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THE BITTERSWEET STORY OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH



Behind every “**ism**” is a theory of what’s wrong with the world, a vision for the good life, and a plan for achieving it.



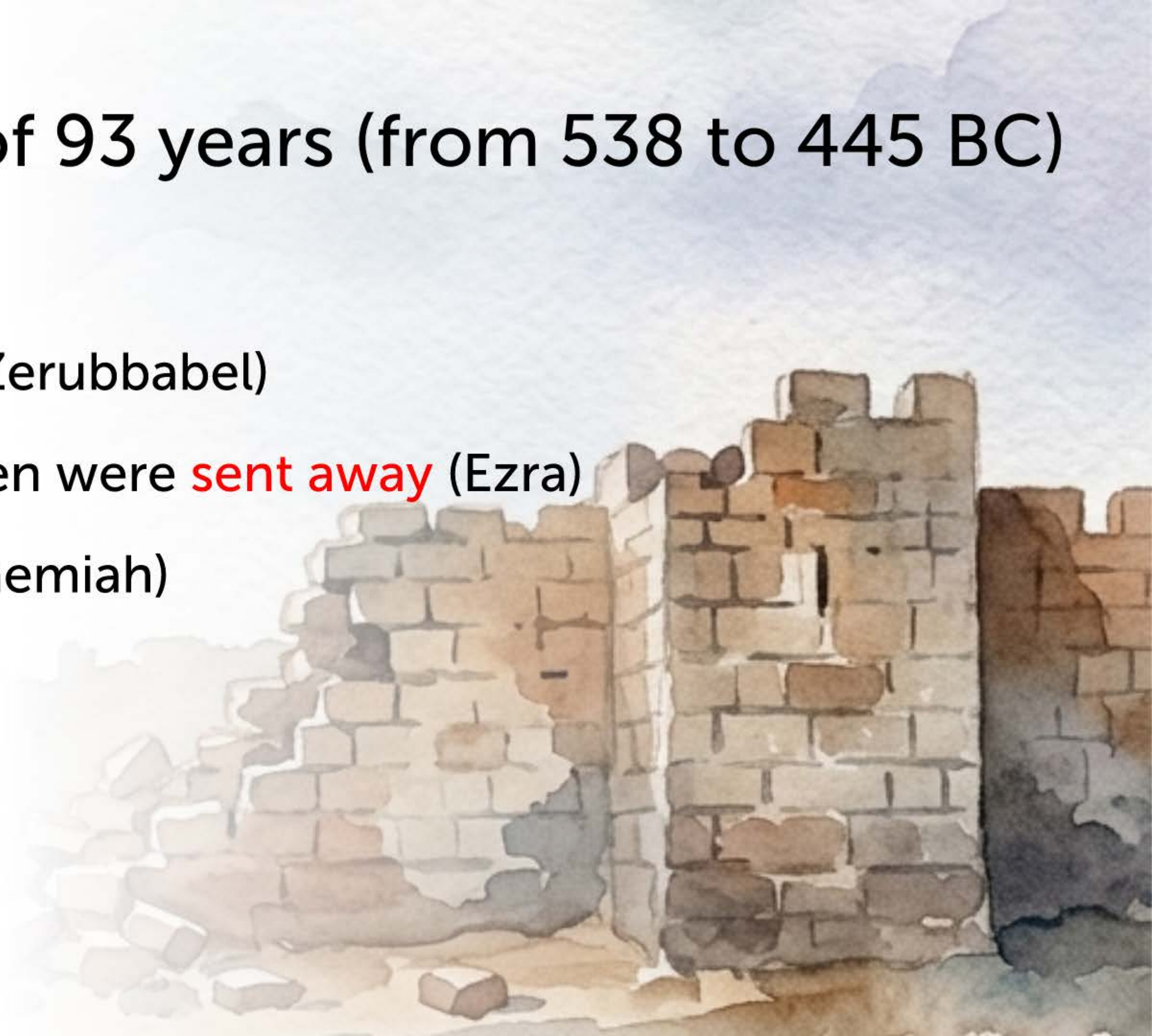
Over the Course of 93 years (from 538 to 445 BC)

Many Jews **returned**

The **temple** was rebuilt (Zerubbabel)

Foreign wives and children were **sent away** (Ezra)

The wall was **rebuilt** (Nehemiah)



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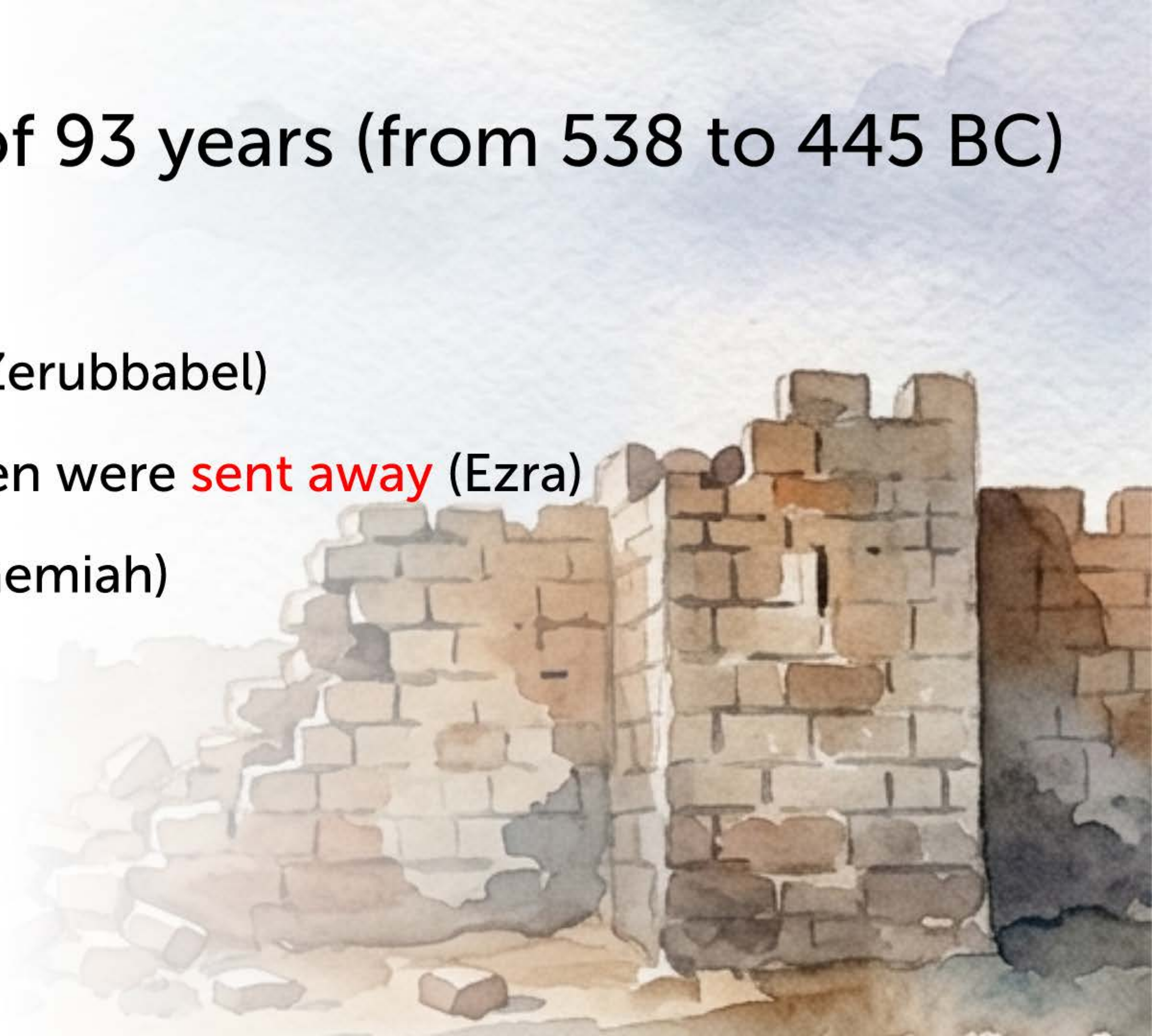
Many Jews **returned**

The **temple** was rebuilt (Zerubbabel)

Foreign wives and children were **sent away** (Ezra)

The wall was **rebuilt** (Nehemiah)

Still, **the curse** remained



Nehemiah 8:1–2

ESV

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring **the Book of the Law of Moses** that the Lord had commanded Israel. ² So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month.

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Nehemiah 8:3

ESV

³ And 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.

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Nehemiah 8:5–6

ESV

⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. ⁶ And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “**Amen, Amen,**” lifting up their hands. And they **bowed** their heads and **worshiped** the Lord with their **faces to the ground.**

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Nehemiah 8:17

ESV

¹⁷ And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for **from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun** to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.

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Nehemiah 8:18

ESV

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 feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

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Nehemiah 9:36–37

ESV

³⁶ Behold, **we are slaves** this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, **we are slaves.** ³⁷ And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

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Nehemiah 13:23–25

ESV

²³ In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.

²⁵ And I **confronted** them and **cursed** them and **beat** some of them and **pulled out their hair**. And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

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For the next 500 years, God's people tried in
vain to follow Ezra and Nehemiah's plan for
achieving the good life.



James 2:10

ESV

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but **fails in one point** has become guilty of all of it.

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Galatians 3:10

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¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are **under a curse**; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

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Romans 7:14–15

ESV

¹⁴ For we know that the law is **spiritual**, but I am of the **flesh**, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

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Romans 7:16–18

ESV

¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For **I have the desire** to do what is right, but **not the ability** to carry it out.

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Romans 7:19–21

ESV

¹⁹ For I **do not do the good I want**, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

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Romans 7:22–24

ESV

²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?

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Romans 7:25a

ESV

²⁵ Thanks be to God through **Jesus Christ our Lord!**

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The good life isn't **achieved**,
it's **received**.

