

Giving to “the House of God”

Nehemiah 10: 32-39

Last time we looked at verses 28-31

Under the title:

“Regulation of the Covenant”

Just a brief review of the headings.

We saw:

1.

In verse 28.

Even though the Covenant was sealed by a representative number, it included all the people of God.

2.

They had a common experience.

They had:

*“separated themselves from the people of the lands
unto the law of God”*

3;

We saw in verse 28.

The essential ingredient in our hearing of the word.

*“every one having knowledge, and having
understanding”*

4th;

In verse 29

The honour and glory of God becomes the priority in
this Covenant.

5th;

Covenant regarding Marriage.

In verse 30

*“we would not give our daughters unto the people of
the land”*

“nor take their daughters for our sons”

6th;

Covenant regarding the Sabbath.

*Neh 10:31 And if the people of the land bring ware
or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we
would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the
holy day:*

7th;

Covenant and its relationship to mercy

31b

*“and that we would leave the seventh year, and the
exaction of every debt.”*

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Tonight:

We want to consider:

The Importance of the House of God.

Note:

9 Times the phrase “the House of our God” is
mentioned in the 8 verses 32-39.

{one exception verse 35 reads “the House of the Lord”}

The phrase is only found 16 times in all scripture.

4 times in Ezra
1 in the Psalms
1 in Joel
9 in Nehemiah.

8 Times in this short passage.

So this passage becomes essential to our Biblical understanding of the importance of “the house of our God”

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Let us then look at these verses.

Neh 10:32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;

Adam Clarke

Notes:

“According to the law, every one above twenty years of age was to give half a

shekel to the sanctuary, which was called a ransom for their souls.”

See [Exo_30:11-16](#).

“But why is one third of a shekel now promised instead of the half shekel, which the law required?”

Clarke thinks it was because of the poverty of the people.

But Barnes notes:

“The half-shekel of the Law [Exo_30:13](#) was paid only at the time of a census (which rarely took place), and was thus not a recurring tax. In later times, the annual payment was raised from the third of a shekel to half a shekel [Mat_17:24](#).”

Also note:

What the beginning of verse 32 says:

“Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly”

This was over and above what scripture commanded!

They charged themselves!

Consider:

What it was for.

The “Service” of the house of our God.

The Service of God’s house was of primary import to them.

How important is it to us?

Verse 33

Outlines what is meant.

Neh 10:33 For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

John Gill:

Neh 10:33 *For the shewbread, To defray the expenses of the twelve loaves, which every week were set on the table of shewbread, Lev 24:5,*

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, Exo 29:38,

of the sabbaths, and of the new moons; on which were additional sacrifices, Num 28:9,

and for the set feasts; of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles; in which also were offered other sacrifices, besides the daily one, Num 28:16,

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.

Next:

In verse 34:

We see mention of “the Wood Offering”

Neh 10:34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law:

The only other place in the Bible that the phrase “the wood offering” is found is the last verse in Nehemiah.

Neh 13:30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;

Neh 13:31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

Albert Barnes notes:

“No special provision was made by the Law, by David, or by Solomon, for the supply of wood necessary to keep fire ever burning upon the altar. Nehemiah established a system by which the duty of supplying the wood was laid as a burden in turn on the various clans or families, which were

regarded as constituting the nation. The lot was used to determine the order in which the several families should perform the duty. A special day (the 14th of the fifth month, according to Josephus) was appointed for the bringing in of the supply; and this day was after a time regarded as a high festival, and called "the feast of the wood-offering."

Note:

The phrase:

At the end of verse 34

"as it is written in the law"

Does not refer to this "new way" of gathering the wood.

But to the proceeding clause in that verse.

Which is:

"to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God"

This is an important distinction.

Why?

Because we must distinguish between:

1. The Circumstances of Worship

And

2. The Regulative Principle of Worship

Ie.

How the wood was gathered was left to the people.

What was burnt on the altar was not.

When it comes to the issue of what we sing in worship, this is not a wood gathering exercise but a Sacrifice of Worship.

Therefore:

We do not have the right to decide how we do it.

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Next:

In verses 35-37a

We have a description of their covenant to bring in the firstfruits to the house of God.

In V.35

We have fruit and vegetables.

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

Compare:

Lev 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

Q. Do you make it a practice of your life to give God the first and not the last?

App;

All too often we spend a day doing our own will and desires.

Then we just spend a few minutes reading our Bible and a short prayer and we think that's enough!

Next:

In verse 36

It is:

The Firstborn of Sons and Animals.

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

3rd;

Firstfruits of all produce

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

Q. What is the meaning of this word “Firstfruits”?

ראשית

rê'shîyth

ray-sheeth'

From the same as H7218; the first, in place, time, order or rank (specifically a firstfruit): - beginning, chief (-est), first (-fruits, part, time), principal thing.

Compare:

Num 18:12 All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

Consider;

The first occurrence of this word in scripture is:

*Gen 1:1 In the **beginning** God created the heaven and the earth.*

Consider:

God put us first and gave us the best he could give including his beloved Son.

Compare:

Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

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Lastly:

From 37b-39

We see the principle of Tithing.

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

Note:

The Tithe was specifically for the Levite.

Num 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Priest was to be with the Levites when the offering was taken.

*Neh 10:38 **And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites***

take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.

Q. Why was this so?

John Gill:

"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"

Note:

The Levites were also to Tithe.

38b

"and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house"

John Gill:

"for out of the tithes of the Levites there was another tithe or tenth part

taken, and given to the priests, see Num 18:26."

Finally:

The goal of all this is found in the concluding clause of verse 39.

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

John Gill:

"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."

May God grant that we will never forsake these things in these days! And "Behave Better".