
§1 The Long Awaited Signal (Ezra 1:1–4)

This passage launches the first of the three missions narrated in Ezra-Nehemiah. The other two missions will focus on individual leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah, and their God-given work within the restored community. This mission, announced here and carried out in 1:5–6:22, involves restoring the Judeans to their own territory and rebuilding the temple for the worship of God. Throughout the story, the actual return of the people is subordinate to their task of building the sanctuary. Their return is a means of achieving the rebuilding. To be the people of God means to be dedicated to the adoration of God, as a worshiping community. The perspective is that of the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, where the goal of the exodus and of the initial occupation of the land is to bring Israel to the sanctuary graced by God's presence.

1:1 / It is characteristic of Ezra-Nehemiah to base its missions on both a supernatural and a secular source. When events in human history prove to be of special significance for God's people, they are presented as having been arranged by divine providence. This role of providence is considered so fundamental in the first mission that it is repeated at the end of the account in 6:14, 22, and it frames the passage, serving as an *inclusio*. In the other two missions, divine involvement is simply a theological claim made by the participants (7:27, echoed by the editor in 7:6; Neh. 2:8). This verse, however, confirms that the God of Israel was at work in this crucial historical event, which is hailed as the validation of earlier predictions made by the prophet **Jeremiah**. The divinely given **word** had come true. What passages did the narrator have in mind? The forecast of a seventy-year exile in Jeremiah 25:11–12; 29:10 is often proposed, but the narrative provides its own clue in the phrase "The LORD stirred up the spirit" (NRSV). Jeremiah 51:1, 11 uses the same language in an oracle about the future destruction of Babylon. The latter verse is especially significant, with its statement that "The

LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes" (NRSV). **Cyrus**, king of Anshan and Persia, became king of the Medes by conquest in 549 B.C. before pressing on to capture Babylon in 539. This capture of Babylon made it possible for him to release the Judeans exiled to Babylonia, in the year 538. The narrator probably associated Jeremiah 51 with the even more relevant passages in Second Isaiah, which proclaim that Israel's God "stirred up" (Heb. *he'ir*) Cyrus in Isaiah 41:2, 25; 45:13. In these first two cases it was to conquer nations and in the last case to rebuild Jerusalem. In Isaiah 44:28, although the verb "stir up" is not used, the divine role given to Cyrus actually includes laying the temple foundations. There was therefore ample material to substantiate the narrative's appeal to prophetic prediction.

The edict of Cyrus is not represented as a directive to the Judean exiles. It is grandly painted on an imperial canvas as information for all the royal subjects (**you**, v. 3). The whole world must know of this wonderful news. In fact, only the Babylonian Jews are mentioned as returning in the ensuing narrative, definitely not the descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel living elsewhere in the empire. The narrator seems to have used Cyrus' memorandum, quoted in Aramaic in 6:3-5, as a basis for this edict (here given in Hebrew). The fact that the king **put it in writing** supports this idea, and this is actually the only official document in Ezra-Nehemiah not written in Aramaic. The narrator reserved the stipulation found in 6:5 concerning the return of sacred vessels for the narrative of 1:7, where he could associate it with an extant inventory. Because he incorporates a list of returnees from Babylon in chapter 2, he includes the return of exiles in the edict—although simply as builders of the temple. There might also be a side-glance at 7:13, 16.

1:2-3 / The narrator, perhaps unwittingly, captures the flavor of early Persian policy in attributing Cyrus' military successes to **the LORD** or Yahweh, **the God of Israel**. It was imperial practice, when a local sanctuary or city was rebuilt, to trace the gift of royal dominion back to the patron deity. Nor should this be regarded as just a shrewd political move. Polytheism was taken seriously and sincerely by the early Persian kings as a supernatural power to be reckoned with. The requirement of Darius that local sacrifices and prayers be offered on behalf of the royal family (6:10), as well as the concern of Artaxerxes to avoid the wrath of Israel's God falling on them (7:23), indicates this concern. Of

course, the monotheistic narrator and readers (including us as Christians) must view the issue from a different perspective. The ironic truth is that the God of Israel, and this God alone, was the real power behind the Persian throne and Cyrus' Judean policy, and verse 1 has already used an argument from prophecy to support this claim.

1:4 / This sentence has a complicated construction in the Hebrew that modern versions have paraphrased, thereby incorporating certain exegetical judgments. The interpretation of the NIV seems to be correct; a more literal version along the same lines appears in the NRSV. The key interpretive question is whether “the people of their place” (NRSV) refers to members of Judean settlements or to their non-Judean neighbors. It is important to note that Cyrus addresses the edict to the non-Judean members of his realm (“you,” v. 3), among whom Judeans were settled. Verse 4 explains his purpose in addressing these people—they were to help their Judean neighbors. “The people of their place” is another way of referring to “you.” The switch to a third person directive picks up “whatever place” (NRSV) earlier in the sentence. As expected, there is a consistency between the narrator's framing of the edict and his subsequent narrative referring to non-Judean neighbors in verse 6. There, as we shall see, the return from exile is envisioned as a second exodus. That flavor is already evident in verse 4 and appears to be reflected in the statement in the memorandum of chapter 6 that the costs were to be borne by the royal treasury (6:4; compare with the first Exodus, in which Egypt provided resources, Exodus 12:35, 36, 38). In 1:6 that was achieved by diverting local taxes, for which 6:8 may be compared.

Additional Notes §1

1:1 / **King of Persia**, used as Cyrus' title twice in this verse and also in 1:2, 8; 3:7; 4:3, 5, designates him as head and founder of the Persian empire, as the Chronicler used it in 2 Chr. 36:20 before citing Ezra 1:1–3a. It was not used by the early kings and reflects later usage in the narrator's period. In 5:13 he is called “king of Babylon,” and here his reign is implicitly dated from the capture of Babylon, which enabled him to take over the Babylonian empire. In the pre-539 B.C. Nabonidus Chronicle he is called “the king of Persia” (*ANET*, p. 306), but with reference to his earlier rank as king of a neighboring state. **The word . . .**

spoken by Jeremiah is related to the seventy years of Jer. 25 and 29 in 2 Chr. 36:21, but not here, as Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp. 9f., has shown. This is a minor bit of evidence for differentiating the two pieces of literature.

1:2 / The God of heaven is a title used in postexilic Jewish literature. It was a common divine title in the Persian empire, and its adoption by Jews may have been an attempt to use a cultural equivalent that would interpret their faith to non-Jews. This acknowledgment of Yahweh may be compared with Cyrus' description of the moon god Sin, in conjunction with the rebuilding of his temple at Ur, as the god who "delivered into my hands the four quarters of the world" (C. J. Gadd and L. Legrain, *Ur Excavations. Texts. 1: Royal Inscriptions* [London: British Museum, 1928], p. 96).

1:3 / The Cyrus Cylinder attests that Cyrus returned divine statues to rebuilt temples in the area of Babylonia and repatriated the former inhabitants of associated communities, which may be compared to Cyrus giving permission for Judeans to rebuild **the temple**. (*ANET*, p. 316; cf. A. Kuhrt, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaeminid Royal Policy," *JOT* 25 [1983], pp. 83–97).

1:4 / A quite different interpretation is offered in NJPS: "and all who stay behind, wherever he [i.e., any returnee, mentioned in v. 3] may be living, let the people of his place assist him . . ." This rendering takes "the people of his place" as resuming the first phrase, which is related to non-returning Judeans. This interpretation was argued by E. Bickerman, "The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1," *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, Part One (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 72–108, and followed in principle by Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp. 5, 14. The latter uses it as an argument for the independent origin of the edict of vv. 2–4, since it conflicts with v. 6, although he grants that "of Persia" in v. 2 was added by the narrator. For the dependence of the edict on 6:3–5, see B. Halpern, "A Historiographic Commentary on Ezra 1–6: Achronological Narrative and Dual Chronology in Israelite Historiography," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* (ed. W. H. Propp et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 83–93, 122f., and R. de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (trans. D. McHugh; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 94–96. W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia* (HAT 1:20; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1949), p. 220, complained that Bickerman's interpretation of "the men of his place" made the phrase superfluous, and indeed Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, regards it as a gloss or an alternative reading. If possible, a more integrated interpretation of the phrase is preferable on principle. If "the men of his place" is the subject and refers to non-Judeans, the first phrase must relate to the returnees as survivors of the catastrophe of judgment in the year 586, the initial generation of Judeans exiled by Nebuchadnezzar (2:1) together with their families. A theological reference to a remnant is less likely here.

§2 Preparations for Implementing the Mission (Ezra 1:5–11)

Ezra 1:5–3:13 tells the story of the first of the two stages in carrying out the mission of 1:1–4. This section relates the official restitution of temple “vessels” (NRSV) to the returning group (1:7–11).

1:5–6 / First, however, we find an introductory passage that details the close correspondence between Cyrus’ edict and the response it triggered, step by step. The events that follow fulfilled the commands in the divinely inspired proclamation. Having been told to go back to rebuild the temple in verse 3, God’s people took steps to do so. Their Gentile neighbors duly helped them, in line with verse 4. But there is more here than a mere repetition in the form of events. The narrator took the opportunity to make a number of theological points. First, the inspiration of verse 1 finds a parallel among the returnees. Those who opted to go back were the ones who responded to divine prompting. All was of **God**. God was the prime mover behind the restoration of the postexilic community. Second, God’s **people**, or **Israel**, in verse 3 is now defined as Judean exiles from the three tribes of **Judah**, **Benjamin**, and Levi, to which **priests and Levites** belonged. Contemporary members of the tribes that had made up the preexilic southern kingdom of Judah constituted the new people of God, as heirs of the earlier community of faith.

Third, there is a typological reference to a second exodus. At the first exodus there was a spoiling of the Egyptians, in which the ancient text reveals at several points (Exod. 3:21–22; 11:2; 12:35–36). The Israelites asked their Egyptian neighbors for articles of silver and gold, and received them. The tables were turned, and the victims became the victors by this dramatic means. In verse 6, the addition of **articles** to the command of verse 4 clinches this parallel with the first exodus. Gentile neighbors handed over precious objects, other materials for the temple, and more mundane supplies

to the returning Judeans. Biblical typology is the defining of a new act of God in the same terms used for an earlier act. Thus Christ is “the last Adam,” head of a new humanity, corresponding to the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45–49). He is also the “Passover lamb” sacrificed for the church, the counterpart of the first Passover offering for Israel (1 Cor. 5:6–8). This latter parallel is another example of second exodus typology. In the OT, Second Isaiah predicted Israel’s return from exile in terms of a new work of God comparable to the ancient exodus (e.g., Isa. 43:19–21; 48:21; 51:9–11; 52:11–12). The same God would again miraculously redeem Israel from oppression and lead them safely to their own land. Our narrator speaks in the same theological vein, but now with the satisfaction of retrospection. He gives a new twist to the typology by applying it to the spoiling of the Egyptians. Other exodus parallels will emerge in verse 11 and in 2:68, and later with reference to Ezra’s return in chapter 8.

1:7 / The royal edict had focused on rebuilding the Jerusalem temple. This purpose comes correspondingly to the fore in Cyrus’ restitution of the temple vessels plundered from the first temple. Here the narrator draws on the official memorandum in 6:5 for this detail. He also had at his disposal Tattenai’s letter to King Darius, which he incorporated into chapter 5 and which includes further details about the vessels (5:13–15).

1:8–11a / In these verses, the narrator reproduces yet another piece of documentation available to him. An **inventory** of the restored vessels was evidently preserved in the temple archives. The official-sounding reference to **Mithredath** and the Persian word used here for **treasurer** suggest that the narrator turned the introduction to the inventory into the narrative of verse 8. Tattenai’s letter concurs in its mention of **Sheshbazzar** as the leader of the first group of returnees. This enigmatic figure then fades into obscurity as Zerubbabel, who is known to have been active some twenty years later, takes his place as leader in this story. The inventory proper follows in verses 9–10. The numbers do not add up to the total given in verse 11a, indicating that the text was probably incomplete or corrupted and was simply presented as it was found.

1:11b / Whatever the precise numbers may have been, the narrator emphatically states, in the conclusion he has added to round off the section, that Sheshbazzar brought them **all** back—to

the last vessel. The restitution closes a long episode of shameful loss. It spelled vindication for the people of God and the triumph of their God. It also supplied continuity in holy worship for the postexilic community. Second Isaiah had envisioned the return of the sacred vessels (Isa. 52:11). Whereas pagan nations had their divine images restored, their counterparts in Judah's case were the vessels of the first temple. They conferred authenticity for the worship that was to be conducted in the second temple. A further allusion to a second exodus appears at the end of this verse. **The exiles "were brought up"** (here the NRSV is more accurate than the NIV's **came up**) **from Babylon to Jerusalem**. The passive verb connotes divine activity. Scripture frequently refers to the exodus in terms of God bringing Israel up from Egypt (e.g., Exod. 32:11; Deut. 20:1). Now the same God was at work again, laying the foundation for a new community of faith, whose members were thereby stamped as bona fide successors to the old community that had once occupied the land.

Additional Notes §2

1:6 / For a sensitive discussion of the spoiling of the Egyptians, see B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), pp. 175–77.

1:7 / There are two traditions about the fate of the temple vessels. According to 2 Kgs. 24:13 (NRSV, REB), all of the golden vessels were cut into pieces. However, Jer. 27:16–22; 28:3–6 speak of the removal of some of the vessels intact to Babylon. The documentation and narrative in Ezra attest the latter tradition, and the Chronicler followed it in 2 Chr. 36:7, 10, 18. See further I. Kalimi and J. D. Purvis, "King Jehoiachin and the Vessels of the Lord's House in Biblical Literature," *CBQ* 56 (1994), pp. 449–57.

1:8 / **Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah:** In 5:14 he is called "governor," a term used for a range of Persian administrators. **Prince** (Heb. *nasi*?) is not itself a royal term. Here the word seems to refer to his role as a prominent member of the Judean community in Babylon, specifically a tribal leader (cf. Num. 1:16, "leaders," translating the same Heb. noun). He was an obvious choice for the Persians to entrust with the responsibility of leading the initial mission. Josephus (*Ant.* 11.13, 92) identified him with Zerubbabel, but (1) while a number of individuals had double names, one was always Hebrew and the other foreign, so the fact that both Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar are Babylonian names makes this

unlikely, and (2) in 5:14–16 he is described as a long-gone figure of the past, distinct from the contemporary governor Zerubbabel mentioned in 5: 2. Some scholars have identified him with the Davidic Shenazzar in 1 Chr. 3:18. It remains a phonetic possibility (see Halpern, “Historiographic Commentary,” pp. 91f.), but if so the narrator made nothing of a royal connection and the issue is a historical matter rather than a literary one.

1:9 / The renderings **pans** (**silver** has no counterpart in the Heb. text) and “knives” (NRSV) reflect the uncertainty of the term. A quite different interpretation is to regard it in a revocalized form as an original marginal comment (wrongly inserted into the text between the numerals) relating to the numbers in v. 9, in the light of the total in v. 11. This form means “to be changed,” and the LXX understood it in a similar way. (Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, p. 5; *BHS*. Here and elsewhere, *BHS* will be used as a conventional way of referring to the edited notes added to the Hebrew text in the *BHS* edition.) With this reading, 1,029 **silver dishes** were intended by the text.

1:10 / **Matching** or “other” (NRSV): again Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, proposes a similar gloss, revocalized with the sense “to be altered,” now querying the number of **silver bowls** (see *BHS*). In 1 Esd. 2:13–14 the individual and total figures agree, and the RSV followed this tradition. (The apocryphal book of 1 Esdras is a Gk. translation of 2 Chr. 35–36, Ezra, and Neh. 8–12, which is independent of the LXX.) However, this tradition represents a secondary harmonization and the NRSV has rightly reverted to the MT. See the discussion in D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*, vol. 1 (OBO 50; Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), pp. 523–25.

1:11 / For the significance of the temple vessels indicating continuity of worship from the first to the second temples, see P. R. Ackroyd, “The Temple Vessels—A Continuity Theme,” *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), pp. 46–60.

§3 The Return of the True People of God (Ezra 2:1–70)

The text now informs us of the composition of the returnees, who duly set out and arrived in Judah and prepared to rebuild the temple. The narrator, writing considerably later than the events of the first mission, drew on this list, which appears again in Nehemiah 7:6–73a. First, Nehemiah found this list in the Jerusalem archives and incorporated it into his memoirs, but the narrator in Ezra did not find it in the archives or the memoirs, since he cited it along with Nehemiah 7:73b–8:1a (= substantially Ezra 3:1). This latter material is part of the next passage in Nehemiah, which is drawn from different material associated with the work of Ezra. Thus the narrator in Ezra knew and used the list in the form in which it currently appears in Nehemiah 7. This fact gives us some insight into how late the narrator was writing the present account. The list supplied a record of early settlers at a certain point in the ongoing history of **the province**. The narrator adapted it for his own story by inserting the major part of verse 68, as the absence of this verse from Nehemiah 7 and its echoing of the mission-linked vocabulary used in chapter 1 indicate. He also summarized Nehemiah 7 in verses 68–69, rounding up most of the figures.

It is noticeable that there is no mention here of Sheshbazzar, who returned in the year 538. Instead, **Zerubbabel** appears, beside **Jeshua**, as the first of the leaders enumerated in the introduction to the list (v. 2). We know of these two men as governor and high priest, respectively, early in the reign of Darius, in 520–515, both from the books of Haggai and Zechariah and from the dependent Ezra 5:1–2. The list here in chapter 2 reflects the membership of the Judean colony at this later, post-Sheshbazzar period. The narrator has merged the early (ch. 1) and later (ch. 2) evidence and presented it as a single return—although the list itself seems to reflect a series of returns in the relatively early period of the

postexilic community. We are given a literary, condensed presentation of a protracted history. Its coherence has been achieved by linking later material to the description of the initial wave of migration led by Sheshbazzar.

2:1–2a / The concern of the list is to define the restored community as a legitimate continuation of the preexilic people of God who had been exiled but still constitute **the people of Israel** (v. 2b). The list must have appealed to the narrator, who had presented his own similar definition of Israel in general terms in 1:5. Indeed, the list arranges laity, priests, and Levites in the same way. Thus, in the first two chapters of Ezra, the theme of restoration continues. First the vessels plundered by **Nebuchadnezzar** had been handed back (1:7), and now the people deported by the Babylonian king could come back from exile. The people of God essentially consisted of those who had journeyed through judgment—from Judah to exile and then back to Judah.

2:2b–35 / Verse 2b is a subheading. As is commonly seen elsewhere, here we have the laity of **Israel** distinguished from the temple staff, who are itemized later. The list is a complex collection, formed by the amalgamation of two or three smaller lists. The first list, in verses 3–20, is based on family association—grouped by clan names and supplying the number of those who returned in each clan. There follows a listing by places of residence in verses 21–35. This residential listing subdivides into a group generally introduced by **men** in verses 21–28 and another one in verses 29–35 introduced by “sons” (Heb. *bene*), in the sense of inhabitants, although the NIV has not preserved the division. **Bethlehem** and **Netophah** are in the tribal area of Judah south of Jerusalem, but most of the other towns that can be identified are in Benjamin, while **Lod, Hadid and Ono** in verse 33 are in the far west, outside the province.

2:36–39 / A list of priestly families follows. There were only four at this stage, but others were to return with Ezra later (8:2–3). A system of twenty-four divisions would be set up eventually—by the time of the Chronicler or a little later (1 Chr. 24:1–19). Although the families were still few, the total number of individuals in these families makes up a tenth of the whole group, whose total is given in verse 64. This ratio is understandable, since the main purpose of the returning exiles was to establish the temple.

2:40–58 / Verse 40 gives a much smaller list of Levites. Their scarcity must have been one reason why Ezra made a special effort to recruit more to return with him (8:15–20). Their role as assistants to the priests held little attraction to exiled members of the order. The temple **singers** and **gatekeepers** are listed separately from the Levites in verses 41–42. Later in the postexilic period they were both grouped under a Levitical umbrella, as they generally are in Chronicles and indeed in Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 12:8, 24. The distinct listings are an indication of the relatively early date of this material. **The temple servants and descendants of the servants of Solomon**, listed separately by family names in verses 43–57, are grouped together for statistical purposes in verse 58. They were groups of temple workers from preexilic times and were of foreign extraction, as most of their names indicate. They had long been incorporated into the community of faith, and so they are included in the total of verse 64.

2:59–63 / This sad group of lay and priestly families functions as a telling footnote before the total membership of the gradually increased community is given. Distinguishing people who could not prove the ancestry they claimed underlines the significance of the main list as a census of genuine members who had verifiable links with the preexilic community of **Israel**. First, three non-qualifying lay groups are listed in verses 59–60, according to the exilic communities to which they had belonged in Babylonia. Claimants to a priestly status, who also fall into three family groups, follow in verse 61. Happily the family of **Hakkoz** was eventually accepted, as can be seen by the presence of Meremoth, son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz in Ezra 8:33 and Nehemiah 3:4, 21. This family eventually took its place among the twenty-four divisions (1 Chr. 24:10). But at the time of this list, no member of the three groups was allowed to officiate or to receive priestly rations. A final decision was to be left until the appointment of a high **priest** for the community. He was expected to bring a traditional divining device to ascertain the will of God: **the Urim and Thummim**. Since Jeshua functioned as the high priest during the governorship of Zerubbabel, it is probable that **the governor** was Sheshbazzar, and so this portion of the material is to be dated very early.

2:64–67 / The **company** is rather the “assembly” (NRSV) in a religious sense, the definitive “assembly of the exiles” of 10:8 and the “assembly of God” of Nehemiah 13:1. The actual total of

the individual numbers (29,818) contrasts with the total in verse 64 of **42,360**. Possibly the difference is a reference to women, who have a role in the religious community (10:1; Neh. 8:2). Women feature in the totals of slaves and **singers** in verse 65. The pack animals and riding animals described in verse 67 make a good introduction to the journey of verse 68.

2:68–69 / Most of verse 68 is a new description that is not taken from Nehemiah 7:70 and was supplied to tie into the narrative context of the mission of chapter 1. In verse 69 the narrator has abbreviated the details of gifts supplied in Nehemiah 7:70–72. The longer listing in Nehemiah 7:70–72 already had a temple concern; this was fittingly adapted in Ezra to the single mission launched by Cyrus' edict. While in Nehemiah 7 the contributions were for the ongoing work of maintaining worship, here they are for building the temple. We are probably to discern a further exodus parallel here. In the wilderness, the Israelites brought **freewill offerings** of precious metals and cloth (Exod. 25:2–7; 35:4–9), while in Numbers 7 tribal **heads of families** brought **silver** and **gold** objects. The restored people, or at least some of them, followed this example, willingly faithful to the pattern set out in Scripture.

2:70 / Verse 70 rounds off the list by echoing the end of verse 1. In the narrative context this sentence marks the conclusion of a single return in an idealistic representation of the birth of the new community.

Additional Notes §3

2:1 / **Province** refers to an administrative district at some level. At least by Zerubbabel's time, from which this introduction dates, Judah, known as Yehud, was evidently an autonomous administrative unit in the Persian imperial system (K. G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* [SBLDS; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], pp. 26, 75, 86).

2:2 / **Nehemiah** is not to be equated with the later governor, nor **Bigvai** with the still later one, since Nehemiah himself regarded the list as old (Neh. 7:5). Neh. 7:7 adds in the sixth place another name, "Nahamani," which brings the total number of leaders to twelve. This total reflects an understanding of the new community as a symbolic re-

construction of a twelve-tribe system, as in 6:17; 8:35. We may compare this with the symbolism of twelve disciples in the Gospels. 1 Esd. 5:8 attests this extra name, and the NJB has incorporated it (cf. *BHS*). It is probable that it fell out of the Ezra text through a copyist's error.

2:5 / In place of 775, Nehemiah 7:10 has "652." This is the first of many discrepancies between the two sets of numbers, although the names are largely the same. H. L. Allrik plausibly explained the differences in terms of a numerical system of easily overlooked or miscounted strokes and other signs ("The Lists of Zerubbabel [Nehemiah 7 and Ezra 2] and the Hebrew Numerical Notation," *BASOR* 136 [Dec., 1954], pp. 21–27).

2:21 / The MT has *bene*, "sons," here and in vv. 24–26. Nehemiah 7 has preserved *ʿanshe*, "men," throughout this section.

2:35 / The large figure associated with **Senaah** is surprising, and there is as yet no satisfactory explanation for it.

2:36 / **Jeshua**: The high priest belonged to the clan of **Jedaiah**.

2:40 / The Levites **Jeshua** and **Kadmiel** are regularly associated with a third, Binnui (8:33; Neh. 10:9; 12:8 [cf. Ezra 3:9 in the NRSV]), while Neh. 8:7; 9:4–5 refer to a similar name, Bani. Moreover, 1 Esd. 5:26, parallel to Ezra 2:40, has "Bannas" in place of Heb. *bene*, "sons." This evidence suggests that here and in the parallel Neh. 7:43 the Levites were originally defined as the descendants of **Jeshua**, namely, **Kadmiel**, **Bani**/**Binnui**, and **Hodaviah**. See the comprehensive discussion of Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, vol. 1, pp. 525–29.

2:41–42 / For the eventual incorporation of the **singers** and **gatekeepers** into the Levitical line, see H. Gese, "Zur Geschichte der Kultsänger am zweiten Tempel," *Von Sinai zum Zion: alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 64; Munich: Kaiser, 1974), pp. 147–58, summarized by H. G. M. Williamson in *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 120f.

2:63 / The precise meaning of Heb. *tirshata*², also used in Neh. 7:70; 8:9; 10:1 and loosely translated **governor**, is unknown. See the range of suggested etymologies in Høglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration*, pp. 75, 80. For the **Urim and Thummim**, see Exod. 28:30; Num. 27:21. They were evidently small objects marked with symbols to indicate a yes or no response. The high **priest** carried them in the breastplate attached to the ephod. The ephod is used as a synonym for them in 1 Sam. 23:9–12; 30:7–8. The cultural use of throwing lots as a spiritual aid is illustrated in a non-religious context in Prov. 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." An example from the NT appears in Acts 1:23–26. For a discussion of the way they worked, see A. M. Kitz, "The Plural Form of 'ûrîm and tummîm," *JBL* 116 (1997), pp. 401–10. **The most sacred food** refers generally to priestly rations (see Num. 18:1–19).

2:68 / **The house of the LORD** must refer to the site of the first temple, as also in 3:8. The narrator took the reference to the temple **site** from the documentation in 5:15; 6:7.

2:69 / In Neh. 7:70, “530” (priestly garments) requires correction to 30, and the 500 refers to silver minas. Rounding up is evident in **5,000 minas of silver**, from 4,700 (500 + 2,200 + 2,000), and in **100 priestly garments**, from 97 (30 + 67). **61,000 drachmas of gold**, standing in place of the expected 41,000 (1,000 + 20,000 + 20,000) may be the estimated monetary value of the “50 bowls” of Neh. 7:70 (Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, p. 26).

2:70 / The text is slightly different from Neh. 7:73. **In their own towns** seems to be an editorial addition referring to Jerusalem and adjacent towns, made in the light of v. 1. The equivalent in 1 Esd. 5:46, “in Jerusalem and its vicinity” (*added* to the text of Ezra in the NRSV, largely following Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, p. 26), appears to be a secondary and not incorrect interpretation as the domicile of the temple staff and **some** of the laity, i.e., lay officials (cf. Neh. 11:1). According to Neh. 3:26, 31; 11:21, **the temple servants** lived in Jerusalem. The first lay group (NRSV “some of the people”) are distinguished from most of the laity, **the rest of the Israelites**, who lived in other towns. The Heb. phrase rendered **some of the other people** is placed not after **the singers**, as in Neh. 7:73 [MT v. 72], but after **the Levites**. This change, not represented in the NIV, presumably reflects their seniority to the lesser temple staff. See the discussions of Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp. 271–73, and Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, vol. 1, pp. 530f.