

Ezra Lesson 08

Ezra Chapter 8

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Introduction: Chapter 8 details of the actual expedition to Jerusalem are briefly detailed, to include the companions of Ezra in verses 1-20, Ezra beseeching God's blessing in verses 21-23, The funds appropriated to the priests in verses 24- 30. And Ezra arriving at Jerusalem in verses 31-36.

I. Genealogy of Those Who Returned with Ezra

Ezr 8:1 These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.

Ezr 8:2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush.

Ezr 8:3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty.

Ezr 8:4 Of the sons of Pahathmoab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males.

Ezr 8:5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.

Ezr 8:6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males.

Ezr 8:7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.

Ezr 8:8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males.

Ezr 8:9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.

Ezr 8:10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males.

Ezr 8:11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males.

Ezr 8:12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males.

Ezr 8:13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males.

Ezr 8:14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

Ezra lists the men (and their families) who would make the journey back to Jerusalem with him. Only men are noted, though it is clear entire families were involved from verse 8:21.

Ezr 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

The number of men noted totals 1,496 (not including their families and some presumed servants). The total migration no doubt therefore totaled well over five thousand people.

II. Ezra Sends for the Levites.

Ezr 8:15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.

Ezr 8:16 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.

Ezr 8:17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.

Ezr 8:18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;

Ezr 8:19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;

Ezr 8:20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

The Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name. As the expedition assembled for departure, they met along the river Ahava (somewhere in the region of Babylon). They tarried to get organized for final departure, Ezra discovered that there were no Levites with them. He therefore sent word back to what evidently was a place where many Levites lived (Casiphia) and sought for volunteers to join with them.

As a result, a total of 38 Levites agreed to go. Also two 220 Nethinims (official servants of the Levite and the Temple) volunteered to go. (This was in addition to the numbers mentioned above.)

III. Fasting and Prayer for Protection

Ezr 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

Ezr 8:22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

Ezr 8:23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

Though, God had obviously blessed thus far, Ezra nevertheless urged the expedition to seek God's continual help and protection. He noted that he was ashamed to ask for soldiers to guard them and the large sums of money they were carrying. He had told the king that God would protect them. Notice Ezra's statement, "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." Pause to consider that remains to this day.

The greater principle is how Ezra exercised great faith in trusting the Lord for protection and deliverance. Though fasting is a means of denying oneself of simple physical pleasure such as food for a season, the greater principle is that of faith. In fasting, they "besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us." In other words, God noted their reliance (trust) in Him and helped them.

IV. Priests to Guard Offerings

Ezr 8:24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,

Ezr 8:25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered:

Ezr 8:26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;

Ezr 8:27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

Ezr 8:28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.

Ezr 8:29 Watch ye, and keep them, 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.

Ezr 8:30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

Ezra there took immediate steps to entrust the considerable monies they were carrying to the oversight of the priests and Levites. The sums were enormous. Record is noted of 650 talents of silver, plus 100 talents of silver vessels, plus 100 talents of gold.

Translating that into modern numbers is difficult. However, if a talent is assumed to be approximately 100 pounds American weight (there were several measures of ancient talents ranging from sixty to one hundred-twenty pounds), that would approximate 1,600 ounces of gold per talent. If a conservative figure of \$350 per ounce of gold is assumed, the sum of one talent of gold would exceed a \$500,000. 100 talents of gold would be more than fifty million dollars.

That does not include the 750 talents of silver, nor the 20 basons of gold or the vessels of fine copper (high grade brass) which was as precious as gold. Ezra therefore enjoined the priests and 746 Levites as holy men of God to “watch ye, and keep them” until it all arrives at the Temple at Jerusalem. The priests and Levites therefore counted the funds, recorded it, and accounted of it upon delivery to the Temple.

Ezr 8:31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

Ezr 8:32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

The expedition departed on the twelfth day of the first month (Nisan) which is approximately April and arrived around the first of August (see 7:9).

Ezr 7:9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

Ezra notes again that “the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.” (Highway robbery was common then.) They rested three days upon arriving at Jerusalem.

I like to read quotes from various people when they have wisdom in them. When you look at Ezra, you see some success and some failures. But he looked to the Lord for his protection.

Winston Churchill spoke some truth in his quote. Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

When faced with success we need to consider

Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% of how we react to it. Chuck Swindoll

When our trust is in God, we will have few failures in this life.

Ezr 8:33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;

Ezr 8:34 By number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.

Ezr 8:35 Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD.

Ezr 8:36 And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

The vast sums designated for the Temple were delivered on the fourth day and those arriving in Jerusalem offered sacrifices at the Temple for the first time in their lives. It must have been a time of great rejoicing for all. For the priests, Levites, and other Jews living around Jerusalem, an unbelievable sum had been delivered for the beautification, redecorating, and improvement to their Temple.

For the pilgrims arriving, it must have been a time of great joy in returning to the land God had promised their forefathers. Furthermore, they were able to offer a proper sacrifice to Jehovah God at the Temple in Jerusalem. Finally, the appropriate officials of the Persian empire in the region were notified of the decrees and authorizations which Artaxerxes had made to Ezra and his people.

The word translated as furthered (asn nasaw) as conjugated has the sense of 'lifting' (the load) or easing the way for the Jews. As the decrees from Artaxerxes were presented, the governmental officials did all they could to assist and remove obstacles for the improvements to the Temple.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.