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Ezra

Introduction

The account of Ezra, is like a continuation of *The Chronicles*—it tells us about the returning home of other Yehudim who had been taken to Bavel as captives, and the restoration of daily life in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and of worshipping at the temple.
It's divided into three main sections: 1. The declaration of King Koresh (Cyrus) of Paras/Persia to allow a group of exiled Yehudim to return to Yerushalem from Bavel. 2. The rebuilding of the temple and its dedication, and the return to worshipping Yahweh there in Yerushalem. 3. The return of a different group of Jewish descendants to Yerushalem under the leadership of Ezra—the one knowledgeable about God's instructions. He assisted the Israelis to return to their beliefs and customs, so that their worshipping of the true God wouldn't be forgotten.

Main components of this account

The first group of exiled Yehudim return home *1:1–2:70*
The rebuilding of the temple and its dedication *3:1–6:22*
Ezra leads other exiles to return to Yehudah (Judah) *7:1–10:44*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Koresh returns some Yehudim

1:1 In the first year that Koresh (Cyrus) was king of Paras (Persia), Yahweh stirred up his spirit in order to fulfil what he'd spoken through the prophet Yirmiyah (Jeremiah).[1] So the king distributed an official written notice throughout his kingdom, saying, **2** "Koresh, king of Paras, declares this: Yahweh, the god of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms in the world, and he's appointed me to build a residence for him in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) in Yehudah (Judah).[2] **3** Anyone among you who's one of his followers is free to go to Yerushalem (in Yehudah) to help build a temple there for Yisrael's (Israel's) god Yahweh—the god of Yerushalem. May God go with you. **4** Those who live near these people but who are not going themselves, should donate gold and silver, and goods and livestock, plus cash as a voluntary offering for God's temple in Yerushalem.

5 Then some of the leaders of Benyamin and Yehudah, and some priests and Levites—all of whom had had their spirits stirred up by God—left to go and build Yahweh's residence in Yerushalem. **6** Their neighbours had helped them by donating gold and silver utensils, goods and livestock, and expensive gifts, as well as the voluntary offerings of cash.

7 Then King Koresh brought out the equipment from Yahweh's temple that Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) had brought all the way from Yerushalem and had put in the house of his gods. **8** He put the treasurer Mitredat in charge of bringing them out and Sheshebatsar, the ruler of Yehudah, in charge of accepting them and listing them. **9** There were: thirty gold basins, one thousand silver basins, twenty-nine knives, **10** thirty gold bowls, 410 silver bowls, and a thousand other utensils, **11** coming to a total of 5,400 gold and silver utensils. Sheshebatsar took all of that with the group of exiles going from Bavel (Babylon) to Yerushalem.

The list of returning exiles[3]

2:1 Out of the captives that Babylonian King Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) had brought as slaves to Bavel (Babylon), these are their descendants who returned to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) in Yehudah (Judah)—each person returning to their own ancestral town. **2** The ones who went with Zerubavel were: Yeshua, Nehemyah (Nehemiah), Serayah, Re'elayah, Mordekai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvay, Rehum, and Ba'anah.

Their numbers were:
3 2,172 descendants of Par'osh,
4 372 descendants of Shefatyah,
5 775 descendants of Arah,
6 2,812 descendants of Pahat-Moav, from the families of Yeshua and Yoav (Joab),
7 1,254 descendants of Eylam,
8 945 descendants of Zatu,
9 760 descendants of Zakay,
10 642 descendants of Bani,
11 623 descendants of Bevay,
12 1,222 descendants of Azgad,
13 666 descendants of Adonikam,
14 2,056 descendants of Bigvay,
15 454 descendants of Adin,
16 98 descendants of Ater, who descended from Hizkiyah (Hezekiah),
17 323 descendants of Betsay,
18 112 descendants of Yorah,
19 223 descendants of Hashum,
20 95 descendants of Givar.
21 And from these towns:
123 from Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem),
22 56 from Netofah,
23 128 from Anatot,
24 42 from Azmavet,
25 743 from Kiryat-Yearim, Kefirah, and Be'erot,
26 621 from Ramah and Geva,
27 122 from Mikmas,
28 223 from Beyt-El (Bethel) and Ay,
29 52 from Nevo,

1 **RV 1:1 · Cross-ref.** Jer 25:11; 29:10.

2 **RV 1:2 · Cross-ref.** Isa 44:28.

3 **RV 2:1 · Parallel** Neh. 7:4-73

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30 156 from Magbish,
31 1,254 from the other Eylam,
32 320 from Harim,
33 725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono,
34 345 from Yeriho (Jericho),
35 3,630 from Sena'ah.
36 The priests who returned:
973 descendants of Yedayah (descendants of Yeshua),
37 1,052 descendants of Imer,
38 1,247 descendants of Pashhur,
39 1,017 descendants of Harim.
40 The Levites who returned:
74 descendants of Yeshua and Kadmiel, who were from the family of Hodavyah,
41 128 musicians who were descendants of Asaf,
42 139 gatekeepers who were descendants of the gatekeepers Shalum, Ater, Talmon, Akuv, Hatita, and Shovay,
43 The temple servants who returned:
The descendants of Tsiha, Hasufa, and Tabaeot,
44 the descendants of Keyros, Siea, and Padon,
45 the descendants of Levana, Hagava, and Akuv,
46 the descendants of Hagav, Shalmay, and Hanan,
47 the descendants of Gidel, Gahar, and Reayah,
48 the descendants of Retsin, Nekoda, and Gazam,
49 the descendants of Uza, Paseah, and Besay,
50 the descendants of Asnah, Meunim, and Nefushesim,
51 the descendants of Bakbuk, Hakufa, and Harhur,
52 the descendants of Batslut, Mehida, and Harsha,
53 the descendants of Barkos, Sisera, and Temah,
54 and the descendants of Netsiah and Hatifa.
55 The descendants of Shelomoh's (Solomon's) servants who returned:
the descendants Sotay, Soferet, Peruda,
56 the descendants of Ya'alah, Darkon, and Gidel,
57 the descendants of Shefatyah, Hatil, Pokeret Tsevayim, and Ami.
58 Altogether there were 392 descendants of temple workers and Shelomoh's servants who returned.
59 Another group went from the towns of Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Keruv, Adan, and Imer, but they didn't know their ancestry from before they were taken as captives.
60 There were 652 people who were descendants of Delayah, Toviyah, and Nekoda, 61 and from the sons of the priests: the descendants of Havayah; the descendants of Hakots; and the descendants of Barzilay, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzilay the Giladi, so he was called by their name. 62 They had searched for their records among the genealogies, but couldn't find their families listed, so they were disqualified to serve as priests. 63 Also the governor told them that they mustn't eat any of the holiest food until a priest could use the Urim and Tumim to determine their status.[4]
64 Altogether in this group, 42,360 people returned to Yehudah (Judah). 65 not counting their 7,337 male and female servants, plus 200 male and female musicians. 66 They also took 736 horses and 245 mules, 67 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.
68 When some of the heads of families got to Yahweh's temple in Yerushalem (Jerusalem), they freely donated so that it could be rebuilt. 69 They each donated to the treasury according to their individual resources—a total of sixty-one thousand gold coins, five thousand silver bars, and a hundred sets of clothing for the priests.
70 So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the gatekeepers and the temple servants returned to live in their ancestral cities, and so all the Israeli cities had returnees living in them.[5]

4 **RV 2:63 · Cross-ref.** Num 27:21.
5 **RV 2:70 · Cross-ref.** 1Ch 9:2; Neh 11:3.

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Rebuilding the altar

3:1 In the seventh month, the Israelis from their various cities, gathered together in unity in Yerushalem (Jerusalem). **2** Then Yotsadak's son Yeshua and his brothers the priests, and Shealtiyel's son Zerubavel and his brothers, and they built the altar to offer up burnt offerings to Yisrael's (Israel's) god on it[6] as is written in the law of Mosheh (Moses), the man of God. **3** They set the altar up on its foundation because they were worried about trouble from some of the other people groups in the region. Then they offered burnt offerings to Yahweh on it as well as the regular morning and evening burnt offerings.[7] **4** Then they observed the Celebration in Shelters as per the written instructions[8] with a burnt offering each day as required. **5** After that was over, they kept up the regular burnt offerings, plus those for the new moons and other times that Yahweh required,[9] as well as any free-will offerings to Yahweh. **6** Even though the temple foundation rebuilding hadn't started yet, the people started sacrificing burnt offerings to Yahweh from the beginning of October.

Rebuilding the temple

7 They donated cash to the stone-workers and carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the workers from Tsidon (Sidon) and Tsor (Tyre) to float cedar logs along the coast from Levanon into Port Yafo (Joppa) with the permission of Persian King Koresh (Cyrus).

8 In the second month of second year since their return to Yerushalem (Jerusalem), Shealtiyel's son Zerubavel and Yotsadak's son Yeshua, and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and everyone except who'd returned to Yerushalem from captivity, began work on God's residence, and they appointed the Levites who were twenty and over to act as overseers for the work of rebuilding Yahweh's temple. **9** And Yeshua with his brothers and their sons, Kadmiel and his sons, (all descendants of Yehudah (Judah)) cooperated to act as overseers for those doing the work at the temple together with Henadad's sons and grandsons, and their brothers the Levites.

10 When the builders had laid the foundation of Yahweh's temple, they got the priests to stand there in their robes with their trumpets, and Asaf's descendants (who were Levites) with their cymbals, to praise Yahweh using the rhythms composed by David, the former Israeli king.[10] **11** Then they sang in response—praising and thanking Yahweh: "Yes, he is good, because his loyal commitment to Yisrael (Israel) will continue forever."[11]

Then all the people shouted a great shout in praise to Yahweh because the foundation of Yahweh's temple had been laid. **12** Many of the older priests and Levites, and clan leaders who'd seen the first temple, wept loudly when they witnessed the founding of this one, but others were shouting happily with loud voices. **13** So the people couldn't differentiate the happy sounds from the sound of the people weeping, because the people were shouting very loudly and it could be heard from far away.

Opposition to rebuilding the temple

4:1 Now the enemies of Yehudah (Judah) and Benyamin heard that the Israelis who'd come back from exile were building a temple for Yisrael's (Israel's) god Yahweh. **2** so they went to Zerubavel and to the other clan leaders and they said to them, "Let us help you with the building work, because like you, we worship your god and we've been sacrificing to him since the days of the Assyrian king

6 RV 3:2 · Cross-ref. Exo 27:1.

7 RV 3:3 · Cross-ref. Num 28:1-8.

8 RV 3:4 · Cross-ref. Num 29:12-38.

9 RV 3:5 · Cross-ref. Num 28:11–29:39.

10 RV 3:10 · Cross-ref. 1Ch 25:1.

11 RV 3:11 · Cross-ref. 1Ch 16:34; 2Ch 5:13; 7:3; Psa 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1; Jer 33:11.

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Esar-Haddon—the one who sent us here."[12]

3 But Zerubavel, and Yeshua, and the rest of the Israelis clan leaders said to them, "It's not for you and for us to build a house for our god, but we ourselves together will build for Yisrael's god Yahweh, just as the Persian King Koresh (Cyrus) has commanded us."

4 Those local people had been discouraging the people of Yehudah and trying to stop them from building. 5 They'd also hired influencers to work against them throughout the reigns of the Persian kings Koresh and Dareyavesh (Darius).

The opposition of replacement of Yerushalem

6 Now at the beginning of the reign of Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus), they forwarded an accusation against those who lived in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and throughout Yehudah (Judah).

7 And in the days of Persian King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes), Bishlam, Mitredat, Teve'el and the rest of their companions wrote to the king. (The letter was written in Aramit (Syrian) and using that alphabet).

8 Rehum the high commissioner and Shimshay the provincial secretary wrote a letter to King Artahshashta against Yerushalem as follows:

9 From Rehum the high commissioner and Shimshay the provincial secretary, and the our companions, the judges and the rulers, the officials, the Persians, the Erekites, the Babylonians, the Susaites (that is, the Eylamites), 10 and the rest of the nations that the famous and powerful King Asenapar exiled from other nations and forced them to live in the cities of Shomron (Samaria), and the province went of the Perat (Euphrates) river.

And now 11 this is what the letter said that they sent to him:

To Artahshashta the king from your servants on this side of the river.

And now 12 let it be known to the king that the Yehudim (Jews) who left your region have come to us at Yerushalem to rebuild that rebellious and evil city—they're currently finishing the walls and repairing the building foundations. 13 Now let it be known to the king that if that city is built and the walls are completed, those people won't pay taxes, or send tributes, and your royal treasury will lose out. 14 Now, because we've had the favour of the palace, and because we don't want to see the king dishonoured, that's why we've sent this letter to update the king, 15 so that he can search in the official records of the kingdom. You'll discover and learn that that city of Yerushalem is a rebellious city and one that has caused harm to kings and provinces, and has harboured rebellion there for decades past—that's why that city was destroyed. 16 We are letting the king know that if that city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, then you'll lose control of this province on this side of the Perat."

17 The king sent this reply:

"To Rehum the high commissioner and Shimshay the provincial secretary, and the rest of their companions who live in Shomron (Samaria), and the rest of the people in the province west of the Perat: Peace.

And now 18 the letter that you all sent to us has been carefully read aloud to me. 19 I ordered my officials to search the records and discovered that it's true that that city has been rebellious and seditious since ancient times. 20 Powerful kings have reigned from Yerushalem and ruled the entire region that side of the river, and had taxes and tributes paid to them. 21 So command those Yehudim to stop rebuilding the city until such time as I make a decree. 22 Don't be negligent in doing that or the damage to this kingdom might get worse."

23 When King Artahshashta's (Artaxerxes') letter reached Rehum, Shimshay the secretary, and their companions, and was read aloud to them all, they immediately went to Yerushalem and used force to stop the Yehudim (Jews) from their rebuilding.

24 So there was a period when the rebuilding

12 RV 4:2 · Cross-ref. 2Ki 17:24-41.

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of the temple in Yerushalem stopped, and it remained paused until the second year of King Dareyavesh's (Darius') reign in Paras (Persia).[13]

The temple rebuilding continues

5:1 Then the prophet Hagay and Ido's son Zekaryah (Zechariah)[14] prophesied to the Yehudim (Jews) in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and across Yehudah (Judah) in the name of Yisrael's (Israel's) god who they served. **2** Then Shealtiyel's son Zerubavel and Yotsadak's son Yeshua took action and began to rebuild God's temple in Yerushalem, and the prophets who served God were there with them, supporting them.[15]

3 At that time, Tatenay, the governor of the province west of the Perat (Euphrates), and Shetar-Bozenay, and their companions came to them and demanded, "Who gave you all permission to rebuild this temple?" **4** They also asked the Yehudim to tell them the names of the men who were working on the building. **5** However, God was watching over the Jewish leaders, and they weren't actually stopped. A report was sent to King Dareyavesh (Darius), then they waited for a response. **6** Tatenay, the governor of the province west of the river, and Shetar-Bozenay and his companions, the provincial officials, sent the letter to King Dareyavesh— **7** this is what was written in their report:

"To King Dareyavesh. All peace. **8** Let it be known to the king that we went to the province of Yehudah (Judea), to the temple of the great God, and it is being built with large stones, and timber is being placed in the walls. This work is being done to a high standard and they're making good progress.

9 "Then we asked those elders, 'Who gave you all permission to rebuild this temple?' **10** We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders to inform you.

11 "This is the answer they gave us, 'We are servants of the god of the heavens and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was constructed and finished many years ago by a famous Israeli king. **12** However, because our ancestors made the god of the heavens angry, he let Babylonian King Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) (Nevukadnetsar, the Chaldean) defeat them, and he destroyed that temple and caused the people to be exiled to Bavel (Babylon).[16] **13** But in the first year of the reign of Babylonian King Koresh (Cyrus), he made a decree to rebuild this house of God.[17] **14** What's more, the gold and silver containers that Nevukadnetsar had taken out from that temple that was in Yerushalem and had brought to the temple in Bavel, King Koresh took them out from the temple in Bavel and they were handed over to the man named Sheshebatsar who he'd appointed as governor over Yehudah. **15** Koresh had told him to take those containers and put them back in the temple in Yerushalem, and to ensure that the temple got rebuilt in the same place where it had been before. **16** So Sheshebatsar came here and laid the foundation of God's house in Yerushalem, and since then, it's been being rebuilt but isn't finished yet.'

17 So now, if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the records in the king's treasure house there in Bavel, if it's correct that a decree was set by King Koresh to rebuild this house of God in Yerushalem (Jerusalem). Then let the king send his decision on this matter back to us."

The former approval is found

6:1 So King Dareyavesh (Darius) ordered that a search be conducted in all the archives where treasures had been deposited there in Bavel (Babylon), **2** and one scroll was found in the fortress at Ahmeta in the province of Maday

13 RV 4:24 · Cross-ref. Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1.

14 RV 5:1 · Cross-ref. Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1.

15 RV 5:2 · Cross-ref. Hag 1:12; Zech 4:6-9.

16 RV 5:12 · Cross-ref. 2Ki 25:8-12; 2Ch 36:17-20; Jer 52:12-15.

17 RV 5:13 · Cross-ref. Ezr 1:2-11.

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(Media), and this record had been made:
3 "In year one of Koresh (Cyrus) the king, he made a decree about the house of God in Yerushalem (Jerusalem):
'Let the house be built in the same place where sacrifices were made. Establish its foundations and build it 27m high and 27m wide 4 with three layers of large stones and a layer of new timber. That should all be paid for from the royal treasury. 5 Also, the gold and silver containers from the house of God that Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) had taken out from the Yerushalem temple and had brought to Bavel, must be returned to their places in the temple in Yerushalem. So you must put them in the house of God.' "

King Dareyavesh orders resumption of work

6 Therefore King Dareyavesh (Darius) wrote: "Now to Governor Tatenay in the province west of the Perat (Euphrates), Shetar-Bozenay, and their companions, the officials who in that province:
Keep away from that place. 7 Leave alone the work on that house of God. Let the Jewish governor and elders build that temple in its place. 8 So here's my decree about what should be done for those Jewish elders to build that house of God: Using the king's treasures that come from the tribute of that west-Euphrates province, let those workers costs be regularly reimbursed so that the work doesn't stop. 9 Whatever is needed (including young bulls, or rams, or lambs for burnt offerings to the god of the heavens, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, according to the command of the priests in Yerushalem (Jerusalem)), let it be given to them day by day (that is, without delay), 10 so that they can be offering sweet-smelling sacrifices to the god of the heavens and praying for the life of the king and his sons. 11 Also I decree that any man who changes this edict should have a beam pulled from his house, and after it's sharpened and set into the ground, then he should be impaled on it. Then his entire house should be made into a rubbish heap because of what he did. 12 May the god who has established his name there overthrow any king or person who makes any attempt to change this decree or to destroy that house of God in Yerushalem. I, Dareyavesh, have made a decree. Let it be done diligently."

The temple dedication

13 Then Tatenay, the governor of the region west of the Perat (Euphrates), Shetar-Bozenay, and their companions worked hard to follow the instructions sent by King Dareyavesh (Darius). 14 So the Jewish elders continued building, and they were encouraged by the prophesying of the prophet Hagay[18] and Ido's son Zekaryah (Zechariah).[19] As a result of the decrees of the Persian kings Koresh (Cyrus) , and Dareyavesh and Artahshashta (Artaxerxes), they were able to fulfil God's decree to rebuild the temple. 15 The rebuilt temple was finished in mid-March in the sixth year of King Dareyavesh's reign.
16 Then the Israeli people, the priests, and the Levites, and the ones that had returned from exile, performed the dedication of this house of God with celebrations. 17 During the dedication, they offered a hundred bulls, two-hundred rams, and four-hundred lambs, as well as twelve male goats for a sin offering for all Yisrael (Israel) (matching the number of the tribes). 18 Then they organised the priests to stand in their divisions and the Levites in their sections to serve the god who resides in Yerushalem (Jerusalem), according to the instructions written by Mosheh (Moses).

The Feast of 'pass-over' of Messenger

19 So the people who'd returned from exile celebrated the 'pass-over' in late April.[20] 20 The priests and Levites all had to be individually purified, and they slaughtered the lambs for all the exiles and for their brothers the priests, and for themselves. 21 Then all the Israelis ate the meal—those who'd returned

18 **RV 6:14 · Cross-ref.** Hag 1:1.
19 **RV 6:14 · Cross-ref.** Zech 1:1.
20 **RV 6:19 · Cross-ref.** Exo 12:1-20.

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from the exile and every one who'd separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land in order to search for Yisrael's (Israel's) god Yahweh. **22** Then they happily enjoyed the Flat Bread Celebration for seven days, because Yahweh had made them happy, and had caused the Assyrian king to show favour to them, to assist their work rebuilding the house of God, the god of Yisrael.

Ezra arrives in Yerushalem

7:1 Many years later in the reign of Persian King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes), Ezra (son of Serayah, son of Azaryah, son of Hilkiyah, **2** son of Shalum, son of Tsadok, son of Ahituv, **3** son of Amaryah, son of Azaryah, son of Merayot, **4** son of Zerahyah, son of Uzi, son of Buki, **5** son of Avishua, the son of Pinhas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aharon (Aaron) the head priest) **6** was a skilled expert in the law that Yisrael's (Israel's) god Yahweh had given through Mosheh (Moses). With the favour of his god Yahweh helping Ezra, the king had granted all his requests, and he travelled from Bavel (Babylon) to Yerushalem (Jerusalem). **7** Some Israelis, including some priests and Levites, singers and gatekeepers, and some temple servants travelled to Yerushalem in the seventh year of Artahshashta's reign. **8–9** They left Bavel on New Year's Day (in early April) and with God's favour on the journey, arrived in Yerushalem exactly four months later **10** because Ezra had made a firm resolution to study Yahweh's written instructions, and to carefully follow them, and to teach them in Yisrael.

King Artahshashta's letter to Ezra

11 King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes) had given a letter for Ezra the priest and scribe and expert in Yahweh's commands and instructions to take with him, saying:

12 Artahshashta, the king of kings, to the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the god of heavens: Peace.

Now, **13** I hereby decree that anyone in my kingdom from Yisrael (Israel) (including priests and Levites) who freely offers to go to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) with you, may go. **14** You are sent by the king and his seven counsellors to determine whether the people of Yehudah (Judah) and Yerushalem are following the law of your god which you have a copy of. **15** You are also to take the gold and silver that the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the god of Yisrael who lives in Yerushalem, **16** along with all the gold and silver that you collect all across Bavel (Babylon), along with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests who freely give towards the house of God in Yerushalem.

17 So then you should diligently use those funds to buy bulls, rams, lambs, and supplies for their grain offerings and drink offerings, and you should offer them on the altar at the your god's house in Yerushalem. **18** With the remaining funds, you can use them for whatever seems good to you and your brothers, according to the will of your god. **19** Also, make sure that you deliver all those gold and silver containers that were handed over to you for use in your god's house in Yerushalem. **20** Anything else that's needed for the house of your god that you need to supply can be provided from the king's treasuries.

21 And I, King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes) make a decree for all the treasurers in the province west of the river: that you all diligently help with everything that the priest Ezra (the scribe of the law of the god of the heavens) asks from you all— **22** up to three tonnes of silver, five hundred bushels of wheat, two thousand litres of wine and the same amount of olive oil, and as much salt as he needs. **23** Everything that the god of the heavens decreed to be done should be done exactly as he specified because there's no good reason to make him angry at the kingdom of the king and his sons? **24** Also, it should be made clear that there is no authority to extract taxes or tribute from any priests or Levites, singers or the gatekeepers, the temple servants or the servants of that house of God.

25 As for you, Ezra, use the wisdom that your god has given to you to appoint magistrates and judges who can judge all the people who are in that province beyond the river—every-

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one who know the laws of your god (plus you should teach those who don't know them).
26 Anyone who refuses to obey your god's laws and the king's laws, should receive swift judgement—whether it's confiscation of goods, or banishment, imprisonment, or the death sentence."

Ezra praises Yahweh

27 Blessed be Yahweh, the god of our fathers who put it into the king's heart to honour Yahweh's house in Yerushalem (Jerusalem), 28 and showed me his loyal commitment in dealing with the king and his counsellors, and all the powerful officials of the king. And as for me, Yahweh my god blessed me with initiative and the strength to carry it out as I gathered some Israeli leaders to go to Yerushalem with me.

The returning exiles

8:1 Now these are the family heads and their descendants by number who went with me from Bavel (Babylon) to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) in the reign of King Artahshashta (Artaxerxes):
2 from the descendants of Pinhas: Gereshom,
from the descendants of Itamar: Daniyel,
from the descendants of David: Hatush,
3 from the descendants of Shekanyah and Par'osh: Zekaryah (Zechariah) and a hundred and fifty other men,
4 from the descendants of Pahat-Moav: Zerahyah's son Elyehoeynay and two hundred other men,
5 from the descendants of Shekanyah: Yahaziel's son and three hundred other men,
6 from the descendants of Adin: Yonatan's (Jonathan's) son Eved and fifty other men,
7 from the descendants of Eylam: Atalyah's (Athaliah's) son Yeshayah (Isaiah) and seventy other men,
8 from the descendants of Shefatyah: Mika'el's (Michael's) son Zevadyah and eighty other men;
9 from the descendants of Yoav (Joab): Yehiel's son Ovadyah (Obadiah) and 218 other men,
10 from the descendants of Shelomit: Yosifyah's son and one hundred and sixty other men,
11 from the descendants of Bevay: his son Zekaryah (Zechariah) and twenty-eight other men,
12 from the descendants of Azgad: Hakatan's son Yohanan and one hundred and ten other men,
13 from the later descendants of Adonikam: Elifelet, Yeiel, and Shemayah, and sixty other men,
14 and from the descendants of Bigvay: Utay and Zakur and seventy other men.

Ezra finds some Levites to take

15 Firstly, I gathered them near the river that goes to Ahava, and we camped there for three days. I interviewed the people and the priests and discovered that we didn't have any Levites included in the group. 16 So I summoned the following leaders: Eliezer, Ariel, Shemayah, Elnatan, Yariv, a second Elnatan, Natan (Nathan), Zekaryah (Zechariah), and Meshulam, as well as the wise men: Yoyariv and a third Elnatan. 17 I commanded them to go to Ido, the leader at Kasifya, and I told them to tell Ido and his relatives (temple servants in Kasifya) to send us some Levites who would go to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) to serve in our god's temple.
18 Then since we had God's favour, they sent us a talented man (from the sons of Mahli, son of Levi, son of Yisrael (Israel)) and eighteen of his sons and other relatives. 19 They also sent Hashavyah and Yeshayah (Isaiah) (from Merari's sons), and their relatives and sons—some twenty men— 20 plus two hundred and twenty descendants of Levite temple servants that King David and his officials had appointed for service—all designated by name.

Ezra's fasting and praying

21 Then right there by the river Ahava, I proclaimed a fast to humble ourselves in front of our god to request that he'd smooth the way ahead for us, and for our children, and for all our property, 22 because I was ashamed to request an army and horsemen from the king to help us from possible enemies on the way. Also, you see, we had previously told the king, "Our god does good to all those who honour him, but his might and his anger are against all those

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who abandon him." 23 So we fasted and asked for wisdom from our god concerning this, and he listened to our requests.

The gift and donations for the temple

24 Then I chose twelve of the leaders of the priests along with Shereveyah and Hashavyah and ten of the other Levites, 25 and as they watched, I weighed out the gold and silver, and the valuable utensils—the offering for the house of our god that the king, and his counsellors and officials, and all the exiled Israelis who could be contacted, had offered. 26 It came to three tonnes of gold, twenty-one tonnes of silver, and another three tonnes of silver containers, 27 as well as twenty gold bowls that weighed another eight kilograms, and two polished bronze containers that were as valuable as gold.

28 "You are sacred to Yahweh," I told them all, "and the containers and utensils are sacred, and the gold and silver are a freewill offering to Yahweh, the god of your ancestors. 29 Look after them all carefully until you weigh them out in front of the leaders of the priests and Levites and the leaders of the Israeli elders in the chambers of Yahweh's house in Yerushalem (Jerusalem)." 30 So the priests and the Levites accepted the receipt of the gold and silver, and the containers, to take them to Yerushalem—to the house of our god.

The return to Yerushalem

31 Then in mid-April, we set out from the river Ahava to go to Yerushalem (Jerusalem), and we had God's favour as he kept us safe from any enemies or ambushes on the way. 32 So we arrived at Yerushalem, and rested there for three days. 33 On the fourth day, the gold and silver and the containers and utensils were weighed out in the temple—being handed over to Uriyah's son Meremot, the priest, and with him was Pinhas's son Eleazar (and with them were Yeshua's son Yozavad, and Binuy's son Noadyah, the Levites). 34 They recorded all the items with their weights.

35 The descendants of the former captives who had returned from exile offered burnt offerings to Yisrael's (Israel's) god: twelve bulls for all Yisrael, 96 rams, 77 lambs, then twelve male goats for a sin offering. The whole was presented as a burnt offering to Yahweh. 36 They relayed the king's orders to the governors and officials of the province beyond the river, and so they honoured the people and God's house.

Ezra's reaction against mixed marriages

9:1 Now as soon as those things were finished, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Yisrael (Israel), and the priests and Levites haven't kept themselves separate from the idolatry of the peoples of the lands: the Kena'anim (Canaanites) , Hitim, Perizim, the Yevusim, Amonim, Moavim, Mitsrim (Egyptians) , and the Amorim. 2 Instead, they've taken women from those peoples as wives for themselves and their sons, so they've diluted their sacred heritage with the anti-God customs of those peoples. But the worst is that it's our leaders and officials that have been at the forefront in this unfaithfulness." 3 As soon as I heard that, I tore my clothes and pulled some of the hair out of my head and beard, and I sat down appalled. 4 Any others who respectfully followed Yisrael's god's instructions and who were concerned about the unfaithfulness of the exiles, joined with me and I sat there appalled until the time of the evening sacrifice.

Ezra's prayer

5 So I got up from my position of humiliation with my torn clothes during the evening sacrifice, then I went down on my knees and spread out my palms to my god Yahweh 6 and prayed, "My god, I'm ashamed and humiliated to raise my face to you, my god, because our sins have multiplied and risen above our heads, and our guilt has mounted up as high as the sky. 7 From back in the time of our ancestors until today, we've been very guilty, and in our disobedience, we ourselves, including our kings and our priests, have been killed by the kings of the surrounding countries, or taken captive, or been plundered, or simply put to shame, which is the case right now. 8 But now for a brief moment, favour has come from our god Yahweh and given us remaining survivors a stake in his holy

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place—yes, our god has cheered us up and given us a little relief from our slavery. **9** Because we are slaves, yet our god hasn't abandoned us in our slavery, but he's used his loyal commitment to us to influence the Persian king to give to us breathing space to rebuild the house of our god from its ruins, and to give to us a 'wall of protection' in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and across Yehudah (Judah).

10 "So now, our god, what can we say after that? We've abandoned your instructions **11** which you gave us via your servants, the prophets, saying, 'The land that you're all entering to occupy is a land of impurity, due to the impurity of the current inhabitants with their evil practices that have filled it from one end to the other with their filth. **12** So now, don't give your daughters to their sons to marry, or vice versa.[21] And don't try to make long-term peace treaties or contracts with them. Then you all will stay in power, and eat the good things of the land, and be able to pass it on to your children for all their future generations.'

13 "Yet after everything that's happened to us as a result our evil actions and our great guilt (even though you, our god, didn't punish us as harshly as you could have, and you've allowed us to survive as we're here now), **14** should we return to disobeying your instructions and to intermarrying with those people groups with their evil practices? You'd rightfully be angry enough with us as to wipe us out completely without leaving any remnant or survivors? **15** Yahweh, the god of Yisrael (Israel), you always do what is right, because here we are as survivors even to this day. So, yes, here we are standing in front of you in our guilt, because none of us are innocent enough to stand in front of you because of what we've done."

10:1 When Ezra prayed and confessed like that, weeping and bowing down low in front of the temple, an extremely large number of Israeli men and women and children gathered around him to join in and weep aloud. **2** Then Yehiel's son Shekanyah (from the sons of Eylam) answered and admitted to Ezra, "We ourselves have behaved unfaithfully towards our god and have married foreign women from the other people groups in this region. But there's still hope for Yisrael (Israel) concerning this. **3** So now, let's make an agreement with our god to send all those women back, along with their children, following the advice of my master and the ones who strive to obey God's instructions, and as per the law. **4** So take action because this is now in your hands, but we're with you. Lead strongly and make a clear decision."

The people's acceptance of their sin

5 So Ezra took action and made the leaders of the priests and Levites, and all Yisrael, to promise to implement this decision, and they did so. **6** Then Ezra left that place there in front of the temple, and he went to Yehohanan's room (Elyashiv's son) and went in. He didn't eat or drink, but continued mourning because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

7 Then the leaders sent an official written notice throughout Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and all Yehudah (Judah) to all those Yehudim (Jews) who'd returned from captivity, that their men should assemble in Yerushalem. **8** They were told that it was the decision of the leaders and elders that anyone who didn't arrive within three days would then forfeit all their property and would no longer be considered as an Israeli. **9** So on the third day (in mid-December), all the men of Yehudah and Benyamin gathered in Yerushalem, and all the people sat in the courtyard in front of the temple. They were shivering because of the rain, and because of the seriousness of the matter.

10 Then the priest Ezra stood up and announced, "You yourselves have acted unfaithfully and have married foreign women, thus adding to Yisrael's guilt in God's eyes. **11** Now however, praise Yahweh, the god of your ancestors, and do what he's commanded us and separate yourselves from the other religions of the

21 RV 9:12 · Cross-ref. Exo 34:11-16; Deu 7:1-5.

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peoples in this region, including not marrying their women."

12 Then all the gathered Israelis answered, "Yes, we do need to do what you've said. **13** However, it's the rainy season now, and there's so many people who can't stand outside for several days while we try to work all this out, because we've done so much wrong. **14** So let's delegate our leaders to make the decisions for all of us. Then we can arrange to meet together by city with our elders and judges to apply the decisions about our foreign wives, until God's anger towards us about these matters cools down. **15** The only ones who were against this plan were Asahel's on Yonatan (Jonathan) and Tikvah's son Yahzeyah, with the support of Meshulam and the Levite Shabtay.

16 So the exiled Israelis agreed to follow that plan, and the names of the men were written down by each clan leader who then stayed behind with the priest Ezra, and a few days later, they sat down to start working through the lists. **17** Some two months later, they had finished considering all the men who had married foreign women.

The men married to foreigners

18 Some of the priests' descendants had married foreign women, i.e., the descendants of Yotsadak's son Yeshua and his brothers, Ma'aseyah, Eliezer, Yariv, and Gedalyah, **19** and they promised to expel their wives, and because of their guilt, each of them sacrificed a ram from their flock. **20** Then, also:

From Imer's descendants: Hanani and Zevadyah,

21 From Harim's descendants: Ma'aseyah, Eliyah (Elijah), Shemayah, Yehiel, and Uziyah,

22 From Pashhur's descendants: Elyehoeynay, Ma'aseyah, Yishmael (Ishmael), Netanel, Yozavad, and Eleasah,

23 Among the other Levites: Yozavad, and Shimei, and Kelayah (that is, Kelita), Petahyah, Yehudah (Judah), and Eliezer.

24 Among the singers: Elyashiv.

Among the temple guards: Shalum, Telem, and Uri.

25 From the other Israelis:

From Par'osh's descendants: Rameyah, Yiziyah, Malkiyah, Miyamin, Eleazar, Malkiyah, and Benayah.

26 From Heylam's descendants: Matanyah, Zekaryah (Zechariah), Yehiel, Avdi, Yerimot, and Eliyah (Elijah).

27 From Zatu's descendants: Elyehoeynay, Elyashiv, Matanyah, Yerimot, Zavad, and Aziza.

28 From Bevay's descendants: Yehohanan, Hananyah, Zabay, and Atlay.

29 From Bani's descendants: Meshulam, Maluk, Adayah, Yashuv, and Sheal-Yerimot.

30 From Pahat-Moav's descendants: Adna, Kelal, Benayah, Ma'aseyah, Matanyah, Betsalel, Binuy, and Menasheh (Manasseh).

31 From Harim's descendants: Eliezer, Yishiyah, Malkiyah, Shemayah, Shim'on (Simeon), **32** Benyamin, Maluk, and Shemaryah.

33 From Hashum's descendants: Matenay, Matatah, Zavad, Elifelet, Yeremay, Menasheh, and Shimei.

34 From Bani's descendants: Ma'aday, Amram, Uel, **35** Benayah, Bedeyah, Keluhayo, **36** Vanyah, Meremot, Elyashiv, **37** Matanyah, Matenay, and Ya'asu.

38 From Binuy's descendants: Shimei, **39** Shelemyah, Natan (Nathan), Adayah, **40** Maknadvay, Shashay, Sharay, **41** Azarel, Shelemyah, Shemaryah, **42** Shalum, Amaryah, and Yosef (Joseph).

43 From Nevo's descendants: Yeiel, Matityah, Zavad, Zevina, Yido, Yoel (Joel), and Benayah.

44 All of those had married foreign women

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and had children from them.

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