

Ezra 10

Verses 1- 4

Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women, and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept greatly. ² Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. ³ So now let’s make a covenant with our God to send away all the wives and their children, following the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the Law. ⁴ Arise! For *this* matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.”

² Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.

Israel had suffered great humiliation, the temple had been destroyed and they were taken captive to Babylon, but God provided a way for Israel to continue as a nation. Israel had been given a second chance and the people understood that this was a very special time in history and they needed to do the right thing.

³ So now let’s make a covenant with our God to send away all the wives and their children, following the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the Law.

The men who found themselves in this situation were facing an awkward and painful situation. This was not a matter of sending away a wife because she was found to have some indecency in her life. They were sending away a wife that prior to this time they were happy to live with and saw them as a partner in life. The children had not done any wrong and yet they were about to suffer the loss of their father and face a future that was filled with uncertainty.

One has to wonder if any of these foreign wives had converted to Judaism and if that would have exempted them from the consequences of this covenant. Boaz married Ruth, a Moabite, and most people seem to agree that that was right in the eyes of God.

⁴ Arise! For this matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.”

Those who had married foreign wives were facing a decision that only they could make but they had the support of this tightly knit group of people.

Verses 5 - 8

⁵ Then Ezra stood and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel take an oath that they would do according to this proposal; so they took the oath. ⁶ Then Ezra rose from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib. Although he went there, he did not eat bread nor drink water, because he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles. ⁷ So they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the exiles, that they were to assemble at Jerusalem, ⁸ and that whoever did not come within three days, in accordance with the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his property would be forfeited, and he himself would be excluded from the assembly of the exiles.

⁵ Then Ezra stood and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel take an oath that they would do according to this proposal; so they took the oath.

Some of the priests and Levites were guilty of the same sin as some of the common people so everyone had to take the oath to get rid of their foreign wives.

⁶ Then Ezra rose from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib. Although he went there, he did not eat bread nor drink water, because he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

God must have put this deep concern into the heart of Ezra because there had been great leaders in the past and nothing like this had even been demanded of the people.

⁷ So they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the exiles, that they were to assemble at Jerusalem, ⁸ and that whoever did not come within three days, in accordance with the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his property would be forfeited, and he himself would be excluded from the assembly of the exiles.

This was a severe penalty for not showing up at Jerusalem but Ezra had been given an edict from the king that gave him great authority in Judah and Jerusalem.

See Ezra 7:25 - 26

²⁵ “And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges so that they may judge all the people who are in *the province beyond the Euphrates River*, that is, all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant *of them*.

²⁶ And whoever does not comply with the Law of your God and the law of the king, judgment is to be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment, or for ^[n]confiscation of property or for imprisonment.”

Verses 9 - 15

So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month on the twentieth of the month, and all the people sat in the public square *before* the house of God, trembling because of this matter and the *heavy* rain. ¹⁰ Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives, adding to the guilt of Israel.

¹¹ Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.” ¹² Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, “It is our duty to do exactly as you have said! ¹³ However, there are many people, it is the rainy season, and we are not able to stand in the open. Nor *can* the task *be done* in one or two days, because we have done a great wrong in this matter. ¹⁴ Please let our leaders represent all the assembly and have all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us.” ¹⁵ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah opposed this, with Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supporting them.

So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month on the twentieth of the month, and all the people sat in the public square *before* the house of God, trembling because of this matter and the *heavy* rain.

This was the month Kislev, our November and December.

See chart 1005

The Jewish Calendar			
The Jews used two types of calendars			
The Civil: Used for kings, births, contracts & The Sacred: Used for festivals			
Month Name	Corresponds to	Civil Year	Sacred Year
Tishri	Sep-Oct	1st	7th
Heshvan	Oct-Nov	2nd	8th
Chislev	Nov-Dec	3rd	9th
Tebeth	Dec-Jan	4th	10th
Shebat	Jan-Feb	5th	11th
Adar	Feb-Mar	6th	12th
Nisan	Mar-Apr	7th	1st
Iyar	Apr-May	8th	2nd
Sivan	May-Jun	9th	3rd
Tammuz	Jun-Jul	10th	4th
Ab	Jul-Aug	11th	5th
Elul	Aug-Sep	12th	6th

The people trembled for 2 reasons; one was spiritual and the other physical.

1. The fear of God's law concerning foreign wives.
2. It was the rainy season, and the weather could be very cold.

¹³ However, there are many people, it is the rainy season, and we are not able to stand in the open. Nor can the task be done in one or two days, because we have done a great wrong in this matter. ¹⁴ Please let our leaders represent all the assembly and have all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us."

All of the following factors were a good reason why this matter should be handled in a more judicious way.

1. There was no reason for all of the people to stay in Jerusalem since the elders and judges would be making any decisions regarding these cases.
2. Given the cold and rain the situation was untenable for all Israel to remain there until the matters of each case was addressed.
3. The separation of wives and children was too complicated to be accomplished quickly.

Verses 16 - 17

¹⁶ But the exiles did so. And Ezra the priest selected men *who were* the heads of fathers' households for each of their father's households, all of them by name. So they convened on the first day of the tenth month to investigate the matter. ¹⁷ And they finished *investigating* all the men who had married foreign wives by the first day of the first month.

The process of investigating all the men who had foreign wives and adjudicating each case took 3 months (from 10-1 until 1-1).

Verses 18 - 24

¹⁸ Now among the sons of the priests who had married foreign wives were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹ They pledged to send away their wives, and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their guilt. ²⁰ Of the sons of Immer, there were Hanani and Zebadiah; ²¹ and of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah; ²² and of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

²³ Of the Levites there were Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴ Of the singers there was Eliashib; and of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

17 priests and 10 Levites were found to have foreign wives.

Verses 25 - 44

²⁵ **Of Israel**, of the sons of Parosh *there were* **Ramiah**, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah; ²⁶ and of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah; ²⁷ and of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza; ²⁸ and of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai; ²⁹ and of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch and Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth; ³⁰ and of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh; ³¹ and of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah; ³² of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei; ³⁴ of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, ³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, ³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasu, ³⁸ Bani, Binnui, Shimei, ³⁹ Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, ⁴⁰ Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹ Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴² Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. ⁴³ Of the sons of Nebo *there were* Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. ⁴⁴ All of these men had married foreign wives, and some of them had wives *by whom* they had children.

86 men of the common people were found to have foreign wives.

Altogether, 113 men in Israel were found guilty of having foreign wives. If we assume there were 15,000 men in all, then 113 out of 15,000 is less than 1%.

However, this sin was not permanently eliminated.

See Nehemiah 13:23 – 29

²³ In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them knew how to speak the language of Judah, but only the language of his own people. ²⁵ So I quarreled with them and cursed them, and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take any of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Did Solomon the king of Israel not sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; yet the foreign women caused even him to sin. ²⁷ Has it not then been reported about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God, by marrying foreign women?” ²⁸ Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, became a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I chased him away from me. ²⁹ Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

There was only a gap of 28 years between the reforms of Ezra in this chapter and the same reform made by Nehemiah in the last chapter of his book.

See timeline 1010

Nehemiah Time Line

Chapter	Events		Year
	Cyrus releases Jews	1st Return	537
	Second temple dedicated		516
	Work on the walls stopped	Ezra 4:7-23	465 to 445
	Reforms of Ezra	2nd return	458
1	Nehemiah in Susa	3rd return	445
2	His trip to Jerusalem	several months	445
3	Rebuilding of the wall begins		445
4	Enemies of Israel		445
5	Nehemiah helps the poor		445
6	The wall completed	52 days	445
7	Two governors appointed		445
8	Ezra reads the law		444
9	Israelites confess their sin	1-24	444
10	Binding agreement signed		444
11	1/10th move to Jerusalem		444
12	Dedication of the wall	9-25?	444
13	Nehemiah returns to Persia	32nd year	433
13	Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem		430
13	Final reforms		430