

Ezra Chapter 8

Ezra 8:1 "These [are] now the chief of their fathers, and [this is] the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king."

Which follows from here to the end of (Ezra 8:14).

“This is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon”: The number given here amounts to 1754. But this is the register of adult males only, and as there were women and children also (Ezra 8:21). The whole caravan may be considered as comprising between six and seven thousand.

"In the reign of Artaxerxes the king": That is, Darius Hystaspis, in the seventh year of his reign (see Ezra 7:1). Though many think Artaxerxes Longimanus is meant.

This is a listing of those who went with Ezra out of Babylonian captivity back to their homeland. The genealogy could have partially been to make sure these were Hebrews leaving Babylon, but it could also, be just because the Hebrews kept good records. Artaxerxes had given Ezra permission to take all who wanted to go home. He was king of Persia. There is a spiritual lesson in this for the believers. We must be willing to be redeemed before we can actually head for our Promised Land, heaven. The release of the world is as important as the accepting the Lord as Redeemer.

Ezra 8:2 "Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush."

"Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel": Not Daniel the prophet, he was of the royal blood, and of the tribe of Judah. This was a priest, a descendant of Ithamar, as Gershom was of Eleazar in the line of Phinehas.

"Of the sons of David; Hattush": Perhaps the same with him in (1 Chron. 3:22), who was a descendant of David the king. These three men seem to have come alone without any of their families, at least they are not mentioned, nor their numbers given, as the rest that follow are.

Ezra 8:3 "Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males a hundred and fifty."

Who is so described, to distinguish him from another Shechaniah (Ezra 8:5).

"Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy, of the males a hundred and fifty": Males only were reckoned, not women and children.

The different groups of people were actually different classes of families.

Ezra 8:4-14 "Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males." "Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males." "Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males." "And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males." "And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males." "Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males." "And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and threescore males." "And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males." "And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him a hundred and ten males." "And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names [are] these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males." "Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males."

Though that there were such that went up is clear from (Ezra 8:21; from Ezra 8:4 to the end of Ezra 8:14), an account here is given of the number of the males that went up with Ezra. Who were chiefly, if not altogether, sons of those that went up with Zerubbabel. Such of them as were left there behind, and now returned, at least a great number of them, (see Ezra 2:1). It is particularly remarked of the sons of Adonikam (Ezra 8:13), that they were the last of them. Not that they were the last that came in to go with Ezra, or were backward and dilatory, but the last with respect to the first of his sons that were gone before, and seem with them to be the whole of his family. The number of all that went up under their respective heads amounts to 1496.

We dealt more fully with the family of Adonikam in the first exodus. The difference in the number of people returning on this second trip and the first was evident in the family of Adonikam. On the first trip his family had 666 going back. In this trip there were 60. Of course, the numbers were just for the males and there were approximately 3 times that many, who would actually return, counting the women and children.

Ezra 8:15 "And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi."

From whence also the river bore the same name; or that from the river (see Ezra 8:21). And may be the same with Adiabene, a country in Assyria, which had its name from the river Adiava.

"And there abode we in tents three days": Or pitched their camp; this was the place of their rendezvous.

"And I viewed the people and the priests": Mustered them, took the number of them, and what tribe and families they were of.

"And found there none of the sons of Levi?": Excepting the priests.

The river spoken of here, is a small stream that flows into the Euphrates. It was about 8 days journey from Babylon. It appears they stopped to rest the people. They abode in tents, because

there were so many of them. This trip would take months, and this was the only way to house the people on the trip. There were no Levites with them. This was very strange. 74 Levites had gone up with Zerubbabel, and this trip Ezra found none. This does not mean there were none at all, but that he saw none.

Ezra 8:16 "Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding."

These were all in the camp, in some part of it, to whom Ezra sent messengers to come unto him; three of them are of the same name. The first nine were men of chief note, rank, and dignity in their family, and the other two were noted for men of good sense. And that could speak to a case well, and so fit to be sent on such an affair as they were.

Ezra 8:17 "And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, [and] to his brethren the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God."

Not a place by the Caspian Sea, and near the Caspian mountains, as Munster, which was too far off to go and return in the time they must (see Ezra 7:9). But, as Jarchi, a place in Babylon so called, a village near it, or a parish or street in it, where Ezra knew lived many of the Levites and Nethinim, and where Iddo was the chief of the Levites, and over them both.

"And I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia. But Iddo was not one of the Nethinim; for he was chief of the Levites, and by his authority many of them were sent as well as of the Nethinim. But none of the latter were over the Levites, for they were servants to them (Ezra 8:20). But, according to Jarchi, the Nethinim are not at all intended in this clause, who reads the words: "To Iddo and Achim, (the name of a man with him; perhaps it may be better rendered, "to Iddo and his brother"), who were appointed, or settled, in the place Casiphia. And with him De Dieu agrees, and so the Syriac version: Who dwelt in Casiphia:

"That they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God": Both Levites to be singers and porters there, and the Nethinim to wait on them.

The chief men mentioned (in verse 16), were men who had enough authority that they would be accepted by Iddo as messengers from Ezra. They were men who would be respected enough that Iddo would listen carefully to what they had to say. Iddo was the chief of the Nethinim. He was, also the head of the Jews at Casiphia. It appears that even though the Jews were in exile, their families were ruled over by the head of the family, as if they were a separate country. The Nethinim had been set aside to do the menial work in the temple. Ezra requested them to come, and help him by being ministers in the house of the LORD.

Ezra 8:18 "And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;"

Favoring their designs and orders, protecting those that were sent, and inclining those they were sent to use their interest and authority with those that were under them. And making them willing also to agree to what was proposed to them.

"They brought us a man of understanding of the sons of Mahli": The son of Levi, the son of Israel; an Israelite, of the tribe of Levi, in the line of Mahli a son of Merari, the third son of Levi.

"And Sherebiah": Or rather "even Sherebiah". So Aben Ezra; For he is the understanding man that is meant, and described by his pedigree.

"With his sons and his brethren, eighteen": All together made this number.

Ezra was thanking God for the good fortune of the Levites that came back to Ezra. Ezra knew this was a blessing from God. Sherebiah and Mahli may be the same person. There were eighteen that came.

Ezra 8:19 "And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;"

These were of the same division of Levites as Sherebiah.

"His brethren and their sons, twenty": These thirty eight, with those they came with, were all Levites; the Nethinim follow.

These were also Levites from the division of Merari.

Ezra 8:20 "Also of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim: all of them were expressed by name."

To wait upon them, and minister to them, as they did to the priests. Some think those were the same with the Gibeonites, whom Joshua gave to the service of the sanctuary, and David confirmed. But others are of opinion these were different from them, and an addition to them.

"Two hundred and twenty Nethinim: all of them were expressed by name": In the history that Iddo sent of them to Ezra. And so the names of the Levites, though not here expressed, only the names of those they came with.

We remember, the Nethinim were in the service of doing the menial jobs in the temple. They were not spoken of as Nethinim, until after the captivity.

Ezra 8:21 "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

After the messengers to Iddo were returned with those they brought with them.

"That we might afflict ourselves before our God": Humble themselves before him for their sins, confess them, and declare their repentance of them, and ask forgiveness for them.

"To seek of him a right way for us": To take from thence towards Jerusalem, to be directed by him in it. Either by a prophet, or by a vision in a dream, as Aben Ezra; or rather by the guidance of his providence. This they sought in prayer by the river side, where it had been usual with them, and since has been, to perform religious exercises (see Ezek. 1:1). Hence Tertullian calls the prayers of the Jews "orationes littorales"; they sought not so much which was the shortest and easiest way for them to travel in, as which was the safest.

"And for our little ones and for all our substance": For the safe conveyance of them. This shows, that though males only are numbered, as before, yet they had their wives and children with them. For little ones cannot be supposed without women to take care of them.

Ezra called the fast to prepare for the rest of the journey. He wanted the assistance of the LORD as he carried these people on this several month journey to Jerusalem. The fast was to receive instructions from God on exactly how they should proceed. They wanted no harm coming to the women and children, or to the precious cargo. Ezra knew his help was in the LORD.

Ezra 8:22 "For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God [is] upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath [is] against all them that forsake him."

Which he might have had, only by asking for them; so great was the interest he had in the king's favor.

"To help us against the enemy in the way": The Arabs, Samaritans, and others, that might lie in wait for them, to rob them of their substance.

"Because we had spoken unto the king": Of the special favor of God to them, his singular providence in the protection of them.

"Saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him": That pray unto him, serve and worship him; his hand is open to them to bestow all needful good upon them, temporal and spiritual. And his power and providence are over them, to protect and defend them from all evil.

"But his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him": His word, his ways and worship; his powerful wrath, or the strength and force of it, is exerted against them and they are sure to feel the weight and dreadful effects of it. And now all this being said to the king, after this, to desire a guard to protect them. It would look as if they had not that favor in the sight of God, and did not believe what they had said, but distrusted his power and providence towards them. Therefore, rather than reflect any dishonor on God, they chose to expose themselves to danger, seeking his face and favor, and relying on his goodness and power.

Ezra knew there were robbers along the way in the land they must pass through. He had not asked for help from the Persians, because if they were really of God, as they had told the Persian king they were, the LORD would take care of them.

Ezra 8:23 "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us."

Sought the Lord by fasting and prayer for a good journey, and preservation in it.

"And he was entreated of us": Accepted their prayer, as Jarchi, so that they came safe to Jerusalem.

This is saying when they fasted and prayed, the LORD heard their prayer, and put into their hearts exactly what they were to do.

Ezra 8:24 "Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,"

That were in company with him; so that it seems there were more than the two mentioned (Ezra 8:2). Very probably their families, or some of their brethren, were with them.

"Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them": These men named were Levites, and not priests (Ezra 8:18), and therefore the copulative "and" must be supplied. And Sherebiah, etc. or with the twelve priests, Sherebiah, etc. and ten Levites more with them. So that the number of priests and Levites were equal, and in all twenty four.

Ezra 8:25 "And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, [even] the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel [there] present, had offered:"

When he delivered them to them. This he did as a proof of his own integrity and faithfulness, and as a security against any charge or accusation of embezzling any part of them, and to set them an example. And also that they might be under no temptation of acting such a part, and might be vindicated should they be charged with it.

"Even the offering of the house of our God": What was freely offered for the service of it.

"Which the king and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered": As freewill offerings (see Ezra 7:15).

This was dividing all of the silver and gold into the hands of 12 trustworthy priests, so the valuables would be scattered out and not so easily found in one place. There was a fairly large amount since this was what the king had sent, as well as the offerings the people themselves had gathered up and sent.

Ezra 8:26 "I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents, [and] of gold a hundred talents;"

The custody of the contributions and of the sacred vessels was, during the journey, committed to twelve of the chief priests, who, with the assistance of ten of their brethren, were to watch closely over them by the way, and deliver them into the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

If a talent weighs 75 pounds, this is speaking of 48,750 pounds of silver. The silver vessels weighed 7,500 pounds in silver. The gold, also, weighed 7,500 pounds. The gold, alone weighed 120,000 ounces. You can see why Ezra was concerned.

Ezra 8:27 "Also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold."

Not of a thousand drams (i.e., darics) each, but worth altogether a thousand darics.

“Of fine copper”: The word translated "fine," which occurs here only, is thought to mean either "yellow" or "glittering" (see the margin). Probably the vessels were of orichalcum (a yellow metal prized in ancient times, probably a form of brass or a similar alloy). An amalgam which was either brass or something nearly approaching to brass, but which was very rarely produced in the ancient world, and, when produced, was regarded as highly valuable.

Ezra 8:28 "And I said unto them, Ye [are] holy unto the LORD; the vessels [are] holy also; and the silver and the gold [are] a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers."

As they were dedicated and set apart to holy service, so the vessels were sacred to holy uses, and therefore not to be converted to any other.

"And the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers": And therefore not to be made use of but in his service.

Ezra was stressing to them the necessity of getting all of these precious items for the temple through. The value in dollars and cents were important, but the idea these treasures belonged to God made this much more important. They were to guard this with their lives.

Ezra 8:29 "Watch ye, and keep [them], until ye weigh [them] before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD."

The vessels, the gold, and the silver, that they be not hurt and diminished.

"Until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord": That is, until they had delivered them in full weight, as they had received them, in the presence of those persons as witnesses, and into their hands, in order to be laid up in the chambers and treasuries of the temple.

Ezra weighed and made a record of exactly what he had entrusted to each priest. They would weigh them in when they arrived at the temple in Jerusalem. This was good record keeping. They

would not be careless with the things of the LORD. Those in authority in the temple in Jerusalem would receive them and weigh them in. There would be a record kept of that as well.

Ezra 8:30 "So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring [them] to Jerusalem unto the house of our God."

The twelve priests and twelve Levites, mentioned in (Ezra 8:24).

"The weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God": This they undertook to do, and did.

They did as Ezra had asked them. Each priest and Levite would be responsible for the portion of the treasure that had been entrusted to him.

Ezra 8:31 "Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way."

The month Nisan, answering to part of March and part of April. This was two days before the Passover began.

"And the hand of our God was upon us": Guiding, directing, and protecting them by his providence.

"And he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way": Either by intimidating them, that they dared not attack them, or by directing them to take a different road, whereby they escaped them (see Ezra 8:22).

God had protected them from all harm, as they journeyed back to their home in Judah. Ezra's fears never happened. They did not even encounter the thieves. Ezra's faith in God brought them through safely.

Ezra 8:32 "And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days."

Before they went about any business, delivered what was committed to them for the use of the temple, and the commissions to the king's officers. As it was but proper they should have some rest after such a fatiguing journey.

This was speaking of a rest they took from their long journey. They were safe to rest now.

Ezra 8:33 "Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him [was] Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them [was] Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;"

After their arrival at Jerusalem.

"Was the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, weighed in the house of our God": The temple, that it might be seen and known that the exact weight which had been deposited with them was now faithfully delivered.

"By the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas": These were priests.

"And with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites": Two priests and two Levites. For since there were of both that were charged with the above things, it was proper there should be some of both, when weighed, that they might be witnesses of their fidelity.

Each one of the 12, that the treasures had been entrusted to weighed them to the son of the high priest in Jerusalem. The men mentioned in the verse above, were priests and Levites. They would put the treasures in safe keeping in the temple.

Ezra 8:34 "By number [and] by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time."

They were delivered in by tale and weight, which exactly agreed to the number and weight in which they received them.

"And all the weight was written at that time": An account was taken in writing, and laid up, that it might not only be known hereafter what freewill offerings had been made in Babylon. But that it might be a voucher for the fidelity and integrity of those that brought them, should it ever be called in question.

The weights were recorded in a record book kept at the temple. The twelve, who were responsible for the safe journey, had now shifted their responsibility to those in charge of the treasures in the temple.

Ezra 8:35 "[Also] the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats [for] a sin offering: all [this was] a burnt offering unto the LORD."

Namely, those that now came along with Ezra.

"Offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel": By way of thankfulness for their deliverance from captivity, and for their safe journey.

"Twelve bullocks for all Israel": According to the number of the tribes; and there might be some of every tribe that now came up.

"Ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs": These and the bullocks were burnt offerings.

"Twelve he goats for a sin offering": According to the number of the twelve tribes, also to make atonement for sins they had been guilty of.

"All this was a burnt offering unto the Lord": Excepting the twelve he goats, which were a sin offering.

Their offering was for themselves, but for all Israel as well. This offering was very similar to the offering the people gave when Zerubbabel returned. The number of animals are smaller, because those who came out of Babylon this trip were much fewer in number.

Ezra 8:36 "And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God."

The governors of the provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Judea, which were on that side of Euphrates the land of Israel was.

"And they furthered the people, and the house of God": Or "lifted them up". Eased them of all burdens, and freed them from all impediments, and assisted them and furnished them with everything, as the decree of Artaxerxes enjoined them. And provided everything as they required for ornamenting the temple, and for the sacrifices of it. All which is to be understood of the king's lieutenants and governors, who obeyed his commands.

This was speaking of the documents that Ezra brought from the king giving him authority to draw from the treasury. The lieutenants under the governors, were in charge of it. It appears, that they did just as the documents had requested them to do immediately.

Ezra Chapter 8 Questions

1. Who was king when Ezra went to Jerusalem?
2. Who had permission from the king to go to Jerusalem?
3. The release of the _____ is as important as the accepting the Lord as _____.
4. What does the small number of the family of Adonikam in this journey reveal to us?
5. Where did they gather, and set up their tents for three days?
6. When Ezra viewed the people, he discovered there were no _____.
7. The river, in verse 15, flowed into what large river?
8. How far was this first stop from Babylon?
9. How many Levites had gone with Zerubbabel?

10. Who did Ezra send to Iddo to get Levites and Nethinim?
11. Why did Ezra want them?
12. How many came, mentioned in verse 18?
13. How many Nethinim came?
14. What was their job in the temple?
15. Why did Ezra proclaim a fast?
16. Why had he not asked for a Persian escort?
17. What did Ezra do for safety of the valuables they were carrying?
18. The silver and gold were a _____ offering unto the LORD.
19. What would they do with the treasures, when they made it to Jerusalem?
20. How long did they rest in Jerusalem?
21. Who took care of the gold and silver in the temple?
22. Those who made the second trip made _____ offerings.
23. Who did they make the offerings for?
24. What happened when Ezra showed the documents from the king to the lieutenants?