

# **Nehemiah – Leadership Principles**

## **Lesson 1 – Introduction**

### **Class Study**

Dr. John Maxwell makes this statement about leadership “Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.” (*Developing the Leader Within You*) Leadership is not confined to those who are at the head of some company or organization. Virtually everyone is in a leadership position at sometime in their life.

1. Name some leaders (including children) that are a part of your life.
2. What are ways they exhibit leadership traits?

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah together record how the Babylonian captivity, the tomb of Israel’s national identity, became the womb of its rebirth.

The Assyrians invaded Israel (Northern Kingdom) in 738 BC. The Assyrian Empire practiced cross-deportation (e.g., 2 Ki. 17:24). That meant that they took some Israelites to Assyria and replaced the Judeans with non-Israelites. Assyria’s goal was to establish economically productive provinces throughout the realm.

Babylon invaded Judah (Southern Kingdom) in 605. The Babylonians did not follow the Assyrian model. Their policy may be likened to slash and burn. The demographic movement was one way: the Judeans were expelled from their homeland and moved to the heartland of the empire. Babylonians did not invest time or effort in creating productive provinces. Rather, they engaged in military campaigns in those regions to secure tribute and support construction in their urban centers, period. Babylon removed only members of certain specialized or elite classes: for example, royalty, warriors, skilled workers, and scribes (see 2 Ki. 24:14, 16).

3. Why were both Israel and Judah led into captivity?
4. How would Babylon’s policy affect Judah?

The drama of Israel’s restoration opens 60 years before Ezra appears on the scene. In 538 BC, when Jerusalem had been in ruins for half a century, a large contingent of exiles returned to the homeland. Prominent figures in the early period included the two governors, Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, and the high priest Jeshua (Ezra 1:8; 2:2). In their second year the people were ready to begin rebuilding the temple (3:8) but it took over 20 difficult years before the returnees were able to complete it

5. Why was it necessary to have at least some Jews be present in Judah?

The next recorded events are Ezra's return to Jerusalem almost 60 years later and his vigorous campaign against mixed marriages, "for Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and teach His statutes and rules in Israel" (7:10).

After another interval of 12 years, Nehemiah received permission from the Persian king to investigate reports that the repatriated exiles were "in great trouble and shame" (Neh.1:3). On arrival in Jerusalem, he at once set to work to make the city safe against attacks from the outside.

Apparently recalled by the king, Nehemiah left Jerusalem. When later he returned, he found it necessary again to correct abuses that had crept in during his absence.

612 Babylonians and Medes conquer Assyria  
605 The Babylonians invade Judah & 1st wave of deportation to Babylon (Daniel)  
601 Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt, Jeremiah warns  
597 Babylonians capture Jerusalem & 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of deportation to Babylon (Ezekiel)  
593 Ezekiel begins to prophesy  
587 The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple  
586 Jerusalem's walls and gates are burned with fire & 3rd wave of Jews deported  
539 The Fall of Babylon and Beginning of the Persian Period to 332  
538 The Decree of Cyrus II allowing Jews to return  
516 The Jews rebuild their Temple (70 years)  
458 Ezra arrives in Jerusalem  
445 Nehemiah leads work on walls of Jerusalem  
432 Alexander defeats Persia  
17 Roman Empire begins

6. Look at the timeline above. What does that tell us about how God is in charge of world events?

7. How is that comforting for us in our society?

Read 1:1-4: In what setting does Nehemiah find himself.

Date –

Site –

Reporters –

Judah Situation –

Nehemiah's Reaction –