

Dr. Tiberius Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 3, Ezra 5-6

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 3, Ezra 5-6, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Tiberius Rata's lecture discusses Ezra chapters 5-6, focusing on the **rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem** after a 16-year delay. The lecture highlights the roles of **prophets Haggai and Zechariah**, who inspired Zerubbabel and Jeshua to resume the project. **Opposition from Persian governor Tattenai** led to an appeal to King Darius, who, after reviewing historical records, **authorized the temple's completion**. The lecture concludes with a description of the **temple's dedication and the celebratory Passover feast**, emphasizing God's providence in using pagan rulers to fulfill his purposes.

2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Rata, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Ezra/Nehemiah).



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3. Briefing Document: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 3, Ezra 5-6

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Tiberius Rata's lecture on Ezra 5-6:

Briefing Document: Ezra 5-6 - Resumption and Completion of Temple Rebuilding

Overview: This session focuses on the events in Ezra chapters 5 and 6, detailing the resumption of the temple rebuilding after a 16-year standstill and its eventual completion. The key themes are God's sovereignty, the role of prophecy, the opposition to God's work, God's providence through pagan kings, and the eventual celebration and return to religious observance.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Resumption of Temple Rebuilding After Stagnation:

- After 16 years of halted construction (due to opposition detailed in Ezra 4), the work on the temple in Jerusalem restarts (Ezra 5:1-2).
- The resumption is directly attributed to the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah, "the prophets of God were with them supporting them." Their role as intermediaries between God and the people is highlighted. Dr. Rata emphasizes, "the word of the Lord that jump-starts the process" and that "the prophetic office did not die during the Babylonian exile."
- Haggai's focus is on the temple's rebuilding, while Zechariah focuses on God's sovereignty.
- Zerubbabel, a governor of Judah, is a key leader in the effort.

1. Opposition and Divine Protection:

- Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, and his associates challenge the Jews' authority to rebuild (Ezra 5:3-4), asking "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish the structure?". Tattenai is identified as an "imperial troubleshooter" from the Persian Empire concerned about rebellion.
- Despite the renewed opposition, the Jews continue working because "the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews," indicating divine protection, providence and oversight. Dr. Rata explains this, "It's a figure of speech when something is under the eye of God, which means God watches over it."

1. Appeal to King Darius and Historical Context

- Tattenai sends a letter to King Darius, informing him about the rebuilding, and questioning its legitimacy. The letter describes the scale of the building as "being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls." (Ezra 5:6-10).
- The Jewish elders respond with a short history lesson, explaining that they are rebuilding a temple originally built by a king of Israel, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and that Cyrus had issued a decree to rebuild it (Ezra 5:11-16). They cite the earlier decree of Cyrus.
- They petition Darius to search the royal archives for Cyrus's decree. Dr. Rata notes that it's interesting that the historical events are not known by the subsequent rulers; "It's very interesting to see how history is not known by the previous king, by the kings. So, they have to be reminded about what happened just 20 years or so before."

1. God's Providence Through King Darius:

- God moves in the heart of King Darius, as he moved in Cyrus's, and Darius finds Cyrus's original decree in the archives (Ezra 6:1-2).
- Darius not only allows the rebuilding to continue but also provides financial support from the royal treasury, commanding that resources be given to the Jews daily for the building, as well as for sacrifices.
- Darius decrees: "Let the work of this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild the house of God on its site." (Ezra 6:7) and further orders that "the cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue" (Ezra 6:8)
- Dr. Rata emphasizes the beautiful irony: "That what the enemy wanted to use against the people of God. Now God moves in the heart of the king and not only allows for the work to be continued, but he gives money for the treasury from the treasury to happen."
- Darius further decrees that anyone who alters this edict will face severe consequences: "if anyone alters this edict a beam shall be pulled out of his house and shall be impelled on it and his house shall be made a dung hill." (Ezra 6:11)
- The role of pagan kings in God's plan is highlighted; "It's beautiful work of God that uses a foreign king, a pagan king to accomplish his purposes."

1. **Completion of the Temple and Dedication:**

- The temple building is completed under the leadership of the Jewish elders and the prophetic influence of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 6:13-15).
- The temple is completed in the sixth year of Darius's reign (around 516 BC). Dr. Rata notes, "Finally the restoration is complete. The return is complete because God's house is completed."
- The completed temple is dedicated with great joy, including sacrifices and the re-establishment of the priestly and Levitical divisions. They offered, "100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel, 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel." (Ezra 6:16-18) This dedication is compared to the dedication of Solomon's temple, though on a smaller scale.
- Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes are noted as being used by God to accomplish the rebuild. Artaxerxes will be relevant later in the narrative.

1. **Reinstatement of Religious Observances**

- The Passover is celebrated as a reminder of deliverance, mirroring the Exodus event and highlighting the parallel between their return from exile and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt (Ezra 6:19-22)
- The celebration is done with joy: "They kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful" (Ezra 6:22).
- Dr. Rata notes that the Passover was often neglected during the monarchy period, and likely during exile, making its observance at this time significant.
- The people remember "God's faithfulness to be with them. They are rejoicing about all that God is doing."

Conclusion:

This section of Ezra demonstrates God's consistent control and sovereignty over history. Despite opposition and setbacks, God uses prophets, foreign rulers, and circumstances to accomplish His purposes. The rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of religious practices are evidence of God's faithfulness to His people and the fulfillment of His promises. The joy of the people in celebrating these achievements is a key takeaway.

4. Study Guide: Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 3, Ezra 5-6

Ezra 5-6 Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What prompted the Jews to resume rebuilding the temple after a 16-year standstill?
2. Who were the two prophets who encouraged the Jews to rebuild, and what was the focus of their messages?
3. Who was Tattenai, and why did he challenge the rebuilding of the temple?
4. How did the Jews justify their rebuilding efforts to Tattenai and his associates?
5. What historical document did the Jews refer to in their defense, and why was it important?
6. What did Darius discover in the royal archives that supported the Jews' claim?
7. What did Darius decree regarding the rebuilding of the temple and its expenses?
8. How did the Jews complete the temple, and when was it finished?
9. What significant religious ceremony did the Israelites perform after the completion of the Temple?
10. Why was the celebration of the Passover a fitting response to their circumstances?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The work was restarted by the word of the Lord through the post-exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who encouraged the Jews to resume their work on the temple. They served as intermediaries between God and the people.
2. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding efforts. Haggai's message focused on the need to rebuild the temple, while Zechariah emphasized God's sovereignty and control.
3. Tattenai was the governor of the province Beyond the River, a representative of the Persian Empire. He challenged the rebuilding to ensure the Jews were not rebelling against King Darius.

4. The Jews explained they were rebuilding a house that was originally built by a great king of Israel, but it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar after their fathers had angered God. They were now rebuilding it based on the edict of King Cyrus.
5. The Jews referred to the decree issued by King Cyrus, who had authorized the rebuilding of the temple and the return of its sacred vessels. This decree legitimized their rebuilding efforts.
6. Darius found a record of Cyrus's decree authorizing the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. This confirmed the historical basis of the Jews' actions.
7. Darius decreed that the Jews should rebuild the temple and ordered that the expenses for the project should be paid from the royal treasury, including all the animals and supplies needed for sacrifices. He also decreed punishment for those who altered the decree.
8. The Jews completed the temple with the help of Haggai's and Zechariah's prophesying and the support of the decree by the Persian kings, including Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. It was finished in the sixth year of Darius's reign.
9. After completing the Temple, the Israelites celebrated its dedication with joy and a large offering of sacrifices, including bulls, rams, and lambs, as well as a sin offering. They also re-established the proper order of priests and Levites for the temple services.
10. Celebrating the Passover was appropriate because it commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, which was a parallel to their deliverance from Babylonian exile and their return to the promised land. It also reminded them of God's faithfulness and their own renewal of faith.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the roles of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. How did their specific messages complement each other, and what do their ministries reveal about the function of prophecy in the post-exilic period?
2. Analyze the political and religious dynamics at play in Ezra 5-6. How did the Persian authorities and the Jewish leaders interact, and how did the actions of the Persian Kings and God's intervention contribute to the project's ultimate success?
3. Explore the significance of the temple in the lives of the returning exiles. How did the completion of the temple and the resumption of temple worship affect their religious and national identity?
4. Discuss the theme of divine providence as it is presented in the text, highlighting how God used both Jewish and non-Jewish figures, like Cyrus and Darius, to achieve his purposes. What does this tell you about God's sovereignty?
5. Analyze the ways the Book of Ezra connects to the history of the Exodus, particularly the themes of deliverance, covenant renewal, and celebration. How is the re-establishment of religious practices in the post-exilic period reflective of the earlier events in Israel's history?

Glossary of Key Terms

Post-exilic Prophets: Prophets who ministered after the Babylonian exile, such as Haggai and Zechariah.

Zerubbabel: A governor of Judah who played a key role in leading the reconstruction of the temple.

Jeshua (Joshua): The high priest who worked alongside Zerubbabel in rebuilding the temple.

Tattenai: The governor of the province "Beyond the River," who initially challenged the rebuilding of the temple.

Decree of Cyrus: The edict issued by King Cyrus of Persia that authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Royal Archives (Babylon): The place where official records of the Persian Empire were stored, where the edict of Cyrus was found.

Darius I (The Great): The Persian king who ordered a search of the archives and reaffirmed Cyrus's edict, providing royal funding for the rebuilding.

Adar: The twelfth month of the Jewish year, during which the temple was completed.

Temple Dedication: A celebratory event that marked the completion of the Temple in which sacrifices were offered and worship was restored.

Passover: A major Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; celebrated by the returned exiles as a parallel to their own deliverance.

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5. FAQs on Rata, Ezra-Nehemiah, Session 3, Ezra 5-6, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Rebuilding the Temple and God's Providence in Ezra 5-6

- **Why did the rebuilding of the temple come to a standstill after the initial return from exile?** The rebuilding efforts faced significant opposition, as described in Ezra chapter 4, which resulted in the work being halted for 16 years. This opposition successfully stopped the project until divine intervention through prophecy restarted it.
- **What role did the prophets Haggai and Zechariah play in the resumption of the temple's construction?** Haggai and Zechariah, post-exilic prophets, were instrumental in jumpstarting the rebuilding process. Haggai emphasized the importance of rebuilding the temple itself, while Zechariah highlighted God's sovereignty over the entire process. They both spoke in the name of the God of Israel, encouraging the people to continue this work.
- **Who was Tattenai, and why did he challenge the rebuilding?** Tattenai was the governor of the province Beyond the River, representing the Persian Empire. He acted as an "imperial troubleshooter" to ensure the Jews were not rebelling against the king. He questioned their authority to rebuild, wanting to confirm it was not against the king's decree. His role shows the tension between the Jewish community and the imperial power in this time.
- **How did the Jewish leaders respond to Tattenai's inquiries about their authority to rebuild?** The Jewish leaders explained that they were rebuilding a house of worship built by a great king of Israel, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. They also referenced the decree of Cyrus, the previous king, that permitted the rebuilding and the return of the temple vessels. This response highlights their reliance on God's historical actions and decrees.
- **What was the significance of the letter sent to King Darius, and what did he discover?** The letter to Darius served as an appeal for confirmation of Cyrus's original decree allowing the temple's reconstruction. Darius ordered a search of the royal archives and found a record of Cyrus's edict, thus validating the Jews' efforts. This demonstrated God's hand in using even pagan rulers to accomplish his purposes.

- **How did King Darius's decree impact the rebuilding project?** Darius did not just confirm the original decree, but also ordered that the rebuilding be allowed to continue unhindered. He also mandated that funds be provided from the royal treasury to support the project. This showed God's providential control over the situation turning an obstacle into an opportunity. He also ordered severe consequences for anyone who tried to alter this decree.
- **What was the significance of the completion and dedication of the temple?** The completion of the temple, also known as the Second Temple, symbolized the restoration of the Jewish people's relationship with God and the reestablishment of their religious practices. The dedication included significant sacrifices, joyful celebrations, and a recommitment to God. The completion of the temple, at this point, signified the completion of their restoration to their land.
- **Why is the celebration of the Passover important in the context of the rebuilt temple?** The Passover celebration was a parallel to the exodus from Egypt, symbolizing their deliverance from Babylonian captivity and return to their land. By reestablishing this observance, the returned exiles renewed their covenant with God and remembered his faithfulness and deliverance of the people. They also recognized that just as God moved in the hearts of the Pharaoh of Egypt to release them, God has again moved in the hearts of the foreign kings.