

INTERACTIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

DESTINATION: *Ezra 1-10*

Ezra continues the narrative of 2 Chronicles by showing God's faithfulness to keep His promises by returning His people to the land He had driven them from for 70 years as they were captive in the land of Babylon. Ezra relates the stories of two returns from Babylon for the children of Israel to rebuild Jerusalem. The first was led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple of God, and the second by Ezra to bring reformation to the people.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

586 B.C.

Babylonians take Judah captive

539 B.C.

King Cyrus conquers Babylon

538 B.C.

Decree made by Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem

536 B.C.

Construction on the Temple begins

534 B.C.

Construction on the Temple is discontinued, restarted in 520 B.C. and completed

521-486 B.C.

Darius 1 reigns in Persia

485-465 B.C.

Ahasuerus (Xerxes 1) reigns in Persia

464-424 B.C.

Artaxerxes Longimanus reigns in Persia

458 B.C.

Ezra leads second return back from captivity

TRIP PLANNER:

The book of Ezra picks up where 2 Chronicles left off with the decree made by King Cyrus of Persia to rebuild the House of God. Ezra tells of the two different returns from captivity, and can be divided into two sections.

The Restoration of the Temple – Chapters 1-6

The Reformation of the People – Chapters 7-10

PLACES OF INTEREST:

Persia - Cyrus was the King of Persia. Persia is the area of present day Iran. A united kingdom that originated in the region was known as Pars (Persis) and was formed under Cyrus the Great. When you look at a map of the area, you can see the distance that the Israelites had to travel into the captivity. 70 years later, a new generation had to make the trip back.

Ecbatana - The capital of ancient Media, this city was one of four capitals of Babylon. Later it was the summer residence of kings, beautifully situated at the foot of Mt. Elvend and NE of Behistun. In 549 B.C. it was captured by Cyrus the Great. It possessed a royal treasury and was later plundered in turn by Alexander, Seleucus, and Antiochus III. The site has never been thoroughly excavated, and today it is covered by the modern city of Hamadan, Iran. Interestingly this is where the traditional tomb of Esther (Book of Esther) is still honored by the Jewish community. Ecbatana was the Achmetha of Ezra 6.

Casiphia - A place on the way from Babylon to Jerusalem. It was the home or the headquarters of Iddo and residence of the Nethinim. Iddo was to send servants up to Jerusalem for the House of God.

Jerusalem - The central location of the book of Ezra and home of the Temple Mount bought by King David in 2 Samuel 24 from Araunah the Jebusite for 50 shekels of silver. Later the location of the first temple built by King Solomon which was destroyed in 586 B.C. by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The book of Ezra chronicles the rebuilding of this Temple by the captives who returned with Zerrubabel and then later with Ezra.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST:

Artaxerxes I - He was the son of Xerxes and he ruled the Persian Empire from 464- 424 B.C. He helped Ezra and Nehemiah with their return journeys to Jerusalem.

Cyrus, King of Persia - He began his reign over Babylon in 539 B.C. In his first year, he gave the Jews the valuables from the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had captured and brought to Babylon in 586 B.C. He allowed the Jews to return to their home country. Cyrus founded a dynasty that lasted until conquered by Alexander the Great in 336 B.C.

Darius the Great - At the time that the work was stopped by Zerubbabel's enemies, it was Darius who searched in the archives to find the decree of his predecessor, King Cyrus. He found it at Ecbatana.

Ezra - The scribe and priest who took the silver and gold valuables from Babylon and returned them to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. He had the blessing of Artaxerxes. The temple had been rebuilt, and it was Ezra's job to teach the Law of God. This resulted in the end of pagan marriages in which the people had been participating.

Jeshua the Priest - He was the son of Jehozadak and a priest. He along with others rebuilt and restored the altar. Later, he was the supervisor of some of the other workers on the temple.

Mithredath - Cyrus' treasurer who returned the temple vessels (Ezra 1:8).

Rehum - A chancellor under Artaxerxes. He had a letter written to King Artaxerxes complaining about the Jews rebuilding the temple and asking the King to have the work stopped.

Sheshbazzar - According to Ezra 1:8, Sheshbazzar was the prince (Hannasi) of Judah who Cyrus put in charge of the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had carried with him out of Jerusalem and had placed in the house of his gods. In Ezra 1:11, it is Sheshbazzar who brought these vessels with them on their return from Babylon to Jerusalem. In Ezra 5:14, it is said that these vessels had been delivered by Cyrus "to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor," and that Sheshbazzar further laid the foundations of the house of God which was in Jerusalem.

Shethar-Bozenai - A provincial leader who joined with Tattenai to halt the rebuilding. However, when he heard back from Darius that the decree had been given, he helped the Jews rebuild.

Shimshai - He was the scribe, or secretary, to Rehum who actually wrote the letter to King Artaxerxes to stop the work in Jerusalem.

Tattenai - The military governor of Judea who reported to the King of Persia. Zerubbabel reported to him. He also tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple.

Xerxes - Succeeded Darius the Great as King of Persia after his death. He is better known in the book of Esther as Ahasuerus, the husband of Queen Esther. He was a weak king who ruled from 485-465 B.C.

Zerubbabel - He was the heir to the throne of Judah, but when he finally returned to Jerusalem with his entourage of about 50,000 people in 539 B.C., he was only allowed to be the governor.

FUN FACTS:

The treasures taken back to Israel - The exiles returning to Jerusalem were supported by their neighbors who provided valuables. It must have been an important event since each article was inventoried:

- a. gold dishes - 30
- b. silver dishes - 1,000
- c. silver pans - 29
- d. gold bowls - 30
- e. matching bowls - 410
- f. other articles - 1,000

Who returned - Ezra 2:64 begins a list totaling people and animals who returned; everything is important to God - important enough to be numbered.

- a. Israelites - 42,360
- b. servants - 7,337
- c. singers - 200
- d. horses - 736
- e. mules - 245
- f. camels - 435
- g. donkeys - 6,720

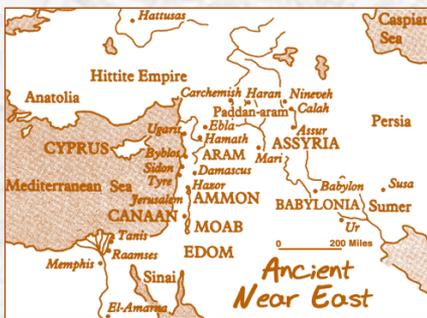
Contemporaries of this time period - Other prominent people who lived during this time of return:

- a. The Buddha - India (557-447 B.C.)
- b. Confucius - China (551-478 B.C.)
- c. Socrates - Greece (470-399 B.C.)

New Moons - The Jewish calendar is set by both the sun and moon. The feasts come around the different lunar cycles. They were great times. Each month of the year was consecrated to the Lord by bringing special sacrifices and the blowing of trumpets. Most of the observances included the cessation from normal working activities.

Intermarriage - Being in captivity didn't mean that the Israelites were in jail. They were resettled in a foreign land. During this time, the Jews married spouses from the land in which they lived. This was against God's will for His people, as He wanted the line to stay pure and not be influenced by outside nations. In the end, Ezra had to break up these unions once the return to Jerusalem was complete.

MAPS:



NOTES:



BOOK OF

DATE

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