

Ezra Reads the Law

Nehemiah 7:73b – 9:37

by Don Falkos

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It was New Year's Day, time for the Feast of Trumpets. Ezra took the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given him, and went up onto a raised platform specially built for the day. Several other priests stood with him.

The people gathered in the square, not just the men, but also the women and children. They stood all morning long from daybreak until noon listening as Ezra read God's Law. The Levites stood among the crowd translating Ezra's words from Hebrew into the more familiar Aramaic so the people could understand.

The Law revealed to them they had been sinning against the Lord, and they wept. At the encouragement of the priests and Levites, the people's mourning over the past turned to joy over a future guided by the Law of the Lord. They vowed to uphold the covenant God made with their ancestors, acknowledging, "You, O Lord, have always treated us fairly; we are the ones who have acted wickedly."

The assembly broke up as everyone went home to feast and celebrate, remembering to share their bounty with those less fortunate.

Further study of the Law revealed the need to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, where everyone was to live for several days in temporary shelters. And so the exiles came full circle with their distant ancestors. They left Babylon as the Israelites of long ago left Egypt. Ezra gave them the Law as Moses had done at Mount Sinai. They lived in temporary shelters as their ancestors lived in tents in the wilderness. And both groups entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord.