

Ezra

The Argument

That this book of Ezra is part of the canonical Scripture is evident, partly from the testimony of the Jewish church, to which *were committed the oracles of God*, [Ro 3:2](#), who also did carefully keep them, and faithfully transmit them to us, and are not once charged either by Christ or his apostles with breach of that trust; and partly by the unanimous consent of all, both Jews and Christians, at this day. And that Ezra was the writer of this book, is also, and ever was, the opinion of the Jews, who had the best means of knowing this, and is most agreeable to his quality, for he was the son, or *grandson*, (as the word is elsewhere used,) of *Seraiah*, [Ezr 7:1](#), who was the high priest, [2Ki 25:18](#); [1Ch 6:14](#); and he was a *ready scribe of the law of Moses*, [Ezr 7:6](#), and endowed with a more than ordinary measure of God's Spirit, as is evident from this book; and was himself an eye-witness of these transactions. In his time also there lived divers other holy men of God, as Daniel, and Nehemiah, and Mordecai, and Zorobabel, and Joshua; which makes that probable which the Jews report, that these prophets and other holy and learned men did review the canonical books of the Old Testament, and added here and there some few passages in the historical books, and digested them into that order in which now we have them in our Hebrew Bibles; this being a work most suitable to the prudence, and piety, and sacred function of these persons, and to the present estate of the Jewish nation, who had been long in captivity in Babylon, where it was to be feared that many of them were ignorant or corrupt in the principles of religion, and who were yet in a broken condition, and likely to be exposed to further calamities and dispersions; which also might be signified to some of them; and it was suitable also to that care which the wise and gracious God hath ever used for the guidance of his church, according to their several occasions and necessities.

Chapter 1

Cyrus's proclamation to Israel for building the Lord's temple at Jerusalem, [Ezr 1:1-4](#). The chief of the people prepare for their return, [Ezr 1:5-6](#). Cyrus restores the vessels of the temple to Sheshbazzar prince of Judah, [Ezr 1:7-8](#). Their number, [Ezr 1:9-11](#).

[Ezr 1:1](#)

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to wit, of his empire or reign in Babylon; for he had now been king of Persia for many years. Stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, i.e. put into him a mind and will to his work.

[Ezr 1:2](#)

All the kingdoms of the earth, to wit, in those parts of the world; all that vast empire formerly under the Assyrians and Babylonians. The gift of which he ascribes to the great God, either by virtue of those common notions which were in the minds of the heathens, who though they worshipped idols, yet many of them did acknowledge a true and supreme God; or by that clear and express prophecy of Isaiah concerning him, [Isa 44:28-45:1](#); [45:13](#), so long before he was born; which prophecy the Jews had doubtlessly showed him, which also carried a great evidence with it, especially to him, who was so highly gratified and encouraged by it; or by a

special illumination which God vouchsafed to him, as he did to Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, and some others of the heathen princes.

He hath charged me; either by his prophets, Isaiah formerly, or Daniel now; or by an inward suggestion to his mind.

[Ezr 1:3](#)

Of all his people, to wit, of Israel. A material clause; by virtue of which they justly refused the help of those aliens who pretended to join with them in the building, [Ezr 4:2-3](#).

His God be with him; let his God help him, as I also shall do.

Which is in Jerusalem, or only *in Jerusalem,* as it is in the Hebrew. So it notes the place where he allows and requires them to build it.

[Ezr 1:4](#)

Whosoever remaineth; who, when his brethren were gone up, was desirous to go with them, but forced to tarry there for want of necessaries for his journey.

Let the men of his place help him; I require my officers to take care that they may be supplied, either by the voluntary contributions of the people, or by a moderate tax to be laid either only upon those Jews who were resolved to stay, or upon the Gentiles also, which the Persian monarchs, being absolute, had a power to do; and which was the more reasonable, because the king himself submitted to it, and bore a great part of the burden, and because it was for the house of that great God to whom they all owed their present peace and great felicity.

With silver and with gold, which upon this occasion I give you leave to transport.

[Ezr 1:5](#)

The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin; and with them some of other tribes, as appears from [1Ch 9:3](#); but these only are named, because they were most considerable for number and quality.

Whose spirit God had raised to go up; to whom God had given that pious disposition, and that fortitude and resolution, which it required to break through their difficulties, which were great and many, such as their present penury, the length, and hazards, and costliness of the journey, their settlements in comfortable habitations, their dispersion in several and distant places, which hindered the conjunction of their counsels and actions, the multitude of their enemies, the actual possession of their country by others, the great backwardness of many of their own brethren to go with them, and many other discouragements.

[Ezr 1:6](#)

Strengthened their hands; either because they had embraced, or at least favoured the Jewish religion, concerning which they were instructed by the Israelites that had now for a long time

dwelt among them; or rather, that they might hereby gratify the king's humour, and purchase his favour; for they perceived him to be hearty and forward in the work.

[Ezr 1:7](#)

Object. These are said to have been cut in pieces, [2Ki 24:13](#); how then are they here returned?

Ans. That Hebrew word used [2Ki 24:13](#), signifies not so properly to *cut in pieces* as to *cut off*, as from the use of the word, [De 25:12](#); [2Sa 4:12](#); [2Ki 18:16](#); [Jer 9:26](#). And these vessels, when they were taken away from the temple, might very well be said to be cut off from it, because they had for so long time been so constantly, and as it were inseparably, united to it, and kept in it. In like manner, *the meat-offering and drink-offering* are said to be cut off from the house of the Lord, [Joe 1:9](#). And it is very improbable that they should deface and cut in pieces these magnificent vessels, which they could so easily transport whole to Babylon. Although, if some of the larger of them had been cut into two or more parts, yet the parts of them might be delivered to the Jews, who could, without great difficulty, restore them to their former unity and form.

[Ezr 1:8](#)

Numbered them, i.e. he caused them to be delivered to the Jews by number.

Unto Sheshbazzar, i.e. Zorobabel, as appears by comparing [Ezr 3:8](#), with [Ezr 5:16](#), to whom the Persians, or rather the Chaldeans, had given this name of Sheshbazzar, as they gave other names to Daniel and his companions, [Da 1:7](#).

The prince of Judah, and the captain and governor of these returning Jews, [Ezr 2:2](#). So the sceptre is not yet departed from Judah.

[Ezr 1:9](#)

Large knives used in the killing of the sacrifices, which are here mentioned, because the hafts of them were made of or covered with gold or silver.

[Ezr 1:10-11](#)

Basons of a second sort; the first or chief were of gold, and these of silver are called the second, or next to them of worth and use.

Other vessels a thousand: he speaks of vessels of a middle size; for great and small were five thousand four hundred, as it follows here. Or, as some render it, *other vessels by thousands*: they were not distinctly numbered according to their various forms and uses, but were promiscuously put together by thousands.

Chapter 2

The number of the people that returned, [Ezr 2:1-35](#); and of the priests, [Ezr 2:36-39](#); of the Levites, [Ezr 2:40](#); of the singers, [Ezr 2:41](#); of the porters, [Ezr 2:42](#); of the Nethinims, [Ezr 2:43-54](#); and of Solomon's servants, [Ezr 2:55-60](#). Concerning the priests that could not show

*their pedigree, [Ezr 2:61-6:3](#). The whole number of them and their substance, [Ezr 2:64-67](#).
Their oblations, [Ezr 2:68-70](#).*

[Ezr 2:1](#)

*The children of the province, i.e. the Israelites, called *the children of the province*, either, 1. Of Babylon, of which province we oft read, as [Ezr 7:16](#); [Da 2:48](#); [3:1-2](#), [30](#), called *the province* by way of eminency; of which they are called children, because of their birth and habitation in it for a long time, it being usual to call the inhabitants of any city or place its children. Or rather, 2. Of Judea, called *a province*, [Ezr 5:8](#). And he calls it thus emphatically, to mind himself and his brethren of that sad change which their sins had made among them, that from an illustrious, independent, and formidable kingdom, were fallen to be an obscure, servile, and contemptible province, first under the Chaldeans, and now under the Persians. *Every one unto his city*; either unto those cities or towns which belonged to their several ancestors; or rather, to those which were now allotted to them, and from this time possessed by them. For their former cities were either demolished. or possessed by other persons, which they were not now in a capacity of disturbing.*

[Ezr 2:2](#)

As for this catalogue, it differs in some names and numbers from that [Ne 7:1-73](#), which might be from divers causes, partly because several names were given to one and the same person; and partly because of the many changes which might happen in the same families between the time of the first making of this catalogue by Ezra, and the making of it anew so many years as that catalogue, [Ne 7:1-73](#), was made after the former.

[Ezr 2:3](#)

i.e. The posterity (as that word is for the most part, if not constantly, taken in this catalogue) that descended either from Parosh, or from that family whereof Parosh was the chief. And so for the rest.

[Ezr 2:4-5](#)

In [Ne 7:10](#), they were only six hundred and fifty-two. It seems seven hundred and seventy-five marched out of Babylon, or gave in their names that they would go; but some of them died, others changed their minds, others were hindered by sickness, or other casualties, happening to themselves or near relations; and so there came only six hundred and fifty-two to Jerusalem. And the like is to be said in the like differences; which it suffices to hint once for all.

[Ezr 2:6](#)

Of Jeshua and Joab, or of Jeshua-joab, as the former was Palath-moab.

[Ezr 2:7-16](#)

Of Ater the son of Hezekiah, not the king, but another famous person so called.

[Ezr 2:17-21](#)

Either of a man called *Beth-lehem*, or the *Beth-lehemite*, by way of eminency; or of the place so called. And so these were the remainders of the inhabitants of that city. And the like may be said of the two following names, Netophah and Anathoth, or others of the like nature.

[Ezr 2:22-39](#)

The head of one of the twenty-four courses which David appointed, [1Ch 24:8](#); of all which courses, some observe, here are not above four or five that returned. There is another Harim mentioned above, [Ezr 2:32](#), but that was no priest as this was, [Ezr 2:35](#).

[Ezr 2:40-43](#)

The Nethinims; the persons devoted to the inferior services of the priests and Levites; of whom see [1Ch 9:2](#).

[Ezr 2:44-55](#)

The children of Solomon's servants; either of those strangers and proselytes whom Solomon used in the building of the temple, [1Ki 9:21](#), to the service of which, as some add, he devoted them, as there should be occasion hereafter; or others who had lived in Solomon's family, and after his death called themselves and their families by that name, as esteeming it, a great honour to them that they had been servants to so great a prince.

[Ezr 2:56-59](#)

Tel-mela, Tel-harsa; the names of the places whence they came, and where they had lived in the time of their captivity.

Cherub, Addan, and Immer; the names either of the heads of the families living in the places last mentioned, or of other places where the persons here understood had dwelt.

[Ezr 2:60-61](#)

To wit, Barzillai; which name he preferred before that of his own family, accounting it, as it seems, a greater honour to be allied to so noble a family, than to be a priest of the Lord. But by this ambition he deprived himself of the honour and advantage of the priesthood, as it is here noted, [Ezr 2:62](#).

[Ezr 2:62](#)

The Jews were generally very exact and careful in their genealogies, partly from their own choice and interest, that they might preserve the distinctions of the several tribes and families, which was necessary both to make out their claims or titles to offices or inheritances, which might belong to them by death, or otherwise, as here we see, and to govern themselves thereby in the matter of marriages, and some other things wherein the practice of some laws required the knowledge of these things; and partly by the special providence of God, that so it might be certainly known of what tribe and family the Messiah was born. For as they took

care of all their families, so doubtless they took a more punctual and singular care about the royal family, upon which all their hopes depended.

[Ezr 2:63](#)

The Tirshatha, i.e. the governor, to wit, Zerubbabel; whence Nehemiah also is so called, [Ne 8:9](#); [10:1](#).

Till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim; that this point, which could not be found out by any human skill or industry, might be determined by Divine direction. Hereby it appears that the Urim and Thummim were lost in the destruction of the city and temple, though the Jews fed themselves with hopes of recovering them, but in vain. Of the Urim and Thummim, see [Ex 28:30](#); [Nu 27:21](#); [1Sa 23:9](#).

[Ezr 2:64](#)

The particular sums here recited come only 29,818; unto whom are added in this total sum, 12,542; which either were of the other tribes beside Judah and Benjamin, or were such as were supposed by themselves and others to be Israelites, but could not prove their pedigree by their genealogies, and therefore could not be so punctually and particularly described as the former.

[Ezr 2:65](#)

For women as well as men were devoted to and employed in this exercise in the temple service, as appears from [1Ch 25:5-6](#). And the parents of these persons had taken care to instruct and exercise them as far as they could in this art, both for God's service, and for their own benefit, when Jerusalem and the temple should be rebuilt; which they knew would be done after Jeremiah's seventy years were expired.

[Ezr 2:66-68](#)

To the house of the Lord, i.e. to the ruins of the house; or to the place where that house stood.

[Ezr 2:69-70](#)

A dram of gold is supposed to be of the weight of the fourth part of a shekel, and of the value of a French crown.

Chapter 3

The altar set up, [Ezr 3:1-3](#). The feast of the tabernacles kept, [Ezr 3:4](#). Their continual offerings, [Ezr 3:5-6](#). Workmen hired, [Ezr 3:7](#). Priests and Levites are appointed to set forward the work, [Ezr 3:8-9](#). The foundation of the temple is laid with great joy and mourning, [Ezr 3:10-13](#).

[Ezr 3:1](#)

When the seventh month was come, or rather, was coming, or drew near; for the altar was set up after this time, [Ezr 3:3](#), which yet was employed the first day of this month, [Ezr 3:6](#). This

was a sacred kind of month, wherein there were divers festivals, as appears from [Lev 23:1-44](#) for which the people had been preparing themselves, and now came to Jerusalem to the celebration of them.

[Ezr 3:2](#)

Jeshua the son of Jozadak, the high priest.

The son of Shealtiel, i.e. the grandson; for he was the son of Pedaiiah, [1Ch 3:17-19](#).

Built the altar; which was of more present and urgent necessity than the temple, both to make atonement to God for all their sins, and to obtain God's assistance for the building of the temple, and to strengthen their own hearts and hands in that great work, wherein they saw they should have many enemies.

[Ezr 3:3-4](#)

The feast of tabernacles seems to be mentioned synecdochically for all the solemnities of this month, whereof this was the most eminent and most lasting. Otherwise it is not probable that they would neglect the day of atonement, which was so severely enjoined, [Lev 23:27-29](#), and was so exceeding suitable to their present condition: [See Comment on Ezr 3:6](#).

The daily burnt-offerings, Heb. *burnt-offerings day by day*, i.e. every day of that feast they offered as many sacrifices as were prescribed; of which see [Nu 29:13](#), &c.

[Ezr 3:5](#)

The continual burnt offering; thee morning and evening sacrifice; of which see on [Nu 28:6](#).

Consecrated, i.e. set apart for the solemn and holy service of God.

[Ezr 3:6](#)

To offer burnt-offerings, and the other sacrifices which were to be offered with them upon that day, being the feast of trumpets, [Nu 29:1](#), &c. *Burnt-offerings* are oft put for all sacrifices, as hath been observed once and again.

The foundation of the temple was not yet laid; though it is probable they had done something towards the removing of the rubbish, and preparing the way for it.

[Ezr 3:7-9](#)

Jeshua; not the high priest so called, but a Levite, of whom see [Ezr 2:40](#).

To set forward the workmen; by their presence and favour to encourage them to a cheerful and vigorous prosecution of the work.

[Ezr 3:10](#)

After the ordinance of David, Heb. by or according to the hands of David, i.e. in such manner and with such psalms, or songs, and instruments as God hath appointed by the hands or ministry of David.

[Ezr 3:11-13](#)

Had seen the first house; which divers of them might very well do, because it was destroyed not quite sixty years ago, as is manifest from [2Ki 25:1-30](#); [2Ch 36:1-23](#); [Eze 40:1](#).

Wept with a loud voice; partly, because of the poor and small preparations made for this in comparison of what was made for the other temple; partly, because this temple was divested and destitute of those things which were the principal glory of the former temple, to wit, the ark, and the Urim and Thummim, &c.; partly, because these foundation stones were far inferior to the former, both for quantity and price, [1Ki 7:9-10](#); and partly, because these foundations were of a far narrower compass than the former; for although the foundations of this house of the Lord, strictly so called, were at least of equal largeness with those of the former, by comparing [1Ki 6:2](#), and [Ezr 6:1-3](#); yet the foundations of the whole building belonging to the first temple, and adjoining to it, or in the courts of it, were far larger than these.

Chapter 4

The adversaries, being not accepted in the building of the temple with the Jews, endeavour to hinder it, [Ezr 4:1-6](#). Their false and malicious letter to Artaxerxes, [Ezr 4:7-16](#). Artaxerxes's decree: the building is hindered, [Ezr 4:17-24](#).

[Ezr 4:1](#)

The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin; the Samaritans, as appears from [Ezr 4:2](#), [10](#).

[Ezr 4:2](#)

Let us build with you: this they spake not sincerely, as appears from their disposition and designs discovered in the following history; but that by this conjunction with them they might pry into their counsels, and thereby get an opportunity to find some matter or pretences of accusation against them.

We seek your God, as ye do; for so they did, though in a mongrel way: see [2Ki 17:26](#), &c.

Esar-haddon king of Assur; son of Sennacherib, and after him king of Assyria, [2Ki 19:37](#); who brought or sent these persons hither, either, 1. In the days of Salmaneser, who lived and reigned in Assyria but eight years before Esar-haddon's reign; and so Esar-haddon might be one of his most eminent commanders, and the man by whom that colony was sent. Or, 2. In the reign of Esar-haddon, who sent this second colony to supply and strengthen the first.

[Ezr 4:3](#)

Ye have nothing to do with us; as being of another nation and religion, and therefore not concerned in Cyrus's grant, which was confined to the Israelites and to the worshippers of the true God.

We ourselves together, i.e. who are united together by Cyrus's grant in this work; or, *alone,* as this word is sometimes used, as [Job 34:29](#); [Ps 33:15](#); [Ho 11:7](#).

[Ezr 4:4](#)

The people of the land, Heb. *of that land*; the present inhabitants of that province, to wit, the Samaritans.

Troubled them in building; by false reports and threats, and other means, described afterwards.

[Ezr 4:5](#)

Hired counsellors against them; who by their artifices and interests in the Persian court should give some stop to their work.

All the days of Cyrus king of Persia; for though Cyrus still favoured the Jews, yet he was then diverted by his wars, and his son Cambyses was left his viceroy, who was a very wicked prince, and an enemy to the Jews and their religion.

Even until the reign of Darius, Heb. *and until,* &c., i.e. not only in the reign of Cyrus, but also of Cambyses, and of the magician, after whom was this Darius; of whom see [Ezr 5:6](#).

[Ezr 4:6](#)

In the reign of Ahasuerus; which is supposed by divers learned men to be from this time a common name to divers succeeding kings of Persia. And this makes it seem doubtful who this was. This was either, 1. Xerxes the *fourth and rich* king of Persia, as he is called, [Da 11:2](#). Or rather, 2. Cambyses the son and successor of Cyrus, as may appear, 1. Because none but he and Smerdis were between Cyrus and this Darius. 2. Because Cambyses was known to be no friend to the Jewish nation nor religion; and therefore it is very improbable that these crafty, and malicious, and industrious enemies of the Jews would omit so great an opportunity when it was put into their hands.

[Ezr 4:7](#)

In the days of Artaxerxes; either, 1. Artaxerxes the son of Xerxes. Or, 2. Smerdis the magician. Or rather, 3. The same Cambyses, called by his Chaldee name Ahasuems, [Ezr 4:6](#), and here by his Persian name Artaxerxes; by which name he is here called in the inscription of this letter, because so he was called by himself and others in the letters written either by him or to him. *Interpreted, or exposed, or declared.* The sense is, It was written in the Chaldee or Syrian language, and in the Syrian character; for sometimes the Chaldee or Syrian words are written in the Hebrew character, as Hebrew words are oft written in an English character.

[Ezr 4:8-9](#)

Several people thus called from the several places of that vast Assyrian empire, from whence they were fetched, and who were united together into one body, and sent as one colony by the Assyrian monarchs into these parts.

[Ezr 4:10](#)

Asnappar; either Esar-haddon, or some other person then of great eminency, especially with his subjects and followers, who was captain of this colony, and conducted them hither.

On this side the river, to wit, Euphrates.

At such a time: the date of the epistle was particularly expressed in the epistle, but here it was sufficient to note it in the general.

[Ezr 4:11-12](#)

Have set up the walls thereof: either, 1. The Jews had begun to build or repair some part of the walls which Nebuchadnezzar had left, which they aggravate in this manner. Or, 2. This is a mere fiction, which, being confidently affirmed, they thought would easily find belief with a king whose heart and ears they possessed by their hired counsellors, and others of their friends, or the enemies of the Jews.

[Ezr 4:13-14](#)

Thus they pretend the king's service to their own malicious designs and private interests.

[Ezr 4:15](#)

The records of thy fathers; political fathers, i.e. thy predecessors, the former emperors of this empire, namely, in the Assyrian and Babylonish records, which together with the empire were now in the hands of the Persian kings, to be searched or read as the king's pleasure was, or as the affairs of the empire required.

[Ezr 4:16-24](#)

Then ceased the work of the house of God; for they neither could nor might proceed in that work against their king's prohibition, without a special command from the King of heaven, which they had, [Ezr 5:1-2](#).

Darius king of Persia, to wit, Darius the son of Hystaspes, successor of Cambyses; not, as some would have it, Darius Nothus, the son of Artaxerxes Longimanus, who was not emperor till above one hundred years after Cyrus, and consequently from the beginning of the building of the temple to the finishing of it must be about one hundred and thirty years, which is not credible to any one that considers, 1. That the same Zerubbabel did both lay the foundations and finish the work, [Zec 4:9](#). 2. That some of the same persons who saw the finishing of this second house, had seen the glory of the first house, [Hag 2:3](#).

Chapter 5

Zerubbabel, being encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, setteth forward the work, [Ezr 5:1](#); [2:1-70](#). Their adversaries oppose them again, [Ezr 5:3-5](#). Their letter to Darius concerning this matter, [Ezr 5:6-17](#).

[Ezr 5:1](#)

Zechariah the son of Iddo, i.e. Iddo's grandchild; for he was the son of Berechiah. In the name of the God of Israel; commanding them from God to return to the work of building the temple, with promise of his favour and assistance.

[Ezr 5:2](#)

Encouraging the people to work by their presence, and assurance of success.

[Ezr 5:3](#)

Tatnai and Shethar-boznai; not Rehum and Shimshai &c., who were either dead, or removed from their offices by the new emperor Darius, as is very usual.

[Ezr 5:4](#)

*Then said we; either, 1. We Tatnai and Shethar-boznai. And so this is an additional and more express inquiry concerning the names of the builders. And this sense is favoured by comparing [Ezr 5:9-10](#), where the same questions here severally made, [Ezr 5:3-4](#), are in like manner distinguished. And so the sacred writer speaks this in their person; such variation of persons being frequent in the Hebrew language, as the learned know. Or, 2. We Jews; and so the translation must be a little varied, and the words read without an interrogation, thus, *Then we told them accordingly* (i.e. according to what they asked) *what were the names of the men that made this building*, i.e. who were the chief undertakers and encouragers of this work; for although the Hebrew particle *mah*, rendered *what*, seems always to be used interrogatively, yet the Chaldee particle *man*, here rendered *what*, is used otherwise, as is manifest from [Da 4:17](#).*

[Ezr 5:5](#)

They could not cause them to cease; because God overruled their hearts and hands, that they did not hinder them by force, as they could have done.

[Ezr 5:6](#)

The Apharsachites; a people so called, sent hither as a colony. As the other people, mentioned [Ezr 4:9](#) they seem to have had a greater power with Rehum and Shimshai than with these new officers, who made choice of other companions.

Which were on this side the river, whereby they are distinguished from those of their brethren who yet continued in their native country beyond the river, and were not transplanted hither.

[Ezr 5:7-17](#)

The great God; whom the Jews account the great God, the God of gods, esteeming all others to be but little and false gods.

Chapter 6

Darius answereth the former letter, [Ezr 6:1-7](#); and maketh a new decree, [Ezr 6:8-12](#). By the help of the adversaries, and the directions of the prophets, the temple is finished, [Ezr 6:13-15](#). The feasts of the dedication, [Ezr 6:16-18](#), and of the passover, are kept, [Ezr 6:19-22](#).

[Ezr 6:1](#)

*Darius made a decree; either, 1. To search the rolls. Or rather, 2. To permit and promote the building of the temple. And so the following words may be rendered, *after search was made, &c.*, the Hebrew particle *vau* being oft so used, as hath been noted before. *In Babylon*; either, 1. In the kingdom or empire of Babylon, which he now possessed; Or rather, 2. In the city of Babylon, where search was first made, supposing that this edict, which was made presently after Cyrus had taken Babylon, was kept there; but not finding it there, they searched in Achmetha, and found it there.*

[Ezr 6:2](#)

Here the king's answer may seem to begin, and this following account he sends to them, and after that lays down his commands.

Achmetha; the royal city of the Medes and Persians.

[Ezr 6:3](#)

He did not command them to make it so large, for he left the ordering of the proportions of the building to their skill and choice; but he restrained them that they should make it no larger, lest they should hereafter make use of it to other purposes against himself: but those proportions differ much from those of Solomon's temple, which was but thirty cubits high, only the porch was one hundred and twenty cubits high, and but twenty cubits in breadth. Either therefore Solomon's cubits were sacred cubits, which were larger than the other, and these were but common cubits; or the sixty cubits of height are meant only of the porch, which he would not have to be so high and magnificent as that of Solomon's was, lest they should be puffed up with it, and by degrees arrive at their former height and insolence. And the word rendered *breadth*, may be, and is by some, rendered more generally, *the extension*, or *amplitude*, or *the length* of it; it being improbable that the king should give orders about the breadth, and none about the length of it.

[Ezr 6:4](#)

With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber; as Solomon's temple was built, [1Ki 6:36](#); whereof Darius was informed by some of the Jews, who also desired that it might be done in this manner.

[Ezr 6:5](#)

Be restored to Sheshbazzar; for this is part of Cyrus's decree, (which is here recited,) and not Darius's, which does not begin till the next verse.

[Ezr 6:6-14](#)

They prospered through the prophesying of Haggai: this is a seasonable intimation that this great and unexpected success was not to be ascribed to chance, nor to the kindness or good humour of Darius; but unto God only, who by his prophets had required and encouraged them to proceed in the work, and by his mighty power disposed Darius's heart to such kind and noble purposes and actions.

Artaxerxes; who is thought to be either, 1. Xerxes, Darius's son and successor, who is called also Artaxerxes, and Ahasuerus, who is here joined with his father Darius, possibly because he favoured the Jews, and promoted their cause with his father, and saw to the execution of his father's decree, and was his father's viceroy, if not made co-emperor with his father in his lifetime, which was not unusual. Or, 2. Artaxerxes Longimanus, the son of Xerxes, who was best known by the name of Artaxerxes; who is here joined with Cyrus and Darius, because though the temple was finished, as to the substance of the work, in Darius's reign, [Ezr 6:15](#), yet it was afterwards more fully completed and adorned by Artaxerxes, as is evident from [Ezr 7:20](#), [27](#), by whom Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem with a large commission and full power to take care about the building of the city, and all other things concerning the Jewish nation and religion.

[Ezr 6:15-21](#)

From the filthiness of the heathen, i.e. such as had forsaken that filthy and idolatrous religion of the heathens, and were proselyted to the Jewish religion; for such were allowed to eat the passover, [Ex 12:48](#); [Nu 9:14](#).

[Ezr 6:22](#)

The heart of the king of Assyria, i.e. of the king of Persia, which was now king of Assyria also, or emperor of that vast and famous Assyrian empire; which was first subdued by the king of Babylon, who therefore is somewhere called *the Assyrian*; and for the same reason the Persian monarch is here so called emphatically, to note the great power and goodness of God in turning the hearts of these great monarchs, whose predecessors had been the chief persecutors and oppressors of God's people.

Chapter 7

Ezra's genealogy, [Ezr 7:1-5](#). *The priests, Levites, and Ezra go up to Jerusalem*, [Ezr 7:6-10](#). *The gracious commission of Artaxerxes to Ezra*, [Ezr 7:1-26](#). *Ezra blesseth God for his favour to his people*, [Ezr 7:27-28](#).

[Ezr 7:1](#)

Artaxerxes; the same of whom he speaks [Ezr 6:14](#). *The son of Seraiah*, i.e. his grandson. Here are divers persons omitted for brevity sake, which may be supplied out of [1Ch 6](#); [1Ch 7:1-40](#); [8:1-40](#); [9:1-44](#).

[Ezr 7:2-6](#)

Ezra went up from Babylon, with the king's consent and commission.

A ready scribe, i.e. a learned and expert doctor; for in that sense the word *scribe* is oft used, as [Jer 8:8](#); [Mt 7:29](#); [17:10](#); [23:2](#), [13](#); [Mr 12:28](#), compared with [Mt 22:35-36](#).

According to the hand of the Lord his God upon him, i.e. by the grace and favour of God so disposing the heart of the king.

[Ezr 7:7](#)

This is here related in the general, but how he procured this is particularly related hereafter.

[Ezr 7:8-10](#)

Ezra had prepared his heart, or, *directed*, &c., i.e. he had set his mind and affections upon it, and made it his chief design and business.

To seek the law, i.e. to search and find out the true sense and meaning of it, and thence to learn what sins or errors were to be reformed, and what duties were to be performed.

And to teach in Israel. The order of things in this verse is very observable; first he endeavours to understand God's law and word, and that not for curiosity or ostentation, but in order to practice; next he conscientiously practiseth what he did understand, which made his doctrine much more effectual; and then he earnestly desires and labours to instruct and edify others, that they also might know and do it.

[Ezr 7:11](#)

A scribe of the words of the commandments, the phrase seems emphatical, noting that he explained both the words and the things; for the Jews in the land of their captivity had in a great measure lost both their language, and the knowledge of God's commands, and therefore Ezra and his companions instruct them in both; of which see more on [Ne 8:8](#).

[Ezr 7:12-14](#)

His seven counsellors; his chief nobles and officers of state, of whom see also [Es 1:10](#), [14](#).

To inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, i.e. to make inquiry into all abuses and deviations from your law, and to redress them.

Which is in thine hand; which is now and always in thy hand, being the matter of thy daily study and exercise; which thou now carriest along with thee, the interpretation whereof belongeth unto thee.

[Ezr 7:15-16](#)

That thou canst find, i.e. procure, as that word is used, [Ge 6:8](#); [26:12](#); [Ps 84:3](#); [119:162](#); [Pr 1:13](#); [2:5](#); [3:13](#). Whatsoever thou canst get of my subjects by way of free gift.

The free-will-offering of the people, to wit, of Israel.

[Ezr 7:17-20](#)

For the house of thy God; towards the reparation, or adorning, or completing of it. [See Comment on Ezr 6:14](#).

[Ezr 7:21-22](#)

Because it was but of mean price, and of very common and necessary use in all their sacrifices, [Lev 2:13](#); [Mr 9:49](#).

[Ezr 7:23](#)

For the omission of any part of his worship occasioned by my neglect. This danger and duty he discerned, partly by natural light, and principally by the information of Ezra, [Ezr 8:22](#), who had the king's ear and heart.

[Ezr 7:24-25](#)

The wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, i.e. which God hath put into thy heart, and which appears in the works of thy hand. Wisdom is sometimes ascribed to the hands, as [Ps 78:72](#). See my Latin Synopsis on [Ge 48:14](#). Or, by *the wisdom of God*, he means the law of God, which was said to be *in his hand*, [Ezr 7:14](#).

[Ezr 7:26-28](#)

The law of thy God, and the law of the king, to wit, concerning these matters. Or, which law of God is by this my sanction now become my law also, to which I expect their punctual and ready obedience. For as far the civil laws of the empire, Ezra neither was skilful in them, nor was intrusted with the execution of them, which was committed to other hands.

Chapter 8

Ezra's companions who returned from Babylon, [Ezr 8:1-14](#). He sendeth to Iddo for Levites to be ministers for the temple, [Ezr 8:15-20](#). He keepeth a fast at Ahava, [Ezr 8:21-23](#). He committeth the treasures to the custody of the priests, [Ezr 8:24-30](#). From Ahava they come to Jerusalem, [Ezr 8:31-32](#). The treasure is weighed in the temple, [Ezr 8:33-35](#). The commission is delivered to the adversaries, and they further the house of God, [Ezr 8:36](#).

[Ezr 8:1-3](#)

Of the sons of Pharosh, i.e. one of the sons of Pharosh; whereby he is differenced from the other Shechaniah, [Ezr 8:5](#).

By genealogy of the males: though the *males* only be expressed here, and in the succeeding verses, yet it is more than probable they carried the women along with them, as they did carry little ones as it is expressed here, [Ezr 8:21](#).

[Ezr 8:4-5](#)

The son of Jahaziel; either his only son, or the most eminent of his sons, and therefore so called here.

[Ezr 8:6-15](#)

The river that runneth to Ahava; or, *the river of Ahava*, as it is called, [Ezr 8:21](#), [31](#). By comparing of these places, it seems that Ahava was the name both of the river, and of the town or place by which it ran. Either this was that river which other writers call *Adiava*, which runs to Assyria, which thence is called *Adiabene*; or some other river running into Euphrates.

None of the sons of Levi, to wit, who were simple Levites, and not priests. And therefore the Levites, mentioned [Ezr 7:7](#), by anticipation, were not yet come to him.

[Ezr 8:16](#)

Then sent I for Eliezer to come to me, and go along with me to Jerusalem. *Men of understanding*; who seem to have had more knowledge than pious zeal for God and his house and solemn worship, which was confined to Jerusalem.

[Ezr 8:17](#)

I sent them with commandment; which he might do, partly by virtue of that authority which he had over them by his priesthood; and partly by that authority which he either had received or could easily procure from the king to that purpose.

Iddo the chief; the head of the rest, either by ecclesiastical order or government, which the Persian kings allowed to the Jews; or by some grant or commission from the king.

At the place Casiphia; not a place near the Caspian Lake, as some guess from the likeness of the names; for that was at too great a distance for his present purpose; but some other place not far from Ahava, where he knew that there was a college or considerable company of Levites together.

[Ezr 8:18-20](#)

The Gibeonites, who were devoted to this service by Joshua and the princes of his time, [Jos 9:21](#), and are said to be appointed by David and his princes, because they were confirmed by

them in their former office, and more particularly applied to the several services of the temple; though this be not distinctly related in [1Ch 24:1-31](#); [25:1-31](#); [26:1-32](#), because his business there was to give an account only of the new constitutions and alterations made by David in those matters.

[Ezr 8:21](#)

A *right way*, i.e. a safe and prosperous journey; or such a way and course as might be best for us.

[Ezr 8:22-23](#)

He gave us some assurance of his gracious answer to our request.

[Ezr 8:24](#)

Or, and *Sherebiah*, &c., who were the Levites mentioned [Ezr 8:18](#), who were jointly intrusted together with the priests with the charge of carrying these things carefully and safely. The particle *and* is oft understood.

[Ezr 8:25-27](#)

Heb. *desirable as gold*; not that it was of equal price and worth with it, but for its incomparable excellency in its kind, and for its great rarity, for which cause there were only two vessels of that sort.

[Ezr 8:28-31](#)

To wit, in the direct way; whereby it may be conjectured, that God directed them to fetch a little compass, and to go a more uncouth and unsuspected way, as they had begged of God, [Ezr 8:21](#).

[Ezr 8:32-35](#)

Which were come out of the captivity, to wit, these new comers, whom God had safely conducted hither.

[Ezr 8:36](#)

In the adorning and furnishing of it with these vessels and other conveniences; and in promoting God's worship and service therein.

Chapter 9

Ezra and others, hearing of the unlawful marriage of the people with strangers, mourn for it, [Ezr 9:1-4](#). He prayeth unto God, and confesseth their sins, and particularly this, [Ezr 9:5-15](#).

[Ezr 9:1](#)

The princes; who feared God, and understood that Ezra was come with large commission from the king, and with this design, to reform all disorders, whereof this was not the least. *From the people of the lands,* i.e. from the heathen nations round about them, which God had expressly commanded them to do, [De 7:2-3](#). *Doing according to their abominations,* to wit, either, 1. Marrying promiscuously whomsoever they liked, as the heathens used to do; Or, 2. Imitating them in their idolatrous or other wicked practices, into which they were drawn by their heathenish affinities; although they are not charged with any other crime besides their marriage in the following account of it.

[Ezr 9:2](#)

This they had done, either, 1. In the land of their captivity, into which these people were carried as well as others, as appears from [Jer 25:9](#), &c. Or rather, 2. Since their return, as may be gathered from [Ezr 9:8-9](#), [10](#), [14](#).

The princes and rulers; who should have restrained the people from this sin by their authority and example; and, by doing otherwise, made the sin more general, and involved themselves and the nation in the guilt of it.

[Ezr 9:3](#)

My garment and my mantle; both my inner and my upper garment.

Plucked off the hair of my head, and of my beard, in testimony of my great grief and indignation; which was usual among all these eastern and ancient people, wherein he did not transgress that law, [Lev 19:27](#); [De 14:1](#), because he did not shave off all the hair, but only plucked off some hairs.

Sat down astonished; partly for grief and shame at the sin; and partly for fear of some great and dreadful judgment which he expected and feared for it.

[Ezr 9:4](#)

Then were assembled unto me; to join with me both in lamenting the sin, and in endeavouring the redress of it.

Every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, i.e. who stood in awe of God, and of his word, and durst not violate his commands; or who feared his threatenings against those that did so, and trembled for fear of God's judgments upon them, and upon the whole land for their sakes, as the following words imply. Compare [Isa 66:2](#), [5](#).

Those that had been carried away, to wit, into captivity, and were safely returned from it, and yet were not reformed either by their former affliction, or by their latter deliverance.

Until the evening sacrifice, when the people used to assemble together. See [Ps 141:2](#); [Ac 3:1](#).

[Ezr 9:5](#)

From my heaviness, i.e. from that mournful posture, [Ezr 8:4](#), and put myself into the posture of a petitioner. Or, *by reason of my heaviness, or affliction*. Having mourned for the sin, I considered that was not sufficient, and that God expected the confession and amendment of it, and therefore I fell to prayer.

[Ezr 9:6](#)

He includes himself in the number of the transgressors, not only by a rhetorical figure called communication, but partly because he himself was guilty of many sins; and partly because the princes and priests, and so many of the people, having done this, the guilt was now become national.

Increased over our head; like deep waters, in which we are as it were drowned, and ready to perish. Compare [Ps 38:4](#).

[Ezr 9:7](#)

We have been in a great trespass unto this day: we are not purged from the guilt and filth of our fathers' sins, but we are still feeling the sad effects of their sins in the continuing captivity of a great number of our brethren; and we are still repeating the same sins.

[Ezr 9:8](#)

Now for a little space: it is but a little while since God hath delivered and restored us, and yet we are already returned to our former sin and folly. Or thus, We have enjoyed this favour but a little while, and now we are sinning it away, and shortening our own happiness.

To leave us a remnant to escape; that by his favour many of us should escape out of captivity; whom he calls but a remnant, because the far greatest part of the Israelitish nation were yet in captivity.

To give us a nail, i.e. either, 1. A just and merciful prince of our own nation and religion; such being compared to nails or pins, as [Isa 22:23](#). Or rather, 2. Some kind of settlement; whereas before we were tossed and removed from place to place as our masters pleased. It is a metaphor from tents, which are fastened by cords and nails, or pins. *In his holy place*, i.e. in this holy land, as the land of Judah is called, [Zec 2:12](#). Or, in Jerusalem, which is called *the holy city*, [Ne 11:1](#), [18](#); [Da 9:24](#); which is peculiarly mentioned, because of the temple, which was the nail which fastened their tents, and gave them some ground of hopes to continue in their land.

That our God may lighten our eyes, i.e. that he might revive and comfort our hearts. For as *darkness* is oft put for a state of sorrow and affliction, so *light* is put for joy and comfort.

Give us a little reviving in our bondage; for we are not quite delivered, but still wear our fetters upon us, being even here in subjection to our former lords.

[Ezr 9:9](#)

We were bondmen, i.e. in greater bondage than that in which we now are.

Hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, i.e. hath given us to find favour in their eyes.

To give us a reviving; to recover us from the grave of dreadful calamities, in which we lay like dead men and dry bones, [Eze 37:1](#), &c.

To repair the desolations thereof, to wit, of the temple; either, 1. To build the house, where there was only a heap of the ruins of the old temple. Or rather, 2. To frequent and celebrate the worship of God in that place, which hath long lain like a desolate and neglected place. For the building of the house was mentioned in the next foregoing words.

To give us a wall, Heb. *a hedge*, or *a fence*; either, 1. The wall built about Jerusalem. But it is probable that was not yet built, as we shall see by the following history. Besides, this fence is intimated to be as much a fence to the rest of Judah as to Jerusalem. Or, 2. The favour and protection of the kings of Persia, whose edicts on their behalf were under God their security against all those enemies wherewith they were encompassed. Or, 3. The powerful and gracious providence of God, which had brought them together, and planted them in their own land, and watched over them from time to time.

[Ezr 9:10](#)

What apology can we make for ourselves, after thou hast conferred such great and high favours upon us, and we have so grossly abused them?

[Ezr 9:11](#)

An unclean land with the filthiness of the people: this notes the cause or matter of this uncleanness. The land was not unclean in itself, but only polluted by the filthiness of its inhabitants.

Of the lands; or, of these lands which are round about it. This land is as corrupt as any of the rest of the heathen nations.

[Ezr 9:12](#)

Nor seek their peace; but root them out, as I have commanded you to do; which also they have abundantly deserved, both of mine and of your hands. See [De 7:2](#).

That ye may be strong: although you may fancy that this way of making leagues and marriages with them is the only way to establish and settle you, yet I assure you it will weaken and ruin you, and the contrary course will make you stronger.

[Ezr 9:13](#)

After all our sore sufferings for our sins, and after all thy favour showed to us in the mitigation of thy judgments.

Such deliverance as this; so full, so sudden, and unexpected, and amazing, not only to our enemies, but also to ourselves.

[Ezr 9:14](#)

Should we again break thy commandments? was this a fit and just requital of all thy kindnesses? or was this thy end and design in these actions? or wilt thou take this well from our hands?

There should be no remnant nor escaping: can we reasonably expect any thing from thee less than utter ruin?

[Ezr 9:15](#)

Thou art righteous; a just and holy God, who dost hate, and wilt infallibly punish, sin and sinners. Or, *thou art merciful,* as appears from hence, that notwithstanding all our sins, thou hast not utterly destroyed us, but left a remnant of us. The Hebrew word here rendered *righteous,* is oft used for *merciful;* as is well known to all the learned.

For we remain yet escaped; or, though *we remain,* &c., i.e. though thou hast yet spared us in part, yet thou art righteous, and therefore wilt certainly punish and destroy us according to our deserts, if we do not repent us, and reform this great wickedness.

We are before thee in our trespasses; we are here in thy presence, and so are all our sins; we are arraigning ourselves before thy tribunal, acknowledging ourselves to be vile offenders, and thee to be just, if thou destroy us.

We cannot stand before thee, to wit, in judgment, as that word is oft used, as [Ps 130:3](#); compare [Ps 1:5](#); we must needs fall and perish at thy presence, as the phrase is, [Ps 9:3](#). *Because of this;* because of this our great guilt, and the aggravations of it.

Chapter 10

Shechaniah encourageth Ezra to reform the strange marriages, [Ezr 10:1-4](#). All Israel swear to do accordingly, [Ezr 10:5](#). Ezra, mourning, assembleth the people, [Ezr 10:6-8](#). The people at the exhortation of Ezra repent, and promise amendment, [Ezr 10:9-14](#). Their care to perform it, [Ezr 10:15-17](#). The names of them that married strange wives, [Ezr 10:18-44](#).

[Ezr 10:1](#)

Awakened by the words and example of this holy priest and great potentate. So inexpressible is the good which is done by the good example, and the evil which is done by the bad example, of a great person, or of a minister. The fame of his great passion of grief, and of his many and public expressions thereof in the court before the temple, being in an instant

dispersed over all the city, brought a great company together. *The people wept very sore*, being greatly affected with Ezra's prayer, and with the common sin.

[Ezr 10:2](#)

He saith *we*, either, 1. Because he was guilty in this matter. Or rather, 2. In the name of the people, and their several families, and his own amongst the rest. For this man's name is not in the following catalogue, but there we have his father, Jehiel, and his father's brethren, five other sons of his grandfather Elam, [Ezr 10:26](#). It was therefore an evidence of his great courage, and good conscience, that he durst so freely and fully discharge his duty, whereby he showed that he honored God more than his nearest and dearest relations.

There is hope concerning this thing, in case of our repentance and reformation. Therefore let us not sorrow like persons without hope, nor sit down in despair, but let us fall upon action, and amend our errors, and then trust to God's mercy.

[Ezr 10:3](#)

To put away all the wives; which though it may seem harsh, yet is not unjust, if it be considered, 1. That marriages made between some prohibited persons; as suppose, between a father and his daughter, a brother and a sister, are not only unlawful, but void marriages, and *ipso facto* null, by the political laws of civil nations. And therefore these marriages with idolatrous and heathen women, being expressly and severely forbidden by God, might well be disannulled. And it was one of good Theodosius's laws, that those actions which were done against law, should be accounted not only unlawful, but null. 2. That there were many peculiar laws given to the Jews concerning the marrying and putting away of wives, as hath been observed before in their proper places, and therefore it is not strange if there be something more in this case that is now usual with us. 3. Supposing the matrimonial tie had continued, yet they might be excluded from cohabitation with them, as a just punishment upon them for the wilful breach of a known and positive law of God.

And such as are born of them: this may seem harder than the former, but many things may be said. 1. Whatsoever evil befell either them or their children, they had all reason to accept it as the just and deserved fruit of their own sin. 2. That children may and sometimes do suffer, at least temporal evils, for their parents' sins, or upon occasion of them, is most evident, both by the Scripture instances, and by the laws and usages of nations in some cases. 3. This may seem to have been a necessary part of severity, partly, as a proper punishment of the parents' sin herein, and to deter others more effectually from the like practices; partly, to prevent the corruption of their other children by the conversation and society of this ungodly and idolatrous brood; and partly, lest such children, being continually present with them, and stealing into their affections, might at last prevail with them to take their ejected wives again. 4. These children were only cast out of the families and commonwealth of Israel, but were not utterly forsaken and ruined; but due care was probably taken by authority that they should have some provision made for them, and some care taken about their education in the Jewish religion, &c.

According to the counsel of my lord; either, 1. As thou counsellest and desirest us to do. Or, 2. Let us do it in such manner as thou shalt think fit and agreeable to the law, as it follows; for it requires great caution, as being a matter of no small difficulty.

And of those that tremble at the commandment of our God: and of other serious and religious persons who may with thee consider and regulate the business.

Let it be done according to the law: this is meant, either, 1. Of the matter of the business, let that be done which the law requires; let them be put away. Or, 2. Of the manner of it, which must be according to the rules of God's law.

[Ezr 10:4](#)

This matter belongeth unto thee; because thou hast both skill to manage it, and authority both from God and from the Persian king to do it.

[Ezr 10:5-6](#)

Went into the chamber, that he with the princes and elders, as it follows, [Ezr 10:8](#), might consult about the execution of their resolution.

[Ezr 10:7-8](#)

Either by banishment; or rather, by excommunication from the church, and people, and house, and public worship of God.

[Ezr 10:9](#)

All the men of Judah and Benjamin not only of these two tribes, as appears from the following catalogue, where there are priests and Levites; but all the Israelites, [Ezr 10:25](#), who are thus described, partly because the greatest part of them were of these tribes, though others were mixed with them; and partly because they all now dwelt in that land which formerly was appropriated to those tribes.

In the street of the house of God; in that street of the city which was next to the temple, and within the view of it, that so they might be as in God's presence, whereby they might be awed to a more faithful and vigorous prosecution of their work. And this place they might choose rather than the court of the people, because they thought it might be polluted by the delinquents, who were all to come thither.

For the great rain, which they took for a token of God's displeasure against them.

[Ezr 10:10-11](#)

Do his pleasure; you have sinfully pleased yourselves, now please God by your obedience to his command.

[Ezr 10:12-14](#)

Let our rulers of all the congregation stand; let the great council, called the *Sanhedrim*, be settled, and meet to judge and determine of all particular causes.

Them which have taken strange wives, to wit, of these heathen nations, such as were not proselyted to the Jewish religion before their marriage, or since revolted from it.

The elders of every city, and the judges thereof; who are best able to inform the great council of the quality of the persons, and of all matters of fact and circumstances.

Until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, i.e. until the thing be done, and God's wrath thereby removed.

[Ezr 10:15](#)

To wit, to take due care that the business should be executed in the manner proposed, that the officers and delinquents of every city should come successively in convenient time and order, as these should appoint, and to take and keep an exact account of the whole transaction, and of the names of the cities and persons whose causes were despatched, and to give notice to others to come in their turns, and to prepare the business for the hearing of the judges. And these two were priests, as their coadjutors or helpers were Levites; that so they might inform the persons concerned, if any matter of doubt did arise.

[Ezr 10:16](#)

Were separated, i.e. sequestered themselves from all other business, and gave themselves wholly to this.

[Ezr 10:17-19](#)

They gave their hand, i.e. they covenanted or swore by giving their hand; which was the usual gesture in those cases; of which see [Lev 6:2](#); [Eze 17:18](#).

[Ezr 10:20-25](#)

Of Israel, i.e. of the people of Israel, distinguished from the priests and the Levites hitherto named, who before were called Judah and Benjamin, [Ezr 10:9](#), [See Comment on Ezr 10:9](#).

[Ezr 10:26-44](#)

Whereby he implies that most of their wives were barren; which came to pass by God's special providence, partly to manifest his displeasure against such matches, and partly that the practice of this great and necessary duty might not be encumbered with too many difficulties.