

Ezra 7:1-28

Ezra; Ezra's Return; Ezra's Commission and Letter from Artaxerxes 458 BC

Ezra 7:1-28

1. This is the year 458 BC
2. There have been 57 years between the end of chapter 6 and this chapter 7. Events between those years include:
 - a. 499 BC – Lydia rebels against Darius, but the rebellion is put down.
 - b. 490-479 – Persians battle back and forth with Greeks for territory
 - c. 485 BC – Darius dies, his son Xerxes rules (485-465)
 - d. 485 BC – Events of Ezra 4:6 – The people of the land (Samaritans, imported Gentiles) write a letter to King Xerxes accusing the Jews who had returned and had finished the temple 30 some years before. The text says,
“In the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), in the beginning of his reign (485 BC), they (the people of the land: Samaritans, Gentiles) wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.”
 - e. 480 BC – Xerxes crossed the Hellespont with 360,000 soldiers and 700 ships to defeat the Spartans at Thermopylae, conquer Attica and destroy Athens.
 - f. 479 BC – Greeks combine their fleets defeating the Persians at the Battle of Salamis. This is followed by a victorious Greek attack at the Battle of Plataea where Xerxes was decisively defeated. This ended Xerxes attempt to conquer Greece and Persia abandoned Europe.
 - g. 479 BC – Esther becomes the queen of Persia when she is chosen by Xerxes (Ahasuerus)
 - h. 460 BC – With the help of Athens and the Greeks the Egyptians revolt against Persia and Artaxerxes.
 - i. 459 BC – All Persians are driven out of Egypt. Persia is in the middle of squelching the revolt in Egypt.
 - j. 458 BC – Xerxes sends Ezra to Judea to teach, practice and enforce law and order: This includes:
 - i. Jewish Law according to the traditions of their people, or the Law of Moses which is the Law of God.
“Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.” – Ezra 7:23
 - ii. Persian Law which is the Law of Artaxerxes.
“Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.” – Ezra 7:26
3. In the land of Judea these 57 years would include:
 - a. Samaritan hostilities mentioned in Ezra 4:6-23
 - b. General hostility in trade, travel, farming, community establishment. These returning exiles were seen as foreigners to the people of the land.

- c. Immoral interaction with the people of the land polluted by the Samaritans, remains of false worship of Northern Israel, and the influx of the many pagan gods brought in from exiled peoples from other lands
 - d. Common sense compromise by the returning exiles to live at peace with the peoples, cultures, traditions, religions of the area for peace, safety, trade, intermarriage, and other issues in daily life.
4. Most likely things had declined morally and spiritually during the 60 years from the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (520-518 BC) and the glorious completion of the temple and Passover of 515 BC)

Ezra 7:1-5 -Ezra's Linage and Occupation Return to Jerusalem

7:1-5 – “**Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,**

Ezra the son of Seraiah,

son of Azariah,

son of Hilkiyah,

son of Shallum,

son of Zadok,

son of Ahitub,

son of Amariah,

son of Azariah,

son of Meraioth,

son of Zerariah,

son of Uzzi,

son of Bukki,

son of Abishua,

son of Phinehas,

son of Eleazar,

son of Aaron the chief priest—

1. Almost 1,000 years of genealogy (1440 BC – 458 BC = 982 years) is captured in these 16 names of Ezra's forefathers.

a.

7:6 – “**this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.**

1. This is awkward language because the subject of the sentence is Ezra in verse 7:1, but the predicate (verb “came” or “went up”) does not occur until 7:6. In between the subject and the verb is a rough genealogy of Ezra. Six verses separate the subject and the verb.
 - a. The author did this intentionally and skillfully
 - b. The subject “Ezra” is repeated at the beginning of 7:6 – “this Ezra”. So, this was not a mistake.
2. Joshua (or, Jeshua), the high priest of the returning exiles in 538 BC is the son of Jehozadak (or, Jozadak) according to Haggai 1:1:

1 Chronicles 6:3-14 –

“The sons of **Aaron**:

Nadab, Abihu, **Eleazar** and Ithamar.

Eleazar was the father of Phinehas,

Phinehas the father of Abishua,

Abishua the father of Bukki,

Bukki the father of Uzzi,

Uzzi the father of Zerariah,

Zerariah the father of Meraioth,

Meraioth the father of Amariah,

Amariah the father of Ahitub,

Ahitub the father of Zadok,

Zadok the father of Ahimaaz,

Ahimaaz the father of Azariah,

Azariah the father of Johanan,

Johanan the father of Azariah (it was he who served as priest in the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem),

Azariah the father of Amariah,

Amariah the father of Ahitub,

Ahitub the father of Zadok,

Zadok the father of Shallum,

Shallum the father of Hilkiyah,

Hilkiyah the father of Azariah,

Azariah the father of Seraiah,

Seraiah the father of Jozadak.

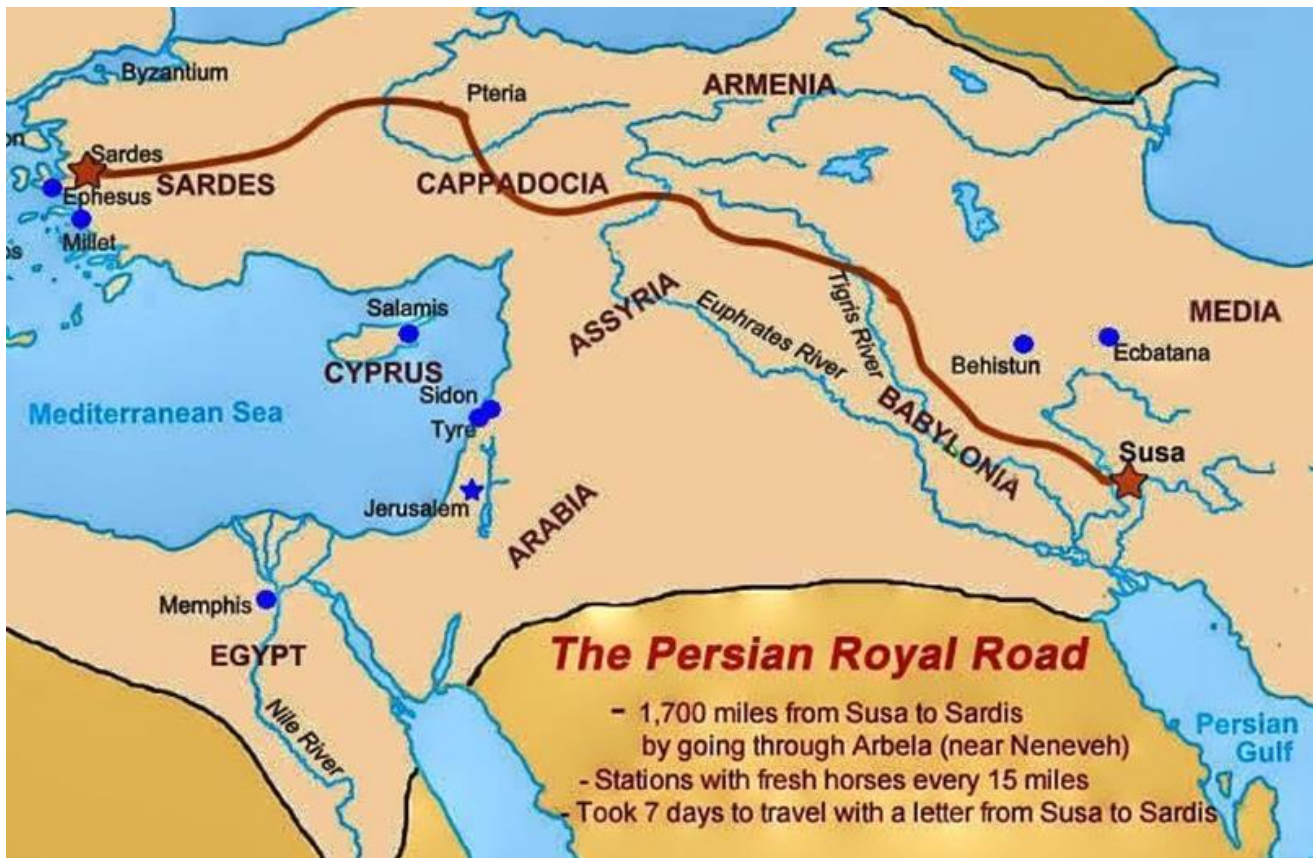
Jozadak was deported when the Lord sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.”

“In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.”

- a. Shealtiel was the High Priest in 587 BC under King Zedekiah.
 - i. Shealtiel was killed by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - ii. This would have been 129 years before the arrival of Ezra in 458 BC
 - iii. 2 Kings 25:18-21 says, “And the captain of the guard (Nebuzaradan) took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest and the three keepers of the threshold...who were found in the city. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. And the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was taken into exile out of its land.”
 - iv. According to 1 Chronicles 6:15 the executed high priest Seraiah’s son Jozadak “was deported when the Lord sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.”
 - v. Jozadak was the father of Joshua the high priest who returned in 538 with the exiles from Babylon.
 1. **Seraiah (586 BC) → Jozadak (Jehozadak) → Joshua 538 BC)**
 - vi. Ezra 7:1 says: Ezra was the son of Seraiah. What does this mean? Options are:
 1. Ezra was born in Jerusalem, the son of executed high priest Seraiah and the younger brother of Jozadak. (Ezra’s mother may have been pregnant with Ezra when she went into exile?) This would make Ezra at least 128 years old in 458 BC. Ezra would then be the uncle of Joshua the high priest.
 2. Ezra was the grandson (or, great-grandson) of Seraiah and his father’s name (a brother of Jozadak) is left out. Ezra would then be a cousin of Joshua the high priest.
 3. Ezra’s father Seraiah is NOT the same person as the executed high priest. Maybe, Jozadak, the father of Joshua, had a son he named after his father. This imaginary son of Jozadak would be Joshua’s brother “Seraiah” the father of Ezra. Ezra would then be Joshua’s nephew.
3. Hilkiyah was the high priest under Josiah
4. Zadok was a priest under David, but Solomon appointed him to be the high priest after David’s high priest Abiathar sided with Adonijah in his pursuit of the kingship after David died.
 - a. Zadok’s line continued in the office of high priest until 171 BC
 - b. The Sadducees get their name from Zadok.
 - c. Ezekiel says the Zadokites were free from idolatry (Ezekiel 4:15-16)
 - d. The Qumran community was partially an attempt to restore the priesthood of Zadok.
5. The author is trying to make a point that Ezra, besides being appointed by the Persians to establish and enforce law and order, was also in the line of the High Priests going all the way back to the beginning.
6. Not every generation is mentioned, but only some highlighted names to give Ezra some credentials.
7. The phrase “son of” does not necessarily have to mean a father and son relationship.
 - a. This is used often of a man’s grandfather
 - b. It is used in a general genealogical connection.

- c. It is used, for example, of the Messiah being the son of David. But, of course, David will not be the actual father of the Messiah, but the Messiah will be in the human lineage of the man David.
8. Ezra comes from Babylon. Nehemiah comes from Susa.
 - a. Ezra would have lived in Babylon and taught the Jews there in Babylon
 - i. The Jews in Babylon were educated
 - ii. The Jews in Babylon were prosperous in business
 - iii. The Jews in Babylon had successfully become part of the Babylonian culture
 9. Ezra is a shortened name for Azariah which means “the Lord has helped.
 10. Ezra was a “secretary” or a “scribe” from *spr*’
 - a. *Spr*’ is a “scribe”, “secretary”, “clerk”
 - i. Here it is a Persian office appointed by Artaxerxes with a specific task in Judah.
 - ii. Ezra has an official task in Judah to accomplish for Artaxerxes (and, the Lord.)
 - b. Likely a double role or a double meaning
 - c. First, he would be a Persian office holder under Artaxerxes. Ezra was appointed to act as the secretary of Judah on behalf of Artaxerxes.
 - d. Second, he was a priest who had specialize in the study of the Law of Moses.
 - e. Ezra was the scribe who established Jewish exegesis. He was the greatest interpreter and taught others to do likewise.
 - f. Ezra will be serving to teach, oversee and enforce
 - i. The Law of Artaxerxes
 - ii. The Law of Moses (or, The Law of the Lord)
 11. “Skilled” or “well versed” is from *mahir*
 - a. *Mahir* is a combination of wise and skilled
 - b. Refers to a scribe of the highest efficiency
 - c. A professional of the highest order
 - d. Ezra is particularly skilled in the Law of Moses





Ezra 7:7-10 – Ezra’s Return to Jerusalem, the returning exiles and Ezra’s Purpose

7:7 - **“And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants.**

7:8 - **“And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.**

7:9 - **“For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him.**

1. Ezra did not have an armed escort. Nehemiah will have an armed escort

7:10 - **“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.**

1. 500 mile journey in a straight line, but they did not go through the desert but in to northern Syria and down the coast.
2. 900 mile journey traveling up the Euphrates to the NW before turning south.
3. It was a dangerous journey and during a time that an Egyptian rebellion had broken out.
4. The seventh year of Artaxerxes was 458 BC
5. They arrived the same year they left
6. April 8 until August 4.
 - a. They traveled from the first of the first month, Nisan (April 8) until the first of the fifth month, Ab (August 4)
 - b. They began in the spring and arrived in midsummer.
 - c. The journey took 119 days and included an 11 day delay according Ezra 8:21 and 8:31 for fasting and prayer before the journey.

7. Ezra had taught the Jews in Babylon (some of them were likely traveling with him back to Jerusalem. Ezra came to Jerusalem to teach the Jews who had already returned.
8. All of the rest of the book should be read with the understanding that Ezra came to teach, enforce and live the Law of Moses with the Jews in Judah.
 - a. He was sent by Artaxerxes to do this.
 - b. God's hand was on him to accomplish this.

Ezra 7:11-26 – Artaxerxes' Letter and Ezra Commission and Documents of Provision

7:11 – **“This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel:**

1. Daniel 9:24-27 speaks of 483 years “from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince.”
 “from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again[e] with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.” – Daniel 9:25-26

This 483 years from the issuing of the decree until the baptising/anointing of the Messiah can be dated two ways. One from this letter given to Ezra in 458 (457) or the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem given to Nehemiah. Both of the decrees come from Artaxerxes:

- a. Ezra's letter: 457 BC + 483 Solar years = 26 AD
- b. Nehemiah's decree: 445 BC + 483 Lunar years = 26 AD

THE LETTER FROM ARTAXERXES:

7:12 – **“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now**

1. “King of Kings” or the Aramaic *melek malkayya*, is seen on the silver wine bowl of Artaxerxes.
2. “The Law” the Persian kings were interested in not only the Persian Law, but the traditional Law of the Lands they were restoring.
 - a. Darius did this when he wrote to his satrap named Aryandes in Egypt. Aryandes was told to collect the wise men of the realm of Egypt to make a new code of laws.
 - b. Artaxerxes in like fashion was trying to codify the laws of their subjects in agreement with both Persian and local laws. This is seen in Ezra 7 and 11 and in Nehemiah 8

7:13 – **I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.**

1. Notice the use of “Israelites” and not “Judeans”. In Ezra and Nehemiah the two terms have significance and practical application.
 - a. Israel is used 24 times in Ezra and Nehemiah to refer to the reunited 12 tribes of Israel and the theology of these people.
 - b. Judah is a geographical or administrative term used to identify the Persian province of Judah. It is used 4x in Ezra only as a geographical term (7:14; 9:9; 10:7, 9)

7:14 – **For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand,**

1. These “seven counselors” or “seven advisers” match the historical accounts of the Persian practice:
 - a. Herodotus mentions these seven.
 - b. Xenophon mentions these seven

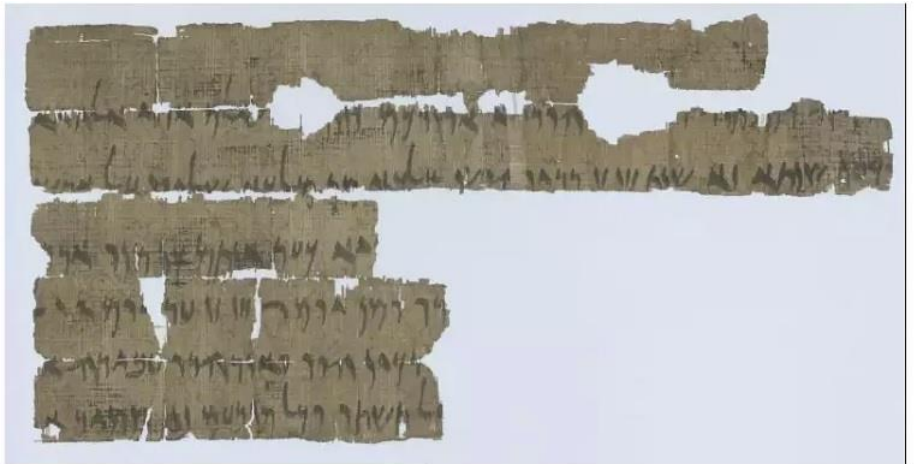
- c. Esther 1:14 lists and names them when Xerxes desired to find out how to deal with his Queen Vashti:
 “Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, the men next to him being:
 1-Carshena,
 2-Shethar,
 3-Admatha,
 4-Tarshish,
 5-Meres,
 6-Marsena, and
 7-Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom).
2. Ezra was sent to inspect the law and order. Ezra would evaluate it and enforce improvements.

7:15 – and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

7:16 – with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem.

7:17 – With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem.

1. This was typical of the Persian kings when restoring a people to their land, their god and their temple
2. In the Elephantine letters to the Jews in Egypt Darius II (423-404 BC) wrote in the papyri known as the “Passover Papyrus” ordering the Jews to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread and when he authorized them to rebuild their “temple” he wrote, “Let meal-offering, incense and burnt -offering be offered upon the altar of God Yahu in your name.”



A papyrus letter, written in Aramaic, from the fortified island of Elephantine in **Egypt**. The letter was written c. 419 BCE by a Jewish man named Hananiah and is addressed to his brother Jedoniah and the rest of the Jews garrisoned at Elephantine. The letter states that King **Darius** II (r. 424 - 404 BCE) has instructed the Persian **satrap** Armases (c. 5th Century BCE) to allow the Jewish garrison at Elephantine to observe a seven-day festival of unleavened bread. This is believed to be an early reference to observance of the Passover holiday.

7:18 – **Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and**

The so-called Passover Papyrus was found during the excavations of Otto Rubensohn and Friedrich Zucker in the early 20th Century. This papyrus is now part of the collection of the **Egyptian** Museum of Berlin in Germany.

gold, you may do, according to the will of your God.

7:19 - The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem.

7:20 - And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which it falls to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury.

7:21 - And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence,

1. This part of the letter addresses the treasurers of the Trans-Euphrates authorities. There may have been a separate attachment to this letter to be given to these Persian officials by Ezra.
2. 3,000 travel texts from Persian capital Persepolis exist today that record these travel-ration texts report the daily operations of a detailed and developed travel system that include transportation and communication and the ability to exchange credits for value.

7:22 - up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

1. A “talent” was from the Babylonian math system based on 60 (instead of 10) called a sexagesimal system (instead of decimal system). Here is the weight/coinage breakdown:
 - a. 1 talent = 60 minas = 3600 shekels
 - b. 1 mina = 60 shekels
 - c. 1 talent weighed 75 pounds
 - d. 100 talents weighed 7,500 pounds (3.75 ton)
 - e. Today (June 27, 2023) 3.75 ton of silver is \$2,450,420
2. Bath = 6 gallons or about 600 gallons of oil and wine used for offerings
3. Cor = a donkey load of 6.5 bushels or about 6550 bushels sent for meal offerings

Weight

Unit

Metal

[Calculate](#)

3.75 Tons of Silver is Worth	
U.S. dollars (USD)	2,497,031
Euros (EUR)	2,288,125
British pounds (GBP)	1,962,188

Market prices as of June 27, 2023

[Opposite calculator here](#)

Nearby Results

Tons	USD Value	Tons	USD Value	Tons	USD Value
3.00	\$1,997,625	3.34	\$2,224,023	3.68	\$2,450,420
3.01	\$2,004,284	3.35	\$2,230,681	3.69	\$2,457,079
3.02	\$2,010,943	3.36	\$2,237,340	3.70	\$2,463,737
3.03	\$2,017,601	3.37	\$2,243,999	3.71	\$2,470,396
3.04	\$2,024,260	3.38	\$2,250,657	3.72	\$2,477,055
3.05	\$2,030,919	3.39	\$2,257,316	3.73	\$2,483,714
3.06	\$2,037,578	3.40	\$2,263,975	3.74	\$2,490,372
3.07	\$2,044,236	3.41	\$2,270,634	3.75	\$2,497,031
3.08	\$2,050,895	3.42	\$2,277,292	3.76	\$2,503,690
3.09	\$2,057,554	3.43	\$2,283,951	3.77	\$2,510,349
3.10	\$2,064,213	3.44	\$2,290,610	3.78	\$2,517,007
3.11	\$2,070,871	3.45	\$2,297,269	3.79	\$2,523,666

7:23 - Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.

1. Avoiding God of Israel's wrath
2. May have involved fear of the Egyptian revolt occurring at this time
3. Artaxerxes had 18 sons

7:24 – We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on

anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

1. Persians often exempt priests and temple personnel from taxation.
2. Antiochus III did that for the Jews according to Josephus.

7:25 - And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach.

7:26 - Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.' ”

1. This is direct instructions to Ezra and his role
2. The Law of God is for Jews, but the Law of the king is for Jews and Gentiles
3. Ezra would be appointing two kinds of tribunals under the Persian system>
 - a. One was a kind of social tribunal for cases involving customary law. In this case, the Law of the Lord (or, the Law of Moses)
 - b. Second, was a royal tribunal for cases that the state of the Persian empire was interested in.
4. Ezra has extensive power including death penalty
5. Ezra would have been traveling and overseeing the land
6. Persia was interested in legal, moral and religious order that would enhance the societies they ruled
7. Ezra is being sent back to Judah for this purpose
 - a. Darius sent Udjahorresnet, a priest and scholar, back to Egypt with orders to codify Egyptian law into demotic and Aramaic text. This took from 518-503. The Demotic text from this collection record that Darius wanted wise men from the warriors, the priests and the scribes to write down the ancient laws of Egypt.

Ezra 7:27-28 - Ezra Writing in First Person includes His Own Words likely from his Personal Memoirs

7:27 – “Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem,

7:28 – “and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.”

1. Ezra resumes in verse 27 writing in Hebrew. The first word is blessed from baruk
2. This begins the first person account and is known as the “Ezra Memoirs”, since just like the previous Aramaic letter was from an actual document this personal account is likely taken from an official document written by the scribe Ezra who is documenting these events.
3. Ezra uses wording similar Isaiah’s promises of Isaiah 60 which may indicate he was anticipating some for of eschatological fulfillment from his role.



This silver bowl dates to the 5th century BC and comes from ancient Persia. It was used as a wine-drinking vessel, and it comes from the royal house of the Persian ruler Artaxerxes I. It is inscribed with the name of Artaxerxes himself, as well as his father Xerxes and his grandfather Darius. Of interest is the fact that the Biblical figure Nehemiah is listed as a cupbearer to Artaxerxes in Nehemiah 2:1. Found before 1935,* it is nearly 12 inches in diameter and is one of four such bowls discovered so far. The inscription in the Old Persian language using cuneiform script has been translated as:



"Artaxerxes the Great King, King of Kings, King of Countries, son of Xerxes the King, of Xerxes [who was] son of Darius the king; in whose royal house this silver saucer was made."