

NEHEMIAH

Reading of the Law

8 ¹In the seventh month, all the people gathered as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which Yahweh had given to Israel. ²Ezra brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all the children who could understand what was being read. It was the first day of the seventh month. ³Ezra read the book before all of them from early morning until midday in the square facing the Water Gate; and all who heard were attentive to the Book of the Law.

⁴Ezra, the teacher of the Law, stood on a wooden platform built for that occasion and to his right were Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and to his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hasbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

⁵Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was in a higher place; and when he opened it, all the people stood. ⁶Ezra blessed Yahweh, the great God; and all the people lifted up their hands and answered, "Amen! Amen!" And they bowed their heads to the ground.

⁷The Levites Joshua, Bani and the rest of their brothers explained the Law to the people who were standing. ⁸They read from the Book of the Law of God, clarifying and interpreting the meaning, so that everyone might understand what they were hearing.

⁹Then Ezra, the teacher of the Law, said to the people:

—This day is dedicated to Yahweh, your God, so do not be sad or weep.

He said this because all wept when they heard the reading of the Law. ¹⁰Then he said to them:

—Go and eat rich foods, drink sweet wine and share with him who has nothing prepared. This day is dedicated to the Lord, so do not be sad. The joy of Yahweh is our strength.

¹¹The Levites also calmed the people down, saying:

—Do not weep. This day is a festival day. Do not be sad.

¹²And the people went their way to eat, drink and share, and they had a great feast, because they had understood the words that had been proclaimed to them.