

RESTORING THE BROKEN

A Study of Ezra and Nehemiah

8

Read Ezra 8.


1. Ezra 8 backs up a bit to describe the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem and to list those who accompanied Ezra. Who are they?¹ (Ezra 7:28; 8:1)

DOING A LITTLE MATH: 2nd Wave of Travelers from Babylon to Jerusalem

Take 15 family heads + the men listed under each of them = 1,496 men. Along with this number of men would have been women and children. If each man listed was married and had an average of 3 children, how many people would be traveling to Jerusalem together? _____

2. Ever get packed up for a trip only to realize something essential is missing? Ezra had such an experience. As he searches among this large group traveling with him, who does he notice is missing? (v. 15)

3. It appears that there might have been a need to persuade the Levites to join this caravan.
 - a. What plan did Ezra come up with? (vv. 16-17)

- b. What enabled the success of Ezra's plan? (v. 18;  * Prov. 19:21; 21:30)

4. What do we know from Scripture about the original role of the Levites? (Num. 3:5-9; 18:2-6)

What was the role of the temple servants? (v. 20)

¹ These family heads (except for one) are from the same families as listed in chapter 1 and 2. "So it underlines the fact that the original challenge to return... divided individual clans down the middle..." Derek Kidner, *Ezra & Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 65.

5. Why do you think Ezra saw bringing the Levites and temple servants along as so important that he delayed the journey?

6. With so many people in the caravan to Jerusalem, it would have been easy for the travelers to trust in their numbers as they make their way through the hostile land.
 - a. What might Ezra have been concerned about? (vv. 21-22; Ezra 7:15-16)

 - b. How did Ezra deal with his concerns?
vv. 21-23

 - c. Why was Ezra's plan successful? (v. 31)

 - d. What proved that his plan was successful? (vv. 32-34)

7. Like the Israelites, we have been given many resources. What are some practical ways of evaluating if you are using them wisely?

8. After resting, what do the people do to acknowledge God's favor? (v. 35)

Have you ever finished a challenging task or passed through a difficult season and then set aside time to worship and praise God? If so, share how seeing God's gracious hand upon you inspired your response.

9. How would King Artaxerxes's orders benefit those living in Jerusalem? (v. 36; You may wish to review Ezra 7:21-26.)

10. The book of Ezra is a great example of seeing history in light of God's gracious hand upon his people.
 - a. How did the Israelites enter into this kind of favor from God? (Deut. 7:6-9)

 - b. How do we enter into this kind of favor from God? (Eph. 1:3-14)

11. Three times in this chapter Ezra takes care to note that God's gracious hand is upon his people (vv. 18, 22, 31). This is not a throw-away phrase but the very source of the Israelites' existence and success. You may want to take a cue from this record and write a short history of your life in light of God's gracious hand upon you. You may also consider taking up the practice of journaling, with this truth figuring prominently as you record your life story.

This study has been adapted and expanded with permission from a study of the same name by Bridge Community Church, Phila., PA.