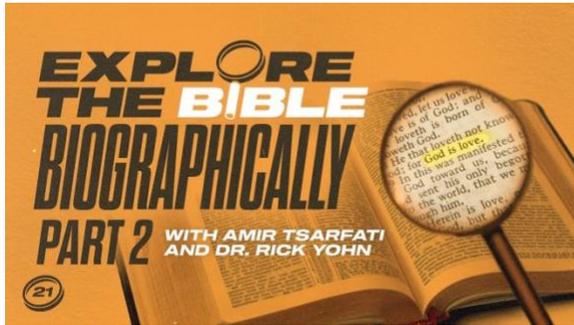




Amir Tsarfati

Explore the Bible: Biographically Part II

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V5qUk5QbEs>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom, everyone. I'm Amir Tsarfati and welcome to yet another episode of *Explore the Bible*. Last time Dr. Rick Yohn and I were looking into interpreting or exploring the Bible biographically. And in a beautiful 40-minute

program, we actually analyzed John Mark and we saw how he was introduced to us. We looked at the journey that he took and we eventually could see some amazing things that we could even apply to our own lives in. And Dr. Rick, shalom and welcome again to *Explore the Bible*.

RICK: Shalom, Amir, it's great to see you again. Great to be back into the Word of God.

AMIR: Yes. A few weeks ago we had a great chance to look into John Mark and look into his old name, his new name, and the very first encounter he had with Paul and Barnabas in his first missionary journey. His role also later on and the very fact that from someone who was a Timothy and later on a Barnabas, he actually turned into a Paul and wrote a whole gospel that managed to teach every one of us an amazing lesson. And another aspect of the gospel of Yeshua, of Jesus. And today we promised a few weeks ago that today it's going to be an Old Testament figure. But before we do that, would you do us the honor and start this program with a prayer?

RICK: Certainly. Lord God, we thank You that You show us in the Scriptures individuals who were so connected to You that through them You have blessed our lives after thousands of years of their writings. And I pray that once again, as we look at



another man's life and what You've done in his life, and through him, what You are doing in our lives today, I pray that you would give us understanding that You will equip us so that we might become more like our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

AMIR: Amen. Amen. So again, last time we explored the Bible biographically as we looked into the life of John Mark. And what are we going to do today? Dr. Rick?

RICK: Well, we're going into the Old Testament because so many believers read only the New Testament and they miss out on so much. They miss out on the foundation that has been laid for the New Testament. So today we're going to look at a man by the name of Ezra.

AMIR: Wow, Ezra

RICK: Now a lot of, a lot of people may ask, well, "Who in the world is Ezra? What's he all about?" Well, we're going to find out. We saw John Mark the last time, and John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. Well, Ezra also wrote a book. Guess what it's called.

AMIR: Isn't Ezra in two books, both in Ezra and Nehemiah?

RICK: Ezra and Nehemiah. So this is going to be an interesting study. With John Mark we had just a few Scriptures that we could turn to learn about his life. But here we have two books that we can learn about this man's life. So let's look at Ezra today.

AMIR: Yeah. And you know, we most likely won't cover the whole thing on this program. And these are two books and there's so much to go into and look. But since Ezra doesn't really show up until the seventh chapter, why don't we limit? Am I right?

RICK: Yes, very much so. And that is what is so interesting. When you look at the book of Ezra, you read the first six chapters and you wonder where in the world is Ezra?

AMIR: Where is he?

RICK: So what are the first six chapters about?

AMIR: So let's actually devote this program to the first six chapters. Are you okay with that? All right, so now that we've entered answered the questions of who and why— now we understand why we're going to talk about him and who he is. What about the when? Let's talk about that.

RICK: Well, we actually have to go back. If you remember our overview of the Old Testament, we are at the end of the history of the Old Testament.

AMIR: Correct.

RICK: It's interesting that if you go historically through the Old Testament, we actually finish with the book of Nehemiah. Once you get to Nehemiah, you're finished with the Old Testament chronologically. And many people say, "Well, wait a minute, there's a lot after the book of Nehemiah." [AMIR: Yeah] But all that has to go before the book of Nehemiah. So as we look at this, we can begin just here in verse one. **[Ezra 1:1–4]: “¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ² Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:...**” This is the Cyrus Decree “² ...All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. ³ Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.”

AMIR: So, it's the God of Israel, the house of God is in Jerusalem, and Cyrus is basically allowing the Jewish people to go back, build it, and to build a temple for the God of Israel in Judah for the God of Israel. Amazing.

RICK: Exactly. And as we continue to read, look down in verse 7: “**7 King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods;**” Now just think of this historically. We have Cyrus, we have Jeremiah, and we have Nebuchadnezzar. Now normally when we read something like this, we just go through those names as though all this happened on one day.

AMIR: Oh no.

RICK: But when you start counting the years, [AMIR: 70 years] between Cyrus, Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar and also Isaiah the prophet who talked about a Cyrus who was going to come into being 150 years later, we have a lot of years in this passage of Scripture.

AMIR: And definitely the big 70 that the people of Israel needed to complete in Diaspora.

RICK: Definitely. And why don't you explain a little bit about that whole thing?

AMIR: Yeah well, the children of Israel obviously departed from the way of God, from the Word of God. And one of the things they didn't do was keep the sabbatical year and let the land rest every seven years. And therefore God judged them to spend a year in diaspora for every year that they did not let the land rest. And it accumulated to 70 because 490 years of life in the land of Israel, they actually neglected the need of the land to rest. So that's why they spent 70 years... And by the way, Jeremiah the prophet detailed that, and he knew why they're going to be punished, how they're going to be punished, how long it's going to take, but he also had a good word to give them right before they left. And the good word is when the 70 years will be fulfilled, God is going to bring them back. And this is where we are right now.

RICK: Well, why don't we pick up on just what you said about Jeremiah and look at Jeremiah 25.

AMIR: Exactly. Yeah, so—Jeremiah 25, verse 12. Here it is. I'm reading **Jeremiah 25**: “¹² ‘Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.’” So, I read two sentences here, but basically this is what He said prior to the commence of the diaspora, that 70 years later He will bring them back and punish Babylon.

RICK: Okay, now let's look at Jeremiah, chapter 29.

AMIR: Oh, I love that one. You know.

RICK: The passage that most people apply and have no idea of the context.

AMIR: Exactly. And I always love to teach about that when we talk about Israel, because, you know, this is the good word that I talked about earlier, that God made sure that the children of Israel hear from Jeremiah prior to the Diaspora. And so again, chapter 29, verse...

RICK: Well, before we look at the most applied passage of Scripture out of context, let's look at verse one.

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: Now these are the words.

AMIR: Exactly. Go ahead.

RICK: Okay, [Jeremiah 29:1–9]: “¹ Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen

mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)³ The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:⁵ Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit.⁶ Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.⁷ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it;...” Can you imagine God saying, pray for the people who just took you out of Jerusalem, out of your homeland and settled you here. “⁸ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed.⁹ For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.” Now, Amir, you can read.

AMIR: All right, there you go. So now we’re saying, [Jeremiah 29:10–11 NASB]: “¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word to you, to bring you back to this place.¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’” I mean, that’s the verse that a lot of women love in women’s conferences and a lot of people love to take it. You know, that’s for us. And it’s good. But again, remember the context and remember to whom it was originally given and when; that blows my mind away. That’s such an amazing thing. And the reason why I’m saying that Dr. Rick, is because so many people

nowadays suggest that only if Israel is perfect, then God is going to fulfill His plan for them or bless them or bring them back or do what He... This is a second before He actually *kicked* them out of the land, that He already tells them that He has a good word, and He will fulfill that. And He's not even saying here you are going to be perfect and then I will bring you back. No, he basically says, "I know My plans for you. I have for you a future and hope, and I'm not going to destroy you." This is the God of Israel and it's the same God then who is the God of Israel now. And for the same reason he brought us back from Babylon then and He brought us back from the four corners of the world now.

RICK: So you wonder, well, what does this have to do with Ezra?

AMIR: Yes.

RICK: Well, we just read chapter 1 about Jeremiah and about Nebuchadnezzar and about the Cyrus Decree and the prophecies of Jeremiah. So now let's look at chapter three of Ezra.

AMIR: Yep.

AMIR: Chapter 3 of Ezra, here we are.

RICK: Now remember, remember that Ezra is not yet back in Jerusalem. [AMIR: Correct] Zerubbabel is in Jerusalem and he came to Jerusalem in order to build the temple.

AMIR: Yep. And you know what, I also want to—A lot of people think that the name Yeshua is a New Testament name that is not Jewish and is all about Christian, Gentile, blah, blah, blah. Guys, the word, the name Yeshua appears in the third chapter of Ezra. Now, I know it's being translated to English differently, obviously. But in Hebrew, Yeshua is there.

RICK: Where is that?

AMIR: And it's in verse nine. You know, in your English Bible you call it *Jeshua*, but in the Hebrew. Yeah, but in the Hebrew is *Yeshua* and it's exactly the way... [RICK: Really] Yeah, yeah.

It's quite amazing because I always thought, you know, the New Testament, the Messiah, this is all—Again, before I became a believer, I thought this is for Gentiles, written by Gentiles with Gentile names, Gentile message, and it's not for us, the Jews. And I was shocked to find the name Yeshua in the Old Testament even. And this is, this is the case right here. Yeah., so.

RICK: So that's fantastic. Well, let's look at chapter three and verse one. **[Ezra 3:1]: “¹ And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua...**” Yeshua, “**the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel,**” Now remember, there were no sacrifices for 70 years.

AMIR: Correct.

RICK: And after the 70 years, and Zerubbabel brings back about 50,000 Jews, the first thing they wanted to do was to begin to sacrifice again. So the first accomplishment was to build the altar. And they built the altar and they gave their sacrifices, and then it was time to lay the foundation. And we are told that they also kept the Feast of Tabernacles and they started the burnt offerings and when you get down to verse seven, “**⁷ ...they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus, king of Persia. ⁸ Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.**” And in verse 10, “**¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and**

the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. ¹¹ And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: ‘For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.’” In verses 12–13, ¹² **But...**” Isn’t there always a ‘but’ when it comes to praising, “God has done such a wonderful thing but...” ¹² **But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first temple,...**” meaning the temple of Solomon, **“wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³ so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.”**

AMIR: Beautiful. Yeah, that is. You know, I think that reminds me of what the prophet Haggai actually said in Haggai, chapter two. Am I right? You want to read it to us? Verses 3 and 9. Maybe you can explain that to our viewers.

RICK: Okay. Haggai, got to get to Haggai here.

AMIR: Yeah, get the Haggai.

RICK: This, this is a thin, thin-page Bible I have here.

AMIR: I have the same thing here.

RICK: Okay. In the book of Haggai. And what verse are we talking about again?

AMIR: We’re talking about chapter 2, verse three and verse nine.

RICK: Okay. Verse three.

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: Haggai asked the question, [**Haggai 2:3, 9**]: ³ **‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?...’**” Raise your hand everybody. All you old guys who saw this temple in its former glory. And everybody my age and maybe above, raised their hand. ³ **‘And how do**

you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?’” Yeah, that’s exactly what it was. But then he says, “⁹ ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

AMIR: Amazing.

RICK: Wow. What’s that talking about?

AMIR: Well, we all know which peace is going to come to that second temple. We all know that.

RICK: Amen.

AMIR: Yes. The Prince of Peace.

RICK: Exactly. But even I see another application of that, because remember in the book of Ezekiel, the glory of the Lord leaves the temple.

AMIR: I do know. I remember that.

RICK: And goes up into the Mount of Olives.

AMIR: Yep.

RICK: And it doesn’t disappear; it’s just up there in the Mount of Olives somewhere.

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: And then later on we are told, the day that we celebrate where Jesus rode a donkey down the Kidron valley and up the Kidron valley and they went into the temple. And we are told in the Gospel of John, we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father.

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: Full of grace and truth. So I see that as one application of what Haggai is talking about. But then there’s another wonderful, glorious application, and that’s found in the book of Zechariah. And that’s when Jesus returns. And where does He return to? The Mount of Olives.

AMIR: Exactly. Yeah. It's beautiful.

RICK: Because the glory who is the Lord Jesus Christ, makes this temple so much more glorious...

AMIR: Yeah.

RICK: ... than what they were building at the time.

AMIR: Yeah. And we just looked into the first phase and next program, we will look further into Haggai's life as it appears only from chapter six and on, or chapter seven and on. But just to remind our viewers before we are done, they don't need necessarily to have a college or I guess, a seminary degree, in order to do what we just did of exploring the Bible biographically. Remind us what we told them a few weeks ago of two great resources that anyone can actually find online.

RICK: Yes, well, blueletterbible.org is a tremendous resource and it doesn't cost you anything. I mean, what you find in that load of books and commentaries and everything else, it would cost you so much money to have all those commentaries. And when I got out of seminary, I was buying commentaries, other kinds of books, all that is free right now. And the other is biblehub.com. www.biblehub.com. And then of course, there is AI. And I know a lot of people are afraid of AI and the one problem with AI, they can really distort a lot of information. But if you were just asking for references, and I often will look at AI and say, 'from an evangelical perspective, what does this say about this passage?' And then you can also find where they got that information and make sure it is from an evangelical perspective. But if you don't like AI, you have those other two wonderful resources that you can use and get a lot of information.

AMIR: I'm sure. And before we started the program, you kind of alluded to me that you want to give the viewers some assignments. And I think this would be a good reason to share why are you providing the assignments? And also what are those assignments?

RICK: Well, I believe if we're going to really get serious with Scripture, there are some things that we should be doing to help people get into the Word of God. And one of the things I want to encourage you to do is to learn to ask questions and just ask the who, what, where, when, why questions when you are reading any passage of Scripture, whether you're in the Old Testament or the New Testament, just learn to ask questions. Who is this talking about? When did this event take place? Where did this event take place? Why is it important for me to be able to read this? So just by asking questions, this is one of the assignments the major assignment I would give is wherever you are in your Scripture reading, just ask the who, where, when, and the why and the what. Because the 'what' is usually the basic story of what you're reading.

AMIR: That's true. Yeah. Well, listen, we had a great time of looking into Ezra, although I think the heavy lifting will be next time when we look into chapter 7 to 10 and Nehemiah 8 to 10, Nehemiah 8 to 10 and Ezra 7 to 10. But until then, I want to thank you for another very, very amazing and interesting Exploring the Bible biographically.

And I want to encourage people to look into our website to the tab of *Explore the Bible* where you can actually leave your question for Pastor Rick regarding this program and also look there, we always post there, some of Rick's, I guess, PowerPoint presentations that are coming together with these programs. Dr. Rick, thank you again for being with us today. I'm looking forward to the second *Explore the Bible* biographically on Ezra. And until then I want to tell everyone, thank you for watching. Please subscribe, comment, share and like and make sure that you apply these things as you study the Bible yourself. This whole program is about helping you exploring the Bible yourself. And again, Dr. Rick may have a few degrees here, but all of you can actually explore the Bible if you do it the right way and we're here to help you to do that. Well, thank you Dr. Rick. Thank you everyone for watching. God bless you and Shalom.

* Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

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