

## A GOOD BEGINNING. NEH. 8:1-8. 1/12/25. #24.

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**8** Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. **2** So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. **3** Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* to the Book of the Law. **4** So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. **5** And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was *standing* above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. **6** And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with *their faces* to the ground. **7** Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people *stood* in their place. **8** So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

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### 1. A new start

- a. The wall is finished & both the security & spiritual worship leadership were in place
- b. Facilities are mere tools to facilitate worship
  - a1. There was nothing spiritual about the wall or the temple building & its furnishings
  - a2. People & not things worship
- c. The next step was the rededication of the people to the Covenant of God
- d. Nehemiah set up the mechanism for the dedication
  - a1. He called the people to the central square
  - a2. He had a platform erected for the priests & Levites to be seen by the people
  - a3. Ezra was to read the Law to the people
  - a4. Breaks in reading the Law were in place so that the Levites could explain the Law
  - a5. The people were to commit to obedience

### 2. The proceedings

- a. Ezra read the Law & the Levites explained the Law on the 1st day of the 7th month (Tishrei, Sept./Oct.)
  - a1. The reading took from morning through midday as the people stood & listened
  - a2. The people listened intently
- b. As Ezra praised God the people bowed & proclaimed *Amen* ("let it be so")
  - a1. Amen means that not only did the people agree with the Law & its explanation (an est. 30,000 people), but they committed to comply with what was read & taught
  - a2. Eccl. 5:4 by agreeing to obey, the people also understood that they would be accountable to God for submitting to the Law

### 3. Concurrence vs. compliance

- a. It was easy in the emotional mass gathering of the people who just regained their city & worship to agree to everything that was said
  - a1. Emotional moments of deliverance, insight, or peer influence can produce emotion-driven vows of commitment
  - a2. Commitment motivated by feelings instead of core values will never last
- b. A small percentage of the Jews probably kept vows
  - a1. Many legalistically kept the form of the Law
  - a2. Most abandoned the vows (Neh. 13)
- c. Few people realize how serious vows are
  - a1. People break their word, marriage vows, contracts, & commitments easily
  - a2. God will hold us to account for agreements
- d. The Jews agreed to keep the Law
  - a1. Worship God only
  - a2. Keep all the requirements of the Law
  - a3. Be honest, faithful, & kind
- e. Christians commit to worship the Lord, serve him, & shun evil (will be held to account)