

Nehemiah Chapter 9 Continued

Nehemiah 9:20 "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst."

In the knowledge of the laws delivered to them.

The spirit of prophecy, according to Ben Melech, and which Aben Ezra interprets of the spirit put upon the seventy elders (Num. 11:17).

"And withheldest not thy manna from their mouth":

All the while they were in the wilderness, until they came to Canaan's land.

Called the LORD's manna, because prepared by him, and given by him to them.

A part or portion and gift from the LORD, as Ben Melech, from whence it had its name (see Exodus 16:15).

"And gavest them water for their thirst":

Which seems to have respect to the last rock struck for them, after their many provocations in the wilderness (Num. 20:11).

This was speaking of the nearly 3 million people being fed for the 40 years with manna that fell from heaven.

The water spoken of here, was the water that flowed from the Rock.

This is, however, the first and only mention of the Holy Spirit being their instructor in the Old Testament.

Nehemiah 9:21 "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, [so that] they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not."

As not for food, so neither for raiment, as follows.

"Their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not":

Of which (see Deut. 8:4).

There were so many miracles God had done for them in the wilderness journey, that we tend to forget the miracle of their clothes lasting 40 years.

Not only did their feet not swell, but their shoes did not wear out either.

These were really great miracles within themselves.

Verses 22-25

These verses encompass the period of possessing the Promised Land, as recorded (in Num. chapter 20; Joshua chapter 24).

Nehemiah 9:22 "Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan."

“Gavest them kingdoms and nations”:

Canaan was comprised of a number of politically semi-autonomous groups all loosely connected under the waning authority of Egypt.

The LORD divided Canaan into tribal districts, thus apportioning the Land for Israel’s possession.

We discussed in the previous lesson, how God took the land away from the 7 nations that lived in the area of the Promised Land, and gave it to the Israelites.

The land was divided into 12 parts, and each tribe received their part.

Sihon was king of Heshbon.

Og was the Amorite king of Bashan.

The giants came from this territory.

Nehemiah 9:23 "Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess [it]."

“Their children also multipliedst”:

A nation of offspring was another aspect of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

God told Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5), and (Exodus 1:1-3), reminded Israel that their multiplication in Egypt was nothing short of miraculous.

Approximately 75 people went into Egypt, and the nation of Israel, approximately 3,000,000 came out of Egypt.

This was a tremendous increase.

This near 3,000,000 people took the land of promise and dwelled in it, as God had promised.

Nehemiah 9:24 "So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would."

“Subduedst before them”:

Moses said (in Exodus 15:3) “The LORD is a warrior”.

As Israel’s military leader and king, He led them into battle to defeat their enemies and take the Land.

When they went in and took the land, as God had commanded them to do, God was with them and they won their battles.

In most instances, God had instructed them to kill the people of the lands they conquered.

They never did seem to quite rid the land of the Ammonites, Moabites, and the other five tribes.

The Philistines were a constant thorn for them as well.

Nehemiah 9:25 "And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness."

Such as, in a hyperbolical way, are said to be walled up to heaven (Deut. 1:28).

"And a fat land":

Of a good and fruitful soil, abounding with all good things (Deut. 8:7).

"And possessed houses full of all goods":

Ready built and furnished for them, both with good provisions and good furniture.

"Wells digged":

To supply them with water.

"Vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance":

Which they planted not.

"So they did eat, and were filled, and became fat":

In body, though in mind became wanton and wicked.

They made their hearts fat, or stupid, as Aben Ezra interprets it (see Deut. 32:15).

"And delighted themselves in thy great goodness":

Not in praising the LORD for it, and using it to his honor and glory, but indulged themselves to luxury and intemperance.

Though it may be understood of a lawful pleasure in the enjoyment of the great affluence they were brought into, which last agrees with what follows.

This truly was a land of milk and honey, as God had promised them.

The olive trees and the vineyards were already planted by the people they overran.

The children of Israel wanted for nothing.

God had kept his covenant with Abraham.

Verses 26-31

This section summarizes the period from the judges to the Assyrian deportation (722 B.C.), and Babylonian exile (586 B.C.; see 2 Kings chapters 17-25).

Verses 26-27

The "saviors" that God provided throughout Israel's history foreshadow the ultimate Deliverer, God's own Son.

Nehemiah 9:26 "Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations."

"Which testified against them":

God's prophets brought them to God's court to be judged by His law.

This theme is repeated throughout the message (verses 29-30, 34).

To be blessed beyond any other nation of the world, there was only one thing God asked of them.

He asked them to keep His commandments and be faithful to Him.

They did not do even that.

They rebelled against God.

They were disobedient at every turn.

God sent them prophets to warn them, and they killed their prophets.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were all said (by historians), to have been murdered.

They angered the LORD by worshipping false gods as well.

Nehemiah 9:27 "Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest [them] from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies."

As the kings of Mesopotamia, Moab, Canaan, and others.

"And in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee":

As they usually did (Judges 3:9).

"Thou heardest them from heaven":

And according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies.

Such were judges, Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, etc.

And this was done for them, not on account of their merits, but the abundant unmerited mercy of the LORD towards them.

It seemed to be a never-ending cycle.

They would sin against God and bring His wrath upon them.

Many times His wrath was carried out by them losing a very important battle and losing many men.

They would repent, and God would forgive them.

They seemed to never learn.

God sent judges, prophets, and priests to help them.

God sent those like Samson and David to defeat their enemies.

It was all the same.

As soon as they were out of trouble, they returned to their false gods.

The judges, Othniel and Ehud, were spoken of as saviors.

When each judge was in control, God would give peace to Israel.

Nehemiah 9:28 "But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest [them] from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;"

From their enemies, enjoyed their liberty, and were in prosperity.

"They did evil again before thee":

Relapsed into idolatry.

"Therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them":

As the Philistines had for the space of forty years (Judges 13:1).

"Yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies":

This was their case frequently in the times of the judges.

They sinned and fell into the hands of their enemies.

Then they repented, and cried to God for help, and he had compassion upon them, and saved them.

This is another way of saying the previous verse.

It seemed not to matter how great the help had been from God; they still would turn again to the false gods after their trouble was momentarily gone.

Notice, God forgave them because He was merciful, not because they deserved to be forgiven.

Nehemiah 9:29 "And testifiedst against them, that thou mightiest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear."

By sending prophets to them, to admonish them of their sins, and remind them of their duty.

"That thou mightiest bring them again unto thy law":

To regard it, and walk according to it.

"Yet they dealt proudly":

With a haughty air rejected the counsel of God.

"And hearkened not unto thy commandments":

Yielded no obedience to them.

"But sinned against thy judgments":

Transgressed his laws, which were so just, righteous, reasonable, and equitable.

"Which if a man do, he shall live in them":

Or by them, in the land of Canaan (see Lev. 18:5).

"And withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear":

Like oxen, that wriggle and struggle, and draw back, and will not admit the yoke upon them.

All of the wars they lost and the famines that came, were to drive them back to the LORD and the law.

They were a proud rebellious people, who felt they did not need the LORD.

They did not keep the law, and did not even try to know what God's law said.

They wanted to be like the world around them.

Nehemiah 9:30 "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands."

Throughout the reigns of several kings, such was God's longsuffering towards them.

Or, "thou didst draw upon them".

That is, his mercy, as Jarchi interprets it; he drew it out of his heart, and prolonged it towards them.

"And testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets":

Who reproved and admonished them, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God in them.

Who spoke in his name, and what he suggested to them.

"Yet they would not give ear":

To what the prophets said, and the Spirit of God in them.

"Therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands":

People that were lords of many countries, as the Assyrians and Chaldeans.

God waited several hundred years for them to repent and turn to Him with a pure heart.

He sent prophets to warn them of their evil deeds, and they took no heed.

He waited about 260 years for the ten tribes to repent and turn to Him, but they did not.

They went into captivity about 135 years before the tribe of Judah and Benjamin did.

The main difference I saw in this, was the ten tribes did not have any kings who truly loved God and kept his commandments, and Judah had a few kings who sought God.

Eventually, even Judah got so far away from God, that they were taken into Babylonian captivity.

Nehemiah 9:31 "Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou [art] a gracious and merciful God."

For the displaying of that, and the glorifying of it, which is so large and exceeding abundant.

"Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them":

Some were left in the land, and those that were carried captive found favor in the eyes of those that carried them away.

And were suffered to live, and many of them now had returned to their own land.

"For thou art a gracious and merciful God":

Of which they had abundant proof and evidence.

God loved them so much, that He always saved a remnant to start again.

At the time this is being spoken, that remnant had come back to Judah to begin again.

Notice, Gods mercy was what saved them.

Nehemiah 9:32 "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day."

“Now therefore”:

Having reviewed the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic Covenant (verses 7-8), throughout Israel’s national history, the prayer picks up with the present time confessing their unfaithfulness to (verses 33-35), and renewed commitment to the Mosaic Covenant (verses 36-38).

“The kings of Assyria unto this day”:

This statement sweeps across a summary of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian domination of the nation for almost 4 centuries up to that time.

The kings of Assyria were the rod of God's anger.

They were the instrument God used to punish the people and make them repent.

This was a reminder of the greatness of God.

The people must never forget the punishment that came upon them for their sins.

God is merciful and keeps His covenant.

It is man who breaks the covenant.

Nehemiah 9:33 "Howbeit thou [art] just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:"

They own the justice of God, could not complain of any wrong done them.

And had he shown them no mercy at all, it was but what they deserved.

"For thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly":

He had done according to the truth of his word of promise.

He had faithfully kept it, but they had transgressed his righteous law.

This was admitting that as bad as the punishment had been from God on His people, they had brought it upon themselves by their sins.

God had done what was right.

It was the wickedness of the people that had brought on the terrible times.

Nehemiah 9:34 "Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them."

All ranks of men, from the highest to the lowest, had shown no regard, nor yielded obedience to the holy law of God.

"Nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them":

Moral and ceremonial, which were a testimony of the will of God to them, and a testimony against them if they observed them not.

The Israelites were the only people in the world who had been given the law of God.

All they had to do was live by that law.

The ten tribes of Israel had no kings who kept God's law.

There were a few like Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah of the tribes of Judah that did right in God's sight.

Even they were overwhelmed finally by the sins of the people, and God punished Judah too.

Verse 34 is saying, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Nehemiah 9:35 "For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works."

When in it, whether of Israel or of Judah, and when in the most flourishing circumstances.

"And in thy great goodness that thou gavest them":

Amidst all the prosperity and affluence of good things they enjoyed, which was an obligation upon them to serve the LORD.

"And in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them":

The land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk, which lay open for them.

Their enemies being driven out before them (see Neh. 9:25).

"Neither turned they from their wicked works":

Their idolatries more especially.

While Israel and Judah were free and were not subjects to a foreign land, they did not serve God.

They had everything and threw it away in disobedience.

Verses 36-38

Until this point, the Levites in their hymn reviewed Israel's history; now they gave it a personal application.

"We are servants", said twice, represent the people's desire to come back under God's "covenant" and agree to once again be His people.

In it ... over us":

The praise prayer rejoices that the Jews have been returned to the Land, but grieves that Gentiles still rule over them.

Nehemiah 9:36 "Behold, "we [are] servants this day, and [for] the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we [are] servants in it:"

For though they had leave to return to their land, and rebuild their city and temple, yet they were still in subjection to the kings of Persia.

"And for the land thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it":

Though the rightful owners and proprietors of it by the gift of God to their ancestors.

To hold it and enjoy the good of it, and yet were obliged to pay tribute for it to the kings of Persia, all excepting priests and Levites (see Ezra 6:8).

Even though the king of Persia had let them come back to their homeland to live, they were not out from under his domination.

They still had to pay tribute to him.

The children of Israel had never really been completely free since then, until 1948 when the country of Israel was given to them.

Off and on they were in the land, but under domination of some other country.

Nehemiah 9:37 "And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we [are] in great distress."

“Much increase unto the kings”:

Because God’s people continued in widespread sin, enemy kings enjoyed the bounty that would have been Israel’s.

What God had intended to bless the children of Israel with, had in turn blessed the kings who they were subject to.

The Persian king was their master as they were speaking these words.

Verse 9:38 – 10:39

The nation makes a new covenant with God to keep the Mosaic law.

Though well intended, as they had been (in Exodus 14:1-8), their failure was forthcoming (see note on 13:10-13).

Nehemiah 9:38 "And because of all this we make a sure [covenant], and write [it]; and our princes, Levites, [and] priests, seal [unto it]."

“Because of all this”:

The history of God’s faithfulness, in spite of Israel’s unfaithfulness, is the ground of a pledge and promise which the people make to obey God and not repeat the sins of their fathers.

“We make a sure covenant, and write it”:

An agreement, or covenant, was a binding contract between two parties.

In short, it was a formalized relationship with commitments to loyalty.

In this case, the nation initiated this covenant with God.

This was re-establishing a covenant with their God.

They did not want these same problems to come upon them again.

All of the leaders would sign this covenant, they had written down promising to seek God and His ways from henceforth.

Nehemiah Chapter 9 Continued Questions

1. How many years did God provide manna for the Israelites?
2. How did he quench their thirst?
3. What is the good spirit in verse 1?
4. What miracles, that happened on their journey, were mentioned in verse 21.
5. God took the Promised Land away from _____ nations, and gave it to Israel.
6. Sihon was king of _____.
7. Og was the _____ king of Bashan
8. Their children also _____ thou as the stars of heaven.
9. From the approximately 75 people who went into Egypt, _____ came out.
10. In most instances, God had instructed them to _____ the people of the lands they conquered.
11. The _____ were a constant thorn for them, as well.
12. What was already growing in the land they took?
13. God had promised them a land of _____ and _____.
14. Nevertheless, they were _____.
15. What was the one thing God asked from the Israelites?
16. What did God do to cause them to return to Him?
17. Who did God send to warn them of their sins?
18. When they turned to God and repented, what did God do?
19. Which of the judges had been spoken of as saviors?

20. All the wars they lost, and the famines they suffered, were to drive them back to _____ and the _____.
21. God waited several hundred years, before He did what to them?
22. Why was Judah's captivity over a hundred years after the ten tribes' captivity?
23. God loved them so much, He always saved a _____.
24. God's _____ saved them.
25. The king's of Assyria were the _____ of God' anger.
26. Was God unfair with them?
27. Who were some of the good kings?
28. Who had let them come back to their homeland?
29. Were they truly free?
30. When did they become completely free?
31. What were they going to do, to show God their sincerity in keeping the covenant with Him?