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The Revival of Temple Worship
Ezra 3: 1-13

During the ministry of Zerubbabel (**to see link click Ag – The First Return**).
Compiled by the Chronicler from the Ezra memoirs
(see **Ac – Ezra-Nehemiah from a Jewish Perspective: The Ezra Memoirs**).



Chapter 3 tells the story of the beginnings of the religious institutions at **Jerusalem** after the Babylonian captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu – Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). It deals with the construction of **the bronze altar**, the worship services and offerings conducted upon that **altar**, laying the foundation for **the Temple**, the preparation for **its** construction, and the celebration of the people to the sight of **it**.

Prior to the exile, life in the southern kingdom of Judah centered in **the Temple** at **Yerushalayim**. This was a holy place of sacrifice, prayer, and singing. Although we lack detailed knowledge about the various rituals of **Temple** worship, we learn something of the character of this worship through the **Psalms**. The piety reflected in the ancient poetry, nourished in the context of animal sacrifices, offerings, and festive gatherings, has an enduring appeal to all believers. **The God** of **the Psalms** is the gracious **One** who accepts us as we are, who loves us and remains with us when those closest to us leave. The **God** of **the Psalms** is **Immanuel – God with us** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Cb – The LORD Himself Will Give You A Sign**).

This loving, saving **God**, who causes the heart of the psalmist to rejoice, is present in **the Temple**. **His Sh'khinah glory** and **His Name** are there **(First Kings 8:11** and **29)**. We **yearn** for **the Temple** because in this sacred place we meet **YHVH** in the most holy place (see the commentary on **Exodus Fs – The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**). **How lovely are Your tabernacles, ADONAI-Tzva'ot! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of ADONAI. My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. ADONAI, I love the House where You live, the place where Your Sh'khinah glory dwells (Psalm 84:1-3** and **Psalm 26:8).**

The older **Jews** in exile remembered **the Temple** and **Jerusalem** with pain and deep love **(Psalm 137:1-6)**. So intimate was the relationship between **Ha'Shem** and **the Temple** that **they** could not imagine a restoration that did not include a new **Temple**. **Isaiah** was of similar mind. **Isaiah** speaks of the redemption of **the exiles** in terms of a Second Exodus (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ib – Cyrus is My Shepherd and Will Accomplish All that I Please**). However, he did not believe that this deliverance would be complete until **the Temple** was rebuilt and **the vessels of ADONAI** returned to **Tziyon (Isaiah 52:11)**. Moreover, the prophet's language often reflects the priestly speech of **the Temple**, as in **Isaiah 41:14** and **43:1**. It is not too much to believe that **Isaiah**, like many others, **yearned for the courts of ADONAI.**

Therefore, when we read **Chapter 3** of **Ezra**, we should think of the piety of the book of **Psalms** that includes expressions of love for **the Temple** itself. We should also think of **the exiles** who were driven from **their** homeland and separated from worship and the religious traditions that gave meaning to **their** lives. They remembered **the Temple** as **the House of ADONAI**. To be sure, **they** experienced **God** in other places and events, but in this special place were the memories, traditions, symbols, people, and rituals that nourished **their** lives.[50]