

----- Ezra -----

3537b AM, 4247 JP, 467 BC

1203. Ezra the priest, a scribe or lawyer skilled in the law of Moses, obtained permission from King Artaxerxes and his seven counsellors to resettle the Jewish state and to reform the religion at Jerusalem. This grant once again made it lawful for all the willing Jews to return to Jerusalem. They could send or carry with them any gold or silver that either the king and his nobles or the Jews wanted to offer to their God. They were also given all kinds of furnishings for the Lord's house. The treasurers beyond the river were ordered to supply them from the king's treasury with everything else they would need. All who worked in the temple would be free from having to pay tribute. All the people were allowed to live according to the laws of their God. {#Ezr 7:11-26}

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1204. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, on the first day of the first month, Ezra left Babylon for Israel with a large number of Jews. {#Ezr 7:6,7,9 8:1-14,30} Ezra gathered together at the Ahava River all those who were returning. When he found no Levites in the company, he sent and asked for some to be appointed to make this journey back to Jerusalem with them. They held a fast there for three days to

seek God's protection for the journey. Ezra selected twelve of the chief priests with ten of their brethren to tabulate all the items they were taking back to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. {#Ezr 8:15-30} [L193]

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1205. On the twelfth day of the first month they set out from the Ahava River, and on the first day of the fifth month, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign, they arrived at Jerusalem. They rested there for three days. {#Ezr 7:8,9 8:30,32}

1206. On the fourth day of the fifth month, the gold and silver which they had brought was weighed and put into the house of the Lord along with the other furnishings. Those who had returned offered their sacrifices to God. When this was done, the king's edicts were given to the governors and rulers beyond the river, who showed much favour to the people and to the house of the Lord. {#Ezr 8:33-36}

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1207. When Ezra discovered that the Israelites had intermarried with the heathen, he mourned and fasted, and publicly made intercession to God, to avert his wrath on

them. {#Ezr 9:1-15} When many of the people sorrowed over this, Shecaniah advised Ezra to direct the people to vow to God that they would put away their heathen wives and the children whom they had fathered. This was done. {#Ezr 10:1-17}

1208. Those who had returned from captivity were ordered to appear at Jerusalem within three days, and any who did not would be punished. So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered in the court of the temple on the twentieth day of the ninth month. They were greatly distressed over the seriousness of the matter, and because of the inclement weather. Ezra commanded every male to separate himself from his heathen wife. This they agreed to do, and asked that judges be appointed to see that the orders were followed. Two priests and two Levites were appointed to help carry this out. {#Ezr 10:7-15}

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1209. This examination was held from the first day of the tenth month to the first day of the first month. In three months the matter of the heathen wives was settled. {#Ezr 10:16,17}

1239. For the Feast of Trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month, all the Jews came together at Jerusalem. The law of God was read by Ezra and expounded to them. When they heard it, they were all deeply grieved, and wept. They were encouraged by Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites to keep that feast with joy. {#Ne 8:1-12}

1240. On the second day of the same month, the elders of the families, the priests, and the Levites consulted with Ezra concerning questions arising from the reading of the law. They were encouraged to keep the Feast of Tabernacles outside in the fields in booths made of boughs, as stated in the law. {#Ne 8:13-15 Le 23:40}

1241. From the fifteenth to the twenty-first day, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with great care and devotion. For seven days altogether the law of God was read, and the eighth day was also kept very solemnly, according to the law. {#Le 23:36}

"Neither was there the like Feast of Tabernacles kept from the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, to that time, and there was great joy made." {#Ne 8:17,18} [E139]

1242. The Jews wrote about this in their Greater Chronicle, in chapter thirty:

"It may be said that Ezra compared the return of the children of Israel into the land with the days of Joshua. For as in the days of Joshua they were bound to tithes, to the year of Shemite, or Remission, and to Jubilees, and to the hallowing of their walled towns, so now, in their return in the time of Ezra, they were in like manner obliged to keep the law of tithes, of the years of Shemite, or releasings, or Jubilees, and the hallowing of their walled cities. They rejoiced greatly before the Lord."

1243. On the twenty-fourth of this month the Israelites who had returned separated themselves from all strangers, and made public profession of their repentance. {#Ne 9:1-38} They renewed their covenant with God and bound themselves to observe the law of God, his worship, {#Ne 10:1-39} and the law {#Le 25:4 De 15:1,2} of the Sabbath, and the sabbatical year. {#Ne 10:31}

1244. The chief heads of the people feasted at Jerusalem. The rest cast lots according to which every tenth man who was selected was to live in Jerusalem. {#Ne 11:1-36 1Ch 9:1-44}