

Nehemiah 9 Commentary

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**NEHEMIAH UNDER CONSTRUCTION:
JUST A FEW NOTES NOW.
WILL FINISH IF THE LORD WILLS**

Nehemiah 9:1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.

- Now (KJV): On the first of this month was the feast of trumpets; on the tenth, the day of atonement; on the fourteenth began the feast of tabernacles, which lasted seven days, ending on the twenty- second; on the twenty-third, they separated themselves from their illegitimate wives; and on the twenty-fourth, they held a solemn day of fasting and confession of sin, and reading the law; the whole of which they closed by renewing their covenants.
- twenty (KJV): Lev 23:34,39+ 2Ch 7:10+
- of this month (KJV): Ne 8:2+
- children (KJV): Jud 20:26+ 2Ch 20:3+ Ezr 8:23 Es 4:3,16+ Isa 22:12 Joe 1:13,14+, Joe 2:15-17+ Jon 3:5-8 Ac 13:2,3+
- earth (KJV): Jos 7:6+ 1Sa 4:12+ 2Sa 1:2+ Job 2:12

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

Bob Utley - "on the twenty-fourth day of this month, the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, with dirt upon them" Two days after the Feast of the Booths (cf. Neh. 8:13-18+) and twenty-three days after the reading of the law (cf. Neh. 8:2+), the repentant actions so characteristic of the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16+, which was to be observed on the 10th day) occurred (cf. Neh. 1:4+). During the reading of the law these returnees felt these same feelings of remorse and guilt (cf. Neh. 8:9+). Israel needed forgiveness as the rest of chapter 9 clearly shows. Their covenant God was faithful (cf. Ezra 9:8-9), but they were not (cf. Neh. 1:6+; Ezra 9:6-7,10). "**fasting, in sackcloth**" See [Special Topic: Grieving Rites](#).

Believer's Study Bible - (vv. 1-3) The confession here is reminiscent of that in Ezra 9; 10, and has the same focus, i.e., the separation of Israel (v. 2). In neither instance does pride motivate the separation, but rather concern for the reestablishment of covenant relationship. The "one-fourth of the day" is about three hours.

Ryrie - 9:1 Two days after the conclusion of the Feast of Booths, the people began to acknowledge their sins before God. sackcloth. A sign of mourning. See note on Gen. 37:34.

Matthew Henry - A solemn fast Neh 9:1-3+. The word will direct and quicken prayer, for by it the Spirit helps our infirmities in prayer. The careful study of God's word will more and more discover to us our own sinfulness, and the plenteousness of his salvation; thus it calls us to mourn for sin, and to rejoice in him. Every discovery of the truth of God, should render us more unwearied in attendance on his sacred word, and on his worship.

Steven Cole - Ongoing Repentance (Nehemiah 9:1-38+)

Thirty years ago this week, the U.S. Supreme Court made it legal to kill babies in the womb right up to the time of birth for just about any reason. Making it legal did *not* make it moral in the sight of God, the creator and sustainer of life. Forty million human lives have been snuffed out, mostly because it was inconvenient for the mother to have the child.

It is to our shame as Protestants that most of those working in the pro-life movement are from the Roman Catholic Church. God used the late Francis Schaeffer and Dr. C. Everett Koop to help call evangelicals into the battle in the late 1970's with their "Whatever Happened to the Human Race?" seminars.

God has called us to differing ministries, so that not all of us can work for the pro-life cause. But it seems to me that there should be *some* in our congregation who sense the burden from God to work on behalf of justice for the unborn. Some need to devote themselves to helping women with difficult pregnancies to bring their babies into this world.

All of us, whether we are called to the ministry of the pro-life cause or not, should mourn the sin of abortion and demonstrate ongoing repentance before God for this and the many other grievous sins of our nation. We begin the Christian life through repentance and faith (Acts 11:18+; Acts 16:31+). If we have not repented of our sins, we have not truly believed in Jesus Christ in a saving way. Colossians 2:6+ instructs us, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." Since we received Him through repentance and faith, we should walk in repentance and faith. Ongoing repentance should mark believers in Christ.

Nehemiah 9+ should be linked with Nehemiah 8+, where the people heard God's Word read and wept in repentance as they realized how seriously they and their forefathers had sinned. But it was a time for a feast and so Nehemiah and the other leaders exhorted the people not to weep, but to rejoice, adding, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (8:10).

But now, two days after the end of the Feast of Booths, the people gather again, this time with fasting, sackcloth, and dirt on them to express grief over their sins. Again the law of the Lord is read for several hours, and then the Levites, perhaps led by Ezra, pray in

repentance, asking God to take note of their subservience to a foreign king (9:5-38). Along with Ezra 9 and Daniel 9, it is one of the great prayers of confession in the Bible. It is full of rich instruction about who God is, who we are, and how God has graciously worked on behalf of His people. It teaches us that...

Because we are so prone to sin and because God is so rich in mercy, ongoing repentance should mark our lives.

Before we look at the chapter in more detail, let me repeat what I said when we looked at Nehemiah 8:10⁺, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Some of you by nature are more gloomy, whereas some by nature are more cheerful and upbeat. The more gloomy types will especially need to work at joy in the Lord, but even the upbeat types need to cultivate this quality, because it is *not* the joy of an upbeat personality, but the joy *of the Lord* that we need.

The same observation applies to Nehemiah 9⁺. Some by nature tend to be more introspective and conscientious, always lamenting over their imperfections and sins. Others can commit serious sins with hardly a twinge of conscience and shrug it off with a glib, “We’re under grace!” If you are the gloomy type, you probably need to camp out in passages like Romans 8, which asks, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns?” “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:33, 34a; 1). If you are the glib type, who too easily shrugs off your sin, then you probably need to camp out in passages like Nehemiah 9⁺, which confesses both personal and corporate sins. The chapter brings out three simple but important lessons:

1. We are so prone to sin.

The chapter rehearses not just the sins of God’s chosen people, but worse, the sins of God’s chosen people in the face of His abundant mercy and grace. It is one thing to sin repeatedly if you do not know God, but it is far worse to sin repeatedly when you have tasted of God’s grace and love. Derek Kidner (*Ezra & Nehemiah, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* [IVP], p. 112) observes, “Sin abounds, grace superabounds.... Throughout this miraculous pilgrimage ‘they lacked nothing’ (21)—and appreciated nothing (17).”

It’s easy to read this account of Israel’s repeated sins in the face of God’s abundant mercy and think, “How could those Jews be so ungrateful? How could they be so hardhearted?” It’s also easy to read this account and think, “How can my mate be so prone to sin? He [she] reads the Bible and goes to church where the Bible is preached. What’s wrong with him [her]?” Thus we fail to apply it to ourselves. We ought to read this chapter and realize that we’re looking in the mirror. It describes the propensity of *my* heart! “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love” (Robert Robinson, “Come Thou Fount”).

Keep in mind that this prayer of confession followed and flowed out of the extended reading of God’s Word (9:3). The Word of God reveals to us the true condition of our hearts. Sin deceives and blinds us to our true condition. We’re prone to compare ourselves to others, invariably to those who aren’t quite as godly as we are. We think, “I’m not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get” (Luke 18:11-12⁺).

But “the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12-13⁺). The Bible lays bare the true condition of our hearts before God.

John Calvin opens Book One, “The Knowledge of God the Creator,” of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [ed. by John T. McNeill, Westminster Press] by pointing out that as we gain some knowledge of God, we will see how corrupt we are and thus seek Him. Then he writes (1:1:2),

Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself. For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy—this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity. Moreover, we are not thus convinced if we look merely to ourselves and not also to the Lord, who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured.

Work your way through Nehemiah 9⁺ and see as in a mirror your own heart. God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt through His mighty power. But as soon as they encountered trials in the wilderness, they wanted to go back to Egypt. Even so, even though we have experienced God’s salvation, we’re all prone when we encounter hardship to think, “If this is how God treats me, forget it! I was better off when I was in the world.”

The chapter goes on to describe the abundant blessings that God provided for His people. But in spite of all of His goodness, “they became disobedient and rebelled against [Him], and cast [His] law behind their backs and killed [His] prophets who had admonished

them” (9:26). So God delivered them over to oppressors. When they cried out to Him, He mercifully delivered them, only for them again to do evil. This cycle was repeated many times (9:27-30). Again, read it and see your own heart in the mirror. In spite of God’s repeated and abundant compassion on me, the sinner, I am so prone to lust after the things of the world rather than to be satisfied with the supreme blessing of God Himself.

There is a paradox in the Christian life: the longer you walk with God, the more godly you become. And yet, the more godly you become, the more you are aware of the terrible depravity of your own heart. It was not at the beginning of Paul’s Christian life, but toward the end that he said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Tim. 1:15+). He did not say, “among whom I *used to be* foremost of all,” but rather, “I *am* foremost of all.” The closer Paul walked with God and gazed upon His perfect righteousness, the more he was aware of his own sinfulness, even though in his daily walk he was growing in holiness. Even so, the more that you come to know God and your own heart through His Word, the more you will realize how prone to sin you really are. This will keep you at the foot of the cross, trusting in God’s free grace. That leads to the second lesson:

2. God is so rich in mercy.

God’s abundant mercy is the dominant theme of this prayer. It begins by exalting God and His glorious name (9:5) and then it starts where the Bible does, with God as the almighty Creator of everything, who gives life to every living creature. All the angels bow before Him (9:6). God chose Abram, brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham (9:7; the only Old Testament reference outside of Genesis to God’s changing Abram’s name). God made a covenant with Abraham to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan (9:8). God delivered His people from bondage in Egypt and provided for them in the wilderness (9:9-15). Note that God is the subject and the initiator throughout these verses.

Then, after recounting the arrogance and stubbornness of the people, they pray, “But You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; and You did not forsake them” (9:17). Even when they made the golden calf, “You, in Your great compassion did not forsake them in the wilderness” (9:19). It continues to list the many gracious blessings that God conferred on His disobedient and ungrateful people (9:20-25). Yet in spite of their repeated rebellion, God’s compassion was greater (9:27, 28, 31).

This is the great news of the gospel, that no matter how awful and terrible and numerous your sins are, God’s grace is greater!

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin! [Julia H. Johnston]

You may think, “But you don’t know the *extent* of my sins!” That’s true, I don’t know, but God does and He reveals Himself as a “God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness” (9:17). You may still think, “But you don’t know *how often* I have sinned, even after coming to know Jesus Christ.” True, but God does know and He reveals Himself here as a God who keeps on forgiving, not because people deserve to be forgiven, but rather in spite of their not deserving to be forgiven. We need to understand two things here:

A. GOD’S ABUNDANT MERCY IS PRIMARILY SO THAT HE WILL BE GLORIFIED AND ONLY SECONDARILY FOR OUR BENEFIT.

The prayer states that God performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and the Egyptians to make a name for Himself (9:10). This reflects Exodus 9:16+, where the Lord says concerning Pharaoh, “For this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.” Paul cites that verse in Romans 9:17+ and then goes on to assert God’s sovereignty by saying, “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.” He does *not* say, as many would like the verse to say, “He has mercy on whoever trusts in Christ, and He hardens all those who reject Christ.” Rather, Paul puts the reason for God’s giving or withholding mercy solely on God’s good pleasure, and not at all on anything in man.

He develops this further by stating that as the potter, God has the right to make one vessel for honorable use and another for common use. The reason God endures with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction is so that He could “make

known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom. 9:21-23⁺).

I am saying that salvation is not primarily man-centered; it is primarily God-centered. It is not mainly to make us feel good; it is mainly to make God look good. John Piper, who develops this theme at length in his excellent (although not easy!) *God's Passion for His Glory* [Crossway Books], also touches on it in his book for pastors, *Brothers, We are NOT Professionals* [Broadman & Holman]. Piper says that he was raised with the verse, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” But it was not until he was confronted with the writings of Jonathan Edwards in seminary that he was hit with the biblical truth that God is the most God-centered person in the universe. “God’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy His glory forever.” Piper explains why this is important,

Because many people are willing to be God-centered as long as they feel that God is man-centered. It is a subtle danger. We may think we are centering our lives on God, when we are really making Him a means to self-esteem. Over against this danger I urge you to ponder the implications ... that God loves His glory more than He loves us and that this is the foundation of His love for us (pp. 6-7).

After several paragraphs of demonstrating from Scripture that “God performs salvation for *His own sake*” (italics his), Piper writes (pp. 7-8):

This is no isolated note in the symphony of redemptive history. It is the ever-recurring motif of the all-sufficient Composer. Why did God predestine us in love to be His sons? That the glory of His grace might be praised (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14⁺). Why did God create a people for Himself? “I created [them] for my glory” (Isa. 43:7). Why did He make from one lump vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor? That He might show His wrath and make known His power and reveal the riches of His glory for the vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:22-23⁺). Why did God raise up Pharaoh and harden his heart and deliver Israel with a mighty arm? That His wonders might be multiplied over Pharaoh (Exod. 14:4⁺) and that His name might be declared in all the earth (Exod. 9:16⁺).

Piper continues with more Scriptures to demonstrate the same truth, that “God’s most fundamental allegiance is to His own glory”(p. 9). Don’t get caught in the man-centeredness of our day by thinking that salvation is primarily for man. Salvation is primarily to glorify God.

B. GOD’S ABUNDANT MERCY DOES NOT COME TO US THROUGH ANYTHING IN US, BUT THROUGH HIS FREE GRACE IN CHRIST.

This point flows out of the previous one and is just as practical. Many Christians think that God’s mercy and grace are contingent on our faith or (even worse) on our works, whereas Scripture plainly declares that our faith and our works are contingent on God’s mercy and grace. In Ephesians 2, after stating that we were dead in our trespasses and sins (vv. 1-3), Paul states, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (vv. 4-5). Then (2:8-9) he repeats, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Paul could not make it clearer, that it was *when we were dead* that God made us alive and saved us by His grace. He grants us repentance and saving faith as His gifts (Acts 11:18⁺; Phil. 1:29⁺). Salvation is *totally* by His grace, and not at all from ourselves.

This, too, has to do with God’s glory. If anything about our salvation was rooted in us, we could and would boast in what we contributed. But how much can dead people contribute to their resurrection? God did it all; He gets *all* the glory!

This prayer in Nehemiah 9⁺ shows that we are so prone to sin, but God is so rich in mercy. Therefore,

3. Ongoing repentance should mark our lives.

Again, there is a paradox (or irony) in Scripture. Believers should rejoice always, and yet we should mourn over our sins. This mourning for sin should be both for our personal sins as well as for the corporate sins of God’s people.

James Boice (*Nehemiah, Learning to Lead* [Revell], p. 148) shows the progression of thought that flows from this prayer: First, “There can be no genuine forward moral progress for either a nation or an individual without an acknowledgment of, sorrow for, and a true turning from sin.” Second, “But there can be no true sense of what sin is or a knowledge of why it is sinful without a hearing of and response to the law of God.” Third, “Consequently, revival must be preceded by sound preaching of the whole counsels of God, particularly the Law of God, which we have violated.”

He goes on (pp. 148-149) to point out that what these people did in confessing the sins of their fathers (9:2) was the opposite of what most people do today. Today, if people refer to the sins of their parents at all, it is to excuse themselves by blaming their parents, rather than to confess and mourn over the sins of their parents that have also tainted them.

Ongoing repentance takes sin seriously and takes the necessary steps to break from it. True repentance accepts responsibility for sin and does not blame God. As they prayed (9:33), “You are just in all that has come upon us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.” The chapter ends on what may seem like a down note, with the mention of the great distress of the nation. But as Kidner points out (p. 113), “The *great distress* which ends the prayer is a sign of life and of a vision that has not been tamely given up.” Because God is so rich in mercy toward sinners, whenever His word convicts us of sin or reveals the sins of our nation or our fathers, we should come before Him in repentance, appealing to His great compassion and grace.

Conclusion

It is my prayer that God would graciously use this message, in light of the infamous anniversary of legalized baby killing in America, to prompt some, through ongoing corporate repentance, to get involved in the pro-life movement. Not all will be so led, but just a few can make a huge difference. It should not be just women, but also men, who are moved by compassion for unborn children and compassion for misguided, confused, self-centered pregnant women, to get involved so that God would be glorified through the good deeds of His people.

I also pray that if anyone here is overwhelmed by guilt because of your sins (including, perhaps, the sin of abortion), you will realize that God is abundant in mercy toward sinners and that His great love will draw you to the cross of Christ for forgiveness and refuge. And I pray that all of us who have tasted God’s mercy will glorify Him through ongoing repentance and increasing godliness in our daily lives.

Discussion Questions

1. In what sense and to what degree should we confess the sins of our fathers (Neh. 9:2⁺)? What does this mean?
2. One popular author argues that if we view ourselves as sinners, we will sin more. Why is he mistaken? Where is the right balance between seeing ourselves both as righteous in Christ and yet “the chief of sinners”?
3. Why is it important to see that God’s chief aim in salvation is His glory even above our well being?
4. Why does it matter that salvation is *totally* of God and not a joint endeavor between God and sinners?

Brian Bell - Nehemiah 9:1-38

1. Intro: 6 Hour Service

1. It is interesting that 3 of Israel’s **great national prayers** are in Dan. 9, Ezra 9, Neh.9.
 1. We have here *the longest recorded prayer in the bible*. Neh 9:5-38⁺.
2. Just two days after the glad **Feast of Tabernacles** the people came together in **a solemn assembly**. This was a solemn public confession of their sin, and it was to be directed by the Levites. When they came together, **the book of the Law** was again **read aloud**. Then they **confessed their sins**.
3. The prayer in chapter 9 is a spiritual summary of the OT history of the Jews:
 1. The **Creation** (6); the call of **Abraham** (Neh 9:7,8⁺); the **Exodus** (Neh 9:9-14⁺); the nation’s **wilderness** experiences (Neh 9:15-23⁺); the **conquering** of the land (Neh 9:24-25⁺); the period of **Judges** (Neh 9:26-29⁺); the period of **prophets** up to the captivity (Neh 9:30-31⁺).
 2. Now therefore...in Neh 9:32⁺, brings us up to Ezra/Neh’s day and the need of the nation to repent and confess *sin*.
4. What list would you give a Christian friend that is seeking to **get their life right with God**? [Let’s find that list in the 1st 3 verses]

2. THE LAITY (Neh 9:1-3⁺)

1. We find here **5 steps** to Intimacy with God:
2. Self-Humbling (Neh 9:1⁺) – (*Fasting, sackcloth, ashes*) [cloth made of **black goats’ hair**, coarse, rough, thick]
3. *Outward demonstration* of deep mourning & heaviness of heart.
4. Separation (Neh 9:2a⁺) –
 1. We must *separate ourselves from the world* as we draw near to the Lord.
 1. Here, most likely didn’t marry foreigners.
 2. Separation w/o devotion to the Lord becomes Isolation, but *devotion w/o separation* is hypocrisy.
5. Sins confessed (Neh 9:2b⁺) Do not expect God to cover *what* you are not willing to uncover (*Duncan Campbell*)
 1. “A man should never be ashamed to **own** he has been in the **wrong**, which is but saying, in other words, that he is **wiser today** than he was **yesterday**.” Alexander Pope
6. Scripture read (Neh 9:3a⁺) –

1. They read for **3 hours** about *the sins of their fathers*, and then confessed for **3 hours** *doing the same awful deeds*.
2. In the Scriptures He speaks to **us**. In prayer & praise we speak to **Him**.
7. Worship (Neh 9:3b+) – True worship encompasses all of these (just named).
 1. Note confessed & worshiped. *Never let **self-examination** extend to the place of **ignoring the Lord**.*
 1. The more you look at **yourself**, the more discouraged you will become. Slide5f Ultimately focus on His **perfections**, not your own **imperfections**.
 2. How would you describe **your relationship w/God today?** [eyes closed]
 1. Is it warm & steady or is it cold? Is it interrupted & distracted? Is it a surface relationship or a deep relationship? Is it slow? Is it stale? Is it an exciting personal adventure or, is it a mechanical routine?
8. This then is a fine model for **a confessing people** to approach God.
 1. We must cultivate *closeness w/God* w/these spiritual disciplines.
 2. Involvement, yes...but...**Intimacy**??? [what do you plan to do w/this sermon?]
 3. Do you feel *lonely, hallow, shallow...frayed or frustrated* on your spiritual journey? I have this against that you, that have *left your 1st love*.
 1. *Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for **deep people**.* Richard Foster
 2. Swindoll gives 4 spiritual disciplines to cultivate this *Intimacy with the Almighty*:
Simplicity, which requires reordering our lives.
Silence, which asks us to be still.
Solitude, which involves cultivating serenity.
Surrender, which beckons us to let go
9. This prayer includes 20 sins of **Israel**...but 74 facts about **God**.
 1. **God** is the subject matter here...don't miss that.
 2. This deals 1st with **Who** He is. Then, **What** He does for His people. Then, **What** His people must do for Him.

3. THE LEVITES (Neh 9:4-38+)

1. (Neh 9:4,5+) They stood, cried out, then got everyone else to their feet. [why *stand* 4x's]IV. Slide7 **FROM CREATION (Neh 9:6+)**
 1. (Neh 9:6a+) They start with God as **Creator**.
2. (Neh 9:6b+) His Providential Care - you preserve them all
 1. Ps.145:16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
3. (Neh 9:6c+) We can't **duplicate** the angels worship, but we can **imitate** their devotion to the Lord.
 1. **We** have more cause to worship than *angels* do. [Would you agree? why/why not?]
 1. We are not just *servants*...but **children**. We have been **forgiven**.
4. In our *worship, praise, & prayer*, it's wise to begin w/the **Greatness of God**.
 1. Why is doing this important in **all** our praying? Ask?
 2. Did Christ model this for us? Ask? (yes, the beg of the Lord's Prayer)
 3. Isn't this proper for *any dignitary*...how much more *the Lord God Himself*?

4. FROM ABRAHAM TO MOSES (Neh 9:7,8+)

1. It is good to review the dealings of God with **ourselves** & w/those who have **gone before us**.
 1. At times in our walk w/God we have stood on **hilltops** where *the air is clear*, seeing in all directions, rejoicing that...life is good. Other times, standing waist deep in **mire**, w/**fog** all around us.
 1. What do you do when you're driving & it is foggy outside? *You slow down to the brightness of your headlights.*
 2. Like a **rest** in a piece of music, the **silence** helps define the significance of the sound. - Slow down & be silent before God.
 3. *God will not always **scream & shout** because life is **noisy**. He expects us to provide some **quietness** where His still & small voice can be **heard**.* (Chuck Swindoll; pg. 4 "Intimacy with the Almighty.")
 1. This section rehearses the history of Israel, but it is also a very accurate summary of *our own personal lives* in Christ.
2. The word give (or gave) is used 16x's in this chapter.
 1. Our God is a **Giving** God. He gave Israel a *Land, a Law, the ministry of the Spirit, food & water, deliverers, & victory over their enemies*...to name a few mentioned here.

5. FROM MOSES TO JOSHUA (Neh 9:9-23+)

1. In the last verses (Neh 9:7,8+) God was the **Founder** of a Nation. In (9-12) God, the **Deliverer** of a Nation. In (Neh 9:13-15+) God, the **Guide** of a Nation. In (Neh 9:16-31+) God, **Long-Suffering** towards a Nation.

2. Side by side w/the story of God's **care**...runs the story of **sin/sorrow/suffering**.
 1. The **Gold & Black** strands are closely interwoven. (Meyer)
 2. This Oriental tapestry is put together with many exquisite strands.
 1. It has the **gold** of happiness, pleasures, good days, w/God's Faithfulness. And the **black** of bruising sorrows. [it takes **both** to make it beautiful]
 2. *He will use both in **your life** to make it beautiful.*
3. (Neh 9:16+) What *lessons from the past* do you need to remember today, to keep you from making foolish choices, w/devastating consequences?
 1. *It's just best for me if I just don't take even one drink. It's just best if I stay away from casinos. It's just best I don't hang around w/certain old friends for awhile.*
4. (Neh 9:20+) Your Good Spirit – The Holy Spirit here in the OT.
 1. He is the good **Instructor**, the good **Comforter**, the good **Guide**, The good **Sanctifier**, the good **Quickener**, & the good **Intercessor**.
 1. Let us always **adore** Him, **revere** His person, **seek** His aid, **own** His power, speak to His **praise**, & never **grieve** Him.
5. (Neh 9:21+) They lacked nothing – Like Ps.23+ (same word)
 1. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. (nlt) *The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.* (msg) *God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing.*
6. **FROM JOSHUA TO JUDGES (Neh 9:24-26+)**
 1. (Neh 9:25+) As a nation they didn't thank God in times of **blessing**, but they were quick to turn to Him in times of **suffering**.
 1. Yet before we point at them...what about us?
 2. For every 100 who can stand **adversity**, there is only 1 who can stand **prosperity**.
7. **FROM JUDGES TO THE TIME OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH (Neh 9:27-31+)**
 1. They wanted the Father's **wealth** but not the Father's **will**.
 1. What a record of Israel's **sins**...but what a **greater** record of God allowing new beginnings & allowing them to *bury the past*.
 2. (Neh 9:28+) What does this prayer tell you about Human stubbornness & pride?
 1. Can you relate to this verse? *Is this not our testimony?*
 3. (Neh 9:31b+) In His **Mercy**, God didn't give them what they deserved. And in His **Grace**, He gave them what they didn't deserve. (*Wiersbe pg. 116*)
8. **AT THE TIME OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH (Neh 9:32-38+)**
 1. (Neh 9:32+) You enjoy living like the heathen? Then go live with the heathen.
 2. (Neh 9:33+) Unapproachable purity reaching out to *sinful humanity*.
 3. The song ended with the people entering into a covenant w/the Lord.
 1. A Covenant – A formalized relationship w/commitments to loyalty. (*John MacArthur; pg.90*)
 4. Prayer: God, may you sit upon the throne of our lives arrayed in royal apparel. *May we be quick to **own our sin**. Quick to **repent**. Quick to **return again**.*

Nehemiah 9:2 The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

- the seed (KJV): Ne 13:3,30+ Ezr 9:2 Ezr 10:11
- strangers (KJV): Heb. strange children, Ps 144:7,11 Isa 2:6+ Ho 5:7+
- confessed (KJV): Ne 1:6+ Lev 26:39,40+ Ezr 9:6,7,15 Ps 106:6,7+ Da 9:3-10,20+ 1Jn 1:7-9+

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

Bob Utley - "**descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners**" This VERB (BDB 95, KB 110, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) means "to withdraw from," "separate ourselves from." This withdrawal was for the stated purpose of obeying YHWH's commands (cf. Exod. 33:16+; Lev. 20:24,26+; Ezra 6:21; Ezra 9:1; Ezra 10:1). To worship and obey YHWH meant a complete break with the pagan and semi-pagan culture and practices (cf. Lev. 20:24,26+; e.g., marriages to foreign women). "**confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers**" This VERB (BDB 392, KB 389 II, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) means "to confess" (cf. Lev. 5:5+; Lev 16:21+; Ezra 10:1; Neh. 1:6+; Dan. 9:4,20+). Apparently this confession involved personal and national sin (e.g., Lev. 26+40; Jer. 3:25+; Jer 14:20).

Nehemiah 9:3 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.

- they stood (KJV): Ne 8:4,7,8⁺
- one fourth (KJV): Ne 8:3⁺

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 Three daylight hours.

Bob Utley - "they stood in their place" This seems to refer to Neh. 8:4⁺ (cf. Neh. 9:4⁺). "they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day" These returnees longed to be instructed from the Law of Moses. It seems at this point that a major turning point in the life of the Jews occurred. Instead of being primarily people of the temple (ritual, liturgy, and form) they became people of the Book (the influence of the synagogue). This was a reading/teaching session lasting three hours in the morning (Bible study) and three hours in the afternoon (confession and worship).

and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God

Nehemiah 9:4 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.

- stairs (KJV): or, scaffold
- Jeshua (KJV): Ne 9:5⁺ Ne 8:7⁺ Ne 10:9-13⁺ Ne 12:8⁺
- cried (KJV): 2Ch 20:19⁺ Ps 3:4⁺ Ps 77:1 Ps 130:1 La 3:8 Joh 11:43⁺ Ac 7:60⁺

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

Bob Utley - If Neh. 9:3⁺ refers to Neh. 8:4⁺, then this verse must refer to a separate platform. The names mentioned here refer to the Levites of Neh. 8:7⁺, who translated and interpreted Ezra's (and the men standing with him) words. These two groups may have been involved in antiphonal reading interspersed with translation and interpretation.

Matthew Henry - **Prayer and confession of sin** - Neh 9:4-38⁺. The summary of their prayers we have here upon record. Much more, no doubt, was said. Whatever ability we have to do any thing in the way of duty, we are to serve and glorify God according to the utmost of it. When confessing our sins, it is good to notice the mercies of God, that we may be the more humbled and ashamed. The dealings of the Lord showed his goodness and long-suffering, and the hardness of their hearts. The testimony of the prophets was the testimony of the Spirit in the prophets, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and what they said is to be received accordingly. The result was, wonder at the Lord's mercies, and the feeling that sin had brought them to their present state, from which nothing but unmerited love could rescue them. And is not their conduct a specimen of human nature? Let us study the history of our land, and our own history. Let us recollect our advantages from childhood, and ask what were our first returns? Let us frequently do so, that we may be kept humble, thankful, and watchful. Let all remember that pride and obstinacy are sins which ruin the soul. But it is often as hard to persuade the broken-hearted to hope, as formerly it was to bring them to fear. Is this thy case? Behold this sweet promise, A God ready to pardon! Instead of keeping away from God under a sense of unworthiness, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. He is a God ready to pardon.

Nehemiah 9:5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah, said, "Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever! O may Your glorious name be blessed And exalted above all blessing and praise!

- Stand up (KJV): 1Ki 8:14,22⁺ 2Ch 20:13,19⁺ Ps 134:1-3 Ps 135:1-3
- bless (KJV): 1Ch 29:20⁺ Ezr 3:11 Ps 103:1,2 Ps 117:1,2 Ps 145:2 Ps 146:2 Jer 33:10,11⁺ Mt 11:25⁺ Eph 3:20,21⁺ 1Pe 1:3⁺
- thy glorious (KJV): Ex 15:6,11⁺ De 28:58⁺ 1Ch 29:13⁺ Ps 72:18,19 Ps 145:5,11,12 2Co 4:6⁺
- exalted (KJV): 1Ki 8:27⁺ 1Ch 29:11⁺ Ps 16:2 Ps 106:2⁺

Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah, said, "Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever! O may Your glorious name be blessed And exalted above all blessing and praise

Bob Utley - The Septuagint adds the phrase "and Ezra said. . ." Apparently it is asserting the authorship of chapter 9 to Ezra instead of the Levite leaders, as the MT implies. The rest of this chapter is a history of God's faithful covenant promises and the people's unfaithful responses. **"Arise, bless"** These are both IMPERATIVES. The first VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means "to stand up." Apparently unlike Ezra's first reading of the Law (cf. chapter 8), the people did not stand up the entire time (cf. Neh. 8:5⁺). The second VERB (BDB 138, KB 159 II, used twice, the first a *Piel* IMPERATIVE, the second a *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) means to praise or adore for having special power (cf. Neh. 8:6⁺; 1 Chr. 29:20⁺). **"the Lord your God"** The covenant name of God, YHWH, translated Lord, is from the Hebrew VERB "to be" and refers to the ever-living, only-living One! **"forever and ever"** This is literally "from everlasting to everlasting." It is used of YHWH in Ps. 41:13; Ps 106:48⁺. **"Your glorious name"** The name is a Hebraic idiom for a person (e.g., Exod. 32:33⁺; 1 Chr. 28:13⁺; Ps. 72:19; Acts 1:18⁺; Acts 4:10⁺). God is glorious. **"above all blessing and praise"** The TEV catches the meaning as "although no human praise is great enough."

Believer's Study Bible - The lengthy prayer which begins here (vv. 5-37) acknowledges God's faithfulness throughout the long history of Israel's disobedience.

Ryrie - 9:5-38 Ezra's prayer began with an acknowledgment of God's majesty (v. 6) and continued with a recital of the major points of Israel's history: the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 7-8; see notes on Gen. 12:2⁺; Gen 15:17⁺), the events of the Exodus from Egypt and the years of wandering in the wilderness (Neh 9:9-23⁺), and the conquest of Canaan and subsequent backsliding (Neh 9:24-31⁺). It concluded with a confession of sin (vv. 32-37) and a commitment to keep God's laws (v. 38).

Nehemiah 9:6 "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.

- even thou (KJV): De 6:4⁺ 2Ki 19:15,19⁺ Ps 86:10 Isa 37:16,20⁺ Isa 43:10 Isa 44:6,8⁺ Mk 12:29,30⁺ Joh 10:30⁺
- thou hast (KJV): Ge 1:1⁺ Ge 2:1⁺ Eze 20:11 Ps 33:6 Ps 136:5-9 Ps 146:6 Jer 10:11,12 Col 1:15,16⁺ Rev 4:11⁺ Rev 14:7⁺
- the heaven (KJV): De 10:14⁺ 1Ki 8:27⁺
- preservest (KJV): Ps 36:6 Col 1:17⁺ Heb 1:3⁺
- the host (KJV): Ge 2:1⁺ Ge 32:2 1Ki 22:19⁺ Ps 103:21 Ps 148:2-4 Isa 6:2,3⁺ Heb 1:6⁺ Rev 5:11-13⁺

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

Bob Utley - This verse is an emphasis on God as the only (in the spirit of Exod. 20:2-3⁺ and Deut. 6:4⁺) Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Here creation is attributed to YHWH. Usually it is attributed to *Elohim* (cf. Genesis 1⁺). **"You have made the heavens"** ([Heaven](#)) This phrase is parallel to "the earth and all that is on it." "Heavens" here refers to the atmosphere of this planet (cf. Gen. 1:1⁺). **"the heaven of heavens with all their hosts"** This seems to refer to the ancient association of heavenly bodies (e.g., sun, moon, planets, stars, comets) with gods or angels (cf. Neh. 9:6⁺; Deut. 4:19⁺; Job 38:7). ([The Heavens and the Third Heaven](#))

There has been an ongoing discussion among the rabbis as to how many "heavens" there are and to what they refer. The "highest" heaven would be God's throne. Some see this as the third heaven (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2⁺), while others assert "seventh heaven" (b. Hagigah 11b).

In this context the "heavens of heavens" refers to the starry heavens (cf. Deut. 10:14⁺; Ps. 148:3-4) that personified worship and praise to God.

Henry Morris - heaven. This is one of the great affirmations of faith in Scripture, recognizing publicly that the God of Israel was, first of all, the Creator of the entire cosmos and everything in it, a concept utterly foreign to the pagan religions of other nations. **thou preservest them.** Not only is God the Creator of all things, but also their Sustainer (compare Colossians 1:16-17⁺; Hebrews 1:2-3⁺). This principle of universal conservation of the created universe is recognized scientifically in the most basic of all scientific laws, the Law of Conservation of Mass and Energy.⁶ **host of heaven.** The host of heaven consists of the angelic creation. Some of these have rebelled against their Creator, but most still worship Him.

Nehemiah 9:7 “You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham.

- choose (KJV): Ge 12:1,2⁺ De 10:15⁺ Jos 24:2,3⁺ Isa 41:8,9 Isa 51:2
- Ur (KJV): Ge 11:31⁺ Ge 15:7⁺ Ac 7:2-4⁺
- gavest (KJV): Ge 17:5⁺

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

Bob Utley - 9:7-8 This seems to deal with God's choosing and covenanting with Abraham (cf. Genesis 12⁺-18). [Special Topic: Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs](#) **"the Lord God"** This is YHWH *Elohim*. This combined title occurs first in Gen. 2:4⁺. **"Who chose Abraham"** This VERB (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* PERFECT) refers to God's choice. Here of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12⁺); in Deut. 7:6⁺ of Israel as a people. This refers theologically to the initiation of a covenant relationship. God must initiate. The burning question is does He call, choose, initiate to all or to some select group? Even in the OT, the choice of Abraham was a means to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3⁺); the choice of Israel was a choice for all humans (cf. Exod. 19:4-6⁺, esp. Neh. 9:5c⁺). **"brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees"** Originally Abraham's family were apparently worshipers of the moon god (cf. Gen. 11:31⁺). Ur was one of several centers for moon god (i.e., *Sin* or *Zin*) worship. At this point, in history all were polytheists (many gods) or henotheists (many gods, but one special god for me). **"gave him the name Abraham"** His original name "Abram" means "exalted Father" (BDB 4, KB 10). The name Abraham means "chief of a multitude" (BDB 4, KB, cf. Gen. 17:5⁺, where it is defined as "the father of a multitude of nations").

Henry Morris - Abram. It is worth noting that, in reciting the history of Israel all the way from the call of Abraham to the return of the exiles from captivity, representing a period of at least sixteen centuries, Nehemiah was confirming the historicity of these events, despite the denials and distortions of modern critics. In particular, he affirmed the truth of the mighty miracles performed by God in bringing His people out of Egypt (Nehemiah 9:9-21⁺). His greatest emphasis, however, was on leading his people in a national confession of sin and repentance.

Nehemiah 9:8 “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.

- foundest (KJV): Ge 12:1-3⁺ Ge 15:6,18⁺ Ge 22:12⁺ Ac 13:22⁺ 1Ti 1:12,13⁺ Heb 11:17⁺ Jas 2:21-23⁺
- madest (KJV): Ge 12:7⁺ Ge 15:18⁺ Ge 17:7,8⁺ Ge 22:16-18⁺ De 7:8,9⁺ De 9:5⁺ Ps 105:8,9 Lu 1:72,73⁺
- the Canaanites (KJV): Ge 15:18-21⁺ Ex 3:8,17⁺ De 7:1⁺ Jos 9:1⁺ Jos 11:3⁺
- hast performed (KJV): De 26:3⁺ Jos 11:23⁺ Jos 21:43-45⁺ Jos 23:14⁺ Ps 105:43,44
- righteous (KJV): Nu 23:19⁺ Ps 92:14,15 Tit 1:2⁺ Heb 6:18⁺ 1Jn 1:9⁺

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

Bob Utley - **"You found his heart faithful before You"** Because of the use of the word "faithful," this must refer to Gen. 15:6⁺ (cf. Rom. 4:3,9,22⁺; Gal. 3:6⁺; James 2:23⁺), which refers to God's promise of descendants. Abraham's faith is fully revealed in Gen. 22⁺ (cf. James 2:22⁺). **And made a covenant with him** This covenant is first delineated in Gen. 12:1-3⁺, but reaffirmed in chapters 15 and 17. **"to his descendants"** This is literally the term "seed." In the OT it focuses on the Jewish people, but in the NT Paul sees it as referring uniquely to Christ (cf. Gal. 3:15-22⁺). **"You have fulfilled Your promise"** This relates to Gen. 15:12-21⁺, which refers to the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. **"For You are righteous"** This relates to YHWH's character (cf. 2 Chr. 12:6⁺; Ezra 9:15), but the same term is used in Neh. 9:33⁺, translated "just" and refers to His actions (i.e., judgments, cf. Exod. 9:27⁺; Ps. 119:137⁺; Ps 145:17). The specific text that relates to the reason for the Canaanite defeat is Deut. 9:4-6⁺.

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

- didst see (KJV): Ex 2:25⁺ Ex 3:7-9,16⁺ Ac 7:34⁺
- heardest (KJV): Ex 14:10-12⁺

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

Bob Utley - **Neh 9:9-14⁺** This deals with the period of the Exodus and wilderness wandering period. God's promise and fulfillment of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt is a recurrent theme (e.g., Ps. 78:12ff; Ps 105:23ff; Ps 106:7ff⁺; Ps 135:8ff; Ps 136:10ff). **"You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt"** This relates to Exod. 2:25⁺; Exod 3:7⁺ (Acts 7:34⁺). **"And heard their cry by the Red Sea"** This refers specifically to Exodus 14⁺. [Special Topic: The Red Sea](#)

Nehemiah 9:10 "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.

- showedst (KJV): Ex 7:1-25⁺ Ex 14:1-31⁺ De 4:34⁺ De 11:3,4⁺ Ps 78:12,13,43-53 Ps 105:27-37 Ps 106:7-11⁺ Ps 135:8,9 Ps 136:10-15 Ac 7:36⁺
- they (KJV): Ex 5:2,7,8⁺ Ex 9:17⁺ Ex 10:3⁺ Ex 18:11⁺ Job 40:11,12 Da 4:37⁺ Da 5:23⁺ 1Pe 5:5⁺
- didst (KJV): Ex 9:16⁺ Jos 2:10,11⁺ Ps 83:18 Isa 63:12,14 Jer 32:20⁺ Eze 20:9 Da 9:15⁺ Ro 9:17⁺

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

Bob Utley - This verse refers to the series of plagues that YHWH sent through Moses (cf. Exodus 7-11). These plagues target and repudiate the nature and animal gods of Egypt. YHWH wants Egyptians to believe in Him also (cf. Neh. 9:10d⁺; Exod. 9:14-16⁺).

Nehemiah 9:11 "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.

- divide (KJV): Ex 14:21,22,27,28⁺ Ps 66:6 Ps 78:13 Ps 114:3-5 Ps 136:13-15 Isa 63:11-13
- their persecutors (KJV): Ex 15:1-21⁺ Ps 106:9-11⁺ Heb 11:29⁺
- as a stone (KJV): Ex 15:5,10⁺ Rev 18:21⁺

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

Bob Utley - **"their pursuers You hurled into the depths"** This refers to Exod. 14⁺, especially Neh. 9:26-31⁺. **"Like a stone into raging waters"** This is almost an exact quote from the Song of Moses in Exod. 15:5,10⁺. [Special Topic: Waters](#)

Nehemiah 9:12 "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.

- thou leddest (KJV): Ne 9:19⁺ Ex 13:21,22⁺ Ex 14:19,20⁺ Ps 78:14 Ps 105:39
- in the way (KJV): Ps 107:7 Ps 143:8

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.

Bob Utley - **"a pillar of fire"** This refers to Shekinah cloud of glory (physical symbol of the presence of YHWH) that separated the children of Israel from the army of Pharaoh, and led them throughout the wilderness wandering period (e.g., Exod. 13:22⁺; Exod 14:19-24⁺; Exod 16:10⁺; Exod 19:9,16⁺; Exod 24:15-18⁺; Exod 34:5⁺; Exod 40:34-38⁺). This is referred to again in Neh. 9:19⁺. **"the way"** See [Special Topic: The Route of the Exodus](#).

Nehemiah 9:13 "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.

- camest (KJV): Ex 19:11,16-20⁺ De 33:2⁺ Isa 64:1,3 Hab 3:3⁺
- spakest (KJV): Ex 20:1,22⁺ De 4:10-13,33⁺ De 5:4,22-26⁺ Heb 12:18-26⁺
- gavest (KJV): De 4:8⁺ De 10:12,13⁺ Ps 19:7-11⁺ Ps 119:127,128⁺ Eze 20:11-13 Ro 7:12-14,16⁺
- true laws (KJV): Heb. laws of truth, Ps 119:160⁺

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

Nehemiah 9:14 “So You made known to them Your holy sabbath, And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses.

- madest (KJV): Ge 2:3⁺ Ex 16:29⁺ Ex 20:8-11⁺ Eze 20:12,20
- commandedst (KJV): Ex 21:1-23:33 Lev 27:34⁺ De 4:5,45⁺ De 5:31⁺
- Moses (KJV): Ne 1:8⁺ Joh 1:17⁺

So You made known to them Your holy sabbath, And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses

Bob Utley - This verse, like Neh. 9:13⁺, relates to the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai recorded in Exodus 19⁺-20; see note online. The phrase "Your holy sabbath" probably refers to Exod. 20:8-11⁺, which is a theological development of the seventh day of rest of Gen. 2:1-3⁺. [Sabbath \(OT\)](#)

Nehemiah 9:15 “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.

- gavest (KJV): Ex 16:4,14,15⁺ De 8:3,16⁺ Ps 78:24,25 Ps 105:40 Joh 6:31-35⁺ 1Co 10:3⁺
- broughtest (KJV): Ne 9:20⁺ Ex 17:6 Nu 20:7-11⁺ De 8:15⁺ Ps 77:15-20 Ps 105:41 Ps 114:8 1Co 10:4⁺
- go (KJV): De 1:8⁺ Jos 1:2-4⁺
- sworn (KJV): Heb. lift up thine hand, Ge 14:22⁺ Nu 14:30⁺ Eze 20:15

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.

Bob Utley - **Neh 9:15-21** This is a description of the wilderness wandering period and God's unique care amidst the children of Israel's rebellion (Ezra's theme in chapter 9). **"You provided bread from heaven"** This daily provision of manna is described in Exodus 16⁺, especially vv. 14-15,31. [Manna](#) **You brought forth water from a rock** This must have occurred regularly, but only two times are recorded (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:7-13⁺).

Nehemiah 9:16 “But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly; They became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments.

- dealt (KJV): Ne 9:10,29⁺ Ex 32:9⁺ De 9:6,13,23,24,27⁺ De 32:15⁺ Ps 78:8-72 Ps 106:6⁺ Isa 63:10 Jer 2:31 Ac 7:51⁺
- hardened (KJV): De 31:27⁺ 2Ki 17:14⁺ 2Ch 30:8⁺ 2Ch 36:13⁺ Ps 95:8-10 Pr 29:1 Isa 48:4 Jer 19:15 Ro 2:5⁺ Heb 3:13,15⁺
- hearkened (KJV): Ex 15:26⁺ De 5:29⁺ Ps 81:8,11-14 Isa 48:18 There were two things to which the Israelites did not duly give heed, else they had not done as they did. The word of God they heard, but they gave no heed to God's commandments: and the works of God they saw, but were not mindful of his wonders. Had they really considered them as miracles, they would have obeyed from a principle of faith and holy fear: had they duly considered them as mercies, they would have obeyed from a principle of gratitude and holy love.

But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly; They became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments

Bob Utley - Neh 9:16-17⁺ Here is the recurrent theme of the chapter. (1) God's faithfulness and love, Neh. 9:17b⁺ (2) Israel's unfaithfulness and rebellion, Neh. 9:16-17a⁺ YHWH's righteousness and Israel's rebellion are graphically revealed in Deut. 9:4-6,7,13,24,27⁺. The VERB (BDB 904 I, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) and the NOUN (BDB 791) both denote purposeful rejection of truth (i.e., rebellion, cf. Neh. 9:17,29⁺; 2 Chr. 30:8⁺; 2 Chr 36:13⁺; Jer. 7:26; Jer 17:23; Jer 19:15). [Stubbornness \(OT\)](#)

Nehemiah 9:17 "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.

- refused (KJV): Nu 14:3,4,11,41⁺ Nu 16:14⁺ Ps 106:24,25⁺ Pr 1:24⁺ Heb 12:25⁺
- mindful (KJV): Ps 78:11,42,43 Ps 86:5,15 Ps 106:7,13⁺ Mt 16:9-11⁺ 2Pe 1:12-15⁺
- in their rebellion (KJV): Instead of {bemiryam,} "in their rebellion," seven MSS., one edition, and the LXX., have {bemitzrayim,} "in Egypt:" "appointed a captain to return to their bondage in Egypt."
- appointed (KJV): Nu 14:4⁺ Ac 7:39⁺
- a God (KJV): Nu 14:18,19⁺ Ps 86:5,15 Ps 130:4 Mic 7:18,19⁺
- ready to pardon (KJV): Heb. of pardons
- gracious (KJV): Ex 34:6,7⁺ Ps 78:38 Ps 103:8-18 Ps 145:8,9 Isa 55:7-9 Joe 2:13⁺ Ro 9:15⁺ Eph 1:6,7⁺
- forsookest (KJV): 1Ki 6:13⁺ 1Ki 8:57⁺ Ps 106:43-46⁺

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

Bob Utley - **Your wondrous deeds**" This VERB (BDB 810, KB 927, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE), can mean "difficult" (cf. Deut. 17:8⁺; Pro. 30:18) or "wonderful" (cf. Exod. 3:20⁺; Ps. 78:12-16). In this passage, like so many Psalms, it refers to God's mighty, powerful, extraordinary acts of deliverance during the exodus, wanderings, and conquest. **"appointed a leader to return to their slavery"** This relates specifically to Num. 14:4⁺. The precursor is found in Exod. 14:10-12⁺ and Num. 11:1-9⁺. **You are a God**" There are six specific things stated about God's character.

1. forgiving (BDB 699, used exclusively of God's forgiveness)
2. gracious (BDB 337, cf. Deut. 4:31⁺; 2 Chr. 30:9⁺)
3. compassionate (BDB 933)
4. slow to anger (cf. Num.14:18⁺)
5. abounding in lovingkindness (BDB 338, Covenant loyalty, see [Special Topic: Lovingkindness \(hesed\)](#))
6. He did not forsake them!

This is one of a select number of OT texts that delineate the basic nature of God — Exod. 34:6-7⁺; Ps. 103:8; and Joel 2:13⁺. Part of this text's litany of God's characteristics became a standard way of referring to His character (cf. Ps. 86:15; Ps 145:8; Jonah 4:2). This is who God is! Rejoice and be glad! Believers' hope is based on the unchanging character of God. Remember the list is given in a verse that describes Israel's intentional rejection of God and His word.

Nehemiah 9:18 "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,

- Ex 32:4-8,31,32⁺ De 9:12-16⁺ Ps 106:19-23⁺ Eze 20:7-44

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

Bob Utley - **"they made for themselves a calf of molten metal"** The calf may have been a physical representation of YHWH, not another god (cf. Exodus 32⁺). **"and committed great blasphemies"** There is a series of sins recorded in Exodus 32⁺ -- idolatry (cf. LXX & Vulgate) or at least making a physical image of YHWH (cf. Exod. 20:4-5⁺) drunkenness sexual promiscuity (cf. Exod. 32:6⁺, "rose up to play" means a sexual orgy, cf. Gen. 26:18 for another use of this phrase)**Nehemiah 9:19** **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.

- in thy (KJV): Ne 9:27⁺ 1Sa 12:22⁺ Ps 106:7,8,45⁺ Isa 44:21⁺ La 3:22 Eze 20:14,22 Da 9:9,18⁺ Mal 3:6⁺
- the pillar (KJV): Ne 9:12⁺ Ex 13:21,22⁺ Ex 40:38⁺ Nu 9:15-22⁺ Nu 14:14⁺ Isa 4:5,6⁺ 1Co 10:1,2⁺

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

[Bob Utley](#) - "the pillar of cloud" See [Coming On the Clouds](#)

Nehemiah 9:20 "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.

- gavest (KJV): Ne 9:30⁺ Nu 11:17,25-29⁺ Isa 63:11-14
- good (KJV): Ps 143:10 Ro 15:30⁺ Ga 5:22,23⁺ Eph 5:9⁺ 2Pe 1:21⁺
- withheldest (KJV): Ex 16:15,35⁺ Jos 5:12⁺
- gavest (KJV): Ex 17:6 Ps 105:41 Isa 41:17,18 Isa 48:21 Isa 49:10⁺ Joh 4:10,14⁺ Joh 7:37-39⁺

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

[Bob Utley](#) - "You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them" God's "good spirit" does not necessarily refer to the NT Trinitarian understanding of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In the OT God's Spirit is a way of referring to His will being accomplished (cf. Gen. 1:2⁺). In this context it is probably parallel to God's angel who accompanied Israel during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 3:2⁺; Exod 14:19⁺; Exod 23:20,23,34⁺; Exod 33:2⁺). Also, God's Spirit is a way of referring to revelation or inspiration (cf. Neh. 9:30⁺; Ps. 143:10). He (NT Trinitarian sense) is the agent of inspiration (cf. Neh. 9:30⁺; Num. 11:17,25,29⁺; 1 Sam. 10:6,9-11⁺; 2 Sam. 23:2⁺; 1 Kgs. 22:24⁺; 1 Chr. 12:18⁺; 2 Chr. 24:20⁺; Isa. 11:2⁺; Isa 42:1; Ezek. 11:5,24⁺; Hos. 9:7; Joel 2:28-29⁺; Micah 3:8⁺; Zech. 7:12). [Spirit in the Bible](#)

Nehemiah 9:21 "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.

- forty (KJV): Ex 16:35⁺ Nu 14:33,34⁺ De 2:7⁺ De 8:2⁺ Am 5:25 Ac 13:18⁺
- their (KJV): De 8:4⁺ De 29:5⁺ Ps 34:10⁺

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

[Bob Utley](#) - Even though the wilderness wandering period was a time of judgment because of their unbelief, God was with them in a personal, powerful, daily way. The rabbis later called this time "the honeymoon" period because of YHWH's tender care and provision. The term "forty" is a round, symbolic number. This period only lasted 38 years. The specific reference to the clothes not wearing out is from Deut. 8:4⁺; Deut 29:5⁺. [Symbolic Numbers in Scripture](#)

Nehemiah 9:22 "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.

- thou (KJV): Jos 10:11⁺ Ps 78:65 Ps 105:44
- divide (KJV): De 32:26⁺ Jos 11:23⁺
- Sihon (KJV): Nu 21:21-35⁺ De 2:26-36⁺ De 3:1-17⁺ Ps 135:10-12 Ps 136:17-22

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

Bob Utley - This refers to Joshua's conquest on the eastern side of the Jordan (cf. Num. 21:21-35⁺; Ps. 135:11; Ps 136:19-20).

Nehemiah 9:23 "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.

- multipliedst (KJV): Ge 15:5⁺ Ge 22:17⁺ 1Ch 27:23⁺
- broughtest (KJV): Jos 1:1-3:17
- which thou (KJV): Ge 12:7⁺ Ge 13:15-17⁺ Ge 15:18⁺ Ge 17:8⁺ Ge 26:3

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

Bob Utley - 9:23-25 This seems to refer to Joshua's conquest of the land of Canaan. 9:23 "You made their sons numerous as the stars of heaven" This was part of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 15:5⁺; Gen 22:17⁺; Gen 26:4; Exod. 32:13⁺, i.e., numerous descendants also referred to as "like the sand of the sea," cf. Gen. 22:12⁺; Gen 32:12; Isa. 48:19; Hos. 1:10). For similar hyperbole see Gen. 13:16⁺; Gen 16:10⁺; Gen 17:20⁺; Gen 28:14.

Nehemiah 9:24 "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.

- So the (KJV): Nu 14:31⁺ Jos 21:43,45⁺
- thou subduedst (KJV): Jos 18:1⁺ 1Ch 22:18⁺ Ps 44:2,3
- as they would (KJV): Heb. according to their will, 2Ti 2:26⁺

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

Nehemiah 9:25 "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.

- strong (KJV): Nu 13:27,28⁺ De 3:5⁺ De 6:10-12⁺ De 9:1-3⁺
- a fat land (KJV): Ne 9:35⁺ De 8:7-10⁺ De 32:13⁺ Eze 20:6
- wells (KJV): or, cisterns
- fruit trees (KJV): Heb. trees of food
- did eat (KJV): De 32:15⁺ Ps 65:11 Isa 6:10⁺ Jer 5:27,28 Ho 13:6
- and became fat (KJV): They became effeminate, fell under the power of luxury, got totally corrupted in their manners, sinned against all the mercies of God, and then were destroyed by His judgments.
- delighted (KJV): 1Ki 8:66⁺ Jer 31:14⁺ Ho 3:5⁺ Ro 2:4⁺

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

Nehemiah 9:26 "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.

- they were (KJV): Judges 2:11,12⁺ Judges 3:6,7⁺ Judges 10:6,13,14⁺ Ps 78:56,57 Ps 106:34-40⁺ Eze 16:15-63⁺ Eze 20:21 Eze 23:4-49
- cast thy law (KJV): 1Ki 14:9⁺ Ps 50:17 Eze 33:3-5
- slew (KJV): 1Ki 18:4,13⁺ 1Ki 19:10⁺ 2Ch 24:20,21⁺ 2Ch 36:16⁺ Jer 26:20-23 Mt 21:35⁺ Mt 23:34-37⁺ Ac 7:52⁺

- wrought (KJV): Ne 9:18⁺ 2Ki 21:11⁺ Eze 22:25-31

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

Bob Utley - 9:26-31 This refers to the period of the Judges, which was one of the darkest periods of Israel's history. Cycle after cycle of sin and restoration! **9:26 "And cast Your law behind their backs"** This is a Hebrew idiom for being out of sight, being out of mind (cf. Isa. 38:17⁺). It has the connotation of willful rejection (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:9⁺; Ezek. 23:35 and the same concept is in Ps. 50:17). **"And killed Your prophets"** God's people did not want to hear from God through His spokespersons so they silenced the speaker!

Nehemiah 9:27 "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."

- thou deliveredst (KJV): De 31:16-18⁺ Judges 2:14,15⁺ Judges 3:8-30⁺ 2Ch 36:17⁺ Ps 106:41,42⁺ Da 9:10-14⁺
- in the time (KJV): De 4:29-31⁺ Judges 3:15⁺ Judges 6:6-10⁺ Judges 10:15,16⁺ Ps 106:43-45⁺
- saviours (KJV): Jud 2:18⁺ Jud 3:9-15⁺ 1Sa 12:10,11⁺ 2Ki 13:5 2Ki 14:27 Ob 1:21⁺

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.

Bob Utley - The recurrent theme of YHWH's patience, love, and covenant loyalty is contrasted with Israel's rebellion, generation after generation (cf. Neh. 9:28⁺).

Nehemiah 9:28 "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,"

- did evil again (KJV): Heb. returned to do evil, Jud 3:11,12,30⁺ Jud 4:1⁺ Jud 5:31⁺ Jud 6:1⁺
- hearest (KJV): 1Ki 8:33,34,39⁺ Isa 63:15
- many times (KJV): Ps 106:43-45⁺

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

Nehemiah 9:29 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.

- testifiedst (KJV): Ne 9:26⁺ De 4:26⁺ De 31:21⁺ 2Ki 17:13⁺ 2Ch 24:19⁺ 2Ch 36:15⁺ Jer 25:3-7⁺ Ho 6:5⁺
- yet they (KJV): Ne 9:10,16⁺ Ex 10:3⁺ Jer 13:15-17 Jer 43:2 Jer 44:10,16,17 Da 5:20⁺ Jas 4:6-10⁺
- which (KJV): Lev 18:5⁺ Eze 20:11 Lu 10:28⁺ Ro 10:5⁺ Ga 3:12⁺
- withdrew the shoulder (KJV): Heb. gave a withdrawing shoulder, Zec 7:11,12
- and hardened (KJV): Jer 7:26 Jer 17:23 Jer 19:15

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.

Bob Utley - "to turn them back" See [Repentance in the OT](#). This VERB (BDB 267, KB 268, Hiphil PERFECT) implies the willful

rejection of God's authority expressed through His prophets (cf. Neh. 9:30⁺) and His word. Often one's personal, cultural, or national opinions are substituted for God's truth (e.g., false prophets). The LXX characterizes Israel's repeated unfaithful actions and attitudes. "did not listen" "sinned against your commandments and judgments" "presented a disobedient back" "stiffened their neck" "did not listen" **"By which if a man observes them he shall live"** This is the OT understanding of salvation (cf. Lev. 18:5⁺; Gal. 3:12⁺). However, the repeated failure of each and every generation of the sons of Adam forced YHWH to bring about a "new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34⁺; Ezek. 36:22-38⁺) based on God's performance (in Christ) only dependent on a faithful human reception. The goal is still the same—a righteous people, but the mechanism has changed; an internal law/a new heart/a new spirit! **"And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck"** This terminology refers to Deut. 9:6, 7,13,24,27⁺. [Stubbornness \(OT\)](#)

Nehemiah 9:30 "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."

- many years (KJV): Ps 86:15 Ro 2:4⁺ 2Pe 3:9⁺
- forbear them (KJV): Heb. protract over them
- testifiedst (KJV): 2Ki 17:13⁺ 2Ch 36:15⁺ Jer 7:25 Jer 25:4⁺
- by thy spirit (KJV): Ne 9:20⁺ Isa 63:10 Ac 7:51⁺ Ac 28:25⁺ 1Pe 1:11⁺ 2Pe 1:21⁺
- thy prophets (KJV): Heb. the hand of thy prophets
- therefore (KJV): Isa 5:5,6⁺ Isa 42:24 Jer 40:2,3 Jer 44:22 La 2:17 Zec 7:13

Related Passages:

Acts 7:51⁺ "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."

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

Bob Utley - "the peoples of the lands" In Ezra (Ezra 3:3; Ezra 9:1,2,11; Ezra 10:2,11) and Nehemiah (Neh. 9:30⁺; Neh 10:29,31,32⁺) this means native inhabitants (i.e., those who survived the deportations and those resettled in Palestine and the resulting intermarriages). Earlier in the OT it referred to either (1) the wealthy land owners or (2) the people who had legal rights as citizens.

Nehemiah 9:31 "Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, For You are a gracious and compassionate God."

- for thy great (KJV): Jer 4:27 Jer 5:10,18 La 3:22 Eze 14:22,23⁺ Da 9:9⁺
- gracious (KJV): Ne 9:17⁺ Ex 34:6,7⁺ 2Ki 13:23 2Ch 30:9⁺ Ps 103:8,9 Ps 145:8,9

Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, For You are a gracious and compassionate God

Bob Utley - God's covenant judgment (cf. Leviticus 26⁺; Deuteronomy 28⁺) was always an attempt to cause Israel to repent and return. However, grace and mercy rejected results in judgment even beyond this life. God chose Israel to choose the world! He retained a faithful remnant to accomplish His Messianic promises and world evangelization!

Nehemiah 9:32 "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."

- our God (KJV): Ne 1:5⁺ De 7:21⁺ Ps 47:2 Ps 66:3,5
- keepest (KJV): De 7:9⁺ 1Ki 8:23⁺ Da 9:4⁺ Mic 7:18-20⁺
- trouble (KJV): Heb. weariness
- little before thee (KJV): Lev 26:18,21,24,28⁺ Ezr 9:13

- come upon us (KJV): Heb. found us
- on our kings (KJV): 2Ki 23:29,33,34⁺ 2Ki 25:7,18-21,25,26⁺ 2Ch 36:1-23⁺ Jer 8:1-3 Jer 22:18,19⁺ Jer 34:19-22 Jer 39:1-18 Jer 52:1-34 Da 9:6,8⁺
- since the time (KJV): 2Ki 15:19,29⁺ 2Ki 17:3⁺ Isa 7:17,18⁺ Isa 8:7,8⁺ Isa 10:5-7⁺ Isa 36:1-37⁺38

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

Bob Utley - 9:32-37 These verses deal with the period of the United (Saul, David, and Solomon) and Divided Monarchy (Israel until 922 B.C. and Judah until 586 B.C.). [Kings of the Divided Kingdom](#)

"our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness" Again the character and faithfulness of YHWH, in contrast to His people, is emphasized (cf. Neh. 9:33⁺). This is the recurrent theme.

The term "great" (BDB 152) is attributed

1. several times (cf. Neh. 1:5⁺; Deut. 7:21⁺; Deut 10:17⁺; Ps. 77:13; Ps 95:3; Jer. 32:18⁺; Dan. 9:4⁺)
2. to *Elohim* (cf. Neh. 8:6⁺; 2 Chr. 2:5⁺)
3. to YHWH (cf. Exod. 18:11⁺; 1 Chr. 16:25⁺; Ps. 48:1; Ps 96:4; Ps 99:2; Ps 135:5; Ps 145:3; Jer. 10:6)

God's power is great (Num. 14:17⁺); God's name is great (2 Sam. 7:26⁺; 1 Chr. 17:24⁺); God's works are great (Ps. 92:5).

The term "awesome" (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) is used in several but related senses in connection to God.

1. God's redemptive acts (e.g., Deut. 10:21⁺)
2. description of God Himself (e.g., Deut. 7:21⁺; Deut 10:17⁺; Neh. 1:5⁺; Neh 4:18⁺; Neh 9:32⁺)
 1. of His name (e.g., Deut. 28:58⁺)
 2. of His appearance (e.g., Jdg. 13:6⁺; Isa. 64:3)

Humans tremble or should tremble at the presence or even mention of the God of creation.

The last two in the list are synonymous. God's power is established by His faithfulness to His promises. These last two characteristics often appear together (cf. Neh. 1:5⁺; Neh 9:32⁺; Deut. 7:2,9,12⁺; 1 Kgs. 8:23⁺; 2 Chr. 6:14⁺; Dan. 9:4⁺).

A good article on the relationship between *berith* (covenant) and *hesed* (lovingkindness) is Edmund Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 103-107.

"From the days of the kings of Assyria to this day" Assyria took the Northern Ten Tribes captive in 722 B.C. For a list of their kings in sequence see [Kings of Assyria](#)

Nehemiah 9:33 "However, You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.

- Howbeit (KJV): Ge 18:25⁺ Job 34:23 Ps 119:137⁺ Ps 145:17 Jer 12:1 La 1:18 Da 9:5-14⁺
- but we (KJV): Lev 26:40,41⁺ Job 33:27 Ps 106:6⁺ Da 9:5-10⁺

However, You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.

Bob Utley - "You are just in all that has come upon us" The consequences for covenant violation are clearly spelled out in Leviticus 26⁺ and Deuteronomy 28⁺. God's judgments are both judicially fair and redemptively purposeful.

Nehemiah 9:34 "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.

- nor hearkened (KJV): Jer 29:19⁺

- thy testimonies (KJV): Ne 9:30⁺ 2Ki 17:15⁺
- thou didst (KJV): De 31:21⁺ 2Ki 17:13⁺

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

Nehemiah 9:35 “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.

- For they (KJV): De 28:47⁺ Jer 5:19 Ro 3:4,5⁺
- in their kingdom (KJV): Instead of {bemalkuthom,} "in their kingdom," {bemalkuthecha,} "in thy kingdom," is the reading of two of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., LXX., Syriac, and Arabic.
- thy great (KJV): Ne 9:25⁺
- fat land (KJV): De 8:7-10⁺ De 31:21⁺ De 32:12-15⁺

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

Bob Utley - "the broad and rich land" The Promised Land could hardly be characterized as "spacious," so it must be used metaphorically for a place of freedom (cf. Exod. 3:8⁺). Canaan was a very fertile land in Moses' day (cf. Exod. 3:8,17⁺; Exod 13:5⁺; Num. 13:23,27⁺).

Nehemiah 9:36 “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.

- De 28:48⁺ 2Ch 12:8⁺ Ezr 9:9

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

Ryrie - 9:36-37 They were slaves in their own land because the Persians required tribute of money, produce, and military service.

Bob Utley - "Behold, we are slaves today" This refers to the continuing domination, albeit benevolent, under Persia.

Nehemiah 9:37 “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.

- it yieldeth (KJV): De 28:33,39,51⁺ Ezr 4:13 Ezr 6:8 Ezr 7:24
- dominion (KJV): Ne 5:8⁺ Lev 26:17⁺ De 28:48⁺ Joh 8:33⁺

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

Nehemiah 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.”

- we make (KJV): Ne 10:29⁺ 2Ki 23:3⁺ 2Ch 15:12,13⁺ 2Ch 23:16⁺ 2Ch 29:10⁺ 2Ch 34:31⁺ Ezr 10:3
- seal unto it (KJV): Heb. are at the sealing, or sealed, Ne 10:1⁺

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

[Bob Utley](#) - **"We are making an agreement in writing"** Although the word "covenant" is not used here, a similar but rare word is employed. The term "agreement" is really from the Hebrew root "amen" and should be translated "firm agreement" (BDB 53). The VERB "making" is the Hebrew term "to cut" (BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). This is often associated with the common phrase "to cut a covenant." Neh **9:38-10:27** **"leaders. . . Levites. . . priests"** The leaders are mentioned in Neh. 10:1,14-27[±]; the Levites in Neh. 10:9-13[±]; and priests in Neh. 10:2-8[±] (cf. Neh. 12:1-7[±]). There has been much discussion among scholars whether individuals or families are listed. It is also unusual that Ezra is not mentioned, however, he was a member of the first named priestly family (Seraiah).