

The Rediscovery of Divine Law

Neh. 7:73b - 8:18

Background of the Passage

1. Where does this episode fall in the book of Nehemiah (the literary setting)?

“The section known as the book of Nehemiah depicts the third stage of reconstruction under Nehemiah, focusing on building Jerusalem’s walls (1.1-7.5), followed by the repetition of the list of returnees (7.6-73) that frames the three stages, and concluding with the celebration of the achievements of the return and reconstruction by the rededicated Jewish community (chs 8-13).” (NOSB, HB: 688)

1.1-7.5 Third stage of reconstruction: rebuilding Jerusalem under Nehemiah’s leadership

1.1-2.10 The commission of Nehemiah

2.11-18 Nehemiah’s initial work in Jerusalem

2.19-20 Opposition

3.1-32 Building the walls despite opposition

4.1-6.14 Obstacles to reconstruction

7.1-5 Setting up guards

7.6-73 Frame: repeated list of returnees

8.1-13.31 Celebration of renewal and reconstruction

8.1-18 First step: reading and implementing the Torah

8.1-12 First reading of the book of Torah

8.13-18 Implementing Torah: the festival of booths

9.1-10.39 Second step: confession and commitment

11.1-12.26 Third Step: repopulation and review

12.27-13.3 Fourth step: a service of dedication - celebration, purification, procession, and separation

13.4-31 Coda

Questions for consideration:

1. Does the celebration come after the walls are rebuilt? Before the walls are rebuilt? Why is a connection between the celebration and the rebuilding of the walls important?
2. How long does this celebration last? Compare Neh. 8:1 with 9:1. Using the calendar below, identify how long this is on our calendar?

2. When did this episode happen (the historical setting)?

“Ezra-Nehemiah forms a single book in the Hebrew Bible, though its two parts are separated in Christian tradition. It begins where Chronicles ends (2 Chr 26.22-23 || Esra 1.1-3), with an account of the return from exile (538 BCE). The return, authorized by the edict of the Persian king Cyrus, marks the beginning of a lengthy process of rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem. During this period, under Persian control, Israel reconstitutes itself as the ‘people of the Book,’ with scripture, specifically the first five books of the Bible (the Torah, also known as the Law of Moses, or the Pentateuch), becoming authoritative for communal and personal life. These developments take place in the period of Ezra and

Nehemiah. While the Temple and its clergy gain unprecedented powers, so does the community itself, as new criteria for identity and membership develop.” (NOSB, HB: 671)

“It is difficult to reconstruct the actual history of this period. Most likely, the return and rebuilding took place in three or four stages. **First**, the initial returnees, led by Sheshbazzar in 538, began to rebuild the Temple but were forced to abandon the project. **Second**, a further group of exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, returned during the reign of the Persian king Darius I (522-486) and completed the Temple reconstruction in 515. **Third**, a group led by Ezra in 458 during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424) reestablished the Torah, i.e., Law of Moses, as the authority of Jews in Judah. **Finally**, a group led by Nehemiah beginning in 445, also during the time of Artaxerxes I, restored Jerusalem’s walls and repopulated Jerusalem. Some scholars have suggested that Ezra’s return took place after Nehemiah’s. The majority of scholars, however, favor the reconstruction noted above, which will be used in the annotations.” (NOSB: HB:671)

Questions for consideration:

1. Using the calendar below, identify the ‘first day of the seventh month’ in Neh 8:1 with our calendar.
2. During which one of the stages of reconstruction does Nehemiah 8 take place? What had taken place prior to this celebration in Nehemiah 8?
3. According to Neh. 6:15, the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth of the month of Elul after fifty-two days of work. Using the calendar below, determine the approximate amount of time before the celebration in Neh. 8 took place. (Remember, the lunar calendar being used had about 32 days per month.)

3. Where did this episode happen (the historical setting)?

Babylonian rulers:

- Cyrus the Great, 550-530 BCE
- Cambyses, 530-522
- Darius I, 522-486
- Xerxes (Ahaseurus), 486-465
- Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), 464-424
- Xerxes II, 423
- Darius II, 423-404
- Artaxerxes II (Mnemon), 404-358
- Artaxerxes II, 358-336
- Darius III, 336-331

Questions for consideration:

1. On the map of Jerusalem below locate the ‘Water Gate’ described in Neh. 8:1.
2. Using the map of the Babylonian Empire below, locate the route of the return of the captives to Jerusalem and estimate the distance.
3. According to Neh. 2:1, Nehemiah received permission to return to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes (the first). That would place his return to Jerusalem in what year on our calendar? Use the above listing of Babylonian kings to calculate the date.

- Nehemiah's governorship in Judea was divided into two terms. According to Neh. 2:1, the first term began after the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I reign. According to Neh. 13:6 (cf. 5:14), Nehemiah had returned to Babylon after 12 years and in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes he returned to Jerusalem. When was that? What did he find back in Jerusalem? Read 13:6-31.

4. How is this episode described (the literary genre)?

The passage, Neh. 8, falls into the category of episodic narrative. That is, the description depicts a particular event that took place in history. Such events can take place over long or short periods of time. The narration of episodes can be done either through the eyes of a character inside the story, or, as is more typical of ancient Hebrew narrative, the story teller is above the story giving us readers a 'bird's eye' view down onto the unfolding of events in the story. Both he and we as readers stand outside the story, rather than being a part of it. Episodes will have major and minor characters, plotting in order to 'make a point,' or teach a lesson, sequence of scenes that move the story forward, etc.

Questions for consideration:

- Identify the time span of Neh. 7:73b-8:12. Of Neh. 8:13-18.
- Identify the central character(s) in scene 1 in 7:73b-8:12. In scene 2 in 8:13-18.
- How is each story told? Through the eyes of a character inside the story? From narration outside the story?

The Study of the Scripture Passage

I. The Reading of the Torah, 7:73b - 8:12

Nehemiah BHS Hebrew Text	NRSV	KJV
7:72 אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הַרְחֹב וַיֵּאָסְפוּ מִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: לְעֹזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:1 וַיָּבִיֵא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:2 וְכָל־הָעָם נִשְׁמָעוּ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּבְיֹחַדוּ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּבְיֹחַדוּ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּבְיֹחַדוּ: 8:3 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:4 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:5 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:6 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:7 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:8 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:9 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:10 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:11 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8:12 וַיִּקְרָא עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:	7:73b When the seventh month came — the people of Israel being settled in their towns — 8:1 all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. 8:2 Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. 8:3 He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 8:4 The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made	7:73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities. 8:1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 8:3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and

וְעֵינֵיהֶם וְאֹרְיָהּ וְחִלְקִיָּהּ וּמַעֲשִׂיָּהּ
 וְשִׁמְעִי
 וְחִשְׁבִּיָּהּ וְזַכְרִיָּהּ מִשְׁלֵם: פ
 וּמַלְכִּיָּהּ
 4 כִּי־מַעַל כָּל־הָעָם הָיָה וּכְפָתְחוּ עִמּוֹ
 וַיִּפְתַּח עֲזָרָא הַסֵּפֶר לְעֵינֵי כָל־הָעָם
 כָּל־הָעָם:
 5 וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל־הָעָם אָמֵן אָמֵן בְּמַעַל
 עֲזָרָא אֶת־יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים הַגָּדוֹל
 וַיְבָרְךְ
 וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לַיהוָה אַפַּיִם אַרְצָה:
 יְדִיהֶם
 6 שִׁבְחֵי הוֹדִיָּהּ מַעֲשֵׂיָּהּ קְלִיטָא עֲזָרִיָּהּ
 וַיִּשׁוּעַ וּבְנֵי וְשִׁרְבִיָּהּ יָמִין עֲקוּב
 אֶת־הָעָם לְחֹרֶה וְהָעָם עַל־עַמּוּדָם:
 יוֹיָבֵד חֲנָן פְּלֵאִיָּהּ וְהַלְוִיִּם מְבִינִים
 7 וְשׁוֹם שִׁכְלָם וַיְבִינּוּ בְּמִקְרָא: ס
 וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּחֹרֶת הָאֱלֹהִים מִפְּרֹשׁ
 8 וְהַסֵּפֶר וְהַלְוִיִּם הַמְבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם
 נִחְמִיָּה הוּא הִתְרַשְׁטָא וְעֲזָרָא הִכָּה
 וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶל־הַחֲטָאֲבֹלוּ וְאֶל־תִּבְכּוּ כִּי
 לְכָל־הָעָם הַיּוֹם קֹדֶשׁ־הוּא לַיהוָה
 כָּל־הָעָם כְּשָׁמְעָם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַחֹרֶה:
 בּוֹכִים
 9 מִמַּחֲקִים וְשִׁלְחוּ מְנוּחַ לְאֵין נֹכַח
 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לְכוּ אֲכָלוּ מִשְׁמָנִים וּשְׁתּוּ
 חֲעֲצְבוּ כִּי־חֲדוּת יְהוָה הִיא מְעֻזְכֶם:
 לוֹ כִּי־קָדוֹשׁ הַיּוֹם לְאֹדְגִינּוּ וְאֶל
 10 הַסּוֹן כִּי הַיּוֹם קָדֹשׁ וְאֶל־חֲעֲצְבוּ:
 וְהַלְוִיִּם מְחַשִּׁים לְכָל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר
 11 מְנוּחַ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת שְׂמֵחָה גְדוּלָה כִּי
 וַיִּלְכוּ כָל־הָעָם לֵאכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׁלַח
 חֲבִינּוּ בְּדְבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹדִיעוּ לָהֶם: ס
 12 לְכָל־הָעָם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם אֶל־עֲזָרָא
 וּבְיוֹם הַשְּׁנִי נֶאֱסָפוּ רְאֵשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת
 הַסֵּפֶר וְלִהְשִׁכִּיל אֶל־דְּבָרֵי הַחֹרֶה:

for the purpose; and beside him stood
 Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiyah, Uriah,
 Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right
 hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael,
 Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah,
 Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left
 hand. 8:5 And Ezra opened the book
 in the sight of all the people, for he
 was standing above all the people; and
 when he opened it, all the people stood
 up. 8:6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord,
 the great God, and all the people
 answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up
 their hands. Then they bowed their
 heads and worshiped the Lord with
 their faces to the ground. 8:7 Also
 Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin,
 Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah,
 Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad,
 Hanan, Pedaiah, the Levites,^{F25} helped
 the people to understand the law, while
 the people remained in their places. 8:8
 So they read from the book, from the
 law of God, with interpretation. They
 gave the sense, so that the people under-
 stood the reading. 8:9 And
 Nehemiah, who was the governor, and
 Ezra the priest and scribe, and the
 Levites who taught the people said to
 all the people, "This day is holy to the
 Lord your God; do not mourn or
 weep." For all the people wept when
 they heard the words of the law. 8:10
 Then he said to them, "Go your way,
 eat the fat and drink sweet wine and
 send portions of them to those for
 whom nothing is prepared, for this day
 is holy to our Lord; and do not be
 grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your
 strength." 8:11 So the Levites stilled
 all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for
 this day is holy; do not be grieved." 8:12
 And all the people went their way to
 eat and drink and to send portions and
 to make great rejoicing, because they
 had understood the words that were de-
 clared to them.

the women, and those that could un-
 derstand; and the ears of all the people
 were attentive unto the book of the law.
 8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a
 pulpit^{F26} of wood, which they had made
 for the purpose; and beside him stood
 Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiyah,
 and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah,
 on his right hand; and on his left hand,
 Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah,
 and Hashum, and Hashbadana,
 Zechariah, and Meshullam. 8:5 And
 Ezra opened the book in the sight^{F27} of
 all the people; (for he was above all
 the people;) and when he opened it, all
 the people stood up: 8:6 And Ezra
 blessed the LORD, the great God. And
 all the people answered, Amen, Amen,
 with lifting up their hands: and they
 bowed their heads, and worshipped the
 LORD with their faces to the ground.
 8:7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and
 Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai,
 Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah,
 Jozabad, Hanan, Pedaiah, and the
 Levites, caused the people to under-
 stand the law: and the people stood in
 their place. 8:8 So they read in the
 book in the law of God distinctly, and
 gave the sense, and caused them to un-
 derstand the reading. 8:9 And
 Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha,^{F28}
 and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the
 Levites that taught the people, said unto
 all the people, This day is holy unto
 the LORD your God; mourn not, nor
 weep. For all the people wept, when
 they heard the words of the law. 8:10
 Then he said unto them, Go your way,
 eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and
 send portions unto them for whom
 nothing is prepared: for this day is holy
 unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for
 the joy of the LORD is your strength.
 8:11 So the Levites stilled all the peo-
 ple, saying, Hold your peace, for the
 day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 8:12
 And all the people went their way to
 eat, and to drink, and to send portions,
 and to make great mirth, because they
 had understood the words that were de-
 clared unto them.

Questions for consideration:

1. Who took the initiative in assembling together at the Water Gate? 7:53b-8:3
2. What was read to the people? How long did the reading last? 8:1-3
3. Describe the reading of the Torah in 8:3-8. Who read? Who assisted?
4. How did the people respond to the reading of the Torah? 8:5b-12

II. The Celebration of Booths, 8:13-18

13
 בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
 כְּתוּב בְּחֹרֵה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה
 וַיִּמְצְאוּ
 בַסֵּכוֹת בְּחָג בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי:
 14
 וּבִירוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר צְאוּ הָקֵר
 יִשְׁמִיעוּ וַיַּעֲבִירוּ קוֹל בְּכָל־עָרֵיהֶם
 וְאֲשֶׁר
 הָדָס וְעֵלֵי תְּמָרִים וְעֵלֵי עֵץ עֵבֶת
 עֵלֵי־זַיִת וְעֵלֵי־עֵץ שֶׁמֶן וְעֵלֵי
 וְהִבְיִאוּ
 לַעֲשֹׂת סִכַּת כְּכֹחוֹב: פ
 15
 עַל־גַּגּוֹ וּבְחֻצְרוֹתֵיהֶם וּבְחֻצְרוֹת
 וַיָּבִיאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם סִכּוֹת אִישׁ
 וַיִּצְאוּ הָעָם
 שָׁעַר הַמַּיִם וּבְרַחוֹב שְׁעַר אֲפַרְיִים:
 בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים וּבְרַחוֹב
 16
 וַיָּשְׁבוּ בַסֵּכוֹת כִּי לֹא־עָשׂוּ מִימֵי
 כָּל־הַקֵּהֶל הַשְּׁבִיִּים מִן־הַשְּׁבִי סִכּוֹת
 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
 הַהוּא וַתְּהִי שִׂמְחָה גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד:
 בֵּן־נִוֶן כֵּן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד הַיּוֹם
 יִשׁוּעַ
 17
 בְּיּוֹם מִן־הַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן עַד הַיּוֹם
 וַיִּקְרָא בַסֵּפֶר תּוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים יוֹם
 וּבְיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עֲצַרְתָּ כַּמִּשְׁפָּט: פ
 הָאֲחֵרוֹן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־חָג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
 18

NRSV

8:13 On the second day the heads of ancestral houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law. 8:14 And they found it written in the law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths^{F26} during the festival of the seventh month, 8:15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths,^{F27} as it is written." 8:16 So the people went out and brought them, and made booths^{F28} for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 8:17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths^{F29} and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. 8:18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the festival seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

KJV

8:13 And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand^{F29} the words of the law. 8:14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by^{F30} Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: 8:15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. 8:16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. 8:17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. 8:18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

FOOTNOTES:

- F25: 1 Esdras 9.48 Vg: Heb [and the Levites]
- F26: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]
- F27: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]
- F28: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]
- F29: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]

FOOTNOTES:

- F26: pulpit...: Heb. tower of wood
- F27: sight: Heb. eyes
- F28: the Tirshatha: or, the governor
- F29: to understand...: or, that they might instruct in the words of the law
- F30: by: Heb. by the hand of

Questions for consideration:

1. Using the Jewish calendar below, determine the time period for the celebration of the Festival of Booths? What is the time connection between this celebration and the reading of the Torah? See 8:13.
2. Was the same group of people present for the 'study of the words of the law' (8:13)?
3. What was the Festival of Booths about?
Compare Exodus 23:14-17 and Deut. 16:13-17 (=Festival of Ingathering) with Lev. 23:33-44 and Numbers 29:12-40.

Exod. 13:14-17, NRSV: 23:14 Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me. 23:15 You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. No one shall appear before me empty-handed. 23:16 You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. *You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.* 23:17 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

Deut. 16:13-17, NRSV: *16:13 You shall keep the festival of booths^{F44} for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press. 16:14 Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. 16:15 Seven days you shall keep the festival to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose; for the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate.*

16:16 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths.^{F45} They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed; 16:17 all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.

FOOTNOTES:

F44: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]

F45: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]

Lev. 23:33-44, NRSV: 23:33 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 23:34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths^{F78} to the Lord. 23:35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 23:36 Seven days you shall present the Lord's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the Lord's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. 23:37 These are the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord offerings by fire — burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day — 23:38 apart from the sabbaths of the Lord, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord. 23:39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the Lord, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 23:40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic^{F79} trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 23:41 You shall keep it as a festival to the Lord seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 23:42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 23:43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. 23:44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the Lord.

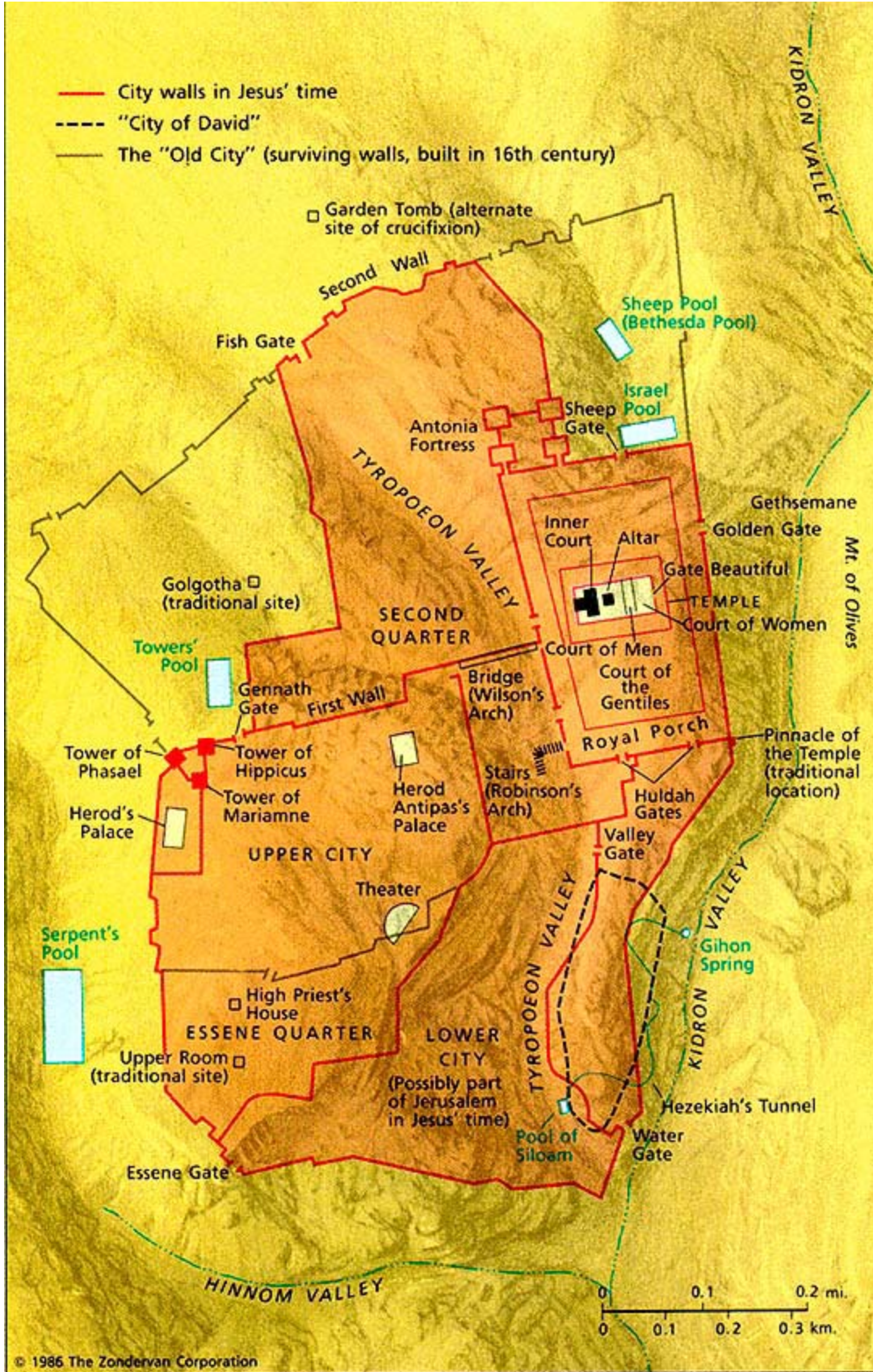
FOOTNOTES:

F78: Or [tabernacles]; Heb [succoth]

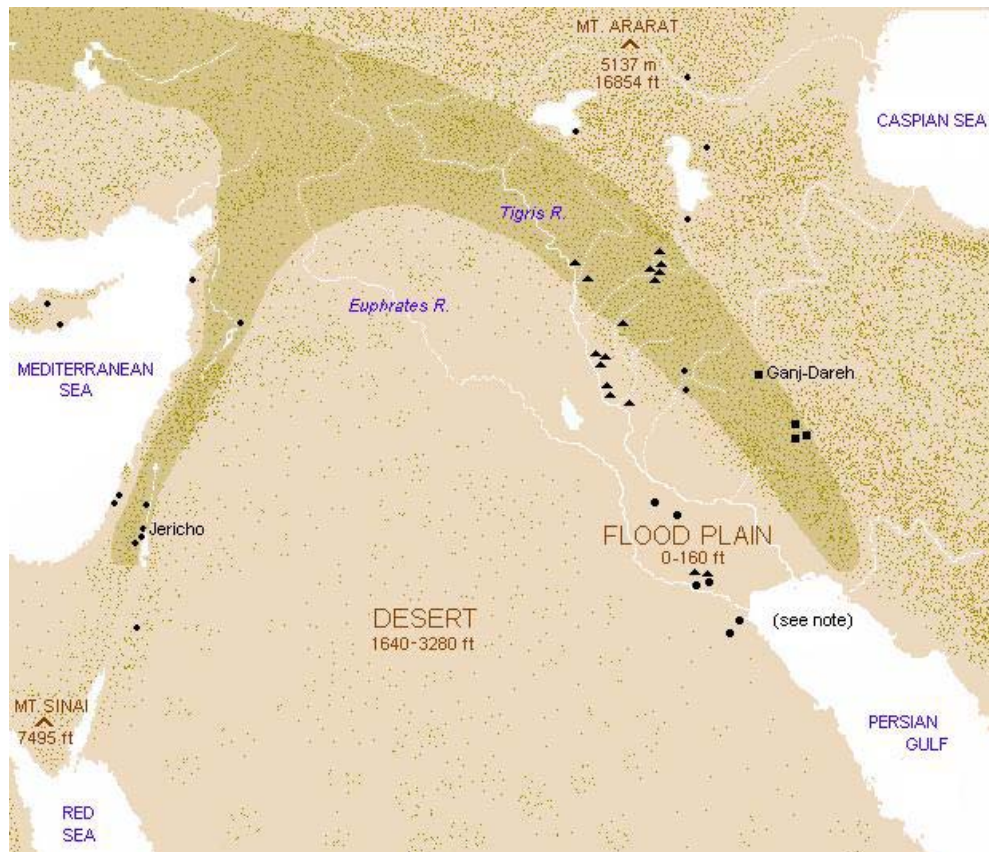
Numbers 29:12-40, NRSV: 29:12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. You shall celebrate a festival to the Lord seven days. 29:13 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old. They shall be without blemish. 29:14 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 29:15 and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; 29:16 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering. 29:17 On the second day: twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:18 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:19 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings. 29:20 On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:21 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:22 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 29:23 On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:24 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:25 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering. 29:26 On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:27 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:28 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 29:29 On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:30 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:31 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offerings. 29:32 On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:33 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:34 also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering. 29:35 On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. 29:36 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish, 29:37 and the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 29:38 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 29:39 These you shall offer to the Lord at your appointed festivals, in addition to your votive offerings and your freewill offerings, as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your drink offerings, and your offerings of well-being. 29:40 So Moses told the Israelites everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

4. How did the people respond to the instructions about the Feast of Booths discovered in the Torah?
8:16-18

Map of Jerusalem



Maps of the Ancient Near East



Ancient Jewish Lunar Calendar*

<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>(Festival)**</i>	<i>Babylonian</i>	<i>Equivalent</i>
1. Nisan (Abib)		Nisanu	Mar/Apr
14	Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread Festival of the Wave Offering		
2. Iyyar		Ayaru	Apr/May
3. Sivan		Siwanu/Simanu	May/June
	Festival of Weeks (Pentecost, 50 days after Passover)		
4. Tammuz		Du'uzu	June/July
5. Ab		Abu	July/Aug
6. Elul		Elulu/Ululu	Aug/Sept
7. Tishri		Tisritu	Sept/Oct
1	Sabbath rest (later celebrated as New Year, Rosh Hasshana)		
10	Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur,)		
15	Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (=Feast of Ingathering)		
8. (Mar)hesvan			(W)arah-sammu Oct/Nov
9. Kislev		Kisliwu/Kislimu	Nov/Dec
10. Tebet		Tebitu	Dec/Jan
11. Shêbat		Sabatu	Jan/Feb
12. Adar		Addaru	Feb/Mar

*Taken from David N. Freedman, ed., Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, s.v., 'Year.'

**Five 'festival calendars' are found in the Pentateuch: Exod. 23:14-17; 34:18-26; Lev. 23; Num. 28-29; Deut. 16:1-17 (also cf. Ezek. 45:18-25). These reflect different interpretations of the meaning of each festival that evolved over time, as well as specific details of how each festival was to be observed. The earliest calendar in Exodus ties each festival to an agricultural event. In the seventh century BCE the festivals, as first reflected in Deuteronomy, shifted to national celebrations requiring a pilgrimage to the central sanctuary. Leviticus and Numbers reflect a later, further move toward a theological interpretation linked to a sacred religious year. This occurred in the sixth century BCE, probably as an outgrowth of the Babylonian exile. (Frank H. Gorman, Jr., S.v., "Feasts, Festivals," Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, edited by David N. Freedman)