

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 10

Upon Ezra's prayer and confession, it was proposed by Shechaniah, that those who had married strange wives should put them away with their children, which they swore to do, (^{<1500>}Ezra 10:1-5), and proclamation was made throughout the land for all to meet at Jerusalem in three days' time, and accordingly they did, (^{<1506>}Ezra 10:6-9) when, at the exhortation of Ezra, all agreed to it, and persons were appointed to see it done, and the work was finished in the space of three months, (^{<1500>}Ezra 10:10-17) and a list of the names of those is given who had married such wives, and now put them away; of the priests, (^{<1508>}Ezra 10:18-22), of the Levites, (^{<1503>}Ezra 10:23,24), of the other Israelites, (^{<1504>}Ezra 10:24-44).

Ver. 1. *Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping,* etc.] Had confessed the sins of the people in prayer and supplication, with many tears:

and casting himself down before the house of God; in the outward court before the temple, his face turned towards it, where he lay prostrate:

there assembled to him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women, and children; it was quickly spread abroad, both in Jerusalem and places adjacent, that such a great man, a commissioner from the king of Persia, and a priest of the Jews, was in the utmost distress, rending his garments, and plucking off his hair, and was crying and praying in a vehement manner; which brought a great concourse of people, who concluded some great sins were committed, and sore judgments were coming upon them:

for the people wept very sore; being affected with his confessions, cries, and tears, and fearing wrath would come upon them for their sins.

Ver. 2. *And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra,* etc.] This man seems to be one of those that now came with Ezra from Babylon, (see ^{<1498>}Ezra 8:3,5),

we have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land; not that he had taken any himself, being but just come into the land, nor is his name in the list of those that had; but inasmuch as many of the nation, of which he was a part, and his own father, and several of his uncles had, (^{<4510>}Ezra 10:26), he expresses himself in this manner:

yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; of a reformation of this evil, and of pardon for it.

Ver. 3. *Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God,* etc.] Renew our covenant with him, and lay ourselves under fresh obligation by promise and oath, and unanimously agree

to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them; he means all the strange wives, such marriages being unlawful; and such wives might the more easily be put away, since bills of divorce were in frequent use with the Jews, and the children of such also being illegitimate; and the rather they were to be put away, lest they should corrupt other children, or get into the affections of their fathers, which might lead on to receive their mothers again, and especially this was to be done as a punishment of their sin: though no doubt but a provision was to be made, and was made, for the maintenance both of wives and children:

according to the counsel of my Lord; either of Ezra, whom he honours with this title, being a ruler under the king of Persia; or of the Lord God, according to his will declared in his words, which is his counsel:

and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; feared to break it, and dreaded the effect of such a breach; and who no doubt would follow the counsel of the Lord, and join in their advice to act according to the proposal made:

and let it be done according to the law; as that directs in such cases.

Ver. 4. *Arise,* etc.] From the ground, where he lay prostrate:

for this matter belongeth unto thee; as a priest and scribe of the law, well versed in it, and therefore could direct what was to be done according to it; and as a ruler under the king of Persia, and a commissioner of his, to inquire whether the law of God was observed by the Jews, (^{<4574>}Ezra 7:14) and so had authority to put the law in execution:

we also will be with thee; to help and assist in the reformation of this evil:

be of good courage, and do it; do not despair of going through it, though there may be some opposition to it; begin, and doubt not of succeeding.

Ver. 5. *Then arose Ezra*, etc.] From the ground where he lay:

and made the chief priests, and the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word: he took an oath of all that were present to do what was proposed, namely, to put away strange wives and their children:

and they sware; by means of which they were kept to their word of promise, an oath being a solemn, sacred, thing.

Ver. 6. *Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God*, etc.] Departed from thence:

and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib; who was of the family of the high priest. Eliashib was grandson of Joshua the high priest, and succeeded his father Joiakim as such; but though Johanan was never high priest, being a younger son, however he was a person of note, and had a chamber in the temple, whither Ezra went, either to advise with the princes and elders in it, (^{<45108>}Ezra 10:8) or to refresh himself with food:

and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water; or rather “not yet had he ate bread”^{f98}, as some render it; that is, not till he came thither, from the time he first heard of the evil the people had committed; which very probably was early in the morning, and it was now evening:

for he mourned for the transgression of them that had been carried away; into captivity, but were now returned from it, and it grieved him the more, that, after such kindness shown them, they should be guilty of such an evil.

Ver. 7. *And they made proclamation*, etc.] By the voice of an herald:

throughout Judah and Jerusalem, unto all the children of the captivity; who were returned from it:

that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; within a time after mentioned.

Ver. 8. *And that whosoever would not come within three days*, etc.] Or at the end of three days, as Jarchi, this was the space of time allowed, and which was decided upon for the quick dispatch of this affair, to prevent any

schemes that might be formed to obstruct it, and lest those who had agreed to it, and promised to assist in it, should repent and go from their word:

according to the counsel of the princes, and of the elders; for though Ezra had a commission at large from the king of Persia, to inquire into and reform all abuses, he chose not to act of himself, but to have the opinion and consent of the senate of the nation; this he prudently did to avoid their envy, and that he might have less opposition, and better success:

his substance should be forfeited; or “devoted”^{f99} to sacred uses, to be put into the treasury of the temple, and used in the service of it, and therefore never to be returned:

and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away; into captivity, but now returned from it; that is, should be excommunicated from them as a church, and be no more reckoned of the body politic, or a freeman of Israel, and so deprived of all privileges both in church and state.

Ver. 9. *Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin*, etc.] And such of the ten tribes that returned and dwelt among them:

gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days; the time fixed: which they were the more careful to observe, since it was enjoined by the authority of princes and elders, and the punishment in case of disobedience very severe:

it was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; the month Chisleu, which answers to part of November and part of December, so that the twentieth day must be in the beginning of December; this was almost five months after Ezra came to Jerusalem:

and all the people sat in the street of the house of God: the street which led to the temple, the east street, (~~2~~2 Chronicles 29:4) though some think this was the court of the people, called a street, because it lay open, not yet walled in; and, according to Josephus^{f100}, it was in an upper room of the temple in which Ezra was, perhaps the same with the chamber of Johanan, (~~10~~Ezra 10:6),

trembling because of this matter; they were met about; some that were guilty, not knowing what punishment would be inflicted on them, and

others that were not, yet dreaded the wrath of God, lest that should break out upon the whole congregation for it:

and for the great rain; which now fell, and which they interpreted as a token of the divine displeasure: for though it was in winter time, yet not with them a time of rain, for the former rain had fallen a month before; so that this being unusual and unexpected, they understood it as betokening evil to them.

Ver. 10. *And Ezra the priest stood up*, etc.] In the midst of the assembly to make his speech, acquainting them with the reason of their meeting together:

and said unto them, ye have transgressed; the law of God in the following instance:

and have taken strange wives; of the people of the land and others, idolatrous persons:

to increase the trespass of Israel; to add to former iniquities, which had been the cause of the captivity.

Ver. 11. *Now therefore make confession to the Lord God of your fathers*, etc.] Of their sin, and express their detestation of it, and repentance for it:

and do his pleasure; obey his will, and particularly in this case:

and separate yourselves from the people of the land; the Canaanites, etc. have no fellowship with them, make no covenants, contracts, and alliances with them for the future;

and from the strange wives; they had taken; put them away.

Ver. 12. *Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice*, etc.] That they might be heard, and to show that they were willing and ready to comply with what was proposed:

as thou hast said, so must we do; being convinced of their sin, they saw it was a duty incumbent on them to put away their strange wives, and that there was a necessity of it, to avert the wrath of God from them.

Ver. 13. *But the people are many*, etc.] Who have been guilty of this evil:

and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without: in the street, because of the rain:

neither is this a work of one day or two; to inquire into this affair, who they are that have taken strange wives, and to persuade or oblige them to put them away:

for we are many that have transgressed in this thing; in marrying strange wives.

Ver. 14. *Let now our rulers of all the congregations stand*, etc.] Let the great sanhedrim, or court of judicature at Jerusalem, be fixed and continued, and others:

and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times; to the court at Jerusalem, at certain and fixed known times of their sittings there for this purpose:

and with the elders of every city and the judges thereof; the principal magistrates of it, who were to testify that upon search and inquiry those were the men and all the men in their city, that had taken strange wives, and that they had put them away according to the order of the princes and elders; and this they proposed to be done in every city, and the account to be brought to the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, who were to sit at certain times till this affair was finished:

until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us: which it seems had broke out in some instances, and they feared would do yet more, unless this step was taken, whereby they hoped it would be averted.

Ver. 15. *Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, were employed about the matter*, etc.] To see that this affair was conducted in the manner proposed; that the magistrates of every city brought the persons that had been delinquents, in their turns, of which they gave them notice, and took the account of them as they came:

and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them; assisted them in this work; the other two perhaps were priests, and both these Levites; and these four were the only persons appointed over this matter, as the phrase in the preceding clause may signify; though Jarchi interprets it to a quite contrary sense, that they were the only persons that opposed and objected to it; and so Dr. Lightfoot^{f101} understands it, and renders it, “stood against this matter”; in which they were seconded by the two Levites, and the sense is very probable.

Ver. 16. *And the children of the captivity did so,* etc.] Put away their strange wives:

and Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated; from all their other business, and gave themselves up to attend to this wholly:

and sat down in the first day of the tenth month; the month Tebeth, which answers to part of December and January; this was ten days after the assembly of all the people met and broke up: these took their places in the great court, and there sat

to examine the matter; the accounts brought in from the several cities by the magistrates thereof, and recorded them.

Ver. 17. *And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives,* etc.] Finished their inquiry and examination of them:

by the first day of the first month; the month Nisan, answering to part of March and April; so that they were three months about this work.

Ver. 18. *And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives,* etc.] So that it need not be wondered at that this evil should spread among the people, when those who understood the law, and should have instructed the people in it, set such an example: namely,

of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak; who was the high priest; and perhaps for this fault of his, in not restraining his sons from such unlawful marriages, is he represented in filthy garments, (^{<38B>}Zechariah 3:3),

and his brethren, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah; these were the brethren of Jeshua.

Ver. 19-43. *And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives,* etc.] They proposed to do it, and actually did it:

and being guilty; of which they were fully convinced:

they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass; to make atonement for it, and thereby set an example to others to do the like. Aben Ezra observes, that we do not find that the trespass offering was a mulct to such who married strange wives, and conjectures, that it was the advice of the chief men to do it. From hence, to the end of (^{<450B>}Ezra 10:43), is a list of the men that had married strange wives, and put them away; those in (^{<450B>}Ezra

10:20-22), were priests; in (^{<1502>}Ezra 10:23,24), Levites, and those of them who were singers or porters; the rest were Israelites: and it is a very common distinction, in rabbinical writers, to distinguish the Jews into priests, Levites, and Israelites; of these we know no more than their names; some of the heads of the families may be observed in (^{<1500>}Ezra 2:1).

Ver. 44. *All these had taken strange wives*, etc.] In all about one hundred and thirteen:

and some of them had wives by whom they had children; and yet they put them away, which made it the more difficult for them to do; and those that had none, it is thought to be a mark of God's displeasure at such marriages. No mention being made of the children being put away, as Shechaniah proposed, (^{<1508>}Ezra 10:3), it may be concluded they were not, but were taken care of, to be educated in the true religion, and entered proselytes at a proper time; and the rather, as Ezra gave no orders about their putting away, (^{<1501>}Ezra 10:11).

FOOTNOTES

- ft1 - Origen apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 6. c. 25. Hieron. Opera, tom. 3. Epist. ad Paulin. fol. 6. B. & ad Domnion. & Rogat. fol. 7. G.
- ft2 - Seder Olam Zuta, p. 108.
- ft3 - Lactant. Institut. l. 4. c. 11.
- ft4 - Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 1.
- ft5 - Demonstr. Evangel. prop. 4. p. 208, 209.
- ft6 - Annal. Vet. Test. p. 146, 193.
- ft7 - De Divinatione, l. 1.
- ft8 - Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 214.
- ft9 - Apud Euseb. Praepar. Evangel. l. 10. c. 10. p. 488.
- ft10 - Nic. Abrami Pharus, p. 303.
- ft11 - Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 130. So Sallust, Bell. Catalin. p. 2.
- ft12 - Cyropaedia, l. 1. in principio.
- ft13 - 8. c. 48.
- ft14 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 1. sect. 1, 2.
- ft15 - Abulpharag. Hist. Dynast. Dyn. 5. p. 82.
- ft16 - Apud Joseph. Antiqu. l. 11. c. 1. sect. 3.
- ft17 - Hieros. Yoma, fol. 41. 1.
- ft18 - Works, vol. 1. p. 127. So Broughton, Works, p. 258.
- ft19 - Vid. Rainold. de Libr. Apocryph. Praelect. 111, 117, 148.
- ft20 - Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 68. 1.
- ft21 - Ebr. Comment. p. 809.
- ft22 - Var. Hist. l. 1. c. 21. Vid. Corn. Nep. Vit. Conon. l. 9. c. 3.

- ft23 - Bab. Yoma, fol. 21. 2.
- ft24 - Bab. Sotah, fol. 48. 2. & Gloss. in Kiddushin, fol. 60. 2.
- ft25 - Seder Olam Rabba, c. 29. p. 86.
- ft26 - Abulpharag. Hist. Dynast. Dyn. 5. p. 82.
- ft27 - Ed. of Sixtus V. and the Lovain in James's Contrariety of Popish Bibles, p. 295.
- ft28 - De Pret. & Ponder. Vet. Num. ch. iii. v.
- ft29 - Scripture Weights & Measures, ch. 4. p. 115.
- ft30 - Sixtus V. Lovain & MSS. in James ut supra. (Contrariety of Popish Bibles, p. 295)
- ft31 - Ut supra, (De Pret. & Ponder. Vet. Num.) ch. iv. v.
- ft32 - Universal History, vol. 10. p. 183, marg.
- ft33 - [gyw "cum appropinquaret", Piscator.
- ft34 - yk "quamvis", Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Patrick.
- ft35 - Etsi, Michaelis.
- ft36 - wyçrk "juxta praeceptum", Vatablus; "juxta quod praeceperat", V. L. So Ben Melech.
- ft37 - Pausan. Messenica, sive, l. 4. p. 368.
- ft38 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 3.
- ft39 - Spanhem. Introduct. Chron. ad Hist. Eccl. p. 54. & Universal History, Vol. 5. p. 203. Prideaux, p. 175.
- ft40 - Ut supra, (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4.) sect. 4, 6. Vid. R. David Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 2. fol. 8. 2. So Dr. Lightfoot, Works, vol. 1. p. 139.
- ft41 - Prideaux's Connect. par. 1. p. 175. Authors of the Universal History, vol. 5. p. 199, 203. So Vitringa, Hypotypos. Hist. Sacr. p. 108.
- ft42 - Herodot. Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 67. Justin. l. 1. c. 9.
- ft43 - Praefat. Arugas Habbosem apud Buxtorf. de liter. Heb. add.

- ft44 - So Midrash Esther, fol. 85. 3.
- ft45 - Pirke Eliezer, c. 38.
- ft46 - Kimchi Sepher Shorash. fol. 166. 2. & Vajikra Rabba in ib. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 1.
- ft47 - Connexion, etc. vol. 1. p. 30.
- ft48 - Tzemach David, fol. 63. 3.
- ft49 - **j l m** “salem vel sale”, Montanus, Vatablus, Michaelis.
- ft50 - Nat. Hist. l. 31. c. 7.
- ft51 - So David de Pomis, Tzemach David, fol. 15. 3.
- ft52 - **ayrps tybb**, **εν ταις βιβλιοθηκαις**, Sept. “in bibliotheca”, V. L. “in bibliotheca librorum”, Tigurine version; “in domo librorum”, Pagninus, Montanus.
- ft53 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 6.
- ft54 - Curtius, l. 5. c. 8. Vid. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 3. c. 6.
- ft55 - Hiller. Onomastic. Sacr. p. 618.
- ft56 - Athen. Deipnosophist, l. 12. c. 1.
- ft57 - De Animal. l. 3. c. 13.
- ft58 - Apud Joseph. Antiqu. l. 15. c. 11. sect. 1.
- ft59 - Ibid. (Antiqu.) l. 11. c. 4. sect. 7.
- ft60 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 4. sect. 6.
- ft61 - Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 89-95.
- ft62 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 3. sect. 1.
- ft63 - Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 2.
- ft64 - Opera, par. 2. ep. 25. p. 153.
- ft65 - Porphy. de abstinentia, l. 4, c. 16.
- ft66 - Diodor. Sic. l. 1. p. 85.

- ft67 - Vid. Rainold de Lib. Apocryph. praelect. 31. p. 271.
- ft68 - Works, vol. 1. p. 139.
- ft69 - Bibliothec. l. 15. p. 400.
- ft70 - Erato, sive, l. 6. c. 98.
- ft71 - Tract. Theolog. Polit. c. 8. p. 163.
- ft72 - Hierozoic. par. 1. l. 2. c. 50. col. 576.
- ft73 - Comment. in Psal. xlv. 1. <Arabic> “acutus ingenio et solers fuit”, Golius, col. 2272. “in re exercitatus fuit et excultus”, Castel. col. 2008. Ethiop. “docuit, erudit”, ib. col. 2007.
- ft74 - See the Universal History, vol. 5. p. 16, 137. & vol. 11. p. 7, 8. margin, & p. 66.
- ft75 - Strabo, Geograph. l. 15. p. 502.
- ft76 - Vell. Patercul. Hist. Roman. l. 1. in initio.
- ft77 - Herodot. Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 209.
- ft78 - **ⲙⲓ Ⲙⲏ** “integra et pleno numero redde”, Michaelis.
- ft79 - See Cumberland’s Scripture Weights and Measures, ch. 4. p. 137.
- ft80 - Diodor. Sicul. l. 1. p. 66.
- ft81 - Caesar. Comment. de Bello Gall. l. 6. c. 13.
- ft82 - **ⲱⲘⲚⲚⲓ** “ad eradicationem ejus”, Pagninus, Montanus; “ad eradicationem”, Tigurine version, Vatablus, De Dieu, Michaelis.
- ft83 - Ad nationes, l. 1. c. 13. Vid. lib. de jejuniis, c. 16.
- ft84 - Physica Sacra, vol. 4. p. 651.
- ft85 - De Pond. & Pret. Vet. Num. c. 4.
- ft86 - Ut supra. (Physica Sacra, vol. 4. p. 651.)
- ft87 - Tzemach David, fol. 57. 3.
- ft88 - Scripture Weights and Measures, ch. 4. p. 115.

ft89 - De Mirabilibus, p. 704, vol. 1.

ft90 - Nat. Hist. l. 34. c. 1, 2.

ft91 - Sepher Shorash. rad. **bhx**.

ft92 - **waçnw** “elevaverunt”, V. L. Piscator; “exaltaverunt”, Pagninus, Montanus, Vatablus; “sublevarunt”, Junius & Tremellius.

ft93 - **hnaçr hzh l [mb** “in praevaricatione ista prima”, Pagninus, Montanus.

ft94 - Aeneid. 12. prope finem. Vid. Ciceron. Tusc. Quaest. l. 3.

ft95 - Vid. Iliad. 10. ver. 15. & Iliad. 22. ver. 77, 78, 406. & Iliad. 24. ver. 711.

ft96 - Hierozoic. par. 1. l. 2. c. 45. col. 481.

ft97 - **ytyn[tm** “jejunio meo”, Michaelis; so Jarchi.

ft98 - **l ka al** “nondum comederat”, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator.

ft99 - **µrj y** “anathema erit [vel] fore”, Montanus, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator; “devoveretur”, Michaelis.

ft100 - Antiqu. l. 11. c. 5. sect. 4.

ft101 - Works, vol. 1. p. 144.