

Opposition to the Remnant During Artaxerxes' Reign (c. 465–458 BC)

Ezra 4:7

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the text of the letter was written in Aramaic and translated *from* Aramaic.

Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem (April 8, 457 BC)

Ezra 7:1–7, 9a, 10–28; 8:1–14

Introduction

7:1a Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,

Ezra's Priestly Lineage

1b *there went up* Ezra son of Seraiah, 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.

6a This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given;

Ezra's Mission

6b and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God *was* upon him.

7 Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

9a For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon;

10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Artaxerxes' Letter of Authorization

11 Now this is the copy of the decree which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel:

12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*. And now

13 I have issued a decree that any of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.

14 Forasmuch as you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand,

15 and to bring the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

16 with all the silver and gold which you find in the whole province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and of the priests, who offered willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem;

17 with this money, therefore, you shall diligently buy bulls, rams and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

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

19 Also the utensils which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.

20 The rest of the needs for the house of your God, for which you may have occasion to provide, provide *for it* from the royal treasury.

21 “I, even I, King Artaxerxes, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are *in the provinces* beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it shall be done diligently,

22 *even up to 100 talents of silver, 100 kors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as needed.*

23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons.

24 We also inform you that it is not allowed to impose tax, tribute or toll *on* any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, Nethinim or servants of this house of God.

25 “You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in *the province* beyond the River, *even* all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant *of them*.

26 Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods or for imprisonment.”

Ezra’s Personal Note of Thanksgiving

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,

28 and has extended lovingkindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king’s mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

List of Family Heads Who Accompanied Ezra

8:1 Now these are the heads of their fathers’ *households* and the genealogical enrollment of those who went up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes:

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

3 of the sons of Shecaniah *who was* of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah and with him 150 males *who were in* the genealogical list;

4 of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah and 200 males with him;

5 of the sons of Zattu, Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel and 300 males with him;

6 and of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan and 50 males with him;

7 and of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah and 70 males with him;

8 and of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael and 80 males with him;

9 of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel and 218 males with him;

10 and of the sons of Bani, Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah and 160 males with him;

11 and of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai and 28 males with him;

12 and of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan and 110 males with him;

13 and of the sons of Adonikam, the last ones, these being their names, Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, and 60 males with them;

14 and of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and 70 males with them.

At the Ahava Canal (April 8–18, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:15–30

Enlistment of Temple Personnel

15 Now I assembled them at the river that runs to Ahava, where we camped for three days; and when I observed the people and the priests, I did not find any Levites there.

16 So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, leading men, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, teachers.

17 I sent them to Iddo the leading man at the place Casiphia; and I told them what to say to Iddo *and* his brothers, the temple servants at the place Casiphia, *that is*, to bring ministers to us for the house of our God.

18 According to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of insight of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers, 18 men;

19 and Hashabiah and Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, with his brothers and their sons, 20 men;

20 and 220 of the temple servants, whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites, all of them designated by name.

Prayer and Fasting

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.

22 For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.”

23 So we fasted and sought our God concerning this *matter*, and He listened to our entreaty.

Treasure Bearers

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers; 25 and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold and the utensils, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes and all Israel present *there* had offered.

26 Thus I weighed into their hands 650 talents of silver, and silver utensils *worth* 100 talents, *and* 100 gold talents,

27 and 20 gold bowls *worth* 1,000 darics, and two utensils of fine shiny bronze, precious as gold.

28 Then I said to them, “You are holy to the LORD, and the utensils are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers.

29 Watch and keep *them* until you weigh *them* before the leading priests, the Levites and the heads of the fathers’ *households* of Israel at Jerusalem, *in* the chambers of the house of the LORD.”

30 So the priests and the Levites accepted the weighed out silver and gold and the utensils, to bring *them* to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

My Help Comes from the LORD (c. 457 BC)

Psalm 121

A Song of Ascents.

- 1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
- 2 My help *comes* from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
- 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand.
- 6 The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

- 7 The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.
- 8 The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.

Journey to Jerusalem (April 19–August 4, 457 BC)

Ezra 7:8–9b; 8:31

- 8:31 Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.
- 7:8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.
- 7:9b and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God *was* upon him.

At Jerusalem (August 4–6, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:32

- 32 Thus we came to Jerusalem and remained there three days.

Delivery of the Temple Vessels (August 7, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:33–36

- 33 On the fourth day the silver and the gold and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *were* the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui.
- 34 Everything *was* numbered and weighed, and all the weight was recorded at that time.
- 35 The exiles who had come from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel, 96 rams, 77 lambs, 12 male goats for a sin offering, all as a burnt offering to the LORD.
- 36 Then they delivered the king's edicts to the king's satraps and to the governors *in the provinces* beyond the River, and they supported the people and the house of God.

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