

Nehemiah 10

Verses 1- 27

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, *and* Shemaiah. **These were the priests.** ⁹ **And the Levites:** Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, *and* Kadmiel; ¹⁰ also their brothers Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³ Hodiah, Bani, *and* Beninu. 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, *and* Baanah.

The covenant was signed by 23 Priests, 14 Levites, and 44 Leaders. Ezra is not on this list but he may be part of the Seraiah family.

Among the priestly families there are some well known names including Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, and Daniel.

Verses 28 - 31

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 comply with all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and statutes; 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 on any holy day**; and **we will forgo the crops of the seventh year and every debt.**

This covenant was an oath to walk in all of God's Law but several specific laws were highlighted.

1. The prohibition against mixed marriages with the pagans.
2. Trading on the Sabbath or any Holy day was prohibited.
3. Honor the seventh year. The fields were to remain uncultivated on the seventh year and debts were to be forgiven.

Verses 32 - 33

³² We also imposed on ourselves the obligation to **contribute yearly a 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 moons, 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.

It should be noted that this is 1/3 of a shekel and it was for the service of the temple. Some scholars say that this was according to the law given in Exodus 30 but that argument is not based on the facts.

See Exodus 30:13 – 15

¹¹ The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “When you take a census of the sons of Israel to count them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you count them, so that there will be no plague among them when you count them. ¹³ This is what everyone who is counted shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the Lord. ¹⁴ Everyone who is counted, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the Lord. ¹⁵ The rich shall not pay more, and the poor shall not pay less, than the half shekel, when you give the contribution to the Lord to make atonement for yourselves.

The tax in Exodus 30 was to be paid whenever a census was taken which was not done on a yearly basis and it was ½ shekel not a 1/3 of a shekel.

These same scholars then say that in view of the poverty of the people, it was now lowered to one third of a shekel, but later it was raised again to a half shekel quoting the Book of Matthew.

See Matthew 17:24

²⁴ **Now when they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?”**

It should be fairly obvious that this was a new tax that they agreed to pay for the service of the temple and had nothing to do with the one in Exodus 30 which God had commanded. Notice what the text says in verse 32,” **We also imposed on ourselves the obligation to contribute yearly a third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:**

It is quite likely that this self-imposed tax was later increased to a ½ shekel and that is what we see being discussed in Matthew 17 but it had nothing to do with the tax in Exodus 30 which dealt with a census.

Verses 34 – 39

³⁴ **Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood *among* the priests, the Levites, and the people so that they could bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers’ households, at set times annually, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law; ³⁵ and so that they could 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 And 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; the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers, and the singers are there. So we will not neglect the house of our God.**

³⁴ **Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood *among* the priests, the Levites, and the people so that they could bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers’ households, at set times annually, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law;**

Lots were cast to determine who would supply the wood for the altar and when they would supply it.

³⁵ and so that they could 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,

The first fruits were separate from the tithe. The first fruits were given at various times because there were a number of different crops that matured at different times throughout the year.

See chart 1005

Harvest Seasons							
	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Barley	X	X	X				
Flax	X	X	X				
Wheat			X	X	X		
Figs			X	X	X		
Grapes				X	X		
Pomegranates				X	X		
Olives					X	X	
Dates						X	X
Figs 2nd crop						X	X

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.

Besides the offering of various first fruits to the priests, the people were to give the tithe of the ground and other items to the Levites in their respective towns. The details of how this worked can be found in my commentary on Deuteronomy 14.

³⁸ And 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.

1/10th of the tithe went to the priests. A priest was present to insure the priesthood received their due share. Perhaps this is where Ronald Reagan got his philosophy about dealing with the Russians, "Trust but Verify".

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; the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers, and the singers are there. So we will not neglect the house of our God.

The work of the priests and Levites needed to be supported so the required sacrifices outlined in Numbers 28 and 29 could be fulfilled.

This included the following:

1. Daily sacrifices
2. Sabbath sacrifices
3. Monthly sacrifices (the beginning of each month).
4. Yearly sacrifices (The various Holy Days).