

## Ezra 10

### Examine the timeline

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Ezra 7:9</i>     | <i>Ezra began his journey from Babylon on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the <b>1st month</b></i><br><i>Ezra arrives at Jerusalem on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the <b>5th month</b></i> |
| <i>Ezra 8:32-33</i> | <i>Camped 3 days; completed the in-processing tasks on the 4<sup>th</sup> day</i>  |
| <i>Ezra 9:1</i>     | <i>“After these things were done...” the leaders report the people’s sin</i>   |
| <i>Ezra 10:9</i>    | <i>Ezra calls the men to assemble for examination on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the <b>9th month</b></i><br><i>He gives them three days to get to Jerusalem</i>                    |
| <i>Ezra 10:16</i>   | <i>Examination begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the <b>10th month</b></i>   |
| <i>Ezra 10:17</i>   | <i>Examination ends on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the <b>1st month</b></i>  |

What feasts fall within this time?

Ezra’s examination ends right before which feast?

When is the time of the heavy rain in Israel (v9)?

How many days does Ezra give the men of Israel to get to Jerusalem?

What does that signify?

How long does Ezra’s examination take?

### Examine the People/Actions

What has to happen before the people can come before God on the Day of Atonement?

#### Observing the Day of Atonement:

- 1) Work through the steps for repentance.
- 2) Perform some outward acts of repentance to express the inward intention (optional)
  - a. **Tevilah Miqveh** (pronounced mikvah)  
*Tevilah mikveh* is complete immersion in a bath of water. This is something that Jewish people do as a part of entering or renewing a covenant. Water immersion was performed as a ceremonial cleansing from sin, likened to becoming a new person, putting the old sin behind you, and starting over with a clean slate.
  - b. **Tashlik**  
*Tashlik* is performed before the Day of Atonement where Jewish people cast crumbs of bread into a lake or body of water while reciting Micah 7:19 *“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”* *Tashlik* means “casting away” and is meant to reflect a person’s intention of turning away from sin in their lives.

- 3) On the Day of Atonement, you would “afflict your soul” by fasting. (Lev 23:27)
- 4) The holy day service would begin with a formal corporate confession of 44 sins called the **AI Chet**. The Jewish person recited the whole list, whether he did all those things or not, because in Jewish thought, every person is responsible to a certain extent for the sin of a brother. This understanding comes from **Leviticus 19:17**:

*“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.”*

You had not at least made an effort to turn a brother from sin, you would be guilty of hating your brother. That was part of your accountability to your brother and to God. (This is why the Pharisees would make sure to point out everyone’s sins – so that they could not be accused of the sin of hating their brother.)

### Steps of Repentance

1. Recognize the sin
2. Renounce the sin (stop doing it)
3. Confess the sin
4. Seek forgiveness from the person you have wronged
5. Make restitution (or pledge to carry through with action)
6. Resolve not to do the sin again

Are these steps the same for us under the New Covenant?

What steps of repentance are reflected in Ezra and the people’s words? (v1-12)

Because of the number of cases to be dealt with, what do the people propose (v13-14)?

### The Opposition

Four men who are helping Ezra with this examination oppose the people’s proposal (v15): Jonathon, Jahaziah, Meshallum, and Shabbathai. Jonathon and Jahaziah are of the priesthood. Shabbathai is a Levite. It isn’t clear if Meshallum is of the priesthood, Levites or tribes. *None of their names appear in the list of those guilty of intermarriage, except Meshallum.* However, Meshallum is a very common name, which is why I think the Meshallum in v15 may be a different Meshallum from the one in verse 29 who was guilty of intermarriage. Ezra would not have asked Meshallum to help him examine the men if Meshallum himself was guilty.

The guilty men of Israel who are facing judgment asked that they not be made to stand in the rain for many days while the sins of the many are dealt with. They requested that their leaders stand in their stead and call them at their appointed times.

It is going to take 3 months to deal with this problem. Four men who are not guilty of that particular sin look at the guilty and say “no, make them stand in the rain until their judgment is done. They are guilty. Let them take their punishment.”

- What attitude do you sense in these four men toward their kinsmen?
- Would their attitude have been different if they were the guilty ones?
- When we must deliver judgment on others, what attitude are we called to have?

### Putting Away of Sin

What is involved with putting away the pagan wives?

### The Guilty List

In the list of guilty, who is listed first?

### Hope (v2)

How many different Hebrew words can be translated as “hope”?

The word used here is *miqveh* (pronounced mikvah) from the root word *qavah*.

- What does *qavah* mean?
- How is *miqveh* translated?

Why would Shecaniah choose this particular Hebrew word for hope? What would this mean to Ezra?

## Hope: Miqveh (also spelled mikveh)

From root verb, *qavah*, meaning to hope or expect, but also to be gathered together or collected.

### In the Law

#### Genesis 1:9-10 NKJV

“Then God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together [*miqveh*] of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.” The Third Day of Creation

**Literal interpretation:** a day of separation, the land being drawn out of the sea, the earth then brings forth new life

**Figurative interpretation:** Israel (the land) being drawn out of the nations (the seas)

**Jewish practice of *tevilah miqveh*,** bodily immersion in a bath of water. When a person was drawn out of the waters, it was an act of separation from what he had been before – a change in status from unclean to clean. It represented leaving the old life behind and entering into newness of life. A person would go through a miqveh:

- when a permanent and irreversible change in status occurs – such as entering into a covenant like marriage or converting to Judaism
- before the Day of Atonement, as an act of repentance and turning away from sin
- when a woman’s monthly is ended. A Jewish woman was required to mikveh each month after she had been cleansed after her cycle or after giving birth. (This practice is not mentioned directly in the Law, but implied as part of being cleansed from impurity. A woman was separated from her husband during her impurity, and that separation ended with this final act of miqveh. It signifies that a new cycle of life (potentially) has begun in her.)

The practice of miqveh is the forerunner to our understanding of immersion baptism.

#### Exodus 7:19 NKJV

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools [*miqveh*] of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.’”

#### Leviticus 11:36 NKJV

“Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty of water [*miqveh*], shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean.”

- Anything that touches an unclean thing like a carcass would become unclean, but not the spring of water. You can put a defiled thing into the *miqveh* bath because the living waters, the running or renewing waters) carry the defilement away. Thus the pool remains clean, and able to cleanse others. For this reason, the *miqveh* bath must be fed from a renewable source of water – a source of living water such as a stream, spring or fountain. Without the renewing of waters, a pool will become stagnant and defiled from the things put into it.

## In the Prophets & Post-Exilic Books

### **Jeremiah 14:8 NKJV**

“O the Hope [*miqveh*] of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?”

### **Jeremiah 17:13 NKJV**

“O LORD, the hope [*miqveh*] of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. ‘Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.’”

### **Jeremiah 50:7 NKJV**

“All who found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, ‘We have not offended, Because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, the LORD, the hope [*miqveh*] of their fathers.’”

### **1 Chronicles 29:15 NKJV**

“For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope [*miqveh*].”

### **Ezra 10:2 NKJV**

“And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope [*miqveh*] in Israel in spite of this.’”

Shecaniah’s use of this word would have brought all these verse to Ezra’s mind. It would have spurred in him an understanding of the work that needs to be done – the separating, cleansing, and gathering together of the people into a holy nation, so that they might stand before the Lord on the coming Day of Atonement.

It also reinforces the vision of what Ezra is building toward. Just as Haggai and Zechariah inspired the people to complete the Temple with those visions of the coming King and kingdom, Shecaniah’s use of the word, *miqveh*, recalls King David’s hope for the gathering of his people into a holy nation, a glorious unshakable kingdom ruled by the greatest of Davidic kings, Solomon, with God dwelling among his people in His holy Temple. It is that vision which strengthens Ezra to the task he must accomplish in this phase of building the House of God.

While we, in this age, have not yet come into the kingdom, we are the gathering of those drawn out of the waters and cleansed by the living waters. We are not drawn out of just a bath of water, but out of *Miqveh* Israel, the Hope of Israel, Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of our identity, our cleansing, and our hope in the day of judgment. In Him lies our vision and hope of a coming kingdom in which there will be peace, permanence, and stability, where we will have rights as children and heirs of the kingdom. He is our *miqveh*, our hope.

Let us press on with the task we have been given in this age – to build each other up as a holy people before God.