

Summary Handout

“Let Us Rise Up and Build”

Lesson

47

Summary

Ezra 1: King Cyrus of Persia lets the Jews go back to Jerusalem to build the temple—Cyrus returns vessels of house of the Lord taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezra 2: Children of the captivity who returned to Jerusalem and to Judah are listed—Children of priests whose genealogy is lost are denied the priesthood—Faithful people contribute to building of the temple

Ezra 3: Altar rebuilt—Regular sacrifices reinstated—Foundations of temple laid amid great rejoicing.

Ezra 4: Samaritans offer help, then hinder the work—Building of temple and of walls of Jerusalem ceases.

Ezra 5: Haggai and Zechariah prophesy—Zerubbabel renews building of temple—Samaritans challenge the Jews' right to continue their building work.

Ezra 6: Darius renews decree of Cyrus to build the temple—It is finished and dedicated, and sacrifices and feasts commence again.

Ezra 7: Ezra goes up to Jerusalem—Artaxerxes provides for beautifying the temple and sustains the Jews in their worship.

Ezra 8: Those who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem are listed—Levites are called to accompany them—Ezra and the people fast and pray for and gain guidance and protection in going to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1: Nehemiah mourns and fasts and prays for the Jews in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 2: Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem—Sanballat and others oppose Nehemiah in rebuilding walls and gates of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 4: Their enemies seek to prevent Jews from rebuilding walls of Jerusalem—Nehemiah arms the laborers and keeps the work going forward.

Nehemiah 6: Sanballat engages in intrigue against Nehemiah and the building of the wall—Jews finish construction of the wall.

Nehemiah 8: Ezra reads and interprets the law of Moses to the people—They keep the feast of tabernacles.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Cyrus Helps Restore Israel at Home and Abroad: “Cyrus was a humane conqueror. In keeping with his general policy of benevolence . . . he not only granted permission to the Jews to return to their homeland, but he restored to the exiles the sacred vessels belonging to the Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken and placed as trophies of victory in the temple of Bel. With the return of a large group of the exiles, a new chapter in the history of Israel began --- the period of the Second Temple.” “The small community of Jews who had remained in Israel . . . was bolstered by the influx of a large number . . . who were now able to return and, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, began to rebuild the Temple . . . and revive a sense of religious and national consciousness.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Some 1917 Parallels with Cyrus: The respect and honor Cyrus has in Jewish History is reflected by the Foreign Minister of England, Sir Arthur James, Earl of Balfour. His “Balfour Declaration” called for the return of the Jews to their homeland in 1917.

Why Not Uganda? “. . . At the beginning of the twentieth century schemes were hatched to “get the Jews out” of Europe - maybe they should gather to Uganda! “In 1903 the Zionist movement was shaken by the introduction of the Uganda Scheme . . . rather than the disputed territory of Palestine. Weizmann was . . . unwilling to agree to Zionism without Zion . . . this adamant stand gained him an introduction to British leader Arthur James Balfour, who was later to play an important role in the establishment of the Jewish state. Balfour . . . puzzled by the Zionist rejection of the Uganda plan . . . asked Weizmann to explain . . . Weizmann then asked Balfour whether, if he were offered Paris he would abandon London. Balfour answered, "No, London is the capital of my country." Weizmann replied, "Jerusalem was the capital of our country when London was a marsh." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Balfour Declaration: “. . . brought exhilaration to Jews and others who cherished the biblical prophecies of the gathering of the children of Israel. “News of Balfour's letter brought joy to Jewish communities throughout the world. Copies of the Declaration were showered from airplanes over Jewish townships in Germany, Austria and Poland, and on the shores of the Black Sea. 200,000 Jews rallied at Odessa, Russia, bearing banners inscribed "Land and Freedom in Erez Israel!" (Their enthusiasm was soon silenced when the Communists came to power in the same year.) The Declaration was compared to the Persian King Cyrus' permission to the exiled Jewish captives in the sixth century B.C.E. to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Awe-inspiring Gathering: “The Talmud teaches that the ingathering of the exiled kingdoms will be part of the coming of the Messiah. The great exile to Babylonia in the sixth century B.C.E. was ended by Cyrus the Great of Persia. However, the rabbis did not consider his proclamation and the return at that time to be the Ingathering of the Exiles since it was incomplete. The day of the ingathering, the rabbis write, will be "as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Samaritans, Others—Resist: “The building of the temple, as well as the city walls, was met with resistance by some inside and outside the Israel community. The Samaritans, who were denied the right to assist in the temple construction and later worked against it, still claim to be part of Israel, however. “Samaritans (are) a small religious sect residing in Israel whose members consider themselves to be direct descendants of the Israelite tribes.” “Until the 17th century (their) priests claimed direct descent from Aaron. But the last descendant died in 1624 and the priesthood passed to another family.” “By the beginning of the 20th century there were only 150 of them left. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (they) split into two centers --- one under Jordanian rule and the other in Israel. But the Six-Day War in 1967 ended the isolation of the two branches and under the protection of the Israel government, their population has grown to about 500 persons.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Amazing Parallels Today: Enemies of the Jews today want to prevent them from “building the wall” (or settling their ancient country) as in ancient days. Even Orthodox Jews maintain that the State of Israel is not legitimate because the Messiah did not restore it! A similar matter of dissent and subsequent success was when the State of Israel’s government had approved the building of the “Mormon” center on Mount Scopus where the BYU Study program is currently located. The building was well under way when an Orthodox Jewish group (dedicated to crushing Christian activities) started a twofold campaign. First was discrediting the government (which they did not support anyway) for allowing the BYU facilities to continue. Secondly, striking a chord of antisemitism, they called the center a “missionary activity.” (There are three kinds of antisemitism to the Jews; 1) kill the Jews, 2) let someone else kill the Jews, and 3) convert the Jews.) This same Orthodox group has attempted to pass a law against proselytizing in Israel and have failed. There is NO Israeli statute prohibiting missionary activity. Let it be known, however, missionary activity is deemed highly insensitive and frankly, antisemitic.

Real Reason for Not Proselytizing: They did manage to pass a law that prohibits any type of bribe or payment to induce Jews to change their religion. (Mormons do not pay people to become members - - - they charge them!) BYU did sign a statement announcing they had no intention of doing missionary activities. President Howard W. Hunter also signed a statement to the same effect with the statement added, “. . . so long as such activity is prohibited by the government of Israel.” The real reason Latter-day Saints are not proselytizing in Israel is because it is the Lord’s will. “. . . he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” (*1 Nephi 13:42*)

Honor and Respect: Israeli government leaders kept their commitment to allow the building. This Orthodox group did not manage to convince the government to stop the BYU project. No legal precedent was established that might affect the Latter-day Saints or for that manner, any other church.

The Future: Likewise, latter-day attempts at undermining the existence of Israel, such as calling for the elimination of Jerusalem as its’ capital or calling for the annihilation of Jews, will be met with the same response as in older times. “And conspired . . . to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God . . .” *Nehemiah 4:8-9* “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” (*Psalms 122:6*)

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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