

## Nehemiah Organizes the Community (September 22–25, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 7:1–5a

### Organization for Conservation

1 Now when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed, 2 then I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

3 Then I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing *guard*, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his post, and each in front of his own house.”

### The Registration of the People

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few and the houses were not built.

5a Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogies.

## Ezra Reads the Law and Explains It to the People (September 26, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 7:73b–8:12

7:73b And when the seventh month came, the sons of Israel *were* in their cities.

8:1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.

2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

3 He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah *and* Meshullam on his left hand.

5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place.

8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said to them, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.”

12 All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

## Discovery of the Forgotten Feast (September 27, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 8:13–15

13 Then on the second day the heads of fathers’ *households* of all the people, the priests and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the law.

14 They found written in the law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feast of the seventh month.

15 So they proclaimed and circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, “Go out to the hills, and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and branches of *other* leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.”

## Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (October 11–17, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 8:16–18

16 So the people went out and brought *them* and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

17 The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was great rejoicing.

18 He read from the book of the law of God daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day *there was* a solemn assembly according to the ordinance.

## The Israelites' Prayer of Confession (October 20, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 9:1–37

### Assembly for Confession and Worship

1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.

2 The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

3 While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day; and for *another* fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.

4 Now on the Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani *and* Chenani, and they cried with a loud voice to the LORD their God.

5a Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah *and* Pethahiah, said, "Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever!

### Prayer of Confession

5b O may Your glorious name be blessed  
And exalted above all blessing and praise!

6 "You alone are the LORD.  
You have made the heavens,  
The heaven of heavens with all their host,  
The earth and all that is on it,  
The seas and all that is in them.  
You give life to all of them  
And the heavenly host bows down before You.

7 "You are the LORD God,  
Who chose Abram  
And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees,  
And gave him the name Abraham.

8 "You found his heart faithful before You,  
And made a covenant with him  
To give *him* the land of the Canaanite,  
Of the Hittite and the Amorite,  
Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite—  
To give *it* to his descendants.  
And You have fulfilled Your promise,  
For You are righteous.

9 "You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,  
And heard their cry by the Red Sea.

10 "Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,  
Against all his servants and all the people of his land;  
For You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them,  
And made a name for Yourself as *it is* this day.

11 "You divided the sea before them,  
So they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground;  
And their pursuers You hurled into the depths,  
Like a stone into raging waters.

12 "And with a pillar of cloud You led them by day,  
And with a pillar of fire by night  
To light for them the way

- In which they were to go.
- 13 “Then You came down on Mount Sinai,  
And spoke with them from heaven;  
You gave them just ordinances and true laws,  
Good statutes and commandments.
- 14 “So You made known to them Your holy sabbath,  
And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law,  
Through Your servant Moses.
- 15 “You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger,  
You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst,  
And You told them to enter in order to possess  
The land which You swore to give them.
- 16 “But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly;  
They became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments.
- 17 “They refused to listen,  
And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them;  
So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.  
But You are a God of forgiveness,  
Gracious and compassionate,  
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness;  
And You did not forsake them.
- 18 “Even when they made for themselves  
A calf of molten metal  
And said, ‘This is your God Who brought you up from Egypt,’  
And committed great blasphemies,
- 19 You, in Your great compassion,  
Did not forsake them in the wilderness;  
The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day,  
To guide them on their way,  
Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.
- 20 “You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them,  
Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth,  
And You gave them water for their thirst.
- 21 “Indeed, forty years You provided for them in the wilderness *and* they were not in want;  
Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet swell.
- 22 “You also gave them kingdoms and peoples,  
And allotted *them* to them as a boundary.  
They took possession of the land of Sihon the king of Heshbon  
And the land of Og the king of Bashan.
- 23 “You made their sons numerous as the stars of heaven,  
And You brought them into the land  
Which You had told their fathers to enter and possess.
- 24 “So their sons entered and possessed the land.  
And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites,  
And You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land,  
To do with them as they desired.
- 25 “They captured fortified cities and a fertile land.  
They took possession of houses full of every good thing,  
Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves,  
Fruit trees in abundance.  
So they ate, were filled and grew fat,  
And reveled in Your great goodness.
- 26 “But they became disobedient and rebelled against You,  
And cast Your law behind their backs  
And killed Your prophets who had admonished them  
So that they might return to You,  
And they committed great blasphemies.
- 27 “Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them,

- But when they cried to You in the time of their distress,  
 You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion  
 You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors.
- 28 “But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before You;  
 Therefore You abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they ruled over them.  
 When they cried again to You, You heard from heaven,  
 And many times You rescued them according to Your compassion,
- 29 And admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law.  
 Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances,  
 By which if a man observes them he shall live.  
 And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen.
- 30 “However, You bore with them for many years,  
 And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets,  
 Yet they would not give ear.  
 Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
- 31 “Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them,  
 For You are a gracious and compassionate God.
- 32 “Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness,  
 Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You,  
 Which has come upon us, our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people,  
 From the days of the kings of Assyria to this day.
- 33 “However, You are just in all that has come upon us;  
 For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.
- 34 “For our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers have not kept Your law  
 Or paid attention to Your commandments and Your admonitions with which You have admonished them.
- 35 “But they, in their own kingdom,  
 With Your great goodness which You gave them,  
 With the broad and rich land which You set before them,  
 Did not serve You or turn from their evil deeds.
- 36 “Behold, we are slaves today,  
 And as to the land which You gave to our fathers to eat of its fruit and its bounty,  
 Behold, we are slaves in it.
- 37 “Its abundant produce is for the kings  
 Whom You have set over us because of our sins;  
 They also rule over our bodies  
 And over our cattle as they please,  
 So we are in great distress.

## A Signed National Covenant (October 20, 444 BC)

Nehemiah 9:38–10:39

### Introduction

9:38 Now because of all this

We are making an agreement in writing;

And on the sealed document *are the names of* our leaders, our Levites *and* our priests.”

### The Chief Leaders and Priests Who Signed

10:1 Now on the sealed document *were the names of*: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah,

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 *were* the priests.

### The Levites Who Signed

9 And the Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;

10 also their brothers Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,  
 11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,  
 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,  
 13 Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

#### **The Other Leaders Who Signed**

14 The leaders 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.

#### **The Solemn Promise**

28 Now the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding,  
 29 are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes;

#### **Specific Examples of Separation**

30 and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.  
 31 As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego *the crops* the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

#### **Temple Taxes**

32 We also placed ourselves under obligation to contribute yearly one third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:  
 33 for the showbread, for the continual grain offering, for the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moon, for the appointed times, for the holy things and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God.

#### **Offerings in Kind**

34 Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood *among* the priests, the Levites and the people so that they might bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at fixed times annually, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law;  
 35 and that they might bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the LORD annually,  
 36 and bring to the house of our God the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks as it is written in the law, for the priests who are ministering in the house of our God.  
 37 We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.  
 38 The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.  
 39 For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God.