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*The 1984
Winifred E. Weter
Faculty Award Lecture*

NEHEMIAH: AGENT OF CHANGE

*Kenneth D. Tollefson
Professor of Anthropology*



Seattle Pacific University

The 1984

Winifred E. Weter

FACULTY AWARD LECTURE

Seattle Pacific University

N E H E M I A H : A G E N T O F C H A N G E

Kenneth D. Tollefson

Professor of Anthropology

Seattle, Washington

April 26, 1984

In tribute to the faith of our fathers,
Ken and Ruth Tollefson dedicate this lecture.

Willard D. Tollefson, 1901-1949

Laurence T. Martin, 1905-1984

Nehemiah: Agent of Change

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Summary

Nehemiah: Agent of Change

Introduction

The Book of Nehemiah contains a fascinating saga about a disheartened community that decided to confront their desperate situation and fight for a respectable future. The community concluded that if there were to be any significant improvement in their deteriorating community environment, any measurable change in their deplorable economic plight, or any noticeable increase in their level of community security, they would have to do it themselves. They turned to their rich historical legacy of cultural and moral resources and discovered a new meaning and motivation to enable them to undertake a bootstrap self-help community development program. The results exceeded their fondest imagination and confounded their persistent and stubborn opposition.

The Book of Nehemiah is inadequately understood by biblical scholars. While many biblical scholars acknowledge its historicity, many view its content as being a somewhat disorganized, disarranged, and disrupted narrative. Therefore, biblical scholars have sought to rearrange the sequence of events in the book to fit their own perceptions of the sequence of events, much like a modern Monday morning football fan who second guesses the Sunday quarterback.[1] Others have sought to explain away certain sections in the book which they find difficult to fit into their understanding of the order of events, as "interpolations" which belong to other periods of history,[2] while still others

attempt to fashion hypothetical reconstructions of the events which ultimately produce little more than additional questions and general disagreements.[3]

The results have frequently led to inadequate explanations of the Book of Nehemiah and warped portrayals of the person of Nehemiah. West, for example, virtually ignores a wealth of data regarding Nehemiah's leadership skills and personal resources in guiding the Jerusalem community through a whole series of volatile social problems and seemingly insurmountable opposition in the completion of a monumental task. West flippantly classified Nehemiah as a "blunt and tactless man." [4] For the most part, biblical scholars analyze the Book of Nehemiah in terms of the historical-literary approach. As a result, their interpretations tend to be static and limited. Indeed, the historical-literary approach will in and of itself never produce a precise and unified explanation of the book. Why? Because there are simply too many missing historical bits of data and the historical model is incapable with interpreting the social processes with the book.

Childs notes that the shaping process for the canonical account of Ezra and Nehemiah was not for the purpose of giving a detailed historical account of Persian history, but rather for the purpose of explaining "the religious reordering of the community of faith." [5] This religious reordering of the community includes an extensive community construction project and the cultural revitalization of the people. Any attempt to unravel the events in this book will need to include a comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of programs of planned change, along

with a general understanding of the dynamics of revitalization movements. It is impossible to explain the sequence of events in Nehemiah apart from the community development process and the cultural revitalization process.

This study combines anthropological insights regarding community development and cultural revitalization with those of historical biblical scholarship in an effort to produce a more comprehensive explanation of the events in the book. This joining of traditional biblical and anthropological perspectives permits a more extensive examination of the material. That is, these models provide a mechanism for organizing and analyzing the data. The inclusion of social models in the field of biblical studies is a pristine but promising field of endeavor.[6] I assume that the compilation of the Nehemiah material was done in an organized and orderly manner. There, my approach will be to search for a logical ordering of events. In doing this I will rely on historical, theoretical, and experimental models.

The focus of study will be upon Nehemiah as an agent of change. Nehemiah chose to become involved with a struggling community, he provided critical leadership during an extensive community renewal project, and he served as the catalyst for the cultural reordering of community priorities. Trained in one of the most politically proficient administrations in the ancient world, Nehemiah demonstrated unusual skill and personal perseverance in leading his people through a formidable military alliance, a disruptive social class conflict, a personal smear campaign, and an internal subversive effort. Our intention is to study his methods and techniques which proved to be so effective in confronting a plethora of problems from the inception of the

project to its final completion. Our method will be to analyze the succinct descriptions included in Nehemiah's report and then to expand upon their significance by drawing upon data from numerous contemporary field studies to illustrate the significance and flow of events in the book. The processes of community development and revitalization are well-documented in the literature and are applicable to the Nehemiah data.

It is readily acknowledged that the Book of Nehemiah is a theological treatise about the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem and the restoration of the law to a place of prominence in the community. This is by no means an attempt to make the book into merely an historical case study. By the same token the data in this book contains vivid descriptions of social events and cultural processes that are amenable to anthropological inquiry. Therefore, our goal will be to integrate the biblical interpretations and the anthropological interpretations into one coherent study of how one man, inspired and empowered by his God, set in motion an historical process that continued in some form for over 400 years.

I. THE INNOVATION PROCESS

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the Book of Nehemiah by combining biblical and social models. Drawing upon a wealth of experience and insights of field workers, it is possible to discern the direction of the flow of events, the reasons for specific actions, and the connection between sequences of events within this book.

From my perspective, the Nehemiah narrative is a well-integrated, sequential and orderly presentation of an ethnic community struggling to create a new sense of identity and political autonomy. Other works of Nehemiah have not included this type of material and so there is a need for an integrated analysis and interpretation of the Nehemiah material.

The Book of Nehemiah is a theological story about a man and a community which interact in a sequence of events much like the melody and counter-melody in a musical masterpiece. Neither existence makes much sense apart from the other. The story begins with a community in search of a leader: the prospective leader in turn develops a creative blueprint for a restored community and then becomes their advocate. Eventually, the leader and the community confront and conquer numerous obstacles as they struggle toward a grand climax of celebration and accomplishment. Indeed, the general gist of this story is neither new nor unique; it has been repeated thousands of times around the world.[7] Only the names, places, and interpretations differ.

The Revitalization Process. Wallace refers to this process of cultural renewal as cultural "revitalization." He defines revitalization as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by the members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." [8] This concept implies that at some previous period of time, people found their culture to be meaningful, believable, and satiable. Over a period of time things changed, the culture stagnated, and the growing gap between the old perceptions and the new reality produced increasing stress. The inability to resolve the growing stress between old social expectations and new social behavior, between old communal values and new commercial practices, and between old local leadership and new foreign domination resulted in cultural distortion of their cultural values and their contemporary behavior. Unresolved, this type of confusion and cultural distortion contributes to apathy, disillusionment, and death--if permitted to continue unchecked. [9]

Wallace suggests a four-phase sequence to revitalization movements: (1) a relatively steady state phase, (2), a mounting individual stress phase, (3) an increasing cultural distortion phase, and (4) a cultural revitalization phase. The last phase evolves into a steady state phase and renews the cycle.

Given the limited sources of information concerning the early postexilic period, it is impossible to reconstruct precisely the social and cultural conditions leading up to the time of Nehemiah. One can only apply the Wallace model of revitalization to the data in a very general way using inferences from archaeology and the prophets. The point is that the conditions leading up to the Persian delegation to recruit Nehemiah is at

best obscure. The Book of Nehemiah abruptly begins with a people floundering in a period of extensive "cultural distortion." The people were discontent with their present situation and so sought to initiate their own program of greater self-determination and ultimately a new direction and a new identity.

The people of Judah were at a critical juncture in their history. They could persist in their present way, become assimilated as the Samaritans had done and perhaps be obliterated as a distinct ethnic group. Royce suggests that the basis of ethnic identity is a "us" and "them" contrast. This contrast is maintained through boundary-maintaining behavior along with a tradition--a believable or persistent identity system.[10] They could also actively seek to revitalize a portion of their old culture and salvage it in a more meaningful form. They chose the latter and sent a delegation from Jerusalem to seek a person to provide leadership for a creative option--cultural and religious renewal.

To the vast majority of the local peasants and the Jewish immigrants from Persia, their contemporary Jewish culture was like a lopsided kaleidoscope. It did not seem to matter how one viewed it--the system was distorted. The old covenant beliefs and values which had been applicable to the old egalitarian structured, kinship oriented, religiously dominated, and politically autonomous tribal societies of the past was gone forever. The old values were largely ignored and forgotten in their present socially insensitive, elite dominated, and impersonalized economic system, a religiously corrupted priesthood, and a foreign-dominated government.

Their old beliefs about God protecting them from the surrounding pagan states had been shattered with the approach of the indomitable armies from Babylon. Their beliefs about a Covenant community based upon brotherhood, about a communal social welfare system in which the more fortunate families assisted the less fortunate families with opportunities and offerings had notoriously disintegrated into the institution of slavery. Their beliefs about righteous priests, just princes, and honest prophets had been corrupted by a covetous society. Thus, their social checks and balances, built into the system to promote a just and equitable society, had become perverted through greed, graft, and aggression. The point is that the old traditions did not seem to address their present conditions.

Early in Hebrew history, the culture had made sense because it was reflected in their customs and influential in their social behavior. De Vaux notes that these early communities were small and their houses were "all of the same size and arrangement"[11] suggesting a general equality in their standard of living. Over the years, the population grew, the level of technology increased, the economy became more diversified, and their social institutions became more complex. Within a period of approximately two centuries, the communities had changed significantly. Their communities were much larger but divided into a wealthy sector, with enlarged and well constructed homes, and a poor sector, with smaller and closely compacted houses.

De Vaux attributes this rapid social stratification of the Hebrew people to the development of the monarchy, the rise of an official elite, state privileges, and high interest rates. The rise of the monarchy was followed by a time of increasing

social and moral decadence in which the wealthy increased their property at the expense of the poor. It was a period of increased individual and social stress. A few prophets appeared from time to time and to condemn the extravagance, the exploitation, and the immorality of the wealthy--pronouncing doom and destruction on those who persisted in their evil ways. The wealthy were accused of trampling on the poor and depriving them of justice in the courts (Amos 5:11-12). However, for the most part, the prophets, priests, and princes avidly participated in the profitable business of exploiting the poor, and along with the people turned a deaf ear to the call of the prophets. The result was defeat, drudgery, and death.

The increasing disparity between their cultural beliefs and social practices, the growing individual restlessness, and the cultural disorganization produced by invading armies contributed to a period of cultural distortion. It produced major disruptions in the social norms and undermined their cultural institutions. The old traditions failed to explain the people's problems or address their "felt needs." Many people lost faith in their culture and sold out to their pagan enemies. The glaring gap between the old beliefs and present practices was a source of amusement to the cynical and concern to the conscientious. Some people pragmatically gave up on the system and sold out to the opposition. Others, like those who returned recently from Persia with idealistic hopes for economic security and ambitious dreams of creating a new social order under the guidance of God, clung tenaciously to the past.

The good life did not automatically materialize, and soon many immigrants were caught up in the old system of exploitation,

appropriation, and taxation. Many residents drifted into disillusionment; others became consumed with apathy. A small hard core group of dedicated diehards sought to perpetuate their flickering flame of eternal hope for a restored community founded upon the laws of Moses. This group agreed that their last hope for dynamic influential leadership in turning their community around and moving toward a new level of cultural certitude seemed to be Nehemiah, the young talented sensitive Persian administrator of Hebrew descent. But would Nehemiah be willing to leave a plush Persian palace for a peasant paradox in Palestine? They could only hope, pray, and wait for his response.

The Revitalization Problem (Neh. 1:1-3). When the delegation arrived in Shushan, the Persian capital, they managed to arrange a short visit with Nehemiah, a close relative of one of the visiting Jews. They left Nehemiah with a cryptic description of their present predicament--a broken wall and burned gates (Neh. 1:3). Nehemiah had long carried nagging questions that were too complicated and painful to ponder, and so he had perpetually pushed them to the borders of his consciousness. However, the weight of that pathetic picture of a broken wall and burned gates burst the flood gates of his repressed feelings concerning his ethnic identity, religious heritage, cultural ideals, and personal motivation to flood his brain with haunting questions. And there they lodged and reverberated through the corridors of his mind. The affect was psychologically devastating.

The solemn news forced Nehemiah to rethink his whole heritage which seemed to rest on a precarious foundation of a broken wall and burned gates. Tormented by the threatening loss of his cultural moorings, Nehemiah set out to resolve the paradox

of his culture and piece together a new maze way for himself and a blueprint for his people. He had to do it to save his own psychic sanity. These types of activities are common to people in Diaspora who frequently become intensely concerned with their symbols of identity. His search for answers led him to the Covenant and to his God. According to Gottwald, the term "covenant" refers to "the compacting ties between deity and people." [12] He suggests that the covenant theme is present "whenever Israel agrees to acknowledge the right and power of Yahwah to be its sovereign and thus to accept what he commands as constitutive of its life." Gottwald notes that covenant "sets the primary modes for interaction within the resulting social system." The Covenant of Israel was an evolving political-religious heritage that covered a host of topics concerning relationships: with God through sacrificial offerings and moral living; with other people by means of equity and sharing; and with the productive animals and fertile fields through proper care and conservation. It was also a discourse on moral law--a sort of practical code of ethics for conducting oneself as a member of the community of faith.

The Covenant was an agreement initiated by God to govern the life of his ancestors. The Covenant included a pledge of integrity which promised blessings for observing it or curses for breaking it. (Deut. 28:1-68). The problem of the broken wall was not only political; it was moral (Deut. 28:52). Gripped with a sense of God's righteousness, holiness, and power, Nehemiah made his humble confession to God for his sin and the sin of his people. He arose with a new relationship to a personally

restored Covenant. In that experience Nehemiah also found the promise for a restored community (Deut. 30: 1-5). Nehemiah had journeyed back to the holy mountain of Covenant renewal and had caught a vision of a Divine plan for Judah living as the people of God in peace and prosperity. God had a man; the man had God's plan. God would use that man with his plan to restore His people.

The story depicts Nehemiah's mental and spiritual anguish plainly and poignantly: he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed (Neh. 1:4). This expression of human emotion reveals an emerging realization that the core of meaning in his life had changed. His anguish was indicative of the immensity and totality of that change which rocked him to the very center of his being—where meaning and motivation surge like the waves of the sea. The data seems to indicate that Nehemiah experienced a dramatic and emotional confrontation with God and the Covenant of God. In the process, Nehemiah changed his perspective of the Covenant and his direction in life.

His anguish was symptomatic of an intensely creative and internal revolution occurring in his perception of reality. It drove him out of his shell of complacency and self-righteousness and opened up his life to a new interpretation of being, of society, and his role in shaping it. His vision simultaneously undermined his old perspective (mazeway) and exposed him to a new level of existence. Lewin suggests that all "successful change includes . . . three aspects: unfreezing . . . the present level, moving to a new level, and freezing group life on the new level." [13] In the ensuing weeks Nehemiah began the arduous task

of translating that mental model into a physical reality and a new level of intellectual integrity and cultural integration.

The Revitalization Plan. Nehemiah pondered over government reports concerning the extent of destruction of the wall, quizzed recent travelers from Jerusalem, and consulted with local construction engineers regarding designs and procedures. He calculated the extent of damage, devised a preliminary budget, and proposed a general plan for its restoration. At an appropriate occasion, he presented the renovation project to King Artaxerxes I of Persia for his support and approval (Neh. 2:1-6).

Meanwhile, Nehemiah found himself caught in a personal struggle. To what extent should he become personally involved? Should he stay in the Persian capital and serve as a Jewish liaison with the government? Should he lead a retinue of assistants and serve in an official capacity in Jerusalem? Would the king permit it? Would the people accept him? What about the matter of leaving his security and affluence in the palace for the strenuous task of restructuring and orienting a defeated, defenseless and demolished community? The project was extensive. It meant literally rebuilding the city and culture from the ground up. It represented a long-term commitment. Was he willing to assume that level of involvement? Was it going to be the royal court or rock construction? Meticulously and conscientiously Nehemiah weighed the pros and cons of a host of pressing questions. Gradually, the will of God began to emerge. The plan of God had gripped the man. He would see it through to fruition.

History records a gradual weakening of Persian control in the western portion of the empire. First a major revolt by Egypt was ruthlessly crushed by Persia, then the king's army squelched

a similar revolt in Syria, which was followed by growing unrest among the Arab countries, and finally a humiliating, no-win peace settlement with the Greeks.[14] It was obvious that King Artaxerxes I needed increased military fortifications and closer political ties with the western satellite states. Myers suggests that "the Persians could have no more zealous supporters than the Jews." [15] Situated on a high and barren rocky plateau, the city of Jerusalem overlooked the productive Jordan River valley and vital trade route to Egypt. The city's strategic location and military reputation as "one of the strongest fortresses in Western Asia was also appealing." [16]

During the four months, between the visit of the Jerusalem delegation and the initial presentation of the plan to the king, Nehemiah gathered his data and prayed that the king would reverse his previous decision to prevent the rebuilding of the wall.[17] Meanwhile, the king grew increasingly concerned about the military situation on the restless western front.

It appears from the story that Nehemiah picked the time and the occasion to make his request.[18] He prayed, "Give success to thy servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (Neh. 1:11b). It was an awesome task. Such audacity might result in loss of position or life, but it had to be done. Nehemiah was concerned with the seriousness of his decision and the magnitude of his requests. The destiny of his people depended upon his success. Perhaps great emotion and tension were etched in every line on his face, his eyes glassy, his lips dry, and he swallowed frequently. Even before Nehemiah could summon his courage or pick the appropriate moment, the king studied the

appearance of Nehemiah and concluded that the man was deeply troubled.

"And the king said to me, Why is your face sad, seeing that you are not sick? This is nothing else but sadness of heart" (Neh. 2:2). Persian palace procedures prohibited any appearance of sadness or gloom in the presence of the king. It was considered a sign of discontent, ill will, or a bad omen.[19] The die was cast. There was no turning back now. Very delicately Nehemiah introduced his concern with a carefully worded non-threatening question.

"Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire" (Neh. 2:3). Barber suggests that the use of questions can be a useful device for disarming potential conflicts, to clarify the situation, to dispel suspicion, and to avoid becoming defensive.[20] Rather than attempt to justify himself, Nehemiah may well have used questions in an attempt to appeal to the local reverence for ancestors in his reference to the desecrated graves of his forefathers. Also an implicit association is made to the king's subjects living in a dilapidated and defenseless city. Perhaps Nehemiah avoided any direct reference to Jerusalem lest it arouse resentment or stir up images of a rebellious city. Very candidly Nehemiah brought up the subject of the broken wall and burned gates as symbolic of his sorrow.

Artaxerxes I responded with a show of genuine concern, inquiring as to what should be done. Some fifteen years before the king had commanded the people to stop rebuilding the wall.

Nehemiah now prayed that God would change the king's heart (Neh. 1:10). God had prepared the king's heart; Nehemiah had prepared his agenda. But before Nehemiah replied to the king, he breathed a quick prayer to God (Neh. 2:4). As Turnbull observes, "This is the practical aspect of the spiritual life. The vertical and the horizontal are together. God and man are joined in his experience. Ask man for help but pray to God first." [21] This seems to be a pattern of strength and inspiration for Nehemiah (Neh. 4:4, 5:19, 6:14, 13:31).

Nehemiah's response is a model of tact and diplomacy. In his remarks, Nehemiah affirmed his inferior status, acknowledged the goodness of the king, and asserted his loyalty. The statement "if it please the king" invited the king to take the initiative and make the final decision. It demonstrated Nehemiah's confidence in the king and his willingness to abide by the king's decision. By offering himself to be in charge of the renovation project (send me), Nehemiah was reassuring the king that it would also advance the Persian cause, rather than weaken it in the West. The project could be beneficial to both the king and the children of Israel. The king would exchange a loyal palace official for a trusted governor. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Interdependence in the Jersalem Project

Persia's Needs	Judah's Needs	Nehemiah's Needs
1. Increased military presence	Strengthened Persian alliance	Royal Leave
2. Increased fortifications	Permit to fortify	Royal decree
3. Loyal satellite state	Executive powers	Royal passport
4. Trusted governor	Local governor	Royal guard
5. Local labor	Grant for materials	Royal requisition

Arrangements were also discussed as to the time of Nehemiah's departure, length of stay, and approximate date for return. Those months of prayer and preparation had equipped Nehemiah with the information he needed to obtain official authorization of his project (Neh. 1:1, 2:1, 2:8). Appropriate letters were issued to insure proper passage across national boundaries and place the mission legitimately under the aegis of the king. In addition, a requisition was issued by the king for a sufficient quantity of timber from the Persian National Forest to rebuild the wall, gates, fortress, and a house for Nehemiah. Nehemiah's plans were materializing, the king would strengthen his military position, and the people could begin the arduous task of rebuilding the wall. It seemed that God had not forgotten His people even as He had promised. God would also provide for Nehemiah's needs. And He did. The king commissioned a royal guard to accompany Nehemiah on his journey to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem with a comprehensive plan, a building permit, and a royal requisition for construction materials. But he did not immediately share his good news with the local community. First, he began the process of building bridges of understanding with the local people. A noted anthropologist observes that "if you wish to help a community improve . . . you must first learn to think like the people of that community." [22] To do this, Nehemiah would need to observe their culture and participate in their society. He spent his first few days in Jerusalem mingling with the people, listening to their concerns, discussing local issues, and observing local customs. He was aware that "some degree of acceptance and

confidence" must exist on the part of both the agent of change and the local people to facilitate positive changes.[23]

Nehemiah knew that before they would be willing to listen to his development plans and to follow his leadership, the people would need time to get to know and trust him as a person.

Second, Nehemiah needed time to make an on-site inspection of the damaged wall to update his research data. When the local people had become familiar with Nehemiah's presence in the community and he had met many of their leaders, he felt freer to move within the area. To avoid unnecessary suspicion, Nehemiah selected a handful of trusted assistants to help him with the survey of the ruins in the privacy of darkness. He measured the broken sections of the wall, inspected the foundation, and calculated the extent of the damage. Some sections were virtually untouched, other sections were partially destroyed, while still other sections were so torn down that a "donkey could not pass through the rubble."

Third, Nehemiah needed time to analyze the feelings, aspirations, and concerns of the local people. Before he could present his plans to them he needed to ascertain their readiness and willingness to become involved in an extensive and difficult project. Nehemiah needed to know whether the forces favoring the project were significant enough to warrant his involvement. Perhaps he desired to avoid the mistake of a Moses who had attempted to force himself on the people many centuries earlier in Egypt and miserably failed. Nehemiah may have wanted time to survey the attitude of the people and to conduct what we would call a force field analysis in order to determine which social and cultural forces favored the project and which forces opposed it.

Roberts suggests three determinates to be considered in such analysis: forces in the situation, forces in the group, and forces in the leader.[24] If Nehemiah had used a similar model his analysis might have resembled Figure 2. The value of such analysis is that it isolates problem areas, pinpoints the opposition, and delineates areas where force might be modified.

Fourth, Nehemiah wanted to wait for an opportune time to disclose his mission. He did not wish to tip his hand prematurely and alert his opposition concerning his intentions. He also had to wait until his data was complete and he had sufficient time to be accepted by the local community.

Nehemiah opened his public address with a realistic assessment of the tragic destruction of their city and ruins still in existence. He pointed out that the rubble and ashes had remained far too long after the disaster had occurred. He awakened the people to the dangers of their present plight and challenged them to do something about it. He appealed to their civic pride to remove the helplessness and powerlessness that permeated a citizenry living in an exposed city. He called for the people to rise up and build and come to the aid of their defenseless city. He identified himself with the project and offered his services.

Nehemiah related how King Artaxerxes I had reversed his previous decision to stop the construction, that the king had approved the restoration and that the king had generously contributed timbers for the project. Nehemiah had procured the illusive royal decree and provided the motivation and opportunity for significant community change. His speech began with the challenge "let us rebuild" and closed with the people's echoing response, "let us rebuild" (Neh. 2:17-18).

Figure 2

Force Field Analysis: Nehemiah and Jerusalem

Forces in the Situation

Supporting:

King of Persia actively supported the project with personnel and materials. Judah contained a strong kinship and religious network which integrated the people. The local community had recently rebuilt the temple. The dismantled wall stones were readily available for reassembling. The inhabitants viewed themselves as Covenant people.

Forces in the Group

Supporting:

The residents were mindful of the former power and wealth of Jerusalem. The project needed manual labor and Judah had an ample number. Many people had returned with the objective to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Judah possessed many well-organized and efficient local groups. The project had the general support of the people.

Opposing:

Some of the neighboring states openly opposed the projects. Local resources were meagre in comparison to the size of the task. The project threatened the political hegemony of Samaria. The project threatened a network of Samaria loyalists in Jerusalem.

Opposing:

Some local elite had pledged their support to the foreign regime. Some of the opposition were related to the high priestly family. Local resources and people were in a state of underdevelopment. The local people were former slaves and dominated peasants.

Forces in the Leaders

Supporting:

The King appointed Nehemiah to lead the project with the authority to rebuild. The Susa delegation demonstrated the concern of local leaders for the restoration project. The people accepted Nehemiah's leadership. Leaders and people had learned to cope with adversity.

Opposing:

Some local elites were disloyal to Nehemiah and informed the opposition. The opposition would never give up the governorship without a desperate struggle. The local leaders had only served under the aegis of foreign power.

II. THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

This section (Neh. 3-7:4) is organized around four concerns in completing the construction project: (1) the participation of the people in the project, (2) the opposition that formed in reaction to the project, (3) the community problems encountered in the process of implementing the project, and (4) the administrative decisions made at the completion of the project. The story describes how the project progressed, the opposition escalated, and the internal resistance increased (Neh. 5:1-19). Almost as soon as the opposition learned of the implementation of the project, they moved rapidly to apply significant social, economic, and political pressure in an effort to terminate the project. This outside interference significantly increased the mounting economical and psychological strain on the people already engaged in an exhausting project.

Participation in the Project (Neh. 3:1-32). It is one thing for a visionary to perceive a brilliant blueprint for alleviating community problems; it is quite another to persuade that community to adopt the plan, to implement it, and to follow it through to completion. As the newly appointed governor of Judah, [25] Nehemiah began his duties by adroitly taking stock of his resources. For the most part, his labor force consisted of a bunch of poor, illiterate, and rural peasants. However, these peasants had learned how to survive in the midst of adversity and they were arduous workers--two qualities severely needed and seriously tested during the ensuing weeks.

Nehemiah proceeded with his organizational task by making an evaluation of the local patterns of social organization and forms of cooperative labor. He observed the attachment of people to their local groups and fit these "natural" social groups into the construction project as distinct units. His administrative style demonstrated a basic grasp of organizational and motivational skills needed for effective management.

First, Nehemiah divided the labor pool into some forty manageable units and assigned each work crew to an appropriate section on the wall depending upon the size of the group, the location of the group's place of residence, and the group's self-interests. He organized these units around the social and economic implications of their self-interests in an effort to provide greater social cohesion and economic efficiency. Larger work crews were assigned the more difficult sections of the wall, craftsmen were assigned sections near their shops in the marketplace, and community residents were assigned sections in their neighborhoods.

Second, Nehemiah expanded the activities of established groups, wherever possible, to avoid the duplication of responsibilities and conflict of interests that erupt when new groups are indiscriminately appointed. Nehemiah showed an understanding of the importance of preserving the integrity and stability of established groups. Members in established work crews know each other and have some experience working together. The wall crews were composed of priests, kinsmen, craftsmen, neighbors, merchants, and geographical groups. Most groups had established long-term friendships, were loyal to one another, and would rapidly close rank when threatened by external forces.

Third, Nehemiah acknowledged the proven and accepted leaders of these local groups and fit them into his administrative structure of the project. The crew leaders served a vital link in the ongoing effort to coordinate the work on the wall, to give the new administration instant credibility in the community, and to increased productivity.

Fourth, Nehemiah delegated sufficient authority to the local leaders to permit them to accomplish their assignments. Weak leaders tend to feel threatened by others and cling to power; strong leaders delegate authority equal to the task and in the process strengthen their administration.[26] The section crews and leaders responded to Nehemiah's leadership with such remarkable productivity that even their enemies were astonished by their rapid accomplishments (Neh. 4:6).

Nehemiah also used effective motivational measures to stimulate participation and productivity. Crews were assigned specific sections on the wall so that the whole community could observe the quantity and quality of their work. The workers were reminded to build well because the lives of their families, the security of their homes, and the welfare of their community depended upon the quality of their work. Through local involvement, Nehemiah desired to develop community spirit, to promote confidence in the people's ability to change their circumstances, to encourage the development of local leaders, and to extend the cooperation between the people and their government.[27]

Nehemiah readily bestowed public recognition on the leaders and their crews. He devoted a whole chapter in his report to honor the contributions that the leaders and their crews made to the success of the project. Even before the report was

written, Nehemiah's respect for the people was readily discernable in the day-to-day activities of the project. The people sensed the quality of this man's spirit and so responded in kind.

Another important ingredient in the success of the project related to Nehemiah's perception of the people's needs. He began where the people were hurting (their perceived needs) and led them on an educational and spiritual odyssey to where the people should be (their actual needs). Patience, understanding, and foresight were a vital part of this development project. The real problem had become so deeply buried under the rubble of apathy and disillusionment that the people needed time and assistance to discover and to articulate it. The order of development was from physical to spiritual needs; from a restoration of the wall to that of the law. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Nehemiah's Administrative Style

Organizational Factors	Motivational Factors
Manageable units: fitted to the task	Group pride: public accomplishments
Local groups: effective working units	Personal incentives: basic security
Local leadership: proven ability	Public recognition: groups and leaders
Delegated authority: local responsibility	Community support: felt needs

Opposition to the Project--Phase I (Neh. 4:1-23). The decision to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem was met with growing resentment and eventually open hostilities by an alliance of groups who opposed the rearmament of an old enemy that could directly threaten the economic control and political hegemony of the region. Sanballet, the governor of Samaria and overseer of Judah, adamantly opposed the renovation project and organized the opposition movement. In a series of swift and decisive actions, Sanballet and associates escalated the level of violence from saber-rattling political speeches to an all-out military siege.

None of these tactics caused Nehemiah to deviate from his top value--the restoration of the wall. On four occasions, when the opposition drastically raised the level of conflict, Nehemiah merely adjusted his plan to meet the present emergency and continued with the project. (See Figure 4.) Moreover, when the workers became exhausted and discouraged, Nehemiah simply reminded them that God would see them through the conflict and to fight to protect their homes, their neighbors, and their families--the very things they valued most.

Programs of planned change place great demands upon the individuals involved in terms of time, energy, and personal risks. Community development studies have long acknowledged that the type of personality of the leaders and the type of relationships established within the local community can make or break a project.[28] Undoubtedly, Nehemiah never envisioned such conditions as a military confrontation, personal assassination plots, or a bitter social faction when he left his opulent Persian palace. He might have responded by barricading himself behind

the walls of the governor's mansion in Jerusalem. To have done so would have placed himself outside of the experiences of the common people, undercut his community respect, and lessened his ability to respond creatively to the problems.

Rather, Nehemiah shared the people's predicament and identified with them. Note his report: "We are being despised," "we built," "we set a watch . . .," "we labored . . .," and "we took off our clothes only for bathing"(Neh. 4). Moreover, he had instructed the people that in the event of any surprise attack, they were to rush to the site of the sound of the trumpet. That would be the location of the enemies' offensive, and Nehemiah would be there. The sight of their gritty, grimy, gutsy leader working in the construction area and in the midst of a dangerous war zone, was a constant source of community inspiration.

The level of personal involvement in planned projects of change increases in difficulty in direct proportion to the number of communication barriers inherent in the contact relationship. The greater the social distance caused by ethnic, class, language, religion, or cultural differences, the greater the effort in establishing effective bridges of communication. Four elements that contributed to Nehemiah's success in crossing his communication barriers upon entering the Jerusalem community were: (1) his ability to overcome culture shock, (2) his personal identification with the local people, (3) his willingness to actively participate in the new community, and (4) his capacity to remain flexible during adverse and trying circumstances.

Individuals who grow up in the same society share a common set of symbols, standard of behavior, and system of values. They tend to think, feel, and behave in predictable ways.

Figure 4: Opposition and Adaptation in Jerusalem Project

<u>Opposition's Strategy</u>	<u>Judah's Response</u>
Diplomatic warning--stop the project	Repair the gaps
1. Show of military might	1. Motivated people to work
2. Derision of the Jews and the	2. Repaired gaps half height
a. Magnitude of the project	3. Reduced gap of vulnerability
b. Paucity of workers	
Military alliance--halt the progress	Appoint guards
1. Five-state connection	1. Prayed--God's help
2. Maintain status quo	2. Watched--man's response
3. Joint agreement--at any cost	3. Worked--God & man
Military intrigue--scare the people	Arm the people
1. Infiltrate the city	1. Trust God and keep sword handy
2. Sudden attack from within	2. Community on military alert
3. Let fear intimidate residents	3. Common for united the people
Diplomatic pressure--isolate the Community	Move to the city
1. Cut off border towns	1. Stay behind the walls
2. Reduce number of workers	2. Increase the labor force
3. Decrease military preparedness	3. Assist in guard duty

Figure 5: Personal Involvement in Planned Change

<u>Problems of Involvement</u>	<u>Responses to Involvement</u>
Cultural shock	Cultural acceptance
Identification	Affective acceptance
Participation	Behavioral acceptance
Flexibility	Tractable acceptance

When an agent of change relocates in a different society, the agent will inevitably experience a loss of relatedness, a feeling of insecurity, or feeling of anxiety. This loss of one's cultural bearings is referred to as cultural shock. One possible occasion when Nehemiah might have suffered from cultural shock was when the opposition moved in and exploded all hopes for a peaceful project. At that moment, Nehemiah may have experienced a loss of cultural bearings and questioned his decision to leave Persia. Most field workers experience some cultural shock.

Second, Nehemiah identified with the people--note his references to "we" in his report. Cultural identification is a psychological process of placing oneself within the sphere of another group's values and behavior. It is a willingness to be classified with the people with whom you work; the personal acknowledgement that you feel "at home" in yourself when with "your new people."

A third level of involvement is social participation--the flip side of the identification coin. If psychological identification refers to the symbolic action of classifying oneself with a particular group, social participation refers to the personal action of establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships within that group. This type of involvement yields three distinct advantages: it gives first-hand experience in the process of change, it strengthens community ties, and it provides continuous feedback for making daily adjustments in solving unanticipated problems. (See Figure 5.)

Lastly, Nehemiah remained flexible in his involvement with the community. He had a plan, a blueprint, an outline. He knew where he was going, but he did not encase himself within

that plan so as to limit his options. Each time a problem arose, he sought to understand it, to resolve it, and then to implement it. Biddle and Biddle suggest that the essence of projects of change is flexibility.[29] To be flexible means to be open for suggestions, alternate options, or new methods. It does not mean appeasement or peace at any price. Nehemiah maintained a flexible personal and administrative stance while he demonstrated an inflexible stance concerning social injustices and moral unrighteousness. He opposed the injustices of the wealthy (Neh. 5:7) and expelled Tobiah from the temple (Neh. 13:8). There are always personal, social, ethical, and moral limits to both participation and flexibility in any project. Some important obligations to remember are: the obligations to the local people, the obligations to the sponsoring group, and the obligation to personal integrity.

Community Problems with the Project (Neh. 5:1-19). The arduous task of restoring the wall had taxed the precarious economy of the small country of Judah to its limits. The influx of additional workers, the constant military vigil, and the decades of foreign economic domination had consumed the scant resources of the willing workers. They had endured the wrath of their enemies, but they could not cope with the guile of unscrupulous neighbors who posed as loyal citizens while they demanded exorbitant rates of interest from the very people who had recently defended their freedom. Scarcity of food had driven up the prices, high foreign taxes had drained the general populace, and loan sharks had foreclosed on overdue mortgages. The poor people were forced to give up their farms and sell their children into slavery. (See Figure 6.)

Embittered and angry, they took their cause to Nehemiah (Neh. 5:1-5). Stunned and shocked by the despicable depth to which the fledgling society had sunk, Nehemiah returned to probe the problem in the light of his vision of a restored people of the Covenant. The diagnosis of the problem was simple. It was a clear case of class conflict, in which the wealthy class who controlled the means of production and distribution of goods used their economic power to exploit the powerless masses. The solution was considerably more complex. Economic exploitation had become deeply engrained within the life of the community and its tentacles permeated society--even into the very life of Nehemiah. Some advocated an all-out war between the social classes. Nehemiah refused to succumb to any instant or simple solution. He held out for something better. Indeed, class warfare would have played directly into the hands of the opposition: the countryside would have been left in shambles, the people divided into armed camps, and the social fabric of society destroyed.

Two priorities emerged. The solution must preserve the community and reaffirm the Covenant. The Covenant taught that the relationship between Jews should never be treated like a purely business transaction, but rather, as a spiritual service that was pleasing to God and blessed by Him. They were to treat their needy neighbors like honored guests, not as pitiful debtors (Lev. 25:35). A loan was to be a simple pledge of good faith to repay--not the ruthless grabbing of personal tools and equipment that would deprive a man of the very means for earning the money to repay the loan (Deut. 24:10-13).

Nehemiah resorted to a method of conflict resolution

Figure 6: Covenant and Social Justice

<u>Group</u>	<u>Problem</u>	<u>Complaint</u>	<u>Covenant Prohibition</u>
Laborers	Shortage of Food	Loss of children	Making Israelites slaves
Farmers	Credit for supplies	Loss of land	Expropriation of Israelite lands
Taxpayers	High interest rates	Loss of property	Dishonest Tax Collectors

Figure 7: Positional Bargaining Model in Nehemiah

	Principled Negotiation Model	Nehemiah's Negotiation Process	Analysis of Neheimah's Negotiation
People	Separate people from problems	Charging interest is self-deteating to Jerusalem development	Poor provide labor Wealthy provide capi Community develops
Interest	Focus on interest, not positions	Redeeming people for resale is shortsighted	Foreclosed mortgages & debt servitude will destroy community
Options	Generate a variety of options	Restored property and food banks will increase prosperity for the whole community	Disregard the covenant and alienate the poor or declare a sabbatical release and restore the community
Criteria	Use objective standards in settlements	Practice the Covenant of Brotherhood	Apply social concerns contained in the Covenant to society

similar to Harvard's "principled negotiation." [30] The Harvard model suggests that negotiations should consider the following:

1. People: Separate the people from the problem.
2. Interests: Focus on interests, not positions.
3. Options: Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do.
4. Criteria: Insist that the results be based on some objective standard.

Nehemiah's method resembled the Harvard model in arriving at a peaceful settlement between the wealthy and poor classes. We do not know how the discussions proceeded. We do know that he succeeded in bringing both sides together, and we can infer, from the resulting social behavior and public compliance, that it was creative, of mutual benefit, and based upon some respected principle of antiquity--the Covenant. The problem was "redeeming people for resale;" the solution was the restoration of a debtor's possessions and a general repudiation of the practice of charging interest--a community social security system which ultimately benefitted all and preserved the Community of Brotherhood. (See Figure 7.)

Perhaps the real key to the solution was the openness and submission of Nehemiah to the Covenant of God. Nehemiah had charged no interest but had apparently taken pledges on loans--some possession of a poor man. Much to his chagrin, Nehemiah was part of the problem. [31] He was not treating his neighbor like a brother and accepting the neighbor's word as a guarantee for payment. Instead, Nehemiah had turned the appeal for assistance into a business proposition and demanded collateral in hand--an additional hardship. Convicted by his conscience and compelled by the urgency of the need of his countrymen, Nehemiah acknowledged his involvement, denounced the practice, and pledged his

compliance in the presence of a large and somewhat hostile crowd. The effect was immediate and exhilarating. In the light of Nehemiah's growing popular support and personal example, the wealthy had little choice but to comply.

Meanwhile, the poor were imbued with a new sense of freedom and an increased opportunity to give expression to their stewardship in developing a Covenant community. The price of restoring community was not cheap. It never is. It cost the wealthy people some of their affluence; it cost Nehemiah some of his security; it cost the poor people some of their pride. However, the long-term gains seemed worth it. Nehemiah's success at restoring community may have been an even greater accomplishment than the eventual restoration of the wall.

Niehoff contends that "the single most important characteristic of the local society is its leadership." [32] A good leader is both a significant model and a source of motivation for community action. The beliefs and behavior of good leaders reflect the values and aspirations of the community and in turn inspire the community to imitate their actions. Nehemiah combined his authority over the people with a sense of service to God and the community. Smith submits that "the purpose of servanthood is to participate in the true character of God. To do so, it must give witness to the dignity of every individual." [33] Nehemiah had a high regard for the people--all the people (Neh. 3:1-32; 5:8-12).

Nehemiah's perception of servanthood was demonstrated in his participation of the project, sharing the financial load with the unfortunate, and living a simplified lifestyle. As governor

of Judah, Nehemiah was entitled to the customary salary which came out of the local tax levy. Former governors had readily accepted it, and both they and their officials had grown mysteriously wealthy while in office. Although Nehemiah received the per diem food allowance for his household, he would not accept a salary from tax funds derived from mortgaged homes and the sale of children into slavery.[34] As Coggins points out, "It was a gesture both generous and costly." [35]

E. Stanley Jones is reported to have explained that "there are two ways to be rich--one in the largeness of one's possession and the other in the fewness of one's wants." It appears that Nehemiah chose the latter. Rather than continue to demand the heavy burden of taxes which had contributed to the plight of the people, Nehemiah chose to trim the public administrative budget. He could not reduce the tribute paid to Persia; he could not trim the public works program--but he could eliminate some administrative overhead within his domain. He did that by refusing to accept a salary as long as people were in desperate need. He simplified his wants and so chose to survive on less. Consequently, he freed up funds for others. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8: Simplification of Needs

Individual level	Reduction of wants Increased reliance upon God Increased funds for human needs Increased meaning of stewardship Increased effectiveness in witnessing
Community level	Reallocation of funds Increased spirit of community Increased sense of human dignity Increased meeting of human needs Reduction of gap between social classes

Opposition to the Project--Phase II (Neh. 6:1-19).

Sanballet had been suspicious of Nehemiah from the first day he arrived in Judah (Neh. 2:10). He shared Machiavelli's suspicion to be wary of the powerful stranger who entered the province, "for strangers are never called in except by those who are ambitious and discontented." [36] Sanballet had moved swiftly to form a common military alliance with the other nations surrounding Judah. The alliance had taken the offensive with superior forces when the inhabitants of Jerusalem scattered along an indefensible and permeable wall. Sanballet had made "the mistake of thinking that superior numerical strength, strategic location, and persistent harrassment would be sufficient to halt the work." [37] He had failed to take into account Nehemiah's personal and spiritual resources (Neh. 2:20; 4:15, 20; 6:16) as well as the local people's depth of affection for their traditional culture, resurging religion, and beloved homeland.

Along with the rapid progress achieved in enclosing the lower level of the wall (Neh. 6:1) came the realization that any sustained military attack would be too risky--given the city's strategic location, its massive wall, and its political alliance with Persia. Sanballet came to the conclusion that his ultimate enemy was not the people of Judah, who had served his interests so docilely all of his years in public office. It was Nehemiah, the intruder, who had stalked into his territory like a lion seeking a new pride of lionesses to dominate. So, Sanballet and associates began a series of personal attacks on Nehemiah--the catalyst and brains behind the project.

They began by sending Nehemiah an innocent-appearing invitation to attend an historic peace conference to end the

recent hostilities in the region. On the surface the invitation seemed like a simple and sincere attempt to regain peace. In reality, it was a heinous plot to lure Nehemiah to the very borders of Samaria and provide Sanballet with the opportunity to seize power through one of the most conspicuous and convenient methods--a simple coup.[38] However, the whole peace plan was so completely out of character with the past behavior and objectives of Sanballet and so far from the safety and supervisory responsibilities of the wall that Nehemiah wrote it off as another foil of deceit. Besides, by this time, Nehemiah had become familiar with the vocabulary of Sanballet in which the terms "war and peace" were used interchangeably.

Sanballet was never really certain that Nehemiah would attend any peace conference, and so he plotted to impale Nehemiah upon the horns of his peace proposal. If Nehemiah refused to accept his repeated invitations (Neh. 6:4), it would make him out to be a warmonger madly pushing a refortification project while everyone else was pursuing peace. Nehemiah's lack of response would turn public opinion in the region against Judah and possibly spark internal resentment in the ranks of the poverty-stricken workers in Jerusalem. If Nehemiah would not attend the conference, then let him face the fury of a war-weary people. But again, Sanballet failed when the people faithfully followed their dedicated leader and Nehemiah escaped the horns of the dilemma through proven commitment to the community.

Sanballet's next attack was equally shrewd. Word was spread abroad that Nehemiah had a good reason to push the project so diligently because he had an ulterior motive--to become king. They even had an allegedly reliable witness (Neh. 6:6) that

Nehemiah had conspired with the prophets to proclaim him as the "messiah." [40] Sanballet had failed to isolate Nehemiah from the wall through the peace process, and so he would seek to use the wall to isolate Nehemiah from the people. It was a perverted and incendiary interpretation of Nehemiah's actions; it charged Nehemiah with conspiring to revolt against Persia, with tyranny of the people, and with blasphemy against God.

A good rumor is a simple and effective method for spreading discontent among the people and staging a revolution. [41] It was also a supreme test of the people's loyalty. Nehemiah quietly dismissed the charge as "pure fabrication." Again Nehemiah prevailed. Why? Because Nehemiah had publicly shown himself to be a man of integrity. The charge did not fit the facts. His previous behavior in returning loan collateral and in refusing the governor's salary dramatically demonstrated the level of Nehemiah's involvement.

The third attack may have been the most diabolical of all. It was designed to disgrace Nehemiah before the people and to ensnare him where he least expected it--a false message from a seemingly respectable source. He reported that the opposition had recently dispatched a hit squad to kill Nehemiah and that God had revealed this information so that Nehemiah would have time to flee to safety--even the security of the temple. The Covenant permitted a layman to seek asylum in the court but not in the temple [42] where only priests were permitted to enter (Num. 18:1-7). This scheme was designed to catch Nehemiah in an act of cowardice, to demonstrate his lack of faith to God, and to reveal a general disrespect for the Covenant. If successful, it could have resulted in public disgrace. And if Nehemiah were a eunich,

as some assert, then it would have been doubly onerous to the people.[43] Nehemiah declined. He feared God, respected the Covenant, and valued his personal witness.

A fourth "dirty trick" designed to topple the government of Nehemiah was an attempt to sway the allegiance of the "intellectuals"--a proven and reliable determinant for revolution.[44] The opposition had a cadre of petty nobles in Jerusalem who had been given special political privilege in exchange for their personal support of Samaria. Machiavelli noted that the Romans "sustained the feebler chiefs without increasing their power, while they humbled the stronger." [45] Sanballet and Tobiah had succeeded in winning the support of many high class Jews through similar acts of political favors who in turn had sworn an oath to support the Samaritans--supplanters of political subversion. These Samaritan loyalists perpetually bombarded Nehemiah with the virtues of his opposition and sought to sway other elites to their persuasion (Neh. 6:17-18). The battle over the allegiance of the elite was intense. Nehemiah managed to maintain control of the separatist movement by sustaining the support of key members of the upper class, the majority of the Levites, and the masses of common people.

Nehemiah is a classic example of leadership under extreme pressure and personal attacks. How did he survive against such political odds? He believed in the power of his God, he kept his commitment to the Covenant, and he carefully studied his opposition. When the opposition converged upon him with greater strength and an inevitable plan of defeat, he smashed their plan. Alinsky suggests that this is not as difficult to do as some might think. "Every step of an opponent's plan is based upon an

anticipated move from you." [46] Alinsky submits that it is like sparring with a boxing opponent. If the opponent attacks the body, you lower your guard; if he attacks your head, you raise your guard. The secret of success, then, is to respond, protect yourself, and counter in an unanticipated manner, so that you throw your opponent off balance.

Nehemiah proceeded with his general renovation plans until the opposition took some decisive course of action. On such occasion, Nehemiah would counter with a well-calculated response so as to render the original action of the opposition ineffective. By so doing, Nehemiah confused his opponents and drew the opposition into the vortex of the same confusion. (See Figure 9.) Alinsky submits that in most circumstances, when confronted by superior numbers and power with fixed plans and fixed forces, the only effective response may be to confuse the opposition and smash their plan. [47]

Completion of the Project (Neh. 7:1-14). Once the fortification plan to secure the perimeter of the city was completed, Nehemiah could turn his attention to new concerns: the need for reliable guards to patrol the city gates, the need for a civil defense program to surveil the wall, and the need for loyal and dependable leaders to continue the progress. Roberts notes that "organization development is a continuous process." [48] The gains of the past can only be sustained and preserved by perpetual vigilance. Consequently, Nehemiah was continually attentive to the needs and progress of his administrative constituency.

The citizenry of Jerusalem constantly lived under the imminent threat of a sneak attack. The city was most vulnerable at its gates. The local residents needed to protect the gates--

Figure 9 Nehemiah Defeats the Plan

Opposition's Action	Nehemiah's Response
Political threats, "Don't build the wall."	Executive order, "Close the gaps in the wall."
Military alliance, "Surround the city."	Executive order, "Post a twenty-four hour guard."
Psychological threat, "Infiltrate the city."	Executive order, "Remember God, and protect your family."
Assassination plot, "Join the peace talks."	Executive order, "Complete the walls as Persia ordered."
Revolution plot, "Revolt, tyranny and blasphemy."	Executive order, "No evidence-- pure fabrication."
Temple plot, "Malign the leader."	Executive order, "Advice of a false prophet."
Intellectual plot, "Use the fifth column."	Executive order, "Be loyal to God and His Covenant."

not only from sudden foreign attacks, but also from the foreign sympathizers residing within the city wall. Faced with the loss of their foreign status and political privileges, these foreign sympathizers might be persuaded to open the city gates or assist the enemy in scaling the wall on some opportune occasion and possibly swing the balance of power in favor of the opposition.

One group whose loyalty was unquestioned, whose self-interest was intimately tied to a secure city, and whose past experience qualified them for supervising the security of the gates, was the temple porters. The temple porters were a specially trained group of "police" who had historically guarded the gates of the temple and maintained security within the temple grounds (I. Chron. 9:17-19; 26:12-19). Nehemiah expanded their duties to include the city gates and increased their ranks with loyal temple singers and teachers.

The temple was the ceremonial heart and soul of the community of Judah. The temple personnel derived their livelihood and status from the temple. They were highly organized, rigorously disciplined, and extremely dedicated to the protection and preservation of the temple services. Therefore, Nehemiah sought their assistance and expressed his confidence in their ability to lead the community in providing needed security.

A second major administrative concern related to the crucial appointment of a qualified candidate to serve as mayor of Jerusalem. Nehemiah desired to turn the administration of Jerusalem over to local leadership at the earliest possible occasion. Hananiah received the appointment. Hananiah was a close relative of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:2), an apparent early leader

in the separatist movement, a member of the delegation to Susa to recruit Nehemiah's assistance, former "chief of the city fortress," a man of faith and integrity, and perhaps of "royal blood." [49] His appointment unified the city's administration and increased the efficiency previously lacking in the two major systems (Neh. 3:9,12).

The new mayor was given specific instructions to increase the security of the city. First, the gates were to be opened for only a brief period each day under the supervision of a heavy guard. Normally, city gates were open from sunrise to sunset. In an effort to reduce the threat of attack, the Jerusalem gates were to be open only during the busiest part of the day, when large numbers of people were nearby, and ample guards were on duty.

Second, all physically fit male residents in Jerusalem were expected to serve their turn guarding the wall. The special temple forces were charged with supervising the security of the gates; the security of the city was to be the duty of all. The city was no more secure than the level of involvement of each citizen. In effect, each worker was called upon to guard a section of the wall near his home--to place his life on the quality of his work and the alertness of his watch.

In the process of cleaning up the rubble and securing the city, the leaders discovered a critical shortage of manpower. Normally, walled cities were compact and crowded, providing a maximum amount of security in a minimum amount of space. Jerusalem was an exception. Few people desired to live in a dilapidated city with a broken wall and burned gates. Consequently, few people lived in Jerusalem. Most people preferred to live in

outlying areas (Neh. 7:73; 11:25-36; 12:27-29). Once the rubble was removed, open spaces became evident and the paucity of population pointed up the critical need for new house construction and urban migrants to secure the city and to fill long-term employment needs. However, the problem was not an immediate crisis, and so Nehemiah made a mental note of the population predicament and began to formulate a solution and schedule it into the master plan of development.

A study of Nehemiah 7:1-4 suggests five significant principles applicable to similar projects of planned change. One, Nehemiah utilized existing local groups whenever possible to meet the challenges of an uncertain future. He avoided the time, expense, and potential factionalism of organizing new groups. Rather, he chose to expand the skills and organizational experiences of older groups to meet new contingencies. New groups were appointed only when no existing group was suitable for meeting the new challenge.

Second, Nehemiah turned over the reins of local government to local leaders at the earliest opportunity. He maintained control only during the crisis of construction. He could have clung to the prerogatives of power as many community or Christian workers have done in the past, reasoning that 150 years of foreign domination had contributed to a classic class of underdevelopment. But he didn't. Barring any unusual drain of personnel from a community, Munro contends that "any ordinary human group contains within its membership all the native ability needed for any job of . . . leadership which that group requires." [50] That is, every group contains sufficient numbers of individuals with adequate abilities to effectively carry on its work. Nehemiah,

at least, tacitly agreed. Indeed, the effectiveness of development projects are connected to the inclusion of local leaders.

Third, Nehemiah involved the people in each stage of the project: the decision to rebuild, the process of repairing of the wall, and the security of the city. It was a people's project. They owned it. Kirsch observes from twenty years of rural development that "well-formulated programs with the necessary technical and financial resources still risk failure if there is lack of effective participation and support from the rural population." [51] People must be made aware that their contribution is a determining factor in solving their problems or in the attainment of their objective. Local participation unites individuals in a common venture to mobilize community resources, to address felt needs, to strengthen sagging perceptions of self-confidence, and to transform passive participants in public programs into active partners in the development process.

Fourth, Nehemiah demonstrated considerable acuity in his ability to acquire power and in his willingness to share it. The perception and use of power is intrinsic to planned projects of change. Every person has some measure of power--to demand, to support, to influence, to vote, to reform, or to revolt. People frequently acknowledge a sense of limited power and unite, organize, and develop strategies for joint action. The people of Jerusalem demonstrated the effectiveness of such joint actions. During the process, Nehemiah was careful not to corner power for personal gain. He sought power in order to share power, and to ultimately turn it over to the local people and their leaders. The personal integrity of Nehemiah became the public check upon the abuse of power by the Samaritans until such time as he could

safely deposit it into the hands of the oppressed people where it legitimately belonged. Kirsch cautions that sometimes "grass root institutions have to be taught . . . how to control their leaders, otherwise, the newly trained leadership would develop into a new elite misusing its position for its own benefit." [52]

Fifth, Nehemiah planned for the future. From the inception of the project he began anticipating the material needs, community involvement, and political support needed to reach his objective. And so when the population problem surfaced, Nehemiah simply added one more item to the list of objectives, prioritized them, and devised a timetable for their completion. As was his custom, Nehemiah discussed the problem with the appropriate leaders, turned to their cultural traditions for insights and solutions, and worked out a plan with the people through some participatory process. His method joined the catalytical inspiration and energies of an agent of change with the productive human skills and material resources of the community in a mutual search for meaningful solutions--solutions which were appropriate, practical, and effective. [53]

III. THE REVITALIZATION PROCESS

The physical reconstruction of Jerusalem was complete: the wall was restored, the gates were hung, and the city was secured. It could have been an occasion for feasting and celebration, but Nehemiah knew that the physical restoration of Jerusalem was superficial and temporary. The basic problem of the people remained: they were still estranged from their cultural heritage and their ethnic roots. The major task of any society

is to provide its members with "meaning and motivation . . . a sense of the worthwhileness of the whole human venture." [54] Until the Jews were willing to come to terms with their historic values, traditions and symbols, they would remain culturally confused, morally adrift, and ethnically entangled with the surrounding ethnic groups. Their ethnic identity and cultural meaning was inextricably tied to their distinctive values and lifestyle.

The people needed to rediscover their ethnic roots, their religious distinctives, and their historical call to be the community of faith. If the people failed to restore God to the centrality of their community life and thus reinforce the people with moral and spiritual principles in their struggle for existence and times of adversity, the new wall would become just another exercise in futility. No people can ignore their cultural heritage and survive with significance and distinction. They must either eventually revise their old beliefs or find a new system.

This section of Nehemiah marks an important transition from physical and temporal concerns to cultural and spiritual concerns. Such extreme shifts in community objectives are neither simple nor spontaneous. Nehemiah tactfully employed a genealogical review. The genealogical review brought the people into intensive contact with their historic past: their cultural accomplishments, their prominent leaders, and their cultural distinctives. In the process, they experienced anew a measure of their rich ceremonial life, their historic values, and a new reason for living. The people responded with enthusiasm and determination. They repudiated their present impoverished

cultural system (Neh. 8:8), reached back into their historical past (Neh. 8:16), and foraged a new faith out of the vitality of a lost heritage (Neh. 9:38) in an effort to address the circumstances of their present existence (Neh. 10:29).

Prelude to Revitalization (Neh. 7:5-65). Nehemiah resorted to the use of genealogies to connect the two prominent objectives in his project--the renovation of the wall with the restoration of the law. He used genealogical reviews as a means to bridge the people's knowledge gap between their contemporary Judean culture and their limited perspective of the past. A Punjabi man from India once remarked, "You never really know who a man is until you know who his grandfather and his ancestors were." [55] The identity of individuals and groups are inexorably connected with their ancestors.

Genealogies are more than sterile lists of progeny. They are cognitive maps of social reality. That is, they define and describe specific kinds of social relationships. They are specially selected sequences of data designed to "accurately express a particular aspect of social reality." [56] They are legitimate and reliable statements about domestic, political, and religious relations that exist among people who accept their validity. Kidner suggests that Nehemiah's general use of genealogies was designed to stress: first, an historical continuity with the land and culture of Judah, and, second, an ethnic separation from the bordering pagan states. [56]

The Babylonian captivity had disrupted their traditional systems of land tenure, kinships affiliations, and ceremonial life. One way to clarify these social, economic, and religious obligations was to check the individual pedigree of each person.

The charts of Zerrubbabel's migration to Judah provides the basis for Nehemiah's review. Theoretically, if a person could trace a line of descent to one of the ancestors on that list, then that person was considered to be a bona fide member of the community. Nehemiah (7:6) reports that each returned to "his city," implying that though the old land tenure system had been contaminated during the period of diaspora, it was still viable.

Nehemiah sought to identify a defeated group of people with their historic roots (Neh. 7:6). And by means of that genealogical review, he hoped that the people would catch a vision of the aspirations and achievements of their ancestors. Lichtman notes that in order for any people to understand themselves they need to catch a vision of their past.[57] Genealogies combine leaders, places, and events into a cherished record revealing the greatness of the past and defining the qualities of the "good life." It has been said that "the most rootless yearn for roots; the most mobile bemoan their placeless fate; the most isolated yearn for kin and community, for these represent the basic things that make life worth living." [58] The project of the wall produced a new sense of community, the genealogical review provided a new sense of social significance, and the ceremonial participation procured a new sense of cultural separation. All contributed to an emerging importance to the "community of faith."

One way to measure the effectiveness of planned change is to study the response of the local community. The greater Jerusalem community responded by giving some 5000 pounds of silver and 8273 pounds of gold, including golden bowls [59] "for

the work" (Neh. 7:69). Calculating the worth of these metals at present prices of \$13.00 per ounce for silver and \$450.00 per ounce for gold, their gifts would have equaled approximately \$61 million (U.S. dollars). This generous contribution "given willingly" by the people for the support of the temple was indicative of their high level of personal involvement and identification with the revitalization movement. The order of events in the book seem to indicate that this offering was the people's response to a new evaluation of their cultural heritage.

Repudiation in Revitalization (Neh. 8:1-18). The Book of Nehemiah began with a people suffering from a negative self-perception--"we are despised and shamed" (Neh. 1:3). They decided to do something about their predicament, and through arduous labor, dauntless courage, and persistent faith, they accomplished an astonishing feat. Even their armies were awed by their accomplishment (Neh. 6:16). In the process the people's self-image dramatically improved. They acquired a new sense of mastery over their lives. They were no longer the disorganized, defenseless, and dependent people subject to the intimidation of the surrounding states. They had become a political entity equal in status with other Persian provinces. They were the people of the Covenant.

How did their ancestors become identified with the Covenant? What did it mean to belong to a Covenant? What did it do for them? How did it affect their daily lives? Due to limited editions of the Covenant and mass illiteracy, the general populace was largely ignorant of Covenant principles and implications for their lives (Neh. 8:13). Spurred by their lack of knowledge of the Covenant, their common quest for ethnic

identity, and their search for religious certitude, the people requested the community elders to sponsor a public reading of the Covenant (Neh. 8:1).

It seems from the Nehemiah narration that he had sensed the people's growing interest in their religious heritage. Distrustful of the high priestly family which had intermarried with the opposition (Neh. 13:4), Nehemiah sent to Persia [60] for a trusted assistant--Ezra (Ezra 7:6-17). The teaching of the law and the administration of the ceremonial life of Judah belonged rightfully to the priesthood. Plagued by the infidelity and corruption of the priesthood (Mal. 1:10), Nehemiah turned to Ezra, a dedicated and scholarly member of the high priestly family, for needed leadership. Nehemiah and Ezra, the political and religious authorities, joined forces to lead the community in their search for a new identity, a new faith, and a revitalized culture.

Nehemiah could model his renewed lifestyle and attempt to communicate it to the people, but he could not change them unless they will were willing to be changed. As Goodenough observes, "The missionary approach to development (in whatever guise) in which an agent's objective is to get others to live according to his values, can succeed only when the agent's clients have decided that these are the values by which they wish to live." [61] Nehemiah noted in his report that the people both requested and responded to the opportunity to hear the reading of the Covenant. God was working, through the renewed interest in the culture of the Covenant and the example of the life of Nehemiah, to begin the process of thawing the mindset of His people and to open the way for significant change (Deut. 30:4-6).

Anthropologists have noted that revitalization movements are a common consequence of projects of planned change.[62] Agents of change, who assist people with their development and who demonstrate a genuine empathy with the people, frequently earn respect and confidence of the people. It is, therefore, natural for the people in such projects to turn to their trusted friends for council and guidance for the weightier issues of life--like seeking a more meaningful faith.

For example, Goodenough describes an incident in New Guinea where a missionary expressed approval of certain biblical-like aspirations in a native myth. "Finding that he was not hostile, they asked him if he would show them the road by which they might achieve their aspirations. By agreeing to teach them 'the way,' he came to occupy the position of 'prophet' for the revitalization movement." [63]

Nehemiah and Ezra became the two "catalysts" of the revitalization movement in Judah. Ezra brought a copy of the Covenant with him from Persia and used it as a sort of plumb line for righteous living (Ezra 7:14). Ezra read from the Book, while the Levites explained the portions of scripture clearly and forcefully. The results were unanticipated and electrifying. It seems that the congregation was devastated by the discrepancy between their social standards of conduct and the expectations set forth in holy writ. Humbled and humiliated by their crass disobedience, they openly and unashamedly sobbed out their sorrow to God.

The text simply stated, "The people wept" (Neh. 8:9). Like Nehemiah (1:4), the people confronted and reevaluated their values and beliefs in the light of the teachings of the Covenant.

They had succeeded, through the experiences of the recent crises, the leadership of Nehemiah, and the reading of the Covenant, in unfreezing their contemporary cultural milieu that had blindly hedged them into a distorted set of cultural norms and social expectations. God was in their midst; they could never be the same. His presence in the reading of His word had confronted their secular living, transformed their concerns to religious values, and imparted a new measure of spiritual sensitivity. Suddenly, like a comet in the dark of the night, the people acknowledged their corporate conduct as contradictory to their historic beliefs and then permitted the shock waves of conviction to burst their bonds of self-righteousness.

Caught by surprise, the leaders hastily conferred with one another to consider an appropriate response to the mood of the gathering. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites issued a joint statement urging the people to resolve their sorrow by putting themselves enthusiastically into the holy celebration of feasting and sharing with the less fortunate families. The next day, the clan elders met with the priests, Levites and Ezra to plot a course of action that would reconstruct a viable set of values and beliefs and that would address the needs of the people within the constraints of the Covenant.

The leaders resolved to revive the old ceremonies of the Covenant and through feasts and rituals to retrace the steps of their ancestors to the source of their historic affirmations. The obvious place to begin was with the application of the Covenant to the present. Since they were about to begin the seventh month of the year, it meant to observe the feast of booths, also called the feast of tabernacle. The feast of booths

provided an excellent opportunity to commemorate a significant portion of their historic past. The group readily agreed to participate in this abandoned ceremony of antiquity.

Ceremony and celebration is no excursus into the trivial and the irrelevant. Celebration enables people, in the form of play, to extend the frontiers of their future. Celebration commemorates those things that make us "distinctive and worthy in our own eyes." [64] Feasts and festivals enable us to relate to one another, to integrate the great mysteries of life, and to assimilate the ultimate concerns of our existence into our daily lives. Rituals reduce the incomprehensible world, in which we are born and die alone, into a complex web of people, symbols, and activities which "bind us to one another." [65]

Religious celebrations go to the very foundations of group values and understandings, and in the process, weave those cultural distinctives into the "private psyche" of individuals replacing external controls with internal motivation. [66] Rituals authenticate lifestyles; participants derive meaning and direction for living. Cox notes that songs and ceremonies "link a man to his story." [67]

The feast of booths took the people of Judah to their spiritual roots, to the values and beliefs, rules and regulations, and social code and moral obligations which set them apart from other people. These factors played a vital role in the revitalization of the community. In symbol and ceremony the festival of booths took the people back through time to the experiences of the wilderness wanderings. The people confronted themselves in the commemoration of their religious heritage and encountered the vivid options of their present choices

demonstrated in the lives of their ancestors. They faced similar defeats and triumphs, similar failures and achievements, and similar villains and heroes. Experimentally, the people could relate to the same sins, the same sacrifices, and the same judgements.

Through their observance of this feast and festival, the people took time out of the busy routine to work their way through the milieu of heritage toward a new fervor of faith. In the process, they became increasingly dissatisfied with their present predicament and acknowledged the need for new interpretation to their old story. Feasting is a technique for "celebrating plenty," a method for freeing up the mind from economic cares during festivals, to work through the plethora of symbols, values, and beliefs associated with rituals.[68] The people had not yet formulated a form of faith to confront the obstacles of their emerging community. But, all segments of the community were involved; it was a social group in mental motion in a corporate resolve to reconstruct a faith worthy of community support.

This type of community participation is imperative for any genuine development project. Kirsch warned that case studies prove almost without exception that programs of rural development "remain limited if project beneficiaries consider themselves only as passive receivers of government assistance and not as active partners of the project authorities." [69] Kirsch adds that "if project planners practice paternalistic attitudes, discourage local participation, or fail to accept a two-way relationship" they readily jeopardize the effectiveness of the project.[70] Nehemiah encouraged local input and publicly acknowledged their

initiatives. The community was involved in every phase of their development. The people and their leaders worked, fought, struggled, wept, and celebrated together as they gradually pieced together a new community out of the brokenness of their infidelity, subjugation, and ignorance.

Although biblical scholars have long noted the interconnectedness of chapters eight to ten and have described them as a "connected whole"[71] and "marked by a certain unity and distinctive character of its own"[72] they have failed to explain the essential unity of these three chapters. Wallace's description of the revitalization phase and Lewin's description of the way groups change, referred to previously in this study, explain the basic relationship between Nehemiah chapters eight through ten. Within these three chapters, the people of Judah reject their present values and symbols, collectively work through their common problems, and eventually institute a revised set of values and symbols. In the eighth chapter, the people jettisoned their faltering attempts to perpetuate a distorted ethos by relinquishing their commitment to the old social charter in an attempt to construct a more meaningful one. In chapter nine the people confronted and conquered the obstacles of the old system which prevented them from implementing a better approach to living. And in chapter ten the community united in a public resolve to implement those changes required to free the people to fulfill their perceived destiny and hence to freeze the new code of values at a new level of meaning.

Momentum in Revitalization (Neh. 9:1-38). The joyous celebration of the previous chapter became abruptly interrupted

by the stark obstruction of an obdurate faction who by their persistence to cleave to old ways hindered community progress. These people wanted to be selective in the process of change desiring to protect certain "pet" areas in their lives from the scrupulous implications of the Covenant. They wanted to be part of the Covenant--but on their own terms. More specifically, the problems of foreign wives, sabbatical observance, and temple contributions posed a threat to their vested interests.

It appears from the story that the Nehemiah team encountered growing opposition. It seems that some of the early enthusiasm of chapter eight had begun to wear thin as the people began to evaluate the implications of the stipulations in the Covenant. As a result, the promising progress of the project again began to grind to a halt. It was strategically imperative to maintain the momentum. Alinsky suggests that "a tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag." [73] What does an agent of change do when a revitalization movement begins to stall? Ezra's strategic response included three time-proven methods for stimulating progress: (1) stage a public demonstration to rally your forces, (2) rub raw the social sores of discontent, and (3) increase the people's magnitude of dissonance to an intolerable level, forcing people to change.

The exact time and sequence of events in Nehemiah 9:1-5 and Ezra 9:3-10:4 are unclear. One thing is certain. Ezra did not abandon the revitalization cause without a struggle. He marched to the entrance of the temple and staged a personal public protest in full view of the people. He tore off his priestly garments, pulled hair out of his head and beard, and sank to the ground "horror-stricken." He lay before the entrance

of the temple crushed and disheveled the rest of the day while worshippers paused to inquire about the circumstances and remained to pray.

Several factors may have contributed to precipitate Ezra's sudden display of caustic cultural reproof. It may have been sparked by a defiant refusal to observe the sabbath laws. Perhaps it was the hardness of heart displayed by some insensitive elites who balked at sharing their wealth with the less fortunate. Or it could have been the report of the recent census with its graphic statistics concerning the alarming rate of foreign marriages and the resulting insidious erosion of the values and beliefs of Judean households. Pagan mothers were raising a skeptical generation of confused children.

The silhouette of their popular priest prostrated on the ground caught the attention of the passing worshippers. They anxiously inquired concerning the reasons for the priest's penitence and learned that he was protesting the flagrant disregard of the people for the Covenant. Many who paused to ponder the seriousness of their decadence remained to mourn the gravity of their apathy. Ezra had received a limited measure of the community's support, but he knew that they were willing on a large scale to commit themselves to the types of changes needed to become the Covenant people.

After a few hours the number of people had grown to a sizeable crowd of sympathetic followers. Moved by shame and fear, the more conservative element began to separate themselves from the foreign element in their midst. Unbelieving foreigners were excluded from the Covenant and thereby were not permitted to worship with the people. Male violators reluctantly withdrew

from their foreign wives and children under the scrupulous gaze of their pious relatives. Their deliberate act of disobedience to their ethnic and religious prohibition against marrying foreign wives now threatened their very position as Covenant people (Exod. 34:15-17; Deut. 7:3). It was a clear choice between God's law and men's will.

The foreign wives were undoubtedly aware of these community sentiments regarding foreigners, but years of foreign dominance and community tolerance had made them seem irrelevant. And even though the Law condemned idolatry, the foreign wives were reluctant to abandon their gods in the belief that since the Jewish community had been largely indifferent to them in the past, it would continue to ignore them. Reality had dawned; the law had prevailed. The people called for a formal resolution to be drawn up to forbid the practice of foreign marriages and to revoke the permanent status of all foreigners--even their wives.

Just as the newly constructed walls had resulted in the physical separation of the people from their enemies, so now the newly mended law resulted in the spiritual separation of the people from paganism. This remedy seems cruel to the modern twentieth-century mind. Their drastic divorce rule appeared to ignore the anguish of human separation, to be a degradation of women and children, and to represent a general disregard for the desires and rights of the people involved. But their ethnic identity, their moral integrity, and their Covenant relationship were at stake. To the community at large, a few foreigners and their descendants were a small price to pay compared to the alternative--possible annihilation of the remnant and demise of the Covenant.

The rest of the day was spent in reading the Covenant to the people, followed by public confession of sin (Neh. 9:3-5). But even though the people had made public contributions to the temple, participated in the ritual, put away their foreign wives, and confessed their transgressions of the Covenant, Ezra still perceived a reticence and lack of resolve of whole-hearted commitment to become the covenant people. Ezra attempted to increase their resolve for change by increasing their level of stress. First he focussed upon key areas of discontent with Persian domination and rubbed raw their sores of servitude. In public prayer Ezra acknowledged that the people were slaves in their own country and on their own farms. He pointed out that the people did not even possess their own cattle, their own labor, or their own harvests. It all belonged to foreigners and the people remained in "great distress" (Neh. 9:36-37). Why? Because the people had forsaken the Covenant. This was inflammatory language designed to motivate the people into action.

Schaller notes that "without discontent with the present situation there can be no planned, internally motivated and directed intentional change." [74] Schaller does not mean that change will not occur. Change is ubiquitous and inevitable. What he does mean is that the type of change which is planned, structured, and directed by the community is the result of people who want change badly enough to make it happen. There is no substitute for creative endurance. Change is threatening and therefore produces opposition. Changes are never easy. They involve unlearning old patterns and learning new ones to replace them. Change is traumatic and enervating. Consequently, Ezra

continued to escalate the level of stress until the people desired to respond in new ways.

A second way Ezra increased the intensity of the revitalization process was by raising the level of individual and group dissonance. This was done by drawing attention to the inconsistencies that existed between their beliefs and their behavior. Individuals habitually strive for consistency in living. Psychological tests demonstrate the extent to which an individual's opinions and attitudes "tend to exist in clusters that are internally consistent." [75] People's beliefs influence their behavior with remarkable congruity. Social scientists use the term "dissonance" to refer to those inconsistencies in behavior in which actions do not logically follow or grow out of stated beliefs.

Dissonance is stressful. The greater the magnitude of dissonance, the greater the pressure to reduce it. Festinger observes that "the pressure of dissonance leads to actions to reduce it." [76] Ezra skillfully and deliberately increased the level of dissonance by focusing public attention on the flagrant incongruity between their historic beliefs and present social practices. His prayer was in the form of a narrative drama contrasting God's faithfulness and grace with man's stubbornness and sin. [77] The drama consisted of four scenes in which this basic conflict was described, personalized, and intensified, in each succeeding scene. (See Figure 10.) By the end of the prayer, the level of dissonance was so intense and the self-esteem of the people so deflated that they were eager to push the project to completion and heal their psychic wounds.

Ezra's prayer reviewed the fundamentals of their faith:

creation, Abraham's call, the Egyptian captivity, the wilderness wanderings, the Conquest of Canaan, the Babylonian captivity, and, in conclusion, a vivid portrayal of their present peril. God had created, blessed, provided, protected, and kept His people. His people had become proud, rebellious, defiant, blasphemous, stubborn, and disobedient. Each stinging accusation intensified their magnitude of dissonance. Ezra had taken their cultic story and turned it against them in order to prod them into action. He turned up the level of psychic pressure until the people were forced to act to reduce it. He rubbed raw the incongruity between their ethnic claims and their ethnic reality until the people were forced to change their lives, to resolve their ugly ethnic image, and to preserve their ethnic sanity. He focussed on the areas of their greatest concerns: their story, their identity, and their pride. The religious survival of the community was at stake--Ezra would pull no punches.

The prayer of Ezra was also a calculated composition designed to offer a ray of hope in the midst of their affliction (Neh. 9:37). Along with the diagnosis of the people's problem was the recognition of God's patience, mercy, and longsuffering. God had never permitted His people to be totally destroyed, nor were they ever completely forsaken (Neh. 9:3, 30-31). To Ezra, the future was no closed box in which the events of life were neatly arranged and rigidly determined. The future contained the possibilities of forgiveness, new beginning, and creative options. In prayer, Cox explains, "a man shows that he is not a slave of the past, nor of the facts, nor of fate." [78]

Judah had a creative option (confession, repentance, and restoration) or a dismal consequence (rebellion, rejection, and

Figure 10 The Magnitude of Jewish Dissonance

<p>Discrepancies Between</p>	<p>Selection of Israel Neh. 9:6-17a</p>	<p>Conquest of Caanan Neh. 9:17b-25</p>	<p>Rebellion of Israel Neh. 9:26-30</p>	<p>Exploitation of Judah Neh. 9:31-37</p>
<p>Belief of the People</p>	<p>God created the universe and human beings. God preserved the universe and human beings. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. God delivered His people from Egypt and provided for their needs. God gave the Law of the Covenant. God kept His promise.</p>	<p>God loved and forgave His people. God did not forsake His people. God instructed His people God fed and cared for His people. God gave the people the land of Canaan, houses, fields, orchards, and cities.</p>	<p>God turned the people over to their enemies. God let their enemies rule over His people. God delivered His people many times. God perpetually warned His people in an attempt to forestall suffering. God sent special prophets.</p>	<p>God spared a remnant of His people. God is gracious and merciful. God is great, mighty, and faithful; He keeps His Covenant. God is just in His punishments. God gave the people rich lands for their enjoyment.</p>
<p>Behavior of the People</p>	<p>People were proud and stubborn. People refused to obey God's laws. People rebelled against God's leadership. People wanted to return to bondage in Egypt.</p>	<p>People worshipped the "Golden Calf." People gave God's praise to the idol. People were disobedient and rebellious. People defiantly broke the law. People mistreated and killed God's prophets who warned them. People committed "great blasphemies."</p>	<p>People refused to listen or respond to God. People suffered much from their enemies. When the people called upon God, they were delivered. People experienced cycles of disobedience, suffering, and deliverance. People were stubborn and obstinate.</p>	<p>People and leaders have suffered much for their disobedience. People acted wickedly. People spurned God's laws and failed to heed God's warnings. People are slaves on their own land. People are forced to share their harvest with foreign rulers. People are dominated by foreigners. People are in great distress.</p>

repression). Repentance was the key. Repentance is the positive recognition "that the future is not just a continuation of the past. The unexpected and unprecedented can happen. Men are not fated by tragic flaws, but free to start over. Penitence simply means starting out in a new direction." [79] Ezra and the people repented and received a stimulating breath of a new beginning.

Solidification in Revitalization (Neh. 9:38-10:40). To many biblical scholars, Nehemiah 9:38 is a paradox. The verse is seen as an anticlimax to the chapter, as an abrupt transition to the following chapter, or an editorial insertion to connect the two chapters. [80] In this study, it is viewed as a necessary and logical step in the revitalization process. If Ezra was effective in his prayer in increasing the people's stress and cognitive dissonance to an intolerable level, if the people were seriously considering changing their lifestyle, then it would be logical for the people to respond in some fashion similar to "Where do we sign?" The present verse is a necessary step in the revitalization process in which the people abandoned their old "state constitution" and decided to adopt a new "state constitution." This verse hardly seems superfluous or irrelevant; it is absolutely essential to the flow of the socio-cultural dynamics of the book. If it were omitted, a causal element would be missing.

Perhaps few societies have been described in more cryptic and caustic terms than the one given in the prayer of Ezra (Neh. 9:6-37). The people had two options--either to face their problems or flee them. Since they had tried to flee their problems and had failed, their only viable option was to confront them.

Chapter ten represents an historic and courageous attempt on the part of the Judean community to confront their social decay with resilience and vision. Ezra's provocative prayer had placed the issues squarely before the people. It was enough. The people were ready to change and anxious to sign their names and so to act to reduce their dissonance and to resolve the pernicious mental image of a rebellious and backslidden people vividly echoed in their minds by the penetrating prayer of their popular priest.

Growth and decay are an integral part of living. As Whitehead observes, "The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code, and secondly, in the fearlessness of revision Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay." [81] Revitalization is not a social luxury; it is an absolute necessity.

The cultural revitalization of Judah lacked the eclecticism normally associated with such movements. Nehemiah did not incorporate Persian, Babylonian, or Samaritan custom and symbols into the movement. Rather, he concentrated on the sacred traditions associated with the Covenant. The Israelite Covenant was ascribed in its authorship entirely to God. [82] The Covenant was religious law, the established principles of God. The precepts of the Covenant were holy, eternal, and binding. These precepts were pervasive and governed the social relations of individuals as well as their relations with God. Revitalization in this setting was not so much a reordering of the past to conform to the present, but a reordering of the present to conform to the past. This means that key elements of the past were rigidly

Nehemiah had conspired with the prophets to proclaim him as the "messiah." [40] Sanballet had failed to isolate Nehemiah from the wall through the peace process, and so he would seek to use the wall to isolate Nehemiah from the people. It was a perverted and incendiary interpretation of Nehemiah's actions; it charged Nehemiah with conspiring to revolt against Persia, with tyranny of the people, and with blasphemy against God.

A good rumor is a simple and effective method for spreading discontent among the people and staging a revolution. [41] It was also a supreme test of the people's loyalty. Nehemiah quietly dismissed the charge as "pure fabrication." Again Nehemiah prevailed. Why? Because Nehemiah had publicly shown himself to be a man of integrity. The charge did not fit the facts. His previous behavior in returning loan collateral and in refusing the governor's salary dramatically demonstrated the level of Nehemiah's involvement.

The third attack may have been the most diabolical of all. It was designed to disgrace Nehemiah before the people and to ensnare him where he least expected it--a false message from a seemingly respectable source. He reported that the opposition had recently dispatched a hit squad to kill Nehemiah and that God had revealed this information so that Nehemiah would have time to flee to safety--even the security of the temple. The Covenant permitted a layman to seek asylum in the court but not in the temple [42] where only priests were permitted to enter (Num. 18:1-7). This scheme was designed to catch Nehemiah in an act of cowardice, to demonstrate his lack of faith to God, and to reveal a general disrespect for the Covenant. If successful, it could have resulted in public disgrace. And if Nehemiah were a eunich,

as some assert, then it would have been doubly onerous to the people.[43] Nehemiah declined. He feared God, respected the Covenant, and valued his personal witness.

A fourth "dirty trick" designed to topple the government of Nehemiah was an attempt to sway the allegiance of the "intellectuals"--a proven and reliable determinant for revolution.[44] The opposition had a cadre of petty nobles in Jerusalem who had been given special political privilege in exchange for their personal support of Samaria. Machiavelli noted that the Romans "sustained the feebler chiefs without increasing their power, while they humbled the stronger." [45] Sanballet and Tobiah had succeeded in winning the support of many high class Jews through similar acts of political favors who in turn had sworn an oath to support the Samaritans--supplanters of political subversion. These Samaritan loyalists perpetually bombarded Nehemiah with the virtues of his opposition and sought to sway other elites to their persuasion (Neh. 6:17-18). The battle over the allegiance of the elite was intense. Nehemiah managed to maintain control of the separatist movement by sustaining the support of key members of the upper class, the majority of the Levites, and the masses of common people.

Nehemiah is a classic example of leadership under extreme pressure and personal attacks. How did he survive against such political odds? He believed in the power of his God, he kept his commitment to the Covenant, and he carefully studied his opposition. When the opposition converged upon him with greater strength and an inevitable plan of defeat, he smashed their plan. Alinsky suggests that this is not as difficult to do as some might think. "Every step of an opponent's plan is based upon an

anticipated move from you." [46] Alinsky submits that it is like sparring with a boxing opponent. If the opponent attacks the body, you lower your guard; if he attacks your head, you raise your guard. The secret of success, then, is to respond, protect yourself, and counter in an unanticipated manner, so that you throw your opponent off balance.

Nehemiah proceeded with his general renovation plans until the opposition took some decisive course of action. On such occasion, Nehemiah would counter with a well-calculated response so as to render the original action of the opposition ineffective. By so doing, Nehemiah confused his opponents and drew the opposition into the vortex of the same confusion. (See Figure 9.) Alinsky submits that in most circumstances, when confronted by superior numbers and power with fixed plans and fixed forces, the only effective response may be to confuse the opposition and smash their plan. [47]

Completion of the Project (Neh. 7:1-14). Once the fortification plan to secure the perimeter of the city was completed, Nehemiah could turn his attention to new concerns: the need for reliable guards to patrol the city gates, the need for a civil defense program to surveil the wall, and the need for loyal and dependable leaders to continue the progress. Roberts notes that "organization development is a continuous process." [48] The gains of the past can only be sustained and preserved by perpetual vigilance. Consequently, Nehemiah was continually attentive to the needs and progress of his administrative constituency.

The citizenry of Jerusalem constantly lived under the imminent threat of a sneak attack. The city was most vulnerable at its gates. The local residents needed to protect the gates--

Figure 9 Nehemiah Defeats the Plan

Opposition's Action	Nehemiah's Response
Political threats, "Don't build the wall."	Executive order, "Close the gaps in the wall."
Military alliance, "Surround the city."	Executive order, "Post a twenty-four hour guard."
Psychological threat, "Infiltrate the city."	Executive order, "Remember God, and protect your family."
Assassination plot, "Join the peace talks."	Executive order, "Complete the walls as Persia ordered."
Revolution plot, "Revolt, tyranny and blasphemy."	Executive order, "No evidence-- pure fabrication."
Temple plot, "Malign the leader."	Executive order, "Advice of a false prophet."
Intellectual plot, "Use the fifth column."	Executive order, "Be loyal to God and His Covenant."

not only from sudden foreign attacks, but also from the foreign sympathizers residing within the city wall. Faced with the loss of their foreign status and political privileges, these foreign sympathizers might be persuaded to open the city gates or assist the enemy in scaling the wall on some opportune occasion and possibly swing the balance of power in favor of the opposition.

One group whose loyalty was unquestioned, whose self-interest was intimately tied to a secure city, and whose past experience qualified them for supervising the security of the gates, was the temple porters. The temple porters were a specially trained group of "police" who had historically guarded the gates of the temple and maintained security within the temple grounds (I. Chron. 9:17-19; 26:12-19). Nehemiah expanded their duties to include the city gates and increased their ranks with loyal temple singers and teachers.

The temple was the ceremonial heart and soul of the community of Judah. The temple personnel derived their livelihood and status from the temple. They were highly organized, rigorously disciplined, and extremely dedicated to the protection and preservation of the temple services. Therefore, Nehemiah sought their assistance and expressed his confidence in their ability to lead the community in providing needed security.

A second major administrative concern related to the crucial appointment of a qualified candidate to serve as mayor of Jerusalem. Nehemiah desired to turn the administration of Jerusalem over to local leadership at the earliest possible occasion. Hananiah received the appointment. Hananiah was a close relative of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:2), an apparent early leader

in the separatist movement, a member of the delegation to Susa to recruit Nehemiah's assistance, former "chief of the city fortress," a man of faith and integrity, and perhaps of "royal blood." [49] His appointment unified the city's administration and increased the efficiency previously lacking in the two major systems (Neh. 3:9,12).

The new mayor was given specific instructions to increase the security of the city. First, the gates were to be opened for only a brief period each day under the supervision of a heavy guard. Normally, city gates were open from sunrise to sunset. In an effort to reduce the threat of attack, the Jerusalem gates were to be open only during the busiest part of the day, when large numbers of people were nearby, and ample guards were on duty.

Second, all physically fit male residents in Jerusalem were expected to serve their turn guarding the wall. The special temple forces were charged with supervising the security of the gates; the security of the city was to be the duty of all. The city was no more secure than the level of involvement of each citizen. In effect, each worker was called upon to guard a section of the wall near his home--to place his life on the quality of his work and the alertness of his watch.

In the process of cleaning up the rubble and securing the city, the leaders discovered a critical shortage of manpower. Normally, walled cities were compact and crowded, providing a maximum amount of security in a minimum amount of space. Jerusalem was an exception. Few people desired to live in a dilapidated city with a broken wall and burned gates. Consequently, few people lived in Jerusalem. Most people preferred to live in

outlying areas (Neh. 7:73; 11:25-36; 12:27-29). Once the rubble was removed, open spaces became evident and the paucity of population pointed up the critical need for new house construction and urban migrants to secure the city and to fill long-term employment needs. However, the problem was not an immediate crisis, and so Nehemiah made a mental note of the population predicament and began to formulate a solution and schedule it into the master plan of development.

A study of Nehemiah 7:1-4 suggests five significant principles applicable to similar projects of planned change. One, Nehemiah utilized existing local groups whenever possible to meet the challenges of an uncertain future. He avoided the time, expense, and potential factionalism of organizing new groups. Rather, he chose to expand the skills and organizational experiences of older groups to meet new contingencies. New groups were appointed only when no existing group was suitable for meeting the new challenge.

Second, Nehemiah turned over the reins of local government to local leaders at the earliest opportunity. He maintained control only during the crisis of construction. He could have clung to the prerogatives of power as many community or Christian workers have done in the past, reasoning that 150 years of foreign domination had contributed to a classic class of underdevelopment. But he didn't. Barring any unusual drain of personnel from a community, Munro contends that "any ordinary human group contains within its membership all the native ability needed for any job of . . . leadership which that group requires." [50] That is, every group contains sufficient numbers of individuals with adequate abilities to effectively carry on its work. Nehemiah,

at least, tacitly agreed. Indeed, the effectiveness of development projects are connected to the inclusion of local leaders.

Third, Nehemiah involved the people in each stage of the project: the decision to rebuild, the process of repairing of the wall, and the security of the city. It was a people's project. They owned it. Kirsch observes from twenty years of rural development that "well-formulated programs with the necessary technical and financial resources still risk failure if there is lack of effective participation and support from the rural population." [51] People must be made aware that their contribution is a determining factor in solving their problems or in the attainment of their objective. Local participation unites individuals in a common venture to mobilize community resources, to address felt needs, to strengthen sagging perceptions of self-confidence, and to transform passive participants in public programs into active partners in the development process.

Fourth, Nehemiah demonstrated considerable acuity in his ability to acquire power and in his willingness to share it. The perception and use of power is intrinsic to planned projects of change. Every person has some measure of power--to demand, to support, to influence, to vote, to reform, or to revolt. People frequently acknowledge a sense of limited power and unite, organize, and develop strategies for joint action. The people of Jerusalem demonstrated the effectiveness of such joint actions. During the process, Nehemiah was careful not to corner power for personal gain. He sought power in order to share power, and to ultimately turn it over to the local people and their leaders. The personal integrity of Nehemiah became the public check upon the abuse of power by the Samaritans until such time as he could

safely deposit it into the hands of the oppressed people where it legitimately belonged. Kirsch cautions that sometimes "grass root institutions have to be taught . . . how to control their leaders, otherwise, the newly trained leadership would develop into a new elite misusing its position for its own benefit." [52]

Fifth, Nehemiah planned for the future. From the inception of the project he began anticipating the material needs, community involvement, and political support needed to reach his objective. And so when the population problem surfaced, Nehemiah simply added one more item to the list of objectives, prioritized them, and devised a timetable for their completion. As was his custom, Nehemiah discussed the problem with the appropriate leaders, turned to their cultural traditions for insights and solutions, and worked out a plan with the people through some participatory process. His method joined the catalytical inspiration and energies of an agent of change with the productive human skills and material resources of the community in a mutual search for meaningful solutions--solutions which were appropriate, practical, and effective. [53]

III. THE REVITALIZATION PROCESS

The physical reconstruction of Jerusalem was complete: the wall was restored, the gates were hung, and the city was secured. It could have been an occasion for feasting and celebration, but Nehemiah knew that the physical restoration of Jerusalem was superficial and temporary. The basic problem of the people remained: they were still estranged from their cultural heritage and their ethnic roots. The major task of any society

is to provide its members with "meaning and motivation . . . a sense of the worthwhileness of the whole human venture." [54] Until the Jews were willing to come to terms with their historic values, traditions and symbols, they would remain culturally confused, morally adrift, and ethnically entangled with the surrounding ethnic groups. Their ethnic identity and cultural meaning was inextricably tied to their distinctive values and lifestyle.

The people needed to rediscover their ethnic roots, their religious distinctives, and their historical call to be the community of faith. If the people failed to restore God to the centrality of their community life and thus reinforce the people with moral and spiritual principles in their struggle for existence and times of adversity, the new wall would become just another exercise in futility. No people can ignore their cultural heritage and survive with significance and distinction. They must either eventually revise their old beliefs or find a new system.

This section of Nehemiah marks an important transition from physical and temporal concerns to cultural and spiritual concerns. Such extreme shifts in community objectives are neither simple nor spontaneous. Nehemiah tactfully employed a genealogical review. The genealogical review brought the people into intensive contact with their historic past: their cultural accomplishments, their prominent leaders, and their cultural distinctives. In the process, they experienced anew a measure of their rich ceremonial life, their historic values, and a new reason for living. The people responded with enthusiasm and determination. They repudiated their present impoverished

cultural system (Neh. 8:8), reached back into their historical past (Neh. 8:16), and foraged a new faith out of the vitality of a lost heritage (Neh. 9:38) in an effort to address the circumstances of their present existence (Neh. 10:29).

Prelude to Revitalization (Neh. 7:5-65). Nehemiah resorted to the use of genealogies to connect the two prominent objectives in his project--the renovation of the wall with the restoration of the law. He used genealogical reviews as a means to bridge the people's knowledge gap between their contemporary Judean culture and their limited perspective of the past. A Punjabi man from India once remarked, "You never really know who a man is until you know who his grandfather and his ancestors were." [55] The identity of individuals and groups are inexorably connected with their ancestors.

Genealogies are more than sterile lists of progeny. They are cognitive maps of social reality. That is, they define and describe specific kinds of social relationships. They are specially selected sequences of data designed to "accurately express a particular aspect of social reality." [56] They are legitimate and reliable statements about domestic, political, and religious relations that exist among people who accept their validity. Kidner suggests that Nehemiah's general use of genealogies was designed to stress: first, an historical continuity with the land and culture of Judah, and, second, an ethnic separation from the bordering pagan states. [56]

The Babylonian captivity had disrupted their traditional systems of land tenure, kinships affiliations, and ceremonial life. One way to clarify these social, economic, and religious obligations was to check the individual pedigree of each person.

The charts of Zerrubbabel's migration to Judah provides the basis for Nehemiah's review. Theoretically, if a person could trace a line of descent to one of the ancestors on that list, then that person was considered to be a bona fide member of the community. Nehemiah (7:6) reports that each returned to "his city," implying that though the old land tenure system had been contaminated during the period of diaspora, it was still viable.

Nehemiah sought to identify a defeated group of people with their historic roots (Neh. 7:6). And by means of that genealogical review, he hoped that the people would catch a vision of the aspirations and achievements of their ancestors. Lichtman notes that in order for any people to understand themselves they need to catch a vision of their past.[57] Genealogies combine leaders, places, and events into a cherished record revealing the greatness of the past and defining the qualities of the "good life." It has been said that "the most rootless yearn for roots; the most mobile bemoan their placeless fate; the most isolated yearn for kin and community, for these represent the basic things that make life worth living." [58] The project of the wall produced a new sense of community, the genealogical review provided a new sense of social significance, and the ceremonial participation procured a new sense of cultural separation. All contributed to an emerging importance to the "community of faith."

One way to measure the effectiveness of planned change is to study the response of the local community. The greater Jerusalem community responded by giving some 5000 pounds of silver and 8273 pounds of gold, including golden bowls [59] "for

the work" (Neh. 7:69). Calculating the worth of these metals at present prices of \$13.00 per ounce for silver and \$450.00 per ounce for gold, their gifts would have equaled approximately \$61 million (U.S. dollars). This generous contribution "given willingly" by the people for the support of the temple was indicative of their high level of personal involvement and identification with the revitalization movement. The order of events in the book seem to indicate that this offering was the people's response to a new evaluation of their cultural heritage.

Repudiation in Revitalization (Neh. 8:1-18). The Book of Nehemiah began with a people suffering from a negative self-perception--"we are despised and shamed" (Neh. 1:3). They decided to do something about their predicament, and through arduous labor, dauntless courage, and persistent faith, they accomplished an astonishing feat. Even their armies were awed by their accomplishment (Neh. 6:16). In the process the people's self-image dramatically improved. They acquired a new sense of mastery over their lives. They were no longer the disorganized, defenseless, and dependent people subject to the intimidation of the surrounding states. They had become a political entity equal in status with other Persian provinces. They were the people of the Covenant.

How did their ancestors become identified with the Covenant? What did it mean to belong to a Covenant? What did it do for them? How did it affect their daily lives? Due to limited editions of the Covenant and mass illiteracy, the general populace was largely ignorant of Covenant principles and implications for their lives (Neh. 8:13). Spurred by their lack of knowledge of the Covenant, their common quest for ethnic

identity, and their search for religious certitude, the people requested the community elders to sponsor a public reading of the Covenant (Neh. 8:1).

It seems from the Nehemiah narration that he had sensed the people's growing interest in their religious heritage. Distrustful of the high priestly family which had intermarried with the opposition (Neh. 13:4), Nehemiah sent to Persia [60] for a trusted assistant--Ezra (Ezra 7:6-17). The teaching of the law and the administration of the ceremonial life of Judah belonged rightfully to the priesthood. Plagued by the infidelity and corruption of the priesthood (Mal. 1:10), Nehemiah turned to Ezra, a dedicated and scholarly member of the high priestly family, for needed leadership. Nehemiah and Ezra, the political and religious authorities, joined forces to lead the community in their search for a new identity, a new faith, and a revitalized culture.

Nehemiah could model his renewed lifestyle and attempt to communicate it to the people, but he could not change them unless they will were willing to be changed. As Goodenough observes, "The missionary approach to development (in whatever guise) in which an agent's objective is to get others to live according to his values, can succeed only when the agent's clients have decided that these are the values by which they wish to live." [61] Nehemiah noted in his report that the people both requested and responded to the opportunity to hear the reading of the Covenant. God was working, through the renewed interest in the culture of the Covenant and the example of the life of Nehemiah, to begin the process of thawing the mindset of His people and to open the way for significant change (Deut. 30:4-6).

Anthropologists have noted that revitalization movements are a common consequence of projects of planned change.[62] Agents of change, who assist people with their development and who demonstrate a genuine empathy with the people, frequently earn respect and confidence of the people. It is, therefore, natural for the people in such projects to turn to their trusted friends for council and guidance for the weightier issues of life--like seeking a more meaningful faith.

For example, Goodenough describes an incident in New Guinea where a missionary expressed approval of certain biblical-like aspirations in a native myth. "Finding that he was not hostile, they asked him if he would show them the road by which they might achieve their aspirations. By agreeing to teach them 'the way,' he came to occupy the position of 'prophet' for the revitalization movement." [63]

Nehemiah and Ezra became the two "catalysts" of the revitalization movement in Judah. Ezra brought a copy of the Covenant with him from Persia and used it as a sort of plumb line for righteous living (Ezra 7:14). Ezra read from the Book, while the Levites explained the portions of scripture clearly and forcefully. The results were unanticipated and electrifying. It seems that the congregation was devastated by the discrepancy between their social standards of conduct and the expectations set forth in holy writ. Humbled and humiliated by their crass disobedience, they openly and unashamedly sobbed out their sorrow to God.

The text simply stated, "The people wept" (Neh. 8:9). Like Nehemiah (1:4), the people confronted and reevaluated their values and beliefs in the light of the teachings of the Covenant.

They had succeeded, through the experiences of the recent crises, the leadership of Nehemiah, and the reading of the Covenant, in unfreezing their contemporary cultural milieu that had blindly hedged them into a distorted set of cultural norms and social expectations. God was in their midst; they could never be the same. His presence in the reading of His word had confronted their secular living, transformed their concerns to religious values, and imparted a new measure of spiritual sensitivity. Suddenly, like a comet in the dark of the night, the people acknowledged their corporate conduct as contradictory to their historic beliefs and then permitted the shock waves of conviction to burst their bonds of self-righteousness.

Caught by surprise, the leaders hastily conferred with one another to consider an appropriate response to the mood of the gathering. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites issued a joint statement urging the people to resolve their sorrow by putting themselves enthusiastically into the holy celebration of feasting and sharing with the less fortunate families. The next day, the clan elders met with the priests, Levites and Ezra to plot a course of action that would reconstruct a viable set of values and beliefs and that would address the needs of the people within the constraints of the Covenant.

The leaders resolved to revive the old ceremonies of the Covenant and through feasts and rituals to retrace the steps of their ancestors to the source of their historic affirmations. The obvious place to begin was with the application of the Covenant to the present. Since they were about to begin the seventh month of the year, it meant to observe the feast of booths, also called the feast of tabernacle. The feast of booths

provided an excellent opportunity to commemorate a significant portion of their historic past. The group readily agreed to participate in this abandoned ceremony of antiquity.

Ceremony and celebration is no excursus into the trivial and the irrelevant. Celebration enables people, in the form of play, to extend the frontiers of their future. Celebration commemorates those things that make us "distinctive and worthy in our own eyes." [64] Feasts and festivals enable us to relate to one another, to integrate the great mysteries of life, and to assimilate the ultimate concerns of our existence into our daily lives. Rituals reduce the incomprehensible world, in which we are born and die alone, into a complex web of people, symbols, and activities which "bind us to one another." [65]

Religious celebrations go to the very foundations of group values and understandings, and in the process, weave those cultural distinctives into the "private psyche" of individuals replacing external controls with internal motivation. [66] Rituals authenticate lifestyles; participants derive meaning and direction for living. Cox notes that songs and ceremonies "link a man to his story." [67]

The feast of booths took the people of Judah to their spiritual roots, to the values and beliefs, rules and regulations, and social code and moral obligations which set them apart from other people. These factors played a vital role in the revitalization of the community. In symbol and ceremony the festival of booths took the people back through time to the experiences of the wilderness wanderings. The people confronted themselves in the commemoration of their religious heritage and encountered the vivid options of their present choices

demonstrated in the lives of their ancestors. They faced similar defeats and triumphs, similar failures and achievements, and similar villains and heroes. Experimentally, the people could relate to the same sins, the same sacrifices, and the same judgements.

Through their observance of this feast and festival, the people took time out of the busy routine to work their way through the milieu of heritage toward a new fervor of faith. In the process, they became increasingly dissatisfied with their present predicament and acknowledged the need for new interpretation to their old story. Feasting is a technique for "celebrating plenty," a method for freeing up the mind from economic cares during festivals, to work through the plethora of symbols, values, and beliefs associated with rituals.[68] The people had not yet formulated a form of faith to confront the obstacles of their emerging community. But, all segments of the community were involved; it was a social group in mental motion in a corporate resolve to reconstruct a faith worthy of community support.

This type of community participation is imperative for any genuine development project. Kirsch warned that case studies prove almost without exception that programs of rural development "remain limited if project beneficiaries consider themselves only as passive receivers of government assistance and not as active partners of the project authorities." [69] Kirsch adds that "if project planners practice paternalistic attitudes, discourage local participation, or fail to accept a two-way relationship" they readily jeopardize the effectiveness of the project.[70] Nehemiah encouraged local input and publicly acknowledged their

initiatives. The community was involved in every phase of their development. The people and their leaders worked, fought, struggled, wept, and celebrated together as they gradually pieced together a new community out of the brokenness of their infidelity, subjugation, and ignorance.

Although biblical scholars have long noted the interconnectedness of chapters eight to ten and have described them as a "connected whole"[71] and "marked by a certain unity and distinctive character of its own"[72] they have failed to explain the essential unity of these three chapters. Wallace's description of the revitalization phase and Lewin's description of the way groups change, referred to previously in this study, explain the basic relationship between Nehemiah chapters eight through ten. Within these three chapters, the people of Judah reject their present values and symbols, collectively work through their common problems, and eventually institute a revised set of values and symbols. In the eighth chapter, the people jettisoned their faltering attempts to perpetuate a distorted ethos by relinquishing their commitment to the old social charter in an attempt to construct a more meaningful one. In chapter nine the people confronted and conquered the obstacles of the old system which prevented them from implementing a better approach to living. And in chapter ten the community united in a public resolve to implement those changes required to free the people to fulfill their perceived destiny and hence to freeze the new code of values at a new level of meaning.

Momentum in Revitalization (Neh. 9:1-38). The joyous celebration of the previous chapter became abruptly interrupted

by the stark obstruction of an obdurate faction who by their persistence to cleave to old ways hindered community progress. These people wanted to be selective in the process of change desiring to protect certain "pet" areas in their lives from the scrupulous implications of the Covenant. They wanted to be part of the Covenant--but on their own terms. More specifically, the problems of foreign wives, sabbatical observance, and temple contributions posed a threat to their vested interests.

It appears from the story that the Nehemiah team encountered growing opposition. It seems that some of the early enthusiasm of chapter eight had begun to wear thin as the people began to evaluate the implications of the stipulations in the Covenant. As a result, the promising progress of the project again began to grind to a halt. It was strategically imperative to maintain the momentum. Alinsky suggests that "a tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag." [73] What does an agent of change do when a revitalization movement begins to stall? Ezra's strategic response included three time-proven methods for stimulating progress: (1) stage a public demonstration to rally your forces, (2) rub raw the social sores of discontent, and (3) increase the people's magnitude of dissonance to an intolerable level, forcing people to change.

The exact time and sequence of events in Nehemiah 9:1-5 and Ezra 9:3-10:4 are unclear. One thing is certain. Ezra did not abandon the revitalization cause without a struggle. He marched to the entrance of the temple and staged a personal public protest in full view of the people. He tore off his priestly garments, pulled hair out of his head and beard, and sank to the ground "horror-stricken." He lay before the entrance

of the temple crushed and disheveled the rest of the day while worshippers paused to inquire about the circumstances and remained to pray.

Several factors may have contributed to precipitate Ezra's sudden display of caustic cultural reproof. It may have been sparked by a defiant refusal to observe the sabbath laws. Perhaps it was the hardness of heart displayed by some insensitive elites who balked at sharing their wealth with the less fortunate. Or it could have been the report of the recent census with its graphic statistics concerning the alarming rate of foreign marriages and the resulting insidious erosion of the values and beliefs of Judean households. Pagan mothers were raising a skeptical generation of confused children.

The silhouette of their popular priest prostrated on the ground caught the attention of the passing worshippers. They anxiously inquired concerning the reasons for the priest's penitence and learned that he was protesting the flagrant disregard of the people for the Covenant. Many who paused to ponder the seriousness of their decadence remained to mourn the gravity of their apathy. Ezra had received a limited measure of the community's support, but he knew that they were willing on a large scale to commit themselves to the types of changes needed to become the Covenant people.

After a few hours the number of people had grown to a sizeable crowd of sympathetic followers. Moved by shame and fear, the more conservative element began to separate themselves from the foreign element in their midst. Unbelieving foreigners were excluded from the Covenant and thereby were not permitted to worship with the people. Male violators reluctantly withdrew

from their foreign wives and children under the scrupulous gaze of their pious relatives. Their deliberate act of disobedience to their ethnic and religious prohibition against marrying foreign wives now threatened their very position as Covenant people (Exod. 34:15-17; Deut. 7:3). It was a clear choice between God's law and men's will.

The foreign wives were undoubtedly aware of these community sentiments regarding foreigners, but years of foreign dominance and community tolerance had made them seem irrelevant. And even though the Law condemned idolatry, the foreign wives were reluctant to abandon their gods in the belief that since the Jewish community had been largely indifferent to them in the past, it would continue to ignore them. Reality had dawned; the law had prevailed. The people called for a formal resolution to be drawn up to forbid the practice of foreign marriages and to revoke the permanent status of all foreigners--even their wives.

Just as the newly constructed walls had resulted in the physical separation of the people from their enemies, so now the newly mended law resulted in the spiritual separation of the people from paganism. This remedy seems cruel to the modern twentieth-century mind. Their drastic divorce rule appeared to ignore the anguish of human separation, to be a degradation of women and children, and to represent a general disregard for the desires and rights of the people involved. But their ethnic identity, their moral integrity, and their Covenant relationship were at stake. To the community at large, a few foreigners and their descendants were a small price to pay compared to the alternative--possible annihilation of the remnant and demise of the Covenant.

The rest of the day was spent in reading the Covenant to the people, followed by public confession of sin (Neh. 9:3-5). But even though the people had made public contributions to the temple, participated in the ritual, put away their foreign wives, and confessed their transgressions of the Covenant, Ezra still perceived a reticence and lack of resolve of whole-hearted commitment to become the covenant people. Ezra attempted to increase their resolve for change by increasing their level of stress. First he focussed upon key areas of discontent with Persian domination and rubbed raw their sores of servitude. In public prayer Ezra acknowledged that the people were slaves in their own country and on their own farms. He pointed out that the people did not even possess their own cattle, their own labor, or their own harvests. It all belonged to foreigners and the people remained in "great distress" (Neh. 9:36-37). Why? Because the people had forsaken the Covenant. This was inflammatory language designed to motivate the people into action.

Schaller notes that "without discontent with the present situation there can be no planned, internally motivated and directed intentional change." [74] Schaller does not mean that change will not occur. Change is ubiquitous and inevitable. What he does mean is that the type of change which is planned, structured, and directed by the community is the result of people who want change badly enough to make it happen. There is no substitute for creative endurance. Change is threatening and therefore produces opposition. Changes are never easy. They involve unlearning old patterns and learning new ones to replace them. Change is traumatic and enervating. Consequently, Ezra

continued to escalate the level of stress until the people desired to respond in new ways.

A second way Ezra increased the intensity of the revitalization process was by raising the level of individual and group dissonance. This was done by drawing attention to the inconsistencies that existed between their beliefs and their behavior. Individuals habitually strive for consistency in living. Psychological tests demonstrate the extent to which an individual's opinions and attitudes "tend to exist in clusters that are internally consistent." [75] People's beliefs influence their behavior with remarkable congruity. Social scientists use the term "dissonance" to refer to those inconsistencies in behavior in which actions do not logically follow or grow out of stated beliefs.

Dissonance is stressful. The greater the magnitude of dissonance, the greater the pressure to reduce it. Festinger observes that "the pressure of dissonance leads to actions to reduce it." [76] Ezra skillfully and deliberately increased the level of dissonance by focusing public attention on the flagrant incongruity between their historic beliefs and present social practices. His prayer was in the form of a narrative drama contrasting God's faithfulness and grace with man's stubbornness and sin. [77] The drama consisted of four scenes in which this basic conflict was described, personalized, and intensified, in each succeeding scene. (See Figure 10.) By the end of the prayer, the level of dissonance was so intense and the self-esteem of the people so deflated that they were eager to push the project to completion and heal their psychic wounds.

Ezra's prayer reviewed the fundamentals of their faith:

creation, Abraham's call, the Egyptian captivity, the wilderness wanderings, the Conquest of Canaan, the Babylonian captivity, and, in conclusion, a vivid portrayal of their present peril. God had created, blessed, provided, protected, and kept His people. His people had become proud, rebellious, defiant, blasphemous, stubborn, and disobedient. Each stinging accusation intensified their magnitude of dissonance. Ezra had taken their cultic story and turned it against them in order to prod them into action. He turned up the level of psychic pressure until the people were forced to act to reduce it. He rubbed raw the incongruity between their ethnic claims and their ethnic reality until the people were forced to change their lives, to resolve their ugly ethnic image, and to preserve their ethnic sanity. He focussed on the areas of their greatest concerns: their story, their identity, and their pride. The religious survival of the community was at stake--Ezra would pull no punches.

The prayer of Ezra was also a calculated composition designed to offer a ray of hope in the midst of their affliction (Neh. 9:37). Along with the diagnosis of the people's problem was the recognition of God's patience, mercy, and longsuffering. God had never permitted His people to be totally destroyed, nor were they ever completely forsaken (Neh. 9:3, 30-31). To Ezra, the future was no closed box in which the events of life were neatly arranged and rigidly determined. The future contained the possibilities of forgiveness, new beginning, and creative options. In prayer, Cox explains, "a man shows that he is not a slave of the past, nor of the facts, nor of fate." [78]

Judah had a creative option (confession, repentance, and restoration) or a dismal consequence (rebellion, rejection, and

Figure 10 The Magnitude of Jewish Dissonance

<p>Discrepancies Between</p>	<p>Selection of Israel Neh. 9:6-17a</p>	<p>Conquest of Caanan Neh. 9:17b-25</p>	<p>Rebellion of Israel Neh. 9:26-30</p>	<p>Exploitation of Judah Neh. 9:31-37</p>
<p>Belief of the People</p>	<p>God created the universe and human beings. God preserved the universe and human beings. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. God delivered His people from Egypt and provided for their needs. God gave the Law of the Covenant. God kept His promise.</p>	<p>God loved and forgave His people. God did not forsake His people. God instructed His people God fed and cared for His people. God gave the people the land of Canaan, houses, fields, orchards, and cities.</p>	<p>God turned the people over to their enemies. God let their enemies rule over His people. God delivered His people many times. God perpetually warned His people in an attempt to forestall suffering. God sent special prophets.</p>	<p>God spared a remnant of His people. God is gracious and merciful. God is great, mighty, and faithful; He keeps His Covenant. God is just in His punishments. God gave the people rich lands for their enjoyment.</p>
<p>Behavior of the People</p>	<p>People were proud and stubborn. People refused to obey God's laws. People rebelled against God's leadership. People wanted to return to bondage in Egypt.</p>	<p>People worshipped the "Golden Calf." People gave God's praise to the idol. People were disobedient and rebellious. People defiantly broke the law. People mistreated and killed God's prophets who warned them. People committed "great blasphemies."</p>	<p>People refused to listen or respond to God. People suffered much from their enemies. When the people called upon God, they were delivered. People experienced cycles of disobedience, suffering, and deliverance. People were stubborn and obstinate.</p>	<p>People and leaders have suffered much for their disobedience. People acted wickedly. People spurned God's laws and failed to heed God's warnings. People are slaves on their own land. People are forced to share their harvest with foreign rulers. People are dominated by foreigners. People are in great distress.</p>

repression). Repentance was the key. Repentance is the positive recognition "that the future is not just a continuation of the past. The unexpected and unprecedented can happen. Men are not fated by tragic flaws, but free to start over. Penitence simply means starting out in a new direction." [79] Ezra and the people repented and received a stimulating breath of a new beginning.

Solidification in Revitalization (Neh. 9:38-10:40). To many biblical scholars, Nehemiah 9:38 is a paradox. The verse is seen as an anticlimax to the chapter, as an abrupt transition to the following chapter, or an editorial insertion to connect the two chapters. [80] In this study, it is viewed as a necessary and logical step in the revitalization process. If Ezra was effective in his prayer in increasing the people's stress and cognitive dissonance to an intolerable level, if the people were seriously considering changing their lifestyle, then it would be logical for the people to respond in some fashion similar to "Where do we sign?" The present verse is a necessary step in the revitalization process in which the people abandoned their old "state constitution" and decided to adopt a new "state constitution." This verse hardly seems superfluous or irrelevant; it is absolutely essential to the flow of the socio-cultural dynamics of the book. If it were omitted, a causal element would be missing.

Perhaps few societies have been described in more cryptic and caustic terms than the one given in the prayer of Ezra (Neh. 9:6-37). The people had two options--either to face their problems or flee them. Since they had tried to flee their problems and had failed, their only viable option was to confront them.

Chapter ten represents an historic and courageous attempt on the part of the Judean community to confront their social decay with resilience and vision. Ezra's provocative prayer had placed the issues squarely before the people. It was enough. The people were ready to change and anxious to sign their names and so to act to reduce their dissonance and to resolve the pernicious mental image of a rebellious and backslidden people vividly echoed in their minds by the penetrating prayer of their popular priest.

Growth and decay are an integral part of living. As Whitehead observes, "The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code, and secondly, in the fearlessness of revision Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay." [81] Revitalization is not a social luxury; it is an absolute necessity.

The cultural revitalization of Judah lacked the eclecticism normally associated with such movements. Nehemiah did not incorporate Persian, Babylonian, or Samaritan custom and symbols into the movement. Rather, he concentrated on the sacred traditions associated with the Covenant. The Israelite Covenant was ascribed in its authorship entirely to God. [82] The Covenant was religious law, the established principles of God. The precepts of the Covenant were holy, eternal, and binding. These precepts were pervasive and governed the social relations of individuals as well as their relations with God. Revitalization in this setting was not so much a reordering of the past to conform to the present, but a reordering of the present to conform to the past. This means that key elements of the past were rigidly

The name of Nehemiah, governor of Judah, headed the list of signers followed by that of his administrative secretary Zedekiah (Neh. 10:1; 13:13). As chief executive of the state, Nehemiah's initial signing of the document increased the significance of the event and set the pattern for others. Next, the priests signed according to their historical lineages, arranged in an attempt to restore the original line of descent from Aaron, the first high priest. Like the priests, the Levites and people were included on the document according to genealogical lineages. The new ratification of the old Covenant by lineages emphasized their legal basis for participation in the ethnic community.

The process of ratifying the document by lineages adds a measure of authenticity to this section. This has been a common practice in kinship-oriented societies from the immemorial. Nehemiah seems to indicate that his test with citizenship rests on kinship (Neh. 7:5). Genealogies can present several problems in the process of their interpretations. It is possible that some names, through centuries of hand copying, have become misspelled, abbreviated, or omitted in these lengthy lists of progeny. Authors may use essentially the same genealogy for different purposes or a writer may use similar lists for different purposes. Genealogies serve specific functions not always discernable to the present readers. The inclusion of names in any genealogy will vary according to the purpose of the compiler, as anthropologists have long recognized. The purpose of the list of names in this chapter is quite obvious. They represent the ratification of the Covenant by the people through their properly designed leaders who sign the document on the behalf. The signed document then becomes of great importance to

applied to the present (Neh. 10:28-40). This reordering process, however, seemed to include enlightenment, creativity, and development. That is, there seemed to be room in their historical revitalization process for improved perceptions, creative applications, and accumulative insights regarding their divinely established Covenant community.

Myers suggests that chapter ten is out of place.[83] He would put the material in this chapter with similar material in chapter thirteen because it addresses the same subject. The author chose not to put the material together. His arrangement follows the sequence of development found in a typical contemporary community development project. Myers' rearrangement would interrupt the logical flow of the change process (unfreezing and refreezing the ethos). His arrangement would postpone closure on the Covenant until after the celebration and produce an artificial climate for community celebration. It would force Nehemiah to solve the tough problems of relocation of the population and the purification of the priesthood without the explicit support of the people. It makes better sense both theoretically and experimentally to follow through on the revitalization process, to achieve a measure of consensus and unity, to tackle the pesky problems of population and priesthood, and then to culminate the change project in a grand climax of community celebration, as recorded in the Nehemiah account. In following the Nehemiah narration, according to the revitalization and community development models, the material in chapter thirteen becomes part of the follow-up process--a normal practice in projects of planned change to monitor the process and problems inherent to the change process.

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those of future generations who are able to trace their descent back to the signers.

All the people of Judah who were old enough to grasp the meaning and significance of the teachings of the Covenant, who had participated in the decision-making process to return to the Covenant as the foundation for their society (Neh. 8:2-3), and who had separated themselves from foreign wives and pagan influences, joined in a common pledge to uphold the Covenant in their daily lives (Neh. 10:29). The ratification process included the usual oaths and curses, adding a measure of seriousness and solemnity to their action.

The ratification process was an act of free will--a voluntary acceptance of a new lifestyle. It was a public act of commitment that greatly improved the prospects of implementing the Covenant because it increased the public's expectations regarding the changes, it increased the pressure to maintain the new values, and decreased their social dissonance by integrating the new values with their behavior.[84] It was a community commitment to a new constitution; each member was a witness of the action taken by every other member.

The first stipulation of their common agreement was to maintain strong ethnic boundaries. They prohibited marriages with other groups (Neh. 10:30). Barth suggests that ethnic groups classify "a person in terms of his most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background." [85] The recent genealogical quest (Neh. 7:6-62) put the Jewish ethnic community in touch with their roots and renewed their interest in their ethnic symbols. Ethnic symbols are unique to each group. Symbols provide a group with a sense of identity and serve to

differentiate the members from the non-members. Boundary maintenance is crucial to the perpetuation of ethnic groups. Boundaries emphasize group membership, while at the same time place restrictions on interaction with non-members.

Gottwald notes that the Samaritans had failed to maintain their ethnic boundaries by deciding "to fraternize and intermarry with the inhabitants of the land." [86] Nehemiah perceived that Judah was threatened with the same problem. Little wonder, then, that their first stipulation addressed the problem of marriages. The mixed marriage was one of the historical problems of Judah (Exod. 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deut. 7:3; Josh. 24:12-13; Judges 3:6-8). The Covenant people were to be distinctive people--in values, beliefs, and conduct. The prohibition against foreign marriages was absolutely essential to restore Covenant values to the community.

A second ethnic distinctive established by the reaffirmation process was sabbath observance. The prohibition against foreign marriages was essentially a negative sanction against pagan influences. The sabbath observance was essentially positive, by providing rest to both humans and their land. It also freed the people from their secular pursuits to devote time to religious education, to corporate worship and personal reflection. Sabbaths and holy days kept the people in touch with their values, beliefs, and story through religious instruction, community rituals, and communal sacrifices.

The custom of refraining from work on the sabbath resulted in the clustering of people in the villages and towns of Judah. Foreign traders looked upon the special days as prime business opportunities to engage the people in acquiring

irresistable bargains. In their renewed commitment to the Covenant, the people agreed to terminate all such sales and break off all business transactions on sabbath and other holy days. Furthermore, they agreed to observe the practice of fallowing the land every seventh year and to donate the volunteer crops of that year to the less fortunate in their midst. Their recent social class conflict (Neh. 5:1-5) had impressed upon them the need for such provisions. Later, Josephus reports that shortages of grain frequently occurred in Judah as a result of inadequate supplies of stored grain to tie people over the sabbatical year to the next one following their soil bank program--perhaps a tribute to Nehemiah's reform.[87]

A third ethnic distinctive and focus of their religious reform regarded the temple services. Inadequate support for the services of the temple resulted in an inadequate level of religious instruction. The people agreed to establish an adequate financial basis to maintain the level of services described in the Covenant (Neh., 10:40). The people agreed to initiate a new annual per capita contribution of one-half shekel to the support of the temple [88] (Exod. 28:25; 30:11). They agreed to supply wood for the burned offerings and the perpetual temple fire on a rotating basis (Lev. 6:12-13). They agreed to restore the firstfruit offerings: of the ground, of their trees, of their flocks, and of their family offspring, in acknowledgement of the creation and providence of God (Num. 18:11-13; Deut. 26:2-10; II Chron. 31:4-6). And they agreed to support the personnel of the temple complex with a tenth of their gross income (Num. 18:24-28). This is solid evidence that the people had indeed moved to a new level of change and were willing to

"freeze" a new "charter."

The people had agreed to marry only within the community of the faithful, to observe the Sabbath, and to support the temple services. These three concerns represented both old traditional ethnic distinctives and the basis of their Covenant community. The history of the children of Israel was replete with the results of foreign customs and pagan practices introduced through foreign marriages. Foreign marriages invaded their homes and undermined the faith of the family; commercialization of the Sabbath day threatened religious integrity of the people; and inadequate support for the temple weakened the religious education and sacrificial system of the Covenant.

Many biblical scholars have stressed the importance of later priestly influences in shaping the final version of the book Nehemiah toward a doctrinaire temple-priestly perspective. I fail to follow their logic either from a theoretical or experimental perspective. The real shapers of the direction and content of this book were Nehemiah and the people, with a little help from Ezra--the priest of the diaspora. The significant actions in the book seem to develop out of the community development and cultural revitalization processes. It was the work of Nehemiah and Ezra who functioned in the role of "visionaries" and catalysts that helped to chart the course of action. It was the people who decided to replace their old "social charter" with a new one. It was the people's collective search for meaning and identity that uncovered their cultural distinctives and redefined their role in the community. Similar struggles for power and manipulation of symbols are common

phenomena as ethnic groups around the world search for identity. Cohen notes that these types of activities are part and parcel of ethnic groups' adjustments to change. He calls the process "retribalization." [89] In a sense, the Book of Nehemiah is a description of the retribalization of Judah.

These stipulations were demanding and costly. The temple services required a considerable expenditure of funds. [90] The survival of the Jewish ethnic community was closely connected with the maintenance of distinct boundaries, the observance of religious days, and the participation in temple worship. Royce warns that "no ethnic group can maintain a believable (viable) identity without signs, symbols, and underlying values that point to a distinctive identity." [91] Religions and churches cost money. Nicoll suggests that "cheap religion is irreligious" [92] because genuine religion demands obedience and sacrifices. The high point of the book of Nehemiah is the people's ratification of the Covenant. Everything else in the book is either preliminary and precursory to the signing of the Covenant, or else is dependent upon and derived from it. Even though the objective of the physical reconstruction of the walls and cultural revitalization of the law had been achieved, they both required constant maintenance and supervision. The rest of the book suggests that vigilance is the eternal price of both freedom and faith.

IV. THE CONSOLIDATION PROCESS

The public ratification of the Covenant gave Nehemiah's administration a tremendous political boost. His public opinion

rating soared to an all-time high, and his opposition was momentarily overwhelmed by the extent of his popular support. Capitalizing upon the strength of this backing, Nehemiah initiated two major programs: a massive population resettlement of Jerusalem and a genealogical review of the priesthood. As an immigrant governor, Nehemiah had to bide his time and acquire adequate support before he could confront the powerful priesthood with a threatening genealogical review. The relationship between Nehemiah and the prestigious family of the high priest was neither very cordial nor cooperative. By recruiting Ezra, Nehemiah had largely worked around the foreign oriented high priestly family (Neh. 13:4-7).

Only after the wall was completed, the law of the Covenant reinstated, and the segments of the community reorganized, were the people in a position to join together for public celebration. Within the small state of Judah, the people were bound together by kin and community ties. It would have been premature and presumptuous to have held the restoration celebration before the city of Jerusalem was resettled and the community reorganized. Nehemiah waited until the community was established and unified.

Soon after the celebration, Nehemiah's term of duty in Judah was over and so he returned to his political position in Persia. Nehemiah, no doubt, stayed in touch with the progress of the Jerusalem community for the next several years. Lacking the strong leadership of Nehemiah, the reformation movement soon began to lose much of its enthusiasm. With a liberal and foreign aligned high priestly family in charge of the temple, the support of the people diminished and the services were curtailed. Caught

in a downward spiral of diminishing temple services and reduced religious personnel, the people lapsed into foreign marriages and desecration of the sabbath. Alarmed by the deteriorating situation in Jerusalem, Nehemiah requested a second leave of absence from King Artaxerxes I of Persia to return to Judah and bolster the fledgling Covenant community.

Resettlement and Reorganization (Neh. 11:1-36). The revitalization process ended with the rulers in the city and the people in the countryside. The security of the city, the administration of the state, and the services of the temple were all dependent upon adequate numbers of people. The destruction and deterioration of the city over the years did little to attract people to the area. The people in turn had become oriented to the rustic life of rural Judah. Jerusalem held little attraction to these small town dwellers.

The rulers sent out a call for volunteers to move to the city as an act of patriotism and devotion. A few responded and received high praise from the city officials. However, most declined the offer of moving to a city in which the residents lived in a state of semi-siege and served as sentinels on the wall. They preferred to remain with their relatives on their small quite farms in the country rather than to move to an insecure city with dilapidated or destroyed houses.

This is precisely why Nehemiah had not pursued the resettlement problem earlier and hence faced certain failure (Neh. 7:4). The people lacked a "cause" and a commitment to relocate. The revitalization process provided both. The people had become aware of their historic sentiments, shared in community rituals and had developed a feeling of esprit de corps.

The people increased their common commitment to historic values and the Covenant. Their community spirit bound the people together in mutual confidence and trust. Their common faith in God during the duress and stress of the construction project had deepened in the process of ritual worship and commitment during the revitalization process. These factors contributed to a powerful force for change. As Goodenough has observed, "Without a deep sense of identity with others, there can be no self-sacrifice for the common good." [93]

The meager response to the voluntary relocation program called for some creative and resourceful leadership. Nehemiah's solution demonstrated both. Josephus suggests that Nehemiah initiated a housing project to repair and replace the ones damaged through warfare. [94] Then he appealed to a time-honored custom that had been enthusiastically endorsed by the people-- "the tithe belongs to God." Applied to the present situation it translated to mean that if the community of faith was to progress, a portion of the people would need to relocate in Jerusalem.

The people discussed the problem, evaluated the possible alternatives, and eventually agreed to the principle of tithing the rural population. Their decision meant that those families whose names were picked by an impartial selection process would move to Jerusalem. Similar resettlement projects had been used in Ancient Greece. [95] Those individuals who moved to Jerusalem felt a new sense of divine calling upon their lives and experienced a new depth of commitment, for they had been specially selected to advance the cause of the people of God. They were His tithe. Those who failed to respond with such

religious zeal were simply compelled to move by the other ninety percent who were passed over in the selection process.

The urban resettlement project supplied the new administration with people to supply city service and to secure the city wall. It also contributed to a new integration between the city and the country. It was no longer the "rulers" in the city and the "peasants" on the farms. Both were linked by a vast network of social, economic, political, and religious kinds of interaction. It was no longer the "man of Jerusalem" versus the "man of Judah" but an integrated community struggling for ethnic survival.[96]

With the people resettled in Jerusalem, Nehemiah turned to his administrative responsibility of conducting a political survey of the local leaders and kinship groups for his personal report to his Persian officials. Such vital data would have been significant in administering the area for both the governments of Judah and of Persia. It would have been strange, indeed, if Nehemiah had not during the course of his political duty in Judah compiled such a list of leaders and groups for both local and Persian interests.

Two dominant themes that prevail in the Book of Nehemiah are ethnic revitalization and political leadership. The people of Judah were significantly involved in the political process and in the manipulation of their symbols of identity. Nehemiah was the moving force throughout the entire book. He is neither dominated by the priesthood nor is the country run by the priests. Judah's political and religious spheres are kept separate. The ethical implications of the Covenant formed the basis of their "governmental system and regulates their ethical

standards, but the priests do not rule the people." [97] It appears that this chapter is largely a political survey of leaders, groups, numbers and communities.

The cultural revitalization of Judah affected all areas of community life--especially the political realm. Nehemiah's administration, founded upon the concept of community development, stressed a decentralized form of government. Local towns and villages were responsible for their own local government. Whereas, other states emphasized strong centralized forms of government, Nehemiah acknowledged the value of government by those who were most familiar with the needs--local leaders solving local problems. The people of Judah had a strong commitment to Covenant principles. These principles along with the people's participation in the construction and revitalization processes produced a responsible and concerned citizenry.

Clarification of the Priesthood (Neh. 12:1-26). The priesthood genealogy in chapter twelve is an expansion of shorter lists given previously (Neh. 7:39-45; 10:2-8). Like the list for laymen (Neh. 7:6-38) the names go back to the return of the Jews from Persia in 532 B.C. and extend beyond the time of Nehemiah--covering a span of some 200 years. [98] Some names were obviously added later. The vast majority of names in the list belonged to the time of Nehemiah and formed a part of the genealogical register for the whole population. [99] The genealogical survey served several functions: demographical, political, and ethnical. Demographically, the survey plotted population distributions providing pertinent data for the relocation program. Politically, it located groups and leaders involved in the

administrative processes. And ethnically, it clarified those individuals who qualified through their descent to be members of the Jewish community.

The deferment of this expanded priesthood genealogy until just prior to the great celebration may have been politically expedient. Biblical scholars note that the Book of Nehemiah is largely chronological in sequence. This delay in resolving the population problem until after the revitalization makes good sense politically. Nehemiah had some serious difficulty with those priests who not only were sympathetic to foreign governments, but also had intermarried with foreign wives.[100] Nehemiah selected a priest from the diaspora, Ezra, to assist in the revitalization process. It appears that Ezra may have ignored the high priest in his reform (Ezra 8:33). We are uncertain as to the high priest's attitude toward the ratification of the Covenant.[101] Finally, the prophet Malachi presented an ominous description of the priesthood which failed to teach the law and so clashed with the two reformers--Nehemiah and Ezra.[102] Malachi charged the priesthood with being a stumbling block to the people (Mal. 2:8), with corrupting the Covenant (Mal. 2:8), and with offering polluted sacrifices (Mal. 1:7).

A portion of the priesthood belonged to the political and religious establishment and wielded considerable power in their temple-oriented society. This may have been why Nehemiah was forced to endure numerous political leaks to the opposition and to also tolerate their continual praise for the opposition (Neh. 6:17-18). Alinsky observes that, "Power goes to two poles--to those who've got money, and those who've got people." [103]

Nehemiah waited until he could mobilize the greatest political clout before he initiated a full scale priestly review to purge the unqualified members.

It is no mere coincidence that the last recorded political action taken by Nehemiah before his return to Persia pertained to the priesthood review and that his first political action upon his second trip to Jerusalem was to expel Tobiah, archenemy of the Covenant, son-in-law of the high priest and foreign leader of the opposition, from his established headquarters in the holy temple. The track record for this segment of the priesthood was less than impressive in supporting the Covenant--the central responsibility of their sacred office.

Some of the more established priests had little to lose regardless of who ruled the country. Either way, the Persian government had backed the local religions and so their temple system would persist. Their major objective, along with certain petty princes and wealthy merchants, was to maintain the status quo and preserve their present power and privileges. Internal strife threatened their comfortable lifestyles and so they opposed Nehemiah and continued to cooperate with the opposition. In the light of the increased popular support of the Covenant, these priests modified their behavior to fit the present mood of the community. They were the last to join and the first to abandon the new cause.

In contrast to some of the established priests, many others, particularly the Levites, had returned from Persia to live by the Covenant and develop a community based upon it. These priests had enthusiastically participated in the reform, eagerly taught the people, and willingly ratified the Covenant.

These priests had most to gain. A revitalized Covenant not only meant increased meaning and motivation; it also resulted in increased tithes and support for them. These religious teachers lived in rural areas and depended upon the support of the people. When religious faith waned and support decreased, these priests were the first to suffer hardships. Many of them could recall the lean years following the return to Judah in which many of their ancestors were forced to abandon their historic calling to serve in the temple in order to earn a living from secular sources.

Celebration and Dedication (Neh. 12:27-47). The intention of the compiler of the Nehemiah material seems to suggest that certain experiences were necessary to the progress of the community, like feasting, ritual, rededication of the law, relocation of the people, and the clarification of the ethnic membership, before the community could properly celebrate the dedication of the wall.[104] The community needed to know what it was doing, why it was doing it, and who could do it. These intervening experiences basically prepared the way for the celebration of a revitalized community.

The Hebrew community celebrated first fruits rites, as the final act of agriculture cycles, by presenting an offering of a sample of the product to God. In like manner, they also offered their construction projects to God when they were completed--even their private houses.[105] It is therefore not surprising that a project as large as the wall and gates should receive similar treatment. In a very real sense it was God's wall. Their God had been actively involved in the process from the call of Nehemiah to the relocation of the people.

Ultimately, it was His people, His protection, and His provisions that permitted the wall to be completed.

As the proposed date for the dedication service drew near, the community began to make the necessary preparations. The priests and Levites performed the prescribed preliminary purification rites. The priests, laymen, and objects involved in holy worship were purified. Purification rites frequently included one or all of the following: fasting, sacrifices, sexual abstinence, and sprinkling with blood or holy water. Such rites served to differentiate between the sacred and the secular (II Chron. 29:20-24).

On the day of the dedication, the community joined together in a great processional of celebration. The line of march, according to the narration, conformed to the traditional expectations. The people, the musical instruments, and the ritual involved were designated by tradition. In traditional culture, it was important to preserve such details for posterity and Persian officials. In utter defiance of their construction critics (Neh. 4:3) the people paraded around on top of the city wall and shouted their joy of freedom and redemption to the high heaven.

Their shame and distress (Neh. 1:3, 4:4) had been replaced by honor, respect, and fulfillment. They had a new city, a new community, and a new culture. It was all a part of God's call, concern, and Covenant. Consequentially, the people broke forth in joyous praise accompanied by their temple orchestra. Like worshippers of any age, the people of Judah were filled with "love and enjoyment of God, as responses to clear proclamation of God's mighty acts." [106]

It was a national day of celebration and sacrifice; the whole countryside was in attendance. All the people participated in the procession on the wall, the service by the temple, and the sacrifices to Almighty God. It was a day of dedication and commencement. It represented a new beginning for the city and a new hope for its former disheartened citizens.

The last portion of this section describes the end result of the cultural transformation process. The cultural distinctives in the Covenant were reported as being integrated into the fabric of their social life. The writer cited evidence for this claim. For example, he noted that the Levites, with assistance from specially designated members of the various local communities, were collecting the tithes and offerings for the support of the priests. Temple assistants (singers, instrumentalists, gatekeepers) had been properly purified and were serving in the worship services. The people were fulfilling their responsibilities to the Levites and they in turn were sharing the tithe with the priests. The people were also vigorously maintaining their ethnic boundaries, even expelling foreigners from their temple services, e.g. the Ammonites and the Moabites (Neh. 11:1-3). This suggests that the community of Judah had ushered in a new steady state phase and so the revitalization process had begun a new cycle.[107] It was also a reassuring note that his mission had been accomplished.

Monitoring the Changes (Neh. 13:4-31). If the Nehemiah report had ended at this juncture, it would have been somewhat idyllic and deceptive. The story would have given the impression that all a person needs to do in projects of planned change is to initiate a good program, point the people in the right direction,

and ipso facto everything will work out. This is contrary to social reality. Lewin reminds social reformers that many changes toward a "higher level of group performance is . . . short-lived; after a 'shot in the arm,' group life soon returns to the previous level." [108]

Indeed, it did in Judah. Soon after Nehemiah's return to Persia, following his twelve-year term as governor, to resume his Persian work, the Jerusalem reforms began to degenerate to their previous levels of social behavior. It seems that the new Jerusalem leadership was either unwilling or unable to maintain the new level of commitment to the Covenant. Through internal weakness, economic pressures, and foreign infiltration the people slipped back into old unrighteous habits. [109] Their oaths to obey God's laws and support His temple (Neh. 10:29,39) evaporated like the morning fog. The three distinctives which served to set them apart from other people were again being ignored: the maintenance of their ethnic boundaries through the prohibition of foreign marriages, the observance of the sabbath as a holy day of rest and worship, and adequate financial support for the temple and its programs.

The dust of Nehemiah's departure had scarcely settled upon the hills of Judah before Tobiah, the antagonist of the Covenant, was back in town. [110] It seemed that Tobiah in the end would spoil the efforts of Nehemiah. Apparently, Tobiah used his influence to obtain a secure room within the temple precincts to serve as his Jerusalem headquarters. The symbolic significance of that act was devastating to the religious life of the fledgling community. It opened up the people anew to all the problems and predicaments they had so recently resolved to

remedy. Tobiah's presence, like a pernicious cancer, sought to destroy the vitality of their ethnic community.

Tobiah's very presence defiled the temple. No unpurified pagan foreigner was permitted within the temple premises. Tobiah lived there. The temple chambers were used to store the equipment, supplies, and provisions used in public worship. Tobiah replaced sacred things with his polluted personal possessions. The people had been forbidden to marry foreign wives, especially Ammonites (Neh. 13:1). Tobiah, an Ammonite, married a daughter of a priestly family and lived in open defiance of the law within the temple grounds. Tobiah was no match for Nehemiah. He had failed in every form of deception and assault to defeat or assassinate Nehemiah. But with Nehemiah in Persia, Tobiah was able to once again assert himself.

The effect of Tobiah's ingenious conspiracy was to move into the temple and cut the spiritual jugular vein of Judah. It was tantamount to a national scandal. The very people who were supported by the public and charged by divine decree to uphold the Covenant had permitted the temple to be polluted, the priesthood to be corrupted, and the Covenant broken without impunity. Respect for the Covenant plunged and support for the temple sharply fell. Respect for the Sabbath faded, and so foreign merchants made their weekly trek to Jerusalem. And the prohibition against foreign marriages was again ignored by the common people.

When the news of these conditions reached Persia, Nehemiah responded by requesting a second leave of absence to serve the interests of his country. Since the strength and

security of Judah was important to Persia, Nehemiah's mission was once again supported by the crown. Nehemiah's power and authority was very much evident on his second trip to Jerusalem. He personally, swiftly, and effectively dealt with the local problems. He had previously earned the authority of the people to uphold the Covenant. He expelled Tobiah from the temple, restored the tithes to the priesthood, stopped the desecration of the sabbath, and prohibited foreign marriages.

Nehemiah's second trip to Jerusalem underscores the need for agents of change to stay with a project until the "bugs" are worked out of it. Hapgood warns that there is always "something risky and half-cocked about an outsider going into a community to get something--anything--started and then abandoning the people. Defeat . . . may simply plunge the people into a deeper apathy concerning them that the idea of progress was only a dream after all, just as the cynics said from the beginning." [111] The process of change is never complete until the changes become institutionalized within the culture of the community. The agent of change needs to stay in contact with the project until his influence is replaced by the weight of tradition and the will of the people.

SUMMARY

This study demonstrates the value and significance of using social models to assist in the interpretation of scripture, i.e. the Book of Nehemiah. Social models provide the analyst with an additional mechanism for explaining the systematic connections of the events within the book, a rationale for the

sequence of events, and field data for comparing similar examples. The application of social models to the Nehemiah material suggests that the data is presented in a logical and orderly fashion and follows a general pattern of community development and revitalization that can be replicated by literally hundreds of other case studies. The results seem to suggest that considerable caution is in order in regard to any wholesale reordering of the Nehemiah material.

This study suggests that when the Book of Nehemiah is approached from a community development perspective, it becomes a carefully calculated series of decisions, events, and responses. Each subsequent action in the book is the logical development from the previous ones. Any attempt to reorder the sequence of events in the book only serve to distort the story. The book opens with a vivid description of the problem; an explanation of how each of the participants became involved; a section concerning the labor force; a summary of some of the problems encountered in the project; a recap of the method for securing the city; a digest of the genealogical review; a sketch of the revitalization process (including unfreezing the present order, methods for stimulating change, and freezing the new changes); an outline of the relocation process; a resume of the priesthood review; an analysis of the celebration; a confirmation that the changes had become operational; and a synopsis of the monitoring process. It reads like a contemporary field description. The flow of events in the Nehemiah material suggests that the bulk of the material must have come from primary sources. It would take a very astute person to create this sequence apart from actual involvement.

This study suggests a degree of sophistication demonstrated in the Jerusalem project of planned change that is remarkable considering its antiquity. It suggests that Persian officials were astute observers of human behavior and governed through sound sociological principles. It demonstrates a level of effective leadership and magnitude of planned community change unsurpassed in modern times. This was no mere piecemeal approach to development that is so characteristic of contemporary programs of planned change, but a total physical and cultural transformation that changes people's values, beliefs, and perceptions.

The study provides a sociological arena for testing and applying contemporary concepts and methods to an historic situation. The program of planned change, the process of revitalization, the strategies of ethnicity, the methods for inducing and stimulating change, the mechanisms for confronting the opposition, the means for resolving conflict, and other phenomena contained in ancient civilization, can be analyzed by using contemporary methods of human research. Allowing for some degree of refinement of certain concepts, like force field analysis, I was simply unprepared for the insights gained in this study regarding the grasp of planned change and insights concerning human behavior that seem to be inherent in Nehemiah's report.

This study demonstrates the need for and significance of intercultural stimulation. Individuals and ideas do change customs and cultures. The prevailing social conditions in most societies are basically in an evolving state of equilibrium. That is, the forces against change are generally evolving at

about the same rate as the forces for change. Therefore, most social and cultural changes occur at an almost imperceptible rate. The Nehemiah account suggests the extent to which an outsider, with communication skills and creative leaders, can contribute to significant social change.

Harvey Cox declares that what we desperately need in our time are individuals who aspire to be both "saints" and "revolutionaries." There exists, according to Cox, a serious gap between those who passively seek to celebrate life and those who actively seek to change society. He notes that those who celebrate life could improve it by becoming "committed to fundamental social change." [112] Christians are called to both celebrate their new life in Christ and to change social injustices and corruption in society. This calls for a "delicate balance" between the need work through voluntary group action and the need for outside supervision to initiate and monitor the process. [113]

Footnotes

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