

Introduction to the Apocrypha – First Book of Esdras Session Five



*Judith and Holofernes' by Michelangelo - Wikimedia Commons
(Example of a Book from the Apocrypha depicted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel)*

The Expulsion of Foreign Wives/ The Reading of the Law

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A Short Modern History of Inclusion of the Apocrypha in Bibles

The first Bible in modern vernacular language to segregate the apocryphal books from the others was the Dutch Bible published by Jacob van Liesveldt in 1526 in Antwerp. After Malachi there follows a section embodying the Apocrypha titled "The books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew.

The first edition of the Swiss-German Bible was published in six volumes (Zurich, 1527 – 29), the fifth of which contains the Apocrypha. The title page of this volume states, "These are the books which are to reckoned as biblical by the ancients, nor are found among the Hebrews." A one-volume edition of the Zurich Bible, which appeared in 1530, contains the apocryphal books grouped together after the New Testament. One Swiss reformer, Oecolampadius, declared in 1530: "We do not

despise Judith, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the last two books of Esdras, the three books of Maccabees, the Additions to Daniel, but we do not allow them divine authority with the others.

In reaction to Protestant criticism of the disputed books, in 1546 the Council of Trent gave what is regarded by Roman Catholics as the definitive declaration of the canon of the scriptures. After enumerating the books, which in the Old Testament include Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, the decree pronounces an anathema upon anyone who “does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition.” The reference to “books in their entirety and with all their parts” is intended to cover the Letter of Jeremiah as ch 6 of Baruch, the Additions to Esther, and the chapters in Daniel including the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. It is noteworthy, however that the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras, although included in some manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, were denied canonical status by the Council of Trent. In the official edition of the Vulgate, published in 1592, these three are printed as an appendix after the New Testament, “lest they should perish altogether.”

In England, even though Protestants were unanimous in declaring that the apocryphal books were not to be used as any doctrine, differences arose as to the proper use and place of noncanonical books. A milder view prevailed in the Church of England, and the lectionary attached to the Book of Common Prayer, from 1549 on, has always contained prescribed lessons from the Apocrypha. In addition, portions of the Song of the Three Jews are used as a canticle, or song of praise, alongside selected Psalms in the service of Morning Prayer. In reply to those who urged the discontinuance of reading lessons from apocryphal books, as being inconsistent with the sufficiency of scripture, the bishops at the Savoy Conference, held in 1661, replied that all sermons should give as useful instruction as did the chapters selected from the Apocrypha.

During subsequent centuries Bibles that lacked the books of the Apocrypha came to outnumber those that included them, and soon it became difficult to obtain ordinary editions of the King James Version containing the Apocrypha.

Ezra on Exclusivism

After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ² For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way.” ³ When I heard this, I tore my garment and my mantle, and pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat appalled. ⁴ Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

(Ezra 9:1 – 4) NRSV

Redaction, Intermarriage and Undermining the Law

*[Editor's note: In his book, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, Mark Brett has proposed that the book of Genesis was designed by the redactor to covertly undermine the ethnocentrism of the imperial governors of the Persian period. That is, if as is assumed by scholars, the redaction was done during the Persian period – late sixth and fifth century b.c.e., that the redactor or redactors were directly engaged with and opposed to the official government position of ethnocentricity – the belief that the Hebrew culture was superior to other cultures of the day and that Hebrews should not interact and were forbidden to intermarry with other peoples. Brett's thesis is that the final redaction of the book of Genesis can be read as resistance literature.*

*This appears to contradict Richard Elliott Friedman's thesis that **Ezra** was the redactor of the Torah (which included Genesis). If Ezra was a proponent of the idea that the Law of Moses prohibited marriage to foreign wives, it would seem to be a contradiction for him to be intentionally undermining those laws through his redaction of the Torah. (Or were the anti-intermarriage laws not his idea, but those of the Persian King Artaxerxes?)*

***Moses**, of course had a foreign wife, Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest. Brett repeatedly points out examples of alien or foreign wives in the book of Genesis who seemed to play major positive roles in the development of the story of the children of Israel.]*

I.

*In the first few verses of Genesis 24, Abraham will not countenance the thought of a Canaanite wife for his son, so he sends a servant back to the place of his birth to find a wife for Isaac among his own people. In the final verses of Chapter 26, we are told that Esau has taken a Hittite wife and they became a **provocation** to Isaac and to Rebekah, his parents. In between (Chapter 25) the children of Abraham's concubine, Keturah, are sent away from Canaan to the Land of the East. "And Abraham gave everything he had to Isaac," the son of Sarah, his half-sister-wife. The Isaac-Ishmael narratives which play off each other in Chapters 21 and 22 seem to be designed to reinforce this exclusivism. Mark Brett has some thoughts on the intent of the redactors or editors with respect to this exclusivism:*

In both chapters, 21 and 22, Abraham is called on to sacrifice a son. In 21, the sacrifice comes at Sarah's initiative, not God's; and Abraham sees Sarah's agency as evil (21:11). Elohim's (*God's*) part in the drama is restricted to comforting Abraham, assuring him that Ishmael is his seed and that the slavewoman's son will become a great nation. In 22 the sacrifice is Elohim's (*God's*) initiative. In both stories, Abraham's silence is excruciating. There is no argument with God, as in the case of Sodom, and the narrator does not even portray Abraham's repulsion as in his response to Sarah's directive to drive out the slavewoman's son.

At the highpoint of the horror (the sacrifice of Isaac), a divine messenger calls out from the heavens, just as when Hagar was at breaking point in 21:16 – 17. What is at issue, apparently, is solely the extraordinary obedience of Abraham:

*Because you have done this thing and have not held back your son,
your only one, I will greatly bless you and greatly multiply your seed ...*
– 22:16

This divine speech, however, leaves some significant questions hanging: why is it, for example, that the editors have retained the reference to Abraham's '**only**' son – reiterating 22:1 – when the intertextual connections with the Ishmael narratives are so clear? Not only do we find the common themes linking chapter 22 to the expulsion of Hagar in 21, but when Abraham names the place of Isaac's deliverance *Yahweh Yireh* (Yahweh sees'), in 22:14, this naming scene parallels Hagar's naming of God in 16:13 – 14 (*El who sees me*). Moreover, in both chapters the naming scenes are associated with the divine deliverance of Abraham's sons, as well as with divine promises. The divine speech seems to be written within the terms of reference defined by an exclusivist ideology, one which would regard Isaac as the only relevant son since he is the one circumscribed by the covenant in 17:18 – 22. Given the numerous allusions to Ishmael in chapter 22, this ideology cannot be identified with the final editors' point of view. It seems much more likely that the joining of Genesis 21 and 22 is designed to subvert such exclusivism.

It is intriguing to notice that Genesis 24 takes up the question of a proper marriage partner for Isaac. Following as it does Abraham's extraordinary obedience of 22, and his scrupulous dealings with the Hittites in 23, we might expect chapter 24 to represent Abraham in similarly positive terms. At the beginning of the chapter, Abraham recounts Yahweh's promises, emphasizing that Isaac should not return to the family's homeland in Mesopotamia (24:6 – 8). The servant repeats Abraham's story to the kin claiming Yahweh's providence in the meeting of Rebekah at the well and language about the will of God is reiterated over and over in the discussions of the servant and Laban.

However, in spite of all the God-talk in the mouths of the characters, it is strikingly evident that Yahweh does not speak at all in chapter 24. There is no direct speech from the deity, and the narrator never claims that any of the characters have accurately represented the divine point of view. In short, the wooing of Rebekah is not given a direct divine blessing, and the question therefore arises whether the editors actually endorse the celebration of endogamy (marrying only within a clan) that appears on the surface of the text.

When Abraham first says to his servant in verse 4, 'Go to my land and to my kin', the form of words ironically inverts the divine command delivered in 12:1: 'Leave your land and kin'. Isaac should never go to Mesopotamia, the servant is told, but a wife should ideally come from there. This idea is never asserted in a divine speech, nor

suggested by the narrator. The continuing fidelity to the old kinship network would actually contravene the divine command in 12:1. The narrator has left several clues that piety is a mask for other, more self-interested, motives. The pursuit of endogamy is not what it seems to be.

II.

In Chapter 26, the wife-sister episode illustrates Isaac's indifference to the sexual purity of his wife when he perceives his own safety to be at stake. In other words, Genesis 26 reveals in advance that Isaac's commitment to endogamy is superficial, and the ideal of marriage purity is thereby deconstructed by one of its key advocates – the patriarch himself.

Rebekah's speech in 27:46 certainly reads as if her only motive is the quest for endogamy: *I am disgusted with my life because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from Hittite women like these, women of the land, what will life mean to me?*

But the interpretation of this verse needs to take account of the complexities of the whole situation, and the question of 'point of view'. Once again, the language expresses only xenophobia, not a divine vocation to marry within the kinship group, and this speech does not come from the narrator; it comes from the mouth of a trickster. Rebekah is the one who initiates the scheme to trick Esau out of his father's blessing, and she participates fully in the deception.

Moreover, when she hears of Esau's murderous resolve, she conceives of the plan for Jacob to flee to her brother Laban (verses 42 – 45). Her speech to Isaac in 27:46 is an extraordinarily successful case of indirect communication. She plays on Isaac's dislike of Esau's Hittite wives, without any explicit condemnation of Esau. Genesis 27:38 says that Isaac wept aloud when he discovered the wrong done to his oldest son; this particular 'blessing' was a ritualized testament for the firstborn, and it could not be revoked. Remembering that Esau was also Isaac's favorite son, Rebekah's defence of Jacob has to be tactful in the extreme. She does not even mention her brother. She simply expresses her disgust at the possibility of an exogamous marriage and allows Isaac to fill in the gaps. She creates the illusion that the patriarch has all the agency, in the same way that she created the illusion that Isaac was blessing the son of his own choice. Rebekah's quest for endogamous marriage can then be read as a ruse designed to obtain paternal permission for Jacob's flight. The ruse is uncannily successful: Isaac instructs Jacob to take a wife from among the daughters of Laban (28:1 – 2). The very least we could say of Rebekah is that she is a woman of mixed motives.

The reticence of the narrator to comment on all this trickery is one of the factors that make it difficult to determine the editors' view on these events. If we consider the evidence of Genesis 29, however, then we certainly find a case of poetic justice. Under cover of darkness, Jacob is tricked into marrying Leah. In defence of his ruse,

Laban drives home the irony: 'It is not done, in our place, to give the younger in marriage before the *firstborn*.'

It seems probable that the complexities of trickery and counter-trickery in Genesis 27 and 29 have an additional layer of irony, which is implied in the editors' intentional hybridity even if not made explicit. If, as some commentators have suggested, 'proper' marriages in Genesis are contracted with the house of Bethuel, then Rebekah, Rachel and Leah derive from the appropriate lineage; the marriages of Isaac and Jacob are endogamous. But since, against this view, the divine command in 12:1 urges Abraham to leave his kinship group, we might infer that all these endogamous marriages will turn out to be, in some sense problematic from the divine point of view. Not only does Genesis 12:1 imply that Isaac's marriage to Rebekah is not divinely sanctioned, but any reader familiar with Leviticus would know that Jacob's marriage to Rachel is contrary to the laws of Israel: 'Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and uncover her nakedness while your wife is living' (Lev.18:18).

Accordingly, the ironies of chapters 27 and 29 might be read as a kind of implied divine judgement insofar as the trickster, Jacob, suffers counter-trickery at the hands of his kin back in Mesopotamia.

III.

In Judah's speech urging the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites (Chapter 37) he adds a moral justification for this profitmaking which only serves only to heighten the impression of hypocrisy: "For he is our brother, our own flesh." The negative depiction of Judah's character actually continues into chapter 38, which depicts his dealings with Tamar. The fact that Judah ends up pronouncing Tamar 'more righteous than I' is highly significant given that Tamar's ethnic identity is never specified. Since she is introduced into the narrative without a tribal identity, we can safely assume that she is a foreigner. In the context of the ethnic tensions in the Persian period, this story has a peculiar relevance. It provides also a kind of interpretive key for the entire Joseph story, as will be seen.

At the outset of chapter 38, we discover that Judah has married a Canaanite woman and has three sons by her – Er, Onan, and Shelah. Onan, like Er, is put to death by Yahweh, but this time the nature of the evil is specified, *coitus interruptus*: 'he would waste his seed on the ground'. As a childless widow, Tamar had a right to her brother-in-law's semen, and the omniscient narrator reveals that her right is fiercely defended by Yahweh. The narrator has drawn attention to the thematic focus of the chapter as a whole: the issue of 'seed'.

Tamar's initiatives can be read as preserving the seed of the family, as opposed to Onan who wastes it for purely selfish reasons. Judah's reluctance to give Shelah to Tamar also raises questions about Judah's judgement: he assumes that the deaths of

his first two sons can be blamed on Tamar, whereas the narrator makes perfectly clear that the responsibility lies entirely with the sons. Not only is Tamar innocent, she is more in tune with the divine promises than any of the males in the story. In spite of the obstacles put in her way by Onan and Judah, Tamar has an overriding concern for the continuity of the family, and in this sense, she plays a significant role in the fulfillment of the divine promises regarding Abraham's seed. The audience of this story in the Persian period may well have detected this irony, since Genesis 38 conflicts so obviously with the doctrine of seminal purity promulgated by the governors of the time.

Given the thematic focus in the Tamar story, a number of analogies with the Joseph story suggest themselves. Both Tamar and Joseph preserve Abraham's seed against a number of obstacles. Both bring about a family reconciliation through elaborate ruses. In both stories, tension is added to the plot by failures to pay for services rendered, respectively by Tamar and by Joseph. In both cases, protagonists in the narrative unwittingly seek satisfaction of their needs from people they have wronged. Finally, the stories contain a 'reversal of Primogeniture' motif, involving both Tamar's sons (Zerah and Perez) and Joseph's sons (Manasseh and Ephraim). Both these younger sons acquire a significant status within the Israelite tradition, even though both are born to foreign women, i.e. Perez to Tamar and Ephraim to Asenath (Joseph's Egyptian wife).

IV.

Genesis 46 provides a list of Jacob's sons and grandsons (vs. 8 – 25). Unlike in the previous lists of the sons' names, there seems to be no single rationale behind the order. In 29:32 – 30:21, the list of Jacob's sons is structured according to the order of birth. Genesis 35:23 – 26, on the other hand, lists the sons of the high-status wives (Leah and Rachel) before the children of the concubines. In chapter 46, the two principles of genealogical status are confused, since although the sons and grandsons are grouped according to their mother, the sequence of their mothers' names conforms to neither model of social status:

1. Leah (vs. 8 – 15)
2. Zilpah (vs. 16 – 18)
3. Rachel (vs. 19 – 22)
4. Bilhah (vs. 23 – 25)

In comparison with the other lists, this sequence preserves the priority only of Leah and her children. For a cultural world in which genealogical standing was all-important, this must have provoked a puzzle among the audience of the received text. Either the editors have suddenly become indifferent to status or they are implicitly raising questions precisely about the nature of genealogical superiority. The core of the puzzle lies not with the sons' names at all, but with the *women* who are named in the text.

Apart from the confusing order of Jacob's wives, it seems that there are four more women at issue in Genesis 46, although only two of them are mentioned specifically: Simeon's Canaanite wife (v. 10) and Joseph's Egyptian wife (v. 1; cf. 41:50 – 52). The other two women figure by implication in v. 12:

The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.

The reader of Genesis 38 knows that all of these men were intimately related to Tamar, without her name being mentioned at all. She was the wife of Er and Onan, and the mother of Perez and Zerah. We can infer that Judah finally gave Shelah to Tamar as a husband. The other piece of information that can be derived from Genesis 38 is that Judah's wife, and therefore Shelah's mother was a Canaanite (38:2). Thus, we have a consistent picture for all four women: the wives of Simeon, Judah, Shelah and Joseph were all foreigners. This apparently, is the key to the genealogical puzzles in Genesis 46. Having raised the question of status by mixing up the order of Jacob's wives, we discover in addition the wives of these four characters were foreign. No other wives are either named or even alluded to.

The final editing of Genesis is the product of an "intentional hybridity." The text reveals a complex inter-subjectivity incorporating diverse cultural elements both from within Israelite tradition and from outside it. Against the ideology of the 'holy seed' in Ezra 9:1 – 2, marriage within the covenant community is not seen as a holy ideal that ensures divine favour; on the contrary, divine blessing flows extravagantly over the covenant's borders. The endogamous marriages of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob are all called in question by the details of the Genesis narratives, and the conventional privilege attaching to the firstborn son is relentlessly undermined. The stories concerned with Hagar, Dinah and Tamar are indicative of the editors' theology, in that they subtly subvert any version of genealogical exclusivism or moral superiority. This perspective on Israel's beginnings is conveyed artfully but indirectly, in view of the fact that the editors were contesting the ideology of the Persian-sponsored governors. As postcolonial theory has suggested, resistance is often an exercise of the art of indirectness.

– Mark G. Brett (adapted from *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*,
Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England (simultaneously
published in the USA and Canada), 2000
)

The First Book of Esdras (Chapter 8:65 – 9:55)

Chapter Eight (beginning with verse 65)

⁶⁵ After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said,⁶⁶ “The nation of Israel and the rulers and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the foreign nations of the land and their pollutions, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Edomites. ⁶⁷ For they and their sons have married the daughters of these people, and the holy seed has been mixed with the foreign nations of the land, and from the beginning of this matter the leaders and the nobles have been sharing in this iniquity.”

⁶⁸ As soon as I heard these things, I tore my garments and my holy vestments and pulled out hair from my head and beard and sat down in anxiety and grief. ⁶⁹ And all who were ever moved at the word of the Lord of Israel gathered around me, as I mourned over this iniquity, and I sat grief-stricken until the evening sacrifice. ⁷⁰ Then I rose from my fast, with my garments and my holy vestments torn, and kneeling down and stretching out my hands to the Lord I said,

⁷¹ “O Lord, I am ashamed and dishonored before your face. ⁷² For our sins have risen higher than our heads, and our mistakes have mounted up to heaven ⁷³ from the times of our ancestors, and we are in great sin to this day. ⁷⁴ Because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors, we with our kindred and our kings and our priests were given over to the kings of the earth, to the sword and exile and plundering, in shame until this day. ⁷⁵ And now in some measure mercy has come to us from you, O Lord, to leave to us a root and a name in your holy place ⁷⁶ and to uncover a light for us in the house of the Lord our God and to give us food in the time of our servitude. Even in our bondage we were not forsaken by our Lord, ⁷⁷ but he brought us into favor with the kings of the Persians, so that they have given us food ⁷⁸ and glorified the temple of our Lord and raised Zion from desolation, to give us a stronghold in Judea and Jerusalem.

⁷⁹ “And now, O Lord, what shall we say when we have these things? For we have transgressed your commandments that you gave by your servants the prophets, saying, ⁸⁰ ‘The land that you are entering to possess is a land polluted with the pollution of the foreigners of the land, and they have filled it with their uncleanness. ⁸¹ Therefore do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons, and do not take their daughters for your sons; ⁸² do not seek ever to have peace with them, so that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.’ ⁸³ And all that has happened to us has come about because of our evil deeds and our great sins. For you, O Lord, lifted the burden of our sins ⁸⁴ and gave us such a root as this, but we turned back again to transgress your law by mixing with the uncleanness of the nations of the land. ⁸⁵ Were you not angry enough with us to destroy us without leaving a root or seed or name? ⁸⁶ O Lord of Israel, you are faithful, for we are left as a root to this day. ⁸⁷ See, we are now

before you in our iniquities, for we can no longer stand in your presence because of these things.”

⁸⁸ While Ezra was praying and making his confession, weeping and lying on the ground before the temple, there gathered around him a very great crowd of men and women and youths from Jerusalem, for there was great weeping among the multitude. ⁸⁹ Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the men of Israel, called out and said to Ezra, “We have sinned against the Lord and have married foreign women from the nations of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel. ⁹⁰ Let us take an oath to the Lord about this, that we will put away all our foreign wives with their children, as seems good to you and to all who obey the law of the Lord. ⁹¹ Rise up and take action, for it is your task, and we are with you to take strong measures.” ⁹² Then Ezra rose up and made the leaders of the priests and Levites of all Israel swear that they would do this. And they swore to it.

Chapter Nine

¹ Then Ezra set out and went from the court of the temple to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib ² and spent the night there, and he did not eat bread or drink water, for he was mourning over the great iniquities of the multitude. ³ And a proclamation was made throughout Judea and Jerusalem to all who had returned from exile that they should assemble at Jerusalem ⁴ and that if any did not meet there within two or three days, in accordance with the decision of the ruling elders, their livestock would be seized for sacrifice and the men themselves expelled from the multitude of those who had returned from the captivity.

⁵ Then the men of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within three days; this was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. ⁶ All the multitude sat in the open square before the temple, shivering because of the bad weather that prevailed. ⁷ Then Ezra stood up and said to them, “You have broken the law and married foreign women and so have increased the sin of Israel. ⁸ Now, then, make confession and give glory to the Lord the God of our ancestors ⁹ and do his will; separate yourselves from the nations of the land and from your foreign wives.”

¹⁰ Then all the multitude shouted and said with a loud voice, “We will do as you have said. ¹¹ But the multitude is great, and it is winter, and we are not able to stand in the open air. This is not a work we can do in one day or two, for we have sinned too much in these things. ¹² So let the leaders of the multitude stay, and let all those in our settlements who have foreign wives come at the time appointed ¹³ with the elders and judges of each place, until we are freed from the wrath of the Lord over this matter.”

¹⁴ Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah undertook the matter on these terms, and Meshullam and Levi and Shabbethai served with them as judges. ¹⁵ And those who had returned from exile acted in accordance with all this.

¹⁶ Ezra the priest chose for himself the leading men of their ancestral houses, all of them by name, and on the new moon of the tenth month they began their sessions to investigate the matter. ¹⁷ And the cases of the men who had foreign wives were brought to an end by the new moon of the first month.

¹⁸ Of the priests, those who were brought in and found to have foreign wives were: ¹⁹ of the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his kindred, Maaseiah, Eliezar, Jarib, and Jodan. ²⁰ They pledged themselves to put away their wives and to offer rams in expiation of their error. ²¹ Of the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah and Maaseiah and Shemaiah and Jehiel and Azariah. ²² Of the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, and Nathanael, and Gedaliah, and Salthas.

²³ And of the Levites: Jozabad and Shimei and Kelaiah, who was Kelita, and Pethahiah and Judah and Jonah. ²⁴ Of the temple singers: Eliashib and Zaccur. ²⁵ Of the gatekeepers: Shallum and Telem.

²⁶ Of Israel: of the descendants of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Asibias, and Benaiah. ²⁷ Of the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah and Zechariah, Jezrielus and Abdi, and Jeremoth and Elijah. ²⁸ Of the descendants of Zamoth: Eliadas, Eliashib, Othoniah, Jeremoth, and Zabad and Zerdaiah. ²⁹ Of the descendants of Bebai: Jehohanan and Hananiah and Zabbai and Emathis. ³⁰ Of the descendants of Mani: Olamus, Mamuchus, Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal and Jeremoth. ³¹ Of the descendants of Addi: Naathus and Moossias, Laccunus and Naidus, and Bescaspasmys and Sesthel, and Belnuus and Manasseas. ³² Of the descendants of Annan, Elionas and Asaias and Melchias and Sabbaias and Simon Chosamaeus. ³³ Of the descendants of Hashum: Mattenai and Mattattah and Zabad and Eliphelet and Manasseh and Shimei. ³⁴ Of the descendants of Bani: Jeremai, Momdius, Maerus, Joel, Mamdai and Bedeiah and Vaniah, Carabasion and Eliashib and Mamitanemus, Eliasis, Binnui, Elialis, Shimei, Shelemiah, Nethaniah. Of the descendants of Ezora: Shashai, Azarel, Azael, Samatus, Zambris, Joseph. ³⁵ Of the descendants of Nooma: Mazitias, Zabad, Iddo, Joel, Benaiah. ³⁶ All these had married foreign women, and they put them away together with their children.

³⁷ The priests and the Levites and the Israelites settled in Jerusalem and in the region. On the new moon of the seventh month, when the people of Israel were in their settlements, ³⁸ the whole multitude gathered with one accord in the open square before the east gate of the temple; ³⁹ they told Ezra the chief priest and reader to bring the law of Moses that had been given by the Lord God of Israel. ⁴⁰ So Ezra the chief priest brought the law, for all the multitude, men and women, and all the priests to hear the law, on the new moon of the seventh month. ⁴¹ He read aloud in the open square before the gate of the temple from early morning until midday, in

the presence of both men and women, and all the multitude gave attention to the law. ⁴² Ezra the priest and reader of the law stood on the wooden platform that had been prepared, ⁴³ and beside him stood Mattathiah, Shema, Ananias, Azariah, Uriah, Hezekiah, and Baalsamus on his right, ⁴⁴ and on his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Lothasubus, Nabariah, and Zechariah. ⁴⁵ Then Ezra took up the book of the law in the sight of the multitude, for he had the place of honor in the presence of all. ⁴⁶ When he opened the law, they all stood erect. And Ezra blessed the Lord God Most High, the God of hosts, the Almighty, ⁴⁷ and the multitude answered, “Amen.” They lifted up their hands and fell to the ground and worshiped God. ⁴⁸ Jeshua and Anniuth and Sherebiah, Jadinus, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maiannas and Kelita, Azariah and Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, taught the law of the Lord, at the same time explaining what was read.

⁴⁹ Then Attharates said to Ezra the chief priest and reader and to the Levites who were teaching the multitude and to all, ⁵⁰ “This day is holy to the Lord”—now they were all weeping as they heard the law— ⁵¹ “so go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to those who have none, ⁵² for the day is holy to the Lord, and do not be sorrowful, for the Lord will exalt you.” ⁵³ The Levites commanded all the people, saying, “This day is holy; do not be sorrowful.” ⁵⁴ Then they all went their way, to eat and drink and enjoy themselves and to give portions to those who had none and to make great rejoicing, ⁵⁵ because they were inspired by the words which they had been taught. And they came together.

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