

Ezra

Chapter 2

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, ² in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah): The list of the men of the people of Israel: ³ the descendants of Parosh 2,172 ⁴ of Shephatiah 372 ⁵ of Arah 775 ⁶ of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,812 ⁷ of Elam 1,254 ⁸ of Zattu 945 ⁹ of Zaccai 760 ¹⁰ of Bani 642 ¹¹ of Bebai 623 ¹² of Azgad 1,222 ¹³ of Adonikam 666 ¹⁴ of Bigvai 2,056 ¹⁵ of Adin 454 ¹⁶ of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98 ¹⁷ of Bezai 323 ¹⁸ of Jorah 112 ¹⁹ of Hashum 223 ²⁰ of Gibbar 95 ²¹ the men of Bethlehem 123 ²² of Netophah 56 ²³ of Anathoth 128 ²⁴ of Azmaveth 42 ²⁵ of Kiriath Jearim, ^a Kephirah and Beeroth 743 ²⁶ of Ramah and Geba 621 ²⁷ of Micmash 122 ²⁸ of Bethel and Ai 223 ²⁹ of Nebo 52 ³⁰ of Magbish 156 ³¹ of the other Elam 1,254 ³² of Harim 320 ³³ of Lod, Hadid and Ono 725 ³⁴ of Jericho 345 ³⁵ of Senaah 3,630 ³⁶ The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973 ³⁷ of Immer 1,052 ³⁸ of Pashhur 1,247 ³⁹ of Harim 1,017 ⁴⁰ The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (through the line of Hodaviah) 74 ⁴¹ The singers: the descendants of Asaph 128 ⁴² The gatekeepers of the temple: the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 139 ⁴³ The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴ Keros, Siaha, Padon, ⁴⁵ Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, ⁴⁶ Hagab, Shalmi, Hanan, ⁴⁷ Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, ⁴⁸ Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, ⁴⁹ Uzza, Paseah, Besai, ⁵⁰ Asnah, Meunim, Nephussim, ⁵¹ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵² Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵³ Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁴ Neziah and Hatipha ⁵⁵ The descendants of the servants of Solomon: the descendants of Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, ⁵⁶ Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁷ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Ami ⁵⁸ The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392 ⁵⁹ The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel: ⁶⁰ The descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 652 ⁶¹ And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). ⁶² These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. ⁶³ The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with

the Urim and Thummim. ⁶⁴ The whole company numbered 42,360, ⁶⁵ besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 200 men and women singers. ⁶⁶ They had 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁷ 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys. ⁶⁸ When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. ⁶⁹ According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 drachmas ^b of gold, 5,000 minas ^c of silver and 100 priestly garments. ⁷⁰ The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

2:1–70 The list of returning exiles in ch. 2 almost exactly parallels the list in Ne 7:6–73 (see also 1 Esdras 5:4–46 in the Apocrypha). The list of localities indicates that people retained the memories of their homes and that exiles from a wide background of tribes, villages and towns returned. In comparing the list here with that in Ne 7, one notes many differences in the names and numbers listed. About 20 percent of the numbers, e.g., are not the same in Ezra and Nehemiah. Many of these differences may be explained, however, by assuming that a cipher notation was used with vertical strokes for units and horizontal strokes for tens, which led to copying errors. (CSB)

2:1 *province*. Probably Judah (cf. 5:8, where the Aramaic word for “province” is translated “district”; see also Ne 1:3).(CSB)

Judah (1:2). Other known Persian provinces west of the Euphrates include Samaria, Moab, and Ammon. (TLSB)

own town. Not only Jerusalem but other towns in the area were also resettled (cf vv 21–35). (TLSB)

2:2–67 This list is a testimony to God’s goodness in preserving the identity of His chosen people during their captivity in a foreign country. An important document, it represented a kind of charter of the newly founded province of Judah. New names and numbers may have been added from time to time to keep the record current. Nine groups are distinguished: the leaders (v 2a; Ne 7:7 adds a 12th name); “men of the people of Israel,” some listed by family names, others by towns (vv 2b–35); priests (vv 36–39); all Levites (vv 40–42); Levitical singers (v 41); Levitical gatekeepers (v 42); temple servants (vv 43–54); sons of Solomon’s servants (vv 55–58); and some people without certified family ties (vv 59–63). (TLSB)

2:2 *Zerubbabel*. See notes on 3:2; 5:2. (CSB)

Later governor of Judah and active in rebuilding the temple (3:8; Hg 1:1). (TLSB)

With Zerubbabel and Jeshua as their leaders they remained under the leadership of David's royal line and the high priests descended from Aaron. (PBC)

Jeshua. Means "The LORD saves" and is an Aramaic variant of Hebrew "Joshua." The Greek form is "Jesus" (see NIV text note on Mt 1:21). Jeshua is the same as the Joshua of Hag 1:1, the son of the high priest Jehozadak (Jozadak, Ezr 3:2), who was taken into exile (1Ch 6:15). (CSB)

Nehemiah. Not the Nehemiah of the book by that name. (CSB)

Bore the same name as the governor who arrived in Jerusalem some 90 years later (Ne 1:1). (TLSB)

Mordecai. A Babylonian name based on that of Marduk the god of Babylon (cf. Jer 50:2). Esther's cousin had the same name (Est 2:7). (CSB)

THE LIST – This list is a testimony to God's goodness in preserving the identity of his chosen people in spite of a seventy-year captivity in a far-off land. (PBC)

2:3 *Parosh*. Means "flea" (Israelites were often named after insects and animals). Members of this family, as well as of several other families named in vv. 6–14, also returned with Ezra (8:3–14). (CSB)

2:5 *Arah*. Probably means "wild ox." Since the name is rare in the OT and has been found in documents from Mesopotamia, it may have been adopted during the exile. (CSB)

2:6 *Pahath-Moab*. Means "governor of Moab" and may have once designated an official title. (CSB)

2:12 *Azgad*. Cf. 8:12; means "Gad is strong." It is a reference either to Gad (the god of fortune, referred to in Isa 65:11) or to the Transjordanian tribe of Gad. (CSB)

2:16 *Ater*. Means "left-handed," as in Jdg 3:15; 20:16. (CSB)

2:21–35 Whereas the names in vv. 3–20 are of families, vv. 21–35 present a series of villages and towns, many of which were in Benjamite territory north of Jerusalem. It is significant that there are no references to towns in the Negev, south of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar overran Judah in 597 B.C. (Jer 13:19), the Edomites (see the book of Obadiah) took advantage of the situation and occupied that area. (CSB)

2:21–35 Towns clustered about Jerusalem within a radius of c 30 mi. If the list is complete, the Persian province was considerably smaller than the territory of preexilic

Judah. See map, p 615. The community was hemmed in on all sides by various racial groups (3:3; 4:1, 4; Ne 4:7). (TLSB)

2:21 *men of Bethlehem*. The ancestors of Jesus may have been among the returnees. (CSB)

C 5 mi S of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

2:23 *Anathoth*. See note on Jer 1:1. (CSB)

2:28 *Bethel*. See note on Ge 12:8. Towns such as Bethel, Mizpah, Gibeon and Gibeah seem to have escaped the Babylonian assault. Bethel, however, was destroyed in the transition between the Babylonian and Persian periods. Archaeological excavations reveal that there was a small town on the site in Ezra's day. (CSB)

2:31 See v. 7. (CSB)

2:33 *Lod*. Modern Lydda. (CSB)

2:35 *Senaah*. The largest number of returnees—3,630 (3,930 in Ne 7:38)—is associated with Senaah. It has therefore been suggested that they did not come from a specific locality or family, but represented low-caste people, as inferred from the meaning of the name. (CSB)

2:36–39 Four clans of priests numbering 4,289, about a tenth of the total. (CSB)

2:40 *Levites*. See Introduction to Leviticus: Title. 74. The number of Levites who returned was relatively small (cf. 8:15). Since the Levites had been entrusted with the menial tasks of temple service, many of them may have found a more comfortable way of life in exile. (CSB)

Total number of Levites was 341, while that of the priests was 4,289. Normally, these two groups of temple officiants would be in reverse proportion (cf 2Ch 29:34). The prospect of serving as assistants to the priests may have kept the Levites from leaving Babylonia. Later, Ezra found “none of the sons of Levi” in the group that volunteered to return to Jerusalem with him (8:15). (TLSB)

2:41 *Asaph*. One of the three Levites appointed by David over the temple singers (1Ch 25:1; 2Ch 5:12; 35:15), whose duties are detailed in 1Ch 15:16–24. (CSB)

2:42 *gatekeepers*. Usually Levites (1Ch 9:26; 2Ch 23:4; 35:15; Ne 12:25; 13:22). They are mentioned 16 times in Ezra-Nehemiah and 19 times in Chronicles. (CSB)

Their primary function was to tend the doors and gates of the temple (1Ch 9:17–27) and to perform other menial tasks (1Ch 9:28–32; 2Ch 31:14). (CSB)

2:43–57 The temple servants and the descendants of Solomon’s servants together numbered 392 (v. 58), which was more than the total of the Levites, singers and gatekeepers together (vv. 40–42). (CSB)

2:46 *Hanan*. Means “(God) is gracious.” The verb “to be gracious” and its derivatives are the components of numerous personal names in the OT—e.g., Johanan (“The LORD is gracious”; see 8:12), which has given us the English name John. (CSB)

2:51 *Bakbuk*. Means “jar.” It may have originally been a nickname for a fat man with a protruding belly. Cf. Jer 19:1, 10, where the same Hebrew word is translated “jar”; see NIV text note on Jer 19:7. (CSB)

2:53 *Barkos*. Means “son of Kos” (or Qos, an Edomite god). (CSB)

2:55, 58 *descendants of the servants of Solomon*. The phrase occurs only here and in Ne 7:57, 60; 11:3. These may be the descendants of the Canaanites whom Solomon enslaved (1Ki 9:20–21). (CSB)

They had been forced to perform the menial tasks needed for the temple service (Joshua 9:23; 2 Chronicles 2:17, 18). If so, their preservation as part of God’s people and their willingness to return are a special demonstration of God’s grace. (PBC)

2:55 *Hassophereth*. Probably means “the scribal office/function” and may have once been an official title. (CSB)

2:58 *temple servants*. Descendants of the Gibeonites and other groups. (TLSB)

Solomon’s servants. Descendants of Canaanite tribes, who became Solomon’s house slaves. Cf 1Ki 9:20–21. (TLSB)

2:59–63 Individuals who lacked evidence of their ancestry. (CSB)

2:59 *towns*. Places in Mesopotamia where the Jews were settled by their Babylonian captors. (CSB)

Tel Melah. Means “mound of salt,” possibly a mound on which salt had been scattered (see Jdg 9:45 and note). The Hebrew word *tel* designates a hill-like mound (see note on Jos 11:13) formed by the remains of a ruined city. The Jewish exiles had been settled along the Kebar River (Eze 1:1), perhaps near Nippur, a city in southern Mesopotamia that was the stronghold of rebels. The

Jews had probably been settled on the mounds of ruined cities that had been depopulated by the Babylonians. (CSB)

Probably places in Babylonia. (TLSB)

prove their fathers' houses. From genealogy records (v 62), demonstrating the importance of lists such as those found in 1Ch 1–9. (TLSB)

2:61 *Barzillai.* Means “man of iron.” For another Barzillai see 2Sa 17:27–29; 19:31–39; 1Ki 2:7. (CSB)

2:62 SO THEY WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE PRIESTHOOD – If people of doubtful ancestry had been allowed to serve, the validity of the sacrifices offered by these priests would have been in doubt. The people’s confidence in their worship and in the forgiveness of their sins could have been undermined. (PBC)

Only those with proven ancestral credentials could serve as priests. (TLSB)

2:63 *governor.* Probably either Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel (see note on 1:8).

Hbr *tirshatha*; probably a Persian word designating the men appointed by Persian kings to administer affairs in the restored community of Judah (Ne 7:65, 70; 10:1). The governor is not named. (TLSB)

Urim and Thummim. See note on Ex 28:30. (CSB)

2:64 42,360. Considerably more than the sum of the other figures given. (CSB)

The total given is far larger than the sum of the individual contingents recorded in the previous verses (29,818). Ne 7:66 gives the same total, but the individual entries there add up to only 31,089. The names of some families or groups were evidently omitted from these lists (TLSB)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Ezra</i>	<i>Nehemiah</i>	<i>1 Esdras</i>
Men of Israel	24,144	25,406	25,947
Priests	4,289	4,289	5,288
Levites, singers, gatekeepers	341	360	341
Temple servants, descendants of Solomon's servants	392	392	372
Men of unproven origin	652	642	652

Totals	29,818	31,089	32,600
--------	--------	--------	--------

It is difficult to account for the difference of about 10,000–12,000. The figure may refer to an unspecified 10,000–12,000 women and/or children, and it doubtless includes the priests of unproven origin referred to in vv. 61–63. Some suggest that the groups explicitly counted were returnees from Judah and Benjamin, while the remainder were from other tribes. (CSB)

2:65 *menservants and maidservants*. The ratio of servants to others (one to six) is relatively high. The fact that so many returned with their masters speaks highly of the benevolent treatment of servants by the Jews. (CSB)

singers. The men and women singers listed here may be secular singers who sang at social events such as weddings and funerals (2Ch 35:25), as distinct from the temple singers of v. 41, who were all male. (CSB)

Likely singers for secular entertainment, not “the sons of Asaph” (v 41). Females did not participate in temple worship, though they sang praises to God after the exodus (Ex 15:20–21) and had some role of service at the entrance to the tabernacle (Ex 38:8). (TLSB)

2:66 *horses*. Perhaps a donation from Cyrus for the nobility. (CSB)

mules. Often used by royalty and the wealthy (1Ki 1:33; Isa 66:20). (CSB)

The comparatively small number of animals suggests that the Israelites were no longer a predominantly agricultural people during the captivity. It may also indicate the relatively low economic status of those who were willing to return. (PBC)

2:67 *donkeys*. Were used to carry loads, women or children. Sheep, goats and cattle are not mentioned. They would have slowed the caravan. (CSB)

2:68 *heads*. Cf 1:5. (TLSB)

arrive ... Jerusalem. For the route of the return from exile see inset to map No. 7 at the end of the Study Bible. (CSB)

GAVE FREEWILL OFFERINGS – In grateful response they gave freewill offerings according to their ability. Rather than feeling that they were doing God a favor by leaving their Babylonian homes, the people recognized what a privilege it was to participate in the building of God’s temple. Grateful hearts produced generous offerings. Our offerings as NT believers are to be based on the same principle (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:8-15). The words of St Paul apply to believers of all times: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to

give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7) (PBC)

Voluntary; not prescribed by law (Lv 22:17–25; Nu 15:1–10; Dt 12:17). (TLSB)

2:69 The parallel passage (Ne 7:70–72) gives a fuller description than the account in Ezra. In Ezra the gifts come from the heads of the families (v. 68), while in Nehemiah the gifts are credited to three sources: the governor, the heads of the families, and the rest of the people. (CSB)

darics ... minas. Earliest biblical reference to minted coins (which were valued by weight). The Persians allowed the Judeans to mint their own coins which had Aramaic markings for the province “Judah.” *priests’ garments*. Cf Ex 29:21; Ezr 3:10. (TLSB)

drachmas. The drachma was a Greek silver coin. Some believe that the coin intended here was the Persian (CSB)

daric, a gold coin. (CSB)

minas. In the sexagesimal system (based on the number 60) that originated in Mesopotamia, there were 60 shekels in a mina and 60 minas in a talent. A shekel, which was about two-fifths of an ounce of silver, was the average wage for a month’s work. Thus a mina would be the equivalent of five years’ wages, and a talent would be 300 years’ wages. (CSB)

2:70 Later, Nehemiah (11:1–2) would be compelled to move people by lot to reinforce the population of Jerusalem. (CSB)

their towns. The clergy and some of the people no doubt settled in Jerusalem and nearby towns, while the rest went to other towns named in vv 20–35. (TLSB)

Ch 2 Although 42,360 people respond to Cyrus’s invitation to return to Judah, relatively few Levites—key temple workers—appear on the list. As then, the Lord gives each of us a role of service in our congregation. The services of God’s house require our faithful support in word and deed. When you are discouraged or overwhelmed by the needs of your congregation, entrust your cares to the Lord of heaven, who oversees all things for your benefit. He will bless you through the service of Word and Sacrament offered in His name. • Dearest Father, grant me joy and contentment in my calling. Help me to see the greater purpose and need of my congregation. Amen. (TLSB)