

Ezra 8

Verses 1- 14

Now these are the heads of their fathers' *households* and the genealogical enrollment of those who went up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes: ² of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush; ³ of the sons of Shecaniah *who was* of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him **150 males** *who were in* the genealogical list; ⁴ of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah and **two hundred males** with him; ⁵ of the sons of Zattu, Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel and **three hundred males** with him; ⁶ and of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan and **fifty males** with him; ⁷ and of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah and **seventy males** with him; ⁸ and of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael and **eighty males** with him; ⁹ of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel and **218 males** with him; ¹⁰ and of the sons of Bani, Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah and **160 males** with him; ¹¹ and of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai and **twenty-eight males** with him; ¹² and of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan and **110 males** with him; ¹³ and of the sons of Adonikam, the last ones, these being their names: Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and **sixty males** with them; ¹⁴ and of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and **seventy males** with them.

Now these are the heads of their fathers' *households* and the genealogical enrollment of those who went up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes:

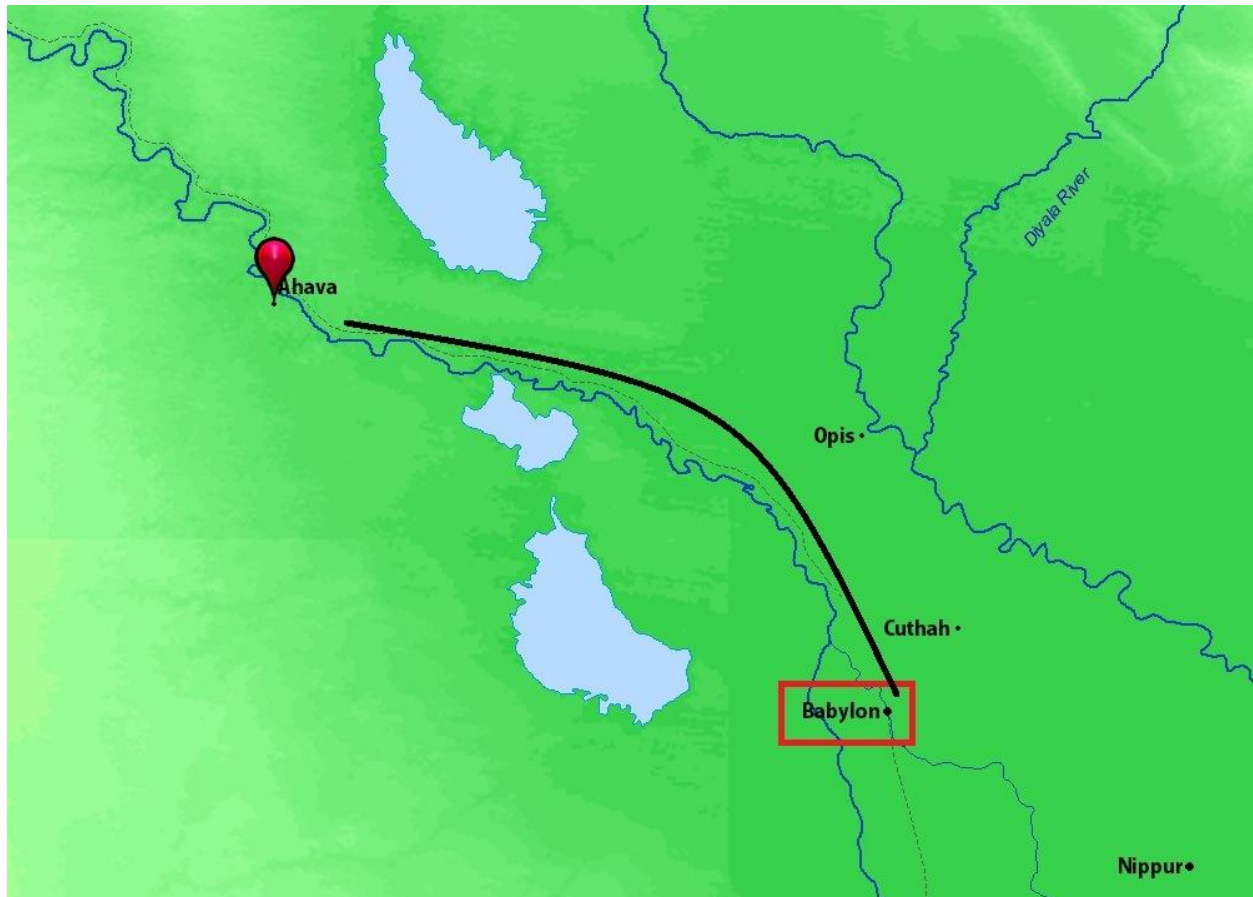
This list comes to a total of about 1500 males. If one includes the women and children it was probably around 6000 people all together. The first group under Zerubbabel was about 50,000 people so this group was about 1/10 the size of the first group.

Verses 15

¹⁵ Now I assembled them at the river that runs to Ahava, where we camped for three days; and when I paid close attention to the people and the priests, I did not find any Levites there.

See map 805

Ahava



Ezra's company left Babylon on the first day of the month and it took 8 days for their journey to Ahava. They then camped for 3 days in order to recruit some Levites. See verse 31.

^{15b} **And when I paid close attention to the people and the priests, I did not find any Levites there.**

Among the many Levites only those from the lineage of Aaron could be priests. The other Levites served in a secondary role to the priests in offering sacrifices and performed other duties such as singers, musicians, guards, and officials.

Many priests returned to Jerusalem but the other Levites were reluctant to do so. Some commentators have given a number of reasons why this might have happened but in the final analysis none of them really explain why this happened.

We should remember that under the previous system the priests and other Levites only served 5 weeks out of the year at the temple so many of the “reasons” given by different commentators just don’t fit the scenario that occurred here.

Verses 16 - 20

¹⁶ So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leading men, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, teachers.

¹⁷ And I sent them to Iddo the leading man at the place *called* Casiphia; and I told them what to say to Iddo and his brothers, the temple servants at the place Casiphia, *that is*, to bring ministers to us for the house of our God. ¹⁸ And as the good hand of our God *was* upon us, they brought us a man of insight from the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers, **eighteen men**; ¹⁹ and Hashabiah and Jeshiah of the sons of Merari, *with* his brothers and their sons, **twenty men**; ²⁰ and **220 of the temple servants**, whom David and the officials had provided for the service of the Levites, all of them designated by name.

¹⁷ And I sent them to Iddo the leading man at the place *called* Casiphia; and I told them what to say to Iddo and his brothers, the temple servants at the place Casiphia, *that is*, to bring ministers to us for the house of our God.

Ezra knew of a settlement of Levites that was nearby, a place called Casiphia, so he sent a number of men there and they came back with 38 Levites and 220 temple servants.

Verses 21 - 23

²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, to humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. ²² For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who abandon Him.” ²³ So we fasted and sought our God concerning this *matter*, and He listened to our pleading.

The following is why Ezra proclaimed a fast in order to appeal to God for a safe journey.

1. It was a long trip and traveling was a danger at that time.
2. He was transporting a large sum of money.
3. It seemed wrong to brag about God's protective hand and then request a military escort.

Verses 24 - 30

²⁴ Then I selected twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers; ²⁵ and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the utensils, the offering for the house of our God which the king, his counselors, his officials, and all Israel who were present *there* had contributed. ²⁶ So I weighed into their hands 650 talents of silver, and silver utensils *worth* a hundred talents, *and* a hundred gold talents, ²⁷ and twenty gold bowls *worth* a thousand darics, and two utensils of fine shiny bronze, precious as gold. ²⁸ Then I said to them, “You are holy to the Lord, and the utensils are holy; and the silver and the gold are a voluntary offering to the Lord God of your fathers. ²⁹ Watch and keep *them* until you weigh *them* before the leading priests, the Levites, and the leaders of the fathers’ *households* of Israel in Jerusalem, *in* the chambers of the house of the Lord.” ³⁰ So the priests and the Levites accepted the weight of silver and gold and the utensils, to bring *them* to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

²⁴ Then I selected twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers; ²⁵ and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the utensils, the offering for the house of our God which the king, his counselors, his officials, and all Israel who were present *there* had contributed.

While they were at Ahava Ezra entrusted the vast sum of money that had been given to him from the king and his officials and the Jews who were on their way to Jerusalem with him.

This included 650 talents of silver, silver utensils *worth* a hundred talents, a hundred gold talents, twenty gold bowls *worth* a thousand darics, and two utensils of fine shiny bronze that was as precious as gold.

²⁸ Then I said to them, “You are holy to the Lord, and the utensils are holy; and the silver and the gold are a voluntary offering to the Lord God of your fathers.

²⁹ Watch and keep *them* until you weigh *them* before the leading priests, the Levites, and the leaders of the fathers’ *households* of Israel in Jerusalem, *in* the chambers of the house of the Lord.”

The priests were responsible for watching over this voluntary offering until they arrived at Jerusalem and could weigh it out to the leading priests, the Levites and the leaders of the people living in Jerusalem.

Verses 31 - 34

³¹ Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and He rescued us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the road. ³² So we came to Jerusalem and remained there for three days. ³³ And on the fourth day the silver, the gold, and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them were the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. ³⁴ *A notation was made for everything by number and weight, and all the weight was recorded at that time.*

³¹ Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and He rescued us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the road.

On the 1st day of the month they left Babylon and it took 8 days for their journey to Ahava. They then camped for 3 days in order to recruit some Levites and on the 12th day of the month they left Ahava for Jerusalem.

³² So we came to Jerusalem and remained there for three days.

Ezra took a 3 day rest, before getting on with the business at hand. Nehemiah did the same thing.

See Nehemiah 2:11

¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. ¹² And I got up in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem, and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.

³³ And on the fourth day the silver, the gold, and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God....

The treasures that Ezra had entrusted to the 12 leading priests were taken to the temple and weighed in with the proper temple authorities. Those entrusted to watch over the contributions to the Lord were careful to validate that nothing was missing during the long journey to Jerusalem.

Verses 35 - 36

³⁵ The exiles who had come from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, twelve male goats for a sin offering, all as a burnt offering to the Lord. ³⁶ Then they delivered the king's edicts to the king's satraps and the governors *in the provinces beyond the Euphrates River*, and they supported the people and the house of God.

³⁵ The exiles who had come from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, twelve male goats for a sin offering, all as a burnt offering to the Lord.

The 12 bulls and the 12 male goats represented all twelve tribes of Israel. The union of the two Israel's was accomplished.

See Ezekiel 37:15 – 23

¹⁵ The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, ¹⁶ “Now you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ ¹⁷ Then put them together for yourself one to another into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when the sons of your people speak to you, saying, ‘Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?’ ¹⁹ say to them, ‘This is what the Lord God says: “Behold, I am going to take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.”’”

²⁰ The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. ²¹ And say to them, ‘This is what the Lord God says: “Behold, I am going to take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; ²² and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. ²³ They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their offenses; but I will rescue them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.’”

Ezekiel spoke this prophesy during the captivity.

All of these offering to the Lord were burnt offerings, which meant that none of the meat was given to any priest or person. This was not a time of feasting but of thanksgiving to the Lord for what He had done.

³⁶ Then they delivered the king's edicts to the king's satraps and the governors in the provinces beyond the Euphrates River, and they supported the people and the house of God.

The Persian governors south of the Euphrates River were required to monetarily support the worship of God in Jerusalem.

See map 810

