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Nehemiah 10

(2021)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Nehemiah 10.

Topics:

All the people of Israel make an oath to walk in God's Law given by Moses and agree to:

- Observe the commandments.
- Not to give their daughters to the people of the land.
- Not to take their daughters for their sons.
- Not to buy or sell from the people of the land on the Sabbath day or any holy day.
- To keep the feasts and tithes of the firstfruits.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

In 445 B.C. the Persian King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah, an Israelite who was a trusted official written permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah went with the third wave of returning Jewish exiles. There was intense opposition from other people in the land, and disunity within Jerusalem. Despite the strong opposition, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls and overcame many threats. He served twice as governor and did what God had put in his heart (Neh. 2:12) (Neh. 7:5), and found that the joy of the LORD was his strength (Neh. 8:10). For an overview of the entire book see the title: "Overview of the Book of Nehemiah" (at the beginning of the index to Nehemiah).

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THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

On the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month the people of Israel assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with earth on their heads and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. An overview of Israel's history is given from the Exodus up to this present time. The chapter ended with the people saying they were in great distress in the land because of their sins and that they will make a firm covenant in writing on a sealed document with the names of their princes, Levites and priests written on it to act as witnesses to the covenant.

NEHEMIAH'S AND THE PRIESTS NAMES ON THE SEALS

NEHEMIAH 10:1-8

The previous chapter ended with the following verse:

- Because of all this (all Israel's sins, hardships and sufferings listed in the previous chapter) we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests. (Nehemiah 9:38).

Now in this chapter we are given a list of the names of those that were placed on the seals. The first names to be mentioned are the names of the following Priests:

- **Nehemiah 10:1-8:** "On the seals are the names of Nehemiah the governor (the Tirshatha in KJV), the son of Hacaliah, Zedekiah (Zidkijah in KJV),² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah; these are the priests.

Nehemiah, the Tirshatha: the word Tirshatha simply means governor. Nehemiah's name was placed first in the scroll on account of his high official rank as governor of the Jews and as deputy of the Persian monarch. All classes of people were included in the sealing; however, the people were represented by their elders as it would have been impossible for everyone in the country to have been added to the sealing.

Government of Jews: It appears from the following that the government of the Jews at this time was a government in which the nobles were the rulers (i.e., an aristocracy,).

Zedekiah (Zidkijah in KJV): may refer to Zadok the scribe (Neh. 13:13) who was Nehemiah's secretary?

Ezra: does not appear among this list, which means he was most likely not present at this time, since it is certain his name would not have been omitted, if he had been present. It is possible he may have been prevented by some sickness or appointment with an important ruler, or returned to Babylon or some other extraordinary obstacle or holdup may have hindered him since the following verse shows that he was previously with them at the feast of tabernacles:

- Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. (Neh. 8:4).

And later at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem:

- And his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. (Neh. 12:36).

LEVITE NAMES ON THE SEALS

NEHEMIAH 10:9-13

- **Nehemiah 10:9-11:** And the Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;¹⁰ and their brothers, Shebaniah, Hodiah (Hodijah in KJV), Kelita, Pellaiah, Hanan,¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,¹³ Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

Seventeen Levites in all.

CHIEFS NAMES ON THE SEALS

NEHEMIAH 10:14-26

- **Nehemiah 10:14-27:** The chiefs of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,²⁷ Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

Now we come to forty-four names of the chief of the people (i.e., their elders) representing all the people, because all agreed to the covenant, but of course not all could put their names on the seals, for making all people write their name on a seal would have been an enormously tedious task therefore the chiefs and princes of each family signed and sealed it in the name of the rest. It appears that each chief wrote the name of the seal in the name of the family that they originated from. These names and numbers are in the list of those that came out of Babylon with Zerubbabel, however, when the list is compared the list in

Ezra chapter two, it shows that the passing years have added to the number of the family houses. The whole number of princes, priests, Levites, and chief of the people that wrote their names on a seal representing all the people of all classes were eighty-four.

ALL AGREE TO ENTER INTO THE CURSE

NEHEMIAH 10:28-29

- **Nehemiah 10:28-29:** “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants (Nethinims in KJV), and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding,²⁹ join with their brothers (clave to their brethren in KJV), their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

The rest of the people: (v28) refers to those who did not have their name written on a seal, because there were far too many for all to write their name on a seal, but they bound themselves to observe the covenant by a solemn oath, to walk in God’s law, thereby accepting a curse upon themselves should they violate it, and the names of the heads of each class was written on a seal on their behalf.

Nethinims: refers to servants who served the priests in the temple, today we call them temple servants.

All who separated from the peoples of the lands: (v28) means to obey the Law of God, they separated themselves from the foreign nation around about them, especially their foreign wives. This may mean that they completely stopped all personal contact with them, and also stopped all kinds of trading, commerce and business with them, but it more likely means they stopped any type of friendly fellowship with those of foreign nations and all contact with potential Romanic partners and separated from everything that was against the law of God, especially all types of pagan religions and their practices.

They joined with their brothers: (v29) (clave to their brethren in KJV), meaning they were bound to each other in union and agreement, from a deep national conviction. Priests, nobles, the rich, servant and the poor were all bound to each other to keep the law of God and all agreed to the same oath to enter into a curse, meaning if they violated it, all the curses written in the law would fall on them. For information concerning the curses see (Deut. 28:15-68) and for God’s blessings see (Deut. 28:1-14) for

LAWS OF THE COVANANT

NEHEMIAH 10:30-33

- **Nehemiah 10:30-33:** We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.³¹ And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.³² “We also take on ourselves the obligation (to charge ourselves in KJV) to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:³³ for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

We will not give our daughters: (v30) having sworn obedience to God’s law, they now specify a few particular laws that at this time they had transgressed, and others that they were most prone to neglect. The first mentioned, is the law that forbids them to give their daughters and

sons in marriage to men and women of foreign nations. Two primary reasons for this law were so they would not be led away from their faith to following pagan religions, and to protect the inheritance of the land and keep it within the tribes.

Other laws mentioned may be summed up under the following titles:

- They abstain from contracting matrimonial alliances with the heathen.
- They rigidly observe the Sabbath.
- They let the land enjoy rest
- They cancel debts every seventh year.
- They contribute to the maintenance of the temple.
- They make a regular payment of the priests' dues.

We also take on ourselves the obligation(v32) (to charge ourselves in KJV): meaning they take it upon themselves to pay a third of a shekel for the service of the House of God Following are some of the things this annual payment would provide for:

- The showbread for the table and grain for the offering.
- Two lambs for the daily burnt offerings and four for the Sabbaths and more costly sacrifices for other festivals such new moon and festivals offerings.
- The occasional sin-offerings, and meat offerings, and drink-offerings.
- Maintenance and work for the House of God.

The third part of a shekel: (v32) the following verse shows that during earlier ancient times the law required every individual above twenty years of age to pay half a shekel to the sanctuary.

- Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. (Exodus 30:13).

But now this tax was reduced to a third part of a shekel, most likely because of the general poverty of the people, because of war and their seventy-year Babylonian captivity and exile. In later times, the annual payment was raised from the third of a shekel back to half a shekel.

- When they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel? (Matt. 17:24) (American standard Version).
- When they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay the half-shekel? (Matt. 17:24) (English Revised Version).

LOTS ARE CAST FOR THE WOOD OFFERING

NEHEMIAH 10:34

- **Nehemiah 10:34:** We, the priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

Prior to this temple servants would to go out into the forests, and bring wood to the House of God for the fire of the altar, but this could not now be done, because only a few of them had returned. This is why the priests, the Levites, and the people are now casting lots to determine in what

order and time of the year particular families or clans should bring the wood to the House of God, so that there would always be a supply of wood to burn on the altar for the sacrifices. Since all those appointed to the work would at some time during the year be taking their turn to bring wood to the House of God it was appropriate that they cast lots, because it removed any possibility of favouritism. There was a building called the wood room near the temple to store the wood in, because it was needed in great quantity, since it was used in every sacrifice.

As it is written in the law: (v34) the following verse shows that the law required the fire on the altar to be kept burning during all burnt sacrifices and offerings.

- The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³ Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out. (Lev. 6:12).

FIRSTFRUITS OF EVERY TREE

NEHEMIAH 10:35

- **Nehemiah 10:35:** We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD;

To bring in the firstfruits: (v35), they did not cast lots concerning who would bring in the first-fruits as they did for collecting the wood, because each one was accountable to bring in the firstfruits of their own land and the fruit that its trees produced, which they took an oath to do every year.

FIRSTFRUITS AND TITHES OF THE PEOPLE

NEHEMIAH 10:36-37

- **Nehemiah 10:36-37:** also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; ³⁷ and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labour.

Following are the two major differences between tithing and firstfruits:

- **Firstfruits:** no specific amount or percentage is given.
- **Tithing:** the people were to give a specific amount of ten percent.
- **Firstfruits:** the primary reason for firstfruits was thanksgiving for all the LORD had given them.
- **Tithing:** the primary reason for tithing was to supply the priests and the Levites with food.

To bring to the House of our God: (v36) to the chambers of the temple where the sacred vessels and other things belonging to the temple were stored.

As it is written in the law: (v36) refers to the following verses:

- **Exodus 13:2:** “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.”

This is the first time giving their firstborn is mentioned, then again in the following verse.

- **Exodus 22:28-29 28:** “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.
29 “You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me.

The firstborn of our sons and of our cattle: (v36) the firstborn of Israel’s cattle and flocks were to be brought to the priests; however, the following verses shows that, according to the priests’ valuation their sons could be redeemed by money. To understand God’s command: “The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me,” it helps to know the that the Israelites were on their way out of Egypt, and that God was giving Moses the instructions for the Passover. Later in chapter thirteen God says:

- **Exodus 13:13:** Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

This command may seem strange to many, however, if we continue to read chapter thirteen, we see that there was a very practical future reason for it, which was, when their sons asked them, “what does this mean?” they were to say to them, ‘By the strength of God’s hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of humans and the firstborn of livestock. That is why we sacrifice to the LORD all the firstborn of the womb that are males, but we redeem all the firstborn of our sons. They would then tell their sons, this truth, that God brought them out of Egypt by unique and mighty miracles was to be forever remembered as a mark on their hand and between their eyes would be). (Exod. 13:14-16).

This shows that the purpose for offering the firstborn of their sons was to be a sign for all future generations that God rescued them out of Egypt by His strong hand. For us today, Jesus put an end to blood sacrifices when He made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross as the following verse shows:

- **Hebrews 9:25-26:** Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

we no longer have to offer sacrifices for our redemption or the redemption of our firstborn sons, for God has redeemed every one of us in Jesus. This is why faithful Christians with raised hands and hearts filled with gratitude praise God for His unceasing grace, and Jesus for his sacrifice on the bloodstained cross of Calvary.

To bring to the Levites who collect the tithes: (v37) in all their towns and bring them in to the priests, to the chambers of the House of God the first of all the following:

- Their livestock, their cattle, herds and flocks.
- Their dough, all contributions and the fruit of every tree.
- Their wine from their orchards and the oil.
- The oil and their tithes.

Every detail concerning the first-fruits are clearly recorded which meant it would be impossible for anyone to pretend ignorance should they withhold any part of the first-fruits from the priests, which they had been very prone to do, because of poverty, greed, materialism, lack of respect for the priests and such like things. Faithfulness in giving the priests their due, encouraged them in their duty, since it meant they were under no temptation to neglect their calling, because receiving all the first-fruits due to them meant they did not need to worry or stress about making provision for their families, but rather set their minds on the work of the House of God. When those who serve before God live comfortably (i.e., not in excess) they are freely able to give more of their time to serving God’s people.

NEHEMIAH 10:38-39

- **Nehemiah 10:38-39:** And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. And the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse (treasure house in KJV).³⁹ For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution (offering in KJV) of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are, as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect (forsake in KJV) the house of our God.”

The expression, “the tithe of the tithes,” (v38) refers to the tithe the Levites were to give to the priests from the tithe they received from the people. National tithing worked in the following manner. The people would tithe ten percent and give it to the Levites to support their service for the LORD, the Levites would then tithe ten percent of that tithe to the priests to support their service for the LORD.

The priests were the offspring of Aaron, there was always to be a priest or priests with the Levites when they received the tithe from the people. This no doubt was so that the Levites would not be under temptation to take more for themselves or give less to the priests and would be free of any suspicion of defrauding the priests of their share.

The Levites, having received a tenth of all land produce (i.e., grain, wine and oil etc.), were required to give a tenth of this tithe to the priests. The Levites were also charged with the additional obligation to carry (by wagons) the tithes they had received, and deposit them in the storehouse of God for the use of the priests.

- For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel.”²⁵ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,²⁶ “Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, ‘When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. (Num. 18:24-26).

To ensure an honest delivery of the tithes the wise, practical and sensible arrangement was that the Levites would deliver the tithe in the presence and oversight of a priest, which would tend to prevent any temptation of wrong doing.

We will not neglect the House of God: even though Israel suffered much hardship and paid taxes to the kings of Persia, they solemnly declared they would not neglect the house and service of God of the necessary tithes to support the priesthood. This oath manifests their enthusiastic zeal at this time to bring glory to God and honour and worship Him in every way possible.

This chapter shows that the people of Israel left no part or ceremony in the Law, that they did not by oath bind themselves to by covenant. However, when we see how quickly they broke the covenant they made with the LORD Himself through Moses at Mount Sinai, it is easy to understand why their zeal at this time eventually waned, as history and the book of Malachi shows.

CONCLUSION

Israel as a nation, repented of their sins and covenanted to keep the commands, duties and laws of God, of which they had been guilty of grossly breaking and bound themselves to observe all that they had neglected. However, it should be noted, ceasing to do evil and keeping ceremonial rules and duties is not enough, we must also do what is good

and kind. When everyone helps, and every one gives, (whether little or much) toward a good work, or to aid in the work of God and the expanding of Christs Kingdom the whole will grow to be a pleasing structure in the eyes of the Lord.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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