

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 their colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. 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 After these things *during* the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia,

Ezra's Priestly Lineage

1b Ezra the 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 Zerariah, 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 Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which Yahweh the God of Israel gave.

Ezra's Mission

6b The king granted him all his requests, for the hand of Yahweh was upon him.

7 Some of the Israelites, some priests and 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 day of the first month he began the journey from Babylonia;

10 For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Yahweh, to do *it*, and to teach the regulations and judgments in Israel.

Artaxerxes' Letter of Authorization

11 This is the copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the scroll of the words of the commands of Yahweh and his statutes for Israel:

12 "Artaxerxes, the king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of the heavens. Peace. And now

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

14 For you are sent from the king and his seven counselors to enquire about Judah and Jerusalem concerning the law of your God, which is in your hand.

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

16 and all of the silver and gold that you will find in the whole province of Babylonia, with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests giving willingly for the house of their God in Jerusalem.

17 With this money, then, with diligence you must buy young bulls, young rams, lambs, and their offerings and libations. You must offer them on the altar that is in the house of your God in Jerusalem.

18 You may do whatever seems best to you and your brothers to do with the remainder of the silver and gold according to the desire of your God.

19 And the vessels that were given to you for the service of the house of your God you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem.

20 And the remainder of the needs for the house of your God that falls to you to provide, you may provide from the house of the king's treasury."

21 "I, even I, King Artaxerxes, issue forth a decree to all the treasurers who are in *the province* Beyond the River. Whatever the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, may ask of you, let it be done with diligence,

22 up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and unlimited salt.

23 All that is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with diligence for the house of the God of heaven, otherwise wrath will come on the kingdom of the king and his sons.

24 You also should be aware that it is not permitted to place tax, tribute, or duty upon all of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, and other servants of the house of God.

25 "You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who can judge all of the people *in the province* Beyond the River who know the laws of your God. And you will teach those who do not know.

26 All who do not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed on him with diligence, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods and for imprisonment."

Ezra's Personal Note of Thanksgiving

27 Blessed be Yahweh the God of our ancestors, who put this in the heart of the king to glorify the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem and who extended to me loyal love before the king and his counselors, and before all of the mighty officials of the king. I took courage, for the hand of Yahweh my God was upon me, and I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

List of Family Heads Who Accompanied Ezra

8:1 These were the heads of their families and the register of those returnees from Babylonia who *came up* with me in the reign of King Artaxerxes:

2 From the descendants of Phinehas: Gershom. From the descendants of Ithamar: Daniel. From the descendants of David: Hattush.

3 From the descendants of Shecaniah, from the descendants of Parosh: Zechariah and with him one hundred and fifty registered males.

4 From the descendants of Pahath-Moab: Eliehoenai son of Zerariah and with him two hundred males.

5 From the descendants of *Zattu*: Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.

6 From the descendants of Adin: Ebed son of Jehonathan, and with him fifty males.

7 From the descendants of Elam: Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.

8 From the descendants of Shephatiah: Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males.

9 From the descendants of Joab: Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.

10 From the descendants of *Bani*: Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred and sixty males.

11 From the descendants of Bebai: Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males.

12 From the descendants of Azgad: Jehohanan son of Haqqatan, and with him one hundred and ten males.

13 From the descendants of Adonikam, those who came last, these were their names: Eliphelet, Jeiel, Shemaiah, and with them sixty males.

14 From the descendants of Bigvai: Uthai son of Zabud, and with him seventy males.

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

Ezra 8:15–30

Enlistment of Temple Personnel

15 I gathered them by the river that goes to Ahava and we camped there for three days. And I looked at the people and the priests, I found no one there from the sons of Levi.

16 And I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were family heads, and for Jehoiarib and Elnathan who were wise.

17 I sent them to Iddo, the head of the place called Casiphia, and I placed in their mouths what words to say to Iddo and his brothers the temple servants in Casiphia, to send to us ministers for the house of our God.

18 With the good hand of our God before us, they brought us a man of understanding from the sons of Mahli, son of Levi, son of Israel—Sherebiah and his sons and brothers, eighteen *in total*.

19 Also Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiiah, the sons of Merari, with his brothers and their sons, twenty *in total*.

20 And from the temple servants, whom David and *his* officials had set up to serve the Levites, two hundred and twenty *in total*. All of them were registered by name.

Prayer and Fasting

21 I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava to humble ourselves before our God in order to seek from him a safe journey for us, our children, and our possessions.

22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for troops and horses to protect us from enemies on the way because we said to the king, “the hand of our God is favorable to all who seek him, but his strength and anger are against all who forsake them.”

23 So we fasted and sought our God for this and he responded to our prayer.

Treasure Bearers

24 I set apart twelve of the official priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers with them.

25 Then I weighed out to them silver and gold and the vessels, the offering of the house of our God that the king, his counselors, his commanders, and all of Israel who was present offered.

26 I weighed out into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, one hundred vessels of silver, one hundred talents of gold,

27 twenty gold bowls worth one thousand darics, and two vessels of good polished bronze as precious as gold.

28 And I said to them, “You are holy to Yahweh and the vessels are holy. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to Yahweh, God of your ancestors.

29 Guard and look after *them* until you weigh *them* before the chief priests, the Levites, and the heads of the families of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chamber of the house of Yahweh.”

30 So the priests and Levites took over the weighed silver, gold, and the vessels to bring to Jerusalem for the house of our God.

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

Ezra 8:31; 7:8, 9b

8:31 On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the river of Ahava to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushing on the way.

7:8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

9b and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God *was* on him.

At Jerusalem (August 4–6, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:32

32 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, gold, and vessels were weighed in the house of our God into the hand of priest Meremoth, the son of Uriah, and with him Eleazar son of Phinehas. With them were the Levites, Jehozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui.

34 The amount and weight of all the weighed *items* was recorded at that time.

35 The exiles that returned from captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel; twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve goats as a sin offering. All was a burnt offering to Yahweh.

36 They delivered the customs of the king to the king's satraps and to the governor of *the province* Beyond the River. And they supported the people of the house of God.

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