

הַיּוֹם בְּאֲשֶׁר קוּמַם יֵשׁוּעַ
הַמָּשִׁיחַ מִן־הַמָּתִים



**The Resurrection Day
Of Messiah Yeshua**

When It Happened

According To The Original
Texts

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(laid out in book order)

our flocks as it is written in the law, for the priests who are ministering in the house of our Almighty. ³⁷ We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our Almighty, and the tithes of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns. ³⁸ And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our Almighty, to the chambers of the storehouse. ³⁹ For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil, to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers, and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our Almighty (Neh 10:32-39).

But in Nehemiah's absence, the enemies gained an office in the Temple. This only makes sense on two points. The office had a monetary value. Just as the money changers in Yeshua's time were able to fleece the people by requiring one kind of money to be used to purchase offerings, so it is possible that there was a kind of tax that was levied by the priesthood, or on the priesthood, other than the usual tithes that could be diverted to the officeholder. When Nehemiah's term ended, the governing authority transferred to the greater Persian government, where the enemies had more influence. The most likely form of attack was the very one implied in the letters of the enemies, to impose a sales tax on the Temple service lest the king should suffer a loss of revenue (cf. Ezra 4:13). The purpose of the "office" or "chamber" in the Temple was to collect the tax. Of course, Tobiah had a house in Jerusalem, but he did bring some of his household stuff to the Temple office. His reason to be there was not the sanctity of the Temple, but to collect the tax levied by the default government in Nehemiah's absence. It is no doubt that Tobiah had the support of secularized Jews, who were interested in money, and not Torah. Indeed, one of the first things that happened to the high priestly families was they they became secular and liberal, and held their positions only because the office was inherited.

Instead of appealing their decisions, Eliashib compromised with

them. But Nehemiah was appointed to a second term, and found the compromise out. Since Nehemiah has direct authority from the king, his first act is to cancel the sales tax and dismiss the tax collector without permitting him back in his office. Then Nehemiah has his stuff thrown out. If taxes are due to the Persian government, then Nehemiah will get them from elsewhere, and not by burdening the Temple Service.

After the end of Nehemiah's term, and after Ezra went to Persia to seek greater judicial authority for Torah in Judea, one Jeshua, who was brother to the High Priest Johanan, plotted with the Persian governor Bagoses to steal the Priesthood. This would mean power and prestige for Jeshua, and money in the pockets or coffers of Bagohi. Jeshua was supposed to slay Johanan by stealth, and then with the backing of the governor would gain the priestly office. But Johanan found out about the plot and in self-defense killed his brother Jeshua. The enraged Persian governor then took matters into his own hands, as I recounted from Josephus earlier.

The enemies gained an office again at this time, which was likely used to collect the tax. This tax was 50 drachmas for every lamb for the daily sacrifices (*Jos. Ant.* 11:297). A drachma was about a day's wages. So the amount was the same as fifty days wages for a skilled worker, perhaps \$10,000 in 2011. Smart enemies. They could not undo the law of the Medes and Persians,³⁷³ but they could impose a tax that made it impossible. They had learned a thing or two from Xerxes' Prime Minister Mordecai.

If the tax had been banned at any time prior to Bagoses administration, then the law of the Medes and Persians would have prosecuted him. Therefore, Ezra is referring to Artaxerxes II, who put an end to the confiscatory tax, and for the first time established the judicial authority of Torah in all Judea. For Josephus informs us that this tax was not ended until after Eliashib, Nehemiah's contemporary, was dead.

Another difficulty with placing Ezra in 458 B.C. is that Egypt was in revolt, backed by a "powerful Athenian fleet."³⁷⁴

³⁷³ See Dan. 6:8; 6:12; 6:15; Esther 8:1-17.

³⁷⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, pg. 142.

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