

Ezra 8:1-36 – Ezra’s Jerusalem Journey

In the seventh chapter of Ezra we learned about Ezra’s character, his lineage, his arrival in Jerusalem and the letter of authorization he received from king Artaxerxes. In chapter eight we get a more detailed account of Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem. It appears to be from Ezra’s memoirs since it is written in the first person.

Read Ezra 8:1-2.

Verse one introduces the next 13 verses “the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia”. What is the significance of the people mentioned in verse 2? After verse 2, twelve heads of families are mentioned along with the number in their groups with a grand total of 1,496 men. For homework, read **Ezra 8:3-14** on your own.

Read Ezra 8:15-20.

Ezra and his group assembled at the river that runs to Ahava. They camped there three days. What did Ezra discover when he reviewed the group of people there? Remember the relatively low number of Levites compared to the number of priests in the first wave of exiles to return in Ezra chapter 2.

What did Ezra do to recruit Levites? One understanding of “the place Casiphia” is that it was a sanctuary or synagogue where students were taught the Mosaic Law. (8:16-17)

Was the recruiting successful? The total recruited appears to be 38 Levites and 220 temple servants. The total number of the men going to Jerusalem was 1,754. With women and children the group may have been between 6 and 7 thousand people. This is a much smaller group than the first group of exiles to return. There were about 50,000 of them. (8:18-20)

Read Ezra 8:21-23.

Ezra proclaimed a fast before they left. Why did he proclaim a fast? Was this a good idea considering the long journey that was ahead of them? Would it have been wrong for Ezra to ask for a military escort considering he was on official government duty? Why did he choose not to ask for a military escort? Should we not have police and fire departments and instead trust that God will protect us? Explain. (8:21-22)

What was the outcome of the fasting? (8:23)

Read Ezra 8:24-30.

While most translations imply that Sherebiah and Hashabiah were priests, some translations indicate that Sherebiah and Hashabiah were not part of the 12 priests but part of a second group of 12 Levites. Sherebiah and Hashabiah were Levites named in verses 18 and 19. F. Charles Fensham states that “almost all modern scholars” understand it this way. Based on Numbers 3 and 4, the Levites were to serve the priests. They were to guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting and to carry them on poles when moving from place to place. Only the priests were allowed to touch the holy vessels. What responsibility were these 24 men given? (8:24-29)

What was the source of the vessels and the gold and silver? How much gold and silver was involved? If word got around how much gold and silver they had, they would definitely need God’s protection. (8:25-27)

What does it mean that “you are holy to Yahweh” and the “the vessels are holy”? (8:28)

Who was responsible for the gold and silver based on verse 30? Does this help with understanding verse 24?

Read Ezra 8:31-36.

After 30 verses, the caravan finally started off on the way to Jerusalem. Ezra started his trip to Jerusalem on the first day of the first month. The group finally left the staging area at the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month. What happened during the trip to Jerusalem? (8:31)

Based on verses 32-34, what happened when they arrived at Jerusalem? What did the whole group of returned exiles do based on verses 35-36?