

## Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week 7: 5 to 11 March, 2018 (pp.58 - 65)

### Context

Since the time of the Judges, the Israelite men had married pagan women and adopted their religious practices (Judg. 3:5-7). Even Israel's 'wise' king Solomon was guilty of this sin (1 Kgs 11: 1-8). The Mosaic Law strictly forbade intermarriage with the native Canaanites (Exod. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-14). Opposition to inter-marriages was not racial prejudice as the reasons were strictly spiritual. This practice of inter-marriage had led the Israelites into idolatry in the past for which God had sent their forefathers into exile. Despite that, it happened during Ezra's day and again only a generation after him (Neh 13:23-27). Until the Israelites finally stopped this practice, idolatry remained a constant problem.

### Key Characters #1: Ezra

**Ezra's** a strong personality is revealed in these two chapters. He had to deal with the issue of unlawful marriages between the Israelites and the neighbouring peoples. He did not emphasize the law as an end in itself; rather, he was convinced that the covenant community needed to return to God by taking seriously His revelation and applying it to every aspect of life.

### Key Characters #2: Shecaniah

**Shecaniah** was the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam. Shecaniah was not among those who had married foreign wives (cf. 10:18-44). He appears to have been another faithful Jew like Ezra. But his father Jehiel is mentioned in Ezra 10:26 as one 'of the sons of Elam' that had married 'foreign women'. It is hardly likely that Shecaniah would have taken action against his own father and mother (or stepmother); though, if he did, it would strikingly illustrate the intensity of the feeling aroused. 'The children of Elam' are mentioned in Ezra 2:7, Ezra 8:7. But he showed, by the measure he recommended, that he deemed it better to obey God than to please his nearest relatives.

### Ezra 9 – 10

#### Watch video

- Rabbi Berel Wein's 5000 Years of Jewish History, **Ezra and the Great Assembly** - #15 Published on May 13, 2009.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsuLW43wA4&index=15&list=PL0FA8227766E8EC2E>

#### Review Verse of the Week **Ezra 10:11**

*Now make confession to the Lord, the God of your fathers, and do his will.*

Date/Passage	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<b>Mon. 5</b> 9:1– 4 {9:3-4}	One of God's major prohibitions was that His people were not to marry outside the community of believers (Ex. 34:11–16; Deut. 7:1–4). This was not because of racial difference. The reason was strictly religious. To prevent God's people from following their non-believing spouses in worshipping other gods.

	<p>The New Testament says that believers should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). Such marriages cannot have unity in the most important issue in life: commitment and obedience to God.</p> <p>Note: tearing one's clothes and pulling hair from one's head or beard were signs of self-abasement or humility, extreme grief, violent wrath, or intense moral indignation (cf. Isa. 50:6). They expressed sorrow for sin.</p> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you deal with the issue of your children choosing to marry a person of another faith?</li> <li>• Do we view sin as seriously as Ezra did when the world today sees sin as inconsequential?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tue. 6</b> 9:5 – 15  {9:10-15}</p>	<p>Ezra's prayer contains four primary characteristics: solidarity, confession, readiness to change, and faith in God's mercy (cf. Dan. 9:4-19). He contrasted Israel's sin and guilt with God's holiness and righteousness.</p> <p>Ezra's heart-felt prayer provides a good perspective on sin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sin is a serious matter (9:6)</li> <li>• No one sins without affecting others (9:7)</li> <li>• He was not sinless although he did not have a pagan wife (9:10 ff)</li> <li>• God's love and mercy had spared Israel when they had done nothing to deserve it (9:8-9,15)</li> </ul> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What else can we learn from the way Ezra prayed?</li> <li>• Note how Ezra confessed the sins of his people and identified with them. In these days of individualism, it's hard to understand such an attitude but are there shortcomings in our church/nation that we can pray for?</li> <li>• Often we cry out for justice when we feel abused or unfairly treated. But if God were to judge as we deserve, how would we have fared (9:15)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wed. 7</b> 10:1– 6  {Ezra 10:1-2}</p>	<p>Ezra's prayer moved the people to tears (10:1). It was not just what he told others what to do but what he showed them. He set the standard of repentance by his own behavior. His action motivated a leader to make a significant stand. Like Ezra, Shechaniah owned the national guilt but also looked forward to God's forgiveness and mercy. Weeping, in this case, is good, but reforming is better. Shecaniah proposed divorce, not separation. In the ancient Near East, mothers received custody of their children when there was a divorce (cf. Gen. 21:14 when Hagar left with Ishmael).</p> <p>Israel's leaders permitted divorce on this occasion because of the unlawful marriages of the Israelites. They had married contrary to the Law of Moses. The sending away of the women was to guard the exiles against the continuation of an illegal act. Even the children born from the illegal marriages must be sent away. The religious influence of the mothers on their children was regarded as the stumbling block.</p> <p>"It was certainly an action that could be justified only by extreme circumstances. To an impartial onlooker it might seem high-handed, harsh, even cruel. But there</p>

	<p>could be no doubt as to the perfect purity and integrity of his motives. Unlike most of his adversaries, he had no personal interest in the dispute – no selfish ends to gain. His one ambition was to glorify God and to be of service to his nation.” (James Hasting, The Greater Men and Women of the Bible)</p> <p>Though the circumstances have changed and we are now in the New Covenant, the same principle of obedience remains. Sins need to be dwelt with seriously, followed by true repentance.</p> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any sin in your life that you need to set right before God even though it may require drastic action from you?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Thu. 8</b> 10:7 – 17 {Ezra 10:11-15}</p>	<p>This general assembly took place in late November or early December of 458 B.C. The people who were guilty agreed to divorce their foreign wives and to do this in various local towns that were convenient to their homes in the weeks and months that lay ahead. The Feast of Dedication fell on the twenty-fifth of this month. Perhaps they made their commitment to God then.</p> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does confession of sin require of us? What did God promise when we confess?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fri. 9</b> 10:18 – 44 {10:18,44}</p>	<p>The people were able to complete the divorce proceedings in three months (10: 9, 17). A total of 113 Israelites had married and now divorced their foreign wives, only a small fraction of the total number of Jews then living in Judah. Of these, 16 were priests and 10 were Levites, about 25 percent of the total 113.</p> <p>This reformation resulted in the continued racial, and more significantly, spiritual purity of Abraham's descendants for another generation. However, Nehemiah faced the problem of mixed marriages again only a few years later (Neh. 10:30; 13:23).</p> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Matt 5:29-30. What is Jesus wanting to teach us with regards to dealing with sin?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sat. 10</b></p>	<p>The book of Ezra opens with God’s Temple in ruins and the people of Judah captive in Babylon. Ezra tells of the return of God’s people, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the restoration of the sacrificial worship system. Similarly, God is able to restore and rebuild the lives of the people today. No one is so far away from God that restoration is not possible.</p> <p><b>R &amp; R:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you strayed from what God required of you? What steps will you take to have that relationship with God restored? Praise God for His great love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.</li> <li>• Ezra 9-10 illustrates how a faithful individual should respond to the sins of the people among whom he or she lives. How can we apply this to ourselves?</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we be the salt of the earth and light of the world? (Matt 5:13-15)</li></ul> |
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**References:**

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Lawrence O Richards, **The Teacher's Commentary**, Victor Books, 1987.

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