

# CHAPTER 9

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 9

Ezra being informed, by some of the princes who complained unto him, of the marriages of many of the Israelites with the people of the land, the Canaanites and others, was greatly grieved and distressed, (<sup><1500></sup>Ezra 9:1-5), upon which he made a confession of their sins to God, with great shame, sorrow, and contrition, and deprecated the evils which they deserved, (<sup><1506></sup>Ezra 9:6-15).

**Ver. 1.** *Now when these things were done*, etc.] When the captives with Ezra had refreshed themselves, and weighed the money and vessels they brought, and put them into the hands of proper persons, and offered sacrifices, and delivered the king's commissions to his lieutenants and governors, and shown his own:

*the princes came to me*; some of the nobles of Israel, the most religious of them, who were concerned at the corruptions that were among them, though not a sufficient number to reform them:

*saying the people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the land*: but joined with them, though not in idolatrous practices, yet by marrying with them, which might lead them into them:

*doing according to their abominations*; not serving idols as they did, but imitating them in their marriages: even

*of the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites*; affinity with many of these was forbidden by an express law, (<sup><1800></sup>Deuteronomy 7:1,3) all but the Moabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians, and from these for the same reason they were to abstain; namely, lest they should be drawn into idolatry; that the priests and Levites should do this, who ought to have known the law, and instructed the people better, was very sad and shocking.

**Ver. 2.** *For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sorts*, etc.] Some that were widowers not only took wives to themselves of the above nations, either when they were of Babylon, where many of these nations also were, or rather since their return; but they took for their sons also; yea, some that had wives took Heathenish ones to them, (see <sup>3113</sup>Malachi 2:13-15),

*so that the holy seed*; such as the Lord had separated from other nations, chosen them to be an holy people above all others, and devoted them to his service and worship:

*have mingled themselves with the people of those lands*; before mentioned, by marrying with them:

*yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass*; they were the first that went into it, were ringleaders of it, who should by their authority and example have restrained others; or they were

*in this first trespass*<sup>f93</sup>; which was the first gross and capital one the people fell into after their return from the captivity.

**Ver. 3.** *And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle*, etc.] Both inward and outward garments, that which was close to his body, and that which was thrown loose over it; and this he did in token of sorrow and mourning, as if something very dreadful and distressing, (see <sup>8111</sup>Job 1:20)

*and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard*; did not shave them, and so transgressed not the law in (<sup>8127</sup>Leviticus 19:27) but plucked off the hair of them, to show his extreme sorrow for what was told him: which has frequently been done by mourners on sorrowful occasions in various nations, (see <sup>2311</sup>Isaiah 15:2). So in the apocryphal “addition” to Esther,

“And laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning: and instead of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair.”  
(Esther 14:2)

she is said to fill every place of joy with the tearing of her hair; and Lavinia in Virgil<sup>f94</sup>; several passages from Homer<sup>f95</sup>, and other writers, both Greek and Latin, are mentioned by Bochart<sup>f96</sup> as instances of it:

*and sat down astonished*; quite amazed at the ingratitude of the people, that after such favours shown them, in returning them from captivity unto their own land, and settling them there, they should give into practices so contrary to the will of God.

**Ver. 4.** *There were assembled unto me everyone that trembled at the words of the God of Israel*, etc.] That had a reverence for the word of God, and the things contained in it; feared to break the laws of God, and trembled at his judgments, which they might apprehend would come upon transgressors, (see <sup>234E</sup>Isaiah 46:2),

*because of the transgression of those that had been carried away*; into Babylon, and were now returned, and which was an aggravation of their transgression:

*and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice*: or until the ninth hour, as the Syriac version, which was about our three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the evening sacrifice was offered; perhaps it was in the morning when Ezra first received his information from the princes.

**Ver. 5.** *And at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my heaviness*, etc.] The signs and tokens of it, particularly sitting on the ground; or “from my fasting”<sup>f97</sup>, having eaten nothing that day, it being early in the morning when he was told the above case:

*and having rent my garment and my mantle*; which he had done before, and still kept them on him in the same case:

*fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God*; in the posture and with the gesture of an humble supplicant.

**Ver. 6.** *And said, O my God*, etc.] Here begins the prayer of Ezra, and that with faith in God as covenant God, even when he was about to make confession of sin, and repentance for it; that prayer is right which is put up in faith, and that repentance genuine which is accompanied with faith, and flows from it:

*I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God*; a true sight and sense of sin causes shame and blushing, and never more than when a man is sensible of his covenant interest in God, and of his grace and favour to him, particularly in the forgiveness of his sin, (see <sup>236E</sup>Ezekiel 16:61,63)

*for our iniquities are increased over our head*; arisen and swelled like mighty waters, which seemed to threaten an overwhelming of them:

*and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens*; being done in an open, public, and insolent manner, and in such numbers, that they were, as it were, piled up in heaps, reaching to heaven, and calling down vengeance from thence. Ezra includes himself as being one of the same nation; and these sins being so common were become national ones, which involved all the individuals, and exposed them to the divine resentment.

**Ver. 7.** *Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day*, etc.] The sins they were guilty of had been long continued in, which was an aggravation of them:

*and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands*; the ten tribes and their king into the hand of the king of Assyria, the kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, into the hands of the king of Babylon, with the priests and people:

*to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil*; some were slain with the sword, others carried captive, and the houses of them all plundered and spoiled:

*and to confusion of face, as it is this day*; being filled with shame when they reflected on their sins, the cause of those evils; and besides, the captivity of the ten tribes continued, and of many others, which exposed them to shame among their neighbours.

**Ver. 8.** *And now, for a little space, grace hath been showed from the Lord our God*, etc.] It was but a small time since the Lord first began to show favour to them, so that they soon after began to revolt from him; which argued the strange propensity of their minds to that which is evil, and from which they could not be restrained by the recent goodness of God unto them:

*to leave us a remnant to escape*; out of captivity, from whence a small number were graciously and safely returned to their own land:

*and to give us a nail in his holy place*; a fixed settlement in the land of Judea, the holy land the Lord had chosen, and in the temple, the holy place sacred to his worship; or a prince of their own, Zerubbabel, to be the

governor of them, under whom they might enjoy settled happiness and prosperity, (see <sup><3223></sup>Isaiah 22:23 <sup><3308></sup>Zechariah 10:4),

*that our God may lighten our eyes*; refresh our spirits, cheer our souls, and give us light and gladness, (see <sup><0147></sup>1 Samuel 14:27)

*and give us a little reviving in our bondage*; for they were still in some degree of bondage, being in subjection, and tributaries to the kings of Persia; but yet being returned to their own land, it was as life from the dead unto them, at least it was giving them a little life, liberty, and joy.

**Ver. 9.** *For we were bondmen*, etc.] To the Chaldeans when in Babylon, which was more than the Jews in the times of Christ would own, (<sup><4033></sup>John 8:33),

*yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage*; had not left them to continue in it always:

*but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia*; moved them to have pity and compassion on them, and release them:

*to give us a reviving*; while in captivity, they were as in their graves, and like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, but revived upon the proclamation of Cyrus, and the encouragement he gave them to return to their own land:

*to set up the house of our God, and repair the desolations thereof*; both to rebuild the temple, and to restore the worship of it:

*and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem*; not to set up the walls of Jerusalem, and of other cities, which as yet was not done; but rather the walls of their houses, which they had rebuilt; they had walled houses given them in Judah and Jerusalem; though the word signifies an hedge or fence, such as is about gardens and vineyards, and may denote the protection of the kings of Persia, which was a fence to them against the Samaritans and others; and especially the hedge of divine Providence about them, which guarded and defended them, (see <sup><3010></sup>Job 1:10).

**Ver. 10.** *And now, O our God, what shall we say after this?* etc.] What apology or excuse can be made for such ingratitude? what can be said in favour of such a people? what kindness can be expected to be shown to a people who had behaved in so base a manner?

*for we have forsaken thy commandments:* particularly those which related to marriages with people of other nations.

**Ver. 11.** *Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets,* etc.] Moses, and Joshua, and others, (see <sup><B00B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3 <sup><B23D></sup>Joshua 23:12 <sup><B00D></sup>Judges 2:2)

*saying, the land, unto which ye go to possess it;* meaning the land of Canaan:

*is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness;* which is to be understood not of their idolatries only, but of their incestuous marriages, and impure copulations, on which account the Lord spewed out the old inhabitants of it; for which reason the Jews ought to have been careful not to have defiled it again by similar practices; (see <sup><B80D></sup>Leviticus 18:1-30).

**Ver. 12.** *Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons,* etc.] That is, in marriage, (see <sup><B00B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3), where the prohibition is expressed in the same language:

*nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever;* that is, as long as they continue in their idolatries and impurities, (see <sup><B23B></sup>Deuteronomy 23:6),

*that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever;* that they might be strengthened and established in the land into which they were brought, and enjoy all the good things it produced, and leave their children in the possession of it, to hold at least until the Messiah came, (see <sup><2019></sup>Isaiah 1:19).

**Ver. 13.** *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass,* etc.] As famine, sword, pestilence, and captivity, for their idolatries and other heinous sins:

*seeing that our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;* for they deserved eternal punishment, whereas it was temporal punishment that was inflicted, and this moderate, and now stopped; the sense is, according to Aben Ezra,

“thou hast refrained from writing some of our sins in the book of remembrance, and thou hast let them down below in the earth,

according to the sense of thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;”

but Jarchi better,

“thou hast refrained thyself from exacting of us all our sins, and hast exacted of us beneath our sins (or less than they deserve), and hast not taken vengeance on us according to all our sins:”

*and hast given us such deliverance as this;* from captivity, which they now enjoyed.

**Ver. 14.** *Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* etc.] That are guilty of abominable idolatries, and of all uncleanness:

*wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us;* it might be justly expected:

*so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* any left or suffered to escape the wrath of but all consumed by it.

**Ver. 15.** *O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous,* etc.] And would appear to be so, should Israel be entirely cut off, and utterly consumed for their iniquities:

*for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day;* that they remained yet escaped out of captivity, and escaped the wrath and vengeance of God, was not owing to any deserts of theirs, but to the grace and mercy of God, who had not stirred up all his wrath, as their sins deserved:

*behold, we are before thee in our trespasses;* to do with us as seems good in thy sight; we have nothing to plead on our behalf, but cast ourselves at thy feet, if so be unmerited favour may be shown us:

*for we cannot stand before thee because of this;* this evil of contracting affinity with the nations; we cannot defend ourselves; we cannot plead ignorance of the divine commands; we have nothing to say for ourselves why judgment should not be passed upon us; we leave ourselves in thine hands, and at thy mercy.