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Ezra-Nehemiah Chronology



539 BC Cyrus comes to power in Babylon (Dani'el 5:30-31)

538-515 BC First Return under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:1 to 6:22)

538-537 BC Cyrus' decree to begin construction of Temple (Ezra 1:1-4)

537 BC Return under Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:11)

536 BC Zerubbabel returns with 49,897 (Ezra 2:2)

536 BC Zerubbabel began to build the altar (Ezra 3:1-3)

536 BC Zerubbabel begins building the Temple (Ezra 3:8)

536 BC Samaritan opposition during Cyrus' reign (Ezra 4:1-5a)

521 BC Opposition in the days of Darius (Ezra 4:5b and 24)

520 BC Haggai calls the people to build God's House (Haggai 1:1-2:9)

520 BC Work resumed on the Temple under Darius (Ezra 5:1-2)

518 BC Zechariah calls for obedience and observance (Zechariah 7:1-8:23)

515 BC The Temple is completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:15)

486 BC Opposition in the days of Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6)

A 57 year gap between the First and Second Return

480 BC Ahasuerus was defeated by the Greeks at the Battle of Hellepont

478 BC Esther becomes Queen between Ezra 6 and 7

478-474 BC Esther's deliverance and Mordecai became Prime Minister

465 BC Accession of Artakh'shasta to the throne

458-457 BC The Second Return under Ezra (Ezra 1:1 to 6:22)

458 BC Artakh'shasta issues decree for Ezra to return (Ezra 7:1-6)

458 BC Ezra departs from Babylon (Ezra 7:7)

458 BC Ezra arrives in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:8-9)

458 BC The book of the Torah is read (Nehemiah 8:1-12)

458 BC Feast of Sukkot (Nehemiah 8:13-18)

445 BC The Israelites Confess Their Sins (Nehemiah 9:1-37)

458 BC The people are assembled (Ezra 10:7-15)

458-457 BC Ezra reforms carried out (Ezra 10:16-44)

A 12 year gap between the Second and Third Return

445 BC The twentieth year of Artakh'shasta (Nehemiah 1:1)

445 BC Nehemiah approaches the king - Nehemiah 2:1

445-432 BC The Third Return under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 7 and 12-13)

445 BC Artach'shashta issues decree for Nehemiah's return (Nehemiah 2:1)

445 BC Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11)

445 BC Nehemiah appointed governor of Judah (Nehemiah 5:14)

445 BC The wall is completed (Nehemiah 6:15)

433 BC Nehemiah returned to Persia (Nehemiah 13:6)

445-433 BC Malachi rebuked the Jews (Malachi 1:1-2:17)

432 BC Nehemiah returned to Tziyon and final reforms (Nehemiah 13:7)

400 years of silence until the coming of John the Immerser in Mark 1:4

The dates of the high priests: There are critics who object to this timeline on the basis of the identity of the high priests. **Eliashib** was high priest during the time of **Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13:28)**. Yet **Ezra 10:6** says that **Ezra** spent the night in **the room of Johanan, the son of Eliashib**, whom some assume to have been the high priest at that time.

Johanan may even have been the grandson of **Eliashib** (taking the **Jonathan of Nehemiah 12:11** as identical with **Johanan of Nehemiah 12:22**). According to the Elephantine Papyri, a **Johanan** was high priest in **Jerusalem** in 401 BC. This would place **Ezra** later than the period of **Nehemiah**.

However, this argument, based on the identity of the high priests, rests on two assumptions. First, that **Johanan** was high priest in the time of **Ezra**, and secondly, that **Johanan** was **Eliashib's** grandson. The first is not stated but assumed because **Ezra** stayed in **his** chamber. The second requires a correction of the text in **Nehemiah 12:11** and the assumption that in **Ezra 10:6** and **Nehemiah 12:23** we should read "grandson" instead of "**son**." This is possible, but not very probable in this context. Again, we simply do not have enough information. Even those who use this argument regard it as more probable but less than proven. Nevertheless, using **458** as the starting point, a **Johanan I** would have been high priest during the time of **Ezra** and an **Eliashib II** would have been the high priest during the time of **Nehemiah**. Both names were repeated later in the succeeding generations.¹⁰