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## COMMENTARIES

# EXPOSITION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

**EZRA**

*by John Gill*

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth*  
— Psalm 60:4

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# EZRA

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EZRA

This book, in the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions, is called the “First” Book of Ezra, Nehemiah being reckoned the “second”; but with the Jews both were accounted but one book <sup>f1</sup>; in the Syriac version, it is called the Writing or Book of Ezra the Prophet; and this title is given him, both by Jews <sup>f2</sup> and Christians <sup>f3</sup>; in the Arabic version, it is called the First Book of Ezra the Priest, skilful in the Law; and that he was a priest is clear, since he was the son of Seraiah the high priest, who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar, and the younger brother of Josedech, who succeeded his father as high priest, and uncle to Joshua that succeeded him; and he was also a ready scribe in the law of Moses, (see <sup><1500></sup>Ezra 7:1,6,10-12). That Ezra was the writer of this book is believed by the Jews <sup>f4</sup>, and by the generality of Christians; only Huetius <sup>f5</sup> thinks that the six first chapters were written by another hand, but his reasons are not satisfactory; and it has been universally received as canonical by all; it agrees with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, and serves to illustrate them; it is of use for the continuation of the sacred history, to point at the fulfilment of prophecies concerning the return of the Jews from captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple; and to give us an account of the state of the church in those times, the troubles and difficulties it met with, and what care was taken to keep the tribes and families distinct, that it might be known from whom the Messiah sprung; this book contains an history of seventy years, according to the calculation of Bishop Usher <sup>f6</sup>, from A. M. 3468, to A. M. 3538.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 1

This chapter informs us of the proclamation of Cyrus king of Persia, for the Jews to return to their own country, and rebuild their temple, (<sup><1500b></sup>Ezra 1:1-4), and that, upon it, the chief of them rose up for that purpose, whose hands were strengthened and supplied by those about them, (<sup><1500b></sup>Ezra 1:5,6) and particularly by Cyrus, who gave orders that the vessels belonging to the temple should be delivered to them, (<sup><1500b></sup>Ezra 1:7-11).

**Ver. 1.** *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia*, etc.] Not in the first of his reign over Persia, for he had been many years king over that, and now had all the kingdoms of the earth given him, (<sup><1500b></sup>Ezra 1:2), but over Babylon, and the dominions belonging to it, which commenced with Darius upon the taking of Babylon; he reigned in all thirty years, as Cicero <sup>f7</sup> from a Persian writer relates; or twenty nine, according to Herodotus <sup>f8</sup>; but in what year this was is not certain; Africanus <sup>f9</sup>, has proved, from various historians, that it was the first year of the fifty fifth Olympiad, perhaps about the twentieth of Cyrus's Persian government <sup>f10</sup>; (See Gill on "<sup><2700b></sup>Daniel 10:1"),

*that the word of the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled;* which foretold that the Jews should return from their captivity at the end of seventy years, which fell on the first of Cyrus, reckoning from the fourth of Jehoiakim, and the first of Nebuchadnezzar, (see <sup><2450b></sup>Jeremiah 25:1,11,12 29:10).

*The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia;* who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and even of the kings of the earth, and can turn them as he pleases; he wrought upon him, put it into his heart, enlightened his mind, showed him what was right, and his duty to do, and pressed him to the performance of it; so that he could not be easy until he had done it, and he was made thoroughly willing, and even eager to do it:

*that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom,* and put it also in writing; gave it in writing to his heralds to read and proclaim throughout all his dominions:

*saying*; as follows.

**Ver. 2.** *Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia*, etc.] Of whom, and this edict of his, Isaiah prophesied two hundred years before he was born, (~~23408~~ Isaiah 44:28)

*the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth*; many he had conquered before he took Babylon, and then the whole Babylonian monarchy fell into his hands. Herodotus <sup>f11</sup> says, he ruled over all Asia; Xenophon <sup>f12</sup> reckons up many nations that were under his government, Medes and Hyrcanians, Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, both the Phrygians, Carians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Bactrians, Indians, Cilicians, Sacae or Scythians, Paphlagonians, Megadinians, and many other nations, the Greeks inhabiting Asia, and the Cyprians, and Egyptians; and elsewhere he says <sup>f13</sup>, the borders of his kingdom were, to the east the Red sea, to the north the Euxine Pontus, to the west Cyprus and Egypt, and to the south Ethiopia. And the possession of these kingdoms Cyrus ascribes, not to his own martial courage and skill, but to the providence and disposal of the God of heaven, which he seems to have had some notion of:

*and he hath charged me to build an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah*; in the prophecy of Isaiah, which, according to Josephus <sup>f14</sup>, he had seen and read, and believed it to be a charge upon him, and a command unto him to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem; however, to give leave for the rebuilding of it, and to encourage to it, and assist in it; an Arabic writer says <sup>f15</sup>, that Cyrus married a sister of Zerubbabel, and that it was at her request that the Jews had leave to return; which is merely fabulous.

**Ver. 3.** *Who is there among you of all his people?* etc.] The people of God, the Israelites, as well of the ten tribes, as of the two of Judah and Benjamin; for this edict was published throughout all his dominions, where were the one as well as the other:

*his God be with him*; to incline his heart to go, to protect him in his journey, and succeed and prosper him in what he goes about:

*and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, he is the God*; the one only living and true God:

*which is in Jerusalem*; who has been in former times, and is to be worshipped there; though Aben Ezra says, this is to be connected with “the house of the Lord”; as if the sense was, to build the house, that was in

Jerusalem, or to be built there; and so our version connects them, putting those words into a parenthesis, “he is God”; but this is contrary to the accents.

**Ver. 4.** *And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth,* etc.] Is left behind, and cannot go up through poverty, not having a sufficiency to bear his charges in his journey to Jerusalem:

*let the men of his place keep him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts;* with money to bear the expenses of his journey, with goods to furnish his house, or trade with, when he came to Judea, and with cattle to carry him, and his goods, and to till the ground with, when he came thither; and the men exhorted to this are either the Gentiles that dwelt in the cities where these poor Jews were, or the richer Jews, who chose as yet not to go up until they saw how things would succeed; and are therefore called upon to assist their brethren who had a will, but not ability:

*besides the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem:* which they freely gave, and sent by them for the rebuilding of the temple.

**Ver. 5.** *Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin,* etc.]. Princes of these tribes, and heads of families in them, and of some other tribes too, though chiefly of these, as appears from (<sup>430B</sup>1 Chronicles 9:3),

*and the priests and the Levites:* whose presence was necessary both to direct in the building of the temple, and to animate to it, and to set the vessels in their proper places; and particularly to assist in the setting up of the altar, and to offer sacrifices on it, which was the first thing done when come to Jerusalem, (<sup>430D</sup>Ezra 3:2,3)

*with all them whose spirit God raised to go up, to build the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem;* God, who “works” in men “both to will and to do”, wrought powerfully by his Spirit on their hearts, inclined their minds, and made them willing to go up, and set about this work; and such a divine, powerful, and efficacious operation upon them, was necessary to engage them in it, since the embarrassments, difficulties, discouragements, and objections, were many: some of them were well settled, and had contracted a pleasing acquaintance with many of their neighbours, and indeed to most of them it was their native place; and as for Judea and Jerusalem, they knew nothing of but what their fathers had told them; the way to it unknown, long, and dangerous, at least fatiguing and troublesome

to their wives and children; and Judea and Jerusalem desolate and in ruins, and in the hands of enemies, from whom they had reason to expect trouble.

**Ver. 6.** *And all they that were about them*, etc.] Their neighbours, the Chaldeans:

*strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things*; which they either did of themselves at their own motion, or by the direction and example of Cyrus, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 1:4) and perhaps many of them to ingratiate themselves into the favour of their new monarch:

*besides all that was willingly offered*: by the rich Jews, who thought fit, at least for the present, to remain in Babylon.

**Ver. 7.** *And Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord*, etc.] Or ordered them to be brought forth:

*which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem*; out of the temple there, when he took it and burnt it:

*and had put them in the house of his gods*; in the temple of Belus at Babylon, (see <sup><480></sup>2 Chronicles 36:7 <sup><200></sup>Daniel 1:2 5:2,3), by which means they were providentially preserved.

**Ver. 8.** *Even these did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer*, etc.] Or Mithridates, a name common with the Persians, from their god Mithras, the sun they worshipped:

*and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar prince of Judah*; delivered them by tale to him; who, according to the Jewish rabbins, as Jarchi says, was Daniel, who was so called, because he stood in six tribulations; but it does not appear that Daniel went up to Jerusalem with the captivity, as this man did, but remained at Babylon; rather, with Aben Ezra, it is best by him to understand Zerubbabel, who did go up, and was the prince of Judah; and Cyrus, in his letter <sup>f16</sup> to the governors of Syria, expressly says, that he delivered the vessels to Zerubbabel, the prince of the Jews. He had two names, Sheshbazzar, which signifies he rejoiced in tribulation, and Zerubbabel, which signifies either the seed of Babylon, being born there, or dispersed, or a stranger there, as others.

**Ver. 9.** *And this is the number of them*, etc.] Of the vessels delivered, as follows:

*thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver*; these, according to Ben Melech, were vessels in which water was put to wash hands in; but rather they were, as Aben Ezra observes from the Jerusalem Talmud <sup>f17</sup>, vessels in which they gathered the blood of lambs and bullocks slain for sacrifices:

*nine and twenty knives*; which, because the handles of them were of gold or silver, were valuable, and might be very large knives, and what the priests used in slaying and cutting up the sacrifices.

**Ver. 10.** *Thirty basins of gold*, etc.] Cups or dishes with covers, as the word seems to signify; but, according to Jarchi and Aben Ezra, they were vessels in which the blood of sacrifices was received, and out of which it was sprinkled on the altar:

*silver basins of a second sort four hundred and ten*; perhaps lesser than the other, however not so valuable, being of silver; in the Apocrypha:

“And this was the number of them; A thousand golden cups, and a thousand of silver, censers of silver twenty nine, vials of gold thirty, and of silver two thousand four hundred and ten, and a thousand other vessels.” (1 Esdras 2:13)

the number is 2410; and in the letter of Cyrus, before referred to, it is 2400:

*and other vessels a thousand*; which are not particularly mentioned; Junius and Tremellius render the words,

*other vessels by thousands*, there being near 3000 that are not described.

**Ver. 11.** *All the vessels of gold, and of silver, were five thousand and four hundred*, etc.] Those that are mentioned make no more than 2499, which Aben Ezra thinks were the larger vessels; but this general sum takes in great and small, as in (~~1468~~ 2 Chronicles 36:18) in the letter of Cyrus, before mentioned, these vessels are more particularly described, and their several numbers given, which together amount to the exact number in the text, 5400; the apocryphal Ezra makes them 5469:

*all these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity, that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem*: of whom there is a large and particular account in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 2

This chapter contains a list of those that went up from Babylon to Jerusalem, of their leaders, their chief men, princes and priests, (<sup><15111></sup>Ezra 2:1,2) of the people, described by their families, towns, and cities, and number of persons, (<sup><15108></sup>Ezra 2:3-35), of the priests, Levites, and Nethinims, (<sup><15126></sup>Ezra 2:36-58), and of those that could not make out their genealogy, people and priests, (<sup><15129></sup>Ezra 2:59-63), and then the sum total of the whole congregation is given, (<sup><15164></sup>Ezra 2:64), besides men and maidservants, singing men and women, and cattle of divers sorts, (<sup><15166></sup>Ezra 2:65-67), and the chapter is closed with an account of the freewill offerings of the principal men towards the building of the temple, and of the settlement of the people in their respective cities, (<sup><15188></sup>Ezra 2:68-70).

**Ver. 1.** *Now these are the children of the province*, etc.] Either of the province of Babylon, as Aben Ezra, where they were either born, or had dwelt for many years; or else rather, according to Jarchi, of the province of Judea, as it is called, (<sup><15188></sup>Ezra 5:8) once a flourishing kingdom, but reduced to a province of the Babylonian monarchy, now in the hands of the Medes and Persians, of which province they and their fathers originally were:

*that went out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon;* who either in person, or in their parents, were carried captive by him, and who were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and they are only mentioned, because they were the principal that returned, though there were some of the other tribes that also came up with them:

*and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, everyone unto his city;* that he dwelt in before, or was now assigned to him by lot, (see <sup><16101></sup>Nehemiah 11:1), etc.

**Ver. 2.** *Which came with Zerubbabel*, etc.] The head of them, the prince of Judah; and the chief that came with him are the ten following; Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum,

Baanah; the first of these, Jeshua, was Joshua the high priest, the son of Josedech, (<sup><3700></sup>Haggai 1:1). Dr. Lightfoot<sup>f18</sup> thinks that Nehemiah is the same, whose name the following book bears; and that Mordecai is he who was uncle to Esther, so Aben Ezra; but, if so, they must both return again; for that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, (<sup><4000></sup>Nehemiah 1:1), and that Mordecai brought up his niece in the city of Shushan, in the times of Ahasuerus, is certain; and this, with respect to both, is denied by others<sup>f19</sup>, who take them to be different men of the same name; and the same writer is of opinion that Seraiah, and who is called Azariah, (<sup><4000></sup>Nehemiah 7:7) is the same with Ezra, who therefore must and did return, since he went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, (<sup><4500></sup>Ezra 7:1,7,8), as for the others, we know nothing more of them than their names:

*the number of the men of the people of Israel*; either of the principal of them before named, or of the common people, which next follows.

**Ver. 3-35.** *The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred and seventy two.*] From hence, to the end of (<sup><4525></sup>Ezra 2:35), a list is given of the captives that returned, described by the families they were of, their ancestors from whence they sprung, or the towns and cities to which they originally belonged, and by their numbers; otherwise nothing more of them is known.

**Ver. 36-39.** *The priests*, etc.] An account of them is given in this and the three following verses, and only four families are mentioned, those of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim, and the number of them amounted to 4289; these, according to the Jews, were heads of four courses, which were all that returned from Babylon<sup>f20</sup>.

**Ver. 40-42.** *The Levites*, etc.] Singers and porters, who are reckoned in this, and the two following verses, whose numbers were no more than three hundred and forty one; whereas, in the times of David, they were 38,000, (<sup><4325></sup>1 Chronicles 23:3).

**Ver. 43-58.** *The Nethinims*, etc.] Supposed by Aben Ezra and Jarchi to be the Gibeonites, who were “given” by Joshua, as the word Nethinims signifies, to the congregation, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water; but rather were those that were given by David to assist the Levites; of these is an account from hence to the end of (<sup><4525></sup>Ezra 2:58), together with those who descended from Solomon’s servants, who seem to be the

remains of the Canaanites in the land, whom Solomon made bondservants of, (<sup>1030</sup>1 Kings 9:20,21 <sup>4217</sup>2 Chronicles 2:17), who, and their posterity, became proselytes; or those sprung from men that were domestic servants of Solomon's, and valued themselves on that account; the number of the Nethinims and these together were three hundred ninety and two.

**Ver. 59.** *And these were they that went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, etc.]* Places in the land of Babylon, (see <sup>23712</sup>Isaiah 37:12 <sup>30815</sup>Ezekiel 3:15).

*Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel;* these were such that professed the Jewish religion, and went for Jews in Babylon, but could not trace their pedigree, and tell what family they were of, who their ancestors, and where they had lived in Judea; they had lost their genealogical tables, if they ever had any, and could not make it out, whether their parents were Israelites or proselyted Gentiles; or they were such who had been exposed, and taken out of the streets, and their parents unknown.

**Ver. 60.** *The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, and the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.]* These, though their immediate parents were known, yet by their being mentioned here, it seems as if they could not carry their genealogy further, and make it clearly appear what was the house of their fathers, or what their family.

**Ver. 61.** *And of the children of the priests, etc.]* Who could not make out their pedigree, for those that could are mentioned before:

*the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai;* how the latter came by this name follows:

*which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name;* this man married a woman that descended from the famous Barzillai the Gileadite, in the times of David; and the priesthood being in disuse, and mean and despicable, in Babylon, he chose to take the name of his wife's family, and pass for a descendant from that, and perhaps destroyed, or at least neglected, to take care of the genealogy of his own family.

**Ver. 62.** *These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, etc.]* To find their names written and registered there; for the Jews kept public registers of their priests, their descent, marriages, and

offspring, that it might be known who were fit, and who not, to officiate as such:

*but they were not found*; their names were not there, nor any account taken of them:

*therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood*; were not suffered to attend at the altar, and offer sacrifice, and enjoy the privileges belonging to that office.

**Ver. 63.** *And the Tirshatha said unto them*, etc.] By whom Jarchi understands Nehemiah, and observes, that their rabbins say he was so called, because the wise men allowed him to drink the wine of the Gentiles, he being cupbearer to the king; but Aben Ezra, with greater probability, takes it to be a name of honour and grandeur in the Chaldee language, as a prince or governor; and no doubt Zerubbabel is meant, the prince of the Jews, the same with Sheshbazzar, (<sup><15008></sup>Ezra 1:8) according to Gussetius <sup>f21</sup>, this office was the same with that of the king's commissary in a province, delegated to carry his orders, make them known, and see them put in execution; and that this name Tirshatha is the same with Tithraustes in Aelian <sup>f22</sup>; but that seems to be not the title of an office, but the personal name of a man that was a chiliarch:

*that they should not eat of the most holy things*; as of the shewbread, and those parts of the sin offerings, and of the peace offerings and meat offerings, which belonged to the priests, which the governor forbid these to eat of, who were rejected from the priesthood:

*till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim*; as yet there was not any priest that had them; they were not to be found at the return from Babylon; the governor might hope they would be found, and a priest appear clothed with them, when it might be inquired of the Lord by them, whether such priests, before described, might eat of the holy things or not; but since the Jews <sup>f23</sup> acknowledge that these were one of the five things wanting in the second temple; it is all one, as the Talmudists <sup>f24</sup> express it, as if it had been said, until the dead rise, or the Messiah comes; and who is come, the true High Priest, and with whom are the true Urim and Thummim, lights and perfections to the highest degree, being full of grace and truth; of the Urim and Thummim, (See Gill on <sup><02830></sup>Exodus 28:30”).

**Ver. 64.** *The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred [and] threescore.*] But the sums before given make no

more, with Zerubbabel, and the ten principal men, than 29,829, so that there are more than 12,000 wanting; wherefore, in answer to the question, where are the 12,000? the Jews say in their chronology <sup>f25</sup> these are they of the other tribes, who set up the altar on its bases, and gave money to the masons, etc. (<sup><4301></sup>Ezra 3:1,3,7), this was a much larger number than were carried captive; (see <sup><1244></sup>2 Kings 24:14,15) (<sup><4528></sup>Jeremiah 52:28,29,30), but not to be compared with the number that came out of Egypt, (<sup><1023></sup>Exodus 12:37). An Arabic writer <sup>f26</sup> makes them 50,000, but wrongly.

**Ver. 65.** *Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven,* etc.] This shows that the greater part of those that returned were of the poorer sort, since there were so few servants that belonged unto them; these came not into the above account:

*and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women;* among the servants, who were kept by persons of figure for their pleasure and recreation, (see <sup><2008></sup>Ecclesiastes 2:8), for that these were such as were employed in sacred service is not so clear, especially the latter, though some conclude it from (<sup><1335></sup>1 Chronicles 25:5,6), but rather they were such as were employed at marriages, festivals, and funerals; though Jarchi thinks they were employed by the returning captives, to make them cheerful as they travelled along, (see Gill on "<sup><2552></sup>Isaiah 55:12").

**Ver. 66,67** *Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six, their mules two hundred forty and five, their camels four hundred thirty and five, [their] asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.*] So that the far greatest part of them must walk on foot, since these can be thought to be little more than sufficient to carry their goods or baggage; some copies of the Vulgate Latin read six hundred and thirty six horses <sup>f27</sup>.

**Ver. 68.** *And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord that is at Jerusalem,* etc.] That is, when they came to the place where it formerly stood, and where were still the ruins of it:

*offered freely for the house of God, to set it up in its place;* to rebuild it upon the spot where it formerly stood; this they did besides the freewill offerings they brought with them from Babylon.

**Ver. 69.** *They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the world threescore and one thousand drachms of gold,* etc.] These "darcemons or darics" were a Persian coin; one of which, according to Brerewood <sup>f28</sup>, was of the value of fifteen shillings of our money, and so this quantity of them

amounted to 45,750 pounds; but according to Bishop Cumberland <sup>f29</sup> they were of the value of twenty shillings and four pence of our money, and so came to upwards of 61,000 pounds; these everyone, according to his ability, put into the common stock or treasury for the work of building the temple; the Vulgate Latin <sup>f30</sup> reads 40,000:

*and five thousand pounds of silver*; and an Hebrew “mina”, or pound, being of our money seven pounds, ten shillings, according to Brerewood <sup>f31</sup>, amounted to 31,250 pounds: but others <sup>f32</sup>, reckoning a drachm of gold at ten shillings, and a mina or pound of silver at nine pounds, make the whole to amount only to 75,500 pounds of our money:

*and one hundred priests' garments*; which, as they were laid up among treasures, so were necessary for the service of the temple.

**Ver. 70.** *So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities*, etc.] Which were assigned to them out of the several tribes, and in which they or their forefathers had dwelt before the captivity:

*and all Israel in their cities*; as those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, so of the other ten, as many as returned and joined those who were left in the land.

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 3

This chapter relates how that the people of Israel returned from captivity, gathered to Jerusalem, and set up the altar, where sacrifices were offered, (<sup><1510B></sup>Ezra 3:1-3), and kept the feast of tabernacles, and offered the sacrifices of that, besides the daily sacrifice, and of other festivals; and contributed to the workmen that prepared for the building of the temple, (<sup><1510B></sup>Ezra 3:4-7) and began it by laying the foundation of it; which to some was matter of joy, to others of grief, on different accounts, (<sup><1510B></sup>Ezra 3:8-13).

**Ver. 1.** *And when the seventh month was come*, etc.] The month Tisri, which answers to part of September and October; or when it “was approaching”<sup>f33</sup>, for before it was actually come some following things were done, the people met, and an altar was built; for on the first day of it sacrifices were offered, (<sup><1510B></sup>Ezra 3:6),

*and the children of Israel were in the cities*; their respective cities, settling their domestic affairs:

*the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem*; the thing was universal, and done with as much dispatch as if only one man was concerned; and it seems to denote as if they were under a divine impulse, and came together without any consultation, or knowledge of each other’s designs, and without summons.

**Ver. 2.** *Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak*, etc.] Who was the high priest, and the proper person to give the lead in the following work:

*and his brethren the priests*; the common priests, very fit to join him, and assist him in it:

*and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel*; the prince and governor of Judah, whose presence was necessary to give countenance to the work, and animate to it:

*and his brethren*; the princes and heads of the people, particularly those mentioned (<sup><1510B></sup>Ezra 2:2)

*and builded the altar of the God of Israel;* the altar of burnt offering, gave orders for the building of it, and directions about it:

*to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God;* or prophet of God, as the Syriac version; (see <sup><B001></sup>Leviticus 1:1-17).

**Ver. 3.** *And they set the altar upon his bases,* etc.] Which might remain of the old altar; or the meaning is, that it was fixed and settled on the same spot where it stood before:

*for fear was upon them, because of the people of those countries;* and therefore they hastened to erect an altar, and offer sacrifices to the Lord, in hope that he would appear for them, and help them against their enemies; or rather, as some render the words <sup>f34</sup> “though fear was upon them”, etc. yet they were not deterred from the work, worship, and service of God:

*and they offered burnt offerings unto the Lord, even burnt offerings, morning and evening;* the daily sacrifice, as directed to (<sup><0238></sup>Exodus 29:38,39).

**Ver. 4.** *They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written,* etc.] According to the rules prescribed for the observation of it in (<sup><0234></sup>Leviticus 23:34-42) this began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month:

*and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;* for on all the eight days of the feast there was a certain number of sacrifices fixed for every day; and exactly according to the law concerning them did they offer them at this time; (see <sup><0212></sup>Numbers 29:12-38).

**Ver. 5.** *And afterwards offered the continual burnt offering,* etc.] Not after the feast of tabernacles, as if they then began to offer the daily sacrifice; for that they did as soon as the altar was set up, and on the first day of the month, (<sup><1513></sup>Ezra 3:3,6), rather the sense is, that after the daily burnt offering of the morning, they offered the other sacrifices peculiar to the several days of the feast of tabernacles; they never neglected that, yea, always began with it; all the rest were after it, and so on other festivals:

*both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated;* to the service of the Lord, and the honour of his name, as every first day of the month, and every other appointed festival, they

offered the sacrifices appropriate to each; but not to the neglect of that sacrifice, and always after it:

*and of everyone that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord;* these they were careful also to offer in their proper time.

**Ver. 6.** *From the first of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord,* etc.] And which day was not only a new moon, but a grand festival, the feast of blowing of trumpets, (<sup><R234></sup>Leviticus 23:24,25), and no doubt but they observed the tenth day of this month, with all the rites of it, which was the day of atonement, (<sup><R237></sup>Leviticus 23:27-32),

*but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid;* they began first with sacrifices, that having thereby given thanks to God for their return to their own land, and for all the benefits they enjoyed, and made atonement for their sins in a typical way, they might be the more prepared and fit for the work of building the temple; or, “though the foundation” of it was not laid <sup>f35</sup>, yet they offered the above sacrifices.

**Ver. 7.** *They gave money also to the masons, and to the carpenters,* etc.] To buy stone and timber with for the building of the temple:

*and meat and drink and oil unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre;* which were more agreeable to them than money, because there was not plenty of such things in their country, as in the land of Israel:

*to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa;* as they did at the first building of the temple by Solomon; they cut down cedars at Lebanon, which belonged to them, and sent them by sea to Joppa, the nearest seaport to Jerusalem, about forty miles from it: (see <sup><H216></sup>2 Chronicles 2:16),

*according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia;* for Tyre and Zidon being under his dominion as well as Judea, he not only gave leave to the Jews to get cedar wood from Lebanon, but gave orders to the Zidonians and Tyrians to furnish them with it, paying a valuable consideration for it; and so some <sup>f36</sup> render the word, “according to the commandment of Cyrus”.

**Ver. 8.** *Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem,* etc.] The place where it formerly stood; the Jews seem to have set out from Babylon, in the spring of the preceding year, as it was now of

this; which to Jerusalem was a journey of about four months, as Ezra performed it, (<sup><15709></sup>Ezra 7:9), but might take up longer time for such a body of people to do it in, being larger than that with him; wherefore, after they had visited their respective cities, and settled their affairs there, they came to Jerusalem on the seventh month, or September, and kept the feast of tabernacles, and then they returned to their cities again, the winter season being an improper time to begin the building of the temple; having given money to workmen to purchase materials with, and no doubt left a sufficient number to clear away the rubbish, and get things ready by the returning spring to set about the work:

*in the second month*; the month Ijar, as Jarchi observes, answering to part of April and May, having, as may be supposed, kept the passover the month before:

*began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak*: the prince, and the high priest:

*and the remnant of their brethren, the priests and Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem*; whose names and numbers are given in the preceding chapter:

*and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upwards to set forward the work of the house of the Lord*; to put men to work upon it, and direct them what to do, and urge them to attend closely to it; ever since David's time the Levites were employed at twenty years of age, when before not till thirty, or twenty five; (see <sup><13224></sup>1 Chronicles 23:24).

**Ver. 9.** *Then stood Jeshua, with his sons*, etc.] Not Jeshua the high priest before mentioned, but Jeshua the Levite, (<sup><15740></sup>Ezra 2:40),

*and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together*; the same with Hodaviah, (<sup><15740></sup>Ezra 2:40)

*to set forward the workmen in the house of God*; to give them orders to begin and lay the foundation, and hasten and animate them to it:

*the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites*: two of this man's sons are mentioned in (<sup><14185></sup>Nehemiah 3:18,24 10:9).

**Ver. 10.** *And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord*, etc.] The masons, whose work it was, (<sup><15747></sup>Ezra 3:7)

*they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets*; these were set in a proper place by the prince and the high priest, in their priestly garments, with trumpets in their hands to blow with, as the foundation was laying:

*and the Levites the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel*; these were instruments of brass, and made a tinkling sound, and were by the order of David; and the persons that made use of them; and the songs of praise they were played upon unto; all by his appointment, as well as harps and psalteries, which might now be used, though not expressed; (see <sup><13156></sup>1 Chronicles 15:16 25:1). So the Messenians, when the walls of their city were raised by Epaminondas, and their houses and temples erected, attended it with sacrifices and prayer, and with piping and singing <sup>f37</sup>.

**Ver. 11.** *And they sang together by course*, etc.] They sang by turns in responses, and answered one another, as the word signifies; when one company had performed their part, another took theirs:

*in praising and giving thanks to the Lord*; for returning them to their own land, and giving them opportunity, ability, and will, to set about the rebuilding of the temple of the Lord, and restoring the pure worship of God;

*because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel*; which words are often repeated in (<sup><13001></sup>Psalm 136:1-26) and which might be the psalm the Levites now sung by responses:

*and all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord*; to express their joy, in the best manner they could, on this solemn occasion:

*because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid*; which gave them hope the temple in due time would be rebuilt, and the service of it restored; (see <sup><13806></sup>Job 38:6,7).

**Ver. 12.** *But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men*, etc.] Seventy or eighty years of age:

*that had seen the first house*; the temple built by Solomon, as they very well might, since then it had been destroyed but fifty two years; for the seventy years captivity are to be reckoned from the fourth of Jehoiakim,

when it began, and which was eighteen years before the destruction of the temple; the beginning of the next clause,

*when in the foundation*, according to the Hebrew accents, is to be connected with this,

*that had seen the first house*; not when first founded, for that was five hundred years ago, but in “its foundation”; they saw it standing upon its foundation, in all its glory, and so the Septuagint version; and we may read on, when

*this house was before their eyes, wept with a loud voice*; seeing what it was like to be by the foundation now laid, and was in their sight as nothing in comparison of the former; (see <sup><sup>S</sup>Hag. 2:3) but Aben Ezra connects this clause as we do,</sup>

*when the foundation of this house was laid*; not but that the dimensions of this house strictly taken were as large as the former: (see <sup><sup>E</sup> Ezra 6:3,4), but not the courts and appendages to it: besides, what might affect them, there was no likelihood of its being so richly decorated with gold and silver as the former temple, and many things would be wanting in it, as the Urim and Thummim, etc.</sup>

*and many shouted aloud for joy*; of the younger sort, who had never seen the grandeur of the first temple, and were highly delighted with the beginning of this, and the hope of seeing it finished.

**Ver. 13.** *So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people*, etc.] That is, not clearly and distinctly, they were so mixed and confounded together, and made such a jarring and discord:

*for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off*; the shouting being of young people, whose voice was strongest, and they the most numerous, the noise of shouting prevailed over the noise of weeping; and it was heard further, and at a distance appeared more distinctly to be the noise of shouting, that of weeping not reaching so far; though Jarchi is of opinion that the noise of weeping was heard further than the noise of shouting, which is not likely.

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 4

The contents of this chapter are the offer the Samaritans made to the Jews, to assist them in building the temple, which having refused, they gave them all the trouble they could, (<sup><1500E></sup>Ezra 4:1-6) and a letter of theirs to Artaxerxes, king of Persia, full of accusations of them, (<sup><1500E></sup>Ezra 4:7-16) and the answer of Artaxerxes to it, giving orders to command the Jews to cease building the temple, (<sup><1500E></sup>Ezra 4:17-22) which orders were accordingly executed, and the work ceased till the second year of Darius, (<sup><1502E></sup>Ezra 4:23,24).

**Ver. 1.** *Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,* etc.] The Samaritans, as appears from (<sup><1502E></sup>Ezra 4:2,10),

*heard that the children of the captivity;* the Jews, who had been in captivity seventy years, and were just come out of it, and still were not quite free, but under the jurisdiction and control of the king of Persia:

*builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel;* that they were going about it, and had laid the foundation of it, which might soon come to their ears, the distance not being very great. Josephus<sup>f38</sup> says they heard the sound of the trumpets, and came to know the meaning of it.

**Ver. 2.** *Then they came to Zerubbabel, and the chief of the fathers,* etc.] These they addressed, as knowing that if they could not prevail with them, they could never succeed in their design; and these were no doubt the principal of the Samaritans that applied:

*and said unto them, let us build with you;* that is, the temple, they proposed to join with them, and assist them in it; which proposal at first sight might seem very agreeable and welcome, and would have been so had they been sincere, but they were not; they hoped, by getting among them, to have sown discord among them, and disunited them; and so by these or other means to have retarded the building; or if it went forward, that they might have a claim to it as theirs, at least as to set up their own idols in a part of it; the reasons they gave follow:

*for we seek your God as ye do*; which was false, for they did not worship him alone, but with idols, nor in the same manner as the Jews did:

*and we do sacrifice unto him*; but even that could not recommend them to the Jews, since they ought not to sacrifice, even to the Lord himself, but at Jerusalem: there is a various reading here; the textual reading is, “we do not sacrifice”; that is, to idols; the marginal reading is, “we sacrifice to him”, which we follow; Aben Ezra takes in both, perhaps most rightly; “we do not sacrifice to any other, but to him”; which was also false:

*since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assur, who brought us up hither*; to Samaria, from Babylon, and other places; (see <sup><1724></sup>2 Kings 17:24).

**Ver. 3.** *But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers, said unto them*, etc.] The prince and high priest, and chief of the people:

*you have nothing to do with us to build an house to our God*; being neither of the same nation, nor of the same religion:

*but we ourselves together will build to the Lord God of Israel*; we and we only, who are together as one man, united in one body of people, and in the same religious sentiments, being Israelites; we separately, without admitting strangers among us, will build a temple to the God of Israel:

*as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us*; thereby letting them know that they acted by his authority, and the commission they had from him only concerned themselves, and not others.

**Ver. 4.** *Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.*] By threatening them, or by dissuading the workmen from going on, by endeavouring to hinder their having materials from the Tyrians and Zidonians, or money out of the king’s revenues to bear the expenses as ordered; (see <sup><1504></sup>Ezra 6:4).

**Ver. 5.** *And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose*, etc.] Either to advise and persuade the king of Persia’s officers in those parts not to supply them with money, or to influence the great men at his court to get the edict revoked: and this they did

*all the days of Cyrus king of Persia*; who, though the hearty friend and patron of the Jews, yet being engaged in wars abroad with the Lydians and Scythians, and leaving his son as viceroy in his absence, who was no friend

unto them, the work went on but slowly, attended with interruptions and discouragements:

*even until the reign of Darius king of Persia;* who was Darius Hystaspis, between whom and Cyrus were Cambyses the son of Cyrus, and Smerdis the impostor, who pretended to be Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses; a space of about fifteen years.

**Ver. 6.** *And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign,* etc.] According to Jarchi, this was Ahasuerus the husband of Esther; but, as most think <sup>f39</sup>, was Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus; so Josephus <sup>f40</sup>; who was an enemy to the Egyptians; and, fearing the Jews might take part with them, was no friend to them; their enemies therefore took the advantage of the death of Cyrus, and the first opportunity after Cambyses reigned in his own right:

*and wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem;* full of hatred and enmity, spite and malice, charging them as a turbulent, disobedient, and rebellious people.

**Ver. 7.** *And in the days of Artaxerxes,* etc.] The same with Ahasuerus, in the preceding verse; and who also is Cambyses, which is his name in Heathen authors, Artaxerxes being a common name to the kings of Persia; though some <sup>f41</sup> think this was Smerdis, the magician and impostor, who was between Cambyses and Darius; but as he reigned but seven months, it is not very likely that he should be wrote unto, and an answer received from him; besides he sent to every nation he ruled over <sup>f42</sup>, and so to the Jews, and proclaimed to them freedom from tribute and the militia for three years, to ingratiate himself to them:

*wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions;* or his company; for Jarchi thinks only one person is meant; that Mithredath Tabeel is the name of one of the adversaries of Judah; and that Bishlam is an appellative, and signifies that he wrote in peace, or in a way of salutation and greeting; but they seem to be the names of governors in the cities of Samaria under the king of Persia: these wrote

*to Artaxerxes king of Persia;* instigated by the Samaritans:

*and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue;* or Chaldee, of which Ezra gives a copy in the Chaldee language; the meaning either is, that it was written both in

Syriac letters, and in the Syriac language; for sometimes words are written in one language and in the character of another, as the Syriac is sometimes written in, Hebrew characters, and the Hebrew in Roman; or else there was a postscript added to this letter, explaining some things in it, which also was written in the same language: some take <sup>f43</sup> the word “nishtevan”, rendered “written”, to be the name of a province on the borders of the country beyond Euphrates, whose figure and characters were in high esteem, and fit to write in to kings; but the words and language were Syrian, and needed interpretation.

**Ver. 8.** *Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort.*] This means the same letter as before; which, according to Jarchi, was sent in the name of Mithredath Tabeel and his company, was ended by Rehum, master of words or sense, and written by Shimshai the scribe, whom he makes to be a son of Haman <sup>f44</sup>; but it was written rather in all their names.

**Ver. 9.** *Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions,* etc.] who all signed the letter; namely, the governors of the following nations;

*the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites;* which were colonies from several parts of Chaldea, Media, and Persia, and were settled in the several cities of Samaria, as several of their names plainly show, as from Persia, Erech, Babylon, Shushan, and Elimais; some account for them all, but with uncertainty; according to R. Jose <sup>f45</sup> these were the Samaritans who first were sent out of five nations, to whom the king of Assyria added four more, which together make the nine here mentioned, (see <sup><1724></sup>2 Kings 17:24).

**Ver. 10.** *And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over,* etc.] The river Euphrates:

*and set in the cities of Samaria;* placed there in the room of the Israelites carried captive; this Asnappar was, according to Jarchi and others <sup>f46</sup> Sennacherib; but, with Grotius, Shalmaneser; rather he was Esarhaddon, the son of the former, and grandson of the latter; so Dr. Prideaux <sup>f47</sup>; though he might be only some commander of the Assyrian monarch, who carried them over by his orders:

*and the rest that are on this side the river;* the river Euphrates:

*and at such a time*; which may respect the date of the letter, which, no doubt, was expressed, though not here given; or this, as some think, was the same with our etc. something following, unto King Artaxerxes greeting, or something like that; though David de Pomis<sup>f48</sup> takes it to be the general name of the people beyond the river.

**Ver. 11.** *This is the copy of the letter they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king*, etc.] Which Ezra brought with him from Babylon, and is contained in the five following verses:

*thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time*; this was the inscription of the letter, or the beginning of it.

**Ver. 12.** *Be it known unto the king*, etc.] The intent of this letter was, that it might be known to the king what follows:

*that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem*; this they observe partly out of contempt of the Jews, having been lately captive in Babylon, and partly to insinuate what ingratitude they were guilty of; that having got their liberty, and come to Jerusalem, they made use of it to the king's detriment:

*building the rebellious and the bad city*; as they suggest it had been to kings, even his predecessors, in former times, (~~CHAP~~ Ezra 4:15)

*and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations*; which was a falsehood; for the most they had done was setting up the walls of their houses in Jerusalem, and laying the foundation of the temple; as for the walls of the city, they had not as yet done anything unto them.

**Ver. 13.** *Be it known now unto the king*, etc.] And let it be seriously and thoroughly considered by him and his counsellors:

*that if this city be builded, and its walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom*; being able to defend themselves against the king's forces, sent to reduce them to their obedience; these three words take in all sorts of taxes and levies on persons, goods, and merchandise:

*and so thou shall endamage the revenue of the kings*; not only his own, but his successors';

*this they thought would be a very striking and powerful argument with him.*

**Ver. 14.** *Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace*, etc.] Have posts under the king, to which salaries were annexed, by which they were supported, and which they had from the king's exchequer; or "salt"<sup>f49</sup>, as in the original, some places of honour and trust formerly being paid in salt; hence, as Pliny<sup>f50</sup> observes, such honours and rewards were called "salaries":

*and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour*; to see any thing done injurious to his crown and dignity, to his honour and revenues, when we are supported by him; this would be ungrateful as well as unjust:

*therefore have we sent and certified the king*; of the truth of what is before related; and, for the further confirmation of it, refer him to the ancient records of the kingdom, as follows.

**Ver. 15.** *That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers*, etc.] That is, his predecessors in the Babylonian monarchy; though, as the Medes and Persians were included in that, and joined the Babylonians in their wars with others, and particularly with the Jews, the records of the Medes and Persians might also be applied to:

*so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time*; against the king of Babylon, particularly in the times of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah:

*for which cause was this city destroyed*; as it was by Nebuchadnezzar; (see ~~1231~~ 2 Kings 24:1,20 25:1,9).

**Ver. 16.** *We certify the king, that if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up*, etc.] As it formerly was, and now attempted, as they suggest:

*by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river*; the river Euphrates; intimating that the Jews would not only shake off his yoke, and refuse to pay tribute themselves, but would seize on all his dominions on that side the river, and annex them to their own.

**Ver. 17.** *Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe*, etc.] This affair, upon examination, being found to be of importance, the king of Persia thought fit to send an answer to the

above letter, which was doing them an honour, and gave them the power and authority they wished to have:

*and to the rest of their companions that dwelt in Samaria*; in the kingdom, province, and cities of Samaria:

*and unto the rest beyond the river*; the river Euphrates, the rest of the nations before mentioned, (<sup><15749></sup>Ezra 4:9,10).

*Peace, and at such a time*: that is, all health and prosperity, etc.

**Ver. 18.** *The letter which ye sent unto us*, etc.] The plural number is used, being now become courtly for kings thus to speak of themselves:

*hath been plainly before me*; by such that understood both the Syrian and Persian languages; the letter was written in the Syrian language, and the king being a Persian, it was necessary it should be interpreted and explained to him.

**Ver. 19.** *And I commanded, and search hath been made*, etc.] In the records of his predecessors, whether Chaldeans or Persians:

*and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein*: and yet this could not be carried higher than to the times of Zedekiah and Jehoiakim, as before observed, which was not one hundred years ago, unless the rebellion of Hezekiah against the king of Assyria could be thought to be in these records, (<sup><1287></sup>2 Kings 18:7), and yet from hence it is concluded as if in ages past they had been guilty of rebellion and sedition, and even always.

**Ver. 20.** *There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river*, etc.] As David and Solomon; and the account of these they had in their records, (see <sup><1031></sup>2 Samuel 8:1 <sup><1021></sup>1 Kings 4:21,24)

*and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them*; as appears from the places referred to; and this served to strengthen the insinuation made to the king, that if these people were suffered to go on building, he would lose his tribute and taxes in those parts.

**Ver. 21.** *Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease*, etc.].  
From building:

*and that this city be not builded until another commandment shall be given from me;* he might suspect that this case, in all its circumstances, was not truly stated, and that hereafter he might see reason to recede from the present orders he gave; and the rather, as by searching, and perhaps on his own knowledge, must have observed, that his father Cyrus had shown favour to the Jews, and had not only set them at liberty, but had encouraged them to rebuild their temple; which might be what they were about, and was the case, and nothing else, except their houses to dwell in.

**Ver. 22.** *Take heed now that ye fail not to do this,* etc.] To put his orders into execution, and at once, without any loss of time, oblige the Jews to desist from rebuilding the walls of their city, which he was told they were doing, though a great falsehood:

*why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?* of him and his successors, to be deprived of their toll, tribute, and customs, and to have insurrections, mutinies, and rebellions, in the dominions belonging to them.

**Ver. 23.** *Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions,* etc.] By him or them to whom it was particularly directed:

*they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews;* not only in obedience to the king's command, but from an eagerness of spirit to put a stop to the proceedings of the Jews, to whom they had an aversion, instigated by the Samaritans:

*and made them to cease by force and power;* from going on with the building of the temple, which they reckoned a part of the city, and within their commission; this they did by showing the power and authority they had under the king's hand, and by the forces they brought with them to compel them to it, should they refuse to obey; or, however, they threatened them highly what they would do, if they did not desist.

**Ver. 24.** *Then ceased the work of the house of God, which is at Jerusalem,* etc.] How far they had proceeded is not said, whether any further than laying the foundation of it; though probably, by this time, it might be carried to some little height; however, upon this it was discontinued:

*so it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia;* not Darius Nothun, as some think, for from the first of Cyrus to the sixth of his reign, when the temple was finished, was upwards of one hundred years;

yea, according to some, about one hundred and forty; which would carry the age of Zerubbabel, who both laid the foundation of the temple, and finished it, and the age of those who saw the first temple, to a length that is not probable; but this was Darius Hystaspis, who succeeded Cambyses the son of Cyrus, there being only, between, the short usurpation of Smerdis for seven months.

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 5

This chapter relates, how that the people of the Jews were stirred up by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah to set about the building of the temple again, notwithstanding the orders to the contrary from the deputy governors of the king of Persia; nor could the present ones cause them to cease from it; though it must be owned they behaved towards them in a better manner than the former ones did, (<sup><45701></sup>Ezra 5:1-5), and who, upon the answers received from the Jews, wrote a letter to Darius, to know the truth of things; and in which they seem to state fairly the case of the Jews, as they had it from them, so far as they understood it, (<sup><45706></sup>Ezra 5:6-17).

**Ver. 1.** *Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo,* etc.] The grandson of Iddo; for he was the son of Berechiah, (<sup><3000></sup>Zechariah 1:1),

*prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel;* this they both did in the second year of Darius; the one began in the sixth month, and the other in the eighth month of the year, (<sup><3000></sup>Haggai 1:1 <sup><3000></sup>Zechariah 1:1), even “unto them”; or “against them”, as Deuteronomy Dieu; reproving them for their sloth and neglect of building the temple, when they were careful enough to raise up goodly houses for themselves to dwell in; and for being intimidated by the command of the king of Persia, which only forbid the building of the city, that is, the walls of it, but not the temple any more than their own houses; and besides, there was now a new king, from whom they had not so much to fear.

**Ver. 2.** *Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak,* etc.] Whose spirits were stirred up and quickened by the ministry of the prophets, the Lord accompanying it by his Spirit, (<sup><3002></sup>Haggai 1:12,14),

*and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem;* to go on with the building of it; for they had laid the foundation before, and perhaps had carried it up to some little height, at least, before they ceased from it, (<sup><4570></sup>Ezra 3:10)

*and with them were the prophets of God helping them;* with words of counsel, comfort, and exhortation, directing and encouraging them, and promising them protection and success: these are the prophets before named.

**Ver. 3.** *At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions,* etc.] These were new governors and officers under the king of Persia in those parts, the old ones, Rehum, Shimshai, etc. being either dead, or removed upon this new king coming to the throne: these came to the Jews,

*and said thus unto them, who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?* for it seems by this time they had raised up the walls of the temple from its foundation to some height; for of these it must be understood, (see <sup><1508></sup>Ezra 4:8,9) for it can hardly be thought they were as yet enclosing it with a wall round about it; now they asked them by what authority they did this? who set them to work? and what were their names? for that this question was asked, though not here expressed, is clear from (<sup><1540></sup>Ezra 4:10) and to which an answer is given in the next verse.

**Ver. 4.** *Then said we unto them after this manner,* etc.] In answer to their questions; namely, Ezra and other Jews replied; for though Ezra is said after this to come from Babylon in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, he might go thither on some business, and then return again at that time; some indeed think these are the words of Tatnai and those with him; so Ben Melech, which seems to be favoured by (<sup><1540></sup>Ezra 4:10), and by reading the words with an interrogation, as we do; Aben Ezra says they are either the words of the builders, or of the scribes, the secretaries that came to question them; but they are the words of the former, as order requires, or otherwise no answer would be returned, at least as expressed; and the next clause may be read without an interrogation, and the sense be, that they told them not only that they acted according to an edict of Cyrus king of Persia, for this was said, as appears from (<sup><1513></sup>Ezra 5:13), but they declared

*what were the names of the men that did make this building;* or employed them in it, namely, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the chief men of the Jews; they made no scruple of telling them who they were; neither ashamed of their masters nor of their work, nor afraid of any ill consequences following hereafter.

**Ver. 5.** *But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews,* etc.] He in his providence looked favourably at them, smiled upon them, encouraged them in the work by his good Spirit, and by the prophets, and gave them success, and protected and defended them, (see <sup><414D></sup>2 Chronicles 16:9 <sup><38B></sup>Zechariah 3:9 4:10),

*that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius;* they were not intimidated by what the governor and those with him said to them, but went on in their work; nor did the governor attempt to interrupt them, they having referred him and their cause to Darius for the truth of what they had said, and for further information from him:

*and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter;* that is, Tatnai and those with him sent a letter to Darius about this affair, to which they had an answer, which are both related in this and the following chapters.

**Ver. 6.** *The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river,* etc.] Which is thought by some to be one of the nations mentioned, (<sup><450D></sup>Ezra 4:9) the name being pretty near alike to two of them; but perhaps might be a distinct colony in those parts Tatnai was governor of:

*these sent unto Darius the king;* and is as follows.

**Ver. 7.** *They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus,* etc.] Or this was the inscription of it:

*unto Darius the king, all peace;* wishing him all kind of happiness and prosperity.

**Ver. 8.** *Be it known unto the king,* etc.] This seems to have been the usual form of beginning a letter to a king in those days, (<sup><450D></sup>Ezra 4:12) that we went into the province of Judea; which from a kingdom was reduced to a province, and was become a part of the Babylonian, now Persian, monarchy, (see <sup><450D></sup>Ezra 2:1) to the house of the great God; as the Jews called the Lord their God; and even the Heathens had a notion that there was one supreme God, though they worshipped inferior ones; and some had a notion that Jehovah the God of the Jews was he:

*which is builded with great stones*; marble stones; as Jarchi <sup>f51</sup>, stones of rolling, as it may be rendered; which, according to Aben Ezra, were so large and heavy, that they could not be carried, but were obliged to roll them:

*and timber is laid in the walls*, cedar wood, as Aben Ezra interprets it, for beams, for flooring and raftering; or rather, is put upon the walls, for the lining and wainscoting of them, which was done with cedar wood:

*and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands*; and, unless timely prevented, will soon be finished.

**Ver. 9.** *Then asked we those elders*, etc.] The elders of the province of Judea; the chief men of it:

*who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?* (see <sup><BR></sup>Ezra 5:3).

**Ver. 10.** *We asked their names also*, etc.] The names of the elders, those that set men about this work:

*to certify that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them*; take the names of them in writing, that they might with certainty acquaint the king who they were, and that if it was necessary they might be called to an account for what they were doing.

**Ver. 11.** *And thus they returned us answer*, etc.] To the purpose and in the manner following:

*saying, we are the servants of the God of heaven and earth*; signifying that they were doing his work, in obedience to his will, and to whom they were accountable:

*and build the house that was builded these many years ago*; even five hundred years ago, or thereabout; so that they were not erecting a building where there was none before, but were rebuilding what was in ruins:

*which a great king of Israel builded and set up*; King Solomon, who was a great king for wisdom, honour, riches, peace, prosperity, and extent of his kingdom.

**Ver. 12.** *But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath*, etc.] By their idolatries; which accounts for it how it was that they who were the servants of the great God of heaven and earth, and this

temple built for the honour of his name, were not preserved by him; but they were carried captive, and this house left desolate: it was for their sins for which

*he (God) gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon;* (see <sup><4830></sup>2 Chronicles 36:19,20).

**Ver. 13.** *But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon,* etc.] That is, the first year he was king of Babylon, having taken it, otherwise he was king of Persia many years before:

*the same King Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God;* (see <sup><4500></sup>Ezra 1:1-4).

**Ver. 14,15** *And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God,* etc.] Of which, and of what is said concerning them, and particularly of the delivery of them to Sheshbazzar, whom Cyrus made governor of Judah, and ordered him to carry them to Jerusalem, and build the temple there, and put them in it, (see <sup><4500></sup>Ezra 1:7-11).

**Ver. 16.** *Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem,* etc.] Which makes it clear, that by Sheshbazzar is meant Zerubbabel; for he it was that laid the foundation of the temple, or at least by whose order it was laid, (see <sup><3800></sup>Zechariah 4:9)

*and since that time even until now;* from the first of Cyrus to the second of Darius, a space of about eighteen years, and just seventy from the destruction of the temple:

*hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished;* the work going on slowly, not without interruption and intermission, through the enmity of the Samaritans unto them, who had made false representations of them; but these men, Tatnai and those with him, as the Jews gave them a very particular account of things, as above, so they fairly and fully related them in this their letter to the king.

**Ver. 17.** *Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon,* etc.] Where were the archives of the kingdom, where the laws, decrees, edicts, and proclamations, and other things relating to the state, were laid up, that recourse might be had to them upon occasion:

*whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem;* which the Jews affirmed was made by him, and upon which they proceeded:

*and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter;* whether the Jews should be allowed to go on with the building of their temple, and finish it, or whether they should be restrained from it; signifying they were ready to do his will and pleasure either way, as he thought fit.

# CHAPTER 6

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 6

Darius, on receiving the letter from his officers in Samaria, searched for the decree of Cyrus, and found it, and which he confirmed, (<sup><15168></sup>Ezra 6:1-7) and made a fresh decree, and ordered expenses to be given out of his tribute for the building of the temple, and for the sacrifices of it; and that whosoever altered it should be hanged on the timber of his own house, and imprecated a curse on those that should destroy the house of God, (<sup><15168></sup>Ezra 6:8-12) upon which the building went on, and was finished, (<sup><15163></sup>Ezra 6:13-15) and the temple was dedicated to God in a solemn manner, (<sup><15166></sup>Ezra 6:16-18), and the passover was kept by all the people, (<sup><15169></sup>Ezra 6:19-22).

**Ver. 1.** *Then Darius the king made a decree*, etc.] To make inquiry after the edict of Cyrus, to search the public records for it:

*and search was made in the house of the rolls*; or “books”<sup>f52</sup>, in a public library or museum:

*where the treasures were laid up in Babylon*; where things of worth and value were repositied; not only gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones, and things rare and curious, but all sorts of writings relating to the monarchy, and the dominions belonging to it; but it seems it could not be found here, and therefore the king ordered search to be made elsewhere.

**Ver. 2.** *And there was found at Achmetha*, etc.] Which Jarchi and Aben Ezra take to be the name of a vessel in which letters and writings were put for safety; but it was no doubt the name of a place; the Vulgate Latin version has it Ecbatana; and so Josephus<sup>f53</sup>; which was the name of a city in Media, where the kings of that country had their residence in the summer time<sup>f54</sup>; for it has its name from heat<sup>f55</sup>; the Persian kings dwelt at Shushan in the winter, and at Ecbatana in the summer<sup>f56</sup>; hence they are compared by Aelian<sup>f57</sup> to cranes, birds of passage, because of their going to and from the above places:

*in the palace that is in the province of the Medes*, here was found

*a roll*; which was the decree of Cyrus, which perhaps he took with him when he went thither:

*and therein was a record thus written*; as follows.

**Ver. 3.** *In the first year of Cyrus the king; the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be builded*, etc.] (see <sup><1500></sup>Ezra 1:1-4 <sup><2348></sup>Isaiah 44:28),

*the place where they offered sacrifices*; to God in times past, ever since it was built by Solomon:

*and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid*; so as to bear and support the building erected on them, as the word signifies:

*the height thereof sixty cubits*; which were thirty more than the height of Solomon's temple, (<sup><1002></sup>1 Kings 6:2) though sixty less than the height of the porch, which was one hundred and twenty, (<sup><4404></sup>2 Chronicles 3:4) and which some take to be the height of the whole house; and hence it may be observed what Herod said <sup>f58</sup>, that the temple then in being wanted sixty cubits in height of that of Solomon's:

*and the breadth thereof sixty cubits*; whereas the breadth of Solomon's temple was but twenty, (<sup><1002></sup>1 Kings 6:2), but since it cannot reasonably be thought that the breadth should be equal to the height, and so very disproportionate to Solomon's temple; many learned men understand this of the extension of it as to length, which exactly agrees with the length of the former temple, (<sup><1002></sup>1 Kings 6:2).

**Ver. 4.** *With three rows of great stones*, etc.] Which Jarchi interprets of the walls of it, and these stones of marble; and so Ben Melech:

*and a row of new timber*; of cedar wood upon the rows of stone, (see <sup><1076></sup>1 Kings 6:36) or for the lining and wainscoting the walls:

*and let the expenses be given out of the king's house*; treasury, or exchequer; but it does not appear that this part of the decree was observed, at least hitherto; but the Jews built at their own expense, and perhaps did not exactly observe the directions given as to the dimensions of the house.

**Ver. 5.** *And also let the golden and silver vessels*, etc.] See (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 1:7-11) and which confirms what the Jews said to Tatnai, (<sup><1514></sup>Ezra 5:14,15).

**Ver. 6.** *Now therefore Tatnai, governor beyond the river,* etc.] The river Euphrates, that side of it towards the land of Israel; Josephus<sup>f59</sup> calls this man master of the horse:

*Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence;* keep at a distance from the Jews, and give them no disturbance, nor interrupt them in their work of building of the temple, but mind your own business and government.

**Ver. 7.** *Let the work of this house of God alone,* etc.] Suffer them to go on with it, and do not hinder them; it looks, by these expressions, as if he had some suspicion or hint given him that they were inclined to molest them, or that there were some that stirred them up to it, and were desirous of it:

*let the governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews, build this house of God in his place;* where it formerly stood; that is, go on with the building of it.

**Ver. 8.** *Moreover, I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God,* etc.] This must be considered as an additional decree of Darius, which was peculiarly made by him, in which more was granted in favour of the Jews, and as an encouragement to them to go on with the building of the temple; though Josephus<sup>f60</sup> says this is no other than a confirmation of the decree of Cyrus; for, according to him, all that is here granted to them, or threatened to others, from hence to the end of (<sup><5760></sup>Ezra 6:10), was contained in the decree:

*that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river;* what was collected out of his dominions on that side the river Euphrates, towards the land of Israel: according to Herodotus<sup>f61</sup>, this Darius was the first of the kings of Persia that exacted tribute; under Cyrus and Cambyses only presents were brought; but he imposed a tribute, and was therefore called **καπηλος**, an huckster, as Cambyses had the name of lord, and Cyrus that of father: the same writer gives an account of the several nations he received it from, and the particular sums, which in all amounted to 14,560 Euboic talents of gold; among whom are mentioned all Phoenicia and Syria, called Palestine, the tribute of which parts is the tribute beyond the river he referred to: and this king was well disposed to the Jewish nation, temple, and worship, before he was king, if what Josephus<sup>f62</sup> says is true, that, while a private man, he vowed to God that, if he should be king, he

would send all the sacred vessels that were in Babylon to the temple at Jerusalem: and out of the above tribute it is ordered,

*that forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered;* from going on with the building, for want of money to buy materials, and pay the workmen.

**Ver. 9.** *And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven,* etc.] All which were used for burnt offerings, (see <sup><BIB></sup>Leviticus 1:2,10,14)

*wheat, salt, wine, and oil;* “wheat”, or “fine flour”, for the “minchah” or meat offering; “salt”, for every offering; “wine”, for the drink offerings; and “oil”, to be put upon the meat offerings, (see <sup><BIB></sup>Leviticus 2:1,13 23:13),

*according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail;* for the daily sacrifice, and the meat and drink offerings which attended it, (<sup><BIB></sup>Exodus 29:38-41).

**Ver. 10.** *That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven,* etc.] Such as will be acceptable to him, (<sup><BIB></sup>Genesis 8:21)

*and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons;* prayer being wont to be made at the time of the morning and evening incense; and the Jews used to pray for other people besides themselves, and especially when desired, and particularly for kings and civil magistrates, to whom they were subject, (see <sup><BIB></sup>Jeremiah 29:7 <sup><BIB></sup>1 Timothy 2:1,2), the sons of Darius Hystaspis, for whose life, as well as his own, he would have prayer made, were, according to Herodotus <sup>f63</sup>, three by his first wife, the daughter of Gobryas, before he began to reign, the eldest of which was Artobazanes; which sons must be here meant, since this was towards the beginning of his reign; he had afterwards four more by Atossa the daughter of Cyrus, the eldest of which was Xerxes, who succeeded him: many of the Heathens had an high opinion of the God of the Jews, and of their prayers to him for them; even the Emperor Julian <sup>f64</sup> styles him the best of all the gods, and desired the Jews to pray to him for the welfare of his kingdom; nor need it seem strange that Darius should desire the same, since he was a devout prince; his father Hystaspes is supposed by some to be the same that was one of the most famous among the Persian Magi, or ministers in sacred things; and Darius himself had so great a veneration for the men of that sacred order, that he commanded that it should be put upon his sepulchral

monument, that he was master of the Magi <sup>f65</sup>; and by his familiarity with the priests of Egypt, and learning their divinity, had the honour, while alive, to have deity ascribed to him <sup>f66</sup>.

**Ver. 11.** *Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word,* etc.] Act contrary to this command, will not obey it, but as much as in him lies changes and revokes it:

*let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him, be hanged thereon;* that is, let a beam be taken from it, and a gallows or gibbet made of it, and hang him on it:

*and let his house be made a dunghill for this;* be pulled down, and never rebuilt more, (see Gill on “~~2M2~~ Daniel 2:2”), (see Gill on “~~2M9~~ Daniel 2:9”).

**Ver. 12.** *And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there,* etc.] Whose name is not only called upon there, and that called by his name; but who grants his presence, and causes his Shechinah, or divine Majesty, to dwell there, as in Solomon’s temple, which Darius had some knowledge of:

*destroy all kings and people;* let them be who they will, high or low:

*that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God, which is at Jerusalem;* this he said to deter from hindering the building of it now, and from attempting to destroy it hereafter:

*I Darius have made a decree, let it be done with speed;* be carried immediately into execution, especially with respect to the disbursement for the building of the temple, and for the sacrifices of it.

**Ver. 13.** *Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions,* etc.] Having received and read the above letter:

*according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily;* acquainted the Jews with what the king had written; were so far from hindering the work going forward, that they encouraged it; and made disbursements to them out of the king’s tribute, and furnished them with everything necessary for sacrifice: and this they did immediately, without delay.

**Ver. 14.** *And the elders of the Jews builded,* etc.] Went on with the building of the temple:

*and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo*; or grandson, as before; being animated and encouraged by them; and as they foretold and promised it would, be, so it was; they had success in their work, the Lord overruling the heart of Darius the king and his council in their favour:

*and they builded and finished it*; that is, the temple:

*according to the commandment of the God of Israel*; by the above prophets, who spoke to them, and prophesied in his name:

*and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia*; the commandment of Cyrus is in (<sup><4500></sup>Ezra 1:1) that of Darius in this, (<sup><4508></sup>Ezra 6:8), but who Artaxerxes is, and his commandment, is not easy to say; he cannot be the Artaxerxes between Cyrus and Darius, but one that followed the latter; besides, he was a hinderer of the building, (<sup><4502></sup>Ezra 4:21-24), some think this was Xerxes the son and successor of Darius, and who might be partner with his father in the empire at this time, and so is joined with him in this commandment; which is more probable than that he should be his grandson Artaxerxes Longimamus, in whose reign the temple, it is supposed, was beautified and ornamented, though the exterior building of it was before finished; and so he is spoken of by anticipation; and still more plausible than that he should be, with others, Artaxerxes Mnemon, the son of Darius Nothus; but, after all, I am most inclined to think, with Aben Ezra, that he is Darius himself; and the words to be read, Darius, that is, Artaxerxes, king of Persia; Artaxerxes being, as he observes, a common name of the kings of Persia, as Pharaoh was of the kings of Egypt; though this is by some rejected <sup>f67</sup>; and who goes by this name in the continuance of this history, in whose seventh year, the year after this, Ezra went up to Jerusalem, and, in the twentieth of his reign, Nehemiah, (<sup><4500></sup>Ezra 7:1-7 <sup><4600></sup>Nehemiah 2:1), and I find Dr. Lightfoot <sup>f68</sup> was of the same mind; and, according to Diodorus Siculus <sup>f69</sup>, the kings of Persia were called by the name of Artaxerxes after Mnemon; and so they might before; Cambyses is so called in (<sup><4500></sup>Ezra 4:7). Herodotus <sup>f70</sup> says the name signifies “a mighty warrior”.

**Ver. 15.** *And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar*, etc.] The twelfth month of the year with the Jews, and answers to part of our February and part of March:

*which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king*; four years after the decree came forth.

**Ver. 16.** *And the children of Israel*, etc.] Those of the ten tribes that remained after the body of the people were carried captive, or came with the Jews at their return:

*the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity*; those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin:

*kept the dedication of this house of God with joy*; they set it apart for sacred use and service, with feasting and other expressions of joy and gladness, as follows.

**Ver. 17.** *And offered, at the dedication of this house of God, an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs*, etc.] Hecatombs of various sorts, which were always reckoned grand sacrifices, even among Heathens, of which Homer sometimes speaks; some of these were for burnt offerings, and others peace offerings, by way of thankfulness to God for the finishing of the temple; part of which belonging to the offerers, they feasted upon it with great gladness of heart:

*and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel*; for though the ten tribes were carried captive by Shalmaneser, yet, as before observed, there were some of them that remained in the land, and others that went and returned with the two tribes; and therefore a sin offering was made for them all, for the typical expiation of guilt contracted since they had been in an Heathen land, and, temple service had ceased.

**Ver. 18.** *And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God which is at Jerusalem*, etc.] All in their proper classes and courses, to do the work of the temple at Jerusalem in their turns:

*as it is written in the book of Moses*; (see <sup><ORIG></sup>Numbers 3:6 8:11,14,15), from hence it is plain the Pentateuch was not written by Ezra, as suspected by Spinosa<sup>171</sup>, but by Moses; see the argument of the book of Genesis. (See Gill on <sup><ORIG></sup>Genesis 1:1”).

**Ver. 19.** *And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.*] The month Nisan or Abib, which was

the month following that in which the temple was finished, (<sup>1765</sup>Ezra 6:15), this passover was kept at the exact time the law commanded, (<sup>1712</sup>Exodus 12:2,6).

**Ver. 20.** *For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure*, etc.] They were all to a man pure, and all purified as one man; all were of one mind to purify themselves, and took care to do it, and did it with as much dispatch as if only one man was purified; so that they were more generally prepared for service now than in the times of Hezekiah, (<sup>1724</sup>2 Chronicles 29:34 30:3)

*and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests and for themselves*; which seems to have been done by the Levites, for themselves and for the priests, and for all the people, who were not so pure as the priests and Levites; or otherwise they might have killed it themselves, (<sup>1716</sup>Exodus 12:6), as Bochart<sup>172</sup> thinks.

**Ver. 21.** *And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity*, etc.] The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with some of the ten tribes mixed with them:

*and all such as had separated themselves unto them, from the filthiness of the Heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat*; such of the Gentiles in the dominions of Babylon, and came with the Jews from thence, who were enlightened into the knowledge and worship of the true God, and not only renounced their idolatry, here called filthiness, but were circumcised, and embraced the religion of the Jews, and so were proselytes of righteousness, as they call them; or otherwise they would not have been allowed to eat of the passover, as they did, (<sup>1718</sup>Exodus 12:48).

**Ver. 22.** *And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy*, etc.] Which immediately followed upon the passover, (<sup>1728</sup>Exodus 12:18,19),

*for the Lord had made them joyful*; the building of the temple being finished, and the service of it restored to its original purity;

*and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel*; by giving them leave to go on in building the temple, and by encouraging and assisting them in it till they had finished it; this was Darius Artaxerxes, who, though called king of Persia, was also king of Assyria, being possessed of the Assyrian monarchy, as his predecessors were upon the taking of Babylon,

and the same is therefore called also the king of Babylon, (<sup><16136></sup>Nehemiah 13:6). God, the God of Israel, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and so the hearts of kings, and can turn them at his pleasure, inclined his heart to do them good, which was matter of joy unto them, (see <sup><13177></sup>Ezra 7:27).

# CHAPTER 7

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 7

In this chapter we have the lineage and character of Ezra described, (<sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:1-6), his expedition to Jerusalem, and of many others with him, (<sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:7-10), a copy of the commission King Artaxerxes gave him to execute, (<sup><1571></sup>Ezra 7:11-26), and his thankfulness, (<sup><1572></sup>Ezra 7:27,28).

**Ver. 1-5.** *Now after these things*, etc.] The finishing of the temple, and the dedication of it, and keeping the passover:

*in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia*; in the seventh year of his reign, (<sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:7,8), who is the same with Darius in the preceding chapter; so Jarchi and Aben Ezra; (See Gill on “<sup><1564></sup>Ezra 6:14”).

*Ezra the son of Seraiah*; the high priest slain by Nebuchadnezzar (<sup><1572></sup>Jeremiah 52:24,27), this Ezra was a younger son of his, brother to Josedech, and uncle to Joshua, who were high priests in succession; his pedigree is carried in the ascending line up to Aaron, in this and the four following verses; only six generations, for brevity sake, are omitted, between Azariah and Meraioth, which may be supplied from (<sup><1387></sup>1 Chronicles 6:7-10), (See Gill on “<sup><1388></sup>1 Chronicles 6:3).

**Ver. 6.** *This Ezra went up from Babylon*, etc.] A second time; for that he went up with Zerubbabel is clear from (<sup><1621></sup>Nehemiah 12:1), and is plainly intimated, (<sup><1574></sup>Ezra 5:4),

*and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given*; the meaning is, not that he had a quick hand in writing out copies of it, but was well versed in the knowledge of it; had studied it thoroughly, well instructed in it, and was abundantly qualified to teach it others; he was an eminent doctor of the law; so scribes, in the New Testament, who are the same with the lawyers, were such as were teachers of the law; the word here used in the Arabic language signifies to be expert, as Jarchi<sup>f73</sup> learned from one of their doctors:

*and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him;* either upon Ezra, giving him favour with the king, and so success and prosperity; or it may denote the divine influence of the God of Ezra upon the heart of the king, moving him to grant what he asked of him, even everything he desired: he seems to have been sent upon an embassy to the king from the chief men at Jerusalem; perhaps the governors of Syria had not so fully made the disbursements the king in his decree had required them to make, since the following commission chiefly respects such things; and he was sent on that errand to acquaint the king with it, as well as to persuade those that remained to return, and to obtain leave for it.

**Ver. 7.** *And there went up some of the children of Israel,* etc.] Perhaps some of the ten tribes, as well as others of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; who, notwithstanding the edict of Cyrus, chose to remain in Babylon, and in the countries of it, until they saw how things would go in Judea; and hearing that the temple was finished, and that those that had returned had built them houses in their several cities, and prospered, thought fit to return also:

*and of the priests,* and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem; to take their places, and execute their offices in the temple now built; for of the Levites especially, some of which were singers, and others porters, and of the Nethinims, there were but few that went up with Zerubbabel: now this journey of theirs was taken

*in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king; that is, of Darius Artaxerxes, and this was the year after the temple was finished:* though it is thought by many learned men, and not without some show of reason, that Artaxerxes Longimanus is meant.

**Ver. 8.** *And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month,* etc.] With the above company; this was the month Abib, answering to part of July and part of August: which was in the seventh year of the king; as in the preceding verse.

**Ver. 9.** *For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon,* etc.] The month Nisan, answering to part of March and part of April; this was New Year's day:

*and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem*; the first of the month Ab, as in the preceding verse; so that he was just four months on his journey:

*according to the good hand of his God upon him*; his power and providence, which gave him and his company health and strength, supplied them with everything necessary, directed, protected, and defended them, and brought them in safety to their journey's end.

**Ver. 10.** *For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord*, etc.] To attain to the knowledge of it, that he might be master of it, and expert in it, and know what was not to be done, and what to be done; he had set his heart upon this, bent his studies this way, and taken a great deal of pains in searching into it, in reading of it, and meditating on it;

*and to do it*; he was not only concerned to get the theory of it, but to put it in practice, to exercise himself in it, that it might be habitual to him; and the rather, as his view and intentions were not merely for the sake of himself, but

*to teach in Israel statutes and judgments*: and therefore it was not only necessary that he should have a large and competent knowledge of the laws, moral, ceremonial, and civil, but that he should act according to them himself, that so by his example, as well as by his instructions, he might teach the people.

**Ver. 11.** *Now this is the copy of the letter that the King Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest*, etc.] This title relating to his office is justly given him, since he was the son of an high priest, and lineally descended from Aaron, as the above account of his pedigree shows:

*the scribe*, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel; the doubling of the word “scribe”) shows that he was very wise and learned in the law, in the commandments and statutes of it the Lord gave to Israel; not only in the language of it in which it was written, but in the matter and substance of it, in the things contained in it; for *yrbd* “dibre”, signifies “things” as well as words.

**Ver. 12.** *Artaxerxes, king of kings*, etc.] Having many kings and kingdoms subject and tributary to him; for this was not merely a proud haughty title which the eastern kings<sup>174</sup> assumed, particularly the Persians; for after

Cyrus they were so in fact, who took this title also, and had it put on his sepulchral monument,

“Here I lie, Cyrus, king of kings <sup>f75</sup>;”

this title was given to Grecian kings, particularly Agamemnon is called king of kings <sup>f76</sup>, he being general at the siege of Troy, under whom the rest of the kings fought; if this was Darius Hystaspis, of him Cyrus dreamed that he had wings on his shoulders, with one he covered Asia, and with the other Europe <sup>f77</sup>:

*unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven*; of which titles (see <sup><1371></sup>Ezra 7:11):

*perfect [peace], and at such a time*; the word “perfect” belongs to Ezra’s title as a scribe, signifying that he was a most learned and complete scribe or teacher of the law of God; “peace” is not in the text, and the phrase “at such a time” respects the date of the letter, though not expressed, or is only an “et cetera”, (See Gill on “<sup><1340></sup>Ezra 4:10”).

**Ver. 13.** *I make a decree*, etc.] Which, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, when signed, might not be changed, (<sup><2118></sup>Daniel 6:8),

*that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm*; who remained there, and took not the benefit of the edict of Cyrus, which gave them leave to go; but neglecting the opportunity, it seems as if they could not now go out of the realm without a fresh grant, which is hereby given:

*which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee*; this decree did not oblige them to go whether they would or not; for they might, notwithstanding this, continue if they pleased; it only gave them leave to make use of the present opportunity of going along with Ezra, if they chose it.

**Ver. 14.** *Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors*, etc.] Such a number the kings of Persia used to have from the times of Darius Hystaspis, who was chosen out of seven nobles to be king, and ever after the Persian kings had seven counsellors privileged, as those nobles were, (<sup><7014></sup>Esther 1:14), and Ezra had the honour to be sent with a commission from this king and his seven counsellors,

*to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem*; the inhabitants thereof, whether they had knowledge of and behaved

*according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand*; a copy of which he had with him, and was very expert in and conversant with, and could readily and at once pass judgment whether they acted according to it or not.

**Ver. 15.** *And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem.*] In the temple built there; for the service of which, either for purchasing and procuring vessels that were wanting in it, or for sacrifices to be offered in it, the king and his nobles had made a voluntary contribution, and intrusted and sent Ezra with it.

**Ver. 16.** *And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon,* etc.] Not that he might take it wherever he found it, whether the owners of it were willing he should have it or not; but whatever was freely offered by them, as Jarchi, that he was allowed to take, whatever he could get in that way:

*with the freewill offering of the people*; of the people of the Jews, who thought fit to continue in the province:

*and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem*; those freewill offerings, whether of the natives of Babylon, or of any of the Jewish nation, for the service of the temple at Jerusalem, he had leave and a commission to carry with him.

**Ver. 17.** *That thou mayest buy speedily with this money,* etc.] Thus freely contributed by one and another:

*bullocks, rams, lambs*; which were for burnt offerings:

*with their meat offerings, and their drink offerings*; which always went along with the burnt offerings, according to the law of Moses; and which the king seemed to have a right knowledge of, being, no doubt, instructed by Ezra, or some other Jew in his court:

*and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem*; the altar of burnt offering in the temple there.

**Ver. 18.** *And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren,* etc.] The priests, that he should think fit to take in to his assistance in this work:

*to do with the rest of the silver and gold;* which should be left after the sacrifices were offered up:

*that do after the will of your God;* as they should be directed by him, or was prescribed by him in the law.

**Ver. 19.** *The vessels also that were given thee for the service of the house of thy God,* etc.] These were vessels of silver, basins of gold, and vessels of fine copper; not what formerly belonged to the temple, they were delivered by Cyrus to Sheshbazzar; but what the present king and his counsellors freely offered at this time, (see <sup><1085></sup>Ezra 8:25,26), those

*deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem;* perfect and complete, the full number of them, as the word signifies <sup>f78</sup>; meaning not to be delivered before him, or in his presence, as a witness thereof, but that they should be dedicated and devoted to his service, who was worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, and by the inhabitants of it; he seems as if he thought him a topical deity, the God of that particular place, which was the notion of the Heathens, (see <sup><1023></sup>1 Kings 20:23), though he also speaks of him as the God of heaven.

**Ver. 20.** *And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shall have occasion to bestow,* etc.] For the beautifying and ornamenting the temple, (<sup><1072></sup>Ezra 7:27),

*bestow it out of the king's treasure house;* where the money collected by tribute, tax, and custom, was deposited; his exchequer, as it may be called, (see <sup><1068></sup>Ezra 6:8).

**Ver. 21.** *And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river,* etc.] The receivers of his tribute, tax, and custom, beyond the river Euphrates, on the side towards the land of Israel:

*that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven;* (see <sup><1072></sup>Ezra 7:12),

*shall require of you, it be done speedily*; which seems at first a grant at large for whatsoever he should want or demand, but is limited and restrained by what follows.

**Ver. 22.** *Unto one hundred talents of silver*, etc.] Which amounted to 35,300 pounds sterling; these, according to Jarchi, were to buy the offerings or sacrifices with:

*and an hundred measures of wheat*; or corn, the same measure with the homer, each of which held ten ephahs, or seventy five wine gallons, five pints, and upwards; these, according to the same writer, were for meat offerings, made of fine flour, or rather bread offerings, as they may be called:

*and to an hundred baths of wine*; which was the same measure in liquids as the ephah in things dry, a tenth part of the cor or homer, and held seven wine gallons, five pints, and upwards<sup>f79</sup>; these were for the drink offerings:

*and to an hundred baths of oil*; the same measure as before; these were to mix in the meat offerings:

*and salt without prescribing how much*; because it was used in all offerings, and was cheap, and therefore no measure is fixed, but as much as was wanting was to be given, (see <sup><OR></sup>Leviticus 2:1-13).

**Ver. 23.** *Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven*, etc.] In the law given by Moses to the people of Israel:

*let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven*; for the service of it, particularly sacrifices:

*for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?* through the neglect of the service of God in the temple, and by reason of the default of the king's treasurers.

**Ver. 24.** *Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God*, etc.] The king had a right and perfect knowledge of the distinct offices and services of those persons, (see <sup><OR></sup>Ezra 7:7),

*it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them*; that they might be the less encumbered with the affairs of life, and be more at leisure to attend divine service, and do it the more readily and freely; it was

usual with the Heathens to except ecclesiastics from taxes, tributes, and imposts; so the priests in Egypt<sup>f80</sup>, and the Druids here in Britain<sup>f81</sup>.

**Ver. 25.** *And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand*, etc.] Which he had a large share of from the Lord, and could readily make use of to good purpose; and this may be meant of the law of God made with the highest wisdom, and to know and observe which is an instance of wisdom in men, (<sup>(f80)</sup>Deuteronomy 4:6),

*set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God*; such as God, in his great wisdom, directed to in his wise law to be appointed over the people, to judge righteous judgment; to inform them in all matters of controversy that might arise among them, and decide them according to it; and lead them into a greater and better knowledge of it, (<sup>(f81)</sup>Deuteronomy 16:18 17:9). Jarchi takes the word for “set” to be a comparative, and the sense to be, that the wisdom of Ezra was greater than the judges that judged the people, than them that knew the law:

*and teach ye them that know them not*; such people that were ignorant thereof; though the above writer interprets this of ignorant judges,

“the judge that knows not to judge, make him know judgment to do it.”

**Ver. 26.** *And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king*, etc.] Either the judge who delays judgment, or does not execute it according to the law of God, and of the king; or the people, that do not obey the law of God in matters of religion, and the law of the king in civil things, Judea being now a province of the Persian empire; though some think the law of the king only refers to this law or decree of the king, which gave the Jews power to execute their own laws:

*let judgment be executed speedily upon him*; immediately, without delay, according to the nature of his crime:

*whether it be unto death*; if guilty of a capital crime, deserving death, let him be put to death:

*or to banishment*; from his native country to a foreign distant land;

*or to rooting out*<sup>f82</sup>, as the word signifies; an utter extirpation of him and his family, a destroying him root and branch; or, as Jarchi expresses it, a rooting him out of the world, his seed and family:

*or to confiscation of goods*; to payment of mulcts and fines:

*or to imprisonment*; for such a term of time; all according to the breach of what law he may be guilty of; thus far the king's decree.

**Ver. 27.** *Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers*, etc.] This is Ezra's thanksgiving to God for the above decree:

*which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart*; which he rightly took to be of God, who wrought in him to will and to do:

*to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem*; to provide for the ornamenting of it, for vessels in it, as well as for sacrifices; for as for the building of it, that was finished.

**Ver. 28.** *And hath extended mercy unto me, before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes*, etc.] Before Artaxerxes, his seven counsellors, (<sup><B7M4></sup>Ezra 7:14) and the nobles of his realm, in being appointed by them to carry their freewill offerings to Jerusalem, and the king's commands to his treasurers, with leave to take as many of the Jews with him as were willing to go:

*and I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me*; animated to undertake this work, and execute this commission, being under the influence of divine favour and protection:

*and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me*; he went about in the several parts where Israelites dwelt, and persuaded some of the principal men among them to go along with him to Jerusalem, showing them the king's decree, which gave them leave; and their names and numbers are described in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 8

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 8

In this chapter we are told who and how many went up with Ezra to Jerusalem, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 8:1-14), the gathering of them together at a river, from whence he sent to Babylon for Levites to come to him, who did, (<sup><1505></sup>Ezra 8:15-20), the proclaiming a fast for a safe and prosperous journey, (<sup><1509></sup>Ezra 8:21-23), the delivery of the vessels and money given him into the hands of priests, to take the care and charge thereof, (<sup><1504></sup>Ezra 8:24-30), their safe arrival at Jerusalem, where they deposited the gifts in the temple, offered sacrifices to God, and delivered the king's commissions to his lieutenants and governors, (<sup><1508></sup>Ezra 8:31-36).

**Ver. 1.** *These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them,* etc.] Which follows from hence to the end of (<sup><1504></sup>Ezra 8:14),

*that went up with me from Babylon;* with Ezra the priest and scribe, the writer of this book:

*in the reign of Artaxerxes the king;* that is, Darius Hystaspis, in the seventh year of his reign, (see <sup><1500></sup>Ezra 7:1,7), though many think Artaxerxes Longimanus is meant.

**Ver. 2.** *Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel,* etc.] Not Daniel the prophet, he was of the royal blood, and of the tribe of Judah; this was a priest, a descendant of Ithamar, as Gershom was of Eleazar in the line of Phinehas:

*of the sons of David; Hattush;* perhaps the same with him in (<sup><1302></sup>1 Chronicles 3:22), who was a descendant of David the king; these three men seem to have come alone without any of their families, at least they are not mentioned, nor their numbers given, as the rest that follow be.

**Ver. 3-14.** *Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh,* etc.] Who is so described, to distinguish him from another Shechaniah, (<sup><1505></sup>Ezra 8:5),

*Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy, of the males an hundred and fifty;* males only were reckoned, not women and children;

though that there were such that went up is clear from (<sup><15121></sup>Ezra 8:21), from hence to the end of (<sup><15184></sup>Ezra 8:14) an account is given of the number of the males that went up with Ezra, who were chiefly, if not altogether, sons of those that went up with Zerubbabel; such of them as were left there behind, and now returned, at least a great number of them, (see <sup><15101></sup>Ezra 2:1), it is particularly remarked of the sons of Adonikam, (<sup><15183></sup>Ezra 8:13), that they were the last of them; not that they were the last that came in to go with Ezra, or were backward and dilatory, but the last with respect to the first of his sons that were gone before, and seem with them to be the whole of his family; the number of all that went up under their respective heads amounts to 1496.

**Ver. 15.** *And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava,* etc.] From whence also the river bore the same name; or that from the river, (see <sup><15121></sup>Ezra 8:21), and may be the same with Adiabene, a country in Assyria, which had its name from the river Adiava:

*and there abode we in tents three days;* or pitched their camp; this was the place of their rendezvous:

*and I viewed the people and the priests;* mustered them, took the number of them, and what tribe and families they were of:

*and found there none of the sons of Levi;* excepting the priests.

**Ver. 16.** *Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding.*] These were all in the camp, in some part of it, to whom Ezra sent messengers to come unto him; three of them are of the same name; the first nine were men of chief note, rank, and dignity in their family, and the other two were noted for men of good sense, and that could speak to a case well, and so fit to be sent on such an affair as they were.

**Ver. 17.** *And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief, at the place Casiphia,* etc.] Not a place by the Caspian sea, and near the Caspian mountains, as Munster, which was too far off to go and return in the time they must, (see <sup><15109></sup>Ezra 7:9 8:15,31), but, as Jarchi, a place in Babylon so called, a village near it, or a parish or street in it, where Ezra knew lived many of the Levites and Nethinims, and where Iddo was the chief of the Levites, and over them both:

*and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia;* but Iddo was not one of the Nethinims; for he was chief of the Levites, and by his authority many of them were sent as well as of the Nethinims; but none of the latter were over the Levites, for they were servants to them, (<sup>4580</sup>Ezra 8:20), but, according to Jarchi, the Nethinims are not at all intended in this clause, who reads the words,

*to Iddo and Achim,* (the name of a man with him; perhaps it may be better rendered, “to Iddo and his brother”,)

*who were appointed, or settled, in the place Casiphia;* and with him Deuteronomy Dieu agrees, and so the Syriac version,

*who dwelt in Casiphia: that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God;* both Levites to be singers and porters there, and the Nethinims to wait on them.

**Ver. 18.** *And by the good hand of our God upon us,* etc.] Favouring their designs and orders, protecting those that were sent, and inclining those they were sent to use their interest and authority with those that were under them, and making them willing also to agree to what was proposed to them:

*they brought us a man of understanding of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel;* an Israelite, of the tribe of Levi, in the line of Mahli a son of Merari, the third son of Levi:

*and Sherebiah;* or rather “even Sherebiah”; so Aben Ezra; for he is the understanding man that is meant, and described by his pedigree:

*with his sons and his brethren,* eighteen; all together made this number.

**Ver. 19.** *And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari,* etc.] These were of the same division of Levites as Sherebiah:

*his brethren and their sons, twenty;* these thirty eight, with those they came with, were all Levites; the Nethinims follow.

**Ver. 20.** *Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites,* etc.] To wait upon them, and minister to them, as they did to the priests; some think those were the same with the Gibeonites, whom Joshua gave to the service of the sanctuary, and

David confirmed; but others are of opinion these were different from them, and an addition to them:

*two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name*; in the history that Iddo sent of them to Ezra; and so the names of the Levites, though not here expressed, only the names of those they came with.

**Ver. 21.** *Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava*, etc.] After the messengers to Iddo were returned with those they brought with them:

*that we might afflict ourselves before our God*; humble themselves before him for their sins, confess them, and declare their repentance of them, and ask forgiveness for them:

*to seek of him a right way for us*; to take from thence towards Jerusalem, to be directed by him in it: either by a prophet, or by a vision in a dream, as Eben Ezra; or rather by the guidance of his providence; this they sought in prayer by the river side, where it had been usual with them, and since has been, to perform religious exercises, (see <sup><2000></sup>Ezekiel 1:1 3:15 <sup><4163></sup>Acts 16:13), hence Tertullian <sup>f83</sup> calls the prayers of the Jews “orationes littorales”; they sought not so much which was the shortest and easiest way for them to travel in, as which was the safest:

*and for our little ones and for all our substance*; for the safe conveyance of them; this shows, that though males only are numbered, as before, yet they had their wives and children with them; for little ones cannot be supposed without women to take care of them.

**Ver. 22.** *For I was ashamed to require of the kings band of soldiers and horsemen*, etc.] Which he might have had, only asking for them; so great was the interest he had in the king’s favour:

*to help us against the enemy in the way*; the Arabs, Samaritans, and others, that might lie in wait for them, to rob them of their substance:

*because we had spoken unto the king*: of the special favour of God to them, his singular providence in the protection of them:

*saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him*; that pray unto him, serve and worship him; his hand is open to them to bestow all needful good upon them, temporal and spiritual, and his power and providence are over them, to protect and defend them from all evil:

*but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him*; his word, his ways and worship; his powerful wrath, or the strength and force of it, is exerted against them and they are sure to feel the weight and dreadful effects of it: and now all this being said to the king, after this, to desire a guard to protect them, it would look as if they had not that favour in the sight of God, and did not believe what they had said, but distrusted his power and providence towards them; therefore, rather than reflect any dishonour on God, they chose to expose themselves to danger, seeking his face and favour, and relying on his goodness and power.

**Ver. 23.** *So we fasted, and besought our God for this*, etc.] Sought the Lord by fasting and prayer for a good journey, and preservation in it:

*and he was entreated of us*; accepted their prayer, as Jarchi, so that they came safe to Jerusalem.

**Ver. 24.** *Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests*, etc.] That were in company with him; so that it seems there were more than the two mentioned, (<sup><4582></sup>Ezra 8:2), very probably their families, or some of their brethren, were with them:

*Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them*; these men named were Levites, and not priests, (<sup><4583></sup>Ezra 8:18,19) and therefore the copulative “and” must be supplied:

*and Sherebiah*, etc. or with the twelve priests, Sherebiah, etc. and ten Levites more with them; so that the number of priests and Levites were equal, and in all twenty four.

**Ver. 25.** *And I weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels*, etc.] When he delivered them to them; this he did as a proof of his own integrity and faithfulness, and as a security against any charge or accusation of embezzling any part of them, and to set them an example, and also that they might be under no temptation of acting such a part, and might be vindicated should they be charged with it: even

*the offering of the house of our God*; what was freely offered for the service of it:

*which the king and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered*; as freewill offerings, (see <sup><4575></sup>Ezra 7:15,16).

**Ver. 26.** *I even weighed unto their hand six hundred fifty talents of silver,* etc.] Which, according to Scheuchzer<sup>f84</sup> amount to 975,000 imperials, and, of our money, 2,229,450 pounds sterling: and silver vessels one hundred talents; which came to 35,300 pounds, or 50,000 imperials; according to Jarchi, there were one hundred vessels, and every vessel weighed a talent, and so Aben Ezra, which, with Brerewood<sup>f85</sup>, was three hundred and seventy five pounds:

*and of gold one hundred talents;* which, according to Scheuchzer<sup>f86</sup>, were equal to 1,222,000 ducats of gold; the value of gold now is above 14 and a 3d to the value of silver, by which may be judged the difference between one hundred talents of gold and one hundred talents of silver; according to David de Pomis<sup>f87</sup>, there were two sorts of talents; common talents, which weighed sixty pounds, and the talent of the sanctuary, which weighed double to that.

**Ver. 27.** *Also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams,* etc.] Which were upwards of 1000 pounds of our money; for Bishop Cumberland says<sup>f88</sup>, the Persian “daric”, “drachma”, or “drachm”, weighed twenty shillings and four pence; and, according to Dr. Bernard, it exceeded one of our guineas by two grains, (See Gill on “<del>1</del>1 Chronicles 29:7”)

*and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold;* which perhaps is the same with the Indian or Persian brass Aristotle<sup>f89</sup> speaks of, which is so bright and pure, and free from rust, that it cannot be known by its colour from gold, and that there are among the cups of Darius such as cannot be discerned whether they are brass or gold but by the smell: the Syriac version interprets it by Corinthian brass, which was a mixture of gold, silver, and copper, made when Corinth was burnt, and which is exceeding valuable; of which Pliny<sup>f90</sup> makes three sorts, very precious, and of which he says, it is in value next to, and even before silver, and almost before gold; but this sort of brass was not as yet in being: Kimchi<sup>f91</sup> interprets the word here of its colour, being next to the colour of gold.

**Ver. 28.** *And I said unto them, ye are holy unto the Lord, the vessels are holy also,* etc.] As they were dedicated and set apart to holy service, so the vessels were sacred to holy uses, and therefore not to be converted to any other:

*and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers:* and therefore not to be made use of but in his service.

**Ver. 29.** *Watch ye, and keep them,* etc.] The vessels, the gold, and the silver, that they be not hurt and diminished:

*until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord:* that is, until they had delivered them in full weight, as they had received them, in the presence of those persons as witnesses, and into their hands, in order to be laid up in the chambers and treasuries of the temple.

**Ver. 30.** *So took the priests and the Levites,* etc.] The twelve priests and twelve Levites, mentioned in (<sup><451834></sup>Ezra 8:24),

*the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God;* this they undertook to do, and did.

**Ver. 31.** *Then we departed from the river of Ahava, on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem,* etc.] The month Nisan, answering to part of March and part of April; this was two days before the passover began:

*and the hand of our God was upon us;* guiding, directing, and protecting them by his providence:

*and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way;* either by intimidating them, that they dared not attack them, or by directing them to take a different road, whereby they escaped them, (see <sup><45182></sup>Ezra 8:22).

**Ver. 32.** *And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.*] Before they went about any business, delivered what was committed to them for the use of the temple, and the commissions to the king's officers; as it was but proper they should have some rest after such a fatiguing journey.

**Ver. 33.** *Now on the fourth day,* etc.] After their arrival at Jerusalem:

*was the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, weighed in the house of our God;* the temple, that it might be seen and known that the exact weight which had been deposited with them was now faithfully delivered:

*this was done by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas;* these were priests:

*and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;* two priests and two Levites; for since there were of both

that were charged with the above things, it was proper there should be some of both, when weighed, that they might be witnesses of their fidelity.

**Ver. 34.** *By number and by weight of everyone*, etc.] They were delivered in by tale and weight, which exactly agreed to the number and weight in which they received them:

*and all the weight was written at that time*; an account was taken in writing, and laid up, that it might not only be known hereafter what freewill offerings had been made in Babylon, but that it might be a voucher for the fidelity and integrity of those that brought them, should it ever be called in question.

**Ver. 35.** *Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity*, etc.] Namely, those that now came along with Ezra:

*offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel*; by way of thankfulness for their deliverance from captivity, and for their safe journey:

*twelve bullocks for all Israel*: according to the number of the tribes; and there might be some of every tribe that now came up:

*ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs*; these and the bullocks were burnt offerings:

*twelve he goats for a sin offering*; according to the number of the twelve tribes, also to make atonement for sins they had been guilty of:

*all this was a burnt offering unto the Lord*; excepting the twelve he goats, which were a sin offering.

**Ver. 36.** *And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river*, etc.] The governors of the provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Judea, which were on that side of Euphrates the land of Israel was:

*and they furthered the people, and the house of God*; or "lifted them up"<sup>f92</sup>, eased them of all burdens, and freed them from all impediments, and assisted them and furnished them with everything, as the decree of Artaxerxes enjoined them; and provided everything as they required for ornamenting the temple, and for the sacrifices of it; all which is to be

understood of the king's lieutenants and governors, who obeyed his commands.

# CHAPTER 9

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 9

Ezra being informed, by some of the princes who complained unto him, of the marriages of many of the Israelites with the people of the land, the Canaanites and others, was greatly grieved and distressed, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 9:1-5), upon which he made a confession of their sins to God, with great shame, sorrow, and contrition, and deprecated the evils which they deserved, (<sup><1506></sup>Ezra 9:6-15).

**Ver. 1.** *Now when these things were done*, etc.] When the captives with Ezra had refreshed themselves, and weighed the money and vessels they brought, and put them into the hands of proper persons, and offered sacrifices, and delivered the king's commissions to his lieutenants and governors, and shown his own:

*the princes came to me*; some of the nobles of Israel, the most religious of them, who were concerned at the corruptions that were among them, though not a sufficient number to reform them:

*saying the people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the land*: but joined with them, though not in idolatrous practices, yet by marrying with them, which might lead them into them:

*doing according to their abominations*; not serving idols as they did, but imitating them in their marriages: even

*of the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites*; affinity with many of these was forbidden by an express law, (<sup><1800></sup>Deuteronomy 7:1,3) all but the Moabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians, and from these for the same reason they were to abstain; namely, lest they should be drawn into idolatry; that the priests and Levites should do this, who ought to have known the law, and instructed the people better, was very sad and shocking.

**Ver. 2.** *For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sorts*, etc.] Some that were widowers not only took wives to themselves of the above nations, either when they were of Babylon, where many of these nations also were, or rather since their return; but they took for their sons also; yea, some that had wives took Heathenish ones to them, (see <sup><3113></sup>Malachi 2:13-15),

*so that the holy seed*; such as the Lord had separated from other nations, chosen them to be an holy people above all others, and devoted them to his service and worship:

*have mingled themselves with the people of those lands*; before mentioned, by marrying with them:

*yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass*; they were the first that went into it, were ringleaders of it, who should by their authority and example have restrained others; or they were

*in this first trespass*<sup>f93</sup>; which was the first gross and capital one the people fell into after their return from the captivity.

**Ver. 3.** *And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle*, etc.] Both inward and outward garments, that which was close to his body, and that which was thrown loose over it; and this he did in token of sorrow and mourning, as if something very dreadful and distressing, (see <sup><3113></sup>Job 1:20)

*and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard*; did not shave them, and so transgressed not the law in (<sup><3113></sup>Leviticus 19:27) but plucked off the hair of them, to show his extreme sorrow for what was told him: which has frequently been done by mourners on sorrowful occasions in various nations, (see <sup><2311></sup>Isaiah 15:2). So in the apocryphal “addition” to Esther,

“And laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning: and instead of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair.”  
(Esther 14:2)

she is said to fill every place of joy with the tearing of her hair; and Lavinia in Virgil<sup>f94</sup>; several passages from Homer<sup>f95</sup>, and other writers, both Greek and Latin, are mentioned by Bochart<sup>f96</sup> as instances of it:

*and sat down astonished*; quite amazed at the ingratitude of the people, that after such favours shown them, in returning them from captivity unto their own land, and settling them there, they should give into practices so contrary to the will of God.

**Ver. 4.** *There were assembled unto me everyone that trembled at the words of the God of Israel*, etc.] That had a reverence for the word of God, and the things contained in it; feared to break the laws of God, and trembled at his judgments, which they might apprehend would come upon transgressors, (see <sup>234E</sup>Isaiah 46:2),

*because of the transgression of those that had been carried away*; into Babylon, and were now returned, and which was an aggravation of their transgression:

*and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice*: or until the ninth hour, as the Syriac version, which was about our three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the evening sacrifice was offered; perhaps it was in the morning when Ezra first received his information from the princes.

**Ver. 5.** *And at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my heaviness*, etc.] The signs and tokens of it, particularly sitting on the ground; or “from my fasting”<sup>f97</sup>, having eaten nothing that day, it being early in the morning when he was told the above case:

*and having rent my garment and my mantle*; which he had done before, and still kept them on him in the same case:

*fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God*; in the posture and with the gesture of an humble supplicant.

**Ver. 6.** *And said, O my God*, etc.] Here begins the prayer of Ezra, and that with faith in God as covenant God, even when he was about to make confession of sin, and repentance for it; that prayer is right which is put up in faith, and that repentance genuine which is accompanied with faith, and flows from it:

*I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God*; a true sight and sense of sin causes shame and blushing, and never more than when a man is sensible of his covenant interest in God, and of his grace and favour to him, particularly in the forgiveness of his sin, (see <sup>236E</sup>Ezekiel 16:61,63)

*for our iniquities are increased over our head*; arisen and swelled like mighty waters, which seemed to threaten an overwhelming of them:

*and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens*; being done in an open, public, and insolent manner, and in such numbers, that they were, as it were, piled up in heaps, reaching to heaven, and calling down vengeance from thence. Ezra includes himself as being one of the same nation; and these sins being so common were become national ones, which involved all the individuals, and exposed them to the divine resentment.

**Ver. 7.** *Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day*, etc.] The sins they were guilty of had been long continued in, which was an aggravation of them:

*and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands*; the ten tribes and their king into the hand of the king of Assyria, the kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, into the hands of the king of Babylon, with the priests and people:

*to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil*; some were slain with the sword, others carried captive, and the houses of them all plundered and spoiled:

*and to confusion of face, as it is this day*; being filled with shame when they reflected on their sins, the cause of those evils; and besides, the captivity of the ten tribes continued, and of many others, which exposed them to shame among their neighbours.

**Ver. 8.** *And now, for a little space, grace hath been showed from the Lord our God*, etc.] It was but a small time since the Lord first began to show favour to them, so that they soon after began to revolt from him; which argued the strange propensity of their minds to that which is evil, and from which they could not be restrained by the recent goodness of God unto them:

*to leave us a remnant to escape*; out of captivity, from whence a small number were graciously and safely returned to their own land:

*and to give us a nail in his holy place*; a fixed settlement in the land of Judea, the holy land the Lord had chosen, and in the temple, the holy place sacred to his worship; or a prince of their own, Zerubbabel, to be the

governor of them, under whom they might enjoy settled happiness and prosperity, (see <sup><2223></sup>Isaiah 22:23 <sup><3104></sup>Zechariah 10:4),

*that our God may lighten our eyes*; refresh our spirits, cheer our souls, and give us light and gladness, (see <sup><0147></sup>1 Samuel 14:27)

*and give us a little reviving in our bondage*; for they were still in some degree of bondage, being in subjection, and tributaries to the kings of Persia; but yet being returned to their own land, it was as life from the dead unto them, at least it was giving them a little life, liberty, and joy.

**Ver. 9.** *For we were bondmen*, etc.] To the Chaldeans when in Babylon, which was more than the Jews in the times of Christ would own, (<sup><4133></sup>John 8:33),

*yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage*; had not left them to continue in it always:

*but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia*; moved them to have pity and compassion on them, and release them:

*to give us a reviving*; while in captivity, they were as in their graves, and like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, but revived upon the proclamation of Cyrus, and the encouragement he gave them to return to their own land:

*to set up the house of our God, and repair the desolations thereof*; both to rebuild the temple, and to restore the worship of it:

*and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem*; not to set up the walls of Jerusalem, and of other cities, which as yet was not done; but rather the walls of their houses, which they had rebuilt; they had walled houses given them in Judah and Jerusalem; though the word signifies an hedge or fence, such as is about gardens and vineyards, and may denote the protection of the kings of Persia, which was a fence to them against the Samaritans and others; and especially the hedge of divine Providence about them, which guarded and defended them, (see <sup><3110></sup>Job 1:10).

**Ver. 10.** *And now, O our God, what shall we say after this?* etc.] What apology or excuse can be made for such ingratitude? what can be said in favour of such a people? what kindness can be expected to be shown to a people who had behaved in so base a manner?

*for we have forsaken thy commandments:* particularly those which related to marriages with people of other nations.

**Ver. 11.** *Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets,* etc.] Moses, and Joshua, and others, (see <sup><B00B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3 <sup><B232></sup>Joshua 23:12 <sup><B00D></sup>Judges 2:2)

*saying, the land, unto which ye go to possess it;* meaning the land of Canaan:

*is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness;* which is to be understood not of their idolatries only, but of their incestuous marriages, and impure copulations, on which account the Lord spewed out the old inhabitants of it; for which reason the Jews ought to have been careful not to have defiled it again by similar practices; (see <sup><B80D></sup>Leviticus 18:1-30).

**Ver. 12.** *Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons,* etc.] That is, in marriage, (see <sup><B00B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3), where the prohibition is expressed in the same language:

*nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever;* that is, as long as they continue in their idolatries and impurities, (see <sup><B236></sup>Deuteronomy 23:6),

*that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever;* that they might be strengthened and established in the land into which they were brought, and enjoy all the good things it produced, and leave their children in the possession of it, to hold at least until the Messiah came, (see <sup><2019></sup>Isaiah 1:19).

**Ver. 13.** *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass,* etc.] As famine, sword, pestilence, and captivity, for their idolatries and other heinous sins:

*seeing that our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;* for they deserved eternal punishment, whereas it was temporal punishment that was inflicted, and this moderate, and now stopped; the sense is, according to Aben Ezra,

“thou hast refrained from writing some of our sins in the book of remembrance, and thou hast let them down below in the earth,

according to the sense of thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;”

but Jarchi better,

“thou hast refrained thyself from exacting of us all our sins, and hast exacted of us beneath our sins (or less than they deserve), and hast not taken vengeance on us according to all our sins:”

*and hast given us such deliverance as this;* from captivity, which they now enjoyed.

**Ver. 14.** *Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* etc.] That are guilty of abominable idolatries, and of all uncleanness:

*wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us;* it might be justly expected:

*so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* any left or suffered to escape the wrath of but all consumed by it.

**Ver. 15.** *O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous,* etc.] And would appear to be so, should Israel be entirely cut off, and utterly consumed for their iniquities:

*for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day;* that they remained yet escaped out of captivity, and escaped the wrath and vengeance of God, was not owing to any deserts of theirs, but to the grace and mercy of God, who had not stirred up all his wrath, as their sins deserved:

*behold, we are before thee in our trespasses;* to do with us as seems good in thy sight; we have nothing to plead on our behalf, but cast ourselves at thy feet, if so be unmerited favour may be shown us:

*for we cannot stand before thee because of this;* this evil of contracting affinity with the nations; we cannot defend ourselves; we cannot plead ignorance of the divine commands; we have nothing to say for ourselves why judgment should not be passed upon us; we leave ourselves in thine hands, and at thy mercy.

# CHAPTER 10

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 10

Upon Ezra's prayer and confession, it was proposed by Shechaniah, that those who had married strange wives should put them away with their children, which they swore to do, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 10:1-5), and proclamation was made throughout the land for all to meet at Jerusalem in three days' time, and accordingly they did, (<sup><1506></sup>Ezra 10:6-9) when, at the exhortation of Ezra, all agreed to it, and persons were appointed to see it done, and the work was finished in the space of three months, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 10:10-17) and a list of the names of those is given who had married such wives, and now put them away; of the priests, (<sup><1508></sup>Ezra 10:18-22), of the Levites, (<sup><1503></sup>Ezra 10:23,24), of the other Israelites, (<sup><1504></sup>Ezra 10:24-44).

**Ver. 1.** *Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping,* etc.] Had confessed the sins of the people in prayer and supplication, with many tears:

*and casting himself down before the house of God;* in the outward court before the temple, his face turned towards it, where he lay prostrate:

*there assembled to him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women, and children;* it was quickly spread abroad, both in Jerusalem and places adjacent, that such a great man, a commissioner from the king of Persia, and a priest of the Jews, was in the utmost distress, rending his garments, and plucking off his hair, and was crying and praying in a vehement manner; which brought a great concourse of people, who concluded some great sins were committed, and sore judgments were coming upon them:

*for the people wept very sore;* being affected with his confessions, cries, and tears, and fearing wrath would come upon them for their sins.

**Ver. 2.** *And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra,* etc.] This man seems to be one of those that now came with Ezra from Babylon, (see <sup><1498></sup>Ezra 8:3,5),

*we have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land;* not that he had taken any himself, being but just come into the land, nor is his name in the list of those that had; but inasmuch as many of the nation, of which he was a part, and his own father, and several of his uncles had, (<sup><4510></sup>Ezra 10:26), he expresses himself in this manner:

*yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing;* of a reformation of this evil, and of pardon for it.

**Ver. 3.** *Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God,* etc.] Renew our covenant with him, and lay ourselves under fresh obligation by promise and oath, and unanimously agree

*to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them;* he means all the strange wives, such marriages being unlawful; and such wives might the more easily be put away, since bills of divorce were in frequent use with the Jews, and the children of such also being illegitimate; and the rather they were to be put away, lest they should corrupt other children, or get into the affections of their fathers, which might lead on to receive their mothers again, and especially this was to be done as a punishment of their sin: though no doubt but a provision was to be made, and was made, for the maintenance both of wives and children:

*according to the counsel of my Lord;* either of Ezra, whom he honours with this title, being a ruler under the king of Persia; or of the Lord God, according to his will declared in his words, which is his counsel:

*and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God;* feared to break it, and dreaded the effect of such a breach; and who no doubt would follow the counsel of the Lord, and join in their advice to act according to the proposal made:

*and let it be done according to the law;* as that directs in such cases.

**Ver. 4.** *Arise,* etc.] From the ground, where he lay prostrate:

*for this matter belongeth unto thee;* as a priest and scribe of the law, well versed in it, and therefore could direct what was to be done according to it; and as a ruler under the king of Persia, and a commissioner of his, to inquire whether the law of God was observed by the Jews, (<sup><4574></sup>Ezra 7:14) and so had authority to put the law in execution:

*we also will be with thee;* to help and assist in the reformation of this evil:

*be of good courage, and do it*; do not despair of going through it, though there may be some opposition to it; begin, and doubt not of succeeding.

**Ver. 5.** *Then arose Ezra*, etc.] From the ground where he lay:

*and made the chief priests, and the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word*: he took an oath of all that were present to do what was proposed, namely, to put away strange wives and their children:

*and they sware*; by means of which they were kept to their word of promise, an oath being a solemn, sacred, thing.

**Ver. 6.** *Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God*, etc.] Departed from thence:

*and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib*; who was of the family of the high priest. Eliashib was grandson of Joshua the high priest, and succeeded his father Joiakim as such; but though Johanan was never high priest, being a younger son, however he was a person of note, and had a chamber in the temple, whither Ezra went, either to advise with the princes and elders in it, (<sup><45108></sup>Ezra 10:8) or to refresh himself with food:

*and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water*; or rather “not yet had he ate bread”<sup>f98</sup>, as some render it; that is, not till he came thither, from the time he first heard of the evil the people had committed; which very probably was early in the morning, and it was now evening:

*for he mourned for the transgression of them that had been carried away*; into captivity, but were now returned from it, and it grieved him the more, that, after such kindness shown them, they should be guilty of such an evil.

**Ver. 7.** *And they made proclamation*, etc.] By the voice of an herald:

*throughout Judah and Jerusalem, unto all the children of the captivity*; who were returned from it:

*that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem*; within a time after mentioned.

**Ver. 8.** *And that whosoever would not come within three days*, etc.] Or at the end of three days, as Jarchi, this was the space of time allowed, and which was decided upon for the quick dispatch of this affair, to prevent any

schemes that might be formed to obstruct it, and lest those who had agreed to it, and promised to assist in it, should repent and go from their word:

*according to the counsel of the princes, and of the elders*; for though Ezra had a commission at large from the king of Persia, to inquire into and reform all abuses, he chose not to act of himself, but to have the opinion and consent of the senate of the nation; this he prudently did to avoid their envy, and that he might have less opposition, and better success:

*his substance should be forfeited*; or “devoted”<sup>f99</sup> to sacred uses, to be put into the treasury of the temple, and used in the service of it, and therefore never to be returned:

*and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away*; into captivity, but now returned from it; that is, should be excommunicated from them as a church, and be no more reckoned of the body politic, or a freeman of Israel, and so deprived of all privileges both in church and state.

**Ver. 9.** *Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin*, etc.] And such of the ten tribes that returned and dwelt among them:

*gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days*; the time fixed: which they were the more careful to observe, since it was enjoined by the authority of princes and elders, and the punishment in case of disobedience very severe:

*it was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month*; the month Chisleu, which answers to part of November and part of December, so that the twentieth day must be in the beginning of December; this was almost five months after Ezra came to Jerusalem:

*and all the people sat in the street of the house of God*: the street which led to the temple, the east street, (~~2~~2 Chronicles 29:4) though some think this was the court of the people, called a street, because it lay open, not yet walled in; and, according to Josephus<sup>f100</sup>, it was in an upper room of the temple in which Ezra was, perhaps the same with the chamber of Johanan, (~~10~~Ezra 10:6),

*trembling because of this matter*; they were met about; some that were guilty, not knowing what punishment would be inflicted on them, and

others that were not, yet dreaded the wrath of God, lest that should break out upon the whole congregation for it:

*and for the great rain*; which now fell, and which they interpreted as a token of the divine displeasure: for though it was in winter time, yet not with them a time of rain, for the former rain had fallen a month before; so that this being unusual and unexpected, they understood it as betokening evil to them.

**Ver. 10.** *And Ezra the priest stood up*, etc.] In the midst of the assembly to make his speech, acquainting them with the reason of their meeting together:

*and said unto them, ye have transgressed*; the law of God in the following instance:

*and have taken strange wives*; of the people of the land and others, idolatrous persons:

*to increase the trespass of Israel*; to add to former iniquities, which had been the cause of the captivity.

**Ver. 11.** *Now therefore make confession to the Lord God of your fathers*, etc.] Of their sin, and express their detestation of it, and repentance for it:

*and do his pleasure*; obey his will, and particularly in this case:

*and separate yourselves from the people of the land*; the Canaanites, etc. have no fellowship with them, make no covenants, contracts, and alliances with them for the future;

*and from the strange wives*; they had taken; put them away.

**Ver. 12.** *Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice*, etc.] That they might be heard, and to show that they were willing and ready to comply with what was proposed:

*as thou hast said, so must we do*; being convinced of their sin, they saw it was a duty incumbent on them to put away their strange wives, and that there was a necessity of it, to avert the wrath of God from them.

**Ver. 13.** *But the people are many*, etc.] Who have been guilty of this evil:

*and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without*: in the street, because of the rain:

*neither is this a work of one day or two*; to inquire into this affair, who they are that have taken strange wives, and to persuade or oblige them to put them away:

*for we are many that have transgressed in this thing*; in marrying strange wives.

**Ver. 14.** *Let now our rulers of all the congregations stand*, etc.] Let the great sanhedrim, or court of judicature at Jerusalem, be fixed and continued, and others:

*and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times*; to the court at Jerusalem, at certain and fixed known times of their sittings there for this purpose:

*and with the elders of every city and the judges thereof*; the principal magistrates of it, who were to testify that upon search and inquiry those were the men and all the men in their city, that had taken strange wives, and that they had put them away according to the order of the princes and elders; and this they proposed to be done in every city, and the account to be brought to the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, who were to sit at certain times till this affair was finished:

*until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us*: which it seems had broke out in some instances, and they feared would do yet more, unless this step was taken, whereby they hoped it would be averted.

**Ver. 15.** *Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, were employed about the matter*, etc.] To see that this affair was conducted in the manner proposed; that the magistrates of every city brought the persons that had been delinquents, in their turns, of which they gave them notice, and took the account of them as they came:

*and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them*; assisted them in this work; the other two perhaps were priests, and both these Levites; and these four were the only persons appointed over this matter, as the phrase in the preceding clause may signify; though Jarchi interprets it to a quite contrary sense, that they were the only persons that opposed and objected to it; and so Dr. Lightfoot<sup>f101</sup> understands it, and renders it, “stood against this matter”; in which they were seconded by the two Levites, and the sense is very probable.

**Ver. 16.** *And the children of the captivity did so,* etc.] Put away their strange wives:

*and Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated;* from all their other business, and gave themselves up to attend to this wholly:

*and sat down in the first day of the tenth month;* the month Tebeth, which answers to part of December and January; this was ten days after the assembly of all the people met and broke up: these took their places in the great court, and there sat

*to examine the matter;* the accounts brought in from the several cities by the magistrates thereof, and recorded them.

**Ver. 17.** *And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives,* etc.] Finished their inquiry and examination of them:

*by the first day of the first month;* the month Nisan, answering to part of March and April; so that they were three months about this work.

**Ver. 18.** *And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives,* etc.] So that it need not be wondered at that this evil should spread among the people, when those who understood the law, and should have instructed the people in it, set such an example: namely,

*of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak;* who was the high priest; and perhaps for this fault of his, in not restraining his sons from such unlawful marriages, is he represented in filthy garments, (<sup><388B></sup>Zechariah 3:3),

*and his brethren, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah;* these were the brethren of Jeshua.

**Ver. 19-43.** *And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives,* etc.] They proposed to do it, and actually did it:

*and being guilty;* of which they were fully convinced:

*they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass;* to make atonement for it, and thereby set an example to others to do the like. Aben Ezra observes, that we do not find that the trespass offering was a mulct to such who married strange wives, and conjectures, that it was the advice of the chief men to do it. From hence, to the end of (<sup><450B></sup>Ezra 10:43), is a list of the men that had married strange wives, and put them away; those in (<sup><450B></sup>Ezra

10:20-22), were priests; in (<sup><5102></sup>Ezra 10:23,24), Levites, and those of them who were singers or porters; the rest were Israelites: and it is a very common distinction, in rabbinical writers, to distinguish the Jews into priests, Levites, and Israelites; of these we know no more than their names; some of the heads of the families may be observed in (<sup><5101></sup>Ezra 2:1).

**Ver. 44.** *All these had taken strange wives*, etc.] In all about one hundred and thirteen:

*and some of them had wives by whom they had children*; and yet they put them away, which made it the more difficult for them to do; and those that had none, it is thought to be a mark of God's displeasure at such marriages. No mention being made of the children being put away, as Shechaniah proposed, (<sup><5103></sup>Ezra 10:3), it may be concluded they were not, but were taken care of, to be educated in the true religion, and entered proselytes at a proper time; and the rather, as Ezra gave no orders about their putting away, (<sup><5101></sup>Ezra 10:11).

## FOOTNOTES

- ft1 - Origen apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 6. c. 25. Hieron. Opera, tom. 3. Epist. ad Paulin. fol. 6. B. & ad Domnion. & Rogat. fol. 7. G.
- ft2 - Seder Olam Zuta, p. 108.
- ft3 - Lactant. Institut. l. 4. c. 11.
- ft4 - Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 1.
- ft5 - Demonstr. Evangel. prop. 4. p. 208, 209.
- ft6 - Annal. Vet. Test. p. 146, 193.
- ft7 - De Divinatione, l. 1.
- ft8 - Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 214.
- ft9 - Apud Euseb. Praepar. Evangel. l. 10. c. 10. p. 488.
- ft10 - Nic. Abrami Pharus, p. 303.
- ft11 - Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 130. So Sallust, Bell. Catalin. p. 2.
- ft12 - Cyropaedia, l. 1. in principio.
- ft13 - 8. c. 48.
- ft14 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 1. sect. 1, 2.
- ft15 - Abulpharag. Hist. Dynast. Dyn. 5. p. 82.
- ft16 - Apud Joseph. Antiqu. l. 11. c. 1. sect. 3.
- ft17 - Hieros. Yoma, fol. 41. 1.
- ft18 - Works, vol. 1. p. 127. So Broughton, Works, p. 258.
- ft19 - Vid. Rainold. de Libr. Apocryph. Praelect. 111, 117, 148.
- ft20 - Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 68. 1.
- ft21 - Ebr. Comment. p. 809.
- ft22 - Var. Hist. l. 1. c. 21. Vid. Corn. Nep. Vit. Conon. l. 9. c. 3.

- ft23 - Bab. Yoma, fol. 21. 2.
- ft24 - Bab. Sotah, fol. 48. 2. & Gloss. in Kiddushin, fol. 60. 2.
- ft25 - Seder Olam Rabba, c. 29. p. 86.
- ft26 - Abulpharag. Hist. Dynast. Dyn. 5. p. 82.
- ft27 - Ed. of Sixtus V. and the Lovain in James's Contrariety of Popish Bibles, p. 295.
- ft28 - De Pret. & Ponder. Vet. Num. ch. iii. v.
- ft29 - Scripture Weights & Measures, ch. 4. p. 115.
- ft30 - Sixtus V. Lovain & MSS. in James ut supra. (Contrariety of Popish Bibles, p. 295)
- ft31 - Ut supra, (De Pret. & Ponder. Vet. Num.) ch. iv. v.
- ft32 - Universal History, vol. 10. p. 183, marg.
- ft33 - [gyw "cum appropinquaret", Piscator.
- ft34 - yk "quamvis", Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Patrick.
- ft35 - Etsi, Michaelis.
- ft36 - wyçrk "juxta praeceptum", Vatablus; "juxta quod praeceperat", V. L. So Ben Melech.
- ft37 - Pausan. Messenica, sive, l. 4. p. 368.
- ft38 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 3.
- ft39 - Spanhem. Introduct. Chron. ad Hist. Eccl. p. 54. & Universal History, Vol. 5. p. 203. Prideaux, p. 175.
- ft40 - Ut supra, (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4.) sect. 4, 6. Vid. R. David Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 2. fol. 8. 2. So Dr. Lightfoot, Works, vol. 1. p. 139.
- ft41 - Prideaux's Connect. par. 1. p. 175. Authors of the Universal History, vol. 5. p. 199, 203. So Vitringa, Hypotypos. Hist. Sacr. p. 108.
- ft42 - Herodot. Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 67. Justin. l. 1. c. 9.
- ft43 - Praefat. Arugas Habbosem apud Buxtorf. de liter. Heb. add.

- ft44 - So Midrash Esther, fol. 85. 3.
- ft45 - Pirke Eliezer, c. 38.
- ft46 - Kimchi Sepher Shorash. fol. 166. 2. & Vajikra Rabba in ib. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 1.
- ft47 - Connexion, etc. vol. 1. p. 30.
- ft48 - Tzemach David, fol. 63. 3.
- ft49 - **j l m** “salem vel sale”, Montanus, Vatablus, Michaelis.
- ft50 - Nat. Hist. l. 31. c. 7.
- ft51 - So David de Pomis, Tzemach David, fol. 15. 3.
- ft52 - **ayrps tybb**, **εν ταις βιβλιοθηκαις**, Sept. “in bibliotheca”, V. L. “in bibliotheca librorum”, Tigurine version; “in domo librorum”, Pagninus, Montanus.
- ft53 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 6.
- ft54 - Curtius, l. 5. c. 8. Vid. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 3. c. 6.
- ft55 - Hiller. Onomastic. Sacr. p. 618.
- ft56 - Athen. Deipnosophist, l. 12. c. 1.
- ft57 - De Animal. l. 3. c. 13.
- ft58 - Apud Joseph. Antiqu. l. 15. c. 11. sect. 1.
- ft59 - Ibid. (Antiqu.) l. 11. c. 4. sect. 7.
- ft60 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 6.
- ft61 - Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 89-95.
- ft62 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 3. sect. 1.
- ft63 - Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 2.
- ft64 - Opera, par. 2. ep. 25. p. 153.
- ft65 - Porphy. de abstinentia, l. 4, c. 16.
- ft66 - Diodor. Sic. l. 1. p. 85.

- ft67 - Vid. Rainold de Lib. Apocryph. praelect. 31. p. 271.
- ft68 - Works, vol. 1. p. 139.
- ft69 - Bibliothec. l. 15. p. 400.
- ft70 - Erato, sive, l. 6. c. 98.
- ft71 - Tract. Theolog. Polit. c. 8. p. 163.
- ft72 - Hierozoic. par. 1. l. 2. c. 50. col. 576.
- ft73 - Comment. in Psal. xlv. 1. <Arabic> “acutus ingenio et solers fuit”, Golius, col. 2272. “in re exercitatus fuit et excultus”, Castel. col. 2008. Ethiop. “docuit, erudit”, ib. col. 2007.
- ft74 - See the Universal History, vol. 5. p. 16, 137. & vol. 11. p. 7, 8. margin, & p. 66.
- ft75 - Strabo, Geograph. l. 15. p. 502.
- ft76 - Vell. Patercul. Hist. Roman. l. 1. in initio.
- ft77 - Herodot. Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 209.
- ft78 - **ⲙⲓ Ⲙⲏ** “integra et pleno numero redde”, Michaelis.
- ft79 - See Cumberland’s Scripture Weights and Measures, ch. 4. p. 137.
- ft80 - Diodor. Sicul. l. 1. p. 66.
- ft81 - Caesar. Comment. de Bello Gall. l. 6. c. 13.
- ft82 - **ⲱⲘⲣⲘⲚⲓ** “ad eradicationem ejus”, Pagninus, Montanus; “ad eradicationem”, Tigurine version, Vatablus, De Dieu, Michaelis.
- ft83 - Ad nationes, l. 1. c. 13. Vid. lib. de jejuniis, c. 16.
- ft84 - Physica Sacra, vol. 4. p. 651.
- ft85 - De Pond. & Pret. Vet. Num. c. 4.
- ft86 - Ut supra. (Physica Sacra, vol. 4. p. 651.)
- ft87 - Tzemach David, fol. 57. 3.
- ft88 - Scripture Weights and Measures, ch. 4. p. 115.

ft89 - De Mirabilibus, p. 704, vol. 1.

ft90 - Nat. Hist. l. 34. c. 1, 2.

ft91 - Sepher Shorash. rad. **bhx**.

ft92 - **waçnw** “elevaverunt”, V. L. Piscator; “exaltaverunt”, Pagninus, Montanus, Vatablus; “sublevarunt”, Junius & Tremellius.

ft93 - **hnaçr hzh l [mb** “in praevaricatione ista prima”, Pagninus, Montanus.

ft94 - Aeneid. 12. prope finem. Vid. Ciceron. Tusc. Quaest. l. 3.

ft95 - Vid. Iliad. 10. ver. 15. & Iliad. 22. ver. 77, 78, 406. & Iliad. 24. ver. 711.

ft96 - Hierozoic. par. 1. l. 2. c. 45. col. 481.

ft97 - **ytyn[ tm** “jejunio meo”, Michaelis; so Jarchi.

ft98 - **l ka al** “nondum comederat”, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator.

ft99 - **µrj y** “anathema erit [vel] fore”, Montanus, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator; “devoveretur”, Michaelis.

ft100 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 5. sect. 4.

ft101 - Works, vol. 1. p. 144.