

# Nehemiah 09 - Ezra's Prayer

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## Nehemiah 9

### (B) National repentance (9:1-38)

#### (a) Repentance of the people (9:1-4)

(i) Fasting (9:1)

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

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**1** On the twenty-fourth day of this same month, the Israelis gathered together while fasting, wearing sackcloth, and covering themselves with dust.

1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

- The Feast of Tabernacles concluded on the 22nd day of the month (see comments on 8:14). After one day's interval, the 23rd, the people assembled on the 24th.

(ii) Confession (9:2)

2 The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and they stood and confessed their sins and the wrongdoings of their fathers.

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

2 The remnant of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners. Then they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

- They separated from foreigners (Cf. 10:28). Then they confessed their sins, evidenced by fasting (Cf. comments on 1:4), wearing sackcloth (Cf. Gen 37:24; Esther 4:1-4; Ps 30:11; 35:13; 69:11; Is 22:12; 32:11; 37:1-2; Lam 2:10; Dan 9:3), a dark coarse cloth made from goats' hair, and having dust on their heads (Cf. Joshua 7:6; 1 Sam 4:12; 2 Sam 1:2; 15:32; Job 2:12; Lam 2:10; Ezek 27:30). These were signs of mourning and grief.

(iii) Reading (9:3a)

(iv) Worshiping (9:3b-4)

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.

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3 While they stood there, they read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for one fourth of the day, and they confessed and worshipped the LORD their God for another fourth of the day.

3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

- For about three hours the people again stood (Cf. 8:7) while the Law was read. Then for another three hours they confessed their sins and worshiped the LORD.

4 Now on the Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and they cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God.

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.

4 Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the rostrum assigned for use by the descendants of Levi and cried out loudly to the LORD their God.

4 Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

(b) Levites' prayer of confession (9:5-38)

(i) The key Levites that prayed (9:5a)

(ii) God's name magnified (9:5b)

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

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!

5 Then the descendants of Levi—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—said, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God from eternity to eternity! Blessed be your glorious name! May it be exalted above all blessing and praise!

5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

- Several Levites, some of whom were mentioned in 8:7, were involved in leading the people in their praise of the eternal God. Five of the eight Levites in 9:4 are listed in the group of eight in v5 (Pethahiah is also mentioned in 11:24). These five may have been the same or different men.

One group was involved in petition (v4) and the other in praise (v5). The stairs (lit., "ascent") may have led to some part of the temple complex or they may refer to the platform mentioned in 8:4. The material in 9:5b—10:39 follows a normal covenant form:

- Preamble (9:5b-6)
- Historical prologue (9:7-37)
- Acceptance of the covenant (9:38—10:29)
- The stipulations (10:30-39)

The prayer in 9:5b-31 was voiced by the Levites on the people's behalf.

It rehearses major events in Israel's history:

- First stating God's glory (v5b)
- Uniqueness (v6a)
- Creation of the universe (v6b)

(iii) Survey of God's past faithfulness (9:6-31)

(a) To Abraham (9:6-8)

6 "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their lights, The earth and everything that is on it, The seas and everything that is in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly lights bow down before You.

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.

6 "You are the LORD; you alone crafted the heavens, the highest heavens with all of their armies; the earth, and everything in it; the seas, and everything in them; you keep giving all of them life, and the army of heaven continuously worships you.

6 Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

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

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

7 You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram, whom you brought from Ur of the Chaldeans and to whom you gave the name Abraham.

7 Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

- The Levites then spoke of God's work with Abram—calling him from Ur (Gen 12:1) and making a covenant with him (Gen 15:4-21)

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, Because You are righteous.

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.

8 You found him faithful in your sight; you made a covenant with him and you gave the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites to his descendants. And you have kept your word, because you are righteous.

8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:

(b) In the Exodus Event (9:9-11)

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

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

9 "You took note of the affliction of our ancestors in Egypt, and listened to their cry at the Red Sea.

9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;

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 You made a name for Yourself as *it is* this day.

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.

10 You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all of his officials, and against all the people of his land, because you knew they acted arrogantly against your people. So you established your name with them, as it remains to this day.

10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.

11 "You divided the sea before them, So they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; And You hurled their pursuers into the depths, Like a stone into raging waters.

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.

11 You divided the sea in front of them, and they traveled through the midst of the sea on dry ground. You hurled their pursuers into the depths, as one throws a stone into turbulent waters.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

(c) Physical and spiritual provision to the wilderness wanderers  
(9:12-21)

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.

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.

12 You led them during the day by a pillar of cloud, and by a pillar of fire at night to provide light for them on the path they took.

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

- Then they recounted God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (v9-12; Cf. Ex 1-15), and the giving of the Law (v13-14) and of manna (bread from heaven) and water (v15; Cf. Ex 16-17).

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.

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.

13 "You also came down to Mount Sinai, spoke with them from heaven, and gave them impartial regulations, true laws, statutes, and good commands.

13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

14 "So You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And gave them commandments, statutes, and law, Through Your servant Moses.

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

14 You revealed to them your holy Sabbath, and you mandated precepts, statutes, and laws through Moses your servant.

14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

15 "You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought out water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to take possession of The land which You swore to give them.

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.

15 You gave them food from heaven for their hunger and water from the rock for their thirst. You directed them to enter and possess the land that you had promised to give them.

15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

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

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

16 "But they—our ancestors—became arrogant and stubborn, refusing to listen to your commands.

16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,

- But the Israelites' ancestors became disobedient and rebellious against God even to the point of worshiping a calf-idol (v16-18; Cf. Ex 32).

17 "They refused to listen, And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You 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 mercy; And You did not abandon them.

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.

17 They would not listen, and did not remember the miracles you did among them. Instead, they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return them to their slavery. "But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in gracious love; therefore you did not abandon them.

17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

18 "Even when they made for themselves A calf of cast metal And said, 'This is your god Who brought you up from Egypt,' And committed great blasphemies,

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,

18 Moreover, after they had cast a golden calf for themselves, they said, "This is your god who brought you out of Egypt!" and committed terrible blasphemies.

18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

19 You, in Your great compassion, Did not abandon 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.

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.

19 You, in your great compassion, did not abandon them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud did not leave them in daylight, in order to provide light for them on the path they took. Nor did the pillar of fire abandon them at night, in order to provide light for them and lead them on the path they took.

19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

- However, God was still gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Cf. Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). God continued to guide them, instruct them, and provide for them (v19-21).

20 "Instead, You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, You did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.

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.

20 "You gave your good Spirit to instruct them, not withholding manna from them, and providing water to quench their thirst.

20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and witheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

21 "Indeed, for forty years You provided for them in the wilderness *and* they were not lacking; Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet swell up.



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.

21 You sustained them in the wilderness for 40 years. They lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell.

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.

- He helped them conquer their enemies Sihon and Og (v22; Cf. Num 21:21-35), and brought them into the Promised Land under Joshua (Neh 9:23-25). In all this they enjoyed God's great goodness (Cf. v35).

(d) To the conquest generation (9:22-25)

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.

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.

22 You gave them kingdoms and nations, apportioning them as frontier boundaries. They took possession of the land of Sihon, the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og, king of Bashan.

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.

23 "You made their sons as numerous as the stars of heaven, And You brought them into the land Which You had told their fathers to enter and possess.

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.

23 "You multiplied their descendants like the stars in heaven and brought them to the land about which you told their ancestors to enter and possess.

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.

24 "So their sons entered and took possession of the land. And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, And You handed them over to them, with their kings and the peoples of the land, To do with them as they desired.

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.

24 So their descendants entered and took possession of the land. Before their eyes you subdued those living in the land—the Canaanites— putting them under their control, along with their kings and the nations of the land, so they could do with them as they pleased.

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.

25 "They captured fortified cities and a fertile land. They took possession of houses full of every good thing, Carved out cisterns, vineyards, olive groves, Fruit trees in abundance. So they ate, were filled and put on fat, And lived luxuriously in Your great goodness.

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.

25 They conquered fortified cities and fertile ground, possessing houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, with vineyards, olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate, were satiated, and were well nourished, delighting themselves in your great goodness.

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.

(e) In the face of prolonged rebellion (9:26-31)

**26** "But they became rebellious and revolted against You, And threw Your Law behind their backs And killed Your prophets who had admonished them In order to bring them back to You, And they committed great blasphemies.

**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.

26 "Then they disobeyed, rebelled against you, and threw your Law behind their backs. They murdered your prophets who had admonished the people to return to you, committing terrible blasphemies.

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.

- Again the people rebelled (Cf. v17) so God gave them over to oppressors

27 "Therefore You handed them over to their enemies who oppressed them, But when they cried out to You in the time of their distress, You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them people who saved them from the hand of their enemies.

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.

27 So you delivered them into the control of their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed, they cried out to you, and you heard from heaven. In your great compassion you gave them deliverers who rescued them from the control of their enemies.

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 saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

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 out again to You, You heard from heaven, And many times You rescued them according to Your compassion,

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,

28 "But after they had gained relief, they returned to doing evil before you. Therefore you abandoned them to the control of their enemies, who continued to oppress them. But when they came back and cried out to you, you listened from heaven and delivered them in your compassion on many occasions.

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;

- But because of His great compassion He raised up deliverers, the Judges, who freed them (v27-28)

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,

Which, *if* a person follows them, then he will live by them. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen.

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.

29 You admonished them to return to your Law, but they acted arrogantly, and would not listen to your commands. They sinned against your regulations, which if anyone obeys, he will live by them. They turned away, being stubborn and stiff-necked, and they did not listen.

29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest 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.

30 "However, You remained patient with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not listen. Therefore You handed them over to the peoples of the lands.

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.

30 You were patient with them for many years, warning them by your Spirit through your prophets. But they would not listen, so you turned them over to the control of people in other lands.

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.

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

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.

31 Nevertheless, in your great compassion you did not completely destroy them or abandon them, because you are a God of grace and you are merciful.

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

- Through the centuries of Israel's sin (v29) God continued to be patient and to admonish them by the Holy Spirit through the prophets (v30). But as a result of their ongoing sinning

they were taken into exile (v30-31).

(c) Present request for forgiveness (9:32-38)

(i) God's greatness (9:32)

**32** "Now then, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps *His* covenant and faithfulness, Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You, Which has happened to us, our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and to all Your people, From the days of the kings of Assyria to this day.

**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.

32 "Now therefore, our God, the great, mighty, and awesome God, who keeps the covenant and gracious love, don't let all of the difficulties seem trifling to you, all of hardships that have come upon us, upon our kings, upon our leaders, upon our priests, upon our prophets, upon our ancestors, and upon all of your people from the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.

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.

- In this concluding part of the Levites' prayer, they asked for relief, again acknowledging God's power, majesty (Cf. 1:5; 4:14), and loyalty

— Throughout Israel's history she experienced hardship because of her disobedience

— Assyria was the first great power after Egypt that menaced Israel and Judah, beginning in the ninth century, over 400 years before Nehemiah's time. Even while the Israelites were enjoying God's blessings (from His great goodness; Cf. 9:25) in the land, they were still sinful.

(ii) Our sin (9:33-35)

33 "However, You are righteous in everything that has happened to us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.

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

33 You are righteous in all that is happening to us, because you have acted faithfully while we have practiced evil.

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

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.

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.

34 Furthermore, neither our kings, nor our leaders, nor our priests nor our ancestors have practiced your Law or paid attention to your commands and warnings by which you admonished them.

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.

35 "But they, in their own kingdom, With Your great goodness which You gave them, With the broad and rich land which You placed before them, Did not serve You or turn from their evil deeds.

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.

35 But they in their kingdom— in the midst of your great goodness that you gave them and in the large and fertile land that you provided them— did not serve you or turn away from their evil deeds.

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.

### (iii) Our distress (9:36-37)

36 "Behold, we are slaves today, And as for the land which You gave to our fathers to eat its fruit and its bounty, Behold, we are slaves on it.

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.

36 "Look! Today we are your servants, along with the land that you gave to our ancestors, so they could enjoy its fruit and its value— behold, in it we are your servants!

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:

37 "And 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.

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.

37 But now its abundant produce belongs to the kings whom you placed over us because of our sin. They also have power over our bodies and our herds at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.

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.

- Now they were slaves in their own land! Being slaves meant that they had to pay taxes to Persia, and Judah's governmental leaders had to give the Persian kings tribute from the produce of the land. Nehemiah's prayer ended with a plaintive admission of their great distress.

#### (iv) Our covenant (9:38)

**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."

**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."

38 "Because of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our descendants of Levi, and our priests hereby set their seals upon it."

38 And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.