

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 Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—
 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed* as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years. [[Jer 25:11–12; 29:10](#)]

Daniel's Prayer

3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him* by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. [cf. [1 Kgs 8:47](#)]

6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

7 “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

9 To the Lord our God *belong* compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done *anything* like what was done to Jerusalem.

13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.

14 Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

15 “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked.

16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *have become* a reproach to all those around us.

17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

Gabriel Comes in Answer to Daniel's Prayer

20 Now while 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 in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in *my* extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

22 He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you*, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*.

25 So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is

decreed, is poured out on the one who makes 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 and they [the Jewish exiles] were servants to him [Nebuchadnezzar] and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia,
 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.
 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,
 23 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may 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, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying:
 2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
 3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.
 4 Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a 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 Then the heads of fathers’ *households* of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.
 6 All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering.
 7 Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods;
 8 and Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.
 9 Now this *was* their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates;
 10 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second *kind* and 1,000 other articles.
 11 All the articles of gold and silver *numbered* 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

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

Ezra 2:1–35

Leadership

1 Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city.
 2a These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai,

Nehemiah 7:5b–38

5b Then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first in which I found the following record:
 6 These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city,
 7a who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai,

Rehum <i>and</i> Baanah.	Nehum, Baanah.
General Population	
2b The number of the men of the people of Israel:	7b The number of men of the people of Israel:
3 the sons of Parosh, 2,172;	8 the sons of Parosh, 2,172;
4 the sons of Shephatiah, 372;	9 the sons of Shephatiah, 372;
5 the sons of Arah, 775;	10 the sons of Arah, 652;
6 the sons of Pahath-moab	11 the sons of Pahath-moab
of the sons of Jeshua <i>and</i> Joab, 2,812;	of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818;
7 the sons of Elam, 1,254;	12 the sons of Elam, 1,254;
8 the sons of Zattu, 945;	13 the sons of Zattu, 845;
9 the sons of Zaccai, 760;	14 the sons of Zaccai, 760;
10 the sons of Bani, 642;	15 the sons of Binnui, 648;
11 the sons of Bebai, 623;	16 the sons of Bebai, 628;
12 the sons of Azgad, 1,222;	17 the sons of Azgad, 2,322;
13 the sons of Adonikam, 666;	18 the sons of Adonikam, 667;
14 the sons of Bigvai, 2,056;	19 the sons of Bigvai, 2,067;
15 the sons of Adin, 454;	20 the sons of Adin, 655;
16 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, 98;	21 the sons of Ater, of Hezekiah, 98;
17 the sons of Bezai, 323;	23 the sons of Bezai, 324;
18 the sons of Jorah, 112;	24 the sons of Hariph, 112;
19 the sons of Hashum, 223;	22 the sons of Hashum, 328;
20 the sons of Gibbar, 95;	25 the sons of Gibeon, 95;
21 the men of Bethlehem, 123;	26 the men of Bethlehem
22 the men of Netophah, 56;	and Netophah, 188;
23 the men of Anathoth, 128;	27 the men of Anathoth, 128;
24 the sons of Azmaveth, 42;	28 the men of Beth-azmaveth, 42;
25 the sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743;	29 the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743;
26 the sons of Ramah and Geba, 621;	30 the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;
27 the men of Michmas, 122;	31 the men of Michmas, 122;
28 the men of Bethel and Ai, 223;	32 the men of Bethel and Ai, 123;
29 the sons of Nebo, 52;	33 the men of the other Nebo, 52;
30 the sons of Magbish, 156;	
31 the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;	34 the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;
32 the sons of Harim, 320;	35 the sons of Harim, 320;
33 the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 725;	37 the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 721;
34 the men of Jericho, 345;	36 the men of Jericho, 345;
35 the sons of Senaah, 3,630.	38 the sons of Senaah, 3,930.

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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-

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.

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.

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* 51.3 (2008): 513–22.