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Ezra 2

(2020)

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Ezra 2.

Topics.

- The record that was kept of the families that came up out of captivity.
- Each returned to his own town (his own city in KJV).
- Those who came out of captivity with Zerubbabel.
- The priests and Levites that returned to Jerusalem and Judah.
- The singers and gatekeepers that returned to Jerusalem.
- The temple servants and sons of Solomon that returned.
- Those who came up from Tel-melah and sons of priests that returned.
- Do not eat holy food, until a priest consults Urim and Thummim.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ezra begins where 2 Chronicles ended as prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 44:28) the Persian King Cyrus had sent exiles led by Zerubbabel back to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. (Persia had defeated Babylon in 539 B.C.). Despite opposition from the non-Jewish inhabitants of Judea, and after encouragement by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the temple was rebuilt (515 B.C.). Then in 458 B.C., Ezra led the second of three waves of returning exiles. By the time Ezra arrived, the people had again fallen into sin, Ezra preached God's word and the people repented (10:9-17). Ezra succeeded because God's hand was upon him (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28) (Ezra 8:18, 22, 31). This book (probably written by Ezra), shows that God uses pagan kings to accomplish His purposes and His faithfulness to His promises and His people.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: focuses on God giving Cyrus king of Persia all kingdoms of the earth and stirring up his spirit to build Jerusalem to fulfil the words of Jeremiah. Everyone whose spirit God stirred went to rebuild the House of the LORD. Cyrus returned to the House of God the vessels, that Nebuchadnezzar had taken. The chapter ends with Mithredath and Sheshbazzar counting out the vessels of gold and silver that were returned to be returned to the House of the LORD.

SONS OF PAROSH

EZRA 2:1

- **Ezra 2:1:** Now these were the people (children in KJV) of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town (his own city in KJV).

A record was kept of the families that came up out of captivity. Upon a careful study of Ezra's record (Ezra 2:64-65) and Nehemiah's recorded in chapter seven, it will be discovered that they differ in some names and numbers, this could be due to the fact that during the years between the first record being made and the record recorded in Nehemiah some

changes to the names and numbers were made to the original record because several names were given to the same persons. It is also probable that those mentioned in Ezra's record gathered at the general place of assembly and enrolled their names intending to go; but in the interval of preparation:

- Some were prevented by sickness or other casualties, happening to themselves or to their near relations.
- Others changed their minds.
- Some died on the journey or faced such insurmountable obstacles that they could not travel the full distance.
- Others may have been hindered by sickness or some other form of casualty and could not make the full journey.

Naturally this means that those recorded at enrolment would obviously differ to those who arrived in Jerusalem and for these reasons the original copy may have been updated sometime during the intervening years between Ezra and Nehemiah.

The people (children in KJV) of the province: (v1) the expression, "the children of the province," refers to the Israelites who returned to Judah, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia. They are those who Nebuchadnezzar had taken captive to Babylon and who at the end of their seventy-year exile went to the province of Judah to build the House of God.

- Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. (Ezra 5:8).

Prior to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem's great sins, the province of Judah was an independent flourishing, and a formidable kingdom, but was reduced to a province of the Babylonian monarchy, and after Cyrus king of Persia released the Jewish captives from their seventy years in exile, and gave them written permission to return to their own land and rebuild the temple of God, the land of Judah was still a province of Persia and the Jewish people were subject to the kings of Persia, however, Cyrus gave them great liberty.

The title, "the children of the captivity," became their generic name in Babylon and in Persia of those Israelites who were taken into Babylonian exile for seventy-years.

NOTE: the words, "captivity and captives," when applied to the Jews being carried to Babylon, does not mean that they were made slaves to private masters, who slave traders sold as captives generally were. For these were taken to Babylon as a colony, to serve the king only. There is no implication in Scripture that they became the property of private persons in Babylon, but rather were given great liberty to establish their own homes and businesses, but all the while subject to the king and the laws of Babylon and to some services for the king.

This is supported by the fact that when Cyrus did give them liberty to return to their own land only a few (comparatively speaking), accepted the offer, which would hardly have been the case if they had been slaves to private masters.

Each returned to his own town (his own city in KJV): (v1) since their former cities were either demolished or during their seventy years in captivity became possessed by others the statement, each returned to his own town (his own city in KJV) refers to those cities or towns which belonged to their forefathers, however, the following verses show that there were a few cases where the cities and towns of their forefathers was not known.

- **Ezra 2:59-62:** The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: ⁶⁰ the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, 652. ⁶¹ Also, of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name). ⁶² These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

The following verses show that for the few that could not prove which cities they belonged to lots were cast for them:

- Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. ² And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 11:1-36).

Those who could not prove from what city their ancestors belonged to, could apply to some of those who were born during the seventy-year captivity, for these people would have never lived in any city, town or village that was in the land of Judah.

SONS OF PAROSH

EZRA 2:2

- **Ezra 2:2:** They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

An account was kept of the families that came up out of captivity. Zerubbabel was their prince (i.e., chief leader) of the first wave of returning exiles, that were dwelling in the province of Babylon. The captives who lived in the same province and nearest to Zerubbabel joined themselves to him. Though Cyrus granted liberty to all the tribes to return to Jerusalem, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned first for the following two reasons:

1. They were in the same province as Zerubbabel.
2. The rebuilding of the temple principally concerned them, since Jerusalem was within their dominion.

The other ten are the chief leaders that went with Zerubbabel to assist him in leading the people from Babylon to Jerusalem.

JESHUA

Jeshua: (v2) (also called Joshua) was the son of Jozadak (also called Josedech) of the tribe of Levi. He is the Jeshua of Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai acting as high priest, who lived hundreds of years after the renowned Joshua (the son of Nun) who, as successor to Moses' led Israel into the land of Canaan.

The following verses show that Jeshua was a priests and Levite who came up with Zerubbabel and helped the people to understand the Law, helped in distributing the portions of the freewill offering to the people, and called them to stand up and bless the LORD their God from everlasting to everlasting, saying, "Blessed be His glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

- **2 Chronicles 31:15:** Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were faithfully assisting him (Kore the overseer of the freewill offerings to God) in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their brothers, old and young alike, by divisions,

- **Ezra 8:33:** On the fourth day, within the house of our God, the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed into the hands of Meremoth the priest, son of Uriah, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui.
- **Nehemiah 12:1:** These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra.
- **Nehemiah 8:7:** Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places.
- **Nehemiah 9:4:** ⁴ On the stairs of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani; and they cried with a loud voice to the LORD their God.
- **Nehemiah 9:5:** Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, “Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

Jeshua: the name translated in our English Old Testament as Jeshua is a late form of the Biblical Hebrew name Yehoshua (Joshua), and means to rescue and deliver. The following verses show that Jeshua was also called Joshua and that he was the son of Jozadak

- **Ezra 3:2:** Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.
- **Haggai 1:1:** In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest:
- **Haggai 1:12:** Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.
- **Haggai 2:2:** “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people.
- **Haggai 2:4:** Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts.

Jeshua (also called Joshua) was, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity the first person chosen to be the high priest for the reconstruction of the Jewish temple. He was a type of the Great Deliverer in that one Joshua led God’s people into Canaan (the Promised Land), and the other Joshua restored the temple. Zerubbabel having the chief power in civil things exercised his office as governor, while Jeshua having all authority in ecclesiastical things exercise the office, of high priest and both had a strong influence upon the people.

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah: (v2) some commentators believe this is not the same Nehemiah that wrote the book that immediately follows after this book of Ezra. They feel that it cannot be the same Nehemiah because in Nehemiah chapter one verse one he is pictured some twenty years later as still being in Susa (also called Shushan a Persian city, and capital of Elam and administrative capital of the Achaemenian king Darius I and his successors from 522 BC. Today Susa is a modern Iranian town. However, it is possible that he did return in the first wave, and sometime later returned to Babylon, perhaps to minister, encourage and help further Jews to return.

Seraiah: (v2) means Yahweh has persisted and helped. Throughout Scripture there are many different men named Seraiah and in some genealogies the word "son" often means "descendant," which means the reader must be careful to make sure which Seraih a verse has in focus. The following genealogy states that Seraiah was the father of Ezra:

- Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son (descendant) of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, ² son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, ³ son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, ⁴ son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, ⁵ son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest. (Ezra 7:1-6).

But according to the Book of Kings Seraiah, was killed by Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah (2 Kings 25:18-21), and since he was the father of Jehozadak, the high priest who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadrezzar (1 Chron. 6:14-15), (Heb. 5:14), etc. in 588 BC, and since the return under Ezra took place in 458 BC, the word "son" must be used in (Ezra 7:2), in the sense of descendant. Since, Jeshua (also called Joshua), the high priest, who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, was the son of Jehozadak and the grandson of Seraiah, Ezra was probably the great-grandson or great-great-grandson of Seraiah. Inasmuch as Jehozadak is never mentioned as one of his forefathers, Ezra was probably not descended from Jehozadak, but from a younger brother. He would thus not be a high priest, though he was of high-priestly descent as far as Seraiah. For the sake of shortening the list of names, six names are omitted in (Ezra 7:2-7), between Azariah and Meraioth, and one between Shallum and Ahitub from the corresponding list found in (1 Chron. 6:4-14) (Hebrew 5:30-40). Seraiah travelled with Zerubbabel the chief leader of the first wave of returning exiles to Jerusalem and Judah

MORDECAI

Mordecai: (v2) some think that the Mordecai here is the same Mordecai that was uncle of Esther, because he brought up his niece in the city of Susa (also called Shushan) a Persian city, in the times of Ahasuerus. However, it is possible that he did return to Jerusalem in the first wave and returned to the capital city of Persia sometime later.

The number of the men of the people of Israel: (v2) this statement refers to the ten principal men that have been previously named.

SONS OF PAROSH

EZRA 2:3

- **Ezra 2:3:** The sons (children in KJV) of Parosh, 2,172.

The words sons and children in this context means future generations or descendants. Now we are given a record of the family and local names. The children Of Parosh may refer to those who descended from his own bloodline or to those who descended from his entire family of which he was the chief (i.e., head) likewise for the rest of the names that follow. From this verse to verse thirty-five, a list is given of the captives that returned, they are described by the following three things:

1. The families they were of, and ancestors that they sprung up from.
2. The towns and cities to which they originally belonged.
3. The numbers of people descended from them.

Other than this information nothing more is known of them.

SONS OF SHEPHATIAH

EZRA 2:4-15

- **Ezra 2:4-15:** The sons of Shephatiah, 372. ⁵ The sons of Arah, 775. ⁶ The sons of Pahathmoab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,812. ⁷ The sons of Elam, 1,254. ⁸ The sons of Zattu, 945. ⁹ The sons of Zaccai, 760. ¹⁰ The sons of Bani, 642. ¹¹ The sons of Bebai, 623. ¹² The sons of Azgad, 1,222. ¹³ The sons of Adonikam, 666. ¹⁴ The sons of Bigvai, 2,056. ¹⁵ The sons of Adin, 454.

Nothing more is known of the sons of these men.

SONS OF ATER

EZRA 2:16

- **Ezra 2:16:** The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98.

Not king Hezekiah, but another famous person called Hezekiah, nothing more is known of the sons of him.

SONS OF BEZAI

EZRA 2:17-19

- **Ezra 2:17-19:** The sons of Bezai, 323. ¹⁸ The sons of Jorah, 112. ¹⁹ The sons of Hashum, 223.

Nothing more is known of the sons of Bezai, Joran and Arah

SONS OF GIBBAR

EZRA 2:20

- **Ezra 2:20:** The sons of Gibbar, 95.

The children of Gibbar, called in (Neh. 7:25), Gibeon. This refers to the citizens of the city of Gibbar, because it is not the name of a man, but of a place. The same may be said of several names that follow.

SONS OF BETHLEHEM

EZRA 2:21

- **Ezra 2:21:** The sons of Bethlehem, 123.

The remainders of the inhabitants of that city, Bethlehem was a little city amongst the thousands of Judah, yet from this small city the Messiah arose.

MEN OF NETOPHAH

EZRA 2:22

- **Ezra 2:22:** The men of Netophah, 56.

Netophah was a city or group of villages near the town of Bethlehem. This refers to the citizens of the city of Netophah, because it is not the name of a man, but of a place. Nothing more is known of the sons of Arah.

MEN OF ANATHOTH

EZRA 2:23

- **Ezra 2:23:** The men of Anathoth, 128.

This Jewish town was a city of the Levites; but the people spurned Jeremiah's warning and by their rebellion bought upon themselves one of his severest predictions (Jer. 32:27-35). This prophecy was fulfilled in the Assyrian conquest. Anathoth was laid waste and continued a heap of ruins. But during the seventy-year exile the people, came to a better state of mind and returned and rebuilt their city. Nothing more is known of the sons of Anathoth.

SONS OF KIRIATH-ARIM

EZRA 2:24-35

- **Ezra 2:24-35:** The sons of Azmaveth, 42.²⁵ The sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743.²⁶ The sons of Ramah and Geba, 621.²⁷ The men of Michmas, 122.²⁸ The men of Bethel and Ai, 223.²⁹ The sons of Nebo, 52.³⁰ The sons of Magbish, 156.³¹ The sons of the other Elam, 1,254.³² The sons of Harim, 320.³³ The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725.³⁴ The sons of Jericho, 345.³⁵ The sons of Senaah, 3,630.

Nothing more is known of the sons, and men mentioned in these verses.

THE PRIESTS

EZRA 2:36

- **Ezra 2:36:** The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, 973.

Having numbered the people that went of Judah and Benjamin, the record now proceeds to the tribe of Levi. This is the first mention of the priests; they are given by family names. Their numbers are very large in proportion to each of the other classes that have been mentioned. The expression, "of the house of Jeshua," means descendants of Jeshua). Each of the priest's families was counted under its prince or head, like those of the other tribes.

Prior to the captivity David divided the whole body of priests into twenty-four courses and the scribe Shemaiah, a Levite, recorded them.

- **1 Chronicles 24:7-17:** The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,⁸ the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,⁹ the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,¹⁰ the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,¹¹ the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah,¹² the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,¹³ the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,¹⁴ the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,¹⁵ the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizez,¹⁶ the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,¹⁷ the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul,

One course in rotation attended to the sacred duties of the temple every week, and each division was called after the name of its first prince or chief. In Ezra's record of priests (Ezra 2:36-39) only the following four courses of priests returned from the Babylonish captivity.

1. Jedaiah.
2. Immer.
3. Pashur.
4. Harim.

Pashhur was a son of Malchijah (Neh. 11:12) (Jer. 21:1) (Jer. 38:1) who, in David's record the fifth lot fell to. (1 Chron. 24:9). Though Pashur is not mentioned in David's list (1 Chron. 24:3-18) Malchijah his father is (1 Chron. 24:9), therefore he along with Jedaiah, Immer and Harim are the only four families of priests mentioned. The total number of them amounts to 4289. These were the heads of the only four courses of priests that returned from Babylon. The Jews say that as these families increased the four courses were again divided into twenty-four. There is another man named Harim mentioned above (Ezra 2:32), but he was not a priest as this Harim is. The following verse shows that the course of Abijah (1 Chron. 24:7-17) (also called Abia) had survived though to the commencement of the Christian era.

- **Luke 1:5:** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

SONS OF IMMER

EZRA 2:37-39

- **Ezra 2:37-39:** The sons of Immer, 1,052. ³⁸ The sons of Pashhur, 1,247. ³⁹ The sons of Harim, 1,017.

See the notes following the title, "THE PRIESTS" under (Ezra 2:36) above.

THE LEVITES

EZRA 2:40

- **Ezra 2:40:** ⁴⁰ The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.

The Levites were the tribe of Israelites that descended from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. All priests were to be Levites, according to the Law, but not all Levites were priests. Following are the three groups of Israelites.

1. Priests (Kohens).
2. Levi (Levites).
3. Israelites.

Jacob's third son's name was Levi. Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kehath and Merari. (Gen. 46:11) (Exod. 6:16) (Num. 3:17). Kohath's firstborn was Amram, he had three children: Miriam, Aaron and Moses. Aaron was chosen to be the high priest and from his descendants all males were priests, the rest of the tribe were Levites. All male descendant of Aaron is an Aaronite, or priest, any non-Aaronic Levite (i.e., descended from Levi but not from Aaron) assisted the Levitical priests of the family of Aaron in the care of the tabernacle (later of the temple). They each had the following specific roles within the Levite tribe:

1. The Kohathites: were descended from Kohath a son of Levi, their specific responsibility was primarily care of the Ark of the Covenant, the Menorah and the Table of Shewbread and other holy items.

- The Kohath were charged with the service of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulder. (Num. 7:9).
- The Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things, and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. (Num. 10:21).
- The Kohathites had charge of the showbread, to prepare it every Sabbath. (1 Chronicles 9:32).

The sanctuary objects that the Kohathites transported were to be carried on their shoulders with poles made for that purpose.

- You shall make for it (the table for the bread of the Presence) four rings of gold, and fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. ²⁷Close to the frame the rings shall lie, as holders for the poles to carry the table. ²⁸You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with these. (Exodus 25:26-28).

2. **The Gershonites:** had the responsibility of taking care of the decorations in the sanctuary, the curtains, ropes, and coverings and given two carts and four oxen to help with the transport of these and other items of the sanctuary.

- This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites, in serving and bearing burdens: ²⁵they shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tent of meeting with its covering and the covering of goatskin that is on top of it and the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting ²⁶and the hangings of the court and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords and all the equipment for their service. And they shall do all that needs to be done with regard to them. (Num. 4:24-26).

- Moses gave two wagons and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service. (Num. 7:6-8).

3. **The Merarites:** had the responsibility of maintaining and carrying from place to place the pillars, bases, frames, pegs, and cords of the structure of the tabernacle, they were given four carts and eight oxen to help with the transport of these items

- Moses gave four wagons and eight oxen to the sons of Merari, according to their service. (Num. 7:6-8).

The Primary Duties of the Levites who were Not Priests.

- They were to attend to the duties connected with the tabernacle. (Numbers chapter three and four).
- They were responsible for taking care of the tabernacle furnishings; all that belongs to it; carrying the tabernacle; taking care of the camp around the tabernacle; taking the tabernacle down and setting it up; camping around the tabernacle so that there may be no wrath on the people of Israel and keeping guard over it. (Num. 1:48-54) (Num. 3:8).
- They were minister to the high priest. (Num. 3:6)
- They were the LORD's gift to Aaron and his sons (and by extension all high priests)
- They were gatekeepers. (1 Chron. 9:22).
- They were to do service in the tabernacle and stand before the people of Israel to minister to them at the tent of meeting and make atonement for them. (Num. 16:9) (Num. 18:6). (Num. 8:19).
- They were to keep guard over the whole tent, but not go near to the vessels of the sanctuary or to the altar lest they die. (Num. 18:3).

- They were supported by the tithes of the people in return for their service that they do, in the tent of meeting. The tithe was their inheritance and from this tithe they were to give a tithe to the LORD, meaning to Aaron and the priests (and by extension all future high priests and common priests). (Lev. 27:32-33) (Numbers 18:21-28).
- They were to assist the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, by caring for the courts; the chambers; the cleansing of all that is holy; and any work for the service of the house of God; to assist with the showbread; the flour for the grain offering; the wafers of unleavened bread; the baked offering; the offering mixed with oil; all measures of quantity or size and stand every morning and evening thanking and praising the LORD. (1 Chron. 23:28-29).
- They were to keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary; to attend to the sons of Aaron; for the service of the House of the LORD whenever burnt offerings were offered to the LORD on Sabbaths, new moons and feast days. (1 Chron. 23:30-32).

All who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. (Ezra 3:9). Faithfully performing all these responsibilities was an important part of Israel's covenantal relationship with God and remaining in His favour, blessing and will.

The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel: (v40) these are Levitical families, but not priests. They are the only two that returned in the first wave and both are traced up to Hodaviah.

THE SINGERS

EZRA 2:41

- **Ezra 2:41:** The singers: the sons of Asaph, 128.

The number of singers, choristers and musician that returned was also very small. They are of the families of Asaph. See the notes following (Ezra 2:42) titled: "The Gatekeepers." (Following).

THE GATEKEEPERS

EZRA 2:42

- **Ezra 2:42:** The sons of the gatekeepers (porters in KJV): the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, in all 139.

The children of the porters or gatekeepers, number six families. The following verses show that three (Shallum, Akkub and Talmon) were in the old Jerusalem.

- **1 Chronicles 9:17:** The gatekeepers were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their kinsmen (Shallum was the chief).

Prior to Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem there were 4,000 gatekeepers (1 Chron. 23:5), and 4,000 who offered praises to the LORD with musical instruments made for praise (1 Chron. 23:5), and the total number of Levites, thirty years old and upward, was 38,000 men. (1 Chron. 23:2-3). In contrast to this great number only a very small number of Levites returned from their Babylon exile to Jerusalem. The duty of the Levites was to act as officers and judges and assist the sons of Aaron (the Levite priests) in the service of the House of the LORD (1 Chron. 23:28), maintaining the courts, the chambers, the cleansing of all that was holy, and any work for the service of the House of God.

EZRA 2:43

- **Ezra 2:43:** The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth.

King James Bible says:

- **Ezra 2:43:** The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth.

The Nethinims were temple-bondsmen: the lowest order of the ministry, performing the more laborious duties of the sanctuary. Their history runs through a long period. Moses apportioned them first, from the Midianite captives.

- **Numbers 31:47:** from the people of Israel's half Moses took one of every 50, both of persons and of beasts, and gave them to the Levites who kept guard over the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

They were later reinforced by Gibeonite captives.

- **Joshua 9:23:** Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

And probably later by David.

- **Ezra 8:20:** besides 220 of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name.

The following verse shows that they were sacred temple slaves, given to the Levites to assist them in the inferior services of the priests and Levites.

- **1 Chronicles 9:2:** Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants.

The word Nethinims means, "given" or "dedicated," (i.e., to the temple) they were used to cut wood and carry water for the use of the sacrifices and carry out any other menial task required to maintain the temple.

Three names—Akkub, Hagab, and Asnah—have dropped from Nehemiah's list, which also gives some unimportant changes in the spelling of the names.

TEMPLE SERVANTS CONTINUED

EZRA 2:44-54

The following verses gives a list of the names of the temple servants that returned to Jerusalem.

- **Ezra 2:44-54:** the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, ⁴⁵ the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub, ⁴⁶ the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shamlai, the sons of Hanan, ⁴⁷ the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, ⁴⁸ the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, ⁴⁹ the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, ⁵⁰ the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephisim, ⁵¹ the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, ⁵² the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, ⁵³ the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, ⁵⁴ the sons of Nezhiah, and the sons of Hatipha.

Since these are all listed as Nethinims and nothing is known of these individual men, see the notes following (Ezra 2:43) above, titled: TEMPLE SERVANTS

EZRA 2:55-58

- **Ezra 2:55-58:** The sons of Solomon’s servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Hassophereth, the sons of Peruda, ⁵⁶ the sons of Jaalah, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, ⁵⁷ the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, and the sons of Ami. ⁵⁸ All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon’s servants were 392.

The children of Solomon’s servants: could refer to the following two groups:

1. To those strangers and proselytes who Solomon used in the building of the temple and who he devoted to its menial tasks and ongoing maintenance.
 - **1 Kings 9:21:** ²¹ their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day.

To those who had lived in Solomon’s family, and after his death called themselves and their families by that name esteeming it a great honour to them that they had been servants to so great a prince. These servants are mentioned in the following verses:

- **1 Kings 9:20-21:** All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—²¹ their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day.

They are a servile class, probably inferior to the Nethinims, formed of the remainder of the Canaanites, generally they were classed with them as in the general listing here.

During their captivity both these classes retained their attachment to the service into which they had been appointed to; and, the Levites being so few in number no doubt valued, their help in the reconstitution of the temple, which gave them a special importance, and therefore they are listed in this record.

THOSE WHO CAME UP FROM TEL-MELAH

EZRA 2:59

- **Ezra 2:59:** The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they could not prove their fathers’ houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel:

Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, were probably cities, or villages, of Babylonia, that the Jews spoken of here had settled in during the time of their exile. Tel-melah, Tel-harsa and Addan, have been reasonably identified with Thelme and Chiripha of Ptolemy, but of the rest nothing is known at present. From these places many went with the Jews to Judea. They were probably children of those who had been taken captive at the beginning of the captivity; but had lost their genealogies and therefore could not trace their lineage and genealogical records, if they ever had any, and therefore could not tell:

- What family they were of and who their ancestors were.
- Whether their parents were Israelites or proselyted Gentiles.
- Where they had lived in Judea or if they had been taken out of the streets desert places.

Because they could not show from what families they originated from they could not obtain any definite possession in Judea, as those did who know and could show to what family and city they belonged.

SONS OF DELAIAH

EZRA 2:59

- **Ezra 2:60:** the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, 652. The King James Bible says:

- **Ezra 2:60:** The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.

Since these are places here in the list of those who could not trace their lineage and genealogical, it appears that these could not carry their genealogy further and therefore could not make it clearly appear what the house of their fathers was.

SONS OF THE PRIESTS

EZRA 2:61-62

- **Ezra 2:61-63:** Also, of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name).⁶² These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

The expression, "the children of the priests," refers to those who could not make out their pedigree (i.e., children of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai) for the priests that could be mentioned in (Ezra 2:36) titled THE PRIESTS (above).

They sought their register: (v62) generally the Jews from their own choice and for their own interest were very exact in their genealogies so that they would preserve the distinctions of the tribes and their families, which was necessary both to make out their titles to offices and for their inheritances, and to govern themselves thereby in the matter of marriages, and from the special providence of God, so that the bloodline and the tribe and family that the Messiah descended from could be known.

The story of Barzillai: Barzillai is described as a wealthy man from Rogelim in Gilead who lived during the time of King David (2 Sam. 17:27). He is best known for his loyal and faithful service to David, especially when David was forced to flee Jerusalem during a revolt by his son Absalom. Years later, a son of the priests married a woman that descended from Barzillai the Gileadite.

In Babylon, this man chose to take the name of his wife's family, and pass for a descendant of her people, probably because the name Barzillai had great renown and at this time the priesthood was in abandonment and held in contempt, and therefore he neglected to take care of the genealogy of his own family. He preferred the name Barzillai before that of his own family name, accounting the name Barzillai as a greater honour than to be allied to his Jewish family and the house of Levi. But by this worldly ambition he forfeited the dignity and advantages of the priesthood.

URIM AND THUMMIM

EZRA 2:63

- **Ezra 2:63:** The governor (Tirshatha in KJV) told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

The word Tirshatha is a Chaldee name, and signifies him who has authority over others such as a governor and king's commissioner. Here it most likely refers to Zerubbabel. In the following verse Nehemiah is called a Tirshatha.

- And Nehemiah, who was the governor (Tirshatha in KJV), and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. (Nehemiah 8:9).
- On the seals are the names of Nehemiah the governor (Tirshatha in KJV), the son of Hacaliah, Zedekiah. (Nehemiah 10:1).

The sons (children in KJV) of Habaiah, of Hakkoz, and of Barzillai, Levitical priests, spoken of in the previous verses were not to eat of the sacrifices offered for sin, or eat of the right shoulder of the peace offerings, or eat of the showbread, for these were all most holy foods and the portion of the priests only until a priest consulted the Urim and Thummim.

The following verses speak of the Urim and Thummim.

- And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly. (Exodus 28:30).
- And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation." (Numbers 27:21).
- David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." (1 Sam. 23:9).

The Urim, Thummin: it is important to note, the Urim and Thummim were not the jewelled breastplate of judgment, but something that was placed into it as the following verse shows:

- And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly. (Exodus 28:30).

The meaning of Urim and Thummim: since it is not known exactly what the Urim and Thummin were, it has been suggested Urim and Thummim carry the following ideas:

How the Urim and Thummim functioned: following are the two most common ways various commentators suspect the Urim and Thummin may have been used:

1. They were placed in the breastplate, so that whenever the high priests entered the presence of the LORD they would be over his heart. In this way the high priest would always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD."
2. The high priest carried in his breastplate the Urim and Thummin perhaps two sticks or two stones, one white and the other black. When Israel was preparing for battle, and desired to know God's will, they would shake or toss the sticks or stones, if they turned up black, they would not go to battle, and if they turned up white, they would proceed into battle with the knowledge that they were in the will of God.

However, the following verse:

- And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. (1 Sam. 128:6).

Makes clear a definite answer was not always obtainable, so it may not have been as simple as tossing two stones on ground, and Moses never used them, which would indicate that they were given for a certain time in Israel's history for the high priest to aid those who could not find God's will and guidance any other way.

The Urim and Thummim faded from use: The Old Testament indicates that the Urim and Thummin faded from use during the early days of Israel's monarchy, this may be due to the following fact: During the monarchy God installed prophets to communicate God's messages to the courts in Jerusalem and Samaria. It seems that prophets who revealed God's word to the king replaced the Urim and Thummin, by which God previously revealed His mind to the priest. The only mention of the Urim and Thummin after the Babylonian exile is the following verse showing that Ezra was still using the Urim and Thummin to determine the ancestry of the priests who returned from the exile:

- The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim. (Ezra 2:63).

Until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim: as had been anciently done. After (Ezra 2:63) the Bible never mentions the Urim and Thummin again, they were a gift from God to assist His people during a certain time in their history. It appears that the governor was saying that:

- In the same ways that their names could not found in the authentic genealogical registers of the priests, they should be forever excluded from the priesthood until some divine oracle pronounced them to have a right to the priesthood.
- Until the dead rise, or the Messiah comes; who is the true High Priest, and with who the true light of the Urim and Thummim, dwell in the perfections of grace and truth.

THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY

EZRA 2:64-67

- **Ezra 2:64-67:** The whole assembly together was 42,360,⁶⁵ besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers.⁶⁶ Their horses were 736, their mules were 245,⁶⁷ their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720.

Jeremiah tells us that 3,023 Judeans were taken captive:

- **Jeremiah 52:28:** This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, 3,023 Judeans;

Ezra tells us that forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty returned, this is far more than the number that were carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar. There is a noticeable difference between the numbers here in Ezra and in Nehemiah chapter seven. Following are the various theories that have been adopted to explain this.

- Errors had crept into the original documents, considering they had no internet and had to rely on the minds of various scribes separated by many years this is not difficult to understand.
- The other tribes beside Judah and Benjamin and the Priests are included in some list and not others
- The Levites or other Israelites, who could not make out their descent are not include in both lists
- Some records only count people from twenty-years and upwards, while other lists only count those of twelve years of age and upward, while another counts all people regardless of age.

- Many that were not taken captive, but dispersed throughout the surrounding nations and returned were included in some records and not others.
- The original document may have been illegible in places, and the writers were forced to make omissions.
- The servants and singers, male and female, are reckoned separately.
- Those who supposed themselves to be Israelites, but could not prove their pedigree by their genealogies are included in some records and not others.
- For the sake of shortening the list certain names are omitted (generally those least important to the story).

During the years between the first record being made and the record recorded in Nehemiah some changes to the names and numbers were made to the original record for the following reasons.

- Several names were given to the same persons.

It is also probable that those mentioned in Ezra's record gathered at the general place of assembly and enrolled their names intending to go; but in the interval of preparation:

- Some were prevented by sickness or other casualties, happening to themselves or to their near relations.
- Others changed their minds.
- Some died on the journey or faced insurmountable obstacles they could not travel the full distance.
- Others were hindered by sickness or some other form of casualty and could not make the full journey.

Which naturally means that those recorded at enrolment would obviously differ to those who arrived in Jerusalem and for these reasons the original copy may have been updated sometime during the intervening years between Ezra and Nehemiah.

HEADS OF FAMILIES

EZRA 2:68-69

- **Ezra 2:68-69:** Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site.
⁶⁹ According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priests' garments.

When the people came to the place in which the temple had stood, and where the ruins still remained, they willingly made freewill offerings for the House of God. This shows that the Jews were not made absolute slaves in Babylon, but had liberty to trade and gain riches for themselves, otherwise they could not have been able to offer such sums as are mentioned. Seeing their most holy temple laying in ruin stirred their hearts in such deep sorrow, that their love and devotion for the Lord their God welled up and outwardly manifested itself afresh by their voluntary giving of large sums towards the restoration of the temple before taking any active measures for providing permanent accommodation for themselves and their families.

PRIESTS AND LEVITES

- **Ezra 2:70:** Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns.

The emphasis lies in the fact that, though Judah and Benjamin were the largest part, this was a national revival. Those who knew their lineage returned to the cities that their families had inhabited before the captivity, while those who could not prove themselves Israelites by any genealogical register, probably settled in Jewish lands which were not claimed. Although their cities were in a ruinous state, yet, because they were the cities that God had assigned them, they were content to dwell in them; and were thankful for the freedom, unity and harmony they had.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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