

Festival of Booths

Key Verse: *“All the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.”*
—Nehemiah 8:17

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 8:1-18

(Neh. 2:9-6:19) Throughout the period of the nation of Israel's captivity in Babylon, the periodic public reading of the Scriptures was not observed as required by God.—Deut. 31:9-12

“All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could

THE RETURN OF THE FIRST

Jewish exiles from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem was under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who supervised the rebuilding of the Temple. Several years later, Ezra, a scribe and priest, came to the holy city with a second group of Jews and instituted sweeping reforms.—Ezra 3:8-13; 9:5-15; 10:18-44

Another faithful servant of God, Nehemiah, subsequently received authorization from King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and, during turbulent times, accomplished the rebuilding of the walls surrounding the city in his capacity as governor.

hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.”—Neh. 8:1-3

After being instructed in God’s Word, the people responded initially by weeping. They realized they had been chastised because they had failed to observe the divine ordinances associated with their covenant relationship with God. Nehemiah and those conducting the services under his direction admonished the people not to mourn. Rather, he told them to rejoice and give thanks to God for the blessings that would be theirs as a result of their repentant attitude and resolve to obey his statutes in the future.—vss. 9-12

The following day was an occasion of special study for the leaders, the priests, and the Levites who discovered the ordinances of the Mosaic Law regarding the Feast of Booths [or Tabernacles] to be observed later in the month.—vss. 13-15

Our Key Verse asserts the spirit of revival that then permeated the entire assembly of people as they resumed the practice of feasting and worshipping in booths for seven days while remembering with gratitude God’s blessing of delivering their nation from Egyptian bondage into the promised land centuries earlier.

Today, consecrated followers of Christ often leave their normal dwelling places and come together to study God’s Word, sometimes for several days. Whenever possible, let us avail ourselves of such opportunities for provoking one another unto love and good works by faithfulness in assembling together during such holy convocations. “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: . . . Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; . . . but exhorting one another.”—Heb. 10:24,25 ■