

Ezra 9

Verses 1- 4

Now when these things had been completed, the officials approached me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, as to their abominations, *those* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ² For they have taken some of their daughters as *wives* for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the officials and the leaders have taken the lead in this unfaithfulness.” ³ When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled out some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. ⁴ Then everyone who was frightened by the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering.

Now when these things had been completed, the officials approached me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, as to their abominations, *those* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

The delivery of the king's commands to the governors may have taken several months to complete. It was after that mission was completed that the officials approached Ezra about the unfaithfulness of some of the Jewish people.

The problem was that some Jewish men had taken pagan wives which were strictly forbidden in the law.

See Deuteronomy 7:2 - 4

² and when the LORD your God turns them over to you and you defeat them, you shall utterly destroy them. You shall not make a covenant with them nor be gracious to them.³ Furthermore; you shall not intermarry with them: you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me, and they will serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.

The foreign wives included women from five of the seven Canaanite races plus the Ammonites, Moabites and Egyptians.

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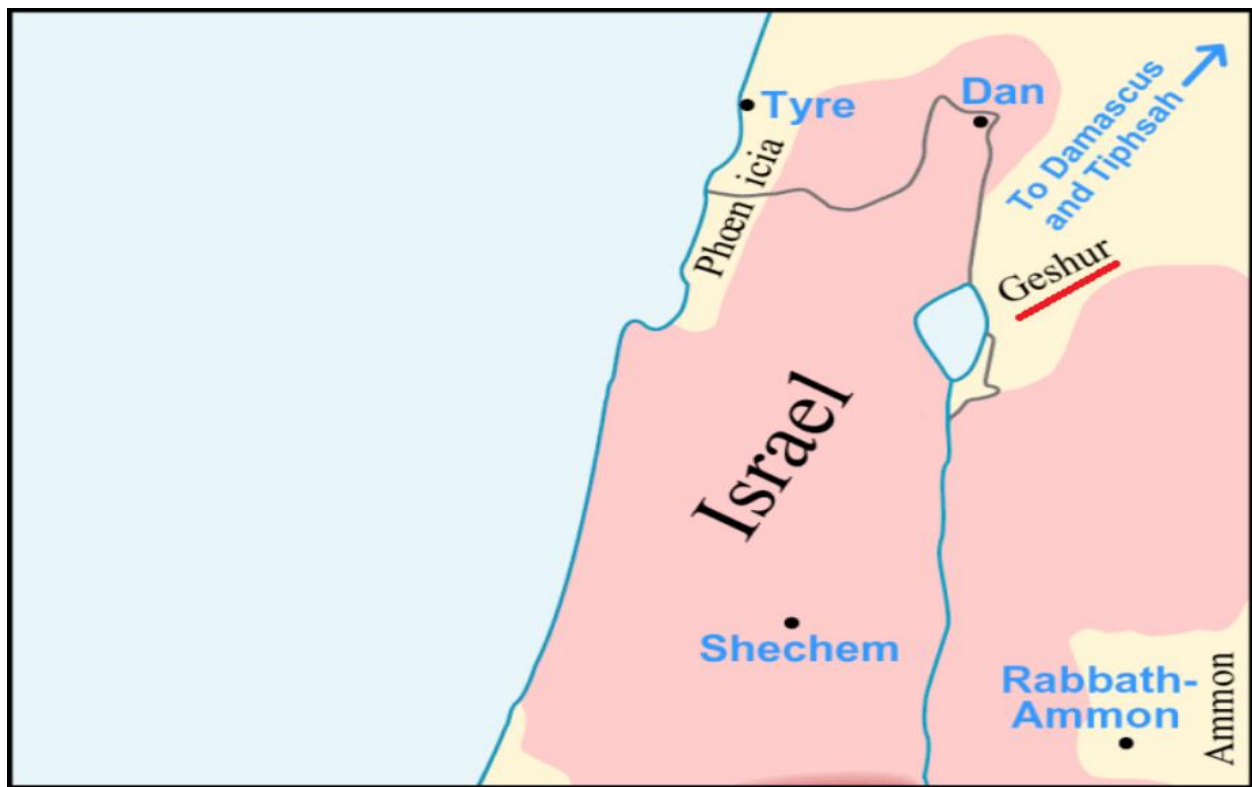
The problem was aggravated by the fact that the officials and leaders of the Israelites led the way in this indiscretion.

However, a number of famous leaders had taken foreign wives and nothing was said about this at the time. One of David's wives was a foreigner:

See 2 Samuel 3:3

² Sons were born to David in Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; ³ and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur;

See map 905



The people of Geshur were foreigners that had not been driven out of the land given to East Manasseh.

See Joshua 13:13

¹³ But the sons of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites; instead, Geshur and Maacath live among Israel to this day.

³ When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled out some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. ⁴ Then everyone who was frightened by the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering.

There was genuine grief concerning this matter but fixing a problem like this would not be easy. There would be grief, sufferings, and emotional distress because the only solution to this problem would be for these families to split up. Nevertheless it had to be done because if it was not corrected they would have lost the favor of God and the Jews would have lost their national identity.

Verses 5 - 9

⁵ But at the evening offering I stood up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I bowed down on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God; ⁶ and I said, “My God, I am ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God, for our wrongful deeds have risen above our heads, and our guilt has grown even to the heavens. ⁷ Since the days of our fathers to this day we *have been* in great guilt, and because of our wrongful deeds we, our kings, *and* our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to open shame, as *it is* this day. ⁸ But now for a brief moment grace has been *shown* from the Lord our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, so that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. ⁹ For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not abandoned us, but has extended favor to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to erect the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

⁵ But at the evening offering I stood up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn , and I bowed down on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God;

The evening offering is at the ninth hour which is 3 P.M.

⁶ and I said, “My God, I am ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God, for our wrongful deeds have risen above our heads, and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.

Israel had neglected to keep their part of the covenant, to follow the law, and the captivity was the punishment for their sin.

⁷ Since the days of our fathers to this day we *have been* in great guilt, and because of our wrongful deeds we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to open shame, as it is this day.

The Jews had a long history of forsaking God and His law and now even this remnant that had returned to Jerusalem were still breaking the law. They needed the reforms of Ezra to make things right with the Lord.

⁸ But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, so that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. ⁹ For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not abandoned us, but has extended favor to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to erect the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

God’s grace allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and restore the temple and city but if they failed to correct the problem of mixed marriages they could find themselves in captivity once again.

The people who had returned were well aware of why they had been deported and wanted to avoid another judgment from God. So some men approached Ezra about the sin that had crept back in among some of the men of Israel hoping to fix the problem and be right with God as a nation.

Verses 10 – 15

¹⁰ “And now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have abandoned Your commandments, ¹¹ which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end, *and* with their impurity. ¹² So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, so that you may be strong and may eat the good *things* of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your sons forever.’ ¹³ And after everything that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have spared *us by inflicting* less than our wrongdoing *deserves*, and have given us *such* an escaped remnant as this, ¹⁴ shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there would be no remnant nor any who would escape? ¹⁵ Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as *it is* this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”

¹² So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, so that you may be strong and may eat the good *things* of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your sons forever.

This sin had been over looked by the Jews in the past but the deportation to Babylon gave them time to reflect on their sin and a majority of the people wanted to nip this sin in the bud so their kids would not be taken into captivity.

¹³ And after everything that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have spared *us by inflicting* less than our wrongdoing *deserves*, and have given us *such* an escaped remnant as this, ¹⁴ shall we again break your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would you not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there would be neither remnant nor any who would escape?

It's true that life is not fair; we receive much more grace than we deserve! ☺

If the remnant did not learn from the mistakes of their parents it could lead to the nation of Israel disappearing from history.