

Nehemiah 13 - Correction of Covenant Violations: Foreigners; Compromise with Enemies; Tithing; The Sabbath; Intermarriage with Foreign Wives

II. Rebuilding of the people (Neh 8:1—13:31)

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(D) Nehemiah's reforms: correction of various covenant violations that the nation had previously covenanted to abstain from (13:1-31)

(a) After hearing the Mosaic law regarding exclusion of Moabites and Ammonites from the assembly, Israel removed all Canaanites from the nation (13:1-3)

(b) When Eliashib converted a sacred temple room into Tobiah's dwelling, Nehemiah ousted Tobiah from the Temple and cleansed this room after returning from Babylon (13:4-9)

(c) Nehemiah appoints faithful administrators in order to make restitution for and prevent the future robbing of Levi's tithes (13:10-14)

(d) Nehemiah stops Sabbath breaking by reprimanding the Sabbath breakers and by driving away those conducting business on the Sabbath (13:15-22)

(e) Nehemiah disciplined those who intermarried with pagans (13:23-29)

(f) Nehemiah asks God to remember him for sanctifying the nation from all things foreign, appointing duties for the priests and Levites, and providing for the Temple (13:30-31)

Nehemiah 13

(D) Nehemiah's reforms: correction of various covenant violations that the nation had previously covenanted to abstain from (13:1-31)

Each of the following reforms made by Nehemiah dealt with a violation of the covenant that these people had made with God (Cf. 10:29-32).

(a) After hearing the Mosaic law regarding exclusion of Moabites and Ammonites from the assembly, Israel removed all Canaanites from the nation (13:1-3)

1 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud as the people listened; and there was **found written in it** that no Ammonite or Moabite was ever to **enter the assembly of God**,

1 On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God,

1 Later that day the book of Moses was read aloud so the people could hear it, and a written command was discovered therein¹ permanently prohibiting the Ammonites and Moabites from coming into the congregation of God

1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

- "On that day" - refers not to 12:44 but to the time after Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to be governor again, as indicated in 13:4-7

- "...found written in it" - the portion of the Law (the Book of Moses) that was read is Deut 23:3-4. In that passage, God told Israel that no Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly to the Lord.

- "...enter the assembly of God" - regarded as one of the people of Israel and people of God, and participate in the spiritual life of the nation

— An Israelite was part of God's covenant by birth, but an Ammonite or a Moabite was not. They had to become part of the covenant by choice—by joining with God's covenant people and leaving the gods of their native people. They had to choose to reject their gods and embrace Yahweh alone.

2 because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

2 because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

2 because they did not greet the Israelis with food and water, but instead hired Balaam to oppose them by cursing them, even though our God turned the curse into a blessing.

2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

- "...because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water" - the reason why God, in Deut 23:3-4, forbid the Moabites and Ammonites from entering the assembly of Israel was because they failed to help Israel (by bringing them bread and water), and instead tried to curse Israel (by hiring Balaam).

— But God turned that attempted curse into a blessing (Num 22-25). Therefore Ammonites and Moabites were to have no part in Israel's temple worship.

- 3 So when they heard the Law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.
- 3 So when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.
- 3 When they heard the Law, they separated all those of foreign descent from Israel.
- 3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.
 - Being reminded of this, the people in Nehemiah's day eliminated those foreigners (Cf. v4-9,23-28).
 - Interestingly once again the reading of God's Word had an effect on the attitudes and actions of the people (Cf. 8:1-6,13-17; 9:3)
 - They likely could have thought of 20 different reasons to not obey what God's Word clearly said to do. Instead, they simply (and immediately) obeyed.

What about Ruth and Rahab?

Ruth (a Moabite) was included in the Israelite nation, as was Rahab (a Canaanite). Did Israel break God's law to include them among the nation? Likely no.

This is referring to unbelieving immigrants from these nations who were denied full rights.

Ruth and Rahab were both believers in Yahweh, thus exempt from this law.

Another more technical reason could be that both "Ammonite" and "Moabite" are masculine nouns, thus refer to males only. So only males from these tribes were prohibited by the Law to become part of Israel.

(b) When Eliashib converted a sacred temple room into Tobiah's dwelling Nehemiah ousted Tobiah from the Temple and cleansed this room after returning from Babylon (13:4-9)

- 4 Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah,
- 4 Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah,
- 4 Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who supervised the store rooms of the Temple of our God and who was related to Tobiah,
- 4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah:
 - Eliashib may have been the high priest at this time (Cf. 3:1,20; 13:28)
 - He was somehow related to Tobiah, the Jewish Ammonite who opposed Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild the walls (Cf. 2:19; 6:1,17-18)

5 had prepared a large room for **him**, where previously they used to put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil prescribed for

the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

5 had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

5 had prepared a great chamber for him, in the place where they used to place the grain offerings, incense, and vessels, along with the tithes of the grain, the new wine, and the oil that was mandated for the descendants of Levi, the singers, the gate keepers, and the priests' offerings.

5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforesaid they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

- "...him" - Tobiah, an Ammonite

- When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem (v6-7) he was shocked to find that Eliashib, the high priest in Judah (Cf. 3:1,20; 13:28), had prepared a large room in the temple for Tobiah.

— Probably Eliashib cleaned out one of the temple storerooms and converted it into an apartment for Tobiah because he was an influential friend and a relative (v4)

— Eliashib and Tobiah were closely associated, which may mean family ties (Cf. Tobiah's relationships by marriage with several Jews, 6:17-18). Tobiah had been an enemy of Nehemiah, opposing the wall-building (2:10-19; 4:3,7; 6:1,12,17,19); but now that Nehemiah was gone, Tobiah the Ammonite moved into the temple!

6 But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes **king of Babylon** I had come to the king. After **some time**, however, I requested a leave of absence from the king,

6 But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king,

6 During all of this time, I was not in Jerusalem, because I had returned to the king in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon. After a while I obtained permission from the king

6 But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:

- Nehemiah had left Jerusalem and returned to King Artaxerxes in 432 BC

— It was customary for kings to require their servants to return to them periodically to reaffirm their allegiance

- "...king of Babylon" - Persian kings used this title until Babylon rebelled against Persia.

Nehemiah evidently continued to use this title out of custom/habit. It's also possible that

Artaxerxes was living in Babylon at this time.

- "...some time" - we don't know how long Nehemiah was away from Jerusalem (some scholars guess 10-12 years). However, Malachi reproved the Jews in Judah for the same sins that Nehemiah described in this chapter.

— Scholars usually date Malachi's prophecies to about 432-431 BC. Therefore, Nehemiah may have returned to Jerusalem in 431 BC.

7 and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had committed for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courtyards of the house of God.

7 and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

7 to return to Jerusalem. I learned of the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in furnishing him with a room in the courts of the Temple of God.

7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

8 It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household articles out of the room.

8 It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

8 I was greatly upset, so I threw out all of Tobiah's property from the room.

8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.

- "It was very displeasing to me" - there were many reasons why this situation was displeasing (grieving) to Nehemiah:

- Because a room in the courts of the temple of God was being occupied by a man who was not only a pagan, but who also had a history of actively opposing God's work.
- Because it reflected so badly on Eliashib, the spiritual leader of Israel, and those around him. It showed that if Eliashib was blind to a problem, no one else around him could confront and correct him.
- It grieved Nehemiah because it made him question the lasting value of the spiritual revival he witnessed in Jerusalem before he returned to Artaxerxes.

- But Nehemiah didn't just sit back and grieve—he acted. He threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room, ceremonially cleansed the rooms, and returned the rooms to their proper use (v9).

— Nehemiah's actions here remind us of Jesus when He cleared out the moneychangers from the temple courtyard. Both Nehemiah and Jesus had the wisdom to not confuse love with being nice—they both knew when to take decisive action.

9 Then I gave an order, and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned the utensils of the house of God there with the grain offering and the frankincense.

9 Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.

9 I ordered them to purify the chambers, and then they brought back the vessels from the Temple of God, along with the grain offerings and incense.

9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

(c) Nehemiah appoints faithful administrators in order to make restitution for and prevent the future robbing of Levi's tithes (13:10-14)

10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *to them*, so the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

10 I also learned that the allotments for the descendants of Levi had not been distributed. As a result, the descendants of Levi and singers who were responsible for the service had each left to go back to their fields.

10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field.

- While Nehemiah was away, the people had stopped bringing their tithes to the temple, which caused the Levites to abandon their service in the temple to go provide for their own needs.

— This is why Eliashib could setup an apartment for Tobiah in one of the storeroom chambers in the temple—because the people had failed in their commitment to bring their tithes and offerings to the Levites.

— As a result, the Levites and others who were to live off these offerings as they performed spiritual services for the people instead had to work in the fields caring for their livestock (Cf. Num 35:1-5). This meant they had less time to work in the temple.

11 So I reprimanded the officials and said, **"Why has the house of God been neglected?"** Then I gathered them together and stationed them at their posts.

11 So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts.

11 So I confronted the officials and asked, "Why is the Temple of God neglected?" Then I gathered them together and put them back in their places.

11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

- "...Why has the house of God been neglected?" - it was neglected/forsaken because Israel did not obey the Law nor keep its promises before God.

— Support for the Levites via tithing was an obligation for the Israelites in the Mosaic Law (Cf. Num 18:21). And they renewed their commitment to this practice in their covenant (Cf. 10:39).

12 All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.

12 All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

12 Then all of Judah brought the tithe of the grain, the new wine, and the oil into the storerooms.

12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.

- In response to Nehemiah's reprimand (v11), and Malachi's preaching (Cf. Mal 3:8-10), the people once again began to bring their tithes into the storehouses

13 *To be* in charge of the storehouses, I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah from the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

13 In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

13 I appointed over the storerooms: Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah from the descendants of Levi; and next to them Zaccur's son Hanan, the grandson of Mattaniah, because they had been considered faithful. Their duties were to distribute to their associates.

13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren.

- Nehemiah stationed the Levites at their posts in the temple and appointed four men—a priest, a scribe, a Levite, and an assistant, all trustworthy—to oversee the distribution of the peoples' tithes (grain, new wine, and oil, v12; Cf. 10:39).

14 Remember me for this, my God, and do not wipe out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

14 Remember me, my God, concerning this, and do not erase my faithful deeds that I have undertaken for the Temple of my God, and for its services.

14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

- Also Nehemiah, as he so often did, prayed for God's help in the matter

- "Remember" - asking God to "remember" was a plea for help, not merely a request that God not forget something (Cf. v22,29,31; 5:19; 6:14 [2x]). Judah's leader did not want his efforts of reform to be undone by the people's neglect.

— The call to "remember" demonstrates Nehemiah's personal trust in God's heavenly accounting. While human approval might be limited, Nehemiah's ultimate desire was to honor the Lord and preserve proper worship.

The officials had failed to make sure the people of Judah obeyed the Lord in these matters. What made this problem even more distressing for Nehemiah, and difficult to believe, is that these leaders had previously signed a document promising before the Lord and the people that they would never again let this happen (Neh 9:38; 10:14-29,35,37,39). They had even said specifically, "We will not neglect the house of our God" (10:39b).

(d) Nehemiah stops Sabbath breaking by reprimanding the Sabbath breakers and by driving away those conducting business on the Sabbath (13:15-22)

15 In those days I saw in Judah *people* who were treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs, and every *kind of* load, and they were bringing *them* into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food.

15 In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought *them* into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food.

15 At that time I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the Sabbath, bringing in sacks of grain, loading them onto donkeys, along with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads. They brought them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I rebuked them on the day on which they were selling food.

15 In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens,

which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

- "In those days" - in the days following Nehemiah's return from Artaxerxes

- Nehemiah saw merchants working and transporting goods for sale into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.

— They were working on the Sabbath as they did on the other days of the week. They were treading grapes in the winepresses, and transporting the wine, along with grain grapes, figs, and other merchandise, into Jerusalem to sell it.

— One of the commitments Israel had made in writing was to keep God's laws regarding the Sabbath (Cf. 10:31), but when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he found that the people had also violated this promise.

— So Nehemiah admonished (corrected) them, probably reminding them of the purpose of the Sabbath as a day of worship, and their renewed covenant with God

- This was a problem with their priorities. There was nothing wrong with buying and selling goods, only when this desire became more important than honoring God. This was a clear way the people of Israel were prioritizing making and spending money above worship of Yahweh.

16 Also people of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all *kinds of* merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the Sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

16 Also men of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

16 Furthermore, Tyrians were living there who were importing fish and all kinds of merchandise, selling them to the people of Judah on the Sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

- They also were buying fish and other items from the people of Tyre who resided in Jerusalem

17 Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, by profaning the Sabbath day?"

17 Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day?"

17 I rebuked the officials of Judah, saying to them, "What's this evil thing that you're doing by profaning the Sabbath day?"

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

18 Did your fathers not do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath against Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

18 Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath."

18 Didn't your ancestors do the same? And didn't our God bring on us and on this city all of this trouble? Now you're adding to the wrath against Israel by profaning the Sabbath!"

18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

- Nehemiah intervened because he knew this sin was not just a personal issue. When open sin is tolerated and left uncorrected, it invited the discipline of God.

19 And it came about that just as it became dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered that the doors be shut, and that they were not to open them until after the Sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so *that* no load would enter on the Sabbath day.

19 It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so *that* no load would enter on the sabbath day.

19 As the Sabbath approached and it began to get dark at the gates of Jerusalem, I gave word to shut the gates, charging that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. I stationed some of my men at the gates to ensure that no loads would be brought in on the Sabbath day.

19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

- Nehemiah had the city doors shut on the Sabbath, beginning on Friday evening, with guards posted to see that merchandise was not brought in.

20 Once or twice the traders and merchants of every *kind of* merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

20 Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

20 As a result, the merchants and sellers of all sorts of goods remained outside Jerusalem a couple of times.

20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

- Even though the city gates were closed, some merchants stayed all night outside the walls, perhaps hoping people would slip outside in the darkness to purchase their goods (v20).

— When Nehemiah heard of this, he threatened to use force against them (v21). Then he told the Levites to help guard the gates (v22).

21 Then I warned them and said to them, "Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, **I will use force against you.**" From that time *on* they did not come on the Sabbath.

21 Then I warned them and said to them, "Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you." From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.

21 I argued with them, "Why are you staying outside the wall? If you do this again, I'll arrest you." From that time on, they didn't come anymore on the Sabbath.

21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.
- "...I will use force against you" - Nehemiah was not speaking of the laying on of hands for prayer; he was speaking of the laying on of hands for correction.

22 And I ordered the Levites that they were to purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath day. *For* this also remember me, my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness **of Your mercy.**

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. *For* this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

22 Then I commanded the descendants of Levi to purify themselves and to come as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Remember me, my God, and show mercy to me according to the greatness of your gracious love.

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

- "...of Your mercy" - *hesed*, again (Cf. v14), he asked God to help in this problem, showing mercy to him out of the greatness of His love

(e) Nehemiah disciplined those who intermarried with pagans (13:23-29) (Cf. Ezra 9:1-4)

23 In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, *and* Moab.

23 In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon *and* Moab.

23 At that time I also noticed that Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

23 In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:

- Nehemiah now tackled the issue of mixed marriages, a problem that Ezra had addressed several years earlier (Ezra 9-10)

— While Nehemiah was away, some Jewish men had divorced their Jewish wives to marry foreign women (Cf. Mal 2:10-16)

— This, yet again, broke the renewed covenant that the people of Judah promised in writing—that they would not intermarry with pagan people (Cf. 10:30).

— This was also forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Ex 34:12-16; Deut 7:1-5)

24 As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them knew how to speak the language of Judah, but only the language of his own people.

24 As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people.

24 Furthermore, their children spoke half of the time in the language of Ashdod, and could not speak in the language of Judah. Instead, they spoke in the languages of various nations.

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

- Nehemiah was distressed that the children spoke a foreign language, not Hebrew. They had learned this foreign language from their foreign mothers.

— The issue was the loss of their entire religious heritage. They also had not learned the lesson of Solomon's foreign wives, who turned him away from the Lord (v26).

25 So I quarreled with them and cursed them, and struck some of them and **pulled out their hair**, and **made them swear by God**, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take *any* of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

25 So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

25 So I rebuked them, cursed them, struck some of their men, tore out their hair, and made them take this oath in the name of God: "You are not to give your daughters to their

sons nor take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

- From Nehemiah's reaction, he must have thought mixed marriages to be the most dangerous of their sins

- "...pulled out their hair" - pulling out the men's hair may seem to be violent and inappropriate for a man of God. However, Nehemiah was concerned that God's judgment not fall again on Judah. He knew God would not tolerate this sin.

— To lose one's beard was a disgrace (2 Sam 10:4; also see Is 50:6).

- "...made them swear by God" - he made them swear before God that they would not continue to commit this violation of God's Law

26 Did Solomon the king of Israel not sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; yet the foreign women caused even him to sin.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin.

26 Didn't Solomon, king of Israel, sin by doing these things, even though among many nations there was no king like him who was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel? Even so, foreign women caused him to sin.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

- He used the example of Solomon, which obviously those divorcing and marrying foreign wives did not consider (Cf. 1 Kings 11:1-8).

— If Solomon, the wisest and richest man ever, sinned with unwise and ungodly relationships, everyone else should consider themselves vulnerable as well.

27 Has it not then been reported about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God, by marrying foreign women?"

27 Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?"

27 Should we listen to you and do all of this terrible evil by transgressing against our God to marry foreign wives?"

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

28 Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *became* a son-in-law of **Sanballat** the Horonite, so I chased him away from me.

28 Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me.

28 One of the sons of Eliashib the high priest's son Joiada was a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me.

28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.

- The marriage of Joiada's son (Manasseh) to a foreign woman was especially bad since he was grandson of the high priest, and priests were only to marry Jewish virgins (Cf. Lev 21:14).

— Any person in the high-priestly lineage could become high priest, so this was a dangerous situation.

- "...Sanballat" - perhaps governor of Samaria, had vigorously opposed Nehemiah's work (Cf. 2:10,19; 4:1,7; 6:1-2,5,12,14), and now he, like Tobiah (Cf. 6:17-18; 13:4), had apparently planned through this family relationship to destroy God's work.

— Nehemiah had thrown Tobiah's furniture out of the temple storage chambers (v8); now he chased the guilty husband away.

29 Remember **them**, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

29 Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the descendants of Levi.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

- "...them" - another significant prayer of Nehemiah (Cf. v14,22b,31b), but this time he prayed that God would remember "them" rather than himself

— Nehemiah prayed that God would judge the high priest's grandson. Who else is included is not specified, but probably Sanballat was in mind.

(f) Nehemiah asks God to remember him for sanctifying the nation from all things foreign, appointing duties for the priests and Levites, and providing for the Temple (13:30-31)

30 So I purified them from everything foreign, and assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each in his work,

30 Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his task,

30 I purified them from everything foreign, arranged duties for the priests and the descendants of Levi, each to his task,

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

- This problem, like the others reported in this chapter (Cf. v9,22), called for ceremonial purifying. Again the priests and the Levites were assigned their duties. Nehemiah was great at getting people to work!

31 and I arranged for the **delivery of wood** at appointed times and **for the first fruits**.

Remember me, my God, for good.

31 and I arranged for the supply of wood at appointed times and for the first fruits.

Remember me, O my God, for good.

31 and I arranged at the appointed time for the supply of wood, and for the first fruits.

Remember me, my God, with favor.

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

- "...delivery of wood" - the temple's sacrificial system required a steady supply of wood for burnt offerings

- "...for the first fruits" - renews Israel's commitment to their covenant, and obedience to the Mosaic Law. The first yield of every harvest symbolized their trust in God's provision.

- "...Remember me, my God, for good" - for the fourth time in this chapter, this great leader prayed that God would remember him, that is, that God would bestow His blessings on him in return for his diligence.

— This book underscores the importance of physical protection for God's people in Jerusalem but, more importantly, it stresses the need for His people to obey His Word, not giving in to sin through neglect, compromise, or outright disobedience.

- Yet Nehemiah certainly carried a sense of failure. In Neh 10, the people made a solemn covenant to God that they would not do three things:

1. Have ungodly sexual liaisons (10:30)
2. Buy and sell on the Sabbath (10:31)
3. Fail to support the work of God with money (10:32-39)

— But 10-12 years later, Israel again committed the exact same sins that they previously vowed to stop. In this chapter, Nehemiah had to address the problems of:

1. Ungodly sexual liaisons (13:23-31)
2. Buying and selling on the Sabbath (13:15-22)
3. Failing to support the work of God (13:10-14)

— This makes a point crystal clear: Rules, vows, promises, covenants, and such are all ultimately powerless to stop sin. Only the grace of God in our lives can give us the power to truly overcome sin.

— Paul expressed this fact in Rom 8:3:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

— Too many Christians look for victory over sin by making rules, vows, promises—then fail to live up to them because those things make us look to ourselves to overcome sin instead of looking at the shed blood of Christ.

— The OT history of Israel illustrates this, from beginning to end. When the nation was born at the Exodus, despite the most spectacular miracles and displays of God's glory and the revelation of the Law, the people sinned by crediting a golden calf with their deliverance from Egypt.

— And now here, at the end of OT history, with God's people back in the Promised Land, Nehemiah was pulling hair out—his own and those of sinners—because they couldn't keep their promises to God.

— If we could be saved by our own promises, by our own commitment to Jesus, then His death would have been noble, but unnecessary. We aren't saved by a vow we make or a new leaf we turn over, but by trusting in who Jesus is and what He has done to save us.