

B. *Ezra's Commission*<sup>1</sup> 7:11 - 26 = *I Esdras* 8:8 - 29

1. *Introduction* 7:11- 12

11 This is a copy<sup>2</sup> of the letter which king Artaxerxes gave to the priest/<sup>3</sup> scribe Ezra a scholar in matters of the commandments<sup>4</sup> of Israel. 12<sup>5</sup> Artaxerxes, king of kings to the priest Ezra, a scholar of the law<sup>6</sup> of the<sup>7</sup> God of heaven. [Peace!]<sup>8</sup>

2. *Permission to Return* 7:13 - 14

13 I now issue a decree that any Israelites residing in my kingdom including priests and Levites who desire (*or, feel compelled*) to join you in going to Jerusalem have my permission to do so. 14 You are sent at the command of (*or, commissioned by*) the king and the seven advisors to investigate (*or, make inquiries about*) Judah and Jerusalem according to the law your God has entrusted to you.

3 *Gifts of the Temple* 7:14 - 19

15 The silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, is to be given over to be taken to Jerusalem. 16 All the silver and gold you collect<sup>9</sup> in the entire province of Babalonia, together with the freewill offerings of the people and priests,<sup>10</sup> is very willingly given for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem. 12 With this money you are to be faithful (*or, reliable*) in purchasing bulls, rams, lambs, along with their cereal offerings and the drink offerings and you will offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

18 Whatever you choose to do with the additional silver and gold you and your fellow Israelites may do in accordance with the will of your God. 19 Deliver the vessels (*or, utensils*) that have been given you for the service of the house of your God and hand them over to the God of Jerusalem.

4 *Additional Plans* 7:20 - 24

20 Any additional requirements for the house of your God which you have occasion to provide, you may requisition from the royal

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1 Some scholars reject parts of 7:11 - 8:36 as not being authentic. There is no manuscript evidence nor agreement among scholars as to what is not authentic.

2 This implies a source behind this Aramaic text being Old Persian - *Parsegen*. The word for "letter" is an Old Persian word meaning "memorandum."

3 Here the Hebrew word *kohen* is used instead of the Aramaic word *kumra*. Possibly the Hebrew word had become a part of the lingua franca.

4 Literally: "the scribe of the words of the commandments."

5 Verses 12 - 26 are written in Aramaic.

6 Here a Persian word *dar* is used instead of *torah*. The Persians seem not to have differentiated between secular and sacred law.

7 The Aramaic text adds *gemir* meaning "perfect."

8 Added by Syriac, Vulgate & I Esdras 8:9. Possibly the word "perfect" cf. footnote 7 has that meaning. At this point in language studies this is unclear.

9 Literally: "find."

10 Two distinct kinds of donors are referred to in verses 15 & 16. Jewish donors and non-Jewish donors.

treasury <sup>21</sup> I, king Artaxerxes hereby decree to all the treasurers in the province of the Trans-Euphrates region: Whatever request Ezra the priest and scholar of the law of the God of Heaven presents to you -- it is to be fulfilled quickly, <sup>22</sup> up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil and an unlimited amount of salt. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Whatever is ordered by the God of heaven, let it be assiduously carried out for the house of the God of heaven or else his wrath will be directed against the realm of the king and his sons. (*or, Why should his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons?*)

<sup>24</sup> We also inform you that you are not permitted to impose a general tax levy, poll tax or land tax (*duty*) on any priests, Levites, cantors, warders (*or, door keepers*) or temple attendants and servants of this house of God. <sup>12</sup>

#### *5 Ezra and the Law 7:25 - 26*

<sup>25</sup> You, Ezra, according to the wisdom which has been granted you by God, you are to appoint arbitrators <sup>13</sup> and judges who may judge all the people in the province of Trans-Euphrates, selecting people who know the laws of your God and teach those who do not know them. <sup>26</sup> Whoever does not obey the law of God and the law of the king, is to be punished without delay by death, by exile, by confiscation of his property, or by imprisonment.

#### *6 Ezra's Poem of Praise 7:27 - 28*

<sup>27</sup> May the Lord, the God of our fathers be praised who caused the king to be disposed to think in these terms and glorify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, <sup>28</sup> who has offered me his steadfast love so that before the king and his counselors and all the king's military officers I was able to be courageous, thanks to the lord's loving faithfulness upon me, enabling me to assemble leading men from Israel to go up with me.

### <CHAPTER 8>

#### *C Those Returning with Ezra 8:1 - 14 = 1 Esdras 8:28 - 40*

<sup>1</sup> These are the chiefs of their ancestral houses <sup>14</sup> and this is the genealogical record of those who came up with me from Babylon, during the reign of king Artaxerxes: <sup>2</sup> These are the descendants of Phinehas, <sup>15</sup> Gershom. Of the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the descendants of David, Hattush, <sup>3</sup> of the descendants of Shecaniah. Of the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah with whom were registered one hundred fifty males. <sup>4</sup> Of the descendants of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai,

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<sup>11</sup> A silver talent weighed 91 pounds. A "measure" of wheat was a kor or 6 1/2 bushels. A bath was 6 gallons.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. ANET 212b.

<sup>13</sup> The word for "arbitrators" is used only in Aramaic. Verses 25 & 26 are in Aramaic. The words for "arbitrators" and "judges" are synonymous terms.

<sup>14</sup> The list of participants in Ezra's caravan amounts to 1513 (1640 in 1 Esdras 8). It is thought that with women and children it could have been 5,000. However some scholars doubt the authenticity of the list since only 12 families are mentioned. This format was possibly contrived as a means of reflecting the 12 tribes of Israel.

<sup>15</sup> The list of heads of families is also found in 2:3 - 15 with the exception of Joab in v. 9.

the descendant of Zerachiah, and with him two hundred males. <sup>5</sup> Of the descendants of Zattu <sup>16</sup> Shecaniah, the descendants of Jahaziel and with him three hundred males. <sup>6</sup> Of the descendants of Adin, Ebed the descendant of Jonathan and with him fifty males. <sup>7</sup> Of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiiah, the descendant of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. <sup>8</sup> Of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah, the descendant of Michael, and with him eighty males. <sup>9</sup> Of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah, the descendants of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. <sup>10</sup> Of the descendants of Bani, <sup>17</sup> Shelomith, <sup>18</sup> the descendant of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred sixty males. <sup>11</sup> Of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah, the descendant of Babai, and with him twenty eight males. <sup>12</sup> Of the descendants of Azzad, Johanan the descendant of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males. <sup>13</sup> Of the descendants of Adodnikam, those who came later <sup>19</sup> their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males. <sup>14</sup> Of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, <sup>20</sup> and with them seventy males. <sup>21</sup>

*D. Acquisition of Temple Servants 8:15 - 20 = I Esdras 8:41 - 49*

<sup>15</sup> I assembled them near the stream <sup>22</sup> that enters the Ahava river, <sup>23</sup> and we camped there for three days. When I observed the laity and the priests I discovered there were no descendants of Levi (*or, Levites*) among them. <sup>24</sup> <sup>16</sup> Then I sent for <sup>25</sup> Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, <sup>26</sup> Jarib, Elnathan <sup>27</sup> Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, <sup>28</sup> and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were instructors (*or, interpreters of the law*), <sup>29</sup> who had great insight. <sup>17</sup> I sent them <sup>30</sup> to Iddo <sup>31</sup> the leader at the place called Casiphia <sup>32</sup> to give the message <sup>33</sup> to Iddo and his colleagues, the temple servants, <sup>34</sup> at Casiphia: "Send us servants for the house of our God!" <sup>18</sup> Due to the benevolent nature of our God toward us, they brought us a man of discretion from the descendants of Mahli, the son of Levi, son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his relatives, numbering eighteen, <sup>35</sup> <sup>19</sup> as well as Hashabiah and along with him <sup>36</sup> Jeshaiiah of the descendants of Merari and his relatives, being twenty. <sup>20</sup> Additionally there were two hundred twenty temple servants (this being based on David and his

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16 So: LXX & I Esdras 8:22. Omitted by the MT.

17 So: LXX & I Esdras 8:26. Omitted by the MT.

18 A female name. Cf. I Chronicles 3:19.

19 This could grammatically also be translated as "the last of the family". MT: "The last, and these are the names."

20 Possibly Zabbud.

21 Some scholars feel verses 1 - 14 are an insertion which interrupts the connection between 7:28 and 8:15. There are also some variants and / or corrections to the text in various manuscripts.

22 Canal might best describe the word.

23 Possibly modern Mecin on the canal, now called Ad-Dugejl, meaning "tented settlement."

24 The Levites apparently were reluctant to leave their security and position in Babylon.

25 Grammatically it could be translated: "I sent for" or "I sent to."

26 Some manuscripts have "Jonathan."

27 Some scholars feel this may be a corruption of the name Jonathan as found in six manuscripts.

28 Literally, "heads."

29 The MT, LXX & Vulgate list 11 members of the delegation while I Esdras and LXX manuscripts A & B list 10. L has only 7 names.

30 Literally: "I sent them with commandment." So also Hebrew oral tradition & Peshitta. If this is the appropriate text it could be translated as "I directed them to...."

31 The location is unknown.

32 In the Elephantine Papyri *ksp* appears as a profession: silversmith. Some scholars feel this was the site of a school for Levites. The location is unknown though some feel it is a reference to Ktestphon on the Tigris.

33 Literally: "I placed in their mouths the words to say."

34 Hebrew: *nethinim*.

35 The Hebrew is rather obscure.

36 The LXX does not translate the Hebrew word for "along with him."

officials having people set apart to attend to the Levites.) These were all designated by name.

*E. First Preparation before Departure 8:21 - 23 = 1 Esdras 8:50 - 58*

21 I then proclaimed a fast by the Ahava river to humble ourselves before our God, to beseech him for a safe<sup>37</sup> journey for us, our children<sup>38</sup> and all our possessions.<sup>39</sup> 22 I was ashamed to request an armed guard and cavalry from the king to protect<sup>40</sup> us against any enemy along our way, since we had told the king, "The benevolent care of our God is bestowed upon all that seek him,<sup>41</sup> and his power is fierce<sup>42</sup> against all who forsake him." 23 So we fasted and prayed to our God for this, and he responded to our plea.

*F. Delegation to Transfer Treasure 8:24 - 30 = 1 Esdras 8:54 - 60*

24 Then I selected twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their relatives. 25 I weighed out the silver and the gold to them along with the vessels, as a contribution for the temple of our God which the king and his counselors and his leaders and all Israel who were present had made. 26 For safe keeping I entrusted to them the weight of fifty talents of silver and one hundred silver vessels worth one hundred silver talents.<sup>43</sup> and one hundred talents of gold,<sup>44</sup> 27 twenty gold bowls worth one thousand darics<sup>45</sup> and two vessels of shining bronze, as precious as gold,<sup>46</sup> 28 and I said to them, "You are consecrated to the Lord and the vessels are also consecrated (*or, holy*): the silver and gold are a freewill offering to the Lord the God of your fathers. 29 Diligently guard them, preserving them until you weigh them out in the presence of the chief priests and the Levites and the officers of the leading families in Israel in Jerusalem, within the rooms of the house of the Lord. (*or, Until they are safely delivered to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.*)

30 So the Priests and the Levites accepted responsibility for the cargo of silver and gold and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

*G. Departure and Arrival 8:31 - 36 = 1 Esdras 8:61 - 64*

31 We then departed to go to Jerusalem, leaving from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month. God's protective hand<sup>47</sup> saved us from any enemies or ambushes along the way. 32 We arrived at Jerusalem, and rested there three days. 33 On the fourth day, within the house of our God, the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed and given over into the hands of Meremoth the priest, son of Uriah accompanied by Eleazar the son of Phinehas, along with the Levites, Jozabad, the son of Jeshua and Noadiah, the son of Binnui. 34 The entire amount was accounted for and all the weight was recorded.

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37 Literally: "a straight."

38 Some scholars seem to prefer to translate the Hebrew word as "the weak" but it seems clearly to mean "children."

39 Hebrew: *rekhus*. LXX translates "accumulated goods."

40 Literally: "help."

41 Literally: "upon all who entreat him, to their good."

42 Literally: "his strength and anger."

43 Scholars have figured this to amount to 24 1/2 tons. Might this be somewhat exaggerated?

44 This surely gives the impression that the amounts as noted are questionable. Did the numbers get changed by copyists? Did the Masorites insert the wrong vowels, thus making the numbers much larger than originally intended?

45 The LXX manuscripts A, B & L read the Hebrew word as "road." The word used in Hebrew is a Persian loan word *adarlpmo*, a gold coin equal to 8.424 grams. Older coins which were called by the same name were 1/60th of mina. Cf. Ezra 2:69.

46 A hapax legomenon. *mutshab*. Possibly this should be translated as "polished bronze" or "fine red orichalcum."

47 Literally: "the hand of our God was upon us."

<sup>35</sup> At that time the returning exiles who had arrived, having formerly been captives, offered twelve bulls as an offering for all of Israel, along with ninety-six rams, seventy-three <sup>48</sup> lambs and twelve he-goats as a burnt offering to the Lord. <sup>36</sup> They also handed over the royal orders to the king's satraps <sup>49</sup> and to the governor of the province of Trans-Euphrates; and they supported (*or, aided*) the people as well as the house of God.

#### <CHAPTER 9>

#### IV. Mixed Marriages 9:1 - 10:44

##### A. Report of Mixed Marriages 9:1 - 2 = I Esdras 8:68 - 70

<sup>1</sup> After all this had taken place <sup>50</sup> the officers approached me and said, "The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not isolated themselves from the local population <sup>51</sup> whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. <sup>52</sup> <sup>2</sup> They have taken women to be wives for themselves and their sons. Therefore the holy race <sup>53</sup> has become intermingled (*or, contaminated*) with that of the local population. Moreover, in their faithless conduct <sup>54</sup> the leaders <sup>55</sup> and magistrates have been the foremost offenders. <sup>56</sup>

##### B. Ezra's Reaction to the Mixed Marriages 9:3 - 15

##### 1. Ezra's Mourning 9:3 - 5 = I Esdras 8:11 - 13. cf. Nehemiah 13:23 - 28

<sup>3</sup> When I heard this I tore my tunic and my robe <sup>57</sup> and tore my hair from my head and beard <sup>58</sup> and sat appalled. <sup>59</sup> <sup>4</sup> Then those who were deeply concerned about fulfilling the will of the God of Israel, because of the infidelity (*or, apostasy*) of the returned exiles, rallied around me while I sat dumbfounded until the evening sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of the evening sacrifice <sup>60</sup> I rose, ending my self-abasement (*or, depression*), <sup>61</sup> but, still wearing my torn tunic & robe, <sup>62</sup> I fell down on my knees and spread out my hands. Spreading out my hands to the Lord my God, <sup>63</sup> <sup>6</sup> I said:

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48 So: MT. Josephus & I Esdras say 72.

49 A Persian loan word, *'hasdarpenim* which may simply mean "high officials."

50 Many scholars feel the events of chapters 9 & 10 took place shortly after Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem. Cf. 7:8,9. Other scholars feel this transpired in 5 - 7 months after the arrival in Jerusalem. The Hebrew is obscure. Literally: "at the beginning." *ukkallot 'elleh* which was commonly used by the chronicler as a transitional phrase.

51 Literally: "peoples of the land" which was a derogatory description.

52 So: MT. I Esdras 8:69 has "Edomites."

53 Literally: "holy seed."

54 LXX: "breach of covenant."

55 Hebrew: *sarim*, a word used for all kinds of leadership.

56 Marriage outside the community was described as *ma'al*, "infidelity, unfaithful conduct, being seduced by alien abominations." *cto 'ebot*.

57 The equivalent of a Greek *chiton* with a neck hole in the midst of the cloth. This was often highly decorated with embroidery.

58 The common expression of mourning. Cf. Leviticus 19:27; 21:5; Deuteronomy 14:1.

59 Hebrew: *mesomen*. An awesome emotion, dumbfounded, horrorstruck. OTL: "remained seated in a stupor."

60 Peshitta reads: "the ninth hour" or 5 P.M.

61 Older versions translate the Hebrew word as "heaviness." The LXX translates as "humiliation." More recent scholars feel "fasting" would better translate the word though the sense of the verse might best be described with "depression."

62 Literally: "in my tearing of my garments." Tunic and robe are found in verse 3 and seemed appropriate in verse 4 also.

63 An exceptional position having penitential connotation. Usually one would stand with hands uplifted during prayer. The MT & LXX suggest that Ezra tore his clothes prior to the prayer time - an inappropriate action, accompanied by his sense of horror that this would happen among the exiles who had recently returned.

2 Ezra's Prayer 9:6 - 15 = 1 Esdras 8:74 - 90

"O my God, I am too humiliated and ashamed to lift up my face to you,<sup>64</sup> my God, for our iniquities are overwhelming,<sup>65</sup> and our guilt has grown as high as the heavens. 7 from the time of our ancestors until now we have been deeply involved with guilt,<sup>66</sup> because of our iniquities we, our kings, our priests, -- we all have been handed over to foreign kings<sup>67</sup> to be slain, enslaved, pillaged,<sup>68</sup> in utter shame, as is the case even today.

8 "But now, for a brief moment the Lord our God has granted a reprieve<sup>69</sup> for those who comprise a surviving<sup>70</sup> remnant, to give us a stable hold<sup>71</sup> within his holy place in order that our God may restore the luster in our eyes and grant us sustenance in our slavery.<sup>72</sup> 9 For we are slaves - even in our bondage our God has not abandoned us - but has extended his steadfast love<sup>73</sup> to us and has moved the kings of Persia, to grant us the empowerment<sup>74</sup> to raise up the house of our God, to repair its ruins and give its protection<sup>75</sup> in Judah and Jerusalem.

10 "Now, O God, what can we say after this? We have abandoned your commandments, 11 which you commanded by your servants, saying 'The land which you are about to enter<sup>76</sup> and to take possession is a land that is polluted,' as the result of the corruptness of the inhabitants of the land, with their detestable (*or, abhorrent*) practices which have filled it from end to end with impurity.<sup>77</sup> 12 Therefore do not permit your daughters to marry their sons, nor take their daughters as wives for your sons, and never seek to accommodate to their practices (*or, make concessions*) for your personal well-being so that you might become strong and enjoy the bounty of the land for yourselves<sup>78</sup> to bequeath it as an inheritance to your children forever.

13 "After all that has happened to us because of our evil deeds, our great guilt, we realize that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities merited,<sup>79</sup> for you have allowed us to survive, as is happening now. 14 Will we again break your commandments and intermarry with the people who observe abhorrent practices? Would you be so angry and display your wrath toward us until we are consumed with no possibility to escape so that there would be no remnant nor any escape?<sup>80</sup> 15 O Lord, the God of Israel, you are benevolent (*or, in the right*) for a remnant has survived, as is presently the case. Behold, we stand in your presence, being guilty, for no one can feel guiltless

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64 Ezra associates himself with those who are guilty.

65 Literally: "are numerous above the head." Note the sudden change that appears in Ezra's feelings as he begins a communal confession of guilt.

66 Literally: "we are in a state of great guilt."

67 Literally: "kings of the lands."

68 A late Hebrew word.

69 NICOT "God has given us a foothold in his holy place."

70 A collective feminine form referring to people who have escaped disaster and have been rescued.

71 Hebrew: "nail" or "tent pin." He is speaking to nomadic people but the word may have some legal connotation. Where the nomad pitches his tent implies that he has a right to do so. The Hebrew word is *yated* but some scholars emend the word to read *geber* meaning "remnant."

72 Hebrew: *babhduthenu* "to means of our works." An optimistic verse in the prayer of a distraught person. 1. Remnant. 2. Escape. 3. Security and reviving.

73 Literally: "he has extended love before the Persian kings."

74 Literally: "he extended to us favor."

75 Hebrew: *gader* "a wall."

76 Cf. Deuteronomy 7:1 - 3.

77 Probably idol worship.

78 The thought is that of eating well so that your offspring are healthy.

79 A difficult phrase to translate. Some scholars want to translate it with slight emendation: i.e. "you, O our God have kept from the rod of our iniquities."

80 Literally: "be at the point of destroying."

before you because of this."

<CHAPTER 10>

*C. Public Reaction to Ezra's Distress 10:1 - 6 = I Esdras 8:91 - 92*

<sup>1</sup> When <sup>81</sup> Ezra prayed and made a confession he wept and prostrated himself before the temple of God. A very great crowd of Israelites gathered around him, men, women and children, who wept <sup>82</sup> bitterly. <sup>2</sup> Then Shecaniah <sup>83</sup> the son of Jehiel, of the descendants of Elam spoke to Ezra: "We have betrayed (*or, committed an offense against*) our faith to our God by marrying women <sup>84</sup> from among the people of the lands, <sup>85</sup> but there is still hope for Israel in spite of this. <sup>86</sup> <sup>3</sup> Therefore let us now make a covenant with God to expel <sup>87</sup> all these <sup>88</sup> wives and their children, <sup>89</sup> according to the counsel of my <sup>90</sup> Lord as well as of those who are concerned about (*or, who question*) the commandment of our God. Let it be done according to the law.<sup>91</sup> <sup>4</sup> Arise! Get active! <sup>92</sup> It is your responsibility! We will assist you! Take courage! Do it!" <sup>93</sup> <sup>5</sup> So Ezra stood and had the leading priests and Levites and all Israel make a vow that they would take the action <sup>94</sup> that had been announced. So they made the vow.

<sup>6</sup> Then Ezra left the place in front of <sup>95</sup> the temple of God, and lodged in the room <sup>96</sup> of Jehohanan, the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night. <sup>97</sup> During the night he did not eat bread nor drink water; for he was mourning the faithlessness (*or, treachery*) of the exiles.

*D. Public Assembly 10:7 - 15 = I Esdras 9:9 - 14*

<sup>7</sup> Then a proclamation (*or, decree*) <sup>98</sup> was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles, that they should gather in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> According to the demand ordered by the officials and leaders, anyone who did not come within three days would have his property confiscated, <sup>99</sup> and he, himself would be banned <sup>100</sup> from the congregation <sup>101</sup> of the exiles.

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81 Grammatically it could be "When" Ezra prayed or "While" Ezra prayed.

82 Literally: "for the people were weeping with a great weeping."

83 The name resembles a name in a cuneiform document of the time of Darius. Was he the son of the Jehiel of 10:26? If so, among those he was talking about was his own father (and step-mother.)

84 Literally: "given dwelling to (*nasim nokriyai*) women" of a different ethnic group.

85 A derogatory Hebrew expression referring to those who did not strive for ceremonial cleanliness due to different religious backgrounds. JB: "natives of the countries."

86 A covenant had been broken. It was necessary that there be a reversal of that covenant. The broken covenant was more than the marrying of foreign women. It included the cause for the original exile -- unfaithfulness toward God.

87 "To expel, eject" or "send away." Employing brutal expulsion of loved ones from the Jewish community.

88 Literally: "all women." I Esdras 8:90 has "all our wives who are of alien race."

89 Literally: "that which is born to them." In the mind of Shecaniah there was a clear dividing line between the permissible and the impermissible. Even the children were to be sent away.

90 The massorettes read the word as "the Lord." All other ancient and modern versions read "my lord." The consonants are the same. The selection of the vowels to be inserted is the crux of the matter.

91 TAN: "Let the teaching be obeyed."

92 Literally: "This matter is on you."

93 Literally: "be strong and do."

94 Literally: "thing."

95 I Esdras 9:2 "the court of the temple."

96 Josephus interprets this as "the priestly quarters." LXX: "treasury."

97 The Hebrew is awkward. Two different Hebrew words for "went" are found in this verse.

98 Literally: "They issued a proclamation." LXX: "a decree."

99 The Hebrew word is very strong, usually used for destruction ordered against special enemies. Thus those who were guilty were to have their property confiscated if they did not change their way of life.

100 The implication seems to be that the guilty were also banned from participation in the society of Israel.

101 Peshitta: "people of Israel."

9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem after three days (that was in the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month.)<sup>102</sup> All the people sat in the open square in front of the temple of God, trembling on account of this matter and shivering because of the heavy rain.<sup>103</sup> 10 Ezra the priest stood up and said, "You have committed an offense (*or, treason*) against God by marrying foreign wives and thereby have added to Israel's guilt! 11 Therefore let us confess<sup>104</sup> to the Lord the God of our fathers, and do his will.<sup>105</sup> Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives."<sup>106</sup> 12 Then the entire congregation answered with a loud voice, "Right! It is our duty to do as you say!"<sup>107</sup> 13 However, there are many people who are involved and this is the rainy season. We cannot possibly stand in the open. Nor is this a work that can be completed in a day or two: our transgressions are extensive in this matter. 14 Let our officials represent us<sup>108</sup> on behalf of the entire assembly; let everyone in our cities who has taken foreign wives come at the appointed time, and appear before the leaders and judges in accordance with a schedule, coming from every city to avert the fierce wrath<sup>109</sup> of our God concerning this matter." 15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah, the son of Tikvah were opposed to this course of action.<sup>110</sup> However Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite also supported them.<sup>111</sup>

16 Then the returned exiles each did so. Ezra the priest selected heads of ancestral families<sup>112</sup> and all were registered by name. This took place on the first day of the tenth month.<sup>113</sup> They sequestered themselves to investigate (*or, study*) the matter, 17 and by the first day of the first month<sup>114</sup>

17 they had completed the investigation (*or, study*) of what was to be done to all those men who had married foreign women.<sup>115</sup>

18 Among descendants of the priests it was discovered that Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah, the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brothers had married foreign women. 19 They gave their word<sup>116</sup> that they would put away their wives and would offer a ram of the flock as an expiation for their guilt.<sup>117</sup>

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102 The month would be Chislev (or Kislev) -- mid November - Mid December. Assuming the year was 397 BCE it would be December 18th. The month marked the beginning of the 'great' rainy season.

103 It should be understood that divorce was permitted in Israel though not without serious cause. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:1. Cf. also Malachi 2:10 - 16 where Jewish wives were abandoned in favor of 'heathen' women.

104 Literally: "make sacrifice."

105 This can also properly be translated as "do his pleasure" or "do that which pleases him."

106 Ezra presents a solution to a difficult situation. Cf. the footnote of 9:2.

107 Literally: "Yes, as your words to us do." This event served as a kind of plebiscite.

108 Literally: "stand for."

109 LXX: "to turn away the fierce wrath."

110 Interestingly there is some opposition to the reform procedure. The Hebrew is unclear.

111 The Hebrew is unclear. Some scholars emend to make Meshullam and Shabbethai judges over those who dissented. Some scholars have them supporting the opposition while other have them supporting the proposal. The Hebrew is obscure. The Hebrew word "so therefore" translates "must make a choice."

112 Hebrew obscure. Literally: "and these were selected Ezra the priest." Peshitta & LXX: "the priest selected for himself."

113 Tebeth: mid-December - mid-January.

114 Nisan: mid-March - mid-April.

115 This took about seventy five days to complete.

116 Hebrew is obscure. Literally: "gave their hand." Were the priests the only ones who pledged to send their women away, or was this pledge on behalf of all the people, a kind of sacerdotal pledge by the priests on behalf of the people?

117 Literally it would be translated: "their guilt offering. The marriage of 'foreign women' amounted to a trespass thus requiring a guilt offering." Cf. Leviticus 5:14 - 26. Usually this meant an unintentional transgression. If the word carries the same meaning here the marriages were regarded as unintentional. Is this verse a reference only to the priests or does the priest's



*F. List of Those who Married Foreign Wives 10:20 - 44 = I Esdras 19:21 - 36*

- 29 Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah  
21 Of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jediel and Uziah.  
22 Of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jonzadad and Elasah.  
23 Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is Kelita) <sup>118</sup> Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.  
24 Of the cantors: Eliashib. Of the warders (*or, gatekeepers*): Shallum, Telem and Uri.  
25 And of Israel:  
Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, <sup>119</sup> Eleazar, Mijamin, <sup>120</sup> Hashabiah,  
<sup>121</sup> and Benaiah.  
26 Of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, <sup>122</sup> Jeremoth and Elijah.  
27 Of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zubad (*or, Zabadiah*)  
and Aziza.  
28 Of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai.  
29 Of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal. <sup>123</sup> and Jeremoth.  
30 Of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelai, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel,  
Binnui and Manasseh.  
31 Of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah and Shimeon,  
32 Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah.  
33 Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai Mattattah, Zabad, Elipheler, Jeremai, Manasseh  
and Shimei.  
34 <sup>124</sup> Of the sons of Bani, Maadai, Amram, Uel, <sup>125</sup>  
35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, <sup>126</sup>  
36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,  
37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasu.  
38 Of the sons of Binnui: <sup>127</sup> Shimei,  
39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,  
40 Machnadebai, <sup>128</sup> Shashai, Sharai,  
41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,  
42 Shallum, Amariah and Joseph.  
43 Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah.  
44 All these had married foreign women and they exiled them along with their children. <sup>129</sup>.,

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offering include a guilt offering for all the people. Here again the Hebrew is unclear.

118 Cf. Nehemiah 8:7.

119 The name appears twice in the LXX Aleph, Lambda; in I Esdras MSS A & B the second Malchijah is written as Hashabiah.

120 A contraction of Miniamin. Peshitta: "Benjamin."

121 So: I Esdras 9:26. LXX MT: Malchijah.

122 An abbreviation of Abadiah.

123 Peshitta: "Shaul (Saul)."

124 Verses 34 - 37 include what appear to be a number of corruptions.

125 Very likely Joel.

126 Several MSS of I Esdras and the LXX show it to be "Koliahu" or "Jecoliahu."

127 So: LXX & MT. The name might be "Bani" or "Binrui." The change comes through the emending of one vowel and the name becomes "the descendant of Binnui," cf. I Esdras 9:34.

128 The name is questionable. LXX MSS B: Machad-Nabow. Cf. I Esdras 9:39.

129 The Hebrew is uncertain, having possible dittography. The conclusion appears to be garbled. Nehemiah 9:1 - 5 would fit after this. There is to be a purge of the society of Hebrew exiles who returned to Jerusalem and environs, resulting in a

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drastic separation of the mixed families. In the Hebrew Bible the Book of Nehemiah follows directly from here to form the final part of a single story.