

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 10

In this chapter we have the names of the persons that signed and sealed the covenant mentioned in the last chapter, (^{<1601>}Nehemiah 10:1-27), and the things they agreed unto and promised to perform; in general to observe the law of God, in particular not to marry with the people of the land, to keep the sabbaths weekly and yearly, to pay annually the third part of the shekel for the service of the temple, to bring into it the wood offerings, first fruits, firstborn, and tithes, (^{<1602>}Nehemiah 10:28-39).

Ver. 1-27. *Now those that sealed were,* etc.] That sealed the covenant, made (^{<1603>}Nehemiah 9:38).

Nehemiah the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah; the governor of the Jews:

and Zidkijah; who seems also to have been a prince, since, without, it could not be said it was sealed by their princes, (^{<1604>}Nehemiah 9:38) though some think both these were priests, and then the princes must be supposed to be among the chief of the people, (^{<1605>}Nehemiah 10:14), from hence to the end of the twenty seventh their names follow; the names of the priests, (^{<1606>}Nehemiah 10:2-8), who were in all twenty one; no mention is made either of Eliashib the high priest, nor of Ezra the priest and scribe; some think the former had not behaved well in his office, and that the latter was either sick, or returned to Babylon, or however hindered by some providence or another, since we hear of him both a little before and after, (^{<1607>}Nehemiah 8:2,13 12:36) then the names of the Levites, (^{<1608>}Nehemiah 10:9-13), in all seventeen, most of which we have met with in this book before; next follow the names of the chief of the people, (^{<1609>}Nehemiah 10:14-27), their number in all forty four; and their names may be observed in the list of those that came out of Babylon with Zerubbabel; the whole number of those that sealed, princes, priests, Levites, and chief of the people, were eighty four.

Ver. 28. *And the rest of the people,* etc.] That did not sign and seal:

the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims; the porters and singers were Levites; but those so called were such as waited upon the priests, as the Nethinims were persons that waited on them:

and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God; proselytes, who had renounced Heathenism, and embraced the true religion, had received the law of God, and professed to walk according to it;

their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone having knowledge, and having understanding; of the nature of the covenant, and the things contained in it, of what was required of them, and of what they promised, of the nature of an oath they entered into, and of the sin of perjury.

Ver. 29. *They clave to their brethren, their nobles*, etc.] Who had signed and sealed the covenant, they declared their approbation of it, attended to it, and ratified what they had done in their name:

and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God; they bound themselves with an oath that they would keep the law of God, and added a curse or imprecation on themselves to it should they break it; or, according to Piscator, they went into the space between the two pieces of the calf, which they cut asunder for the confirmation of the covenant, and so they cursed themselves if they should break it, (see ²⁶⁴⁸Jeremiah 34:18)

and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God, and his judgments and his statutes; all the laws, moral, ceremonial, and judicial; this they engaged to do in general; some particulars follow.

Ver. 30. *And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons*, etc.] Intermarry with them as they had done, and were prone to do, and even did after this, (¹⁶³³Nehemiah 13:23).

Ver. 31. *And if the people of the land bring ware*, etc.] Any thing to be sold, any sort of goods, that being sold might be taken away, as the word signifies;

or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell; anything to make food of; wheat or barley, as Aben Ezra interprets it; the same word is rendered corn, (see

Gill on “^{<0401>}Genesis 42:1”); to sell which was not lawful on the sabbath day, (see ^{<3085>}Amos 8:5)

that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day; any festival, as the feast of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles:

and that we would leave the seventh year: the ground untilled in that year, the vines unpruned, and the fruits of the earth, which sprung of themselves, for the poor to gather, (^{<0204>}Leviticus 25:4-7),

and the exaction of every debt; that they would not demand the payment of any debt on the seventh year, as the law required they should not, (^{<0650>}Deuteronomy 15:2).

Ver. 32. *Also we made ordinance, for us,* etc.] Laws among themselves, binding them to that which the laws of God did not:

to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel, for the service of the house of our God; the particulars of which follow in the next verse; for the defraying of which there used to be a treasury in the temple; but now there was none, and therefore they took this method to assess themselves; and being poor, instead of the half shekel, which in some cases was required, they only charged themselves with the third part of one; though Aben Ezra thinks this was added to the half shekel, and was paid over and above that; according to Breewood^{f63}, it was of the value of ten pence of our money: Waserus^{f64} has given us the figure of one of these coins, with this inscription, a “third” part of a shekel of Israel.

Ver. 33. *For the shewbread,* etc.] To defray the expenses of the twelve loaves, which every week were set on the table of shewbread, (^{<0245>}Leviticus 24:5-9),

and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering; for the daily sacrifice, morning and evening, which always had a meat offering along with it, (^{<0238>}Exodus 29:38-42),

of the sabbaths, and of the new moons; on which were additional sacrifices, (^{<0230>}Numbers 28:9-15),

and for the set feasts; of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles; in which also were offered other sacrifices, besides the daily one, (^{<0236>}Numbers 28:16-31 29:1-39),

and for the holy things: which were both by way of thanksgiving to God, and that they might feast and rejoice together:

and for the sin offerings, to make an atonement for Israel; for the whole body of the people, and so were made at the public expense:

and for all the work of the house of our God; whatever else was necessary that is not mentioned.

Ver. 34. *And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people*, etc.] The priests and Levites were in one lot, and the people in another, as Aben Ezra:

for the wood offering; for providing wood to burn upon the altar continually, concerning which Maimonides ^{f65} thus writes:

“what is the wood offering? there was a time fixed for families to go out unto the forests, and bring in wood of disposition (to be laid in order on the altar); and the day when it came to the turn of a family to bring the wood, they offered up freewill burnt offerings, which were called a wood offering; and it was to them as a good day (or festival), and they were forbid to mourn, fast, or do any work on it;”

and he observes, that if a single person brought wood of his own free will, he was obliged to the same; and Josephus ^{f66} speaks of a feast called *χυλοφορια*, when it was customary for all to bring wood to the altar, to keep alive the sacred fire, that it might not go out, which, according to him, was on the fourteenth of the month Lois, or August; but this was not the business of all the people, lots were cast, as here said, who should do it, and when:

to bring it into the house of our God; the temple, where there was a place called the “wood room”, into which the wood was brought after it had been wormed by the priests ^{f67}

after the houses of our fathers; or families on whom the lot fell to do it: some render it,

into the house of our fathers, meaning the same as before; the temple so called, because they built it, and worshipped God in it; so Jarchi and Aben Ezra:

at times appointed, year by year; as the lot directed; these, according to the Jewish doctors ^{f68}, were nine times in the year; on the first of Nisan (or March), the sons of Arach, of the tribe of Judah, brought the wood; on the twentieth of Tammuz (or June), the posterity of David, of the tribe of Judah; on the fifth of Ab (or July), the children of Parosh, of the tribe of Judah; on the seventh of the same month, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab; on the tenth of the same month, the posterity of Senaah, of the tribe of Benjamin; on the fifteenth of the same month, the children of Zattu, and with them the priests and Levites, and all who were of an uncertain tribe, etc. on the twentieth of the same month, the posterity of Pahathmoab, of the tribe of Judah; on the twentieth of Elul (or August), the children of Adin, of the tribe of Judah; on the first of Tebeth (or December), the posterity of Parosh again brought the wood:

to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law; the wood should be burnt upon it, and fire kept on it continually, (^{Q182}Leviticus 6:12,13), for this refers only to that, the wood offering is nowhere spoken of in the law.

Ver. 35. *And to bring the firstfruits of our ground*, etc.] Not that they cast lots to do this, but they bound themselves with an oath, according to the law, to do it; this is the first of all the fruits of the earth, (^{Q239}Exodus 23:19), though Aben Ezra restrains it to the sheaf of the firstfruits, and to the two wave loaves, (^{Q230}Leviticus 23:10,17),

and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees; which, as Aben Ezra observes, their wise men restrain to the seven kinds only mentioned in (^{Q188}Deuteronomy 8:8).

Ver. 36. *Also the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle*, etc.] Such as were unclean, as Aben Ezra notes, as the ass, etc. and are distinguished from clean ones mentioned in the following clause; now both these, their sons, and this sort of cattle, were to be redeemed by a price paid to the priests: as it is written in the law, (^{Q132}Exodus 13:2,13 ^{Q185}Numbers 18:15,16),

and the firstlings of our herds, and of our flocks; clean cattle, which were to be offered, (^{Q187}Numbers 18:17,18),

to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God; a price for the one sort, and the other for sacrifice.

Ver. 37. *And that we should bring the first fruits of our dough, etc.]*

According to the law in (^{<04150>}Numbers 15:20,21)

and our offerings; their heave offerings, (^{<04188>}Numbers 18:8,11)

and the fruit of all manner of trees; bore by them on the fourth year after their planting, (^{<04182>}Leviticus 19:23,24)

of wine and oil; to which Aben Ezra restrains the fruit of the trees, (see ^{<04182>}Numbers 18:12), all these they were to bring

unto the priests, to the chambers the house of our God; there to be laid up for the use of it; and oil and wine were frequently used in sacrifices:

and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our village; the tenth part of the produce of their agriculture everywhere throughout the land, (see ^{<04182>}Numbers 18:21).

Ver. 38. *And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes, etc.]* There was always to be a priest with the Levites at such times, to take notice what quantity they received, that they might not be under any temptation, or lie under any suspicion of defrauding the priests of their due, who were to have a part in the tithes, as follows:

and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house: which were in the court of the priests for that purpose; for out of the tithes of the Levites there was another tithe or tenth part taken, and given to the priests, (see ^{<04183>}Numbers 18:26-30).

Ver. 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, etc.]* In the temple:

where are the vessels of the sanctuary; to put the said things into, that they might be ready at hand when wanted, as they often were for the meat and drink offerings:

and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers; who dwelt there when in their ministrations, and were supported by the above tithes and gifts:

and we will not forsake the house of our God; neither forsake the assembling themselves there for worship, nor neglect to make the necessary provisions for the service of it, as they had too much done, but now resolve for the future to behave better.