

RENEWED COVENANT

NEHEMIAH 9:38 | Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests. NEHEMIAH 10:1-27 | ¹ On the seals are the names of Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, Zedekiah, ² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, ⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, ⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah; these are the priests. ⁹ And the Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; ¹⁰ and their brothers, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³ Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. ¹⁴ The chiefs of the people: Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, ¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, ¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, ²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, ²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, ²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, ²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, ²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, ²⁷ Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing... (9:38). This opens a new chapter in Israel's history. The only way to end the endemic of distress and disgrace that has plagued the nation since the exile is to restart their relationship with God from ground zero.

The great awakening that began under Ezra now produces its best and most enduring fruit: a reorientation of Israel's entire national life around the Word of God and the House of God. This is not a new covenant, but a firm commitment to obey the original Sinai Covenant. Every true revival in history involves a return to the Ancient Path.

This renewal is from the ground up. Ezra's name is not mentioned. And, although Nehemiah signs the pledge in chapter 10, the initiative came from the community. This is another classic feature of revivals. They

almost always start on the periphery of the Church instead of the centre. Think ACS Clocktower.

A third and most important feature of this covenant renewal is its family orientation. It is initiated and ratified almost entirely by fathers, be they clergy or laity. Most of the signatories of the pledge are heads of large family networks that formed the building blocks of Jewish society.

The *heads of fathers' houses* who studied under Ezra in Nehemiah 8 now take matters into their own hands to lead the nation in revival, family by family. No one could be happier about this than Ezra himself. He doesn't even sign the pledge. His father Seraiah signs it for him (10:2, EZRA 7:1).

Thus Israel returns to the Ancient Path. Fathers now take full responsibility to teach and lead their families in obedience to the Torah: *Hear, O Israel!* (DEUT 6:4-9). The *Israel of God*, which includes the Church, is a Family of families led by fathers. And mothers too. Wives and children participate in the covenant renewal ceremony (10:28). While obedience to God is a deeply personal affair, it is equally and essentially a community affair. The family living room is as important a setting for worship and obedience as the church sanctuary (ALEXEI SIVERTSEV).

WALL OF DUTY

■ Dear Fathers, are you inspired? You have a pivotal role to play in revival—with family life at the heart of it all! Will you get serious with God? He is counting on you to steward faith at home. He has given you authority to disciple your family in the knowledge of God. The family is the basic unit of discipleship. Will you be the man of the house to 'father' a renewal movement on your home ground? No show. No spin. Just Jesus at the centre of family life. A quiet revolution of family repentance, covenant renewal, and consecration. A ground-up initiative of discipleship and nurture in Word, worship, witness, and works. Inter-generational. Life-giving!

■ Singapore is *Made for Families* (WWW.MADEFORFAMILIES). This national call from

our government pleases God. After all, family is his idea. *As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live* (POPE JOHN PAUL II). The Church has a critical role to play. God has given us his curriculum of family life, centred on our relationship with him, and to be modelled by parents always and everywhere:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (DEUT 6:4-9).

Pray for Fathers and Mothers to hear and obey. May the ripple effects of their obedience go far and wide. Down their generational line and across their social web, influencing Singapore Godward, family by family. Glory to God!

■ Dear Church, a well-disciplined family is the first line of defence against liberal ideologies. Pray for our young: For a new breed so grounded in the Word that they can at once detect and reject the liberal agenda. For a great disgust with all things liberal. For disillusionment with post-Truth trends that promote falsehood and filth.

May God's Law be so deeply embedded in their hearts that no matter the changes in the law of the land, they stay true to the Law of the Lord. They stand their ground. They are his voice in the wilderness, calling their generation back to God. They lead the fight against end-time perversion and resist it unto death. They keep covenant with God and perpetuate a community of kingdom disciples grounded in the Truth (COL 1:23).