

Opposition to the Remnant During Artaxerxes' Reign (c. 465–458 BC)

Ezra 4:7

7 And during the reign of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their colleagues wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia. This letter was first written in Aramaic but then translated.

Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem (April 8, 457 BC)

Ezra 7:1–7, 9a, 10–28; 8:1–14

Introduction

7:1a Now after these things had happened, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra came up from Babylon.

Ezra's Priestly Lineage

1b Ezra was the son of Seraiah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Hilkiah,

2 who was the son of Shallum, who was the son of Zadok, who was the son of Ahitub,

3 who was the son of Amariah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Meraioth,

4 who was the son of Zerariah, who was the son of Uzzi, who was the son of Bukki,

5 who was the son of Abishua, who was the son of Phinehas, who was the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron the chief priest.

6a This Ezra is the one who came up from Babylon. He was a scribe who was skilled in the law of Moses which the LORD God of Israel had given.

Ezra's Mission

6b The king supplied him with everything he requested, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

7 In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, Ezra brought up to Jerusalem some of the Israelites and some of the priests, the Levites, the attendants, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants.

9a On the first day of the first month he had determined to make the ascent from Babylon,

10 Now Ezra had dedicated himself to the study of the law of the LORD, to its observance, and to teaching its statutes and judgments in Israel.

Artaxerxes' Letter of Authorization

11 What follows is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priestly scribe. Ezra was a scribe in matters pertaining to the commandments of the LORD and his statutes over Israel:

12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, a scribe of the perfect law of the God of heaven:

13 I have now issued a decree that anyone in my kingdom from the people of Israel—even the priests and Levites—who wishes to do so may go up with you to Jerusalem.

14 You are authorized by the king and his seven advisers to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of your God which is in your possession,

15 and to bring silver and gold which the king and his advisers have freely contributed to the God of Israel, who resides in Jerusalem, 16 along with all the silver and gold that you may collect throughout all the province of Babylon and the contributions of the people and the priests for the temple of their God which is in Jerusalem.

17 With this money you should be sure to purchase bulls, rams, and lambs, along with the appropriate meal offerings and libations. You should bring them to the altar of the temple of your God which is in Jerusalem.

18 You may do whatever seems appropriate to you and your colleagues with the rest of the silver and the gold, in keeping with the will of your God.

19 Deliver to the God of Jerusalem the vessels that are given to you for the service of the temple of your God.

20 The rest of the needs for the temple of your God that you may have to supply, you may do so from the royal treasury.

21 "I, King Artaxerxes, hereby issue orders to all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates, that you precisely execute all that Ezra the priestly scribe of the law of the God of heaven may request of you—

22 up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of olive oil, and unlimited salt.

23 Everything that the God of heaven has required should be precisely done for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should there be wrath against the empire of the king and his sons?

24 Furthermore, be aware of the fact that you have no authority to impose tax, tribute, or toll on any of the priests, the Levites, the musicians, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or the attendants at the temple of this God.

25 "Now you, Ezra, in keeping with the wisdom of your God which you possess, appoint judges and court officials who can arbitrate cases on behalf of all the people who are in Trans-Euphrates who know the laws of your God. Those who do not know this law should be taught.

26 Everyone who does not observe both the law of your God and the law of the king will be completely liable to the appropriate penalty, whether it is death or banishment or confiscation of property or detainment in prison."

Ezra's Personal Note of Thanksgiving

27 Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, who so moved in the heart of the king to so honor the temple of the LORD which is in Jerusalem!

28 He has also conferred his favor on me before the king, his advisers, and all the influential leaders of the king. I gained strength as the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

List of Family Heads Who Accompanied Ezra

8:1 These are the leaders and those enrolled with them by genealogy who were coming up with me from Babylon during 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 the son of Shecaniah; from the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were enrolled by genealogy 150 men;

4 from the descendants of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerariah, and with him 200 men;

5 from the descendants of Zattu, Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men;

6 from the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men;

7 from the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men;

8 from the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him 80 men;

9 from the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men;

10 from the descendants of Bani, Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men;

11 from the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him 28 men;

12 from the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men;

13 from the descendants of Adonikam there were the latter ones. Their names were Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men;

14 from the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai, and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

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

Ezra 8:15–30

Enlistment of Temple Personnel

15 I had them assemble at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there for three days. I observed that the people and the priests were present, but I found no Levites there.

16 So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders, and Joiarib and Elnathan, who were teachers.

17 I sent them to Iddo, who was the leader in the place called Casiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and his relatives, who were the temple servants in Casiphia, so they would bring us attendants for the temple of our God.

18 Due to the fact that the good hand of our God was on us, they brought us a skilled man, from the descendants of Mahli the son of Levi son of Israel. This man was Sherebiah, who was accompanied by his sons and brothers, 18 men,

19 and Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, with his brothers and their sons, 20 men,

20 and some of the temple servants that David and his officials had established for the work of the Levites—220 of them. They were all designated by name.

Prayer and Fasting

21 I called for a fast there by the Ahava Canal, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and seek from him a safe journey for us, our children, and all our property.

22 I was embarrassed to request soldiers and horsemen from the king to protect us from the enemy along the way, because we had said to the king, "The good hand of our God is on everyone who is seeking him, but his great anger is against everyone who forsakes him."

23 So we fasted and prayed to our God about this, and he answered us.

Treasure Bearers

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers,

25 and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the vessels intended for the temple of our God—items that the king, his advisers, his officials, and all Israel who were present had contributed.

26 I weighed out to them 650 talents of silver, silver vessels worth 100 talents, 100 talents of gold,

27 20 gold bowls worth 1,000 darics, and two exquisite vessels of gleaming bronze, as valuable as gold.

28 Then I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD, just as these vessels are holy. The silver and the gold are a voluntary offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers.

29 Be careful with them and protect them, until you weigh them out before the leading priests and the Levites and the family leaders of Israel in Jerusalem, in the storerooms of the temple of the LORD."

30 Then the priests and the Levites took charge of the silver, the gold, and the vessels that had been weighed out, to transport them to Jerusalem to the temple 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 began traveling from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from our enemy and from bandits along the way.

7:8 He entered Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king.

7:9b and on the first day of the fifth month he arrived at Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him.

At Jerusalem (August 4–6, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:32

32 So we came to Jerusalem, and we stayed there for three days.

Delivery of the Temple Vessels (August 7, 457 BC)

Ezra 8:33–36

33 On the fourth day we weighed out the silver, the gold, and the vessels in the house of our God into the care of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest, and Eleazar son of Phinehas, who were accompanied by Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui, who were Levites.

34 Everything was verified by number and by weight, and the total weight was written down at that time.

35 The exiles who were returning from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel—twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven male lambs, along with twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

36 Then they presented the decrees of the king to the king's satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, who gave help to the people and to the temple of God.

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