

Courage, Resilience, and Perspective
Ezra and Nehemiah

1. They set up the altar on its site because they were in fear of the peoples of the land
Ezra 3:3

2. For they were frightened that the peoples of the land would interfere with them and slander them to the king. So, they built the altar to offer upon it offerings so that the people would hear and understand that they, the Israelites, were acting according to the word of the king. And refrain from interfering as they, [the Israelites], rebuilt the Temple.

Rashi on Ezra 3:3

3. When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Eternal God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the chiefs of the clans and said to them, "Let us build with you, since we too worship your God having offered sacrifices to Him since the time of King Esarhaddon of Assyria who brought us here.

Ezra 4:1-2

4. They were idolaters who [the Assyrian King], Senacharib, settled in the Land of Israel. As it says in II Kings 17:24 "The king brought [people] from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharim and he settled them in the towns of Samaria in place of the Israelites."

Rashi on Ezra 4:1-2

5. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. When they first lived there, they did not worship the Lord; so, He sent lions among them and they killed some of the people. It was reported to the king of Assyria: "The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires."

6. Then the king of Assyria gave this order: "Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires." So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Eternal... Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns. They worshiped the Eternal, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.

II Kings 17:25-34

7. The Christian Gospels use the Greek term Σαμαριτις, Samaritis, Samaritans

8. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.

John 4: 9

9. This story is well known. By the enemies of Judah and Benjamin he means the Samaritans whom the king of the Assyrians, when the ten tribes had been captured, transported from various

peoples of the Gentiles into their cities and lands; they accepted God's law and observed it to a degree and yet continued to be slaves to the same idols as before.

The Venerable Bede

10. Initially, after the court (in Jerusalem) sanctified the new month they would light torches on the mountaintops, from one peak to another, to signal to the community in Babylonia that the month had been sanctified. After the Samaritans corrupted and ruined this method by lighting torches at the wrong times to confuse the Jews, the Sages instituted that messengers should go out to the Diaspora and inform them of the start of the month.

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:2

11. Contemporary Samaritans call themselves Shamerim, guardians.

12. Modern Hebrew speakers uses a geographic term Shomronim, people of Samaria.

13. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Exodus 3:8

14. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the terebinth of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

Genesis 12:6

15. 'Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?'

II Samuel 11:3

16. Ephron the Hittite

Genesis 23:10

17. When the first Vikings arrived in Iceland in the 870s CE nobody else was living there.

18. Nobody spoke Turkish in what is today the country of Turkey before the 11th century. Anatolia was part of the Greek speaking Christian Byzantine Empire. The Seljuk Turks originated in central Asia and slowly moved west. At the battle of Manzikert in 1071 the Turkish army defeated the forces of the Byzantine Empire completing the Turkish conquest of Anatolia. Turkish replaced Greek as the local language and Islam replaced Christianity.

19. My late mother-in-law grew up in Chernowitz in Romania that is now Chernivsti in Ukraine. Her first language was not Romanian, Ukrainian or Yiddish. The educated Jews of Chernowitz spoke German. From 1775 to 1918 Chernowitz was part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Despite the collapse of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, Chernowitz remained an outpost of Viennese culture.