

## Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Sevens (c. April 538 BC)

### Daniel 9

#### Daniel's Understanding of Jeremiah's Prophecies Concerning the Length of the Captivity

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;  
 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. [[Jer 25:11–12; 29:10](#)]

#### Daniel's Prayer

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:  
 4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;  
 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: [cf. [1 Kgs 8:47](#)]  
 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.  
 7 O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are* near, and *that are* far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.  
 8 O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.  
 9 To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;  
 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.  
 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.  
 12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.  
 13 As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.  
 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.  
 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.  
 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us.  
 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.  
 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.  
 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

#### Gabriel Comes in Answer to Daniel's Prayer

20 And whiles I *was* speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;  
 21 Yea, whiles I *was* speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.  
 22 And he informed *me*, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.  
 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew *thee*; for thou *art* greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.  
 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.  
 25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.  
 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. [[Matt 24:15](#); [Mark 13:14](#)]

### Cyrus' [Persia] Proclamation—the End of the Exile (c. May 538 BC)

2 Chronicles 36:20b–23

20b where they [the Jewish exiles] were servants to him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:  
 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.  
 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD *spoken* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,  
 23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all his people? The LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up.

Ezra 1:1–4

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,  
 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.  
 3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God *be* with him, 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,) which *is* in Jerusalem.  
 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem.

### The Remnant Prepare to Return to Jerusalem (c. May–December 538 BC)

Ezra 1:5–11

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem.  
 6 And all they that *were* about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all *that* was willingly offered.  
 7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;  
 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.  
 9 And this *is* the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,  
 10 Thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second *sort* four hundred and ten, *and* other vessels a thousand.  
 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did Sheshbazzar bring up with *them* of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

### The Return of the Exiles Under Zerubbabel – Part 1 (Spring 537 BC)

Ezra 2:1–35

#### Leadership

1 Now these *are* the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;

Nehemiah 7:5b–38

5b And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,  
 6 These *are* the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;

2a Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

### General Population

2b The number of the men of the people of Israel:  
 3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.  
 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.  
 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.  
 6 The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.  
 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.  
 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five.  
 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.  
 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two.  
 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three.  
 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two.  
 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six.  
 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six.  
 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four.  
 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.  
 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three.  
 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve.  
 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three.  
 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five.  
 21 The children of Bethlehem, an hundred twenty and three.  
 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six.  
 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.  
 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two.  
 25 The children of Kirjatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three.  
 26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.  
 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two.  
 28 The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three.  
 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two.  
 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six.  
 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.  
 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.  
 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five.  
 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.  
 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

7a Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

7b The number, *I say*, of the men of the people of Israel *was this*;  
 8 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.  
 9 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.  
 10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.  
 11 The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand and eight hundred *and* eighteen.  
 12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.  
 13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five.  
 14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.  
 15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight.  
 16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight.  
 17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two.  
 18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven.  
 19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven.  
 20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five.  
 21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.  
 22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight.  
 23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four.  
 24 The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve.  
 25 The children of Gibeon, ninety and five.  
 26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.  
 27 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.  
 28 The men of Bethazmaveth, forty and two.  
 29 The men of Kirjathjearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three.  
 30 The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one.  
 31 The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two.  
 32 The men of Bethel and Ai, an hundred twenty and three.  
 33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two.  
 34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.  
 35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.  
 37 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one.  
 36 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.  
 38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

## Chronological Notes

### 1) Ezra's Calendar.

- A) I am currently of the opinion that Ezra used a Tishri-to-Tishri (Fall-to-Fall) calendar.<sup>1</sup> This is primarily due to the fact that Ezra and Nehemiah are closely connected and Nehemiah used a Tishri-to-Tishri calendar (cf. Neh 1:1; 2:1). I am not alone in this opinion—many other scholars have argued for this position: Hoehner, Thiele, Horn, Keil, Yamauchi, Getz, Fensham, Loken, Laney, Shea, Young and Hardy (note that several of these scholars are Seventh-Day Adventists, and so have a special interest in the chronology of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel). Steinmann, however, is of the opinion that Ezra used a Nisan-to-Nisan (Spring-to-Spring) calendar (so also Williamson, Clines and McFall). Thus I will be diverging from Steinmann's dates for the chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah (usually only by a single year).

### 2) The Date of the First Return.<sup>2</sup>

- A) The book of Ezra contains numerous chronological references. It begins with Ezra 1:1's reference to Cyrus' first year as king of Babylon (538/537 BC) and ends with Ezra 10:17's reference to the first day of the first month of what is apparently Artaxerxes' eighth year (March 27, 457 BC). Between these two verses are sixteen other references to specific years, months, or days (3:1, 6, 8; 4:24; 5:13, 6:3, 15, 19; 7:7, 8, 9 (twice); 8:31, 33; 10:9, 16).
- B) Despite this wealth of chronological data, the date of the first major event in the book following Cyrus' decree—the return of exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel—is not recorded. The closest the writer comes to dating this event is Ezra 3:8 which implies that the events of Ezra 2:1–3:7 took place in the first year “after their arrival at the house of God, at Jerusalem” (Ezra 3:8). But that does not answer the question of when the exiles first returned to Jerusalem. It must have happened sometime after Cyrus' decree in 538 BC in his first year and sometime before the end of his reign in 530 BC, since Ezra 4:5 indicates that the effort to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem was stalled during the reign of Cyrus.
- C) The return probably occurred earlier in Cyrus' reign rather than late in his reign, since after the return, the work on the temple began but then was stopped for “all the [rest of the] days of King Cyrus of Persia” (Ezra 4:5), and that phrase seems ill-suited if the return to Jerusalem (and subsequently the start of the work on the temple) had only taken place during the last year or two of his reign.
- D) Steinmann argues (based on the postexilic cycle of Sabbatical Years, pp. 37–39) that the first return occurred in 533 BC, some five years after Cyrus' decree in 538 BC permitting the return. He defends this view by listing several reasons why it is “not at all unreasonable” (cf. pp. 38–39). However, the current majority view is that the return occurred very early in Cyrus' reign, that is, in 538/537.
- E) At this time, I have decided to go with the current majority view and date the first return to the Spring of 537 BC. I may revisit this decision at some time in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> For a defense of this position see the following: Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2006), Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, “The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 13 (Jan 1954): 1–20, and Frank W. Hardy, “The Context for Ezra's Use of a Fall-to-Fall Calendar,” *Historicism* No. 8 (Oct 86): 2–65.

<sup>2</sup> See Andrew E. Steinmann, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Concordia Commentary (Concordia Publishing House, 2010): 29–39 and “A Chronological Note: The Return of the Exiles under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel (Ezra 1–2),” *JETS* 51 (2008): 513–22.