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**COMMENTARY**

**Barnes' Notes on the Bible**  
**Volume 3 -**  
**Ezra**  
*By A. Fuller*

*To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:*

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# EZRA

## INTRODUCTION

Though the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were undoubtedly regarded as one book in two parts, both by the Jewish Church and by the early Christian Fathers, yet the judgment of modern criticism that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally two distinct works, seems to be, on the whole, deserving of acceptance.

The object of the writer of Ezra is to give an account of the return from the captivity, and of the subsequent fortunes of the Palestinian Jews until the eighth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, 457 B.C. — The matters to which he directs attention are only three:

- (1)** The number, family, and (to some extent) the names of those who returned from Babylonia with Ezra and with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2; 8:1-20);
- (2)** The rebuilding of the temple and the circumstances connected with it (Ezra 1; Ezra 3—7); and
- (3)** The misconduct of the returned Jews with respect to mixed marriages, and the steps taken by Ezra in consequence (Ezra 9—10).

The Book of Ezra is made up of two completely distinct sections:

**(a)** In Ezra 1—6, the writer treats of the return from the captivity and of the events following (538-516 B.C.), or a period of 23 years. It belongs to the time when Zerubbabel was governor of Judaea, Jeshua was high priest, and Zechariah and Haggai were prophets.

**(b)** Ezra 7—10. This relates the commission given to Ezra by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign (458 B.C.), the journey of Ezra to Jerusalem, and his proceedings there (April 458 B.C. — April 457 B.C.). There is thus a gap of 57 years between the first section of the book and the second; from which it appears that the writer of the second portion cannot well have been a witness of the events recorded in the first.

Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the whole book to Ezra. Modern critics generally admit that Ezra was the original and sole author of the

entire second section (Ezra 7—10), but consider him the compiler of the first (Ezra 1—6) from state documents, national records, and lists. It is probable that the Book of Ezra was composed soon after the arrangements with respect to the mixed marriages had been completed; i.e. in 457 or 456 B.C..

In character the Book of Ezra is historical, and like Chronicles, it lays great stress on the externals of religion; it gives special prominence to the Levites, and exhibits a genealogical bias; it lays down very distinctly the general principle of a special Providence (<sup><1822></sup>Ezra 8:22); and it applies this principle to particular points of the history not unfrequently.

In style, Ezra more resembles Daniel than any other book of Scripture, always excepting Chronicles. This may be accounted for by these two writers being both Babylonian Jews. The work contains also a considerable number of proper names and words which are either known or suspected to be Persian, and altogether, the language is such as might have been looked for under the circumstances of the time, when the contact into which the Jews had been brought with the Babylonians and the Persians had naturally introduced among them a good many foreign words and modes of speech.

(The following are the proper names, certainly Persian, which occur in Ezra: Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes. Mithredath (Mithridates), Persia, and Achmetha (Ecbatana). To these may be added, as probably Persian: Rehum, Shimshai, Tatnai, Shetharboznai, and Tabeel. Persian words, not belonging to the class of proper names, which may be recognized in Ezra are the following: ganza or gaza, “treasury” (<sup><1567></sup>Ezra 5:17; 6:1; 7:20); ganzabara or gazabara, “treasurer” (<sup><1508></sup>Ezra 1:8); khshatrapa, “satrap” (<sup><1535></sup>Ezra 8:36); angara, “a letter” (<sup><1508></sup>Ezra 4:8); nipishta, the same (<sup><1507></sup>Ezra 4:7); patigama, “an edict” (<sup><1547></sup>Ezra 4:17); apatama (?), “at last” (<sup><1543></sup>Ezra 4:13); tarsata, name of an office, literally, “the feared” (<sup><1513></sup>Ezra 2:63); usfrana, “speedily, diligently, abundantly” (<sup><1518></sup>Ezra 5:8; 6:8; etc.); and darkon, or perhaps darkemon, a gold coin, a “daric” (<sup><1827></sup>Ezra 8:27).)

The text of Ezra is not in a good condition. The general bearing of the narrative is, however, untouched by slight blemishes which affect chiefly such minute points as the names and numbers of those who returned from the captivity, the weight and number of the sacrificial vessels, and the like.

## NOTES ON EZRA 1

**Ezra 1:1.** By the first year of Cyrus is to be understood the first year of his sovereignty over the Jews, or 538 B.C.

**Ezra 1:2.** *The LORD God of heaven* Or, “Yahweh, the God of heaven.” In the original Persian, the document probably ran —” Ormazd, the God of heaven.” The Hebrew transcript took “Yahweh” as the equivalent of “Ormazd.” The Persian notion of a single Supreme Being — Ahura-Mazda, “the much-knowing, or much-bestowing Spirit” — did, in fact, approach nearly to the Jewish conception of Yahweh.

*Hath given me all the kingdoms ...* There is a similar formula at the commencement of the great majority of Persian inscriptions.

*He hath charged me to build him an house* It is a reasonable conjecture that, on the capture of Babylon, Cyrus was brought into contact with Daniel, who drew his attention to the prophecy of Isaiah (<sup>2348</sup>Isaiah 44:28); and that Cyrus accepted this prophecy as a “charge” to rebuild the temple.

**Ezra 1:4.** *Let the men of his place help him* i.e., “Let the pagan population help him” (see <sup>1506</sup>Ezra 1:6).

*The freewill offering* Probably that made by Cyrus himself (<sup>1507</sup>Ezra 1:7-11).

**Ezra 1:5.** Only a portion of the Israelites took advantage of the permission of Cyrus. Many remained in Babylon, since they were disinclined to relinquish their property. They who returned were persons whom God had especially stirred up to make sacrifices for His glory.

**Ezra 1:7.** *The house of his gods* Rather, “of his god” (<sup>2002</sup>Daniel 1:2), i.e., Merodach, “his lord” (see <sup>4407</sup>2 Chronicles 36:7 note).

**Ezra 1:8.** *Mithredath* Or, “Mithridates.” The occurrence of this name, which means “given by Mithra” or “dedicated to Mithra,” is an indication that the sun-worship of the Persians was at least as old as the time of Cyrus.

*Sheshbazzar* i.e., Zerubbabel. On his royal descent, see ~~<1389>~~ 1 Chronicles 3:19 note.

~~<1509>~~ **Ezra 1:9.** *Chargers* The word in the original thus translated occurs only in this passage. Its meaning is doubtful. Some derive it from a Hebrew root, “to hollow out,” and translate “cup” or “vessel.”

*Knives* This is another doubtful word, only used here. The etymology points to some employment of basket-work.

~~<1511>~~ **Ezra 1:11.** The sum of the numbers as they stand in the present Hebrew text is 2,499, instead of 5,400. In the Apocryphal Book of Esdras the sum given is 5,469, and with this sum the items in that place exactly agree (1 Esdras 2:13,14). Most commentators propose to correct Ezra by the passage of Esdras; but the items of Esdras are improbable. Probably the sum total in the present passage has suffered corruption.

## NOTES ON EZRA 2

**Ezra 2:1.** *The province* Judaea was no longer a kingdom, but a mere “province” of Persia. “The children of the province” are the Israelites who returned to Palestine, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia.

*Every one unto his city* That is, to the city whereto his forefathers had belonged. Of course, in the few cases where this was not known (<sup><1129></sup>Ezra 2:59-62), the plan could not be carried out.

Two other copies of the following list have come down to us — one in <sup><1107></sup>Nehemiah 7:7-69, and the other in 1 Esdras 5:8-43. All seem to have been taken from the same original document, and to have suffered more or less from corruption. Where two out of the three agree, the reading should prevail over that of the third.

**Ezra 2:43.** *The Nethinims* The hieroduli or sacred slaves, “given” to the Levites to assist them in their work (see <sup><1300></sup>1 Chronicles 9:2 note).

**Ezra 2:59.** Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, were probably cities, or villages, of Babylonia, at which the Jews here spoken of had been settled. The first and third have been reasonably identified with the Thelme and Chiripha of Ptolemy. Of the rest, nothing is known at present.

**Ezra 2:63.** *The Tirshatha* i.e., Zerubbabel. See margin. The word is probably old Persian, though it does not occur in the cuneiform inscriptions. Some derive it from a root “to fear.” See the introduction to the Book of Ezra, first note.

*A priest with Urim and with Thummim* See <sup><1230></sup>Exodus 28:30 note. According to the rabbinical writers, the second temple permanently lacked this glory of the first. Zerubbabel, it would seem by the present passage (compare <sup><1105></sup>Nehemiah 7:65), expected that the loss would be only temporary.

**Ezra 2:64.** The sum total is given without any variation by Ezra, by Nehemiah (see the marginal reference), and by Esdras (1 Esdras 5:41),

who adds, that in this reckoning only those of twelve years of age and upward were counted.

It is curious that the total 42,360, is so greatly in excess of the items. Ezra's items make the number 29,818; Nehemiah's 31,089, Esdras, 33,950. The original document was probably illegible in places, and the writers were forced to make omissions.

~~<BIB>~~ **Ezra 2:69.** The numbers here and in Nehemiah (see the marginal reference) vary.

~~<BIB>~~ **Ezra 2:70.** *All Israel* That the Israelites of the ten tribes returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel is apparent:

(1) from ~~<BIB>~~ 1 Chronicles 9:3;

(2) from the enumeration of twelve chiefs (~~<BIB>~~ Nehemiah 7:7; 1 Esd. 5:8);  
and

(3) from various expressions in Ezra (~~<BIB>~~ Ezra 2:2,59; 3:1).

## NOTES ON EZRA 3

**Ezra 3:1.** *The seventh month* i.e., the month Tisri (nearly our September), the most sacred month in the Jewish year (<sup><1236></sup>Exodus 23:16; <sup><1234></sup>Leviticus 23:24-41).

**Ezra 3:2.** Jeshua, the high priest, was the son of Jozadak, who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (<sup><1365></sup>1 Chronicles 6:15).

Zerubbabel was really the son of Pedaiah, Shealtiel's (or Salathiel's) younger brother. But Shealtiel having no sons, and the royal line being continued in the person of his nephew, Zerubbabel, the latter was accounted Shealtiel's son.

**Ezra 3:3.** *Upon his bases* They restored the old altar of burnt-offerings, which stood directly in front of the temple-porch, upon the old foundation. This became apparent on the clearing away of the ruins, and on a careful examination of the site.

**Ezra 3:7.** *According to the grant* i.e., in accordance with the permission granted them by Cyrus to rebuild their temple (<sup><1300></sup>Ezra 1:1-4).

**Ezra 3:8.** *Unto the house of God* i.e., to the place where the house of God had been, and where God was believed still to have His special dwelling.

*And appointed the Levites* This is the emphatic clause of the present verse. Though so small a number of Levites had returned from Babylon (<sup><1310></sup>Ezra 2:40), yet they were especially singled out to be entrusted with the task of superintending and advancing the building of the temple.

**Ezra 3:9.** *Jeshua* See the marginal reference. Not the high priest, but the head of one of the two Levitical houses which had returned.

*Together* The Hebrew phrase is very emphatic — “they stood up as one man.”

**Ezra 3:10.** *They set the priests* Or, according to another reading, “The priests stood.”



*The Levites the sons of Asaph* i.e., “such of the Levites as were descendants of Asaph.” It would seem as if no descendants of Heman or Jeduthun had returned.

<sup><15812></sup>**Ezra 3:12.** *Wept ... shouted ... for joy* Compare the marginal reference and <sup><30410></sup>Zechariah 4:10. It is implied that the dimensions of the second temple were smaller than those of the first. Hence, the feeling of sorrow which came upon some. They, however, who had not seen the former temple, and so could not contrast the two, naturally rejoiced to see the sanctuary of their religion begin to rise from its ruins.

## NOTES ON EZRA 4

<sup><1501></sup>**Ezra 4:1.** *Adversaries* i.e., the Samaritans, a mixed race, partly Israelite but chiefly foreign, which had replaced to some extent the ancient inhabitants after they were carried into captivity by Sargon (see <sup><12716></sup>2 Kings 17:6 note).

<sup><1502></sup>**Ezra 4:2.** Compare <sup><12724></sup>2 Kings 17:24-28 notes.

*Since the days* Esar-haddon reigned from 681-668 B.C. Thus, the Samaritans speak of what had taken place at least 130 years previously. There appear to have been at least three colonizations of Samaria by the Assyrian kings. The first is mentioned in <sup><12724></sup>2 Kings 17:24. Later in his reign Sargon added to these first settlers an Arabian element. Some 30 or 40 years afterward, Esarhaddon, his grandson, largely augmented the population by colonists drawn especially from the southeast parts of the Empire (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 4:10). Thus, the later Samaritans were an exceedingly mixed race.

<sup><1503></sup>**Ezra 4:3.** *Ye have nothing to do with us* Because the Samaritans had united idolatrous rites with the worship of Yahweh (<sup><12729></sup>2 Kings 17:29-41). To have allowed them a share in restoring the temple would have been destructive of all purity of religion. *As king Cyrus ... commanded us* The exact words of the edict gave the right of building exclusively to those who should “go up” from Babylonia to Judaea (<sup><1503></sup>Ezra 1:3).

<sup><1504></sup>**Ezra 4:5.** *Hired counselors* Rather, “bribed” officials at the Persian court to interpose delays and create difficulties, in order to hinder the work.

*Darius* i.e., Darius, the son of Hystaspes

<sup><1505></sup>**Ezra 4:6.** *Ahasuerus* Or, Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus. Persian kings had often two names.

<sup><1506></sup>**Ezra 4:7.** *Artaxerxes* Gomates, the Pseudo-Smerdis. He succeeded Cambyses (521 B.C.), and reigned for seven months, when he was deposed and executed by Darius Hystaspis.

*Written in the Syrian tongue ...* Or, “written in Syriac characters and translated into Syriac.” On the use of this tongue as a medium of communication between the Jews and their Eastern neighbors, see <sup><1283></sup>2 Kings 18:26 note.

<sup><1508></sup>**Ezra 4:8.** *The chancellor* literally, “Lord of judgment;” the title, apparently, of the Persian governor of the Samaritan province. Every Persian governor was accompanied to his province by a “royal scribe” or “secretary,” who had a separate and independent authority.

<sup><1509></sup>**Ezra 4:9,10.** These verses form the superscription or address of the letter (<sup><1501></sup>Ezra 4:11, etc.) sent to Artaxerxes.

The Dinaites were probably colonists from Dayan, a country often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as bordering on Cilicia and Cappadocia. No satisfactory explanation can be given of the name Apharsathchites (see <sup><1506></sup>Ezra 5:6 note). The Tarpelites were colonists from the nation which the Assyrians called Tuplai, the Greeks “Tibareni,” and the Hebrews generally “Tubal.” (It is characteristic of the later Hebrew language to insert the letter “r” (resh) before labials. Compare Darmesek for Dammesek, <sup><1483></sup>2 Chronicles 28:23 margin). The Apharsites were probably “the Persians;” the Archevites, natives of Erech (Warka) (<sup><1100></sup>Genesis 10:10); the Susanchites, colonists from Shushan or Susa; the Dehavites, colonists from the Persian tribe of the Dai; and the Elamites, colonists from Elam or Elymais, the country of which Susa was the capital.

<sup><1510></sup>**Ezra 4:10.** A snapper was perhaps the official employed by Esarhaddon (<sup><1502></sup>Ezra 4:2) to settle the colonists in their new country.

*On this side the river* literally, “beyond the river,” a phrase used of Palestine by Ezra, Nehemiah, and in the Book of Kings, as designating the region west of the Euphrates.

*And at such a time* Rather, “and so forth.” The phrase is vague, nearly equivalent to the modern use of *et cetera*. It recurs in marginal references.

<sup><1513></sup>**Ezra 4:13.** *Toll, tribute, and custom* Rather, “tribute, provision, and toll” (so <sup><1503></sup>Ezra 4:20). The “tribute” is the money-tax imposed on each province, and apportioned to the inhabitants by the local authorities; the “provision” is the payment in kind, which was an integral part of the

Persian system; the “toll” is probably a payment required from those who used the Persian highways.

*The revenue* The word thus translated is not found elsewhere, and can only be conjecturally interpreted. Modern commentators regard it as an adverb, meaning “at last,” or “in the end,” and translate, “And so at last shall damage be done to the kings.”

<sup><5044></sup>**Ezra 4:14.** *We have maintenance* See the margin. The phrase “to eat a man’s salt” is common in the East to this day; and is applied not only to those who receive salaries, but to all who obtain their subsistence by means of another. The Persian satraps had no salaries, but taxed their provinces for the support of themselves and their courts.

<sup><5045></sup>**Ezra 4:15.** *The book of the records* Compare <sup><7023></sup>Esther 2:23; 6:1; 10:2. The existence of such a “book” at the Persian court is attested also by Ctesias.

*Of thy fathers* i.e., thy predecessors ripen the throne, Cambyses, Cyrus, etc. If Artaxerxes was the Pseudo-Smerdis (<sup><5047></sup>Ezra 4:7 note), these persons were not really his “fathers” or ancestors; but the writers of the letter could not venture to call the king an impostor.

<sup><5048></sup>**Ezra 4:18.** *Hath been ... read* It is doubtful if the Persian monarchs could ordinarily read. At any rate, it was their habit to have documents read to them (compare <sup><7061></sup>Esther 6:1). This is still the ordinary practice in Eastern courts.

<sup><5049></sup>**Ezra 4:19.** The archives of the Babylonian kingdom would contain accounts of the insurrections raised, or threatened, by Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (<sup><1240></sup>2 Kings 24:1,10,20). It does not appear that there had ever been any rebellion against Persia.

<sup><5049></sup>**Ezra 4:20.** *Mighty kings ...* If this reference can scarcely have been to David or Solomon (see marginal reference), of whom neither the Babylonian nor the Assyrian archives would be likely to have had any account — it would probably be to Menahem (<sup><1256></sup>2 Kings 15:16) and Josiah (<sup><1806></sup>2 Chronicles 34:6,7; 35:18).

<sup><5044></sup>**Ezra 4:24.** *It ceased* The stoppage of the building by the Pseudo-Smerdis is in complete harmony with his character. He was a Magus,

devoted to the Magian elemental worship, and opposed to belief in a personal god. His religion did not approve of temples; and as he persecuted the Zoroastrian so would he naturally be hostile to the Jewish faith. The building was resumed in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), and was only interrupted for about two years; since the Pseudo-Smerdis reigned less than one year.

## NOTES ON EZRA 5

**Ezra 5:1.** Haggai and Zechariah stirred up Zerubbabel and Joshua (<sup><458D></sup>Ezra 5:2; Hag. 1:14), and warned the people against neglecting the building of the temple, in order to give themselves to the beautifying of their own houses (see Hag. 1:4,9). Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo (see the marginal reference; <sup><4235></sup>Matthew 23:35). Compare a similar application of “son” in the case of Jehu (see the <sup><434D></sup>2 Kings 9:20 note).

*In the name of the God of Israel, even unto them* Rather, “in the name of the God of Israel, which was upon them.” The two prophets addressed the Jews, in respect of their being God’s people, or, in Hebrew phrase (see the <sup><4456></sup>Jeremiah 15:16 margin), “having God’s name called upon them.”

**Ezra 5:2.** *Began to build* i.e., “made a second beginning” — recommenced the uncompleted work.

*Helping them* By infusing zeal into the people (see <sup><3012></sup>Haggai 1:12).

**Ezra 5:3.** *Governor on this side the river* Compare <sup><504D></sup>Ezra 4:10 note. Tatnai was apparently satrap of Syria, which included the whole tract west of the Euphrates from Cilicia to the borders of Egypt. Zerubbabel must have been, to some extent, under his authority.

*Who hath commanded you to build?* There was no doubt a formal illegality in the conduct of Zerubbabel and Jeshua: since all edicts of Persian kings continued in force unless revoked by their successors. But they felt justified in disobeying the decree of the Pseudo-Smerdis (see the <sup><504D></sup>Ezra 4:7 note), because the opposition between his religious views and those of his successor was matter of notoriety.

**Ezra 5:4.** *Then said we* The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions have “Then said they,” which brings this verse into exact accordance with <sup><551D></sup>Ezra 5:10.

**Ezra 5:6.** Apharsachites, like Apharsites, and Apharsathchites (<sup><504D></sup>Ezra 4:9), are thought by some to be forms of the word “Persians,” which is applied here generally to the foreign settlers in Samaria. (Others

identify the first and the third names with the “Paretaceni,” a people on the Medo-Persian border.)

<sup><518></sup>**Ezra 5:8.** *Great stones* literally, as in the margin; i.e., stones so large that they were rolled along, not carried. Others translate “polished stones.”

<sup><516></sup>**Ezra 5:16.** *Since that time even until now* Sixteen years — from 536 B.C. to 520 B.C. The adversaries of the Jews here overstep the truth; since, in point of fact, the work had been suspended for a while (<sup><502></sup>Ezra 4:24).

<sup><517></sup>**Ezra 5:17.** *Let there be search made...at Babylon* They perhaps doubted whether proof of the decree of Cyrus remained in the archives. The Pseudo-Smerdis had had the records in his power for seven months; and, when he reversed the policy of his predecessors, might have been expected to destroy their edicts. The decree was not found at Babylon, the most natural place for it, but in the provincial capital of Ecbatana, which Tatnai and his friends had not asked Darius to have searched (see <sup><512></sup>Ezra 6:2).

## NOTES ON EZRA 6

**Ezra 6:1.** A “house of the rolls” was discovered at Koyunjik, the ancient Nineveh, in 1850 — a set of chambers, i.e., in the palace devoted exclusively to the storing of public documents. These were in baked clay, and covered the floor to the depth of more than a foot. Such a “house” was probably that at Babylon.

**Ezra 6:2.** “Achmetha” is the “Ecbatana,” or “Agbatana,” of the Greeks, the Persian name for which, as we find in the Behistun Inscription, was HaGMaTANA.

We must suppose that, when Babylon had been searched in vain, the other cities which possessed record-offices were visited, and the decree looked for in them. Ecbatana was the capital of Cyrus.

**Ezra 6:3.** It is difficult to reconcile the dimensions here with expressions in Zechariah (<sup>3040</sup>Zechariah 4:10), Haggai (<sup>3013</sup>Haggai 2:3), and even Ezra (<sup>1582</sup>Ezra 3:12), which imply that the second temple was smaller than the first (compare <sup>1062</sup>1 Kings 6:2). Perhaps the dimensions here are those which Cyrus required the Jews not to exceed.

**Ezra 6:4** The word translated “row” occurs only in this passage. Some regard it as a “course,” and suppose that after every three courses of stone there followed a course of timber. Others understand three “storeys” of stone, with a fourth “storey” of woodwork on the summit (compare <sup>1085</sup>1 Kings 6:5,6). Others consider that Cyrus intended to limit the thickness of the walls, which were not to exceed a breadth of three rows of stone, with an inner wooden wainscotting.

*Let the expenses be given out of the king’s house* i.e., “out of the Persian revenue,” a portion of the decree which was probably not observed during the later years of Cyrus and during the reign of Cambyses, and hence the burthen fell upon the Jews themselves (<sup>1585</sup>Ezra 2:68,69).

**Ezra 6:6.** This verse gives the words of the decree of Darius, which was grounded upon, and probably recited, the decree of Cyrus.

**Ezra 6:11.** *Being set up, let him be hanged thereon* Rather, “let him be lifted up and crucified upon it.” Crucifixion was the most common form of capital punishment among the Persians.



**Ezra 6:12.** *Destroy all* A similar malediction is found at the end of the great inscription of this same king Darius at Behistun: If anyone injures the tablet which he has set up, he prays that Ormazd will be their enemy, and that they may have no offspring, and that whatever they do, Ormazd may curse it for them.

*To alter and to destroy this house* i.e., to alter the decree, and then proceed to destroy the house.

**Ezra 6:14.** *Artaxerxes* The Artaxerxes of marginal reference seems to be meant (i.e., Longimanus); he was one of those who together with Cyrus and Darius helped forward the completion of the work.

**Ezra 6:15.** “Adar” was the twelfth or last month of the Jewish year, corresponding nearly with our March. The sixth year of Darius was 516-515 B.C.

**Ezra 6:17.** Compare with this modest sacrifice, which suits well “the day of small things” (<sup>3040</sup>Zechariah 4:10), the lavish offering of Solomon (see the marginal reference “n”).

**Ezra 6:19.** With this verse the writer resumes the use of the Hebrew language, which he had discarded for the Chaldee from <sup>1508</sup>Ezra 4:8. With the exception of the letter of Artaxerxes (<sup>1572</sup>Ezra 7:12-26), all the remainder of the book is in Hebrew.

**Ezra 6:20.** Some render, “And the priests were purified; and the Levites, as one man, were all of them pure.” A contrast is drawn between the universal purity of the Levites and the merely general purity of the priests (<sup>1438</sup>2 Chronicles 29:34; 30:3), which made it fitting that the former should undertake the slaughter of all the Paschal lambs, even of those which the priests were to consume. In later times the ordinary practice was for each head of a family to kill for himself.

**Ezra 6:22.** *The king of Assyria* i.e., Darius. Assyria had so long been the great monarchy of western Asia that the sacred writers continue the title to those who had inherited the old Assyrian power, as first to the Babylonians (<sup>1239</sup>2 Kings 23:29), and secondly to the Persians. With similar inexactness we find Herodotus calling Cyrus “king of the Medes.”

## NOTES ON EZRA 7

**Ezra 7:1.** *After these things* The words mark an interval of 57 years; if, with most commentators, we take Artaxerxes to be Longimanus. See the introduction to the Book of Ezra. Three kings named Artaxerxes, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Artakhshasta, and the Persian Artakhshatra, ruled over Persia, namely, Longimanus, Mnemon, and Ochus. The evidence is in favor of the first being meant here: he was the grandson of Darius Hystaspis, Jeshua's contemporary.

The genealogy of Ezra here is incomplete. The time between the Exodus and Ezra must have exceeded one thousand years, and cannot have been covered by 16 generations. One gap may be filled up from <sup>13307</sup>1 Chronicles 6:7-10, which supplies six names between Meraioth and Azariah (<sup>13078</sup>Ezra 7:3): another gap probably occurs between Seraiah (<sup>13000</sup>Ezra 7:1) and Ezra himself; since Seraiah appears to be the high priest of Zedekiah's time (marginal reference), who lived at least 130 years before Ezra. Three or four names are probably missing in this place. Another name (Meraioth) may be supplied from <sup>11911</sup>1 Chronicles 9:11, between Zadok and Ahitub (<sup>13000</sup>Ezra 7:2). These additions would produce 27 generations — a number nearly sufficient — instead of 16 generations.

**Ezra 7:6.** *A ready scribe* Or, "a ready writer" (<sup>10901</sup>Psalms 45:1). The professional scribe was well known in Egypt from an early date (see <sup>10304</sup>Genesis 39:4 note); and under David and his successors "scribes" were attached to the court as the king's secretaries (<sup>10187</sup>2 Samuel 8:17; 20:25; <sup>12120</sup>2 Kings 12:10, etc.). It was scarcely, however, until the time of the captivity that the class to which Ezra belonged arose. The "scribes" of this time, and of later Jewish history, were students, interpreters, and copiers of the Law (see the marginal references and <sup>2408</sup>Jeremiah 8:8). They retained the knowledge of the old dialect, which was being rapidly superseded by a new one. The emphatic application of the title "the scribe" to Ezra marks the high honor in which the office was now held. Its glories eclipsed those of the priesthood.

*The hand of the LORD ... upon him* The use of this phrase in a good sense is rare elsewhere (compare <sup>11846</sup>1 Kings 18:46), but is a favorite one with

both Ezra and Nehemiah (see the marginal references; <sup><1618></sup>Nehemiah 2:8,18).

<sup><1579></sup>**Ezra 7:9.** The direct distance of Babylon from Jerusalem is about 520 miles; and the circuitous route by Carchemish and the Orontes valley, which was ordinarily taken by armies or large bodies of men, is about 900 miles. The time occupied in the journey is long, and is perhaps to be accounted for by the dangers alluded to in <sup><1582></sup>Ezra 8:22,31.

<sup><1572></sup>**Ezra 7:12.** The title, “king of kings,” is assumed by almost all the persian monarchs in their inscriptions.

*Perfect peace* “Peace” is not in the original, and the word translated “perfect” occurs only in this place. Some prefer to take it as an adjective descriptive of Ezra (see margin); others (Septuagint) as the opening word of the first paragraph of the letter, and give it the meaning, “it is completed.”

<sup><1574></sup>**Ezra 7:14.** *Seven counselors* Herodotus relates that there were seven families pre-eminent in Persia, those of the seven conspirators against the Pseudo-Smerdis (<sup><1547></sup>Ezra 4:7 note); and it is reasonable to suppose that the heads of these families formed the special council of the king; the “Achaemenidae,” or royal family, being represented by the head of the branch next in succession to that of the reigning monarch (see the marginal reference).

<sup><1572></sup>**Ezra 7:21.** *All the treasurers* The Persian system of taxing the provinces through the satraps involved the establishment in each province of at least one local treasury.

<sup><1572></sup>**Ezra 7:22.** This verse assigns limits to the permission of <sup><1572></sup>Ezra 7:20. As the Persian tribute was paid partly in money and partly in kind (see <sup><1543></sup>Ezra 4:13 note), the treasuries would be able to supply them as readily as they could furnish money.

<sup><1572></sup>**Ezra 7:23.** Literally, as in the margin, i.e., Whatsoever is commanded in the Law with respect to the temple service.

<sup><1572></sup>**Ezra 7:24.** The decree of Artaxerxes was more favorable to the Jews than those of all previous Persian monarchs. We hear of a similar

exemption of ecclesiastics from tribute, only to a less extent, under the Seleucidae.

*Ministers* The rare word here used, which in Daniel has the sense of “worshippers,” appears to designate in this place the lowest class of persons employed in the service of the temple.

<sup><5172></sup>**Ezra 7:26.** *Banishment* literally, as in the margin. Separation from the congregation is probably intended (compare <sup><5108></sup>Ezra 10:8).

<sup><5177></sup>**Ezra 7:27.** An abrupt transition from the words of Artaxerxes to those of Ezra. Compare a similar abrupt change in <sup><5106></sup>Ezra 6:6. The language alters at the same time from Chaldee to Hebrew, continuing henceforth to be Hebrew until the close of the book.

## NOTES ON EZRA 8

**Ezra 8:2,3.** Punctuate as follows:

**Ezra 8:2.** ... of the sons of David, Hattush of the sons of Shechaniah.

**Ezra 8:3.** Of the sons of Pharosh, Zechariah....

Hattush, the descendant of David, was the grandson of Shechaniah (see marginal reference).

Most of these names (<sup><1582></sup>Ezra 8:2-14) occur also as those of heads of families in the list of the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel (<sup><1583></sup>Ezra 2:3-15). The Septuagint and Syriac versions supply omissions in <sup><1585></sup>Ezra 8:5,10.

**Ezra 8:15.** Ahava was both a town and a river (<sup><1582></sup>Ezra 8:21). The modern name of the place is Hit. It is famous for its bitumen springs, and is situated on the Euphrates, at a distance of about 80 miles from Babylon, toward the northwest.

*None of the sons of Levi* The Levites appear to have been disinclined to return to Jerusalem (see <sup><1583></sup>Ezra 3:8 note).

**Ezra 8:17.** *Casiphia* Its situation is wholly unknown; but it cannot have been far from Ahava.

**Ezra 8:18.** *And Sherebiah* Either a name has fallen out before the words “a man of understanding,” or the “and” here has crept into the text by accident. Sherebiah appears among the most earnest of the Levites under Nehemiah (see the marginal references).

**Ezra 8:22.** What “enemy” menaced Ezra, and on what account, is wholly uncertain (compare <sup><1583></sup>Ezra 8:31). Perhaps robber-tribes, Arab or Syrian, were his opponents.

**Ezra 8:27.** *Twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams* Not of a thousand drams (i.e., darics) each, but worth altogether a thousand darics. As the value of the daric was about 22 shillings of British money, each basin, or saucer, would have been worth (apart from the fashioning) 55 British pounds.

*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, 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.

<sup><1588></sup>**Ezra 8:31.** The Jews with Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first month (<sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:9). They reached Ahava in nine days, and, having remained there three (<sup><1585></sup>Ezra 8:15), quitted it, and resumed their journey on the twelfth. They reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month (<sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:9), four months after the departure from Babylon.

<sup><1585></sup>**Ezra 8:35.** Compare the marginal reference. The idea of offerings for all Israel pervades in this case the entire sacrifice, with the exception of the lambs, whose number (77) is unique, and has not been accounted for.

<sup><1586></sup>**Ezra 8:36.** *The kings commissions* i.e., the orders issued to all governors of provinces near Judaea by Artaxerxes, given in <sup><1572></sup>Ezra 7:21-24.

*The kings lieutenants* literally, “the king’s satraps.” The word is used in its strict sense, referring to the chief rulers of Persian provinces, from which the “governors” or rulers of smaller districts are distinguished.

## NOTES ON EZRA 9

**Ezra 9:1.** *Abominations* The mixed marriages had prevented that complete separation of the people of God from the idolatrous rites, or “abominations,” which the Law required, and which was necessary for purity of religion. See <sup><1111></sup>1 Kings 11:2 note.

**Ezra 9:3.** Plucking out the hair with the hands, so common among the Classical nations, is, comparatively speaking, rarely mentioned as practiced by Asiatics.

**Ezra 9:7.** Very similar in tone to this are the confessions of Nehemiah (<sup><1429></sup>Nehemiah 9:29-35) and of Daniel (see the marginal references). The captivity had done its work by deeply convincing of sin the Jewish nation that had previously been so proud and self-righteous.

**Ezra 9:8.** The “little space” was above 60 years, counting from the second year of Darius (<sup><1504></sup>Ezra 4:24), or about 80 years, counting from the first year of Cyrus (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 1:1). This does not seem to Ezra much in the “lifetime” of a nation.

*A remnant to escape* Rather, “a remnant that has escaped.” The “remnant” is the new community that has returned from the captivity.

*A nail* Compare the marginal note and reference. The metaphor is probably drawn from a tent-pin, which is driven into the earth to make the tent firm and secure.

**Ezra 9:9.** *We were bondmen* Rather, “we are bondmen” (compare the marginal reference). The Israelites, though returned from the captivity, were still “bondmen.” The Persian monarch was their absolute lord and master.

**Ezra 9:11.** *Saying* The words which follow in this verse are not quoted from any previous book of Scripture, but merely give the general sense of numerous passages. Compare the marginal references.

**Ezra 9:13.** *Deliverance* Or, “remnant,” as in <sup><1508></sup>Ezra 9:8.

~~15015~~ **Ezra 9:15.** Some take “righteous” to mean here “kind” or “merciful.” Others give it the more usual sense of “just,” and understand the full meaning of the passage to be, “Thou art righteous, and hast punished us, because of our sin, the contraction of forbidden marriages, so that we are a mere remnant of what was once a great people.”



## NOTES ON EZRA 10

**Ezra 10:1.** *Before the house of God* i.e., in front of the temple, praying toward it (<sup><1080></sup>1 Kings 8:30,35; <sup><2760></sup>Daniel 6:10), and thus in the sight of all the people who happened at the time to be in the great court.

**Ezra 10:2.** Jehiel was one of those who had taken an idolatrous wife (<sup><5100></sup>Ezra 10:26); and Shechaniah had therefore had the evil brought home to him.

**Ezra 10:3.** *Let it be done according to the law* i.e., let a formal “bill of divorcement” be given to each foreign wife, whereby she will be restored to the condition of an unmarried woman, and be free to marry another husband (see <sup><1620></sup>Deuteronomy 24:1,2). The facility of divorce among the Jews is well-known. According to many of the rabbis, a bill of divorcement might be given by the husband for the most trivial cause. Thus, no legal difficulty stood in the way of Shechaniah’s proposition; and Ezra regarded it as necessary for the moral and religious welfare of the people.

**Ezra 10:6.** The “chamber of Johanan” was probably one of those attached externally to the temple (see <sup><1065></sup>1 Kings 6:5,6). Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua (<sup><4920></sup>Ezra 3:2), and was high priest under Nehemiah (<sup><1400></sup>Nehemiah 3:1). He could assign chambers in the temple to whomever he pleased (see <sup><1630></sup>Nehemiah 13:4,5).

**Ezra 10:8.** *Separated from the congregation* i.e., “excommunicated” (compare <sup><2120></sup>Exodus 12:19; <sup><0450></sup>Numbers 19:20, etc.). The power assigned to Ezra is stated in 7:25,26.

**Ezra 10:9.** *It was the ninth month* Or, our December, a time when rain falls heavily in Palestine: four months, therefore, after Ezra’s arrival in Jerusalem (compare <sup><1570></sup>Ezra 7:9).

*The street* Rather, “the court,” the “broad,” “spacious, place” (compare the <sup><420></sup>2 Chronicles 29:4 note).

<sup><5105></sup>**Ezra 10:15.** Some translate it: “Nevertheless, Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this.” The opposition was useless (<sup><5106></sup>Ezra 10:16).

<sup><5107></sup>**Ezra 10:17.** The business occupied the commission full two months. In some cases, it may be presumed, they had to summon persons before them who did not wish to part with their foreign wives; in all, they had to assure themselves that the wives were foreign; finally, they had in every case where they decreed a divorce to make out the “writing of divorcement” (<sup><5108></sup>Ezra 10:3).

<sup><5108></sup>**Ezra 10:18-45.** Compare with the list in Ezra 2.

<sup><5109></sup>**Ezra 10:19.** *They gave their hands* i.e., “solemnly pledged themselves” (compare the marginal references).

<sup><5104></sup>**Ezra 10:44.** The guilty persons, it would seem, were 113 in number. They comprised 4 members of the high priest’s family, 13 other priests, 10 Levites, and 86 lay Israelites belonging to at least 10 distinct families. The fact noted in the second clause of the verse must have increased the difficulty of Ezra’s task.