

Ezra

¹ In order to fulfill the Lord's prophecy given through Jeremiah, the Lord encouraged Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a proclamation throughout his kingdom and also to put it in writing, saying, ² "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, who has given to me all the kingdoms of the earth, has given me the responsibility to build a Temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Anyone among you who belongs to his people can go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. May your God be with you. ⁴ Wherever survivors are currently living, let them be helped by the people that region with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, together with a voluntary donation for God's Temple in Jerusalem.' "

⁵ Then God encouraged the family leaders of Judah and Benjamin, as well as the priests and Levites to go and rebuild the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. ⁶ All their neighbors supported them with gifts of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with other valuable items, in addition to all their voluntary donations.

⁷ King Cyrus also retrieved the items belonging to the Lord's Temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and placed in the temple

* **1:4** This proclamation of Cyrus is also found at the end of 2 Chronicles.

of his god. ⁸ Cyrus had Mithredath the treasurer retrieve them, who counted them and gave them to Sheshbazzar,[†] the leader of Judah.

⁹ This was the list: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 silver silverware, ¹⁰ 30 gold bowls, 410 matching silver bowls, and 1,000 other items. ¹¹ In total there were 5,400 gold and silver items. When the exiles left Babylon to go to Jerusalem Sheshbazzar took all these along with them.

2

¹ This is a list of the Jewish exiles from the province* who returned from captivity after King Nebuchadnezzar had taken them away to Babylon. They went back to Jerusalem and to their own towns in Judah. ² Their leaders were Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reeliah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

This is the number of the men of the people of Israel: ³ the sons of Parosh, 2,172; ⁴ the sons of Shephatiah, 372; ⁵ the sons of Arah, 775; ⁶ the sons of Pahath-moab (sons of Jeshua and Joab), 2,812; ⁷ the sons of Elam, 1,254; ⁸ the sons of Zattu, 945; ⁹ the sons of Zaccai, 760; ¹⁰ the sons of Bani, 642; ¹¹ the sons of Bebai, 623; ¹² the sons of Azgad, 1,222; ¹³ the sons of Adonikam, 666; ¹⁴ the sons of Bigvai, 2,056; ¹⁵ the sons of Adin, 454; ¹⁶ the sons of Ater, (sons of Hezekiah), 98;

[†] **1:8** “Sheshbazzar”: some have identified Sheshbazzar (Babylonian name) with Zerubbabel (Hebrew name). * **2:1** “Province”: under Persian rule, Judah was simply a province of the empire

¹⁷ the sons of Bezai, 323; ¹⁸ the sons of Jorah, 112; ¹⁹ the sons of Hashum, 223; ²⁰ the sons of Gibbar, 95; ²¹ the people from Bethlehem, 123; ²² the people from Netophah, 56; ²³ the people from Anathoth, 128; ²⁴ the people from Beth-azmaveth, 42; ²⁵ the people from Kiriath-jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743; ²⁶ the people from Ramah and Geba, 621; ²⁷ the people from Micmash, 122; ²⁸ the people from Bethel and Ai, 223; ²⁹ the sons of Nebo, 52; ³⁰ the sons of Magbish, 156; ³¹ the sons of Elam, 1,254; ³² the sons of Harim, 320; ³³ the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725; ³⁴ the sons of Jericho, 345; ³⁵ the sons of Senaah, 3,630.

³⁶ This is the number of the priests: the sons of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua), 973; ³⁷ the sons of Immer, 1,052; ³⁸ the sons of Pashhur, 1,247; ³⁹ the sons of Harim, 1,017.

⁴⁰ This is the number of the Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel (sons of Hodaviah), 74; ⁴¹ the singers of the sons of Asaph, 128; ⁴² the gatekeepers of the families of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, 139.

⁴³ The descendants of these Temple servants: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴ Keros, Siaha, Padon, ⁴⁵ Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, ⁴⁶ Hagab, Shalmal, Hanan, ⁴⁷ Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, ⁴⁸ Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, ⁴⁹ Uzza, Paseah, Besai, ⁵⁰ Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, ⁵¹ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵² Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵³ Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁴ Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁵ The descendants of King Solomon's servants: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, ⁵⁶ Jaalah,

Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁷ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-hazzebaim, and Ami. ⁵⁸ The total of the Temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants was 392.

⁵⁹ Those who came from the towns of Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Kerub, Addan, and Immer could not prove their family genealogy, or even that they were descendants of Israel. ⁶⁰ They included the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, 652 in total.

⁶¹ In addition there three priestly families, sons of Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai. (Barzillai had married a woman descended from Barzillai of Gilead, and he was called by that name.) ⁶² They searched for a record of them in the genealogies, but their names weren't found, so they were barred from serving as priests. ⁶³ The governor[†] instructed them not to eat anything from the sanctuary sacrifices until a priest could ask the Lord about the issue by using the Urim and Thummim.[‡]

⁶⁴ The total of number of people returning was 42,360. ⁶⁵ In addition there were 7,337 servants and 200 male and female singers. ⁶⁶ They had 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁷ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁶⁸ When they arrived at the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the family leaders made voluntary contributions toward the rebuilding of God's Temple where it had once stood. ⁶⁹ They

[†] **2:63** "Governor": a Persian word, probably referring to Sheshbazzar. [‡] **2:63** "Urim and Thummim": a methodology of establishing God's will in a matter. See Exodus 28:30.

gave depending on how much they had, putting their gift into the treasury. The total came to 61,000 gold daric coins, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 robes for the priests.

⁷⁰ The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, the Temple servants, as well as some of the people went back to live in their specific towns. The others returned to their own towns throughout Israel.

3

¹ By the time of the seventh month, the Israelites had settled in their towns, and the people gathered together as one in Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and the priests with him, together with Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and his relatives, started to build the altar of the God of Israel in order to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, as instructed by the Law of Moses, the man of God. ³ Even though they were afraid of the local people, they set up the altar on its original foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both morning and evening burnt offerings.

⁴ They observed the Festival of Shelters as the Law required, sacrificing the specified number of burnt offerings each day. ⁵ After that also presented the daily burnt offerings and the new moon offerings, as well as those for all the yearly festivals of the lord and for those who brought voluntary offerings to the Lord. ⁶ So from the first day of the seventh month, the Israelites began to present burnt offerings to the Lord,

even though the foundation of the Lord's Temple had not been laid.

⁷ They paid masons and carpenters, and provided food and drink and olive oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre for them to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to Joppa by sea, as King Cyrus of Persia had authorized.

⁸ In the second month of the second year after arriving at God's Temple in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and those with them—the priests, the Levites, and everyone who had come back to Jerusalem from captivity—began the work. They put Levites twenty years and older to in charge of building the Lord's Temple. ⁹ Jeshua and his sons and relatives, Kadmiel and his sons, the descendants of Yehudah, the sons of Henadad and their sons and relatives, all of them Levites, supervised those working on God's Temple.

¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the Lord's Temple, the priests dressed in their special clothes and carrying trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) carrying cymbals, all took their places to praise the Lord, following the instructions given by King David of Israel.

¹¹ They sang with praise and thanks to the Lord: "God is good; for his trustworthy love for Israel lasts forever." Then everyone there gave a tremendous shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the Lord's Temple had been laid.

¹² But many of the older priests, Levites, and family leaders who remembered the first Temple

wept loudly when they saw the foundation of this Temple, though many others shouted for joy.*
¹³ However, nobody could tell the shouts of joy from the cries of weeping, because everyone was making so much noise—so much so it could be heard a long way away.

4

¹ The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a Temple to the Lord, the God of Israel. ² They came to Zerubbabel and the family leaders and said, “Please let us help you with the building work, for we worship your God like you do. In fact we have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the family leaders of Israel replied, “You can't share with us in building a Temple for our God. Only we can build it for the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has ordered us to do.”

⁴ Then the local people set out to intimidate the people of Judah and make them too scared to go on building. ⁵ They bribed officials* to oppose them and to obstruct their plans. This continued during the whole reign of Cyrus king of Persia up until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

* **3:12** The reason for the sadness of the older people is usually thought to be because this replacement Temple was much inferior to the first. * **4:5** These would be local officials whose chain of command stretched back to the Persian king.

⁶ When Ahasuerus became king the local people sent him a written accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ During the time of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and their fellow officers wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated from Aramaic.[†]

⁸ Rehum the officer in command and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes condemning Jerusalem stating,

⁹ This comes from Rehum the officer in command, Shimshai the scribe, and fellow officers: the judges and officials and those in charge of Persia, Erech and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa, ¹⁰ and the rest of the people whom the great and noble Ashurbanipal deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria and other places west of the Euphrates. ¹¹ The following is a copy of the letter they sent to him.

To King Artaxerxes, from your servants, men beyond the River Euphrates:

¹² Your Majesty should be informed that the Jews who came from you to us have returned to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city, completing repairs to the walls, and mending its foundations. ¹³ Your Majesty should realize that if this city is rebuilt and its walls repaired, they will not pay tax, tribute, or fees, and the king's revenue will suffer. ¹⁴ Now because we are in the king's service[‡] and it is

[†] **4:7** The passage from 4:8 to 6:18 is in Aramaic. [‡] **4:14** "King's service": literally, "eat the salt of the palace."

not right for us to see Your Majesty disrespected, we are sending this letter so that you can be informed, ¹⁵ and order a search of the royal archives. You will discover in these records that this is a rebellious city, damaging to kings and countries,§ having often risen up in revolt in the past. That is what led to this city being destroyed. ¹⁶ We wish to inform Your Majesty that if this city is rebuilt and the walls completed, you will lose this province west of the Euphrates.

¹⁷ The king replied as follows: “To Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and fellow officers living in Samaria and in other areas west of the Euphrates: Greetings. ¹⁸ The letter you sent to us has been translated and read to me. ¹⁹ I ordered a search to be conducted. It was discovered that this city has often risen up in revolt against kings in the past, frequently promoting insurrection and rebellion. ²⁰ Powerful kings have ruled over Jerusalem and throughout the whole area west of the Euphrates, and they received tax, tribute, and fees. ²¹ Issue an immediate order for these men to stop work. This city is not to be rebuilt until I authorize it. ²² See that you do not neglect this matter. Why should this problem be allowed to grow and damage royal interests?”

²³ As soon as this letter from King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their fellow officers, they rushed to the Jews in Jerusalem and used their power to forcibly make them stop work.

§ 4:15 “Countries”: literally, “provinces.”

²⁴ Consequently work on God's Temple in Jerusalem came to a halt. The stoppage continued until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

5

¹ The prophets Haggai and Zechariah, son of Iddo, gave messages* to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem from the God of Israel, their ruler. ² Then Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, son of Jozadak, decided to start work on rebuilding God's Temple in Jerusalem. The prophets of God encouraged them and helped them.

³ Almost immediately Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow officials arrived and asked, "Who gave you permission to rebuild this Temple and finish it?" ⁴ Then they asked, "What are the names of the men who are working on this building?"

⁵ But their God was watching over the Jewish leaders, so that they were not prevented from working until a report could be sent to Darius and a written reply with instructions was received.

⁶ The following is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow

* **5:1** "Gave messages": literally, "prophesied." From the reaction of Zerubbabel the messages were to restart the building of the Temple.

officials, officials of the province, sent to King Darius.

⁷ The report they sent him read went like this: “To King Darius: Greetings. ⁸ We wish to inform Your Majesty that we went to the province of Judah, to the Temple of the great God. It is being built with large stones, with timber beams being placed on the walls. This work is being done properly and is progressing well.

⁹ We questioned the leaders, asking them, ‘Who gave you permission to rebuild this Temple and finish it?’ ¹⁰ We also asked for their names, so that we could write them down and let you know the names of their leaders.

¹¹ This is the answer they gave us. ‘We are servants of the God of heaven and earth. We are rebuilding the Temple built and completed many years ago by a great king of Israel. ¹² But our forefathers made the God of heaven angry, so he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this Temple and deported the people to Babylon. ¹³ However, Cyrus, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, issued a decree to rebuild this Temple of God. ¹⁴ He even gave back the gold and silver items belonging to God's Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and placed in his temple in Babylon. King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, ¹⁵ telling him, Take these items and place them in the Temple in Jerusalem. Rebuild God's Temple on its original site. ¹⁶ So Sheshbazzar came and

laid the foundation of God's Temple in Jerusalem. It has been under construction since then, but hasn't yet been completed.'

¹⁷ So, if Your Majesty wishes, authorize a search to be made of the royal archives in Babylon to discover if there is a record that King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild God's Temple in Jerusalem. Then please let us know Your Majesty's decision in this matter."

6

¹ Thus King Darius ordered that a search be made of the archives that were housed in the treasury of Babylon. ² But it was actually in the fortress of Ecbatana, in the province of Media, that a scroll was found, recording the following: ³ In the first year of King Cyrus, he issued a decree regarding God's Temple in Jerusalem: Let the Temple be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are offered, and make sure its strong foundations are firm. Make it sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, ⁴ with three layers of stone blocks and one of timber. Expenses are to be paid from the royal treasury. ⁵ In addition, the gold and silver items of God's Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, must also be returned to the Temple in Jerusalem and placed there.

⁶ These are my instructions to you, Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and your fellow officials, and officials of the province: Stay far away from

there! ⁷ This work on God's Temple—leave it alone! Let the governor and leaders of the Jews continue with rebuilding this Temple of God on its original site. ⁸ Furthermore, this is my decree as to what you are to do for these Jewish leaders regarding the rebuilding of this Temple of God. The full expense involved is to be paid from royal income, the tribute of the province west of the Euphrates, so that the work will not be delayed. ⁹ Provide whatever is needed by the priests in Jerusalem: young bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil. Make sure to give them this each day without fail. ¹⁰ In this way they can offer sacrifices that are acceptable to the God of heaven, and pray for the lives of the king and his sons. ¹¹ Further I declare that if any man interferes with this decree, a beam is to be ripped from his house and set in the ground, and he is to be impaled on top of it. His own house shall be turned into a pile of rubble for disobeying this decree. ¹² May God who chose the city of Jerusalem as the place where he would be honored, destroy any king or people who try to alter what I have said or who destroy this Temple. I, Darius, issue this decree. Let it be faithfully carried out.

¹³ Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow officials faithfully carried out what King Darius had decreed. ¹⁴ As a result the Jewish leaders continued building, and they were encouraged

by the messages from Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, son of Iddo. They completed building the Temple following the command of the God of Israel, and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. ¹⁵ The Temple was completed on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

¹⁶ Then the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of those who had returned from exile, all joyfully celebrated the dedication of the God's Temple. ¹⁷ To dedicate God's Temple they sacrificed one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and a sin offering for the whole of Israel comprising twelve male goats, one for each Israelite tribe. ¹⁸ They organized the priests and Levites by their divisions to serve God in the Temple at Jerusalem, in accordance with the Book of Moses.

¹⁹ The exiles who had returned observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. ²⁰ The priests and Levites had all purified themselves so that they were clean according to the ceremonial law.* So they killed the Passover lamb for all the exiles who had returned, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. ²¹ The Passover was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and by those who had joined them and had rejected the pagan practices of the peoples of the land in order to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. ²² Then they observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

* **6:20** "According to the ceremonial law": implied.

Everyone throughout the land was so happy because the Lord had made the king of Assyria favorable to them, helping them to rebuild the Temple of God, the God of Israel.

7

¹ After all this, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra arrived from Babylon. He was the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, ² son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, ³ son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, ⁴ son of Zeremiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, ⁵ son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the high priest. ⁶ This Ezra arrived from Babylon, and was a scribe who was an expert in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given to Israel. The king had granted Ezra everything he'd asked for, because the Lord his God was with him. ⁷ In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes left for Jerusalem, accompanied by some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, singers and gatekeepers, and Temple servants.

⁸ Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of King Artaxerxes' reign. ⁹ He had started the journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, his gracious God going with him. ¹⁰ For Ezra had committed himself to gaining insights from the Law of the Lord, wanting to practice it and to teach in Israel its rules and how to live.

11 This is a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest and scribe, who had studied the Lord's commandments and regulations given to Israel:*

12 “Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest,[†] the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings. 13 I hereby issue this decree: Any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who voluntarily decide to go to Jerusalem with you may do so. 14 You are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to investigate the situation in Judah and Jerusalem as it relates to the Law of your God, which you carry with you.[‡] 15 We also instruct you to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have voluntarily donated to the God of Israel, whose lives in Jerusalem, 16 together with all the silver and gold you may receive from the province of Babylon, as well as the voluntary donations of the people and priests to the Temple of their God in Jerusalem. 17 You are to use this money first to buy as many bulls, rams, and lambs as necessary, along with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and present them on the altar at the Temple of your God in Jerusalem. 18 Then you and those with you may decide to use the

* **7:11** The text of 7:12-26 is in Aramaic. † **7:12** “Priest”: interestingly the usual Aramaic word for priest is not used. Instead it is a word derived from Hebrew, suggesting the decree was first drafted by a Jew, possibly Ezra himself. ‡ **7:14** “Which you carry with you”: literally, “which is in your hand.”

rest of the silver and gold in whatever way you think best, in accordance with the will of your God.

¹⁹ But the items you have been given for the service of the Temple of your God must be all delivered to the God of Jerusalem. ²⁰ If there is anything else required for the Temple of your God that you have to provide, you may charge it to the royal treasury.

²¹ I, King Artaxerxes, decree that all the treasurers west of the Euphrates should provide whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require from you, and it must be provided in full, ²² up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred cors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of olive oil, and unrestricted amounts of salt. ²³ Make sure you provide in full whatever the God of heaven requires for his Temple, for why should his anger be brought down on the king and his sons? ²⁴ Also be aware that all of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, Temple servants, or other workers of this Temple are exempt from paying any tax, tribute, or fees, and you are not authorized to charge them.

²⁵ You, Ezra, are to follow the wisdom of your God which you possess, shall appoint magistrates and judges to provide justice to all the people west of the Euphrates—all those who follow the laws of your God. You are to teach these laws to those who do not. ²⁶ Anyone who does not keep the law of your God and the law of the king, will be severely punished, either

by death, banishment, seizure of property, or imprisonment.”

²⁷ Praise the Lord, the God of our forefathers, who put into the king's mind to honor the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem in this way, ²⁸ and who has shown me such kindness by honoring me before the king, his counselors, and all his high officials. Because the Lord my God was with me, I was encouraged and called together the leaders of Israel to return to Jerusalem with me.

8

¹ This is a list of the family leaders and genealogical records of those who came back with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

² From the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. From the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. From the sons of David, Hattush, ³ son of Shecaniah. From the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him 150 men were registered. ⁴ From the sons of Pahathmoab, Eliehoenai, son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men. ⁵ From the sons of Zattu,* Shecaniah, son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men. ⁶ From the sons of Adin, Ebed, son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men. ⁷ From the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah, son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men. ⁸ From the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah, son of Michael, and with him 80 men. ⁹ From the sons of Joab, Obadiah, son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men. ¹⁰ From the sons of Bani,† Shelomith, son

* **8:5** “Zattu”: Septuagint reading. † **8:10** “Bani”: Septuagint reading.

of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men. ¹¹ From the sons of Bebai, Zechariah, son of Bebai, and with him 28 men. ¹² From the sons of Azgad, Johanan, son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men. ¹³ From the sons of Adonikam, those who were last,[‡] their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men. ¹⁴ From the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

¹⁵ I gathered the returning exiles together at the Ahava Canal. We camped there for three days while I reviewed who had come—the ordinary people, the priests, and the Levites. I discovered there wasn't a single Levite ¹⁶ so I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men with good insight. ¹⁷ I told them to go to Iddo, the leader of the Temple servants at Casiphia, asking him and his relatives to send us ministers for the Temple of our God.

¹⁸ Since our gracious God was with us, they brought us Sherebiah, a man with good insight from the sons of Mahli, son of Levi, son of Israel, together with his sons and brothers, a total of eighteen men; ¹⁹ and Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiiah, from the sons of Merari, and his brothers and their sons, a total of twenty men. ²⁰ In addition they brought 220 of the Temple servants, a group appointed by David and his

[‡] **8:13** “Those who were last”: most likely meaning these were the younger sons of Adonikam, so they were the last of his family to return to Jerusalem.

officials to help the Levites. These were all registered by name.

²¹ At the Ahava Canal I called for a fast so we could confess our sins before God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, along with all our possessions. ²² I had been reluctant to ask the king to give us a military escort to protect us from enemies on the way. We had told the king, “Our gracious God takes care of everyone who follows him, but shows his anger against anyone who abandons him.” ²³ So we fasted and asked God to protect us, and he answered our prayers.

²⁴ Then I designated twelve of the leading priests, and § Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers, ²⁵ and I weighed out and handed them* the donations of silver and gold, and the items that the king, his counselors, his leaders, and all the people of Israel there had given for the Temple of our God. ²⁶ I weighed out and placed in their hands 650 talents of silver, silver Temple items weighing 100 talents, 100 talents of gold, ²⁷ 20 gold bowls worth 1,000 darics, and two articles of highly-polished bronze, as valuable as gold.

²⁸ I told them, “You are set apart for the Lord, and these Temple items are too. The silver and

§ **8:24** “And”: following the Septuagint reading, making one group of twelve priests, and another group of twelve Levites. Sherebiah and Hashabiah have just been identified as Levites, nor priests (see verses 18 and 19). * **8:25** Entrusting them with the responsibility of safeguarding these valuable items.

gold are a voluntary offering to the Lord, the God of your forefathers. ²⁹ You are to guard them and keep them safe until you hand them over, weighing them before the high priests, the Levites and the family leaders in Israel at Jerusalem, in the treasury rooms within the Lord's Temple.” ³⁰ The priests and Levites took responsibility for the silver and gold and the Temple items that had been weighed out to be brought to the Temple of our God in Jerusalem.

³¹ On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem, and our God was with us to protect us from enemy ambushes along the way. ³² Eventually we arrived in Jerusalem and rested there for three days.

³³ On the fourth day the silver and the gold and the Temple items were weighed out in the Temple of our God and handed over to Meremoth, son of Uriah the priest, accompanied by Eleazar, son of Phinehas. Also present were the Levites, Jozabad, son of Jeshua, and Noadiah, son of Binnui. ³⁴ Everything was checked, both by number and weight, and the total weight was written down at the time.

³⁵ Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel—twelve bulls for all of Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and a sin offering of twelve goats. All were sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Lord. ³⁶ They also delivered the king's decrees to the chief officers[†] of the king

[†] **8:36** “Chief officers”: literally, “satraps.”

and the governors of the province west of the Euphrates, who then provided assistance to the people and to God's Temple.

9

¹ Some time later after all this had happened, the leaders* came and told me, “The people of Israel, including the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the people around us whose disgusting religious practices are similar to those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. ² Some Israelites have even married women from these people, both themselves and their sons, mixing the holy race with these people of the land. Our leaders and officials are at the forefront of this sinful behavior.”

³ When I heard about this, I tore my clothes, pulled out some hair from my head and beard, and sat down, absolutely appalled. ⁴ Everyone who respected the instructions of the God of Israel† gathered around me because of this sin on the part of the exiles. I sat there shocked and appalled until the evening sacrifice.

⁵ At the evening sacrifice, I stood up from where I had been sitting in grief, with my clothes torn, and I kneeled down and held out my hands

* **9:1** These were civil leaders, not religious leaders. † **9:4** “Everyone who respected the instructions of the God of Israel”: literally, “Everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel.” The emphasis here is not so much fear but an openness to instruction and obedience to what God had said.

to the Lord my God. ⁶ I prayed, “My God, I am so ashamed and embarrassed to come and pray to you,[‡] my God, because we are in over our heads in sin, and our guilt has risen to the heavens. ⁷ From the time of our forefathers to now, we have been deeply guilty. Because of our sins, we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the earth, killed and taken prisoner, robbed and humiliated, just like we are today.

⁸ Now for a short time the Lord our God has given us grace, preserving a few of us as a remnant, and giving us safety[§] in his holy place. Our God has brightened our lives* by giving us some relief from our slavery. ⁹ Though we are slaves, our God did not abandon us in our slavery, but he showed us his trustworthy love by making the kings of Persia kind to us, by reviving us so we could rebuild the Temple of our God and repair its ruined state, and by giving us a wall of protection around Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰ But now, our God, what do we have to say for ourselves after all this? For we have given up following your commands ¹¹ that you gave through your servants the prophets, telling us, “The land you are entering to become its owners is contaminated by the sins of its peoples, the disgusting religious practices that they have filled it with, from one side to the other. ¹² So do not let your daughters marry their sons, or allow

[‡] **9:6** “To come and pray to you”: literally, “to lift up my face to you.” **§ 9:8** “Safety”: literally, “tent peg.” * **9:8** “Lives”: literally, “eyes.”

their daughters marry your sons. Never make a peace or friendship treaty with them, so that you may live well and eat the good food the land produces, and give the land as an inheritance to your children forever.'

¹³ Now that we are receiving all this punishment because of our sinful actions and our terrible guilt—though you, our God, have not punished us as much as our sins deserve, and have still given us this remnant[†]— ¹⁴ shall we break your commandments once again and intermarry with the peoples who commit these disgusting religious practices? Wouldn't you become so angry with us that you would destroy us? No remnant would be left, not a single survivor. ¹⁵ Lord, God of Israel, you do what is right. Today we're all that is left, a remnant. We are before you in our guilt, but no one can stand before you because of it."

10

¹ As Ezra was praying and confessing sins, weeping and falling down on his face before God's Temple, a very large crowd of Israelites, men, women, and children, gathered around him. The people were weeping bitterly as well. ² Shecaniah, son of Jehiel, an Elamite, said to Ezra: "Yes, we have been unfaithful to our God because we have married foreign women from the people of the land. But even so there is still hope for Israel over this. ³ Let us make a solemn

[†] **9:13** "Remnant": referring to those who had returned from exile.

agreement right now before our God that we will send away all the foreign wives and their children. We will follow the directions given by you and those who respect the instructions of our God, carried out according to the Law. ⁴ Take action! It's your responsibility. We are with you. Be brave and do it!"

⁵ So Ezra stood up and made the leading priests, Levites, and all the Israelites present take an oath to act on what had just been said. They all took the oath. ⁶ Then Ezra left them in front of God's Temple, and went to the room of Jehohanan, son of Eliashib. During the time he stayed there, he didn't eat or drink anything, because he was still mourning the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

⁷ Then a proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles should assemble in Jerusalem. ⁸ Anyone who did not come within three days would have all their property confiscated, and would be banned from the assembly of the exiles. This was the decision of the leaders and elders.

⁹ Within three days, everyone from Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem. On the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people sat in the square beside God's Temple, shivering because of this issue and also because of the heavy rain. ¹⁰ Ezra the priest stood up and told them, "You have committed sin by marrying foreign women, making Israel's guilt even worse. ¹¹ Now you must confess your sin to the Lord, the God of your forefathers, and do

what he requires. Sever your connections with the people of the land and your foreign wives.”

¹² The whole assembly answered in a loud voice: “We agree, and we promise to do as you say! ¹³ But there are a lot of people here, and it's pouring with rain. We can't stay outside. More to the point, this isn't something that can be fixed in one or two days, for we have sinned extremely seriously in this. ¹⁴ Let our leaders act on behalf of the whole assembly. Then let every man in each of our towns who has married a foreign woman be given an appointment to come and meet, together with the elders and judges of that town, until our God is no longer angry with us over this.”

¹⁵ The only ones to oppose this were Jonathan, son of Asahel, and Jahzeiah, son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite.

¹⁶ So this what the exiles did, selecting Ezra the priest and family leaders, according to their family divisions, all of them specifically named. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to begin the inquiry, ¹⁷ and by the first day of the first month they had finished handling all the cases of men who had married foreign women.

¹⁸ Among the descendants of the priests, the following had married foreign women: from the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and his brothers Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹ They vowed to send their wives away, and they presented a ram from the flock as a guilt offering for their guilt.

²⁰ From the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.

²¹ From the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah.

²² From the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasa.

²³ Among the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (or Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴ Among the singers: Eliashib. Among the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

²⁵ Among the Israelites: From the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah,* and Benaiah.

²⁶ From the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

²⁷ From the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

²⁸ From the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Haniah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

²⁹ From the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth.

³⁰ From the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

³¹ From the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³² Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

³³ From the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

* **10:25** Following the parallel list in 1 Esdras 9:26. The Hebrew text is Malkijah, but he has already been listed in the same verse.

³⁴ From the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, ³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi, ³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

³⁸ From the sons of Binnui:† Shimei, ³⁹ Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, ⁴⁰ Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹ Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴² Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

⁴³ From the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

⁴⁴ All of these men listed had married foreign women. They divorced them‡ and sent them away with their children.§

† **10:38** Following the Septuagint reading. ‡ **10:44** “divorced them”: implied. § **10:44** “They divorced them and sent them away with their children,” or “and some of them had wives by whom they had children.” The Hebrew is unclear. The Septuagint of 1 Esdras 9:36 gives the former translation.

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Version translation in American English

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Language: English

Dialect: American

Translation by: Dr. Jonathan Gallagher

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2024-02-21

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