

1. Yeshua	528 – 479 <sup>168</sup>	49 years
2. Joiakim	479 – 451	28 years
3. Eliashib	451 – 416	35 years
4. Joiada <sup>169</sup>	416 – 410	6 years
5. Jonathan <sup>170</sup>	410 – 360	50 years
6. Jaddua	360 – 318	42 years

The days of Joiakim were those between the work of Zerubbabel and the work of Nehemiah, or during the time of Xerxes and the early reign of Artaxerxes I. Now if the Ezra family had one “Meshullam” as its representative in these days, then who was the representative of the Ezra Family in the time of Zerubbabel (vs. 1)? Who was the representative of the Ezra Family in the time of Nehemiah during the office of the high priest Eliashib? Who was the representative of the Ezra family in the time of Jonathan the High priest? Clearly the Ezra family goes back to 528, and clearly the Ezra family continued till the time of Artaxerxes II.

Named as the head of the family Jeremiah<sup>171</sup> is “Hananiah,” and of “Seraiah: Meraiah”. These three families sent officials back with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:1) “Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra.” These three families are listed first because they were the most important. The Jeremiah family gained its prestige on account of the prophet Jeremiah. The Ezra family gained prestige for skill in Torah-scholarship and the reading of the Law in the year of release. And the Seraiah family was the family most closely connected with the high priestly line.

Part of the Ezra family returned with Zerubbabel (528 B.C.)<sup>172</sup>. An Ezra from the same family read the Law in Nehemiah 8 (444 B.C.), and the third Ezra, the most famous of this family of priest-scholars, went up from Babylon in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes II (397 B.C.). The Ezra family was descended from Seraiah (Ezra 7:1) who was killed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.<sup>173</sup> So the reformer Ezra lived 191 years after the fall of the temple.

### *The Work of Ezra the Reformer*

In order to understand the work of Ezra in 397-396 B.C. we must reconstruct what happened prior to his arrival in Jerusalem. Nehemiah returned to Persia at the end of a twelve year term (432 B.C., anno 3709). In his absence Eliashib compromised the temple (Neh. 13:7), and when Nehemiah returned, evidently with authority, he corrected the problem. He found out that Joiada, the son of Eliashib had given a son in marriage to Sanballat. So Nehemiah banished him (Neh. 13:28). After that generation died, Xerxes II, and then Darius II Nothus became king of Persia in 424 B.C. A “lord Bagoas”

<sup>168</sup> Except for the 528 B.C. date, all these office terms for the high priests are estimates to show the reasonableness of the arrangement.

<sup>169</sup> Joiada was dismissed by Nehemiah for intermarrying his son (Neh. 13:28).

<sup>170</sup> Named in the Elephantine Papyri and dated to 407 B.C. (ANET 253.98, pg. 492). Josephus (Ant. 11.7.1 [297], 252.68) relates how Jonathan was forced to put his brother to death for conspiring with the Persian governor to seize the priesthood.

<sup>171</sup> The priestly family Jeremiah owes its surname to the prophet Jeremiah, who was exiled to Egypt.

<sup>172</sup> The actual number of family members of these important families was much too small to enumerate a number of returnees with these family names. Rather the register goes back several generations to a common ancestor.

<sup>173</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:18-21.

was made “governor of Judah”<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile, Jonathan, son of Joiada, son of Eliashib, had become the high priest ca. 410 B.C.<sup>175</sup> Josephus fills in the blank between Nehemiah and Ezra:

(297) “When Eliasib [SIC] the high priest was dead, his son Judas<sup>176</sup> succeeded in the high priesthood: and when he was dead, his son John<sup>177</sup> took that dignity; on whose account it was also that Bago- ses<sup>178</sup>, the general of another Artaxerxes’ army<sup>179</sup>, polluted the temple, and imposed tributes on the Jews, that out of the public stock, before they offered daily sacrifices, they should pay for every lamb fifty shekels.<sup>180</sup> (298) Now Jesus was the brother of John, and was a friend of Bagoes, who had promised to procure him the high priest- hood. (299) In confidence of whose support, Jesus quarreled with John in the temple, and so provoked his brother, that in his anger his brother slew him.”<sup>181</sup>

This slaying was justified because it was in self de- fense. The Persian governor was unable to unseat Jonathan (John) from the high priesthood, but he mistreated the Jews for seven years.<sup>182</sup> In particular the 50 shekel tax on the temple offerings made operation of the temple difficult. One of the particulars in Artaxerxes II decree was that this tax be re- scinded with a very severe penalty for violators:

KJV Ezra 7:24, “Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, **tribute**, or custom, upon them. ... 7:26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confisca- tion of goods, or to imprisonment.”

Therefore, it was 49 years from the building of the walls till the time that the Jews were again allowed to freely practice the Torah.

### *The Nehemiah Family*

Nehemiah was the cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes (Longimanus) of Persia. The Queen in Neh. 2:6 was the wife of Xerxes, who still held a position of influence in the reign of Artaxerxes, namely Esther, who was then about 50 years of age.<sup>183</sup> There was a Nehemiah who returned with Zerubbabel,

<sup>174</sup> ANET 253.98, pg. 492.

<sup>175</sup> ANET (ibid.).

<sup>176</sup> Apparently the son of Eliashib that replaced Joiada after Nehe- miah banished him.

<sup>177</sup> The same as Jonathan.

<sup>178</sup> The Elephantine papyri makes him the “governor of Judah” (ANET, ibid.).

<sup>179</sup> The Elephantine papyri make it clear that Bagoes was governor of Judah in 407 B.C. during the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Darius II Nothus. Artax- erxes was a throne name, but Bagoes may have remained governor until the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes II.

<sup>180</sup> About 500 grams of Silver (*New Bible Dictionary*).

<sup>181</sup> Ant. 11.7.1, 252.68.

<sup>182</sup> Perhaps the first seven years of Artaxerxes II (405-398).

<sup>183</sup> The influence of queen Esther is probably the explanation of Ar- taxerxes hint in Ezra 4:21 that he will eventually be giving a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. F.N. Jones (252.67, page 199-204) tries to place Esther in the reign of Darius I. However, I have not found his arguments convincing. The sequence of Persian kings in Ezra with the reference to “Ahasuerus” in Ezra’s sequence “Cyrus” (1:1) “Darius” (4:5) “Ahasuerus” (4:6) “Artaxerxes” (4:7) corresponds exactly to the received list “Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, and Artax- erxes I.” The book of Esther uses “Ahasuerus” (1:1). The Bible is