

## Ezra Chapter 9

**Ezra 9:1 "Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, [doing] according to their abominations, [even] of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites."**

When the captives with Ezra had refreshed themselves, and weighed the money and vessels they brought, and put them into the hands of proper persons. And offered sacrifices, and delivered the king's commissions to his lieutenants and governors, and shown his own.

"The princes came to me": Some of the nobles of Israel, the most religious of them, who were concerned at the corruptions that were among them, though not a sufficient number to reform them.

"Saying the people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands": But joined with them, though not in idolatrous practices, yet by marrying with them, which might lead them into doing them.

"Doing according to their abominations": Not serving idols as they did, but imitating them in their marriages.

"Even of the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites": Affinity with many of these was forbidden by an express law (Deut. 7:1). All but the Moabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians, and from these for the same reason they were to abstain. Namely, lest they should be drawn into idolatry. That the priests and Levites should do this, who ought to have known the law, and instructed the people better, was very sad and shocking.

It appears that the time between when Zerubbabel had brought the people to Jerusalem in the first return to their homeland, and until this return led by Ezra, there had been very little government. It was bad enough for the people of Israel to break God's law and marry the heathens around them, but it was even worse that the priests and leaders were involved in this as well. All of those listed above, were people forbidden for the Hebrews to marry. These were the very people that God had removed out of the land when He gave it to Israel.

**Ezra 9:2 "For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of [those] lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass."**

Some that were widowers not only took wives to themselves of the above nations, either when they were of Babylon, where many of these nations also were, or rather since their return. But they took for their sons also; yea, some that had wives took Heathenish ones to them (see Mal. 2:13).

"So that the holy seed": Such as the Lord had separated from other nations, chosen them to be a holy people above all others, and devoted them to his service and worship.

"Have mingled themselves with the people of those lands": Before mentioned, by marrying them.

"Yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass": They were the first that went into it and were ringleaders of it, who should by their authority and example have restrained others. Or they were in this first trespass; which was the first gross and capital one the people fell into after their return from the captivity.

They were doing what was right in their own sight, and forgetting the teachings of the law of God. The sad thing was they were about to commit the very same sins that caused them to be driven out by God before. These strange wives, or husbands, would bring in their abominations to worship in Judah.

**Ezra 9:3 "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished."**

Both inward and outward garments, that which was close to his body, and that which was thrown loose over it; and this he did in token of sorrow and mourning, as if something very dreadful and distressing (see Job 1:20).

"And plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard": Did not shave them, and so transgressed not the law (in Lev. 19:27), but plucked off the hair of them, to show his extreme sorrow for what was told him. Which has frequently been done by mourners on sorrowful occasions in various nations (see Isa. 15:2). So in the apocryphal "addition" to Esther, "And laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning. And instead of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair." (Esther 14:2). She is said to fill every place of joy with the tearing of her hair; and Lavinia in Virgil; several passages from Homer, and other writers. Both Greek and Latin, are mentioned by Bochart as instances of it.

"And sat down astonished": Quite amazed at the ingratitude of the people, that after such favors shown them, in returning them from captivity unto their own land, and settling them there, they should give into practices so contrary to the will of God.

Ezra was overwhelmed with grief when he saw the extent of the sins they had committed. The renting of the clothes, show a deep mourning. Plucking out the hairs on his head and beard was an extreme show of shame and mourning for what the people had done. Sometimes the head was shaved in grief, but this was so evil an act upon their part, that he actually tore out his hair by the roots.

**Ezra 9:4 "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice."**

That had a reverence for the word of God, and the things contained in it; feared to break the laws of God, and trembled at his judgments. Which they might apprehend would come upon transgressors (see Isaiah 46:2).

"Because of the transgression of those that had been carried away": Into Babylon, and were now returned, and which was an aggravation of their transgression.

"And I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice": Or until the ninth hour, as the Syriac version, which was about our three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the evening sacrifice was offered. Perhaps it was in the morning when Ezra first received his information from the princes.

It appears that they did not know of this being a sin, or else thought the law did not apply to them. Now that Ezra had shown such terrible grief in this matter, it had frightened those who understand the magnitude of what they had done. Ezra was in a state of shock all day long.

**Ezra 9:5 "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,"**

The signs and tokens of it, particularly sitting on the ground; or "from my fasting", having eaten nothing that day. It being early in the morning when he was told the above case.

"And having rent my garment and my mantle": Which he had done before, and still kept them on him in the same case.

"Fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God": In the posture and with the gesture of a humble supplicant.

When Ezra stopped to pray at the evening sacrifice, he fell to his knees before the LORD with both hands extended to Him.

**Ezra 9:6 "And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over [our] head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens."**

Here begins the prayer of Ezra, and that with faith in God as covenant God, even when he was about to make confession of sin, and repentance for it. That prayer is right which is put up in faith, and that repentance genuine which is accompanied with faith, and flows from it.

"I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God": A true sight and sense of sin causes shame and blushing, and never more than when a man is sensible of his covenant interest in God, and of his grace and favor to him, particularly in the forgiveness of his sin (see Ezek. 16:6).

"Or our iniquities are increased over our head": Arisen and swelled like mighty waters, which seemed to threaten an overwhelming of them.

"And our trespass is grown up unto the heavens": Being done in an open, public, and insolent manner. And in such numbers, that they were, as it were, piled up in heaps, reaching to heaven, and calling down vengeance from thence. Ezra includes himself as being one of the same nation; and these sins being so common were become national ones, which involved all the individuals, and exposed them to the divine resentment.

Ezra was being ashamed for all of the people. They were so deep in sin themselves, they were not even ashamed. Ezra remembered why Israel and Judah went into captivity. He knew these people had done enough to deserve to die. This was the beginning of a prayer for them.

**Ezra 9:7 "Since the days of our fathers [have] we [been] in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, [and] our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as [it is] this day."**

The sins they were guilty of had been long continued in, which was an aggravation of them.

"And for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands": The ten tribes and their king into the hand of the king of Assyria, the kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, into the hands of the king of Babylon, with the priests and people.

"To the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil": Some were slain with the sword, others carried captive, and the houses of them all plundered and spoiled.

"And to confusion of face, as it is this day": Being filled with shame when they reflected on their sins, the cause of those evils. And besides, the captivity of the ten tribes continued, and of many others, which exposed them to shame among their neighbors.

Ezra knew that the captivity of Israel and Judah had been a punishment from God for their sinful ways. God had turned them over to the various kings. The sins of their fathers and grandfathers were the same sins they were involved in now. They did not learn a thing from the captivity in Babylon. He was explaining that they deserved all of their difficulties for their sins.

**Ezra 9:8 "And now for a little space grace hath been [showed] from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage."**

It was but a small time since the Lord first began to show favor to them, so that they soon after began to revolt from him. Which argued the strange propensity of their minds to that which is evil, and from which they could not be restrained by the recent goodness of God unto them.

"To leave us a remnant to escape": Out of captivity, from whence a small number were graciously and safely returned to their own land.

"And to give us a nail in his holy place": A fixed settlement in the land of Judea, the holy land the Lord had chosen. And in the temple, the holy place sacred to his worship. Or a prince of their own, Zerubbabel, to be the governor of them, under whom they might enjoy settled happiness and prosperity (see Isa. 22:23).

"That our God may lighten our eyes": Refresh our spirits, cheer our souls, and give us light and gladness (see 1 Sam. 14:27).

"And give us a little reviving in our bondage": For they were still in some degree of bondage, being in subjection, and tributaries to the kings of Persia. But yet being returned to their own land, it was as life from the dead unto them, at least it was giving them a little life, liberty, and joy.

God always left a remnant, because they were His people and He loved them. They had come back into the land, just a small portion of the great company of people who had originally come from Egypt. God had once again, granted them grace to begin again, and now they were sinning again as they had before.

**Ezra 9:9 "For we [were] bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem."**

To the Chaldeans when in Babylon, which was more than the Jews in the times of Christ would own (John 8:33).

"Yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage": Had not left them to continue in it always.

"But hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia": Moved them to have pity and compassion on them, and release them.

"To give us a reviving": While in captivity, they were as in their graves, and like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 37:1-14), but revived upon the proclamation of Cyrus, and the encouragement he gave them to return to their own land.

"To set up the house of our God, and repair the desolations thereof": Both to rebuild the temple, and to restore the worship of it.

"And to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. Not to set up the walls of Jerusalem, and of other cities, which as yet was not done; but rather the walls of their houses, which they had rebuilt. They had walled houses given them in Judah and Jerusalem; though the word signifies a hedge or fence, such as is about gardens and vineyards, and may denote the protection of the kings of Persia, which was a fence to them against the Samaritans and others. And especially the hedge of divine Providence about them, which guarded and defended them (see Job 1:10).

This was an amazing thing how God had extended mercy to them again. It was almost unexplainable why the Persian kings had suddenly decided to let them return to their homeland. It was even more unexplainable, why they would give all the gold and silver to rebuild the temple. The only answer was that God put this in their hearts to do. Ezra is in essence saying, God has done all of this for us to give us a new start, how can we fail him by sinning again?

**Ezra 9:10 "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments," There was nothing left for Ezra to say, except to repent for all of the people. He admitted guilt for all the people.**

What apology or excuse can be made for such ingratitude? What can be said in favor of such a people? What kindness can be expected to be shown to a people who had behaved in so base a manner?

"For we have forsaken thy commandments": Particularly those which related to marriages with people of other nations.

**Ezra 9:11 "Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness."**

Moses, and Joshua, and others (see Deut. 7:3).

"Saying, the land, unto which ye go to possess it": Meaning the land of Canaan.

"Is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness": Which is to be understood not of their idolatries only, but of their incestuous marriages, and impure copulations, on which account the Lord spewed out the old inhabitants of it. For which reason the Jews ought to have been careful not to have defiled it again by similar practices (see Lev. 18:1).

God had warned them of the sinfulness of the people, that he had run out to give the land to the Hebrews. The corruption of the nations around them and of Canaan, which they had overthrown, had been common knowledge to them from the beginning. They seemed to never learn. The abominations of the heathens were their downfall.

**Ezra 9:12 "Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave [it] for an inheritance to your children for ever."**

That is, in marriage (see Deut. 7:3), where the prohibition is expressed in the same language.

"Nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever": That is, as long as they continue in their idolatries and impurities (see Deut. 23:6).

"That ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever": That they might be strengthened and established in the land into which they were brought, and enjoy all the good things it produced. And leave their children in the possession of it, to hold at least until the Messiah came (see Isa. 1:19).

God had forbidden intermarriage with these people. God's law had not changed. They were still obligated to keep God's commandments not to intermarry. They had done exactly what God had forbidden them to do.

**Ezra 9:13 "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities [deserve], and hast given us [such] deliverance as this;"**

As famine, sword, pestilence, and captivity, for their idolatries and other heinous sins.

"Seeing that our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve": For they deserved eternal punishment, whereas it was temporal punishment that was inflicted, and this moderate, and now stopped. The sense is, according to Aben Ezra, "thou hast refrained from writing some of our sins in the book of remembrance, and thou hast let them down below in the earth, according to the sense of thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". But Jarchi better, "thou hast refrained thyself from exacting of us all our sins, and hast exacted of us beneath our sins (or less than they deserve), and hast not taken vengeance on us according to all our sins:"

"And hast given us such deliverance as this": From captivity, which they now enjoyed.

Ezra realized as bad as the punishment had been, when they had lost their homeland and had gone into captivity, it was not as bad as what they deserved. They all deserved to die.

**Ezra 9:14 "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed [us], so that [there should be] no remnant nor escaping?"**

That are guilty of abominable idolatries, and of all uncleanness.

"Wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us": It might be justly expected.

"So that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" Any left or suffered to escape the wrath, of all that was consumed by it.

Ezra was aware that God is a loving God. He was also aware that He was just in His judgements. He feared that the punishment this time would be death for everyone. Ezra felt they should expect death for these terrible sins they had committed.

**Ezra 9:15 "O LORD God of Israel, thou [art] righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as [it is] this day: behold, we [are] before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this."**

And would appear to be so, should Israel be entirely cut off, and utterly consumed for their iniquities.

"For we remain yet escaped, as it is this day": That they remained yet escaped out of captivity, and escaped the wrath and vengeance of God, was not owing to any deserts of theirs, but to the grace and mercy of God, who had not stirred up all his wrath, as their sins deserved.

"Behold, we are before thee in our trespasses": To do with us as seems good in thy sight; we have nothing to plead on our behalf, but cast ourselves at thy feet, if so be unmerited favor may be shown us.

"For we cannot stand before thee because of this": This evil of contracting affinity with the nations; we cannot defend ourselves. We cannot plead ignorance of the divine commands. We have nothing to say for ourselves why judgment should not be passed upon us. We leave ourselves in thine hands, and at thy mercy.

God is full of mercy. His righteousness was from generation to generation, but so was His mercy. There was no way they could stand and face God with these sins not atoned for.

### **Ezra Chapter 9 Questions**

1. What terrible report came to Ezra in verse 1?
2. When had they begun committing this sin?
3. What was worse than the people committing this sin?
4. What were the Hebrews called in verse 2?
5. They were doing what was right in \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What was so bad about the heathen marriages?
7. What did Ezra do, when he heard the news?
8. What did Ezra do, that showed the extreme sin they had committed?
9. Who assembled to Ezra?
10. When did Ezra begin to pray?
11. Did he stand and pray? Explain.
12. Who was Ezra ashamed for?
13. They had done enough to deserve to \_\_\_\_\_.



14. The captivity of Judah and Israel had been what?
15. God always left a \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Who had released them to return to their homes?
17. What was even more unexplainable than their release?
18. Why had this happened?
19. What was Ezra doing in verse 10?
20. What had the land been called, before they received it from God?
21. In verse 12, what had been forbidden?
22. God had punished them \_\_\_\_\_ than their iniquities deserved.
23. What question does Ezra ask the people in verse 14?
24. God is full of \_\_\_\_\_.