

Foreign Wives

Ezra 7 – 10

by Don Falkos

copyright 2018 Donald Falkos Storytelling LLC

Ezra was a priest, a descendant of Aaron, and was well versed in the Law of Moses. King Artaxerxes II gave Ezra permission to go to Jerusalem for the express purpose of teaching the Law of God to the people of God. He and his officials donated vast sums of money to be used in the service of God's Temple. This was not an act of piety; Artaxerxes had ulterior motives. He believed having the people organized around the Law of their God would bring stability to this distant province. He also believed showing his support for their religion would motivate them to pray for his wellbeing.

Ezra led a fourth wave of exiles on their return from Babylon to Judah. He did not ask the king for a military escort. Instead, he and the people prayed for God's protection. And indeed, they arrived safely in Jerusalem after a journey of about four months.

Ezra and those with him presented Artaxerxes' gifts to the priests in the Temple of God; they offered sacrifices to the Lord; and they delivered the king's orders to his local officials, who, at the king's insistence, provided the returnees with any assistance they needed and grudgingly donated large amounts of money to the Temple.

The Jewish leaders came to Ezra saying, "We have been unfaithful to the Lord by marrying foreign women. We are guilty and place ourselves in your hands. We will support whatever decision you make. So do what needs to be done."

Ezra insisted they take an oath to send away all these wives and their children. A council was established to review each case of intermarriage, and it took months for the issue to be completely resolved.