

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE CHRONOLOGY OF EZRA II. AND IV. 6-23.

I.

THE Book of Ezra, which has undoubted difficulties, chronological and others, has been more obscured by the mistakes of commentators than any other book in the Bible. The two main difficulties with which it is proposed to deal in the following paper, are that of Ezr. ii. as compared with Neh. vii., and that of Ezr. iv. 6-23. The writer believes that the solution in both cases is, in the main, quite certain, and capable of demonstration.

To take, first, Ezr. ii. The difficulty here arises from the fact that this chapter is a duplicate of Neh. vii., and that whereas in Neh. vii. the action is avowedly and manifestly laid in the time of Nehemiah "the Tirshatha," the Governor of Judea in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, King of Persia; in Ezr. ii. it appears to be laid in the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua in the reign of Cyrus King of Persia, some ninety years before.

The first question that arises is, Are the two passages identical in the sense that one is borrowed from the other? And if so, in which book is it original, and in which borrowed and transcribed from the other?

Now that the two passages are identical, in spite of some variations in the numbers, appears from a close comparison of the two verse by verse. And we will begin with what is perhaps the most significant part of the two chapters, viz. the account of the offerings for the Temple service described in Ezr. ii. 68, 69, Neh. vii. 70, 72.¹

Premising that the *numbers* in both chapters are more or less corrupt and uncertain, both here and throughout the two chapters, I would observe that the key to the restora-

¹ See the writer's articles in the *Dict. of the Bible*: "Ezra, book of"; "Nehemiah, book of."

tion in these verses is to remember that the offerings (as we learn from Neh. vii.) consisted of three, in the main, equal parts; one given by the Tirshatha, one by the chief of the fathers, and one by the rest of the people. Ezra abridges the account and only gives the sum total of the gifts. But a comparison of the sum total with the items given by Nehemiah shows at once that the 61,000 drams of gold consisted of three offerings of 20,000 each, *plus* 1,000 which, we gather from Neh. vii. 70, was contributed by the Tirshatha over and above his share. The שְׁתֵּי רִבּוֹת “two myriads,” or 20,000, which ought to have preceded the אֶלֶף “a thousand,” has dropped out of the text.

To take next the priests' garments, Ezr. ii. 69. The total is there given as 100, which is confirmed by 1 Esdr. v. 45. But in Neh. vii. 70, 72, there is attributed to the Tirshatha 530 priests' garments, and to the rest of the people 67. Now 67 is two-thirds of 100. Surely it is scarcely doubtful that in Neh. vii. 70 is to be found the other third, viz. 33, and that the 500 does not belong to the priests' garments at all, but is the numeral really belonging to some other kind of gift which has fallen out of the text.

The third article, the 5,000 lbs. of silver, is not quite so easily explained, but we may find a probable explanation.

The total in Ezr. ii. 69, with which 1 Esdr. v. 45 agrees, is 5,000 lbs. of silver. The items in Neh. vii. 71, 72 are, the chief of the fathers 2,200 lbs., the rest of the people 2,000, the Tirshatha nothing. Now if the chief of the fathers, and the rest of the people, gave each 2,250 = 4,500,¹ there would remain 500 for the Tirshatha to make up the 5,000. And this would account for the stray חֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת, “500” of Neh. vii. 70, which we have just seen was improperly attached to the priests' garments given by the Tirshatha. The reason why the Tirshatha gave only 500 lbs. to meet the 4,500 of the fathers and the people, was that he gave in

¹ The LXX. ascribe 2,300 to the fathers, and 2,200 to the people = 4,500.

addition "50 basons." If these were of gold, like the "100 basons of gold" made by King Solomon (2 Chr. ix. 8), as their small number rather indicates (comp. Ezr. i. 10), the value of 50 gold basons would far exceed the 2,000 lbs. of silver by which the Tirshatha's contribution fell short of those of the fathers and the people.

The subjoined table shows at a glance the different statements of the gifts in Ezr., Neh. and 1 Esdr., and also either the carelessness of the scribes, or the illegible state of the MS. which they were copying.

EZRA II. 69.	NEHEMIAH VII. 70, 72.	1 ESDRAS V.
Drams of gold 61,000	Drams of gold—	Pounds of gold 1,000
Pounds of silver 5,000	Tirshatha 1,000	Pounds of silver 5,000
Priests' garments 100	Fathers 20,000	Priests' garments 100
	People 20,000	
	————— 41,000	
	Pounds of silver—	
	Fathers 2,200	
	People 2,000	
	————— 4,200	
	Priests' garments 67	

The incident of the Tirshatha's decision concerning the priests who could not find their register in the official genealogy is so manifestly the same in Ezr. ii. 61-63 and Neh. vii. 63-65, that nothing more need here be said about it.

The identity of the numbers in Ezr. ii. 64-67 and Neh. vii. 66, 67 (with one exception noticed below), is no less conclusive.

The same lesson as to the identity of the two documents is taught by a comparison of them verse by verse.

Ezr. ii. 1, 2, which is the description of the whole document, is identical with Neh. vii. 6, 7, except in writing *Azariah* for *Seraiah*, *Reelaiah* for *Raamiah* (ר for ד), *Mizpar* for *Mizpereth*, *Rehum* for *Nehum*, and the omission of *Nahamani*; all manifestly clerical variations.

Ezr. ii. 3, 4, is identical with Neh. vii. 8, 9, both in names and numbers.

Ezr. ii. 5, gives the number of the children of Arah as 775 instead of 652, as in Neh. xii. 10; of which a probable explanation is that חֲמִשָּׁה וְשִׁבְעִים "five and seventy," is a mistake for the usual order חֲמִשִּׁים וְשִׁבְעָה "fifty-seven," and שִׁבְעִים for the very similar שְׁנַיִם. The mistake of *seven* hundred for *six* hundred might easily be caused by the eye resting upon the *seven* in the same verse.

Ezr. ii. 6 is identical with Neh. vii. 11, except in the substitution of שְׁנַיִם for שְׁמֹנֶה, *twelve* for *eighteen*, where Ezra may probably be right.

Ezr. ii. 7 is identical with Neh. vii. 12.

Ezr. ii. 8 is identical with Neh. vii. 13, except in the substitution of תִּשְׁעַ "nine" for שְׁמֹנֶה "eight"—945 for 845, where again Ezra may be right, the scribe in Nehemiah being misled by the 800 in *v.* 8.

Ezr. ii. 9 is identical with Neh. vii. 14.

Ezr. ii. 10 is identical with Neh. vii. 15, except in reading בְּנֵי Bani, for בִּנְיֵי Binnui, and שְׁנַיִם *two*, for שְׁמֹנֶה *eight*. 642 for 648, mere clerical variations.

Ezr. ii. 11 is identical with Neh. vii. 16, except in reading שְׁלֹשָׁה *three* for שְׁמֹנֶה *eight*, 623 for 628.

Ezr. ii. 12 is identical with Neh. vii. 17, except in reading אֶלֶף *a thousand* for אֲלֵפִים *two thousand*, and מֵאָתַיִם *two hundred* for שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת *three hundred*: 1,222 for 2,322.

Ezr. ii. 13 is identical with Neh. vii. 18, except in reading שֵׁשׁ *six* for שִׁבְעָה *seven*; 666 for 667.

Ezr. ii. 14 is identical with Neh. vii. 19, except in reading חֲמִשִּׁים וְשִׁשָּׁה *fifty-six* for חֲמִשִּׁים וְשִׁבְעָה *sixty-seven*: 2,056 for 2,067, putting the unit 6 for the ten 60, and then the sequence 56 for 67.

Ezr. ii. 15 has 454 instead of 655 in Neh. vii. 20.

Ezr. ii. 16 is identical with Neh. vii. 21.

Ezr. ii. 17 is identical with Neh. vii. 23, except in Bezai

preceding Hashum, and in reading *שְׁלֹשָׁה* *three* for *אַרְבָּעָה* *four*, perhaps from having the first *three* (300) in his mind.

Ezr. ii. 18 corresponds with Neh. vii. 24, except in reading *יֹרָה* *Jorah* for *חֲרִיף* *Hariph*—names thought to be of identical meaning (Simonis, Fürst).

Ezr. ii. 19 differs from Neh. vii. 22 in Hashum succeeding *Jorah* (= *Hariph*), instead of preceding *Bezai*, and in reading *מֵאָתַיִם* *two hundred* for *שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת* *three hundred*; and *שְׁלֹשָׁה* *three* for *שְׁמֹנֶה* *eight*, 223 for 328.

Ezr. ii. 20 is identical with Neh. vii. 25, except in reading *גִּבְבָּר* *Gibbar* for *גִּבְעוֹן* *Gibeon*.

Ezr. ii. 21, 22 is identical with Neh. vii. 26, except that the total in Ezra is 179 instead of 188 as in Nehemiah.

Ezr. ii. 23 is identical with Neh. vii. 29.

Ezr. ii. 24 is identical with Neh. vii. 28, except in having *Azmaveth* instead of *Beth-azmaveth*.

Ezr. ii. 25-27 is identical with Neh. vii. 29-31.

Ezr. ii. 28 is identical with Neh. vii. 32, except in reading *מֵאָתַיִם* for *מֵאָה* : 200 for 100.

Ezr. ii. 29 is identical with Neh. vii. 33, except in omitting "*the other*," which seems to be a mistake in Nehemiah.

Ezr. ii. 30 has nothing to correspond with it in Nehemiah. The name *Magbish* is perhaps the same as *Magpiash*, Neh. x. 20.

Ezr. ii. 31 is identical with Neh. vii. 34, and 32 with 35.

Ezr. ii. 33 is identical with Neh. vii. 37, except in having *חֲמִשָּׁה* *five* for *אֶחָד* *one*. The scribe's eye was probably caught by the concluding *five* of v. 34, which precedes this in Nehemiah.

Ezr. ii. 34 is identical with Neh. vii. 36, except in its order.

Ezr. ii. 35 is identical with Neh. vii. 38, except in reading *שֵׁשׁ* *six* for *תִּשְׁעִי* *nine*, 3,630 for 3,930.

Ezr. ii. 36-39 is identical with Neh. vii. 39-42.

Ezr. ii. 40 is identical with Neh. vii. 43.

Ezr. ii. 41 is identical with Neh. vii. 44, except in reading עֶשְׂרִים *twenty* for אַרְבָּעִים *forty*, 128 for 148.

Ezr. ii. 42 is identical with Neh. vii. 45, except in reading תִּשְׁעָה *nine* for שְׁמֹנֶה *eight*, 139 for 138.

Ezr. ii. 43-45 is identical with Neh. vii. 46-48, except in reading *Akkub* for *Shalmai* (a manifest mistake, as *Akkub* was one of the families of porters [*v.* 42]), and a different spelling of *Siaha*, *v.* 44.

Ezr. ii. 46-54 is identical with Neh. vii. 49-56, except in the insertion in *v.* 46 of two names, *Hagab* and *Salmai*, which belong to the preceding verse, and the insertion in *v.* 50 of אֲסַנָּה *Asnah*.

Ezr. ii. 55-58 is identical with Neh. vii. 57-60, except one or two quite unimportant differences in spelling.

Ezr. ii. 59-63 is in the main identical with Neh. vii. 61-65, only in *v.* 60 we read חֲמִשִּׁים *fifty* for אַרְבָּעִים *forty*, 652 for 642.

Ezr. ii. 64-67 is identical with Neh. vii. 66-69, except that Ezr. ii. 65 has "200" singing men and women; Neh. vii. 67 has "245."

Ezr. ii. 68 has a remarkable addition, compared with Neh. vii. 70, 71, viz. the words "when they came to the House of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the House of God to set it up in its place," or rather, "to establish it in its place." See p. 439. There is nothing corresponding to this in Nehemiah, where we are only told that the gifts were "for the work," and were given to "the treasure," and to "the treasure of the work," without specifying what the work was. But the nature of the gifts (Neh. vii. 70, 72) shows plainly that they were for the House of God, viz. basins and priests' garments, and the verbal identity of the two passages shows that they are speaking of the same thing, and are merely variations in the transcripts of the same documents. I place the two

accounts side by side, and mark the identical words by underlining them.

EZR. II. 68, 69.

And some of the chief of the fathers when they were come to the House of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the House of God to set it up in his place. They gave after their ability unto *the treasure of the work* 61,000 drams, etc.

NEH. VII. 70, 71.

And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure, etc. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work, etc.

Ezr. ii. 70, iii. 1, 2 is identical with Neh. vii. 73, viii. 1a, except in one most extraordinary respect, which will be seen by placing the two passages side by side, the differences being marked by italics.

EZR. II. 70, III. 1, 2.

So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities; and when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in their cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up *Jeshua . . . and Zerubbabel*, etc.

NEH. VII. 73, VIII. 1.

So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers and some of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came the children of Israel were in their cities. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into *the street that was before the water gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe*, etc.

The two passages are absolutely identical, word for word (except one or two variations in the order of the words), till you come to the word JERUSALEM in Ezra, which stands for THE STREET THAT WAS BEFORE THE WATER GATE in Nehemiah: when the passage in Ezra goes on to relate what was there done by Jeshua and Zerubbabel in the reign of Cyrus, B.C. 535, but that in Nehemiah what was done by Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes ninety years afterwards, B.C. 445; an impossible condition of a sound text,

which we shall endeavour to account for by-and-by. But we may safely affirm, as the result of the preceding comparison, that Ezra ii. and Nehemiah vii. are copies of one and the same document.

Our next inquiry is, to which book, Ezra or Nehemiah, does this document belong? and the answer, when we have considered all the circumstances, can only be the unhesitating one, to Nehemiah. Everything goes to prove this. 1. Neh. vii. 5, 6, tells us what was the occasion of Nehemiah's finding and using this document. God, he says, put it into his heart to gather together (to Jerusalem, Ezr. ii. 68) the nobles, rulers, and people, that they might be reckoned by genealogies; and be found, no doubt, among the national archives, a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and he proceeds to transcribe what he found "written therein," viz. from *v.* 6 to *v.* 60 inclusive. By this register the claims of all those who came up at his bidding "to be reckoned by genealogies" were tried. And it is to be presumed that all passed except those which follow in *vv.* 61-64. There were 642 (652 Ezr. ii. 60) persons who could not prove their birth nor their place in Zerubbabel's register, and so of course could not be entered in Nehemiah's roll. There were also a certain number of persons claiming to be priests who could produce no register of their genealogy, and Nehemiah decided concerning them that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a High Priest with Urim and Thummim to give an authoritative decision as to their claims to the Priesthood. All this is manifestly no part of Zerubbabel's register, but a record of what happened in pursuance of Nehemiah's project in *v.* 5.

But what follows in *vv.* 66-69 is still more conclusive. Commentators have been greatly puzzled by the circumstance that whereas the sum total here given—which is the

same as that in Ezr. ii. 64 and 1 Esdr. v. 41—is 42,360, the items in the preceding list amount only to 31,089, or, as in Ezr. ii., to 29,818—and in 1 Esdr. to 30,000 more or less in different MSS. It has never occurred to them (as far as I know) that the total in *v.* 66 ff. is not the total at all of those in Zerubbabel's list, but the total of those whom Nehemiah "gathered together to reckon them by genealogies" (Neh. vii. 5). This is indicated not only by the obvious probability of the case, and the discrepancy of the numbers, but also by the place in the narrative where the enumeration comes in, at an interval of 4 verses after the close of the list, and by the use of the word **הַקְהָל** "the congregation" (*v.* 66), *i.e.* the assembly whom Nehemiah "gathered together" at Jerusalem (*v.* 5) to reckon them by genealogies.¹ The difference between the sum total of 42,360, and the total of the items, 30,000, represents the increase in the population during the years that had elapsed since Zerubbabel's census was taken. The narrative then proceeds to record further the gifts and offerings of the nobles, rulers and people assembled at Jerusalem (Ezr. ii. 68), and so passes on to the events recorded in ch. viii. and following chapters. Again, the phrase in Ezr. ii. 68, that "the chief of the fathers when they came to the House of the Lord² which is at Jerusalem offered freely," etc., clearly implies that the "House of the Lord" was then standing, which we know it was not in the reign of Cyrus; and so shows that the time spoken of in this chapter was the time of Nehemiah, not that of Zerubbabel. The phrase that follows "to set it up in its place" is apt to mislead the English reader, as if it meant to "build it." But the Hebrew

¹ It is of course possible that the whole number was not actually present at Jerusalem, but only by representation—the heads of families, or the like. The "assembly" at Jerusalem represented 42,360.

² **בְּיַת יְהוָה** is different from **בֵּית אֱלֹהִים** Ezr. iii. 2. See Gesen. *Thes.*, under **אֱלֹהִים**.

לְהַעֲמִידוֹ עַל־מְכוּנֹו has no such meaning. It implies the existence of that which is to be "set up" or established. See 1 Kings xv. 4; 2 Chr. ix. 8. Another distinct evidence that the transactions here recorded belong to the time of Nehemiah, and not to that of Zerubbabel, is the postponement of the decision about the priests who could not prove their priestly descent "till a High Priest should stand up with Urim and Thummim." This would have been wholly unnecessary in the days of Zerubbabel, because there were the prophets Haggai and Zechariah at hand to decide the question (1 Sam. ix. 9), but in the days of Nehemiah there was no prophet in Israel. Hence the necessity of waiting for an authoritative decision till the Urim and Thummim should be restored.

But the crowning evidence that the chapter belongs to Nehemiah, not to Ezra, is the mention of the Tirshatha. That "the Tirshatha" means Nehemiah, and no one else, is to my apprehension an absolute certainty. It would be to the highest degree probable if we had only Neh. vii. 65 to compare with vii. 5. For who could have authority to decide so grave a question but he who had authority to gather the congregation together? It becomes still more probable when we find that in the matter of the offerings for the Temple service the Tirshatha stood alone; the chief of the fathers standing second; and the whole of the rest of the people standing third. For who could occupy such a place but the great Patriotic Governor of the Jews sent with such a large commission by the Persian king? But if the probability of the Tirshatha being Nehemiah is already so great, what shall we say when in the very next chapter (Neh. viii. 9) we read, "and Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha," etc.; and again ch. x. 1. "Now those that sealed were Nehemiah the Tirshatha," etc. It becomes an absolute certainty. But if the Tirshatha in Neh. vii. 65, 70, means Nehemiah, how can it mean Zerubbabel, or any

one but Nehemiah, in Ezr. ii. 63, the duplicate passage? And then again if Ezr. ii. treats of Nehemiah, and his sayings and doings, how can it be part of the history of the times of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and of the reign of Cyrus? The conclusion seems to me quite certain that Ezr. ii. as a whole is out of its place, and belongs not to the book of Ezra, but to that of Nehemiah.

How did it get to its present place? It is obvious from what has just been said that it could not have been placed there by Haggai,¹ who had the charge of the sacred text and of the national annals, because he was dead long before Nehemiah was born. In Haggai's time therefore Ezr. i. 11 was followed immediately by Ezr. iii. 2, which was probably the beginning of Haggai's own work; and the narrative of those times went on to the end of chapter vi., after which there is a long break. But later, perhaps in the reign of Artaxerxes, or even later, after the narrative in Nehemiah had been added to the national annals, the next compiler inserted in its present place in Ezra the roll of the returned captives made in the time of Zerubbabel, ending at Ezr. ii. 58, which was quite germane to his purpose, and caused no confusion. But later still, when perhaps some later genealogy was being added to the book, and there was no prophet to direct, some unskilled hand thought to make things straight by completing the extract down to Neh. vii. 72, and altering Neh. viii. 1, so as to fit on to Ezr. iii. 2. This, or some similar alteration of the ancient text, seems to me the only possible way of explaining the present state of the latter part of Ezr. ii., and Ezr. iii. 1.

I would observe further that if, from reverence for the text of Scripture, any one is ready to go counter to all reasonable criticism, and to accept the grossest improb-

¹ See *Dict. of Bible*, article "Ezra, book of."

abilities, rather than admit any error in the Masoretic text ; is willing to accept Ezr. ii. as belonging in whole to the times of Zerubbabel ; to believe that the Tirshatha means Zerubbabel in Ezra, and Nehemiah in Nehemiah—or that it means Zerubbabel in both, although we are expressly told that it means Nehemiah in Nehemiah, and therefore by implication must mean the same in Ezra—he will find he has made a useless sacrifice, because he will then have the same difficulty, an insuperable one, to deal with with regard to the text of Nehemiah. Neh. vii., viii. 1, are absolutely inexplicable if taken to refer to the time of Cyrus.

We must therefore console ourselves with the thought that this violence was done to the text in very late times, when prophecy had ceased, and that it was done with so little skill that the remedy is easily found.

I ought also to add that the statement to be found in several commentaries that “Tirshatha” is a synonym of תִּרְשָׁתָא , or Governor, is a gratuitous one, unsupported by any evidence. The LXX., who always translate תִּרְשָׁתָא *ἑπαρχος*,¹ only transliterate *Tirshatha* by *Ἀθερσασθά*, or *Ἀρτασασθά*, showing that they did not know the meaning of it. The old commentators explain it to mean *cup-bearer*. As it is only found applied to Nehemiah it is more likely that it was the name of some office or dignity peculiar to him than that it was a common synonym of Pekah or Governor, utterly unknown elsewhere.

I sum up by saying that since every difficulty disappears if you take Ezr. ii. as belonging to Nehemiah ; everything falls into its right place ; Nehemiah retains his peculiar designation ; and the most important discrepancy in the numbers disappears ; we cannot help concluding that either by accident or design Ezr. ii. got erroneously into its pre-

¹ Ezr. v. 14, viii. 14, 36, ix. 7 ; Neh. ii. 9, iii. 7 ; Esth. viii. 9, ix. 3.

sent position, and that the first verse of ch. viii. has been corrupted in consequence.

The consideration of Ezr. iv. 6-23 is reserved to the next number.

ARTHUR C. BATH. & WELL.

HEBREWS VI. 4-6.

II.

“For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”

IN a previous paper on the above passage it was our aim to establish three propositions: (1) That the picture contained in it is not an imaginary one, but that it sets before us what had been the actual condition of the Hebrew Christians addressed. If it be not so, it is difficult to see how the argument of the sacred writer is to attain its end. His reasoning might have been at once met with the reply, “We have not yet reached that stage of Christian life and experience which you have just described; and, although therefore those who have reached it and have fallen away from it may be chargeable with the terrible sin of which you speak, may crucify the Son of God afresh, and may put Him to an open shame, no such sin can at least as yet lie at our door. Your warning does not apply to us. (2) Attention was called to the special nature of the sacred writer’s appeal. It is an exhortation to advance, to hasten forward in the Divine life, to be ashamed, not of apostacy, but of a wilful neglect of great principles to which the Hebrew Christians had given their adhesion, but which they were not carrying out to their legitimate result.