

# THE BOOK OF EZRA

## The return of the exiles to Jerusalem

**1**<sup>1</sup>NOW IN THE FIRST YEAR OF CYRUS king of Persia, so that the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the heart of Cyrus king of Persia; and he issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing, to this effect:

<sup>2</sup>This is the word Of Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. <sup>3</sup>To every man of his people now among you I say, God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD the God of Israel, the God whose city is Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And every remaining Jew, wherever he may be living, may claim aid from his neighbours in that place, silver and gold, goods [*Or pack-animals*] and cattle, in addition to the voluntary offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>Thereupon the heads of families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, answered the summons, all whom God had moved to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>Their neighbours all assisted them with gifts of every kind, silver [*with gifts ... silver: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 2.9; Heb with vessels of silver*] and gold, goods [*Or pack-animals*] and cattle and valuable gifts in abundance [*in abundance: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 2.9; Heb apart*] in addition to any voluntary service. <sup>7</sup>Moreover, Cyrus king of Persia produced the vessels of the house of the LORD which Nebuchadnezzar had removed from Jerusalem and placed in the temple of his god; <sup>8</sup>and he handed them over into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who made an inventory of them for Sheshbazzar the ruler of Judah. <sup>9</sup>This was the list: thirty gold basins, a thousand silver basins, twenty-nine vessels of various kinds, <sup>10</sup>thirty golden bowls, four hundred and ten silver bowls of various types, and a thousand other vessels. <sup>11</sup>The vessels of gold and silver amounted in all to five thousand four hundred; and Sheshbazzar took them all up to Jerusalem, when the exiles were brought back from Babylon.

**2**<sup>1</sup> [*vv1-70: cp Neh. 7.6-73*] Of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile in Babylon, these were the people of the province who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city, <sup>2</sup>led by Zerubbabel, Jeshua [*Or Joshua (cp Hag. 1.1)*], Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.

The roll of the men of the people of Israel: <sup>3</sup>the family of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; <sup>4</sup>the family of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; <sup>5</sup>the family of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; <sup>6</sup>the family of Pahath-moab, namely the families of Jeshua and [*and: prob. rdg, cp Neh. 7.11; Heb omitted*] Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve; <sup>7</sup>the family of Elam, one thousand two hundred

and fifty-four; <sup>8</sup>the family of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; <sup>9</sup>the family of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; <sup>10</sup>the family of Bani, six hundred and forty-two; <sup>11</sup>the family of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; <sup>12</sup>the family of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; <sup>13</sup>the family of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; <sup>14</sup>the family of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; <sup>15</sup>the family of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; <sup>16</sup>the family of Ater, namely that of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; <sup>17</sup>the family of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; <sup>18</sup>the family of Jorah, one hundred and twelve; <sup>19</sup>the family of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; <sup>20</sup>the family of Gibbar, ninety-five. <sup>21</sup>The men [*prob. rdg, cp Neh. 7.26; Heb family*] of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; <sup>22</sup>the men of Netophah, fifty-six; <sup>23</sup>the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; <sup>24</sup>the men of Beth-azmoth [*prob. rdg, cp Neh. 7.28; Heb the family of Azmoth*], <sup>25</sup>forty-two; the men of Kiriath-jearim [*prob. rdg, cp Neh. 7.29; Heb the family of Kiriath-arim*], Kephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; <sup>26</sup>the men [*prob. rdg, cp Neh. 7.30; Heb family*] of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; <sup>27</sup>the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; <sup>28</sup>the men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; <sup>29</sup>the men [*prob. rdg, Heb family (also in vv30-35)*] of Nebo, fifty-two; <sup>30</sup>the men of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six; <sup>31</sup>the men of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; <sup>32</sup>the men of Harim, three hundred and twenty; <sup>33</sup>the men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; <sup>34</sup>the men of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; <sup>35</sup>the men of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

<sup>36</sup>Priests: the family of Jedaiah, of the line of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three; <sup>37</sup>the family of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; <sup>38</sup>the family of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven; <sup>39</sup>the family of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

<sup>40</sup>Levites: the families of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the line of Hodaviah, seventy-four. <sup>41</sup>Singers: the family of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight. <sup>42</sup>The guild of door-keepers: the family of Shallum, the family of Ater, the family of Talmon, the family of Akkub, the family of Hatita, and the family of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine in all.

<sup>43</sup>Temple-servitors: the family of Ziha, the family of Hasupha, the family of Tabbaoth, <sup>44</sup>the family of Keros, the family of Siaha, the family of Padon, <sup>45</sup>the family of Lebanah, the family of Hagabah, the family of Akkub, <sup>46</sup>the family of Hagab, the family of Shamlai [*Or Shalmal (cp Neh. 7.48)*], the family of Hanan, <sup>47</sup>the family of Giddel, the family of Gahar, the family of Reaiah, <sup>48</sup>the family of Rezin, the family of Nekoda, the family of Gazzam, <sup>49</sup>the family of Uzza, the family of Paseah, the family of Besai, <sup>50</sup>the family of Asnah, the family of the Meunim [*Or Meinim*] the family of the Nephusim [*Or Nephisim*], <sup>51</sup>the family of Bakbuk, the family of Hakupha, the family of Harhur, <sup>52</sup>the family of Bazluth, the family of Mehida, the family of Harsha, <sup>53</sup>the family of Barkos, the family of Sisera, the family of Temah, <sup>54</sup>the family of Neziah, and the family of Hatipha.

<sup>55</sup>Descendants of Solomon's servants: the family of Sotai, the family of Hassophereth, the family of Peruda, <sup>56</sup>the family of Jaalah, the family of Darkon, the family of Giddel,

<sup>57</sup>the family of Shephatiah, the family of Hattil, the family of Pochereth-hazzebaim, and the family of Ami.

<sup>58</sup>The temple-servitors and the descendants of Solomon's servants amounted to three hundred and ninety-two in all.

<sup>59</sup>The following were those who returned from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Kerub, Addan, and Immer, but could not establish their father's family nor whether by descent they belonged to Israel: <sup>60</sup>the family of Delaiah, the family of Tobiah, and the family of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two. <sup>61</sup>Also of the priests: the family of Hobaiah, the family of Hakkoz, and the family of Barzillai who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and went by his [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 5.38; Heb their*] name. <sup>62</sup>These searched for their names among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they could not be found; they were disqualified for the priesthood as unclean, <sup>63</sup>and the governor forbade them to partake of the most sacred food until there should be a priest able to consult the Urim and the Thummim.

<sup>64</sup>The whole assembled people numbered forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, <sup>65</sup>apart from their slaves, male and female, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred singers, men and women. <sup>66</sup>Their horses numbered seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, <sup>67</sup>their camels four hundred and thirty-five, and their asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

<sup>68</sup>When they came to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families volunteered to rebuild the house of God on its original site. <sup>69</sup>According to their resources they gave for the fabric fund a total of sixty-one thousand drachmas of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.

<sup>70</sup>The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its suburbs [*in Jerusalem and its suburbs: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 5.46; Heb omitted*]; the singers, the door-keepers, and temple-servitors [*prob. rdg, Heb adds in their towns*], and all other Israelites, lived in their own towns.

## **Worship restored and the temple rebuilt**

**3**<sup>1</sup>WHEN THE SEVENTH MONTH CAME, the Israelites now being settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow-priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his kinsmen, set to work and built the altar of the God of Israel, in order to offer upon it whole-offerings as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. <sup>3</sup>They put the altar in place first, because they lived in fear of the foreign population; and they offered upon it whole-offerings to the LORD, both morning and evening offerings. <sup>4</sup>They kept the pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles [*Or Booths*] as ordained, and offered whole-offerings every day in the number prescribed for each day, <sup>5</sup>and, in addition to these, the regular whole-offerings and the offerings for sabbaths [*for sabbaths: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 5.52; Heb omitted*], for new moons and for all the sacred seasons appointed by the LORD, and all voluntary offerings brought to

the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The offering of whole-offerings began from the first day of the seventh month, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not yet been laid. <sup>7</sup>They gave money for the masons and carpenters, and food and drink and oil for the Sidonians and the Tyrians to fetch cedar-wood from the Lebanon to the roadstead at Joppa, by licence from Cyrus king of Persia.

<sup>8</sup>In the second year after their return to the house of God in Jerusalem, and in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak started work, aided by all their fellow-Israelites, the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from captivity to Jerusalem. They appointed Levites from the age of twenty years and upwards to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. <sup>9</sup>Jeshua with his sons and his kinsmen, Kadmiel, Binnui, and Hodaviah [*Hinnui, and Hodaviah: prob. rdg, Heb and his sons the family of Judah*], together assumed control of those responsible for the work on the house of God [*prob. rdg, Heb adds the family of Henadad, their family and their kinsmen the Levites*].

<sup>10</sup>When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their robes took their places with their trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with their cymbals, to praise the LORD in the manner prescribed by David king of Israel; <sup>11</sup>and they chanted praises and thanksgiving to the LORD, singing, 'It is good to give thanks to the LORD [*to give thanks to the LORD: prob. rdg, cp Ps. 106.1; Heb omitted*], for his love towards Israel endures for ever.' All the people raised a great shout of praise to the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD had been laid. <sup>12</sup>But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, who were old enough to have seen the former house, wept and wailed aloud when they saw the foundation of this house laid, while many others shouted for joy at the top of their voice. <sup>13</sup>The people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from that of the weeping and wailing, so great was the shout which the people were raising, and the sound could be heard a long way off.

<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup>they approached Zerubbabel and Jeshua [*and Jeshua: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 5.68; Heb omitted*] and the heads of families and said to them, 'Let us join you in building, for like you we seek your God, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.' <sup>3</sup>But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, 'The house which we are building for our God is no concern of yours. We alone will build it for the LORD the God of Israel, as his majesty Cyrus king of Persia commanded us.'

<sup>4</sup>Then the people of the land caused the Jews to lose heart and made them afraid to continue building; <sup>5</sup>and in order to defeat their purpose they bribed officials at court to act against them. This continued throughout the reign of Cyrus and into the reign of Darius king of Persia.

<sup>6</sup>At the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus, the people of the land brought a charge in writing against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup>And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, with the agreement of Mithredath, Tabeel and all his colleagues wrote to him; the letter was written in Aramaic and read aloud in Aramaic.

8 [*From 4.8 to 6.18 the text is in Aramaic*]Rehum the high commissioner and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes concerning Jerusalem in the following terms:

<sup>9</sup>From Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the secretary, and all their colleagues, the judges, the commissioners, the overseers, and chief officers, the men of Erech and Babylon, and the Elamites in Susa, <sup>10</sup>and the other peoples whom the great and renowned Asnappar [*Osnappar*] deported and settled in the city of Samaria and in the rest of the province of Beyond-Euphrates.

<sup>11</sup>Here follows the text of their letter:

To King Artaxerxes from his servants, the men of the province of Beyond-Euphrates:

<sup>12</sup>Be it known to Your Majesty that the Jews who left you and came to these parts have reached Jerusalem and are rebuilding that wicked and rebellious city; they have surveyed [*have surveyed: prob. rdg, Aram are surveying*] the foundations and are completing the walls. <sup>13</sup>Be it known to Your Majesty that, if their city is rebuilt and the walls are completed, they will pay neither general levy, nor poll-tax, nor land-tax, and in the end [*in the end: or certainly*] they will harm the monarchy. <sup>14</sup>Now, because we eat the king's salt and it is not right that we should witness the king's dishonour, therefore we have sent to inform Your Majesty, <sup>15</sup>in order that search may be made in the annals of your predecessors. You will discover by searching through the annals that this has been a rebellious city, harmful to the monarchy and its provinces, and that sedition has long been rife within its walls. That is why the city was laid waste. <sup>16</sup>We submit to Your Majesty that, if it is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no more footing in the province of Beyond-Euphrates.

<sup>17</sup>The king sent this answer:

To Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the secretary, and all your colleagues resident in Samaria and in the rest of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, greeting. <sup>18</sup>The letter which you sent to me has now been read clearly in my presence. <sup>19</sup>I have given orders and search has been made, and it has been found that the city in question has a long history of revolt against the monarchy, and that rebellion and sedition have been rife in it. <sup>20</sup>Powerful kings have ruled in Jerusalem, exercising authority over the whole province of Beyond-Euphrates, and general levy, poll-tax, and land-tax have been paid to them. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, issue orders that these men must desist. This city is not to be rebuilt until a decree to that effect is issued by me. <sup>22</sup>See that you do not neglect your duty in this matter, lest more damage and harm be done to the monarchy.

<sup>23</sup>When the text of the letter from King Artaxerxes was read before Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the secretary, and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem and forcibly compelled the Jews to stop work. <sup>24</sup>From then onwards the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped; and it remained at a standstill till the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

**5**<sup>1</sup>But the prophets Haggai [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 6.1; Aram adds the prophet*] and Zechariah grandson of Iddo upbraided the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem, prophesying in the name of the God of Israel. <sup>2</sup>Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak at once began to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them and supported them. <sup>3</sup>Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues promptly came to them and said, 'Who issued a decree permitting you to rebuild this house and complete its furnishings?' <sup>4</sup>They also asked them for the names of the men engaged in the building. <sup>5</sup>But the elders of the Jews were under God's watchful eye, and they were not prevented from continuing the work, until such time as a report should reach Darius and a royal letter should be received in answer.

<sup>6</sup>Here follows the text of the letter sent by Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and his colleagues, the inspectors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, to King Darius. <sup>7</sup>This is the written report that they sent:

To King Darius, all greetings. <sup>8</sup>Be it known to Your Majesty that we went to the province of Judah and found the house of the great God being rebuilt by the Jewish elders [*by ... elders: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 6.8; Aram omitted*], with massive stones and timbers laid in the walls. The work was being done thoroughly and was making good progress under their direction. <sup>9</sup>We asked these elders who had issued a decree for the rebuilding of this house and the completion of the furnishings. <sup>10</sup>We also asked them for their names, so that we might make a list of the leaders for your information. <sup>11</sup>This was their reply: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house originally built many years ago; a great king of Israel built it and completed it. <sup>12</sup>But because our forefathers provoked the anger of the God of heaven, he put them into the power of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldaean, king of Babylon, who pulled down this house and carried the people captive to Babylon. <sup>13</sup>However, Cyrus king of Babylon in the first year of his reign issued a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. <sup>14</sup>Moreover, there were gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and put in the temple in Babylon; and these King Cyrus took out of the temple in Babylon. He gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, <sup>15</sup>and said to him, "Take these vessels; go and restore them to the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God there be rebuilt on its original site." <sup>16</sup>Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from that time until now the rebuilding has continued, but it is not yet finished.' <sup>17</sup>Now, therefore, if it please Your Majesty, let search be made in the royal archives in Babylon, to discover whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house

of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his wishes in the matter.

**6**<sup>1</sup>Then King Darius issued an order, and search was made in the archives where the treasures were deposited in Babylon. <sup>2</sup>But it was in Ecbatana, in the royal residence in the province of Media, that a scroll was found, on which was written the following memorandum:

<sup>3</sup>In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued this decree concerning the house of God in Jerusalem: Let the house be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are offered and fire-offerings brought. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, <sup>4</sup>with three courses of massive stones and one [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 6.25; Aram a new*] course of timber, the cost to be defrayed from the royal treasury. <sup>5</sup>Also the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, shall be restored; they shall all be taken back to the temple in Jerusalem, and restored each to its place in the house of God.

<sup>6</sup>Then King Darius issued this order [*Then ... order: prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 6.27; Aram omitted*]:

Now, Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues, the inspectors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, you are to keep away from the place, <sup>7</sup>and to leave the governor of the Jews and their elders free to rebuild this house of God; let them rebuild it on its original site. <sup>8</sup>I also issue an order, prescribing what you are to do for these elders of the Jews, so that the said house of God may be rebuilt. Their expenses are to be defrayed in full from the royal funds accruing from the taxes of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, so that the work may not be brought to a standstill. <sup>9</sup>And let them have daily without fail whatever they want, young bulls, rams, or lambs as whole-offerings for the God of heaven, or wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem demand, <sup>10</sup>so that they may offer soothing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. <sup>11</sup>Furthermore, I decree that, if any man tampers with this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house and he shall be fastened erect to it and flogged; and, in addition, his house shall be forfeit [*Or made into a dunghill (meaning of Aram word uncertain)*].

<sup>12</sup>And may the God who made that place a dwelling for his Name overthrow any king or people that shall presume to tamper with this edict or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I Darius have issued a decree; it is to be carried out to the letter.

<sup>13</sup>Then Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out to the letter the instructions which King Darius had sent them, <sup>14</sup>and the elders of the Jews went on with the rebuilding. As a result of the prophecies of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah grandson of Iddo they had good success and finished the rebuilding as commanded by the God of Israel and according to the decrees of Cyrus and Darius [*prob. rdg, Aram adds and Artaxerxes king of Persia*]; <sup>15</sup>and the house was completed on the twenty-third [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 7.5; Aram*

third] day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of King Darius.

<sup>16</sup>Then the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites and all the other exiles who had returned, celebrated the dedication of the house of God with great rejoicing. <sup>17</sup>For its dedication they offered one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, and as a sin-offering for all Israel twelve he-goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. <sup>18</sup>And they re-established the priests in their groups and the Levites in their divisions for the service of God in Jerusalem, as prescribed in the book of Moses.

<sup>19</sup>On the fourteenth day of the first month the exiles who had returned kept the Passover. <sup>20</sup>The priests and the Levites, one and all, had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean, and they killed the passover lamb for all the exiles who had returned, for their fellow-priests and for themselves. <sup>21</sup>It was eaten by the Israelites who had come back from exile and by all who had separated themselves from the peoples of the land and their uncleanness and sought the LORD the God of Israel. <sup>22</sup>And they kept the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with rejoicing; for the LORD had given them cause for joy by changing the disposition of the king of Assyria towards them, so that he encouraged them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

## **Ezra's mission to Jerusalem**

**7**<sup>1</sup>NOW AFTER THESE EVENTS, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, there came up from Babylon one Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, <sup>2</sup>son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son [Or grandson] of Ahitub, <sup>3</sup>son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, <sup>4</sup>son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, <sup>5</sup>son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest. <sup>6</sup>He was a scribe [Or doctor of the law] learned in the law of Moses which the LORD the God of Israel had given them; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. <sup>7</sup>In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, other Israelites, priests, Levites, singers, door-keepers, and temple-servitors went up with him to Jerusalem; <sup>8</sup>and they reached Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king. <sup>9</sup>On the first day of the first month Ezra fixed the day for departure from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he arrived at Jerusalem, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. <sup>10</sup>For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the LORD and to teaching statute and ordinance in Israel.

<sup>11</sup>This is a copy of the royal letter which King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest and scribe, a scribe versed in questions concerning the commandments and the statutes of the LORD laid upon Israel:

<sup>12</sup> [*The text of vv12-26 is in Aramaic*] Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest and scribe learned in the law of the God of heaven:

<sup>13</sup>This is my decision. I hereby issue a decree that any of the people of Israel or of its priests or Levites in my kingdom who volunteer to go to Jerusalem may go with you. <sup>14</sup>You are sent by the king and his seven



counsellors to find out how things stand in Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the law of your God with which you are entrusted. <sup>15</sup>You are also to convey the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, <sup>16</sup>together with any silver and gold that you may find throughout the province of Babylon, and the voluntary offerings of the people and of the priests which they freely offer for the house of their God in Jerusalem. <sup>17</sup>In pursuance of this decree you shall use the money solely for the purchase of bulls, rams, and lambs, and the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings, to be offered on the altar in the house of your God in Jerusalem. <sup>18</sup>Further, should any silver and gold be left over, you and your colleagues. may use it at your discretion according to the will of your God. <sup>19</sup>The vessels which have been given you for the service of the house of your God you shall hand over to the God of Jerusalem; <sup>20</sup>and if anything else should be required for the house of your God, which it may fall to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury.

<sup>21</sup>And I, King Artaxerxes, issue an order to all treasurers in the province of Beyond-Euphrates that whatever is demanded of you by Ezra the priest, a scribe learned in the law of the God of heaven, is to be supplied exactly, <sup>22</sup>up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred kor of wheat, a hundred bath of wine, a hundred bath of oil, and salt without reckoning. <sup>23</sup>Whatever is demanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently carried out for the house of the God of heaven; otherwise wrath may fall upon the realm of the king and his sons. <sup>24</sup>We also make known to you that you have no authority to impose general levy, poll-tax, or land-tax on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, door-keepers, temple-servitors, or other servants of this house of God.

<sup>25</sup>And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God with which you are entrusted, are to appoint arbitrators and judges to judge all your people in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, all who acknowledge the laws of your God [to judge ... your God: *or all of them versed in the laws of your God, to judge all the people in the province of Beyond-Euphrates*]; and you and they are to instruct those who do not acknowledge them. <sup>26</sup>Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be rigorously executed upon him, be it death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

<sup>27</sup>Then Ezra said [Then Ezra said: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 8. 25, Heb omitted*] 'Blessed be the LORD the God of our fathers who has prompted the king thus to add glory to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, <sup>28</sup>and has made the king and his counsellors and all his high officers well disposed towards me!'

So, knowing that the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, I took courage and assembled leading men out of Israel to go up with me.

**8**<sup>1</sup>These are the heads of families, as registered, family by family, of those who went up

with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes: <sup>2</sup>of the family of Phinehas, Gershom; of the family of Ithamar, Daniel; of the family of David, Hattush <sup>3</sup>son of [son of: *prob. rdg, Heb of the family of*] Shecaniah; of the family of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him a hundred and fifty males in the register; <sup>4</sup>of the family of Pahath-moab, Elihoenai son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males; <sup>5</sup>of the family of Zattu [of Zattu: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 8.32; Heb omitted*], Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males; <sup>6</sup>of the family of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males; <sup>7</sup>of the family of Elam, Isaiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males; <sup>8</sup>of the family of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males; <sup>9</sup>of the family of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males; <sup>10</sup>of the family of Bani [of Bani: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 8.36; Heb omitted*] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and sixty males; <sup>11</sup>of the family of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; <sup>12</sup>of the family of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him a hundred and ten males. <sup>13</sup>The last were the family of Adonikam, and these were their names: Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males; <sup>14</sup>and the family of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

<sup>15</sup>I assembled them by the river which flows toward Ahava; and we encamped there three days. When I reviewed the people and the priests, I found no Levite there. <sup>16</sup>So I sent Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, prominent men, and Joiarib and Elnathan, men of discretion, <sup>17</sup>with instructions to go to Iddo, the chief man of the settlement at Casiphia; and I gave them a message for him and his kinsmen, the temple-servitors there, asking for servitors for the house of our God to be sent to us. <sup>18</sup>And, because the gracious hand of our God was upon us, they let us have Sherebiah, a man of discretion, of the family of Mahli son of Levi, son of Israel, together with his sons and kinsmen, eighteen men; <sup>19</sup>also Hashabiah, together with Isaiah of the family of Merari, his kinsmen and their sons, twenty men; <sup>20</sup>besides two hundred and twenty temple-servitors (this was an order instituted by David and his officers to assist the Levites). These were all indicated by name.

<sup>21</sup>Then I proclaimed a fast there by the river Ahava, so that we might mortify ourselves before our God and ask from him a safe journey for ourselves, our dependants, and all our possessions. <sup>22</sup>For I was ashamed to ask the king for an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against enemies on the way, because we had said to the king, 'The hand of our God is upon all who seek him, working their good; but his fierce anger is on all who forsake him.' <sup>23</sup>So we fasted and asked our God for a safe journey, and he answered our prayer.

<sup>24</sup>Then I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, together with [together with: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 8.54; Heb omitted*] Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of their kinsmen, <sup>25</sup>and handed over to them the silver and gold and the vessels which had been set aside by the king, his counsellors and his officers and all the Israelites who were present, as their contribution to the house of our God. <sup>26</sup>I handed over to them six hundred and fifty talents of silver, a hundred silver vessels weighing two talents, a hundred talents of gold, <sup>27</sup>twenty golden bowls worth a thousand drachmas, and two

vessels of a fine red copper [red copper: *or* orichalc], precious as gold. <sup>28</sup>And I said to the men, 'You are dedicated to the LORD, and the vessels too are sacred; the silver and gold are a voluntary offering to the LORD the God of your fathers. <sup>29</sup>Watch over them and guard them, until you hand them over in the presence of the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and the heads of families of Israel in Jerusalem, in the rooms of the house of the LORD.'

<sup>30</sup>So the priests and Levites received the consignment of silver and gold and vessels, to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem; <sup>31</sup>and on the twelfth day of the first month we left the river Ahava bound for Jerusalem. The hand of our God was upon us, and he saved us from enemy attack and from ambush on the way. <sup>32</sup>When we arrived at Jerusalem, we rested for three days. <sup>33</sup>And on the fourth day the silver and gold and the vessels were deposited in the house of our God in the charge of Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, who had with him Eleazar son of Phinehas, and they had with them the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. <sup>34</sup>Everything was checked as it was handed over, and at the same time a written record was made of the whole consignment. <sup>35</sup>Then those who had come home from captivity, the exiles who had returned, offered as whole-offerings to the God of Israel twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams and seventy-two [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 8.65; Heb seventy-seven*] lambs, with twelve he-goats as a sin-offering; all these were offered as a whole-offering to the LORD. <sup>36</sup>They also delivered the king's commission to the royal satraps and governors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates; and these gave support to the people and the house of God.

**9**<sup>1</sup>When all this had been done, some of the leaders approached me and said, 'The people of Israel, including priests and Levites, have not kept themselves apart from the foreign population and from the abominable practices of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>2</sup>They have taken women of these nations as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy race has become mixed with the foreign population; and the leaders and magistrates have been the chief offenders.' <sup>3</sup>When I heard this news, I rent my robe and mantle, and tore my hair and my beard, and I sat dumbfounded; <sup>4</sup>and all who went in fear of the words of the God of Israel rallied to me because of the offence of these exiles. I sat there dumbfounded till the evening sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup>Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my humiliation and, in my rent robe and mantle, I knelt down and spread out my hands to the LORD my God <sup>6</sup>and said, 'O my God, I am humiliated, I am ashamed to lift my face to thee, my God; for we are sunk in our iniquities, and our guilt is so great that it reaches high heaven. <sup>7</sup>From the days of our fathers down to this present day our guilt has been great. For our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been subject to death, captivity, pillage, and shameful humiliation at the hands of foreign kings, and such is our present plight. <sup>8</sup>But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious to us, leaving us some survivors and giving us a foothold in his holy place. He has brought light to our eyes again and given us some chance to renew our lives in our slavery. <sup>9</sup>For slaves we are; nevertheless, our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has made the kings of Persia so well disposed towards us as to give us the means of renewal, so that we may repair the house of our God and rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall of defence in [*Or*

thereby giving us a wall of defence for] Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>Now, O our God, what are we to say after this? For we have neglected the commands <sup>11</sup>which thou gavest through thy servants the prophets, when thou saidst, "The land which you are entering and will possess is a polluted land, polluted by the foreign population with their abominable practices, which have made it unclean from end to end. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons, and do not marry your sons to their daughters, and never seek their welfare or prosperity. Thus you will be strong and enjoy the good things of the land, and pass it on to your children as an everlasting possession." <sup>13</sup>Now, after all that we have suffered for our evil deeds and for our great guilt – although thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved and hast allowed us to survive as now we do – <sup>14</sup>shall we again disobey thy commands and join in marriage with peoples who indulge in such abominable practices? Would not thy anger against us be unrelenting, until no remnant, no survivor was left? <sup>15</sup>O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous; now as before, we are only a remnant that has survived. Look upon us, guilty as we are in thy sight; for because of our guilt none of us can stand in thy presence.'

**10**<sup>1</sup>While Ezra was praying and making confession, prostrate in tears before the house of God, a very great crowd of Israelites assembled round him, men, women, and children, and they all wept bitterly. <sup>2</sup>Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the family of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, 'We have committed an offence against our God in marrying foreign wives, daughters of the foreign population. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. <sup>3</sup>Now, therefore, let us pledge ourselves to our God to dismiss all these women and their brood, according to your advice, my lord, and the advice of those who go in fear of the command of our God; and let us act as the law prescribes. <sup>4</sup>Up now, the task is yours, and we will support you. Take courage and act.'

<sup>5</sup>Ezra stood up and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all the Israelites swear to do as had been said; and they took the oath. <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra left his place in front of the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan grandson of Eliashib and lodged [*prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 9.2; Heb went*] there; he neither ate bread nor drank water, for he was mourning for the offence committed by the exiles who had returned. <sup>7</sup>Next, there was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem a proclamation that all the exiles should assemble in Jerusalem, <sup>8</sup>and that if anyone did not arrive within three days, it should be within the discretion of the chief officers and the elders to confiscate all his property and to exclude him from the community of the exiles. <sup>9</sup>So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within the three days; and on the twentieth day of the ninth month the people all sat in the forecourt of the house of God, trembling with apprehension and shivering in the heavy rain. <sup>10</sup>Ezra the priest stood up and said, 'You have committed an offence in marrying foreign wives and have added to Israel's guilt. <sup>11</sup>Make your confession now to the LORD the God of your fathers and do his will, and separate yourselves from the foreign population and from your foreign wives.' <sup>12</sup>Then all the assembled people shouted in reply, 'Yes; we must do what you say. <sup>13</sup>But there is a great crowd of us here, and it is the rainy season; we cannot go on standing out here in the open. Besides, this business will not be finished in one day or even two, because we have committed so grave an offence in this matter. <sup>14</sup>Let our leading men act for the whole assembly, and let all in our cities who have married foreign women present themselves at appointed times, each man with the elders and judges of his own

city, until God's anger against us on this account is averted.' <sup>15</sup>Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this.

<sup>16</sup>So the exiles acted as agreed, and Ezra the priest selected [and Ezra the priest selected: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 9.16; Heb obscure*] certain men, heads of households representing their families, all of them designated by name. They began their formal inquiry into the matter on the first day of the tenth month, <sup>17</sup>and by the first day of the first month they had finished their inquiry into all the marriages with foreign women.

<sup>18</sup>Among the members of priestly families who had married foreign women were found Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah of the family of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers. <sup>19</sup>They pledged themselves to dismiss their wives, and they brought a ram from the flock as a guilt-offering for their sins. <sup>20</sup>Of the family of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. <sup>21</sup>Of the family of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uziah. <sup>22</sup>Of the family of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad and Elasa.

<sup>23</sup>Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer.

<sup>24</sup>Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the door-keepers: Shallum, Telem and Uri.

<sup>25</sup>And of Israel: of the family of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchiah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchiah and Benaiah. <sup>26</sup>Of the family of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah. <sup>27</sup>Of the family of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza. <sup>28</sup>Of the family of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai. <sup>29</sup>Of the family of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Jeremoth. <sup>30</sup>Of the family of Pahath-moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh. <sup>31</sup>Of the family of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Simeon, <sup>32</sup>Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah. <sup>33</sup>Of the family of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei. <sup>34</sup>Of the family of Bani: Maadai, Amram and Uel, <sup>35</sup>Benaiah, Bedeiah and Keluhi, <sup>36</sup>Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, <sup>37</sup>Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasau. <sup>38</sup>Of the family of [Of the family of: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 9.34; Heb and Bani and*] Binnui: Shimei, <sup>39</sup>Shelemiah, Nathan and Adaiah, <sup>40</sup>Maknadebai, Shashai and Sharai, <sup>41</sup>Azareel, Shelemiah and Shemariah, <sup>42</sup>Shallum, Amariah and Joseph. <sup>43</sup>Of the family of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah. <sup>44</sup>All these had married foreign women, and they dismissed them, together with their children [and they ... children: *prob. rdg, cp 1Esdras 9.36; Heb and some of them were women; and they had borne sons*].