

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Ezra said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty officers” (Ezra 7:27–28). I praise you today as the One who holds the heart of the king in your hands, and you turn it wherever you will (Prov 21:1)! You also give favor to those who seek to accomplish your will. Praise the LORD!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about the second return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra the priest. This took place 80 years after the first return, 58 years after the completion of the temple, and 16 years after the events of Esther. Ahasuerus had been assassinated, and his son Artaxerxes I seized control of the empire by murdering his older brother Darius. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes’ reign, you prompted Ezra to organize another return to Israel. You also put it into the heart of the king to support Ezra, and I wonder if Mordecai played a role in encouraging Artaxerxes to finance the return. You blessed Ezra, and the group of returnees made the journey to Jerusalem safely. Several things about this story stand out to me. First, the character of Ezra. The text says, “Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). What an inspiring picture of godliness! That is my goal—to make your Word a part of my very being and to teach my family and others how to please you. Second, Ezra got all the support and money he needed for the return because “the hand of the LORD his God was on him” (Ezra 7:6). True success in ministry comes only from your approval and blessing. I want your hand to be on me in all that I do! Third, Ezra recognized that the king’s decree was a gift from you, and he took time to thank you and praise you for your faithfulness and love (Ezra 7:27–28). This teaches me to give you the glory for any success that comes in my ministry, for without you, my labor would be in vain. Fourth, Ezra proclaimed a time of prayer and fasting, “that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods” (Ezra 8:21). Ezra told Artaxerxes that your hand of blessing was on those who seek you, and he honored your reputation by staking the safety of the entire journey on your protection. This teaches me to depend on you to meet my needs and to acknowledge that I’m not strong enough to make it on my own.

Reflection

Prayer is often accompanied by fasting, not because it manipulates you into giving me what I want, but because it is a voluntary humbling of myself before you (cf. Ezra 8:21). When I fast, I show my sorrow for sin, and I demonstrate that I am serious about seeking your will (cf. 2 Sam 12:22).

Request

Father, I acknowledge my complete dependence on you today. Give me a special outpouring of your mercy and grace. May I find comfort and help in time of need!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the example of Ezra, a man who staked everything on your name and who showed integrity and faithfulness in his ministry for you! Help me to imitate his faith!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Great God, We Sing Your Guiding Hand](#)” – Philip Doddridge.

Meditation Verse: Ezra 8:23.