

## 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 son of Ahasuerus, who was of Median descent and who had been appointed king over the Babylonian empire—

2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, came to understand from the sacred books that, according to the word of the LORD disclosed to the prophet Jeremiah, the years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem were seventy in number. [[Jer 25:11–12; 29:10](#)]

#### Daniel's Prayer

3 So I turned my attention to the Lord God to implore him by prayer and requests, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

4 I prayed to the LORD my God, confessing in this way: "O Lord, great and awesome God who is faithful to his covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments,

5 we have sinned! We have done what is wrong and wicked; we have rebelled by turning away from your commandments and standards. [cf. [1 Kgs 8:47](#)]

6 We have not paid attention to your servants the prophets, who spoke by your authority to our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors, and to all the inhabitants of the land as well.

7 "You are righteous, O Lord, but we are humiliated this day—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far away in all the countries in which you have scattered them, because they have behaved unfaithfully toward you.

8 O LORD, we have been humiliated—our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors—because we have sinned against you.

9 Yet the Lord our God is compassionate and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

10 We have not obeyed the LORD our God by living according to his laws that he set before us through his servants the prophets.

11 "All Israel has broken your law and turned away by not obeying you. Therefore you have poured out on us the judgment solemnly threatened in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against you.

12 He has carried out his threats against us and our rulers who were over us by bringing great calamity on us—what has happened to Jerusalem has never been equaled under all heaven!

13 Just as it is written in the law of Moses, so all this calamity has come on us. Still we have not tried to pacify the LORD our God by turning back from our sin and by seeking wisdom from your reliable moral standards.

14 The LORD was mindful of the calamity, and he brought it on us. For the LORD our God is just in all he has done, and we have not obeyed him.

15 "Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with great power and made a name for yourself that is remembered to this day—we have sinned and behaved wickedly.

16 O Lord, according to all your justice, please turn your raging anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. For due to our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people are mocked by all our neighbors.

17 "So now, our God, accept the prayer and requests of your servant, and show favor to your devastated sanctuary for your own sake.

18 Listen attentively, my God, and hear! Open your eyes and look on our desolated ruins and the city called by your name. For it is not because of our own righteous deeds that we are praying to you, but because your compassion is abundant.

19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, pay attention, and act! Don't delay, for your own sake, O my God! For your city and your people are called by your name."

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

20 While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the LORD my God concerning his holy mountain—

21 yes, while I was still praying, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness, around the time of the evening offering.

22 He spoke with me, instructing me as follows: "Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you.

23 At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God's sight. Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:

24 "Seventy weeks have been determined concerning your people and your holy city to put an end to rebellion, to bring sin to completion, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to seal up the prophetic vision, and to anoint a most holy place.

25 So know and understand:

From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince arrives, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will again be built, with plaza and moat, but in distressful times.

- 26 Now after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one will be cut off and have nothing. As for the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince will destroy them. But his end will come speedily like a flood. Until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction.
- 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of that week he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt. On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys.” [\[Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14\]](#)

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

2 Chronicles 36:20b–23

Ezra 1:1–4

20b They [*the Jewish exiles*] served him [*Nebuchadnezzar*] and his sons until the Persian kingdom rose to power.

21 This took place to fulfill the LORD's message delivered through Jeremiah. The land experienced its sabbatical years; it remained desolate for seventy years, as prophesied.

22 In the first year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the promise he delivered through Jeremiah, the LORD moved King Cyrus of Persia to issue a written decree throughout his kingdom.

23 It read:  
 “This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: ‘The LORD God of the heavens has given to me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build for him a temple in Jerusalem in Judah.  
 May the LORD your God energize you who belong to his people, so you may be able to go back there!’”

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order to fulfill the LORD's message spoken through Jeremiah, the LORD stirred the mind of King Cyrus of Persia. He disseminated a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom, announcing in a written edict the following:  
 2 “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: “The LORD God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has instructed me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.  
 3 Anyone from his people among you (may his God be with him!) may go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and may build the temple of the LORD God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.  
 4 Anyone who survives in any of those places where he is a resident foreigner must be helped by his neighbors with silver, gold, equipment, and animals, along with voluntary offerings for the temple 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 leaders of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priests and the Levites—all those whose mind God had stirred—got ready to go up in order to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem.

6 All their neighbors assisted them with silver utensils, gold, equipment, animals, and expensive gifts, not to mention all the voluntary offerings.

7 Then King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the LORD's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem and had displayed in the temple of his gods.

8 King Cyrus of Persia entrusted them to Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the leader of the Judahite exiles.

9 The inventory of these items was as follows:

30 gold basins,

1,000 silver basins,  
29 silver utensils,  
10 30 gold bowls,  
410 other silver bowls,  
and 1,000 other vessels.

11 All these gold and silver vessels totaled 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all along when the captives were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

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

Ezra 2:1–35

Nehemiah 7:5b–38

#### Leadership

1 These are the people of the province who were going up, from the captives of the exile whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had forced into exile in Babylon. 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 Israelites was as follows:

3 the descendants of Parosh: 2,172;

4 the descendants of Shephatiah: 372;

5 the descendants of Arah: 775;

6 the descendants of Pahath-Moab

(from the line of Jeshua and Joab): 2,812;

7 the descendants of Elam: 1,254;

8 the descendants of Zattu: 945;

9 the descendants of Zaccai: 760;

10 the descendants of Bani: 642;

11 the descendants of Bebai: 623;

12 the descendants of Azgad: 1,222;

13 the descendants of Adonikam: 666;

14 the descendants of Bigvai: 2,056;

15 the descendants of Adin: 454;

16 the descendants of Ater (through Hezekiah): 98;

17 the descendants of Bezai: 323;

18 the descendants of Jorah: 112;

19 the descendants of Hashum: 223;

20 the descendants of Gibbar: 95.

21 The men of Bethlehem: 123;

22 the men of Netophah: 56;

23 the men of Anathoth: 128;

24 the men of the family of Azmaveth: 42;

25 the men of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth: 743;

26 the men of Ramah and Geba: 621;

27 the men of Micmash: 122;

28 the men of Bethel and Ai: 223;

29 the descendants of Nebo: 52;

30 the descendants of Magbish: 156;

31 the descendants of the other Elam: 1,254;

32 the descendants of Harim: 320;

33 the men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono: 725;

34 the men of Jericho: 345;

5b I found the genealogical records of those who had formerly returned. Here is what I found written in that record:

6 These are the people of the province who returned from the captivity of the exiles, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had forced into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, each to his own city.

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

7b The number of Israelite men was as follows:

8 the descendants of Parosh, 2,172;

9 the descendants of Shephatiah, 372;

10 the descendants of Arah, 652;

11 the descendants of Pahath-Moab

(from the line of Jeshua and Joab), 2,812;

12 the descendants of Elam, 1,254;

13 the descendants of Zattu, 845;

14 the descendants of Zaccai, 760;

15 the descendants of Binnui, 648;

16 the descendants of Bebai, 628;

17 the descendants of Azgad, 2,322;

18 the descendants of Adonikam, 667;

19 the descendants of Bigvai, 2,067;

20 the descendants of Adin, 655;

21 the descendants of Ater (through Hezekiah), 98;

23 the descendants of Bezai, 324;

24 the descendants of Harif, 112;

22 the descendants of Hashum, 328;

25 the descendants of Gibeon, 95;

26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188;

27 the men of Anathoth, 128;

28 the men of the family of Azmaveth, 42;

29 the men of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743;

30 the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;

31 the men of Micmash, 122;

32 the men of Bethel and Ai, 123;

33 the men of the other Nebo, 52;

34 the descendants of the other Elam, 1,254;

35 the descendants of Harim, 320;

37 the descendants of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721;

36 the descendants of Jericho, 345;

35 the descendants of Senaah: 3,630.

38 the descendants 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.<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.

<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.