

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, from *the* offspring of *the* Medes, who became king over *the* kingdom of *the* Chaldeans—

2 in *the* first year of his kingship I, Daniel, observed in the scrolls the number of the years that it was *that were* to be fulfilled according to *the* word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet for the devastation of Jerusalem—seventy years. [[Jer 25:11–12; 29:10](#)]

Daniel's Prayer

3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God to seek *him* by prayer and pleas for mercy, in fasting and *in* sackcloth and ashes.

4 And I prayed to Yahweh my God, and I made confession and I said, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and loyal love with *those who* love him and with *those who* keep his commandments,

5 we have sinned and we have done wrong and we acted wickedly and we rebelled and *have been* turning aside from your commandments and from your ordinances. [cf. [1 Kgs 8:47](#)]

6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors and to all the people of the land.

7 “Righteousness belongs to you, O Lord, and on us *is* open shame, *just as it is* this day to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far off in all the lands *to* which you have driven them, because of their infidelity which they displayed against you.

8 Yahweh, on us *is* open shame, on our kings, on our princes, and on our ancestors, because we have sinned against you.

9 Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord, our God, for we have rebelled against him,

10 and we have not listened to the voice of Yahweh our God, by following his law which he placed before us by *the* hand of his servants the prophets.

11 “And all Israel transgressed your law and turned aside *so as* not to listen to your voice, and *so* the curse and the oath which *was* written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, has been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

12 And *so* he *has* carried out his words which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring upon us *a* great calamity which *was* not done under all *of* heaven as it was done in Jerusalem.

13 Just as *it is* written in the law of Moses, all of this calamity has come upon us, and we have not implored the face of Yahweh our God *so as* to turn from our iniquities and to attend closely to your faithfulness.

14 So Yahweh *has* kept watch over the calamity, and *now* he *has* brought it upon us. Indeed, Yahweh our God *is* righteous concerning all his works that he has done, but we have not listened to his voice.

15 “And now, Lord our God, who have brought your people out from *the* land of Egypt with a strong hand, and you *have* made for yourself a name *until* this day—we have sinned, we have acted wickedly.

16 Lord, according to all your righteousness, please let your anger and your rage turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain, because through our sins and through the iniquities of our ancestors Jerusalem and your people have become an object of mockery among all of our neighbors.

17 “And now, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy. Shine your face upon your desolate sanctuary for your sake, O Lord.

18 Incline your ear, my God, and listen; open your eyes and look at our desolation and the city that is called *by* your name, for we *are* not presenting our pleas for mercy before you because of our righteousness, but *rather* because of your great compassion.

19 Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, pay heed and act! You must not delay for your sake, my God; because your city and your people are called by your name.”

Gabriel Comes in Answer to Daniel's Prayer

20 Now I *was* still speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before Yahweh my God, on behalf of the holy mountain of my God.

21 And I *was* still speaking in prayer, and the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, in my weariness touched me at *the* time of *the* evening offering.

22 And he instructed *me* and he spoke with me and he said, “Daniel I have now come out to teach you understanding.

23 At the beginning of your pleas for mercy, a word went out, and *now* I have come to declare *it*, for you *are* highly esteemed, and *so* consider the word and understand the vision.

24 “Seventy weeks is decreed for your people and for your holy city, to put an end to the transgression and to seal *up* sin and to make atonement for guilt and to bring *in* everlasting righteousness and to seal vision and prophet and to anoint the most holy place.

25 And you must know and you must understand *that* from *the* time of the going out of *the* word to restore and build Jerusalem until *an* anointed *one*—*a* leader—*will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be restored and will be built *with* streets and *a* moat, but in a time of oppression.

26 “And after the sixty and two weeks an anointed one shall be cut off, and he shall have nothing, and *the* people of the coming leader will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and its end *will be* with the flood and *on to the end there shall be* war; *these*

desolations are determined.

27 And he will make a strong covenant with the many *for* one week, but *in* half of the week he will let cease sacrifice and offering and in its place a desolating abomination *comes* even until the determined complete destruction is poured out on *the* desolator.” [Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14]

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

2 Chronicles 36:20b–23

20b And they [*the Jewish exiles*] became servants to him [*Nebuchadnezzar*] and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia,
 21 to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land has enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of desolation it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.
 22 And in the first year of Cyrus, the king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also in writing, saying:
 23 “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: ‘Yahweh the God of heaven has given to me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has appointed me to build a house for him at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.
 Whoever *is* among you from all his people, may Yahweh his God go up with him.’”

Ezra 1:1–4

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to accomplish the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia and he sent a message to all of his kingdom and also *put the message* in writing:
 2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: Yahweh, the God of the heavens, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. And he himself has appointed me to build a house for him in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.
 3 Whoever among you *who is* from all of his people, may his God be with him and may he go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and may he build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel. He *is* the God who *is* in Jerusalem.
 4 And let every survivor, from wherever he resides be assisted by the men of that place with silver and gold, with possessions and domestic animals, and with the freewill offering for the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem.”

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

Ezra 1:5–11

5 So the heads of the families for Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites—to all whose spirit God had stirred—*prepared* to go up and build the house of Yahweh which *is* in Jerusalem.
 6 And all of their neighbors helped them with objects of silver, gold, possessions, domestic animals, and with valuable gifts—besides all of *the* freewill offering.
 7 And Cyrus the king brought out the objects of the house of Yahweh that Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.
 8 Cyrus the king of Persia let them go out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.
 9 Now these were the inventories: thirty gold metal dishes, one thousand silver metal dishes, twenty-nine vessels,
 10 thirty bowls of gold, four hundred and ten matching silver metal bowls, and one thousand other objects.
 11 All of the objects of gold and silver metal *were* five thousand four hundred. All this Sheshbazzar brought up along with the exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

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

Ezra 2:1–35

Leadership

1 Now these were the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exile whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to

Nehemiah 7:5b–38

5b I found the book of the genealogy of those who first came back, and I found *this* written upon it:
 6 These are the people of the province who came up from captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to

Jerusalem and Judah, each to his *own* city.

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

General Population

2b The number of the men of the people of Israel:

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

4 the descendants of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two;

5 the descendants of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five;

6 the descendants of Pahath-moab, *particularly* the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve;

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

8 the descendants of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five;

9 the descendants of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty;

10 the descendants of Bani, six hundred and forty-two;

11 the descendants of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three;

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

13 the descendants of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six;

14 the descendants of Bigvai, two thousand fifty-six;

15 the descendants of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four;

16 the descendants of Ater, *particularly* of Hezekiah, ninety-eight;

17 the descendants of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three;

18 the descendants of Jorah, one hundred and twelve;

19 the descendants of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three;

20 the descendants of Gibbar, ninety-five;

21 the people of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three;

22 the men of Netophah, fifty-six;

23 the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight;

24 the people of Azmaveth, forty-two;

25 the people of Kiriath Arim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three;

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

27 the men of Micmash, one hundred and twenty-two;

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

29 the people of Nebo, fifty-two;

30 the people of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six;

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

32 the people of Harim, three hundred and twenty;

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

34 the people of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five;

35 the people of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

Jerusalem and to Judah, each one to his city.

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

7b The number of the men of the people of Israel:

8 the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two.

9 The descendants of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two.

10 The descendants of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two.

11 The descendants of Pahath-Moab, of the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen.

12 The descendants of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four.

13 The descendants of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five.

14 The descendants of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty.

15 The descendants of Binnui, six hundred and forty-eight.

16 The descendants of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight.

17 The descendants of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two.

18 The descendants of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven.

19 The descendants of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven.

20 The descendants of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five.

21 The descendants of Ater, *namely* of Hezekiah, ninety-eight.

23 The descendants of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four.

24 The descendants of Hariph, one hundred and twelve.

22 The descendants of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight.

25 The descendants of Gibeon, ninety-five.

26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight.

27 The men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight.

28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty-two.

29 The men of Kiriath-Jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three.

30 The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one.

31 The men of Micmash, one hundred and twenty-two.

32 The men of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and twenty-three.

33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty-two.

34 The people of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four.

35 The people of Harim, three hundred and twenty.

37 The people of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one.

36 The people of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five.

38 The people 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.¹ 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.²

- 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.

¹ 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.

² 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.