

SECOND MOSES

NEHEMIAH 10:28-29 | The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding,²⁹ join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.



Where's Ezra? He's been rather inconspicuous of late. He's not mentioned in the Hebrew text

of Nehemiah 9. Nor does he sign the covenant renewal pledge in Nehemiah 10. But that doesn't mean he is absent or idle. He doesn't need to be seen and heard in order to be effective. Do you? There is a time to command from up front. And a time to coach from the side. Ezra leads just as well off stage as he does on stage—unlike lesser leaders who love the limelight and take part only if they can run the show.

The decisive events of Nehemiah 9 and 10 bear Ezra's fingerprints without his fanfare. He has fathered the fathers of Israel so well that they can now convene a day of national repentance without him. Ezra's low profile at the peak of this revival is a validation of his character and a tribute to his leadership. He doesn't need to sign the pledge. The renewal of the covenant is his signature, his *magnum opus*. It marks the turning point of Israel's entire restoration period.

Back in Persia, *Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel* (EZRA 7:10). His active engagement with the Remnant now concludes when Israel's governor, nobles, priests, Levites, fathers, mothers, and children voluntarily bind themselves to observe and *do all the*

commandments of the LORD (:29). Mission accomplished! A great and glorious day for the humble priest-scribe.

Blessed Ezra. He worked himself out of a job. He could now say, as Paul says later to the Ephesian elders: *I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified* (ACTS 20:32).

Thus Ezra quietly bows out. No applause. No long service award. No badge of honour. Israel's obedience to the Torah is his reward. When he dies, he can face his ancestors, Aaron and Moses, without shame. It's hard to imagine how Israel could have survived without him. He is rightly called a Second Moses. He will make an encore before this story ends.

WALL OF DUTY

Aggressive self-assertion has become the ethos of the age. Where are the Ezra-types who are most happy when hidden from the limelight? Nothing diminishes us more than pride. Nothing distinguishes us more than humility.

■ Blessed are the humble. *Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat has decided to step aside as leader of the People's Action Party's fourth-generation team, and pave the way for a younger person with a longer runway to lead the country when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong retires* (THE STRAITS TIMES | 9 APRIL 2021).

DPM Heng Swee Keat's decision was unexpected yet not entirely surprising—simply because *he is selfless and a team player. When the 4G needed a leader, he stepped up even though he is a stroke survivor... Now when the 4G needs a new leader, he is stepping aside instead of clinging on to power, or fighting for it... from his actions, it is clear he is a good man, a team player and a person who does not seek power* (CALVIN CHENG).

Give thanks to God for DPM, a humble man void of selfish ambition. His sense of duty has motivated him to selflessly put the interests of the nation above his own. His selfless decision to step aside as 4G leader *is fully in keeping with the spirit of public service* (PM LEE HSIEN LOONG).

■ Humility honours God. And God honours humility. *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way* (PS 25:9). Listen to his voice. Search your heart in the light of his Word:

- *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves* (PHIL 2:3).

- *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'* (1 PET 5:5).

■ Woe to the proud! We live in a noisy and competitive world of aggressive self-expression. Ask God to set us free from the lust to be seen and heard. Renounce the foolish arrogance of self-importance, *thinking that I must say something on every subject and at every opportunity* (ANONYMOUS ABBESS). Search your heart in the light of God's Word:

- *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice* (JAMES 3:16).

- *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished* (PROV 16:5).

- *For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low* (ISA 2:12).

- *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom* (PROV 11:2).

- *One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honour* (PROV 29:23).

■ Happy are the hidden. Give thanks to God for our retired Senior Pastors and church leaders. Bless each one by name. Acknowledge the good hand of God on their personal life and ministry. Thank God that many are still serving quietly off stage. Quietly coaching from the side. Humbly praying for their successors. Quietly speaking up for them. Humbly rejoicing in their higher profile, larger platform, and wider influence.