

Nehemiah 10:1 ¶ Now those that sealed *were*...

Continuing the narrative from the last chapter, this chapter opens with a listing of the 84 men that signed the covenant. It is noted that Nehemiah, the governor, was the first to sign. (Next comment after verse 29.)

...Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah,
Nehemiah 10:2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
Nehemiah 10:3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah,
Nehemiah 10:4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
Nehemiah 10:5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
Nehemiah 10:6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
Nehemiah 10:7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
Nehemiah 10:8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these *were* the priests.
Nehemiah 10:9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;
Nehemiah 10:10 And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
Nehemiah 10:11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah,
Nehemiah 10:12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
Nehemiah 10:13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu.
Nehemiah 10:14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani,
Nehemiah 10:15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
Nehemiah 10:16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
Nehemiah 10:17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur,
Nehemiah 10:18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai,
Nehemiah 10:19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
Nehemiah 10:20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
Nehemiah 10:21 Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua,
Nehemiah 10:22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
Nehemiah 10:23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub,
Nehemiah 10:24 Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek,
Nehemiah 10:25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
Nehemiah 10:26 And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,
Nehemiah 10:27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

Nehemiah 10:28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding;
Nehemiah 10:29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;

The rest of the people—including priests, Levites, porters, singers, Nethinims, and all those that had separated themselves from foreign people for the purpose of adhering to God's law, including their wives and children—who were of

sound mind and understanding joined with those signing the covenant by making a public oath to obey God's law as recorded by Moses. They vowed to live by His commandments, judgments and laws.

Note that verse 29 also calls for a curse upon the people if they do not keep their covenant with God. Guzik made a good comment at this point: "Many of us have done a similar thing. We probably didn't pray 'God, curse me if I disobey You.' But many of us have prayed, 'Lord, whatever it takes I want to follow You. Whatever it takes I want to be Your man.' That is essentially praying the same thing, and that is a good prayer."

Nehemiah 10:30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons:

Nehemiah 10:31 And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

The people promised not to give their daughters in marriage to men from the surrounding nations or to take their women as wives for their sons. This thought is foreign to most in this day and age; generally speaking, parents don't choose the marriage partners of their children any more.

They promised not to transact business on the Sabbath day or any other designated holy day. They promised to honor a Sabbath for the land every 7th year and cancel all debts owed them by fellow Israelites at that time.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."

Exodus 20:8-10 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work...."

Exodus 23:10-11 "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still...."

Deuteronomy 15:1-2 "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release."

Reminder—It was the fact that the people had not obeyed God’s command to let the land rest every 7th year that had determined the length of their captivity in Babylon.

*2 Chronicles 36:17–21 “Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand...And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, **until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.**”*

Nehemiah 10:32 ¶ Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; Nehemiah 10:33 For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

The people also vowed to pay a yearly fee of 1/3 shekel to support service at the temple, the house of “our” God. This was to be used to provide the showbread, the ongoing grain and burnt offerings made on the Sabbaths, new moons, set feast, sin offerings to atone for the nation and for all the work done in the house of “our” God.

The law actually called for a half-shekel offering.

Exodus 30:13–14 “This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD.”

“One explanation why the offering should be ‘a third of a shekel’ rather than a half shekel is that the later shekel was based on a heavier standard; thus one-third of the later shekel was equal to one-half of the earlier shekel.” (NIV Commentary)

“But in consequence of the general poverty of the people, occasioned by war and captivity, this tribute was reduced to a third part of a shekel.” (JFB)

How sweet it must be for the LORD to hear His people sincerely claim Him as their own and commit to doing His will! Sweeter still is to see them follow through on that commitment. I am reminded of a verse from 3John.

3 John 1:4 “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Nehemiah 10:34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the

people, for the wood offering, to bring *it* into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as *it is* written in the law:

The people—including priests and Levites—then cast lots to determine appointed times for each family to supply wood for the offerings made at the temple.

Nehemiah 10:35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:

Nehemiah 10:36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as *it is* written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

Nehemiah 10:37 And *that* we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.

The people also vowed to bring in the firstfruits of the harvest from the land and the fruit trees. They also promised to redeem their firstborn sons and the firstborn of the livestock as commanded in the law.

Exodus 13:12–13 “That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

They promised the same for the firstfruits of their dough, their offerings, their fruit, wine and oil as well as a tithe of their harvests to supply for the priests and Levites who served in the temple.

Deuteronomy 12:5–6 “But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:”

Nehemiah 10:38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.

Nehemiah 10:39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where *are* the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

Nehemiah notes that the priest was to supervise the collection and storage of tithes to ensure that service in the temple was not disrupted. Though they

received a tithe from the people, the Levites were also to give a tithe from the tithe they received.

Numbers 18:26 "Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe."

I liked Ironside's observation on giving to support ministry at God's house: "Lack of spirituality closes up hearts and purses. Godliness opens both. The poverty of the people was no barrier when their consciences were in exercise, and they determined 'not to forsake the house of their God' (vers. 32-39). And so will it ever be where the love of Christ reigns."