**Nehemiah 9-13** - May 9th

The Israelites Confess Their Sins

**9**On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads.**2**Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. **3**They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God. **4**Standing on the stairs of the Levites were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Kenani. They cried out with loud voices to the Lord their God. **5**And the Levites - Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah - said: “Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.”

“Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. **6**You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

**7**“You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. **8**You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

**9**“You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. **10**You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. **11**You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. **12**By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

**13**“You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. **14**You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses. **15**In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

**16**“But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands. **17**They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, **18**even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, ‘This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ or when they committed awful blasphemies.

**19**“Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. **20**You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst. **21**For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

**22**“You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan. **23**You made their children as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their parents to enter and possess. **24**Their children went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you gave the Canaanites into their hands, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased. **25**They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness.

**26**“But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they turned their backs on your law. They killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies. **27**So you delivered them into the hands of their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

**28**“But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

**29**“You warned them in order to turn them back to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, of which you said, ‘The person who obeys them will live by them.’ Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. **30**For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. **31**But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

**32**“Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps HIS covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in YOUR eyes - the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our priests and prophets, on our ancestors and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. **33**In all that has happened to us, YOU have remained righteous; YOU have acted faithfully, while we acted wickedly. **34**Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our ancestors did not follow YOUR law; they did not pay attention to YOUR commands or the statutes YOU warned them to keep.**35**Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying YOUR great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land YOU gave them, they did not serve YOU or turn from their evil ways.

**36**“But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces. **37**Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress.

The Agreement of the People

**38**“In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.”

**10**Those who sealed it were:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hakaliah.

Zedekiah, **2**Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

**3**Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,

**4**Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk,

**5**Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

**6**Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

**7**Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

**8**Maaziah, Bilgai and Shemaiah.

These were the priests.

**9**The Levites:

Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,

**10**and their associates: Shebaniah,

Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

**11**Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah,

**12**Zakkur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

**13**Hodiah, Bani and Beninu.

**14**The leaders of the people:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

**15**Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

**16**Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

**17**Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

**18**Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

**19**Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

**20**Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

**21**Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,

**22**Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

**23**Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

**24**Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

**25**Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

**26**Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

**27**Malluk, Harim and Baanah.

**28**“The rest of the people - priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand - **29**all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord.

**30**“We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons. **31**“When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

**32**“We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God:**33**for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, at the New Moon feasts and at the appointed festivals; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

**34**“We - the priests, the Levites and the people - have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law.

**35**“We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

**36**“As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.

**37**“Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and olive oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. **38**A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. **39**The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and olive oil to the storerooms, where the articles for the sanctuary and for the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the musicians are also kept.

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”

The New Residents of Jerusalem

**11**Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten of them to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. **2**The people commended all who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

**3**These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem (now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon’s servants lived in the towns of Judah, each on their own property in the various towns, **4**while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem):

From the descendants of Judah:

Athaiah son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez; **5**and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, a descendant of Shelah. **6**The descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem totaled 468 men of standing.

**7**From the descendants of Benjamin:

Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah,**8**and his followers, Gabbai and Sallai—928 men. **9**Joel son of Zikri was their chief officer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was over the New Quarter of the city.

**10**From the priests:

Jedaiah; the son of Joiarib; Jakin; **11**Seraiah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub,the official in charge of the house of God, **12**and their associates, who carried on work for the temple—822 men; Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah, **13**and his associates, who were heads of families—242 men; Amashsai son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, **14**and his associates, who were men of standing—128. Their chief officer was Zabdiel son of Haggedolim.

**15**From the Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; **16**Shabbethai and Jozabad, two of the heads of the Levites, who had charge of the outside work of the house of God;**17**Mattaniah son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the director who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. **18**The Levites in the holy city totaled 284.

**19**The gatekeepers:

Akkub, Talmon and their associates, who kept watch at the gates—172 men.

**20**The rest of the Israelites, with the priests and Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, each on their ancestral property.

**21**The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

**22**The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of Asaph’s descendants, who were the musicians responsible for the service of the house of God. **23**The musicians were under the king’s orders, which regulated their daily activity.

**24**Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, one of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was the king’s agent in all affairs relating to the people.

**25**As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its surrounding settlements, in Dibon and its settlements, in Jekabzeel and its villages, **26**in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet, **27**in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and its settlements, **28**in Ziklag, in Mekonah and its settlements, **29**in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, **30**Zanoah, Adullam and their villages, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its settlements. So they were living all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

**31**The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba lived in Mikmash, Aija, Bethel and its settlements, **32**in Anathoth, Nob and Ananiah, **33**in Hazor,Ramah and Gittaim, **34**in Hadid, Zeboim and Neballat, **35**in Lod and Ono,and in Ge Harashim.

**36**Some of the divisions of the Levites of Judah settled in Benjamin.

Priests and Levites

**12**These were the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Joshua:

Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

**2**Amariah, Malluk, Hattush,

**3**Shekaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

**4**Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,

**5**Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah,

**6**Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

**7**Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah and Jedaiah.

These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Joshua.

**8**The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who, together with his associates, was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. **9**Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood opposite them in the services.

**10**Joshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, **11**Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

**12**In the days of Joiakim, these were the heads of the priestly families:

of Seraiah’s family, Meraiah;

of Jeremiah’s, Hananiah;

**13**of Ezra’s, Meshullam;

of Amariah’s, Jehohanan;

**14**of Malluk’s, Jonathan;

of Shekaniah’s, Joseph;

**15**of Harim’s, Adna;

of Meremoth’s, Helkai;

**16**of Iddo’s, Zechariah;

of Ginnethon’s, Meshullam;

**17**of Abijah’s, Zikri;

of Miniamin’s and of Moadiah’s, Piltai;

**18**of Bilgah’s, Shammua;

of Shemaiah’s, Jehonathan;

**19**of Joiarib’s, Mattenai;

of Jedaiah’s, Uzzi;

**20**of Sallu’s, Kallai;

of Amok’s, Eber;

**21**of Hilkiah’s, Hashabiah;

of Jedaiah’s, Nethanel.

**22**The family heads of the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, as well as those of the priests, were recorded in the reign of Darius the Persian. **23**The family heads among the descendants of Levi up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the book of the annals. **24**And the leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their associates, who stood opposite them to give praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.

**25**Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the storerooms at the gates. **26**They served in the days of Joiakim son of Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law.

Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem

**27**At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. **28**The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites, **29**from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. **30**When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

**31**I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate. **32**Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them, **33**along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, **34**Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, **35**as well as some priests with trumpets,and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zakkur, the son of Asaph,**36**and his associates - Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani - with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God.

Ezra the teacher of the Law led the procession. **37**At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the site of David’s palace to the Water Gate on the east.

**38**The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people - past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, **39**over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped.

**40**The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, **41**as well as the priests - Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets -  **42**and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. **43**And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

**44**At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites. **45**They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the musicians and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.**46**For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.**47**So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the musicians and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

Nehemiah’s Final Reforms

**13**On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God, **2**because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.) **3**When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

**4**Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah, **5**and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.

**6**But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission **7**and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiaha room in the courts of the house of God. **8**I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah’s household goods out of the room. **9**I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.

**10**I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. **11**So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.

**12**All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. **13**I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zakkur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because they were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites.

**14**Remember me for this, My God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of My God and its services.

**15**In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. **16**People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. **17**I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing desecrating the Sabbath day? **18**Didn’t your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.”

**19**When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. **20**Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. **21**But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath.

**22**Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.

**23**Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. **24**Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah.

**25**I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair.

I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. **26**Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. **27**Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”

**28**One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me. **29**Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. **30**So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. **31**I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me with favor, my God.