

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 2

This chapter contains a list of those that went up from Babylon to Jerusalem, of their leaders, their chief men, princes and priests, (^{<15111>}Ezra 2:1,2) of the people, described by their families, towns, and cities, and number of persons, (^{<15108>}Ezra 2:3-35), of the priests, Levites, and Nethinims, (^{<15126>}Ezra 2:36-58), and of those that could not make out their genealogy, people and priests, (^{<15129>}Ezra 2:59-63), and then the sum total of the whole congregation is given, (^{<15164>}Ezra 2:64), besides men and maidservants, singing men and women, and cattle of divers sorts, (^{<15166>}Ezra 2:65-67), and the chapter is closed with an account of the freewill offerings of the principal men towards the building of the temple, and of the settlement of the people in their respective cities, (^{<15188>}Ezra 2:68-70).

Ver. 1. *Now these are the children of the province*, etc.] Either of the province of Babylon, as Aben Ezra, where they were either born, or had dwelt for many years; or else rather, according to Jarchi, of the province of Judea, as it is called, (^{<15188>}Ezra 5:8) once a flourishing kingdom, but reduced to a province of the Babylonian monarchy, now in the hands of the Medes and Persians, of which province they and their fathers originally were:

that went out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon; who either in person, or in their parents, were carried captive by him, and who were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and they are only mentioned, because they were the principal that returned, though there were some of the other tribes that also came up with them:

and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, everyone unto his city; that he dwelt in before, or was now assigned to him by lot, (see ^{<16101>}Nehemiah 11:1), etc.

Ver. 2. *Which came with Zerubbabel*, etc.] The head of them, the prince of Judah; and the chief that came with him are the ten following; Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum,

Baanah; the first of these, Jeshua, was Joshua the high priest, the son of Josedech, (^{<3700>}Haggai 1:1). Dr. Lightfoot^{f18} thinks that Nehemiah is the same, whose name the following book bears; and that Mordecai is he who was uncle to Esther, so Aben Ezra; but, if so, they must both return again; for that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, (^{<4000>}Nehemiah 1:1), and that Mordecai brought up his niece in the city of Shushan, in the times of Ahasuerus, is certain; and this, with respect to both, is denied by others^{f19}, who take them to be different men of the same name; and the same writer is of opinion that Seraiah, and who is called Azariah, (^{<4000>}Nehemiah 7:7) is the same with Ezra, who therefore must and did return, since he went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, (^{<4500>}Ezra 7:1,7,8), as for the others, we know nothing more of them than their names:

the number of the men of the people of Israel; either of the principal of them before named, or of the common people, which next follows.

Ver. 3-35. *The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred and seventy two.*] From hence, to the end of (^{<4525>}Ezra 2:35), a list is given of the captives that returned, described by the families they were of, their ancestors from whence they sprung, or the towns and cities to which they originally belonged, and by their numbers; otherwise nothing more of them is known.

Ver. 36-39. *The priests*, etc.] An account of them is given in this and the three following verses, and only four families are mentioned, those of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim, and the number of them amounted to 4289; these, according to the Jews, were heads of four courses, which were all that returned from Babylon^{f20}.

Ver. 40-42. *The Levites*, etc.] Singers and porters, who are reckoned in this, and the two following verses, whose numbers were no more than three hundred and forty one; whereas, in the times of David, they were 38,000, (^{<4325>}1 Chronicles 23:3).

Ver. 43-58. *The Nethinims*, etc.] Supposed by Aben Ezra and Jarchi to be the Gibeonites, who were “given” by Joshua, as the word Nethinims signifies, to the congregation, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water; but rather were those that were given by David to assist the Levites; of these is an account from hence to the end of (^{<4525>}Ezra 2:58), together with those who descended from Solomon’s servants, who seem to be the

remains of the Canaanites in the land, whom Solomon made bondservants of, (¹⁰³⁰1 Kings 9:20,21 ⁴²¹⁷2 Chronicles 2:17), who, and their posterity, became proselytes; or those sprung from men that were domestic servants of Solomon's, and valued themselves on that account; the number of the Nethinims and these together were three hundred ninety and two.

Ver. 59. *And these were they that went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, etc.]* Places in the land of Babylon, (see ²³⁷²Isaiah 37:12 ³⁰⁸⁵Ezekiel 3:15).

Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel; these were such that professed the Jewish religion, and went for Jews in Babylon, but could not trace their pedigree, and tell what family they were of, who their ancestors, and where they had lived in Judea; they had lost their genealogical tables, if they ever had any, and could not make it out, whether their parents were Israelites or proselyted Gentiles; or they were such who had been exposed, and taken out of the streets, and their parents unknown.

Ver. 60. *The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, and the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.]* These, though their immediate parents were known, yet by their being mentioned here, it seems as if they could not carry their genealogy further, and make it clearly appear what was the house of their fathers, or what their family.

Ver. 61. *And of the children of the priests, etc.]* Who could not make out their pedigree, for those that could are mentioned before:

the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; how the latter came by this name follows:

which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name; this man married a woman that descended from the famous Barzillai the Gileadite, in the times of David; and the priesthood being in disuse, and mean and despicable, in Babylon, he chose to take the name of his wife's family, and pass for a descendant from that, and perhaps destroyed, or at least neglected, to take care of the genealogy of his own family.

Ver. 62. *These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, etc.]* To find their names written and registered there; for the Jews kept public registers of their priests, their descent, marriages, and

offspring, that it might be known who were fit, and who not, to officiate as such:

but they were not found; their names were not there, nor any account taken of them:

therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood; were not suffered to attend at the altar, and offer sacrifice, and enjoy the privileges belonging to that office.

Ver. 63. *And the Tirshatha said unto them*, etc.] By whom Jarchi understands Nehemiah, and observes, that their rabbins say he was so called, because the wise men allowed him to drink the wine of the Gentiles, he being cupbearer to the king; but Aben Ezra, with greater probability, takes it to be a name of honour and grandeur in the Chaldee language, as a prince or governor; and no doubt Zerubbabel is meant, the prince of the Jews, the same with Sheshbazzar, (^{<15008>}Ezra 1:8) according to Gussetius ^{f21}, this office was the same with that of the king's commissary in a province, delegated to carry his orders, make them known, and see them put in execution; and that this name Tirshatha is the same with Tithraustes in Aelian ^{f22}; but that seems to be not the title of an office, but the personal name of a man that was a chiliarch:

that they should not eat of the most holy things; as of the shewbread, and those parts of the sin offerings, and of the peace offerings and meat offerings, which belonged to the priests, which the governor forbid these to eat of, who were rejected from the priesthood:

till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim; as yet there was not any priest that had them; they were not to be found at the return from Babylon; the governor might hope they would be found, and a priest appear clothed with them, when it might be inquired of the Lord by them, whether such priests, before described, might eat of the holy things or not; but since the Jews ^{f23} acknowledge that these were one of the five things wanting in the second temple; it is all one, as the Talmudists ^{f24} express it, as if it had been said, until the dead rise, or the Messiah comes; and who is come, the true High Priest, and with whom are the true Urim and Thummim, lights and perfections to the highest degree, being full of grace and truth; of the Urim and Thummim, (See Gill on ^{<02830>}Exodus 28:30”).

Ver. 64. *The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred [and] threescore.*] But the sums before given make no

more, with Zerubbabel, and the ten principal men, than 29,829, so that there are more than 12,000 wanting; wherefore, in answer to the question, where are the 12,000? the Jews say in their chronology ^{f25} these are they of the other tribes, who set up the altar on its bases, and gave money to the masons, etc. (^{<4381>}Ezra 3:1,3,7), this was a much larger number than were carried captive; (see ^{<1244>}2 Kings 24:14,15) (^{<4528>}Jeremiah 52:28,29,30), but not to be compared with the number that came out of Egypt, (^{<1123>}Exodus 12:37). An Arabic writer ^{f26} makes them 50,000, but wrongly.

Ver. 65. *Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven,* etc.] This shows that the greater part of those that returned were of the poorer sort, since there were so few servants that belonged unto them; these came not into the above account:

and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women; among the servants, who were kept by persons of figure for their pleasure and recreation, (see ^{<2008>}Ecclesiastes 2:8), for that these were such as were employed in sacred service is not so clear, especially the latter, though some conclude it from (^{<1335>}1 Chronicles 25:5,6), but rather they were such as were employed at marriages, festivals, and funerals; though Jarchi thinks they were employed by the returning captives, to make them cheerful as they travelled along, (see Gill on "^{<2552>}Isaiah 55:12").

Ver. 66,67 *Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six, their mules two hundred forty and five, their camels four hundred thirty and five, [their] asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.*] So that the far greatest part of them must walk on foot, since these can be thought to be little more than sufficient to carry their goods or baggage; some copies of the Vulgate Latin read six hundred and thirty six horses ^{f27}.

Ver. 68. *And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord that is at Jerusalem,* etc.] That is, when they came to the place where it formerly stood, and where were still the ruins of it:

offered freely for the house of God, to set it up in its place; to rebuild it upon the spot where it formerly stood; this they did besides the freewill offerings they brought with them from Babylon.

Ver. 69. *They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the world threescore and one thousand drachms of gold,* etc.] These "darcemons or darics" were a Persian coin; one of which, according to Brerewood ^{f28}, was of the value of fifteen shillings of our money, and so this quantity of them

amounted to 45,750 pounds; but according to Bishop Cumberland ^{f29} they were of the value of twenty shillings and four pence of our money, and so came to upwards of 61,000 pounds; these everyone, according to his ability, put into the common stock or treasury for the work of building the temple; the Vulgate Latin ^{f30} reads 40,000:

and five thousand pounds of silver; and an Hebrew “mina”, or pound, being of our money seven pounds, ten shillings, according to Brerewood ^{f31}, amounted to 31,250 pounds: but others ^{f32}, reckoning a drachm of gold at ten shillings, and a mina or pound of silver at nine pounds, make the whole to amount only to 75,500 pounds of our money:

and one hundred priests' garments; which, as they were laid up among treasures, so were necessary for the service of the temple.

Ver. 70. *So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities*, etc.] Which were assigned to them out of the several tribes, and in which they or their forefathers had dwelt before the captivity:

and all Israel in their cities; as those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, so of the other ten, as many as returned and joined those who were left in the land.