EDIFIED EDITION

Ezra

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

10	280	Old	15
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Ezra 1 tells how, in his first year, Cyrus king of Persia is moved by the LORD to fulfil the word spoken by Jeremiah. He proclaims throughout his kingdom that the God of heaven has charged him to build a house in Jerusalem, and that any of God's people may go up, helped by their neighbours with silver, gold, goods and livestock. The family heads of Judah and Benjamin, the priests and the Levites, all whose spirit God has stirred, prepare to go, and those around them help them. Cyrus brings out the vessels of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar took away, and they are counted out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, who brings all five thousand four hundred of them up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah,[1] the LORD stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom and also put it in writing:

2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3 Whoever among you belongs to His people, may his God be with him. Let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah to build the house of the LORD, Israel's God; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.

4 And in every place where survivors are living as foreigners, let the people of that place help them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem."

5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, the priests and the Levites, all whose spirit God had stirred, got ready to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

6 All their neighbours helped them with articles of
silver and gold, with goods, livestock and valuable
gifts, besides all the freewill offerings.

7 King Cyrus also brought out the vessels of the
house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had
taken from Jerusalem and placed in the temple of
his gods.[2]

8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought out by
Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out
to Sheshbazzar,[3] the prince of Judah.

9 This was the inventory: thirty gold basins, a
thousand silver basins, twenty-nine knives,[4]

10 thirty gold bowls, four hundred and ten
matching silver bowls,[5] and a thousand other
articles.

11 The gold and silver articles came to five
thousand four hundred[6] in all. Sheshbazzar
brought them all up when the exiles came back
from Babylon to Jerusalem.

1 In 538 BC. Verses 1–3 repeat 2 Chronicles 36:22–23. See Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10; compare Isaiah 44:28.

2 See 2 Chronicles 36:7, 18; compare Daniel 5:2–3.

3 Perhaps the same man as Zerubbabel (2:2; 3:8; compare 5:14–16), or an earlier leader of the return.

4 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; perhaps ‘censers’ or ‘duplicates’.

5 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

6 The items listed in verses 9–10 add up to 2,499; the list may be a selection.

Chapter 2

Ezra 2 lists the people of the province who return from exile with Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the other leaders, each to his own town. It gives the numbers of the lay families, of the people of various towns, of the priests, the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and of the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon’s servants. Some cannot prove that they are Israelites, and some priests, unable to find their records, are excluded from the priesthood until a priest can consult the Urim and Thummim. The whole assembly numbers forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, besides servants and singers, with horses, mules, camels and donkeys. On reaching the house of the LORD, the family heads give freewill offerings for rebuilding it, and all settle in their towns.

1 These are the people of the province who came
up from the captivity of the exiles, whom
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried
away to Babylon. They returned to Jerusalem and
Judah, each to his own town.[1]

2 Their leaders were Zerubbabel, Jeshua,
Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan,
Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. The men of
Israel numbered as follows:

3 descendants of Parosh: two thousand one
hundred and seventy-two;

4 descendants of Shephatiah: three hundred and
seventy-two;

5 descendants of Arah: seven hundred and seventy-
five;

6 descendants of Pahath-moab, through the line of
Jeshua and Joab: two thousand eight hundred and
twelve;

7 descendants of Elam: one thousand two hundred
and fifty-four;

8 descendants of Zattu: nine hundred and forty-
five;

9 descendants of Zaccai: seven hundred and sixty;

10 descendants of Bani: six hundred and forty-two;

11 descendants of Bebai: six hundred and twenty-
three;

12 descendants of Azgad: one thousand two
hundred and twenty-two;

13 descendants of Adonikam: six hundred and sixty-
six;

14 descendants of Bigvai: two thousand and fifty-
six;

15 descendants of Adin: four hundred and fifty-four;

16 descendants of Ater, through Hezekiah: ninety-
eight;

17 descendants of Bezai: three hundred and
twenty-three;

18 descendants of Jorah: a hundred and twelve;

19 descendants of Hashum: two hundred and
twenty-three;

20 descendants of Gibbar: ninety-five;

21 people of Bethlehem: a hundred and twenty-
three;

22 men of Netophah: fifty-six;

23 men of Anathoth: a hundred and twenty-eight;

24 people of Azmaveth: forty-two;

25 people of Kiriath-arim,[2] Chephirah and Beeroth: seven hundred and forty-three;

26 people of Ramah and Geba: six hundred and twenty-one;

27 men of Michmas: a hundred and twenty-two;

28 men of Bethel and Ai: two hundred and twenty-three;

29 people of Nebo: fifty-two;

30 people of Magbish: a hundred and fifty-six;

31 people of the other Elam: one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;

32 people of Harim: three hundred and twenty;

33 people of Lod, Hadid and Ono: seven hundred and twenty-five;

34 people of Jericho: three hundred and forty-five;

35 people of Senaah: three thousand six hundred and thirty.

36 The priests: the line of Jedaiah, from Jeshua's house: nine hundred and seventy-three;

37 descendants of Immer: one thousand and fifty-two;

38 descendants of Pashhur: one thousand two hundred and forty-seven;

39 descendants of Harim: one thousand and seventeen.

40 The Levites: descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, through the line of Hodaviah: seventy-four.

41 The singers: descendants of Asaph: a hundred and twenty-eight.

42 The gatekeepers: descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai: a hundred and thirty-nine in all.

43 The temple servants:[3] descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

44 Keros, Siaha, Padon,

45 Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub,

46 Hagab, Shamlai, Hanan,

47 Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah,

48 Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,

49 Uzza, Paseah, Besai,

50 Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim,

51 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

52 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

53 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

54 Neziah and Hatipha.

55 The descendants of Solomon's servants: descendants of Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda,

56 Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

57 Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim and Ami.

58 All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants came to three hundred and ninety-two.

59 The following came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan and Immer, but they could not prove that their families and their ancestry were Israelite:

60 descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda: six hundred and fifty-two.

61 And from among the priests: descendants of Habaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai, who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and taken that family name.[4]

62 These men searched for their entries in the genealogical records but could not find them, so they were barred from the priesthood as unclean.

63 The governor[5] told them not to eat any of the most holy food until a priest arose who could consult the Urim and Thummim.[6]

64 The whole assembly together came to forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty,[7]

65 besides their male and female servants, who numbered seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. They also had two hundred male and female singers.

66 They had seven hundred and thirty-six horses, two hundred and forty-five mules,

67 four hundred and thirty-five camels and six thousand seven hundred and twenty donkeys.

68 When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the family heads gave freewill offerings for the house of God, to set it up on its site.

69 According to their means they gave to the treasury for the work sixty-one thousand gold darics,[8] five thousand minas[9] of silver and a hundred priestly robes.

70 So the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their towns, and all Israel lived in their towns.

1 The list is repeated with small differences in names and numbers in Nehemiah 7:6–73.
2 Called Kiriath-jearim in Nehemiah 7:29.
3 Hebrew *nethinim*, 'those given'; see 8:20 and 1 Chronicles 9:2.
4 See 2 Samuel 17:27; 19:31–39.
5 Hebrew *tirshatha*, a Persian title; perhaps Zerubbabel or Sheshbazzar. Compare Nehemiah 8:9.
6 Sacred lots used to seek God's judgement; see Exodus 28:30.
7 The figures listed add up to 29,818. The total probably includes groups not listed, perhaps women.
8 About 510 kilograms (1,100 pounds).
9 About 2.9 tonnes.

Chapter 3

Ezra 3 tells how, in the seventh month, the people gather as one in Jerusalem. Jeshua and Zerubbabel build the altar of the God of Israel on its old site, in fear of the surrounding peoples, and offer the morning and evening burnt offerings, keep the Feast of Booths and restore the regular offerings, though the temple's foundation is not yet laid. They pay masons and carpenters and bring cedar from Lebanon, as Cyrus has allowed. In the second year the Levites are appointed to oversee the work. When the builders lay the foundation, the priests with trumpets and the sons of Asaph with cymbals praise the LORD, singing, "For He is good; His loyal kindness towards Israel endures for ever." The people shout for joy, but many old priests, Levites and family heads, who saw the first house, weep aloud, and no one can tell the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping.

1 When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in their towns, the people gathered as one man in Jerusalem.

2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests, with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his kinsmen, set to work on the altar of Israel's God, so that burnt offerings could be made on it as the Law of Moses the man of God prescribes.

3 They set the altar on its old base, for they were in dread of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, morning and evening.

4 They kept the Feast of Booths as prescribed, with the daily burnt offerings in the number laid down for each day.

5 After that they presented the regular burnt offerings, the offerings for the New Moons and for all the LORD's consecrated feasts, and those of everyone who brought a freewill offering to the LORD.

6 Burnt offerings to the LORD resumed from the first day of the seventh month, even though the foundation of the LORD's temple was still to be laid.

7 They gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, to bring cedar logs from Lebanon by sea to Joppa, as Cyrus king of Persia had authorised them.

8 In the second month of the second year after they had come to the house of God at Jerusalem,[1] Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their kinsmen, the priests, the Levites and all who had come back from captivity to Jerusalem, made a start. They appointed the Levites twenty years old and upward to supervise the work on the house of the LORD.

9 Jeshua with his sons and kinsmen, and Kadmiel and his sons, the descendants of Judah,[2] together took charge of the workmen on the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and their sons and kinsmen, the Levites.

10 When the builders had laid the LORD's temple foundation, the robed priests stood ready with trumpets and the Levites, Asaph's sons, with cymbals, to praise the LORD in the way David king of Israel had laid down.

11 They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good; His loyal kindness towards Israel endures for ever." And all the people raised a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the LORD's house had been laid.

12 But many of the older priests, Levites and family heads, who had seen the first house, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this house, while many others shouted for joy.[3]

13 No one could tell the sound of the joyful shouting from the sound of the people's weeping,

for the people were making a great noise, and it could be heard far away.

1 In 536 BC.
2 Probably Hodaviah (2:40), a name close to Judah in Hebrew.
3 Compare Haggai 2:3.

Chapter 4

Ezra 4 tells how the enemies of Judah and Benjamin offer to help build, claiming to have worshipped Israel's God since Esarhaddon brought them there, but Zerubbabel and Jeshua refuse. The people of the land then discourage the builders and hire counsellors against them through the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. The chapter gathers later opposition too: an accusation in the days of Ahasuerus, and in the days of Artaxerxes a letter in Aramaic from Rehum and Shimshai, warning the king that Jerusalem is a rebellious city and that if its walls are finished he will lose his revenue and his province. Artaxerxes has the records searched, finds that the city has a history of revolt, and orders the work stopped. Rehum and Shimshai hurry to Jerusalem and force the Jews to stop. So the work on the house of God comes to a standstill until the second year of Darius.

1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel,

2 they came to Zerubbabel and the family heads with an offer. "Let us join you in building," they said, "for we seek your God just as you do. We have been sacrificing to Him[1] ever since Esarhaddon king of Assyria brought us here."[2]

3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the family heads of Israel replied, "This is not for you and us to do together, building a house for our God. We alone will build for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."

4 Then the people of the land set about weakening the resolve of the people of Judah and frightening them from building.

5 They hired counsellors against them to frustrate their plans, all through the reign of Cyrus king of Persia and up to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6 At the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus[3] they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes,[4] Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of their colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. The letter was written in Aramaic script and translated into Aramaic.

8 Rehum the commander and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, as follows.[5]

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their colleagues, the judges, the envoys, the officials and the people of Persia, Erech, Babylon and Susa, that is, the Elamites,[6]

10 and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar[7] deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and elsewhere in the province Beyond the River.[8]

11 This is a copy of the letter they sent him: "To King Artaxerxes, from your servants, the men of the province Beyond the River.

12 Be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations.

13 Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, they will pay no tribute, duty or toll, and the royal revenue will suffer.

14 Since we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonoured, we have sent to inform the king,

15 so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. There you will find and learn that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that sedition has been stirred up in it from of old. That is why this city was laid waste.

16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will be left with no possessions in the province Beyond the River."

17 The king sent this reply: "To Rehum the commander, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and

elsewhere in the province Beyond the River: Greetings.

18 The letter you sent us has been read out in translation before me.

19 I issued an order, and a search was made, and it was found that this city has from of old risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been stirred up in it.

20 Mighty kings have ruled over Jerusalem, governing the whole province Beyond the River, and tribute, duty and toll were paid to them.

21 Now issue an order to stop these men, so that this city is not rebuilt until I give the order.

22 Take care not to be negligent in this matter. Why should the damage grow, to the hurt of kings?”

23 As soon as the copy of King Artaxerxes’ letter had been read before Rehum, Shimshai the secretary and their colleagues, they hurried to the Jews in Jerusalem and by force of arms made them stop.

24 So the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a halt, and it stayed at a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.[9]

1 So the spoken Hebrew; the written text has ‘we have not been sacrificing’.

2 See 2 Kings 17:24–41.

3 Xerxes, 486–465 BC, the king of the book of Esther. Verses 6–23 go ahead in time to show how opposition continued; the story of the temple resumes at verse 24.

4 Artaxerxes I, 465–424 BC. The dispute in verses 8–23 concerns the city walls, not the temple.

5 From here to 6:18 the original is in Aramaic.

6 The Aramaic list is obscure; these words may be titles or peoples.

7 Probably Ashurbanipal of Assyria, 669–627 BC.

8 The Persian province west of the Euphrates.

9 In 520 BC. This verse takes up the story from verse 5.

Chapter 5

Ezra 5 tells how the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesy to the Jews in the name of the God of Israel, and Zerubbabel and Jeshua begin again to build the house of God. Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai come and ask who authorised the work, but their God is watching over the elders of the Jews, and the work is not stopped while a report goes to Darius. Their letter tells the king how the elders answered: they are servants of the God of heaven and earth, rebuilding the house a great king of Israel once built. Because their fathers angered God, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the house and deported the people. But Cyrus decreed that it should be rebuilt and gave the temple vessels back to Sheshbazzar, who laid its foundations. The letter asks that a search be made in the royal archives to see whether Cyrus issued this decree.

1 Now the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo[1] prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

2 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set to work and began to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

3 At that time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues came to them and asked, “Who authorised you to rebuild this house and complete this structure?”

4 They also asked,[2] “What are the names of the men who are building this?”

5 But their God was watching over the Jewish elders, and the work went on until a report had gone to Darius and his written answer had come back.

6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues, the officials in the province, sent to King Darius.

7 The report they sent him read as follows: “To King Darius: All peace!

8 Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is being laid in the walls. The work is being done

with care and is making good progress under their hands.

9 We questioned those elders and asked them, ‘Who authorised you to rebuild this house and complete this structure?’

10 We also asked their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

11 This was the answer they gave us: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed.

12 But our fathers provoked the God of heaven to anger, so He delivered them to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who demolished this house and carried the people off to Babylon.

13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon,[3] King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

14 King Cyrus also took out of the temple of Babylon the gold and silver vessels of the house of God that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple of Babylon, and they were handed over to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor.

15 He told him, “Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site.”

16 So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been under construction, but it is not yet finished.’

17 Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether King Cyrus really issued a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his decision on this matter.”

1 Compare Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1, where Zechariah is the grandson of Iddo.

2 So the Greek and Syriac; the Aramaic has ‘We also told them’.

3 Cyrus took Babylon in 539 BC and bore this title among his others.

Chapter 6

Ezra 6 tells how Darius has the archives searched, and a scroll is found at Ecbatana in Media recording the decree of Cyrus: the house of God in Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, at royal expense, and its gold and silver vessels returned. Darius orders Tattenai to keep away from the work and to pay the costs from the royal revenue, with daily supplies for the sacrifices, so that the priests may pray for the life of the king and his sons; anyone who alters the edict will be impaled. Tattenai obeys. The elders build and prosper through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, and the house is finished on the third day of Adar in the sixth year of Darius. The people dedicate it with joy, offering a sin offering for all Israel, and set the priests and Levites in their divisions. The exiles keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with joy, for the LORD has turned the king’s heart towards them.

1 Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives where the treasures were stored in Babylon.

2 At Ecbatana,[1] in the fortress of the province of Media, a scroll was found, on which this memorandum was written:

3 “In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the house of God in Jerusalem: Let the house be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height is to be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits,[2]

4 with three courses of huge stones and one course of timber.[3] The cost is to be paid from the royal treasury.

5 Also, the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its place. You are to put them in the house of God.”

6 “Now therefore, Tattenai governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and your colleagues, the officials in the province, keep away from there.

7 Do not interfere with the work on this house of God. The Jews’ governor and their elders are to rebuild it on its site.

8 I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in rebuilding this house of God. Their costs are to be paid in full and without delay

from the royal revenue, from the taxes of the province Beyond the River, so that the work does not stop.

9 Whatever is needed, young bulls, rams and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, must be given to them day by day without fail.

10 Then they can offer sacrifices that please the God of heaven, and pray for the king's life and for his sons.

11 I also decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house, and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it, and his house is to be made a dunghill for this offence.

12 May the God who has made His name dwell there overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to alter this or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree. Let it be carried out in full."

13 Then Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues acted promptly, as King Darius had commanded.

14 So the elders of the Jews went on building and prospering, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished the building by the decree of the God of Israel and by the decree of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes[4] king of Persia.

15 The house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.[5]

16 Then the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

17 For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams and four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

18 They appointed the priests in their groups and the Levites in their divisions for the service of God at Jerusalem, as written in the Book of Moses.[6]

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month the exiles kept the Passover.

20 The priests and the Levites had purified themselves as one man, and all of them were clean. They slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

21 The Israelites who had returned from exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land and joined them to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.

22 For seven days they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful by turning the heart of the king of Assyria[7] towards them, so that he helped them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

1 Aramaic 'Achmetha'; the summer residence of the Persian kings.

2 About 27 metres (90 feet). The length is missing from the text; compare 1 Kings 6:2.

3 So the Greek; the Aramaic has 'new timber'.

4 Artaxerxes helped later (7:15–24); he is named here to complete the list of Persian patrons.

5 March 515 BC.

6 The Aramaic section ends here; the Hebrew resumes at verse 19.

7 That is, the Persian king, ruler of the old Assyrian lands.

Chapter 7

Ezra 7 introduces Ezra, a priest descended from Aaron and a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses, who goes up from Babylon to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, for the good hand of his God is on him. He has set his heart on seeking the Law of the LORD, on doing it and on teaching it in Israel. The chapter gives the king's letter in Aramaic: any Israelite may go with Ezra, who is sent to enquire about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of his God; he is to take silver and gold for offerings, the treasurers Beyond the River must give what he requires, the temple staff are exempt from tax, and Ezra is to appoint judges and teach the law, with strict penalties for those who disobey. Ezra blesses the LORD, who put this in the king's heart and showed him loyal kindness, and he gathers leaders to go up with him.

1 Long after these events, when Artaxerxes was king of Persia,[1] there came a man named Ezra. He

was the son of Seraiah,[2] son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah,

2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth,

4 son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,

5 son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest.

6 This Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king granted him all he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

7 Some of the Israelites, and of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

8 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the king's seventh year.

9 He had fixed the departure from Babylon for the first day of the first month, and he reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the good hand of his God was on him.

10 For Ezra had set his heart on seeking the Law of the LORD, on doing it, and on teaching its statutes and rules in Israel.

11 This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest and scribe, a scholar in matters of the commandments and statutes of the LORD for Israel:

12 "From Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of heaven's God: Peace.[3]

13 I decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, or of their priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem may go with you.

14 You are the envoy of the king and his seven counsellors, sent to look into affairs in Judah and Jerusalem in the light of your God's law, which you carry with you,

15 and to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

16 together with all the silver and gold you may find in the whole province of Babylon, and the freewill offerings of the people and the priests for the house of their God in Jerusalem.

17 With this money you are to be sure to buy bulls, rams and lambs, with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

18 Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, do it, in keeping with the will of your God.

19 As for the vessels entrusted to you for the service of your God's house, hand them all over before the God of Jerusalem.

20 Anything else needed for the house of your God that you have to provide, you may provide from the royal treasury.

21 I, King Artaxerxes, hereby order all the treasurers of the province Beyond the River to supply in full whatever Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of heaven's God, asks of you,

22 up to a hundred talents of silver,[4] a hundred kors of wheat,[5] a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of oil[6] and salt without limit.

23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven must be done with diligence for the house of the God of heaven, so that wrath may not come on the realm of the king and his sons.

24 We also inform you that it is not permitted to impose tribute, duty or toll on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other servants of this house of God.

25 And you, Ezra, by the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, are to appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all who know the laws of your God. Those who do not know them you are to teach.

26 Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be strictly carried out on him, whether death, banishment, confiscation of goods or imprisonment."

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to glorify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem,[7]

28 and who has shown me loyal kindness before the king, his counsellors and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

1 Artaxerxes I, 465–424 BC; so Ezra came in 458 BC, nearly sixty years after the events of chapter 6.

2 ‘Son’ here means descendant; several generations are left out. Compare 1 Chronicles 6:3–15.

3 From here to verse 26 the original is in Aramaic. The word translated ‘Peace’ is uncertain.

4 About 3.4 tonnes.

5 About 22,000 litres (4,800 gallons).

6 About 2,200 litres (480 gallons) each.

7 The Hebrew resumes here, and Ezra himself begins to speak in the first person.

Chapter 8

Ezra 8 lists the family heads who go up with Ezra from Babylon. Ezra gathers them at the Ahava canal and finds no Levites, so he sends to Iddo at Casiphia, and by the good hand of God men are brought for the service of the house, with temple servants. Ezra proclaims a fast to humble themselves before God and ask for a safe journey, for he is ashamed to ask the king for soldiers after saying that God’s hand is on all who seek Him. God answers their prayer. Ezra weighs out the silver, gold and vessels to twelve leading priests, telling them that they and the vessels are holy, and they must guard them until they are weighed in the house of the LORD. They set out, God protects them from enemies on the road, and they reach Jerusalem. On the fourth day the treasure is weighed in the house of God and recorded, the returned exiles offer burnt offerings to the God of Israel, and the king’s orders are delivered to his officials, who support the people and the house of God.

1 These are the family heads, and the genealogical record of those who came up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes:

2 of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom; of the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel; of the descendants of David, Hattush,

3 of the descendants of Shecaniah;[1] of the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him a hundred and fifty men enrolled;

4 of the descendants of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred men;

5 of the descendants of Zattu,[2] Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred men;

6 of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty men;

7 of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy men;

8 of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty men;

9 of Joab’s descendants, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen men;

10 of the descendants of Bani,[3] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and sixty men;

11 of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight men;

12 of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him a hundred and ten men;

13 of the descendants of Adonikam, the last to come, whose names were Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, and with them sixty men;

14 of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them seventy men.

15 I gathered them at the canal that runs to Ahava, and we camped there for three days. When I reviewed the people and the priests, I found no descendants of Levi there.

16 So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were teachers.

17 I sent them to Iddo, the leader at the place called Casiphia, and told them what to say to Iddo and his kinsmen, the temple servants at Casiphia, so that they would bring us ministers for the house of our God.

18 Because the good hand of our God was on us, they brought us a man of discretion from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and kinsmen, eighteen men;

19 and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the descendants of Merari, with his kinsmen and their sons, twenty men;

20 and from the temple servants, whom David and the officials had given to assist the Levites, two hundred and twenty temple servants, all of them listed by name.

21 There at the Ahava canal I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for ourselves, our little ones and all our possessions.

22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers
and horsemen to protect us against enemies on
the road, since we had told the king, “The hand of
our God is on all who seek Him, for their good, but
His power and His anger are against all who
abandon Him.”
23 So we fasted and asked our God about this, and
He answered our prayer.
24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests,
together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of
their kinsmen.
25 I weighed out to them the silver, the gold and
the vessels, the offering for the house of our God
that the king, his counsellors, his officials and all
Israel who were there had given.
26 I weighed out into their hands six hundred and
fifty talents of silver,[4] silver vessels worth a
hundred talents,[5] a hundred talents of gold,[6]
27 twenty gold bowls worth a thousand darics,[7] and
two vessels of fine polished bronze, as precious as
gold.
28 “You are holy to the LORD,” I told them, “and so
are the vessels. This silver and gold are given
freely to the LORD, your ancestors’ God.
29 Watch over them and guard them until you
weigh them out in the chambers of the house of
the LORD in Jerusalem, before the leading priests,
the Levites and the family heads of Israel.”
30 So the priests and the Levites took charge of the
silver, the gold and the vessels that had been
weighed out, to bring them to Jerusalem, to the
house of our God.
31 On the twelfth day of the first month we set out
from the Ahava canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand
of our God was on us, and He rescued us from
enemies and ambushes along the way.
32 We arrived at Jerusalem and rested there for
three days.
33 The next day, the fourth, the silver, gold and
vessels were weighed in our God’s house and
handed to Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, who
had Eleazar son of Phinehas with him, and the
Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of
Binnui.
34 Everything was counted and weighed, and the
total weight was recorded at that time.
35 Then those who had come back from exile
presented burnt offerings to Israel’s God: twelve
bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams and seventy-
seven lambs, with twelve male goats as a sin
offering. All of it was a burnt offering to the LORD.
36 They delivered the king’s orders to the king’s
satraps and to the governors of the province
Beyond the River, who then gave their support to
the people and to the house of God.

1 Compare 1 Chronicles 3:22.
2 ‘Zattu’ is from the Greek; it is missing from the Hebrew.
3 ‘Bani’ is from the Greek; it is missing from the Hebrew.
4 About 22 tonnes.
5 The number of vessels has probably dropped out of the Hebrew.
6 About 3.4 tonnes.
7 About 8.4 kilograms (18 pounds).

Chapter 9

Ezra 9 tells how the leaders report to Ezra that the people, priests and Levites have not kept themselves separate from the peoples of the lands, and that the holy race has mingled with them through marriage, with the officials leading the way. Appalled, Ezra tears his clothes, pulls out hair from his head and beard, and sits stunned until the evening offering, and all who tremble at God’s words gather round him. Then he falls on his knees and prays: he is ashamed to lift his face to God, for their guilt has mounted to the heavens. For a brief moment God has shown favour, leaving a remnant, giving them a secure hold in His holy place and showing them kindness before the kings of Persia. Yet they have abandoned His commandments given through the prophets not to intermarry with the peoples of the land. God has punished them less than they deserve. Shall they break His commandments again? He is righteous, and they stand before Him in their guilt.

1 When these things had been done, the leaders
came to me and said, “The people of Israel, the
priests and the Levites have not kept themselves
separate from the peoples of the lands, with their
detestable practices, from the Canaanites,

Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.[1]

2 For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mingled with the peoples of the lands. And the leaders and officials have been the first in this unfaithfulness."

3 When I heard this, I tore my tunic and my robe, pulled out hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled.

4 Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles, while I sat appalled until the evening offering.

5 At the evening offering I rose from my humiliation, with my tunic and robe torn, and fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God.

6 I said, "My God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift my face to You, my God, for our sins have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

7 From the days of our ancestors until now our guilt has been great. Because of our sins we, our kings and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder and to open shame, as we are today.

8 But now for a brief moment the LORD our God has shown us favour, leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm hold[2] in His holy place, so that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little new life in our slavery.

9 For we are slaves, yet our God has not abandoned us in our slavery. He has shown us loyal kindness before the kings of Persia, granting us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and giving us a wall of protection[3] in Judah and Jerusalem.

10 And now, our God, what can we say after this? For we have abandoned Your commandments,

11 which You gave through Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land you are entering to possess is a land defiled by the impurity of the peoples of the lands, by their detestable practices, with which they have filled it from end to end in their uncleanness.

12 So do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, so that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land, and leave it to your children as an inheritance for ever.'

13 After all that has come on us because of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and seeing that You, our God, have punished us less than our sins deserved and have given us such a remnant as this,

14 shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who do these detestable things? Would You not be angry with us until You destroyed us, leaving no remnant or survivor?

15 LORD, God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant today. Here we are before You in our guilt, though because of this no one can stand before You."

1 Compare Deuteronomy 7:1–4 and 23:3–8.

2 Literally 'a peg', such as a tent peg.

3 Probably a figure of speech for security; the walls of Jerusalem were not yet rebuilt.

Chapter 10

Ezra 10 tells how, as Ezra prays and weeps before the house of God, a great crowd gathers and weeps bitterly. Shecaniah confesses that they have been unfaithful, but says there is still hope: let them make a covenant to send away the foreign wives and their children. Ezra puts the leaders under oath and fasts, mourning over the exiles' unfaithfulness. A proclamation summons all the exiles to Jerusalem within three days on pain of losing their property. They sit trembling in the square in the heavy rain, and Ezra tells them to confess to the LORD and separate themselves. The assembly agrees, but asks for a proper process because of the numbers and the rain, though a few oppose it. Ezra selects family heads, who examine the cases over three months. The chapter closes with the names of the priests, Levites and laymen who had married foreign women.

1 While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a very large assembly of Israelite men, women and children gathered around him, and

the people wept bitterly.

2 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples of the land. Yet even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.

3 So let us covenant with our God to send these wives away, with all their children, as my lord[1] and those who tremble at our God’s commandment advise. Let the Law be followed.

4 Get up, for this matter rests with you, and we are with you. Take courage and act.”

5 So Ezra got up and put the leading priests, the Levites and all Israel under oath to do as had been said, and they took the oath.

6 Then Ezra left the front of the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. He went there[2] but ate no food and drank no water, for he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

7 A proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles were to assemble in Jerusalem.

8 Anyone who failed to come within three days, as the leaders and elders had decided, would forfeit all his property and be cut off from the assembly of the exiles.

9 So within the three days all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem. It was the twentieth day of the ninth month,[3] and all the people sat in the square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain.

10 Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful by marrying foreign women, adding to Israel’s guilt.

11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from your foreign wives.”

12 The whole assembly answered in a loud voice, “You are right; we must do as you say.

13 But there are many people here, and it is the rainy season. We cannot stand out in the open. Nor can this be done in a day or two, for many of us have sinned in this matter.

14 Let our leaders act for the whole assembly. Let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at an appointed time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God over this matter is turned away from us.”

15 Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supported them.[4]

16 So the exiles did as proposed. Ezra the priest selected[5] family heads, one for each family division, all of them by name, and on the first day of the tenth month they sat down to examine the matter.

17 By the first day of the first month they had finished with all the men who had married foreign women.

18 Among the descendants of the priests the following were found to have married foreign women: from the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers, Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah.

19 They pledged themselves to send away their wives, and for their guilt they offered a ram from the flock.

20 From the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.

21 From the descendants of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uzziah.

22 From the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and Elasah.

23 Among the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer.

24 Among the singers: Eliashib. Among the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem and Uri.

25 And among the rest of Israel, from the descendants of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah and Benaiah.

26 From the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah.

27 From the descendants of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza.

28 From the descendants of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai.

29 From the descendants of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Ramoth.

30 From the descendants of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh.

31 From the descendants of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

32 Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah.

33 From the descendants of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei.

34 From the descendants of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel,

35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi,

36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasai,

38 Bani, Binnui, Shimei,

39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,

40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,

42 Shallum, Amariah and Joseph.

43 From the descendants of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah.

44 All these men had taken foreign wives, and some of those wives had borne them children.[6]

1 Or ‘of the Lord’.

2 1 Esdras 9:2 has ‘spent the night there’.

3 December 458 BC, in the rainy season.

4 Or ‘were in charge of this, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai’.

5 So the Syriac and 1 Esdras 9:16; the Hebrew has ‘were selected’.

6 The Hebrew is obscure. 1 Esdras 9:36 has ‘and they sent them away with their children’.