

עֶזְרָא

Ezra (Hebrew name) **עֶזְרָא**

Ezra (book of the bible) **עֶזְרָא**

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عَزْرَا

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عزرا همراه بسیاری از یهودیان دیگر، پس از سقوط سرزمین یهودا در سال 586 قبل از میلاد، به بابل تبعید شده بود. در سال 539 قبل از میلاد، بابل بدست اورش آبر سقوط می‌آند و اورش به یهودیان

کتابهای عزرا و نحمیا Books Of Ezra and Nehemiah

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لفظ **عزرا** به معنی کمک و امداد است. او کاهن معروف عبرانیان و کاتب ماهر شریعت و شخصی عالم، قادر و امین بود و چنان که معلوم است در بارگاه سلطان ایران درجه و اعتبار تامی ...

انجیل مقدس / عزرا 10 - انجیل مقدس / The Persian Bible ...

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فصل 10. 1 پس چون **عزرا** دعا و اعتراف می‌نمود و گریه‌کنان پیش خاتمه خدا رو به زمین نهاده بود، گروه بسیار عظیمی از مردان و زنان و اطفال اسرائیل نزد وی جمع شدند، زیرا قوم ...

Ezra

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ezra (/ˈɛzrə/; Hebrew: עזרא, *Ezra*;^[1] fl. 480–440 BC), also called **Ezra the Scribe** (Hebrew: עזרא הסופר, *Ezra ha-Sofer*) and **Ezra the Priest** in the Book of Ezra, was a Jewish scribe and a priest. According to the Hebrew Bible he returned from the Babylonian exile and reintroduced the Torah in Jerusalem (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8). According to 1 Esdras, a Greek translation of the Book of Ezra still in use in Eastern Orthodoxy, he was also a high priest.

His name may be an abbreviation of *Azaryahu*, "God-helps". In the Greek Septuagint the name is rendered *Esdras* (Greek: Ἐσδρας), from which Latin: *Esdras*.

The Book of Ezra describes how he led a group of Judean exiles living in Babylon to their home city of Jerusalem (Ezra 8.2-14) where he is said to have enforced observance of the Torah. He also is credited with exhorting the community about intermarriage of different faiths because the Jewish men were actively marrying pagan women.^{[2][3]}

Ezra, known as "Ezra the scribe" in Chazalic literature,^[4] is a highly respected figure in Judaism.^[5]



Ezra from Guillaume Rouillé's *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*



Site traditionally described as the tomb of Ezra at Al Uzayr near Basra.

Contents

- 1 In the Hebrew Bible
- 2 In later Second Temple period literature
 - 2.1 1 Esdras
 - 2.2 Josephus
 - 2.3 The apocalyptic Ezra traditions
- 3 Ezra in rabbinic literature
- 4 Ezra in Christian traditions
- 5 Ezra in Islam
- 6 Academic view
 - 6.1 Historicity and genealogy
 - 6.2 Timeline
- 7 See also
- 8 References
- 9 Further reading

- 10 External links

In the Hebrew Bible

The canonical Book of Ezra and Book of Nehemiah are the oldest sources for the activity of Ezra,^[3] whereas many of the other books ascribed to Ezra (First Esdras, 3-6 Ezra) are later literary works dependent on the canonical books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Book of Ezra–Nehemiah

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one scroll. (Nehemiah 3:32, footnote)^[6] Later the Jews divided this scroll and called it First and Second Ezra. Modern Hebrew Bibles call the two books Ezra and Nehemiah, as do other modern Bible translations. A few parts of the Book of Ezra (4:8 to 6:18 and 7:12-26) were written in Aramaic, and the majority in Hebrew, Ezra himself being skilled in both languages.^{[7][8]} Ezra, a descendant of Seraiah the high priest, was living in Babylon when in the seventh year (~ 457 BCE) of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, the king sent him to Jerusalem to teach the laws of God to any who did not know them. Ezra led a large body of exiles back to Jerusalem, where he discovered that Jewish men had been marrying non-Jewish women. He tore his garments in despair and confessed the sins of Israel before God, then braved the opposition of some of his own countrymen to purify the community by enforcing the dissolution of the sinful marriages. Some years later Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah (a Jewish noble in his personal service) to Jerusalem as governor with the task of rebuilding the city walls. Once this task was completed Nehemiah had Ezra read the Law of Moses (the Torah) to the assembled Israelites, and the people and priests entered into a covenant to keep the law and separate themselves from all other peoples.

In later Second Temple period literature

1 Esdras

1 Esdras, probably from the late 2nd/early 1st centuries BCE, preserves a Greek text of Ezra and a part of Nehemiah distinctly different from that of Ezra–Nehemiah – in particular it eliminates Nehemiah from the story and gives some of his deeds to Ezra, as well as telling events in a different order. Scholars are divided on whether it is based on Ezra–Nehemiah, or reflects an earlier literary stage before the combination of Ezra and Nehemiah accounts.

Josephus

The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, deals with Ezra in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. He preferred 1 Esdras over the canonical Ezra–Nehemiah and placed Ezra as a contemporary of Xerxes son of Darius, rather than of Artaxerxes.^[9]

The apocalyptic Ezra traditions

The apocalyptic fourth book of Ezra (also called the second book of Esdras) was written c.AD 100, probably in Hebrew-Aramaic. It was one of the most important sources for Jewish theology at the end of the 1st century. In this book, Ezra has a seven part prophetic revelation, converses with an angel or God three times and has four visions. Ezra, thirty years into the Babylonian Exile (4 Ezra 3:1 / 2 Esdras 1:1), recounts the siege of Jerusalem

and the destruction of Solomon's Temple.^[2] This would place these revelations in the year 557 BC, a full century before the date given in the canonical Ezra. The central theological themes are "the question of theodicy, God's justness in the face of the triumph of the heathens over the pious, the course of world history in terms of the teaching of the four kingdoms,^[10] the function of the law, the eschatological judgment, the appearance on Earth of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Messianic Period, at the end of which the Messiah will die,^[11] the end of this world and the coming of the next, and the Last Judgment."^[2] Ezra restores the law that was destroyed with the burning of the Temple in Jerusalem. He dictates 24 books for the public (i.e. the Hebrew Bible) and another 70 for the wise alone (70 unnamed revelatory works).^[12] At the end, he is taken up to heaven like Enoch and Elijah.^[2] Ezra is seen as a new Moses in this book.^[2]

There is also another work, thought to be influenced by this one, known as the *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra*.

Ezra in rabbinic literature

Traditionally Judaism credits Ezra with establishing the Great Assembly of scholars and prophets, the forerunner of the Sanhedrin, as the authority on matters of religious law. The Great Assembly is credited with establishing numerous features of contemporary traditional Judaism in something like their present form, including Torah reading, the Amidah, and celebration of the feast of Purim.^[13]

In Rabbinic traditions, Ezra is metaphorically referred to as the "flowers that appear on the earth" signifying the springtime in the national history of Judaism. A disciple of Baruch ben Neriah, he favored study of the Law over the reconstruction of the Temple and thus because of his studies, he did not join the first party returning to Jerusalem in the reign of Cyrus. According to another opinion, he did not join the first party so as not to compete, even involuntarily, with Jeshua ben Jozadak for the office of chief priest.^[13]

According to tradition, Ezra was the writer of the Books of Chronicles.^[13] There is a slight controversy within rabbinic sources as to whether or not Ezra had served as Kohen Gadol.^[14]

In the Syrian village of Tedef, a synagogue said to be the place where Ezra stopped over has been venerated by Jews for centuries. Another tradition locates his tomb near Basra, Iraq.

Ezra in Christian traditions

Early Christian writers occasionally cited Ezra as author of the apocalyptic books attributed to him. Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* referred to Ezra as an example of prophetic inspiration, quoting a section from 2 Esdras.^[15]

Ezra in Islam

In Islam he is known as Uzair (Arabic: عزير). He was mentioned in the Qur'an. Although he was not mentioned as one of the Prophets of Islam, he is considered as one of them by some Muslim scholars, based on Islamic traditions.^{[16][17]} His tomb at Al-ʿUzair on the banks of the Tigris near Basra, Iraq, is a pilgrimage site for the



Woodcut for *Die Bibel in Bildern*, 1860, by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

local Marsh Arabs.^{[18][19]} Many Islamic scholars and modern Western academics do not view Uzair as "Ezra"; for example Professor Gordon Darnell Newby associates Uzair with Enoch and Metatron. On this Timothy Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad) and Gordon Darnell Newby [2] (<http://www.js.emory.edu/faculty/newby.htm>) associate Uzair (عَزَائِرُ) again with Enoch (ancestor of Noah) and by extension Metatron the creator-angel or "lesser Yahweh".[3] (<http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/metatronyhwh.html>)

Academic view

Historicity and genealogy

Mary Joan Winn Leith in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* believes that Ezra was a historical figure whose life was enhanced in the scripture and given a theological buildup.^[20] Gosta W. Ahlstrom argues the inconsistencies of the biblical tradition are insufficient to say that Ezra, with his central position as the 'father of Judaism' in the Jewish tradition, has been a later literary invention.^[21] Those who argue against the historicity of Ezra argue that the presentation style of Ezra as a leader and lawgiver resembles that of Moses. There are also similarities between Ezra the priest-scribe (but not high priest) and Nehemiah the secular governor on the one hand and Joshua and Zerubbabel on the other hand. The early 2nd century BCE Jewish author Ben Sira praises Nehemiah, but makes no mention of Ezra.^[20]

Timeline

Scholars are divided over the chronological sequence of the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra came to Jerusalem "in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the King".^[22] The text does not specify whether the king in the passage refers to Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE) or to Artaxerxes II (404-359 BCE).^{[23][24]} Most scholars hold that Ezra lived during the rule of Artaxerxes I, though some have difficulties with this assumption.^[3] Nehemiah and Ezra "seem to have no knowledge of each other; their missions do not overlap", however, in Nehemiah 12, both are leading processions on the wall as part of the wall dedication ceremony. So, they clearly were contemporaries working together in Jerusalem at the time the wall and the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt in contrast to the previously stated viewpoint.;^[25] These difficulties have led many scholars to assume that Ezra arrived in the seventh year of the rule of Artaxerxes II, i.e. some 50 years after Nehemiah. This assumption would imply that the biblical account is not chronological. The last group of scholars regard "the seventh year" as a scribal error and hold that the two men were contemporaries.^{[3][26]}

See also

- Esdras – about the classification of the books ascribed to Ezra
- Book of Ezra and Book of Nehemiah – the non-rabbinical tradition
- Ezra–Nehemiah – the combination of the above two books
- 1 Esdras and 2 Esdras – the Greek version of the texts (Meir)

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3. Ezra." Encyclopædia Britannica.2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.
4. Edward Kessler, Neil Wenborn, *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, Cambridge University Press, p.398
5. *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism, Ezra*
6. In the margin of the Masoretic Hebrew text opposite this verse is written the Hebrew expression meaning "half of the book," indicating that this is the middle verse of the 685 Hebrew verses of the combined books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and that in Masoretic text the two were one book. (*New World Translation Reference Bible – Nehemiah 3:32, footnote*)
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11. 4 Ezra (Apocrypha), chapter 7, verse 29 (<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=Kjv4Ezr.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=7&division=div2>)
12. Howard H. Cox, *The Pentateuch: History Or Story?*, p.101
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External links

- Jewish Encyclopedia: Ezra the Scribe (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=578&letter=E&search=Ezra>)
- Catholic Encyclopedia: Esdras (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05535a.htm>)



Wikimedia Commons has media related to *Ezra*.

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Uzair

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Uzayr - most often identified with the Judeo-Christian Ezra (عزير, *'Uzair*) - is a figure mentioned in the Qur'an, in the verse 9:30 (<http://quran.com/9/30>), which states that he was revered by the Jews as "the son of God". Historically, Muslim scholars have interpreted this verse as referring to a small group of Jews making such a reverence.^[1]

Although not explicitly mentioned in the Quran among the prophets, Ezra is considered as one by some Muslim scholars, based on Islamic traditions. Ezra lived between the times of King Solomon and the time of Zachariah, father of John the Baptist.^{[2][3]}

On the other hand, Muslim scholars such as Mutahhar al-Maqdisi and Djuwayni and notably Ibn Hazm and al-Samaw'al accused Ezra (or one of his disciples) of falsification of the Torah.^[1] Several sources state that the Qur'an refers to Jews who began to call Ezra a "son of God" due to his religious achievements coupled with the misunderstanding of his position in the Jewish faith as a Bene Elohim.^[4]

Other western scholars, relying on exegetical material from Ibn Abbas and Ibn Qutaybah, consider Uzayr not to be Ezra but Azariah, mentioned in the Book of Daniel as Abednego.^[5]



Site traditionally described as the tomb of Ezra at Al Uzayr near Basra.

Contents

- 1 Quranic statements about perceived Jewish exaltation
 - 1.1 View by modern Muslim scholars
 - 1.2 Jewish tradition and literature
- 2 Accusations of falsification
- 3 Uzayr as Azariah
- 4 Title of son of God in Judaism
- 5 References

Quranic statements about perceived Jewish exaltation

The Quran claims that Jews exalted Ezra as a son of God:

The Jews call Ezra a son of God, and the Christians call the Christ a son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. May Allah destroy them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! (Quran 9:30 (<http://quran.com/9/30>))

View by modern Muslim scholars

In the Qur'an, the verses do not specify to particular groups. For example, when it speaks of the Christians worshiping Christ as the *son of God*, it doesn't specifically say Trinitarian Christians, instead just using the generic term *Christian*. Therefore, it obviously does not refer to all Christians, such as Unitarians, who call Christ a *prophet* rather than *son of God*. Therefore, this verse refers to those Jews who, according to the Qur'an, did or do call Ezra *son of God*, rather than the majority who revere him as a scribe.

Sheikh Ahmad Kutty has said this verse referred to a specific group of Jews who called Ezra "the son of God".^[6]

Scholar Gordon Darnell Newby notes on the topic of Uzair the following in his work "A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse under Islam"^[7] while also bringing up the topic of the creator-angel Metatron (that some called lesser YHVH)^[8] which had been involved in debate between Orthodox Judaism (or Rabbinism) and Karaite Judaism and while also mentioning the topic of the Bene Elohim Sons of God found particularly in Genesis 6:2:^[9]

"we can deduce that the inhabitants of Hijaz during Muhammad's time knew portions, at least, of 3 Enoch in association with the Jews. The angels over which Metatron becomes chief are identified in the Enoch traditions as the sons of God, the Bene Elohim, the Watchers, the fallen ones as the causer of the flood. In 1 Enoch, and 4 Ezra, the term Son of God can be applied to the Messiah, but most often it is applied to the righteous men, of whom Jewish tradition holds there to be no more righteous than the ones God elected to translate to heaven alive. It is easy, then, to imagine that among the Jews of the Hijaz who were apparently involved in mystical speculations associated with the merkabah, Ezra, because of the traditions of his translation, because of his piety, and particularly because he was equated with Enoch as the Scribe of God, could be termed one of the Bene Elohim. And, of course, he would fit the description of religious leader (one of the *ahbar* of the Qur'an 9:31) whom the Jews had exalted."^[4]

Scholar Abdal Hakim Murad (Timothy Winter) has stated the following on this issue; "on Uzair as 'son of Allah', this Uzair clearly has nothing to do with Ezra the Scribe (whose name is not Uzair in Arabic anyway). Looking at the etymology, Gordon Newby ('The Jews of Arabia', p. 60-1) has identified him with Enoch, whom Jews often assimilated to Metatron, a creator-angel who was one of the 'sons of Allah' (*b'nai elohim*) in rabbinic Judaism in the period. The Qur'an is apparently taking the side of the Karaites against the Rabbinites, who had effectively divinised Enoch through identifying him with Metatron. There is not the flimsiest piece of evidence suggesting that Ezra is meant."^[10]

Jewish tradition and literature

Such as in Islam, a fundamental tenet of Judaism is that God is not bound by any limitations of time, matter, or space, and that the idea of any person being God, a part of God, or a mediator to God, is heresy.^[11] The Book of Ezra, which Judaism accepts as a chronicle of the life of Ezra and which predates Muhammad and the Qur'an by around 1000 years, gives Ezra's human lineage as being the son of Seraiah and a direct descendant of Aaron. Tractate Ta'anit of the Jerusalem Talmud, which predates Muhammad by two to three hundred years, states explicitly that "if a man claims to be God, he is a liar."^[12] Furthermore Exodus Rabba 29 says, "I am the first and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God' I am the first, I have no father; I am the last, I have no brother. Beside Me there is no God; I have no son."^[13] However the term 'sons of gods' occurs in Genesis.^[14] There are differing interpretations of what this means.^[15]

However, the Encyclopedia of Judaism makes clear that this title of Son of God is attributed a person whose

piety has placed him in a very near relationship to God. ^[16]

The Qur'anic verse on Ezra appears in one of Maimonides's discussions about the relationship between Judaism and Islam where he says "...they [Muslims] lie about us [Jews], and falsely attribute to us the statement that God has a son."^[17]

Abraham Geiger remarked the following concerning the claim that Jews believed Ezra to be the son of God: "According to the assertion of Muhammad the Jews held Ezra to be the Son of God. This is certainly a mere misunderstanding which arose from the great esteem in which Ezra was undoubtedly held. This esteem is expressed in the following passage 'Ezra would have been worthy to have made known the law if Moses had not come before him.' Truly Muhammad sought to cast suspicion on the Jews' faith in the unity of God, and thought he had here found a good opportunity of so doing."^[18]

In some Islamic narrations, Ezra is the person mentioned in the following Qur'anic verse:^[3]

Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs. He said: "Oh! how shall God bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?" but God caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: "How long didst thou tarry (thus)?" He said: (Perhaps) a day or part of a day." He said: "Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age; and look at thy donkey: And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people, Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh." When this was shown clearly to him, he said: "I know that God hath power over all things." (Quran 2:259 (<http://quran.com/2/259>))

According to Islamic scholar, Ibn Kathir, after questioning how the resurrection will take place on the Day of judgment, God had him brought back to life many years after he died. He rode on his revived donkey and entered his native place. But the people did not recognize him, nor did his household, except the maid, who was now an old blind woman. He prayed to God to cure her blindness and she could see again. He meets his son who recognized him by a mole between his shoulders and was older than he was. Ezra then led the people to locate the only surviving copy of Torah as the remaining were burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rotting and crumpled, so Ezra had a new copy of the Torah made which he had previously memorised. He thus renovated the Torah to the Children of Israel. Ibn Kathir mentions that the *sign* in the phrase "And that We may make of thee a *sign* unto the people" was that he was younger than his children. After this miracle, Ibn Kathir writes that Jews began to claim that Ezra was the 'son of God'.^[19]

The commentary of Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi states: Uzair (Ezra) lived during the period around 450 B.C. The Jews regarded him with great reverence as the revivalist of their Scriptures which had been lost during their captivity in Babylon after the death of Prophet Solomon. So much so that they had lost all the knowledge of their Law, their traditions and of Hebrew, their national language. Then it was Ezra who re-wrote the Old Testament and revived the Law. That is why they used very exaggerated language in his reverence which misled some of the Jewish sects to make him 'the son of God'. The Qur'an, however, does not assert that all the Jews were unanimous in declaring Ezra as 'the son of God'. What it intends to say is that the perversion in the articles of faith of the Jews concerning Allah had degenerated to such an extent that there were some amongst them who considered Ezra as the son of God.

Accusations of falsification

Ibn Hazm, an Andalusian Muslim scholar, explicitly accused Ezra of being a liar and a heretic who falsified and

added interpolations into the Biblical text. Ibn Hazm provided a polemical list of what he considered "chronological and geographical inaccuracies and contradictions; theological impossibilities (anthropomorphic expressions, stories of fornication and whoredom, and the attributing of sins to prophets), as well as lack of reliable transmission (tawatur) of the text", Hava Lazarus-Yafeh states.^{[1][20]} In response to attacks on the personality of Ezra, the Byzantine Emperor Leo III defended Ezra as a pious, reliable person.^[20] The Jewish convert to Islam al-Samaw'al (d. 1175) accused Ezra of interpolating stories such as Gen. 19:30-8 in the Bible in order to sully David's origins and to prevent the rule of the Davidic dynasty during the second Temple.^[1] The writings of Ibn Hazm and al-Samaw'al was adopted and updated only slightly by later Muslim authors up to contemporary times.^{[1][20]}

Uzayr as Azariah

Viviane Comerro, Professeur in Islamic literature at INALCO, considers the possibility of quranic Uzayr not to be Ezra but Azariah, relying on Ibn Qutaybah, and identifying a confusion committed by Muslim exegetes. She declares : "There is, from muslim traditionalists, a confusion between two distinct characters, Ezra ['Azrà] et Azariah ['Azarya(h)](...) Thus, it is possible that the quranic vocable Uzayr could find its origin in Azariah's one." ^[21]

The deutero-canonical version of the book of Daniel confirms this hypothesis. The Theodotion's version, used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians contains the Prayer of Azariah, an apocryphal prayer added by Hellenistic rabbis in the Septuagint version of the book of Daniel, which curiously mentions Abednego by his other name, Azariah, rather than Abednego^[22] which is used in the whole chapter 3 of the Hebrew and Protestant version, without any mention of the name "Azariah" in this chapter.^[23] This mention precedes the appearance^[23] of an angel qualified by Nebuchadnezzar as having the form of the "son of god".^[24] Legends from Jewish communities of Arabia which were using the Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel made the confusion between the fourth character, the angel who is like the son of god, and Azariah himself, as confirmed by H. Schwarzbaum.^[25]

In this perspective, the quranic narrator seems to blame the Jews who believed in such a legend and who considered Azariah as the son of God, legend which finds its origin in a confusion due to an addition in the original biblical corpus by the rabbis who elaborated the Septuagint.

Title of son of God in Judaism

The title of son of God is used by the Jews for any pious person as is evident according to Encyclopedia of Judaism which states that the title of son of God is attributed by the Jews "to any one whose piety has placed him in a filial relation to God (see Wisdom ii. 13, 16, 18; v. 5, where "the sons of God" are identical with "the saints"; comp. Ecclesiastes [Sirach] iv. 10). It is through such personal relations that the individual becomes conscious of God's fatherhood."^[16] Jews consider Ezra among the pious.

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