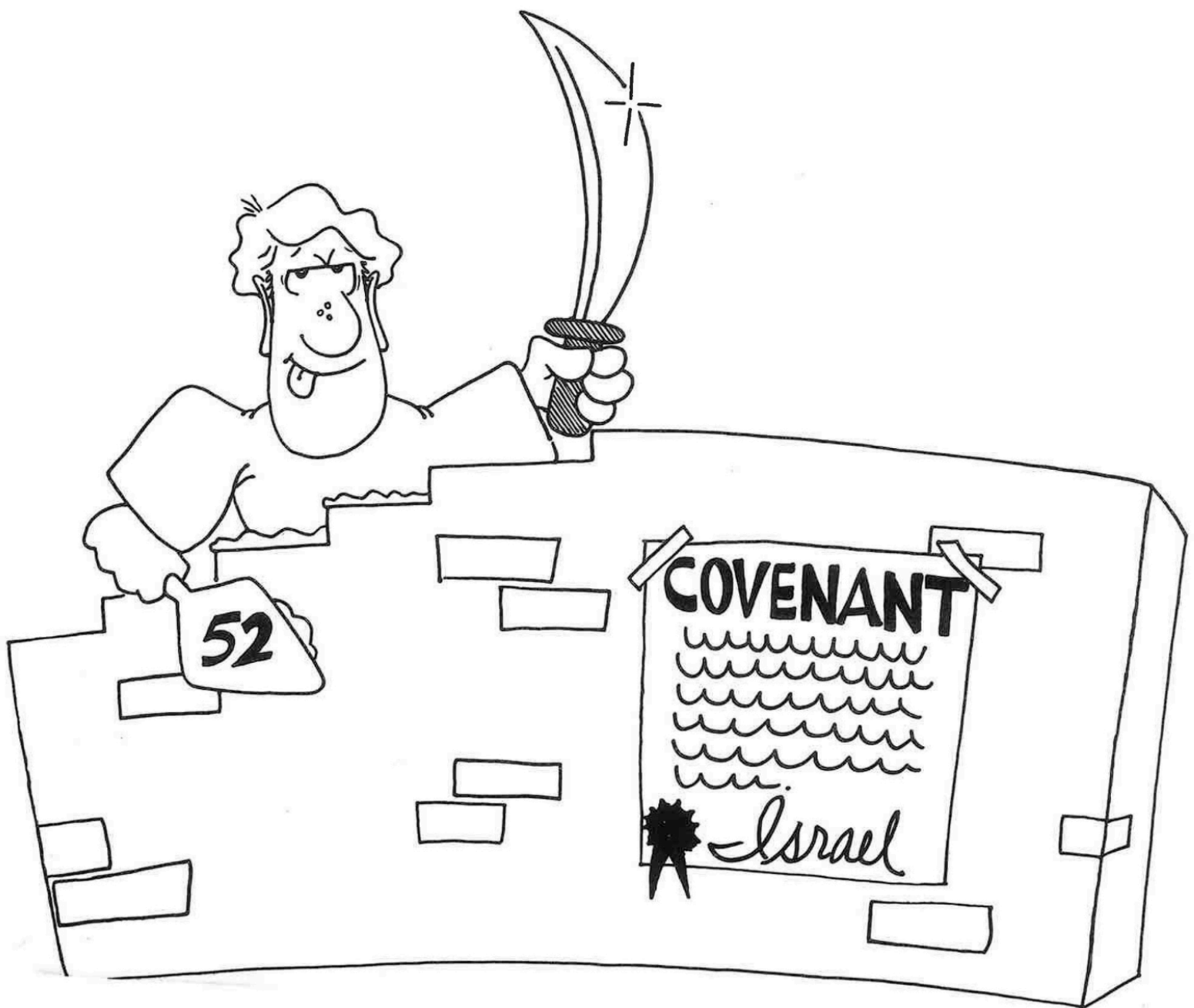


## Ezra

The Babylonian captivity of 70 years had ended (throwing away of neck iron).

The people are back in the land, rebuilding the Temple (in background).

Ezra leads the people in following God's Word (Book of the Law being read).



## Nehemiah

Nehemiah has come to Jerusalem to help motivate the people to rebuild the city walls (walls under construction). They suffered much persecution from neighboring countries (trowel in one hand and sword in the other), but with God's help they completed the wall in just 52 days. After this they restore their covenant with God (covenant on wall signed by Israel).

