

## Ezra returns to Jerusalem

Ezra 7-10





Ezra was a scribe and priest living in Babylon in the Persian empire during the reign of King Artaxerxes. The King gave Ezra a letter giving him permission to return to Jerusalem to teach the laws of God and appoint people to act as judges.





The king entrusted him with gold and silver to use for offerings and returned articles for worship taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. Ezra brought with him scrolls on which were written God's laws. He had devoted his life to teaching people to live as God wanted.





A large group of Jews returning with Ezra gathered by the Ahava canal. Although there were priests in the crowd, there were no Levites or temple servants returning to Jerusalem. Ezra needed Levites to help him teach God's laws.





So Ezra sent a group of leaders with a message to Iddo, the leader of the Levites living in Kasiphia, asking him for help.





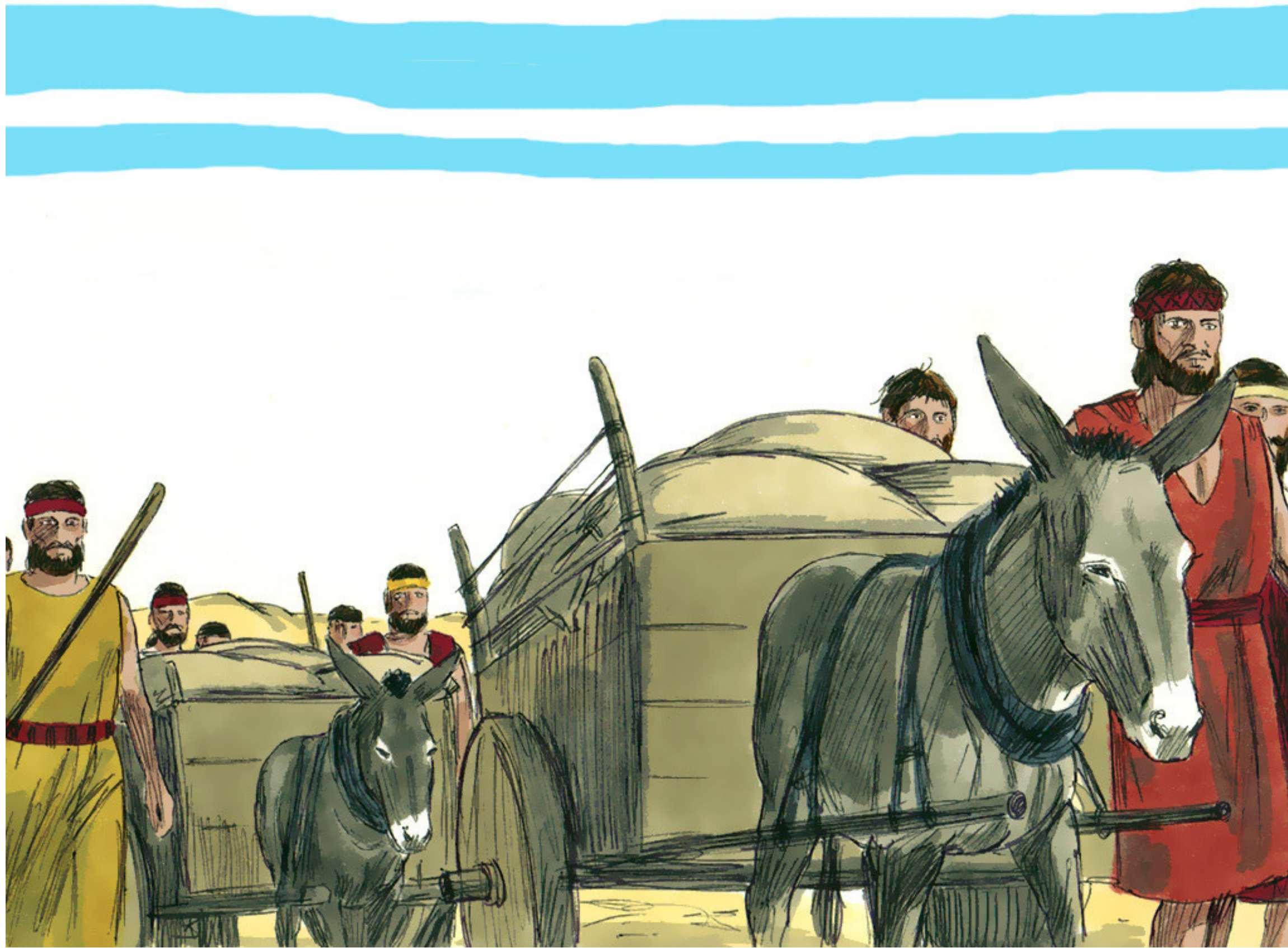
38 Levites responded to Ezra's plea and joined those returning to Jerusalem. They were joined by 220 Temple servants





Ezra chose 12 of the leading priests and weighed out the gold, silver and articles the King had given for the Temple in Jerusalem. He asked them to be responsible and guard 850 talents (29 metric tonnes) of treasures worth a fortune.





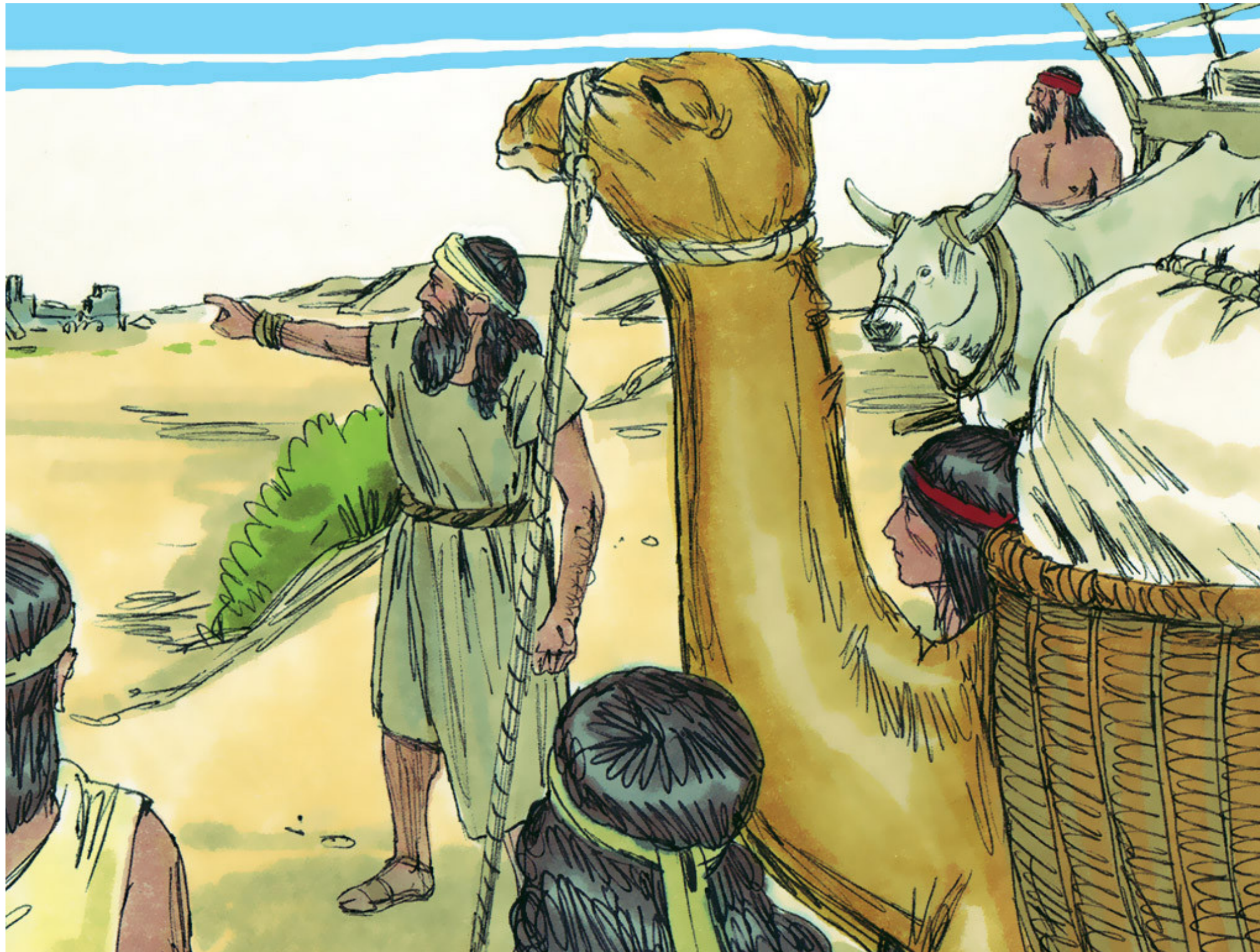
Ezra asked everyone to fast and pray for a safe trip to Jerusalem. He did not want to ask the King for soldiers to escort them and protect them as he had told the king God protects those who turn to Him and shows His anger against those who forsake Him. The party set off trusting God to look after them and their valuable cargo.





The trip took four months but God protected them from attack by their enemies and bandits.





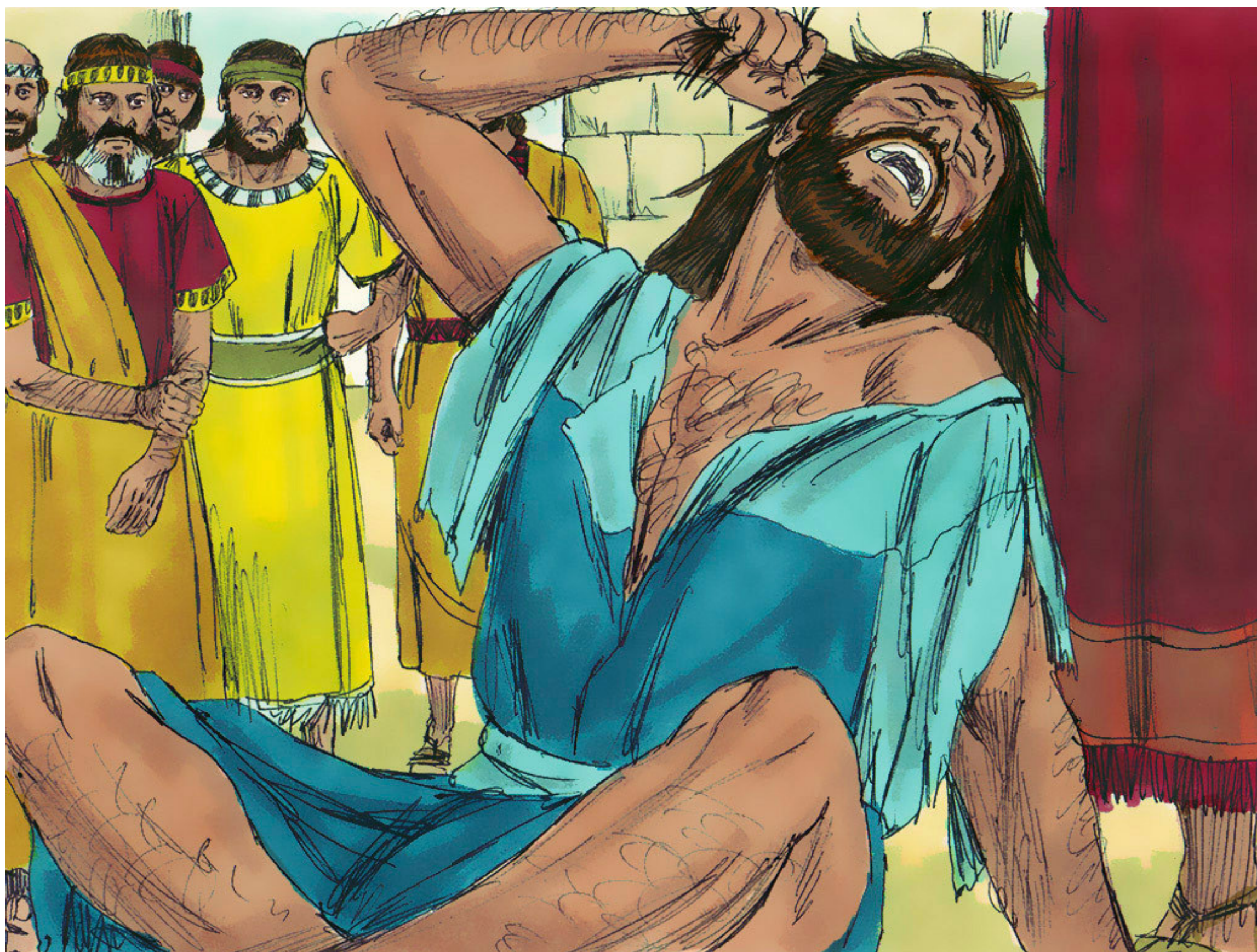
At last Ezra and the Jews travelling with him got to Jerusalem.





On the fourth day the gold and silver was weighed again and entrusted to a priest called Meremoth. It was all accounted for. Nothing had been lost or stolen. Everyone then sacrificed burnt offerings to God.





Ezra was appalled at this news. He tore his tunic and cloak and pulled hair from his head and beard in grief. Those who loved and feared the Lord God gathered round Ezra. Ezra continued to show how upset he was about this disobedience until the time of the evening sacrifice.





He then fell on his knees with his arms outstretched to God and prayed. Ezra told God how ashamed he was of the sins of his people.





As a result of their disobedience they had become captives but God had shown kindness in allowing them to return to their land. Now they were guilty of marrying people who worshipped idols and did detestable things. Ezra pleaded with God not to destroy them all.





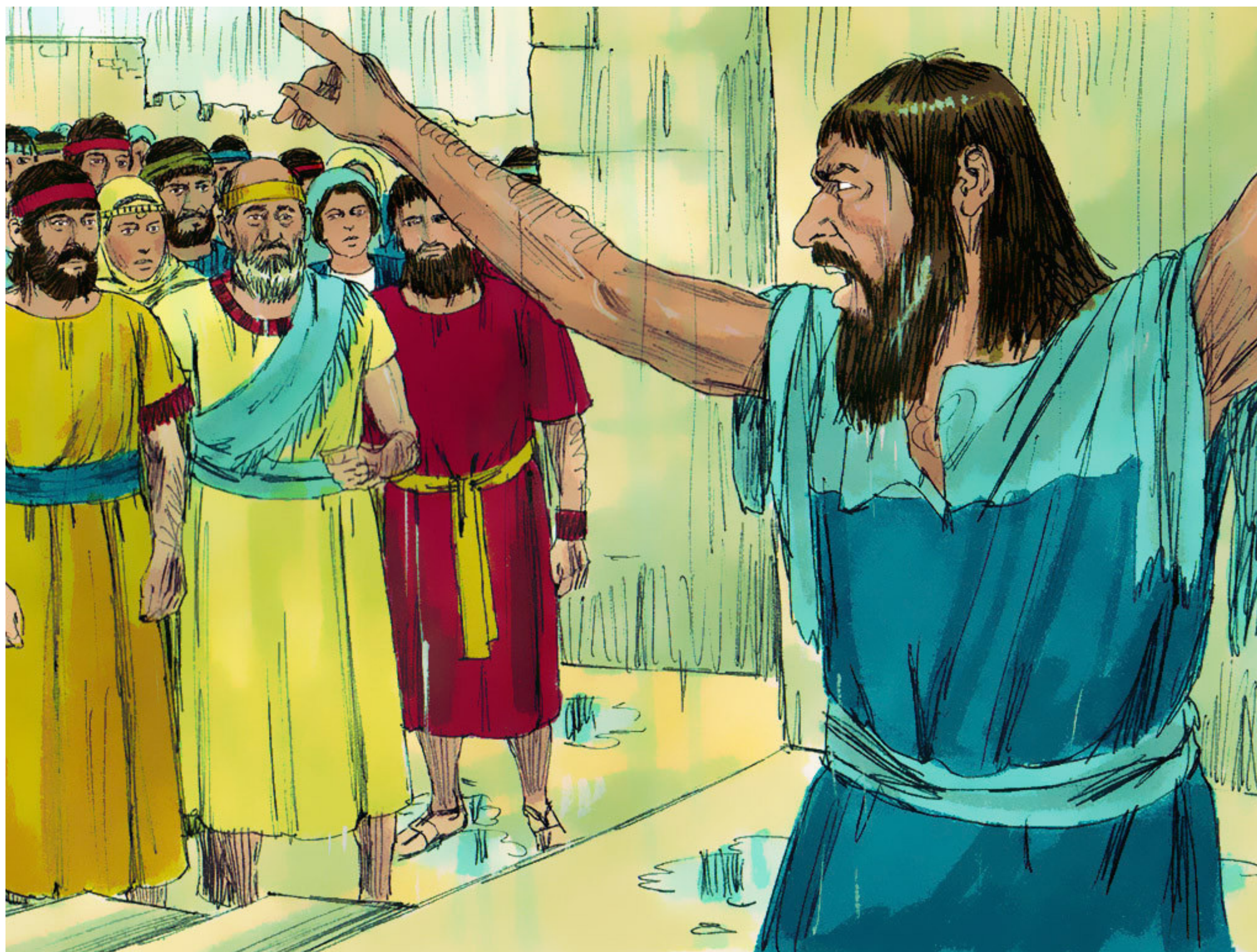
While Ezra was praying, confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the Temple, a large crowd of Jews gathered round him and wept bitterly. One of them, Shekaniah, announced, 'We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women who do not worship God. Let us promise to send these women and their children away according to God's law.'





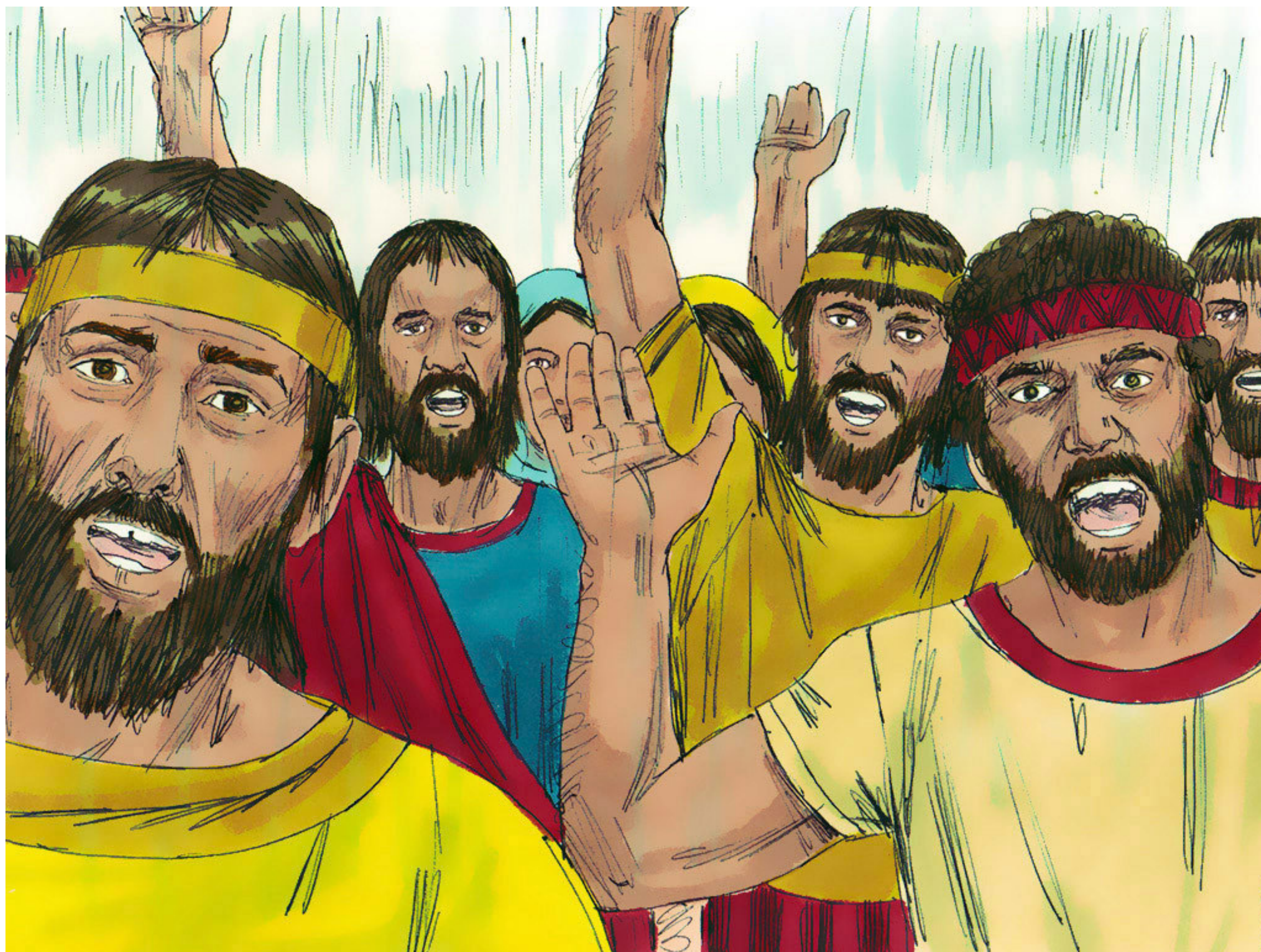
Ezra rose up and put the leading priests, Levites and people under oath to do what had been suggested. An order was given for all the exiled men who had returned to gather in Jerusalem or have their property confiscated.





Three days later the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered in the square before the Temple. It was raining and they were distressed. Ezra told them, 'You have been unfaithful and you have married foreign women. It's time to honour God and obey Him. Separate yourselves from the idol worshipping people around you and from your foreign wives.'





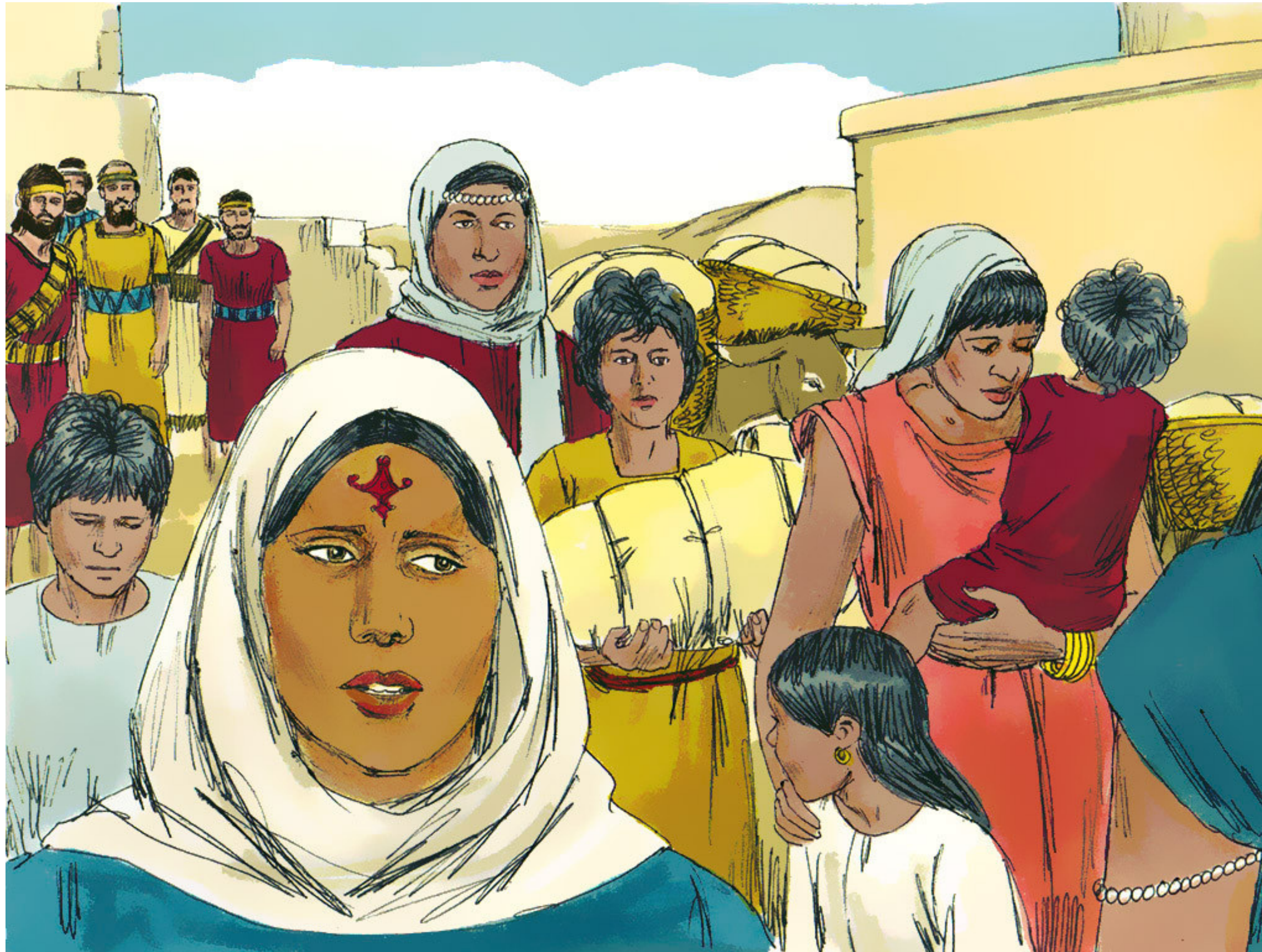
They responded, 'You are right! We must do as you say but we need time to sort this out and put our lives right with God.' Those who had married foreign women agreed to appear before the elders and judges of the towns where they lived for their cases to be heard. Only a few people opposed doing this.





Ezra selected men who were family heads. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to investigate the cases. By the first day of the first month each case had been heard (112 cases in all).





The men with idol worshipping wives made agreements to separate from them and gave offerings to God for their sins. Among those who had disobeyed God in this way were priests and Levites, musicians and Temple servants.



**Let's Talk About  
The Story...**





**What was  
Ezra's job?**





**What did the king allow  
Ezra to do?**





**Who did Ezra take with  
him?**





**When Ezra returned, he found the Jews living in Jerusalem were living in sin. What had they done?**





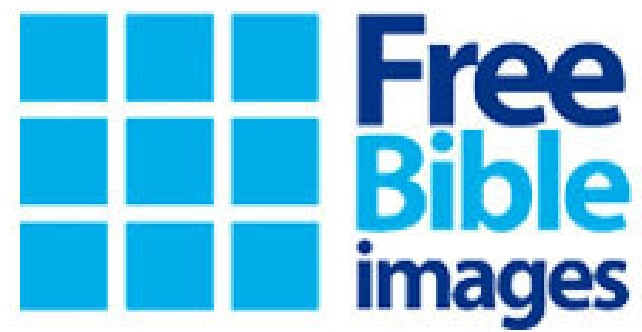
**How did the Jews feel  
when they realized they  
displeased God?**





**What did Ezra do to  
make things right?**





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