

1. Yeshua	529 – 479 <sup>168</sup>	49 years
2. Joiakim	479 – 451	28 years
3. Eliashib	451 – 416	35 years
4. Joiada <sup>169</sup>	416 – 410	6 years
5. Jonathan <sup>170</sup>	410 – 360	50 years
6. Jaddua	360 – 318	42 years

### *The Work of Ezra The Scribe*

In order to understand the work of Ezra, “the scribe,” not of the Ezra Family, but from the line of Seriah. in **397-396 B.C.** we must reconstruct what happened prior to his arrival in Jerusalem. Nehemiah returned to Persia at the end of a twelve year term (**432 B.C.**, anno **3709**). In his absence Eliashib compromised the temple (Neh. 13:7), and when Nehemiah returned, evidently with authority, he corrected the problem. He found out that Joiada, the son of Eliashib had given a son in marriage to Sanballat. So Nehemiah banished Joiada (Neh. 13:28) and his son, or both. After that generation died, Xerxes II, and then Darius II Nothus became king of Persia in **424 B.C.** A “lord Bagoas” was made “governor of Judah”<sup>171</sup> Meanwhile, Jonathan, son of Joiada, son of Eliashib, had become the high priest ca. **410 B.C.**<sup>172</sup> Josephus fills in the blank between Nehemiah and Ezra:

(297) “When Eliasib [sic] the high priest was dead, his son Judas<sup>173</sup> succeeded in the high priesthood; and when he was dead, his son John<sup>174</sup> took that dignity; on whose account it was also that Bagoas<sup>175</sup>, the general of another Artaxerxes’ army<sup>176</sup>, polluted the temple, and imposed tributes on the Jews, that out of the public stock, before they offered daily sacrifices, they should pay for every lamb fifty shekels.<sup>177</sup> (298) Now Jesus was the brother of John, and was a friend of Bagoas, who had promised to procure him the high priesthood. (299) In confidence of whose support, Jesus quarreled with John in the temple, and so provoked his brother, that in his anger his brother slew him.”<sup>178</sup>

This slaying was justified because it was in self defense. The Persian governor was unable to unseat Jonathan (John) from the high priesthood, but he mistreated the Jews for seven years.<sup>179</sup> In particular the 50 shekel tax on the temple

<sup>168</sup> Except for the 529 B.C. date, all these office terms for the high priests are estimates to show the reasonableness of the arrangement.

<sup>169</sup> Joiada was dismissed by Nehemiah for intermarrying his son (Neh. 13:28).

<sup>170</sup> Named in the Elephantine Papyri and dated to 407 B.C. (ANET 254.98, pg. 492). Josephus (Ant. 11.7.1 [297], 253.68) relates how Jonathan was forced to put his brother to death for conspiring with the Persian governor to seize the priesthood.

<sup>171</sup> ANET 254.98, pg. 492.

<sup>172</sup> ANET (ibid.).

<sup>173</sup> Apparently the son of Eliashib that replaced Joiada after Nehemiah banished him.

<sup>174</sup> The same as Jonathan.

<sup>175</sup> The Elephantine papyri makes him the “governor of Judah” (ANET, ibid.).

<sup>176</sup> The Elephantine papyri make it clear that Bagoas was governor of Judah in **407 B.C.** during the **17<sup>th</sup>** year of Darius II Nothus. Artaxerxes was a throne name, but Bagoas may have remained governor until the **7<sup>th</sup>** year of Artaxerxes II.

<sup>177</sup> About 500 grams of Silver (*New Bible Dictionary*).

<sup>178</sup> Ant. 11.7.1, 253.68.

<sup>179</sup> Perhaps the first seven years of Artaxerxes II (405-398).

offerings made operation of the temple difficult. One of the particulars in Artaxerxes II decree was that this tax be rescinded with a very severe penalty for violators:

KJV Ezra 7:24, “Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of Gōd, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, **tribute**, or custom, upon them. ... 7:26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy Gōd, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.”

Therefore, it was **49** years from the building of the walls till the time that the Jews were again allowed to freely practice the Torah.

### *The Nehemiah Family*

Nehemiah the wall builder was the cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) of Persia. The Queen in Neh. 2:6 could have been the wife of Xerxes, who still held a position of influence in the reign of Artaxerxes, namely Esther, who was then about **50** years of age.<sup>180</sup> There was a Nehemiah who returned with Zerubbabel, probably from the same family of long standing in the Persian court. But this was an earlier Nehemiah, and not the famed wall builder. The wall builder could have been cup-bearer as far back as **473** when Mordecai became Prime Minister, but would not have been alive in **529 B.C.** Thus, it must be concluded that Nehemiah was also a family name so as not to confuse the Nehemiah mentioned in Zerubbabel’s list with the wall builder.

<sup>180</sup> The influence of queen Esther is probably the explanation of Artaxerxes hint in Ezra 4:21 that he will eventually be giving a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. F.N. Jones (253.67, page 199-204) tries to place Esther in the reign of Darius I. However, I have not found his arguments convincing. The sequence of Persian kings in Ezra with the reference to “Ahasuerus” in Ezra’s sequence “Cyrus” (1:1) “Darius” (4:5) “Ahasuerus” (4:6) “Artaxerxes” (4:7) corresponds exactly to the received list “Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I.” The book of Esther uses “Ahasuerus” (1:1). The Bible is consistent with itself. Even though these are all throne names or surnames that are interchangeable, the bible consistently uses the same one for each king with the exception of the term “Cyrus” in the Isaiah passage, which is prophetic and not historical prose, and in that one place is explained to be a “surname”. So only in the case of “Cyrus” does the bible give us liberty to apply the surname to the kings who authorized the establishment of the Temple and Jerusalem. The argument that Mordecai’s age proves that Esther came earlier in history falls apart upon analysis of Esther 2:5-6 (See footnote 160). The argument that the seven peers of the kingdom (Esther 1:14) belongs to Darius I ignores the fact that this family peerage was hereditary. Jones intimation that some of the 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia were lost to Xerxes for the duration is false (see “Xerxes” ANET 254.98, pages 316-17). Xerxes says “I put them (again) into their (former political) status” (ANET, pg. 317). Jones says that Esther 10:1 refers to Darius’ supposed collection of tribute upon Greece, and claims Xerxes cannot be the king in question because he could collect no tribute from the “isles” after 479 B.C. However, Xerxes collected from some Greek city-states between 473 and 465. Xerxes did not lose Cyprus until 466 B.C. The text reads, “And he was setting tribute ...”; this does not mean that all tribute was collected, just that it was imposed. In ancient times, the collection of tribute was always iffy, but the imposition of tribute was always continuous by the greater power. Xerxes was trying to collect all his imposed tax right up to the last year of his reign, which is all that is needed to explain Esther 10:1.