

Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem

- Ezra's reason for going to Jerusalem
 - He had set his heart to study the Law of God
 - He had committed to obey the Law of God
 - He was committed to teach God's Word in Israel.

Letter Artaxerxes gave to Ezra on the occasion of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem

- Ezra
 - Priest-Levite with lineage back to Aaron the first high priest
 - Scribe-one expert in reading and writing especially in regards to the Hebrew scriptures.
 - Scholar-learned in the matters of the commandments of God and His statues for Israel.

Letter Artaxerxes gave to Ezra on the occasion of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem

- Provisions of the letter
 - Gave permission for anyone who wished to go with Ezra to Jerusalem
 - The purpose is to check on the state of Judah and Jerusalem in light of the law of God and to deliver the offering of silver and gold made by the king and his seven counselors, others in the province of Babylon, the people and priest for the service of the house of God in Jerusalem.
 - The first priority is to provide for the sacrifices of the temple service.
 - Remainder of the money could be used as needed according to the will of God

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- Provisions of the letter
 - The purpose is to check on the state of Judah and Jerusalem in light of the law of God and to deliver the offering of silver and gold made by the king and his seven counselors, others in the province of Babylon, the people and priest for the service of the house of God in Jerusalem.
 - Specific vessels dedicated to the service of God were to be placed in the temple.
 - Access to the king's treasury for further needs with noted limits

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- Provisions of the letter
 - The decree indicates a high respect for the God of heaven. v20
 - Any taxation of the Levites is forbidden.

Letter Artaxerxes gave to Ezra on the occasion of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem

- Provisions of the letter
 - Authority given to Ezra
 - Appoint magistrates and judges over the province Beyond the River who know or will be taught the Law of God. This would seem to be under the authority of the satraps and governors mentioned in 8:36
 - In addition to the law of the king, the Law of God is to be the basis of government for the Israelites.
 - Authority to enforce the law up to and including the death penalty is given to Ezra.

Letter Artaxerxes gave to Ezra on the occasion of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem

- Ezra's response to the letter
 - Praise to God for moving the heart of Artaxerxes to beautify the house of God. (This is 458 B.C. The temple was completed in 516 B.C.)
 - Praise to God for the favor God had granted to Ezra before the king and his counselors.
 - Courage to move forward
 - Began preparation for the journey.

Careful and deliberate preparation for the journey to Jerusalem.

- Documentation of the heads of the families returning.
- The people committed to the journey encamped by a river for three days and a review reveals that there are no sons of Levi in the group.
 - It seems that there were priests present but no other Levites. The Levites were a necessary part of the ongoing functioning of the temple in their support role to the priests. (Numbers 18:1-7)
 - Ezra sent out people to find and enlist Levites to join them. 20 Levites and 220 servants of the Levites were found. (1 Chronicles 9:22-32)

Careful and deliberate preparation for the journey to Jerusalem.

- Fasting and prayer for a safe journey.
 - Ezra begins this journey with prayer and fasting to seek God's blessing and protection.
 - Ezra had expressed his confidence to Artaxerxes in God's ability to watch over His people.
 - Ezra also knew that we have not because we ask not.

Careful and deliberate preparation for the journey to Jerusalem.

- Ezra chose 12 of the leading priests and divided the temple offerings among them
 - He weighed out and recorded the sums and revealed that an accounting would be made upon arrival at the temple.
 - The vessels and offerings were considered holy since they had been dedicated to temple service and therefore could only be handled by the priest.

The arrival

- God did bless them with safe passage
- After a few days of recovery from the trip they weighed out the offerings to the priests at the temple.
- Burnt offerings were made to the LORD.
- Artaxerxes' letter is delivered to the rulers of the area.