

7:7-10 Timing of their arrival (continued)

1. Talmud, Sanhedrin 21b-22a

רבי יוסי אומר: ראוי היה עזרא שתינתן תורה על ידו לישראל, אילמלא קדמו משה. במשה הוא אומר "ומשה עלה אל האלקים" בעזרא הוא אומר "הוא עזרא עלה מבבל." מה עלייה האמור כאן תורה, אף עלייה האמור להלן תורה. במשה הוא אומר "ואתי צוה ד' בעת ההיא ללמד אתכם חקים ומשפטים" בעזרא הוא אומר "כי עזרא הכין לבבו לדרש את תורת ד' ולעשת וללמד בישראל חק ומשפט." ואף על פי שלא ניתנה תורה על ידו נשתנה על ידו הכתב...

Rabbi Yosi said: Ezra would have been worthy of presenting the Torah to Israel, but Moshe preceded him. Regarding Moshe it says, "And Moshe ascended to Gd," and regarding Ezra it says, "He, Ezra, ascended from Babylon." Just like the former ascent is Torah, so the latter ascent is Torah. And regarding Moshe it says (Devarim 4), "And Gd commanded me at that time to teach you laws and statutes," and regarding Ezra it says, "For Ezra prepared his heart to learn the Torah of Gd and to perform and to teach Israel law and statute." And even though Torah was not given by him, the font was changed by him...

7:11-26 Artachshasta's decree

2. Malbim to Ezra 7:13

מפני שבפקודה הראשונה שנתן כורש רשות לבני הגולה ללכת לירושלים באר הטעם שהוא כדי לבנות שם את בית ד', וא"כ אחר שנשלם בנין הבית נשלמה הפקודה, ומעתה לא היה רשות להגולים לצאת מארץ שבים בלא רשות מיוחד, לכן נתן רשות מחדש שכל מי מבני ישראל שיתנדב לצאת עמך יש להם רשות ללכת:

In the first order, when Cyrus permitted the exiles to go to Jerusalem, he explained that the purpose was to build the house of Gd there. If so, then the order was complete once the construction of the house was complete. From now on, there would be no permission for the exiles to leave the land of their captivity without special permission. Therefore, he gave new permission for all Jews who would volunteer to accompany Ezra, to go.

3. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 4a

איבעית אימא מגלן דאחמיץ? מהכא: "עד כסף ככרין מאה, ועד חנטין כורין מאה, ועד חמר בתין מאה, ועד בתין משח מאה, ומלח די לא כתב וגו'" - מעיקרא בלא קיצותא, והשתא בקיצותא. ודילמא מעיקרא לא הוה קים ליה בקיצותא? אלא מחזורתא כדשנין מעיקרא.

Of if you want: How do we know he went bad? From here (Ezra 7:22): "Up to 100 *kikar* of silver, and up to 100 *kur* of wheat, and up to 100 *bat* of wine, and up to 100 *bat* of oil, and unlimited salt, etc." – At first without limit, and now with a limit. But perhaps beforehand he just didn't know the limit? Rather, clearly, it is as we answered before.

4. Metzudat David to Ezra 7:22

אף אם ירבה לשאול עד ק' ככר כסף ועד ק' כורין חטים...

Even if he asks so much, even 100 *kikar* of silver, even 100 *kur* of wheat...

5. Herodotus, The Histories, Book 3, Chapters 89-90, A.D. Godley edition

Having done these things in Persia, he divided his dominions into twenty provinces, which they call satrapies; and having divided his dominions and appointed governors, he instructed each people to pay him tribute, consolidating neighboring peoples and distributing outlying peoples among different provinces, passing over those adjoining.

I will now show how he divided his provinces and the tributes which were paid him yearly...

In the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses after him there was no fixed tribute, but payment was made in gifts. It is because of this fixing of tribute, and other similar ordinances, that the Persians called Darius the merchant, Cambyses the master, and Cyrus the father; for Darius made petty profit out of everything, Cambyses was harsh and arrogant, Cyrus was merciful and always worked for their well-being...

The fifth province was the country (except the part belonging to the Arabians, which paid no tribute) between Posideion, a city founded on the Cilician and Syrian border by Amphilochochus son of Amphiarus, and Egypt; this paid three hundred and fifty talents; in this province was all Phoenicia, and the part of Syria called Palestine, and Cyprus.

6. Malbim to Ezra 7:23

[אדרזדא חותם בלשון ערבי] עוד צוה שיעשה חותם שיכתוב עליו שהוא חותם בית אלקים, וכל דבר שיצא מבית ד' יוחתם בחותם ויהיה דינו כפקודה שיצא מאלקי השמים, כמו שדבר הנחתם בטבעת המלך דינו כדבר המלך, וזה תפארת גדולה לבית אלקים שהיא פוקדת בחותם ד' ויש לחותם הזה תוקף ועוז מן המלך...

[*Adrazda* is a 'seal' in Arabic.] He also instructed them to prepare a seal, inscribing on it that it is the seal of the house of Gd, and anything coming from the house of Gd would be sealed with that seal and would have the status of an order from the Gd of Heaven, just as anything sealed with the king's seal has the status of an order from the king. This was a great splendour for the house of Gd, that it could command with the seal of Gd and the seal would have the strength and force of the king...

7. Prof. Mordechai Zer-Kavod, *Daat Mikra* to Ezra pg. 29

אם המקדש הוא מוסד ממלכתי, הרי מן הדין הוא שכל העובדים בו ייחשבו כפקידי המלך, הפטורים משלומים ושעבודים המוטלים על שאר התושבים... תקנה זו הפכה במשך הזמן לנוהג שכל המושלים באסיה ובאירופה קיבלוהו וזיכו את הכהנים וכלי הקודש' למיניהם בפטור מעול המלכות.

If the Temple is a royal institution, then logically all who work therein are considered royal servants, who are exempt from payments and obligations which are incumbent upon the rest of the citizens... This enactment became, over time, the custom accepted among all rulers in Asia and Europe, and they gave the priests and assorted 'sacred vessels' the right to an exemption from the royal yoke.

Chapter 8

8:1-14	List of those who came with Ezra
8:15-20	Populating the Beit haMikdash
8:21-23	Ezra's prayer
8:24-30	Assigning the kohanim and leviyim gifts for the Beit haMikdash
8:31-36	The journey and its tasks

8. Rabbi Hayyim Angel, *The Literary Significance of the Name Lists in Ezra-Nehemiah*, JBQ July 2007

Turning to the next outstanding figure in Ezra-Nehemiah, we are introduced to Ezra with a pedigree tracing him back to Aaron (7:1-5), and a document from Artaxerxes according him substantial authority (7:11-26). Given this remarkable introduction, the reader expects Ezra to dominate the narrative, both as a priest and as a sage. Yet, the opposite proves to be the case. The first half of Ezra 8 provides a list of those who returned to Israel along with Ezra. At the conclusion of this roster, Ezra got others involved in bringing the Levites to Israel (8:16-20). This sets the tone for Ezra's transferring most of his authority to the people.

9. Talmud, Taanit 28a

"בני פחת מואב בן יהודה" הן בני דוד בן יהודה, דברי רבי מאיר. רבי יוסי אומר הן בני יואב בן צרויה.

"The sons of Pachat Moav of Judah" are the sons of David of Judah, per Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yosi said: These are the sons of Yoav son of Tzeruyah.