

## Handout Nehemiah Lesson 1

The events in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther took place during the rule of the Medo-Persian Empire located in northeast Mesopotamia which is present-day Iran. These Bible books return to the Biblical theme of the preservation of the faithful remnant of the covenant people of Israel who are the “holy seed” promised in Genesis 3:15 from which the Messiah was destined to come to redeem humanity.

### SUMMARY THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

BIBLICAL PERIOD	#9 THE REMNANT OF JUDAH RETURNS			
FOCUS	The Deeds of Nehemiah in the Restoration of Jerusalem		A Historical Review and the Restoration of the People Through Obedience to the Law	
COVENANT	The Sinai Covenant and Davidic Covenant			
SCRIPTURE	1:1-----3:1-----7:6-----11:1-----13:31			
DIVISION	Preparing to rebuild the wall	Restoration of the wall	Renewal of the Covenant	Obedience to the Covenant
TOPIC	Political renewal		Spiritual renewal	
	Construction		Instruction	
LOCATION	Susa and Jerusalem			
TIME	445-425 BC			

### TIMELINE BC

Judah = vassal state of Persian Empire-----Greek Empire--Hellenistic States

538	517/6	483-473	458	445	336	323	250	control Judah
1 <sup>st</sup> return of exiles to Judah	Temple in Jerusalem rebuilt	Esther Queen of Persia	2 <sup>nd</sup> return Ezra	3 <sup>rd</sup> return Nehemiah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem	Alexander the Great invades Persia	Alexander dies	Greek translation of O. T. = Septuagint	

Part One of the Book of Nehemiah divides into two main parts:

- I. Preparation to Reconstruct Jerusalem’s Wall (1:1-2:20)
  - A. Condition of the ruined walls (1:1-3)
  - B. Nehemiah’s prayer for God’s intercession (1:4-11)
  - C. King Artaxerxes gives his permission for Nehemiah’s mission (2:1-10)
  - D. Arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem and preparation to reconstruct the wall (2:11-20)
- II. Reconstruction of the Wall (3:1-7:5)

- A. Record of the builders (3:1-32)
- B. Opposition to the reconstruction (3:33-38/4:1-6:14)
- C. Completion of the reconstruction (6:15-19)
- D. Reorganization of Jerusalem (7:1-5)

Persian Kings of the Achaemenid Dynasty who ruled Judah:

1. Cyrus II the Great ruled from 559-530 BC and conquered Babylon in 539 BC
2. Cambyses II, son of Cyrus the Great, ruled from 530-522 BC
3. Bardiya, son of Cyrus the Great or imposter, ruled 522 BC but assassinated by Persian nobles
4. Darius I, son of Hystaspes (a kinsman of Cyrus), ruled 522-486 BC
5. Xerxes I, son of Darius I, ruled 486-465 BC (husband of Esther)
6. **Artaxerxes I, son of Darius I, ruled 465-424 BC\***
7. Xerxes II, son of Artaxerxes I, assassinated in 424 BC by Sogdianus
8. Sogdianus, son of Artaxerxes I, ruled 424-423 BC and assassinated by Darius II
9. Darius II, son of Artaxerxes I, ruled 423-404 BC
10. Artaxerxes II, son of Darius II, ruled 404-358 BC
11. Artaxerxes III, son of Artaxerxes II, ruled 358-338 BC
12. Artaxerxes IV, son of Artaxerxes III, ruled 338-336 BC
13. Darius III, descendant of Darius II?, ruled 336-330 BC, killed by Artaxerxes V
14. Artaxerxes V, probably a son of Artaxerxes II, ruled 330-329 BC and killed by Greek King Alexander the Great

\* the Persian king Nehemiah served

Nehemiah's prayer in 1:6b-11a includes three parts:

1. Acknowledgment of the collective past sins of the covenant people
2. Trust in God who listens to those who make appeals to Him
3. The conviction that God can change the course of human events

Nehemiah uses a formula of confession similar to the priest making expiation for himself, his family, and the whole community on the Feast of Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16:17 when he says, "*Confessing the sins that we Israelites have committed against You, sins that I and my father's house have committed*" (*Mishnah Yoma*, 6.2).

In verses 7-11, by recalling the history of Israel, Nehemiah reminds God of the promises He made to the covenant people and of His compassion in the times when the Israelites failed to keep to the path of obedience. Much of his prayer in these verses paraphrase Moses' last homilies to the new generation of Israel on the east side of the Jordan River in the Book of Deuteronomy concerning the blessings for covenant obedience, judgment for disobedience, and restoration for those who repented and returned to a covenant relationship with Yahweh (cf., Dt 5:31; 7:8, 9, 21; 9:29; 12:11; 30:1-5).