

“I didn’t sign up for this!”

Ezra 1–6 (part 1)

Imagine you’re on a tour

- Now imagine I’m your tour guide!
- Tour of: ¹⁾ ancient world, ²⁾ biblical narrative, ³⁾ how to study the Bible
- Explore, ask, enjoy!



Ezra-Nehemiah

• **Sec. 1: Three Great Returns**

- Ch. 1: Zerubbabel’s return and rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1–6)
- Ch. 2: Ezra’s return and rebuilding of the religious community (Ezra 7–10)
- Ch. 3: Nehemiah’s return and rebuilding of the walls (Neh 1–7:3)

• **Sec. 2: Renewal and Restoration**

- Ch. 4: The Covenant renewed (Neh 7:4–12:43)
- Ch. 5: Further reforms of Nehemiah (Neh 12:44–13:51)

Sources:

- Royal documents & records
- Written letters
- Family lists of names
- Ezra’s memoirs
- Nehemiah’s memoirs
- Author’s unique contributions

Literary Techniques:

-concentricity-

A: stuff

B: thingys

X: whole point or hinge

B': other thingys

A': stuff again

Literary Techniques:

-parallel pannels-

A: stuff

B: thingys

C: boom!

A': stuff again

B': more thingys

C': kapow!

Literary Techniques:

-repetitive resumption-

- Yesterday ***I wrecked my car.***
- blahblahblah [other story that makes you realize how much pain I'm in]
- Anyway, ***I crashed my car...***

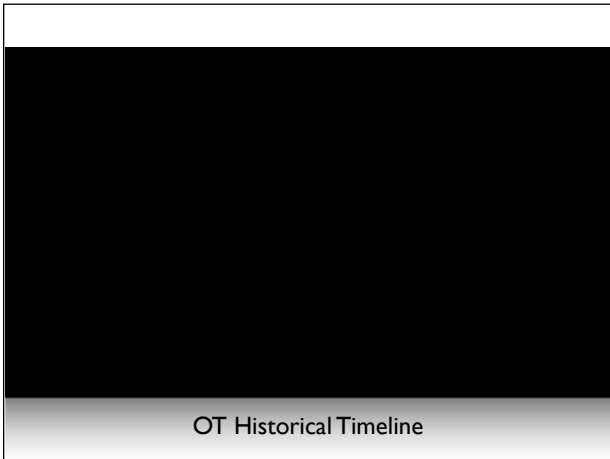
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ANE Event	Biblical Event	Passage
Neo-Assyrian Period	Northern Kingdom of Samaria (Israel) falls, inhabitants deported, 722 BC	2 Kings 17
Neo-Babylonian Period	Jerusalem is invaded and leaders deported, 597 BC	2 Kings 24:1-17
	Jerusalem is invaded again and destroyed, more leaders deported, 587 BC	2 Kings 24:18-25:30
Cyrus inaugurates Persian Period, 539 BC	In response to Cyrus' Decree, Zerubbabel leads first group of returnees to rebuild temple, 538 BC	Ezra 1:1
Cambyses II rules, 530-522 BC		
Darius rules, 522-485 BC	Work on the temple ceases due to opposition	Ezra 4:5, 24
	Temple <i>finally</i> completed, 515 BC	
Xerxes rules, 485-465 BC	Opposition letter sent to Xerxes	Ezra 4:6
	a.k.a., "Ahasuerus" in book of Esther	Esther
Artaxerxes rules, 464-424 BC	Ezra leads group of returnees to Jerusalem to rebuild community, 458 BC	Ezra 7ff.
	Nehemiah commissioned to rebuild walls, leads group of returnees to Jerusalem, 445 BC	
	Opposition letter regarding the wall rebuilding sent to Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:7-18
	Work on the walls ceases due to opposition	Ezra 4:23
	Walls completed, 440 BC	Neh 6:15-16

Ezra-Nehemiah

● **Sec. I: Three Great Returns**

- Ch. I: Zerubbabel's return and rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1–6)
- 3 **parallel panels** (¹ initial return under divinely prompted Persian sanction, ² almost constant opposition to reconstruction and ³ the overcoming of opposition with God's help)
- Also, arranged **concentrically**.

Ezra I: Cyrus' Edict



Ezra I: Cyrus' Edict

- Game: *Guess That Event*
- *Why these allusions?*
- Note esp. 1:7-11

Ezra I: Cyrus' Edict

- A:** Vessels carried away from Jerusalem are brought out (7)
- B:** Vessels counted out to Sheshbazzar (8)
- X:** List of vessels (9-11a)
- B':** Vessels brought up by Sheshbazzar (11b)
- A':** With exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem (11c)

Ezra 2: List of returnees

“Chapters like Ezra 2 are among the most uninviting portions of the Bible to modern readers...”

[H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC), 38]

Ezra 2: List of returnees

- A catalog of “the living parts of Israel, roots and all, for transplanting.” [Kidner, *Ezra*, 36]
- *Why now?*
- *Why all the talk about “land”?*

Aerial View

“Viewed historically, the restoration... was piecemeal, dogged by setbacks and reversals, and proceeding without any coherent plan. However, the theological perspective of Ezra-Nehemiah invites us to see the guiding hand of Israel’s God in seemingly disconnected events.”

[J. J. Bimson, “Ezra,” in *TLOT*, 135]

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Ezra 1–6 (part 1)

“How is never a problem for God. It is usually a big problem for us. But *how* is God’s specialty. If the OT and NT teach us anything, they teach us that nothing is too difficult for God. What he originates, he orchestrates.”

[A. Stanley, *Visioneering*, 56]

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