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THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE EDITION.



THE OLD TESTAMENT

EZRA.

BY THE

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London:

GEORGE GILL & SONS,

13, WARWICK LANE, E.C.



MAP OF THE CAPTIVITIES

## P R E F A C E .

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THE Book of Ezra is one of a series of manuals on the books of the Old Testament which are primarily intended for the use of Students preparing for the Local Examinations of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The Introduction treats fully of the several subjects with which the Student should be acquainted, comprising full Geographical and Biographical Notes, historical references to the ancient monarchies of the Eastern world, and other important details, which are clearly set forth in the Table of Contents.

The chief alterations of the Revised Version are pointed out in footnotes, the Student being referred to the Revised Version.

In the Appendix will be found (1) a Commentary upon the most important differences between the Authorized and Revised Versions, the alterations being pointed out and explanations given of the reasons for the change; (2) a Glossary of words and phrases, thus avoiding constant reference to the text and notes.

The general arrangement of the series will, it is believed, be found helpful to Teachers and Students. Each manual is illustrated with the necessary Maps.

Each volume is complete in itself, requiring from the Student no reference to Atlas, Biblical Dictionary, or other aids.

F. M.

*Mileham.*

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# THE BOOK OF EZRA.

## TITLE.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are found in the Hebrew Canon as one book under the title of "The Book of Ezra."

Later, a division was made, and the two books were distinguished as "The First" and "The Second Book of Ezra."

About the close of the 4th century the Second Book of Ezra became known as "The Book of Nehemiah."

The chief arguments for the separation of the Books and for the modern titles are—

- (1) There are distinct differences in the composition to mark distinct authorship.
- (2) The author of the Book of Ezra identifies himself with Ezra, and the author of the Book of Nehemiah identifies himself with Nehemiah.
- (3) The opening sentence of the book of Nehemiah, "*The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah,*" is almost conclusive that that Book is a separate work.

## THE AUTHOR.

Jewish Tradition assigns the authorship of the Book of Ezra to Ezra.

The book is in Two Sections.

I. Chaps. i.—vi. The Decree of Cyrus and the Rebuilding of the Temple.

(Then there is a gap of nearly sixty years).

II. Chaps. vii.—x. Ezra's Commission.

Thus, if Ezra wrote the Book, he must have obtained the information for the First Section from inquiries or from documents.

In fact, the First Section is a compilation, and the Second is original.

Another theory is that the book is the work of another Compiler living at a later date, who embodied the second portion of the Book, which is undoubtedly the work of Ezra, with information gathered from the Jewish and Persian archives.

*The arguments in favour of this theory are—*

- (1) That Ezra would not have passed over the interval of nearly sixty years in silence. The events of this period would have been well known to him, and mention of them would have explained the reasons for his mission.
- (2) There is a record of only one incident of his administration, but a detailed account of the preliminaries of the journey. Would Ezra have made so abrupt a conclusion to his record?
- (3) The changes from the 3rd person to the 1st, and again from the 1st to the 3rd, suggest the hand of a Compiler rather than the work of Ezra.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

The first part of the book is mainly taken up with official documents and lists—these comprise 112 verses out of 157, viz. :—

1. The Decree of Cyrus, a copy of which was probably brought by the Jews from Babylon, and which would be carefully preserved, as Canon Rawlinson remarks, "as the charter of their liberties" (i. 2-4).
2. The Lists of the Vessels (9-11), would probably be made by either Zerubbabel, Zachariah or Haggai.
3. The List of the Members and Families of those who returned (ii. 2-64), their servants (ii. 65), their cattle (ii. 66-67), and their offerings (ii. 69), would be preserved in a similar manner. Nehemiah found such a register, probably in the record chamber of the Temple.
4. The Letters of Rehum (iv. 9-16), Artaxerxes (iv. 17-22), Tatnai (v. 6-17), the decree of Darius (vi. 3-12), were state documents, to which the writer would have ready access.

## DATE.

We can assign limits—

Not before B.C. 457, the year of the reformation as regards mixed marriages.

Not after B.C. 445, the date of the arrival of Nehemiah at Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, for it is highly improbable that Ezra would have omitted to mention so important an event.

The abrupt conclusion of the Book would indicate that it was written immediately after the marriage reform.

Therefore we may assign B.C. 457, or at the latest B.C. 456, as the date of the work.

## SCOPE OF THE WORK.

The period comprised within Ezra extends :

From B.C. 538, the first year of the rule of Cyrus in Babylon,

To B.C. 457, the eighth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus.

A period of about eighty years.

The design of the writer is to give an account of the Return from the Captivity—i.e. the re-establishment of the Jews in Palestine.

With this object before him, the writer deals with three great matters only—

1. The number, family, and names of those who returned.
2. The rebuilding of the Temple.
3. The sin of the returned Jews in respect of mixed marriages, and the reformation carried on by Ezra in consequence.

## LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

**EZRA** was both scribe and priest (on *scribe*, see p. 44).

He is described as "*the son of Seraiah*" (vii. 2).

This cannot be exactly true, as Seraiah was high-priest in the days of King Zedekiah, and was put to death at Riblah by Nebuzar-adan (2 Kings xxv. 18-21).

**Son** = descendant, and the phrase gives us Ezra's connexion with the high priestly line. He was probably the great-great-grandson of Seraiah.

He is described as being "a ready scribe" (vii. 6).

"*Ezra, the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven*" (vii. 12).

"*Ezra the scribe*" (Neh. viii. 1).

"*Ready scribe*," has reference to his learning, not to the quickness of his pen. He was well versed in the law, so prompt and skilful in interpreting any difficulty.

He was resident in Babylon in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus.

In the 7th year of the reign of the king he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem and to take with him a company of Israelites together with priests, Levites, singers, porters and Nethinim.

For the journey, etc., see p. xxxi.

The commission given him was with the design of effecting a religious reform, and he does not appear to have been invested with other powers.

His great reform was the enforcement of the separation from their wives upon all who had made mixed marriages. This he accomplished in a little more than six months after his arrival at Jerusalem.

Thirteen years after, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, we find him in Jerusalem with Nehemiah, whom he assisted in carrying out religious reforms. The functions he then exercised were purely of a priestly and ecclesiastical character. But in these he took the first place.

Nothing more is definitely known of the life of Ezra, but we may conjecture—

- (1) That, after the religious reform which he was commissioned to undertake, he returned to Babylon.
- (2) During the absence of Nehemiah at Babylon, between his first and second visit to Jerusalem, everything fell into confusion. It can hardly be possible that Ezra could have been at Jerusalem during this interval. Therefore we may conclude that he may have died or returned to Babylon. This theory is supported by the Jewish tradition that he was buried in Persia.

**The Jews ascribe to Ezra five great works—**

- (1) The institution of the Great Synagogue.
- (2) The settling the Canon of Scripture.
- (3) The introduction of Aramaic instead of the Hebrew language.
- (4) The authorship of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
- (5) The establishment of synagogues.

**Ezra's work as generally admitted—**

1. Journey from Babylon. Religious Reform especially as regards the removal of mixed marriages.
2. Assistance given to Nehemiah in his reforms.
3. Arrangement of the Jewish Canon of Scripture.
4. Compilation of the Books of Chronicles and the Book of Ezra.  
(For genealogy of Ezra, see appendix, p. 49).



## LANGUAGE.

**HEBREW**, but there are two great sections in **ARAMAIC**.

The Aramaic sections are :

**I. Chap. iv. 8—Chap. vi. 18** containing four official letters—

- (a) The letter of Rehum and Shimshai (iv. 11-16).
- (b) The answer of Artaxerxes (iv. 17-22).
- (c) The letter of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai (v. 6-17).
- (d) The decree of Darius in reply to this letter (vi. 3-12).

But not only are these letters in Aramaic, but the passages connected with them are also in that language, viz :

- (a) The circumstances introductory to the letter of Rehum and Shimshai (iv. 8-10).
- (b) The effect of the decree of Artaxerxes (iv. 23-24).
- (c) The prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, the recommencement of the rebuilding of the Temple, and the visit of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai to Jerusalem (v. 1-5).
- (d) The search by Darius for the decree of Cyrus (v. 1-2).
- (e) The effect of the letter or edict of Darius (vi. 13-15).

**II. Chap. vii. 12-26. The Commission to Ezra.**

The language is described as "Syrian," iv. 7. It is generally understood to be Chaldee under the idea that it was the vernacular of the Babylonians which the Jews are supposed to have learnt in Babylon.

It is **Aramaic**, the language of diplomacy and commerce of the age. The official documents of the court of Babylon would be written in Aramaic. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the writer had access to these documents or to copies of them, the latter the more reasonable supposition, inasmuch as the Aramaic in Ezra is the Hebrew variety of that dialect.

### The Influence of the Captivity on the Language of the Hebrews.

Hebrew seems to have been forgotten by the majority of the people, for when Nehemiah caused the Law to be read, it was necessary to have interpreters to translate it to the people (Neh. viii. 7-8).

The Jews came back from the captivity speaking **Aramaic**. This was brought about as follows :

**Aramaic** was the language of diplomacy, and was understood by the educated classes. The ministers of Hezekiah desired Rab-shakeh to speak in the Syrian (**Aramaic**) language, which they understood and not in the language of the people (Hebrew) (2 Kings xviii. 26).

**Aramaic** was also the language of trade. Carchemish was the chief centre of trade in Western Asia, and commerce was chiefly conducted by Aramean merchants.

Thus the Jews in Babylon had to learn either the Assyrian language or **Aramaic**, and as many of them embarked in trade, whilst the upper classes already knew **Aramaic** they would naturally prefer that language.

### Disappearance of the Hebrew Language.

Subsequent contact with the Greeks caused the final disappearance of Hebrew.

In our Lord's time Aramaic was the vernacular of Palestine, so St. Matthew's Gospel addressed to Hebrew Christians was originally written in Aramaic. After the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews of Palestine who spoke Aramaic would be dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. The Jews of other countries would know no other language but Greek, and thus those Jews who spoke Aramaic would be compelled to learn Greek.

## FOREIGN WORDS IN EZRA.

### I. PERSIAN.

#### 1. Twelve Proper Names.

(a) **Persons** :—Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, Mithredath, and probably Rehum, Shimshai, Tatnai, Shethar-Boznai and Tabeel.

(b) **Places** :—Persia and Achmetha (*Ecbatana*).

#### 2. Ordinary Words.

**Satrap** translated "*governor*" (*Khshatrapāvan*, from *Khshatra* crown, *pa* to protect). Satrap was therefore "the protector of the crown," a governor of a distant province who maintained the authority of the king.

**Gizbar** translated "*treasurer*," "*Mithredath the treasurer*" (i. 8), "*the treasurers which are beyond the river*" (vii. 21), (*Gaza*, treasure, *bava*, bearer).

**Birah**, translated "*palace*" "*at Achmetha, in the palace*" (*biratu*, a fortress). The name is generally given to important fortified posts defending the frontiers, or commanding the fords of a river. Also to the citadel of a royal city, e.g. Shushan, the palace, *i.e.* the fortress or citadel.

**Pithgama** translated "*answer*" (iv. 17), "*decree*" (vi. 11) = an imperial rescript.

**Tirshatha** (see p. 44).

**Asparna**, a word used seven times in Ezra, and nowhere else in Scripture has been traced to *usfrana* = completely.

**Adarzeda** translated "*diligently*," R.V. "*exactly*" (vii. 23), (*darust* = rightly).

**Apptom**, translated "*the revenue of*"; R.V. "*in the end*" (*apatama* = finally).

### II. ASSYRO—BABYLONIAN.

**Iggereth**, translated "*letter*" (iv. 8) (*egirtu*—an official despatch from the satrapies to the central government), see Chancellor, p. 43.

**Daric**, translated "*dram*" (*dariku*, a Babylonian measure or weight which afterwards came to denote a coin) (see p. 41).

## THE JEWISH FEASTS.

When the altar was set up and the Feast of Tabernacles kept it is recorded that the Jews "*offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feast, of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord*" (iii. 5); that is, that they resumed the usual burnt offerings.

- (1) Daily—morning and evening.
- (2) At the new moon.
- (3) On all "set feasts."
- (4) On the occasion of freewill offerings.

**A Burnt Offering** was an offering which was wholly consumed by fire on the altar, and the whole of which except the refuse ashes "ascended" in the smoke to God. The burnt offering was always accompanied by a "meat (*meal*) offering" of flour and oil and a drink offering of wine.

**I. The Daily Burnt Offering.** There was offered morning and evening—

- (1) A lamb of the first year for a burnt offering.
- (2) A tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil for a "meat (*meal*) offering."
- (3) A fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering.

**II. The New Moons.** The first day of the lunar month was observed as a holy day.

The special offerings were—

- (1) Two young bullocks and seven lambs of the first year as a burnt offering.
- (2) A kid for a sin offering.

All secular pursuits were suspended as on the Sabbath. The trumpets were blown over the burnt offerings (Numb. 10).

**III. The Set Feasts.** These were (Lev. xxiii. 2-37).

- (1) The Sabbath.
- (2) The Passover.
- (3) The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost.
- (4) The Feast of Trumpets.
- (5) The Day of Atonement.
- (6) The Feast of Tabernacles.

**2. The Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread** was instituted to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from Egypt. The Passover was observed very strictly. The original mode of celebrating the feast is given in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. It was kept on the 14th day of the 1st month (NISAN).

The only recorded occasions of keeping the Passover besides the institution of the Feast (Ex. xii.) are:—

- (a) **By Moses**, at Sinai, in the second year after the Exodus (Numb. ix. 1-5).
- (b) **By Joshua** at Gilgal, on the entrance into Canaan after the people had undergone the rite of circumcision (Josh. v. 10).
- (c) **By Hezekiah** after the purification of the Temple (2 Chron. xxx. 1-2).

(d) By **Josiah** after the religious reformation (2 Kings xxiii. 21).

(e) By **Zerubbabel and Joshua** after the dedication of the Temple.

All the above are occasions marking the renewal of the covenant relation with God.

The Israelites always associated the Passover with the deliverance from Egypt. After the solemn keeping of the Feast under Zerubbabel, they would also be reminded of their return from the Babylonish captivity.

3. **The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost**, so-called because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day (seven weeks) after the first day of the Passover. On this day were presented the first-fruits of the wheat harvest, and the giving of the law from Mount Sinai was commemorated.
4. **The Feast of Trumpets** fell on the 1st day of the 7th month (Tisri), and was one of the seven days of holy convocation, and was distinguished by being "*a day of blowing trumpets*" (Lev. xxiii. 24), not merely blowing trumpets of the Temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices.
5. **The Day of Atonement**, kept on the 10th day of the 7th month Tisri; was the great day of national humiliation. On this day only did the high-priest enter the Holy of Holies, and sprinkle the Mercy seat with the blood. On this day the Scapegoat, over which the priest had confessed the sins of the people, was driven into the wilderness.
6. **The Feast of Tabernacles** was the third of the great annual festivals. It lasted for seven days, from the 15th till the 22nd Tisri. During the feast the people dwelt in tents or bowers made of the branches of trees, and often placed upon the flat roofs of their houses. It was held in commemoration of the wanderings of the Jews in the wilderness, and was also the Jewish harvest thanksgiving. The Feast of Tabernacles followed.

(1) The dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings viii. 65).

(2) The erection of the altar by Zerubbabel (Ezra iii. 4).

(As the Feast commemorated originally the wanderings in the wilderness, it would henceforth commemorate the return from Babylon).

3) The Reading of the Law by Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. viii. 14-16).

## FOREIGN NATIONS AND THEIR RELATION WITH THE ISRAELITES.

### ASSYRIA.

**Pul** invaded Israel in the reign of Menahem, who gave him a thousand talents of silver, and became tributary to him (2 Kings xv. 19).

**Tiglath-pileser**. Ahaz, king of Judah, applied to Tiglath-pileser for assistance against Pekah king of Israel and Rezin king of Syria (2 Kings xvi. 7).

In the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser carried off the tribes east of Jordan, and the population of the extreme North of Palestine (2 Kings xv. 29).

**The commencement of the Captivity of Israel B.C. 739.**

**Shalmaneser** twice invaded Israel in the reign of Hoshea, took Samaria after a siege of three years, and carried Israel away "*into Assyria and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes*" (2 Kings xvii. 1-6).

**The second deportation of Israel B.C. 721.**

**Sargon**, father of Sennacherib, mentioned only once in Scripture (Isaiah xx. 1), where he is said to have sent Tartan against Ashdod. He is regarded as being the king of Assyria who first sent Colonists into Samaria (see p. xix.) (2 Kings xvii. 24).

**Sennacherib** invaded Judah in the reign of Hezekiah. The people of Judah were relieved from this invasion by the sudden destruction of the Assyrian host according to the word of Isaiah (2 Kings xix. 35). He was assassinated by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer (2 Kings xix. 37).

**Esarhaddon.** The successor of Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 37). He sent additional colonists to Samaria (see p. xix.) (Ezra iv. 2).

## BABYLON.

**Merodach-baladan** (Is. xxxix. 1) or Berodach-baladan (2 Kings xx. 12), sent ambassadors to Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness.

**Nebuchadnezzar** (or Nebuchadrezzar), in the reign of Jehoiakim, defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish (Jer. xlvi. 2-12, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20), invaded Judah, captured the city, placed Jehoiakim in fetters, plundered the Temple, and carried off to Babylon some of the sacred vessels, and many of the Hebrew nobles, including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. i. 6).

**The First Deportation of Judah (B.C. 606).**

From this date is to be reckoned the Seventy Years' Captivity which Jeremiah foretold.

Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiachin, who surrendered with his mother, princes, servants and officers, and was carried away captive to Babylon. The Temple was again pillaged of such vessels that remained, the nobles and the chief citizens were removed to Babylon, and none "*save the poorest sort of the people*" were left in the land (2 Kings xxiv. 8-16).

**The Second deportation of Judah B.C. 598.**

In the reign of Zedekiah the Jews again revolted, and Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem. Zedekiah effected his escape when the city was taken by assault, but was pursued, captured, and sent to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. His sons were put to death before his face, his eyes were thrust out, and he was conveyed, laden with fetters, to Babylon.

Nebuzar-adan was then commanded to complete the destruction of the city. The Temple, the royal palace, and the houses of the rich were burnt down, the walls were destroyed, the sacred vessels were either destroyed or carried to Babylon, many of the chief priests were put to death, and the rest with the greater part of the inhabitants were removed to Babylon. He left only "*of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen*" (2 Kings xxv. 12).

#### The Third deportation of Judah B.C. 588.

The few remaining inhabitants were finally removed to Babylon by Nebuzaradan.

#### The Fourth deportation of Judah B.C. 583.

The Babylonian kings did not colonize Judah.

**Evil-Merodach** released Jehoiachin from captivity (2 Kings xxv. 27-30).

**Belshazzar.** The night Belshazzar was feasting with his lords, Cyrus having diverted the course of the Euphrates, marched up the dry bed of the river, captured Babylon and slew Belshazzar (Dan. v.).

### PERSIA.

**Persia.** The empire of Persia was most extensive.

On the *East* it included Afghanistan.

On the *West* it embraced the whole of Asia Minor.

On the *North* it reached to the Caucasus.

On the *South* it included Egypt.

The Capitals were—

Babylon, in the valley of the Euphrates.

Susa or Shushan, in Susiana or Elam.

Achmetha or Ecbatana, in Media.

Persepolis (not mentioned in Scripture), in Persia.

**Cyrus**, the founder of the Persian Empire. He captured Babylon in the reign of Belshazzar, by diverting the course of the Euphrates, thus marching along the dry bed of the river to attack the city.

This success was predicted by Isaiah. "*Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*" (Isaiah xlv. 1-4).

Isaiah also prophesied that Jerusalem should be rebuilt under Cyrus. "*That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid*" (xliv. 28).

Cyrus promulgated the decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple. The decree was given in the

first year after the capture of Babylon, B.C. 536, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah who had foretold.

- (1) That the land of Israel should be a desolation, and that the Israelites should serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer. xxv. 11.).
- (2) That the king of Babylon should be punished (Jer. xxv. 12).
- (3) That after the end of the seventy years the people should return again (Jer. xxix. 10).

This prophecy was exactly fulfilled.

- (1) The first deportation of Judah occurred B.C. 606.
- (2) Babylon was captured by Cyrus and the king slain.
- (3) In the first year of his reign over Babylon Cyrus issued the decree permitting the Jews to return, B.C. 536, *seventy years* after the first capture of the city.

For the terms of the decree, see chapter i. 1-4.

**Cambyses**, son of Cyrus. Ahasuerus to whom the enemies of the Jews wrote "*an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem*" (Ezra iv. 6).

**Pseudo-Smerdis**, or Gomates, a Magian priest, who pretended to be Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses, who had been put to death by Cambyses.

The Artaxerxes of Chap. IV., who, on the receipt of the letters from the adversaries of the Jews, stayed the building of the Temple (iv. 7-24).

**Darius** (Darius Hystaspis). Upon the usurpation of Smerdis, the Magian, he conspired with six other Persian princes to overthrow the impostor, and on the success of the plot was placed upon the throne.

His reign is notable for rebellions, expeditions against Scythia, Libya, and India. His army under Mardonius suffered a crushing defeat from the Athenians at Marathon B.C. 521.

The successful attack on the usurper Smerdis by the seven Persian nobles may have given rise to the institution of the seven chief nobles of Persia referred to in Ezra vii. 14, "*Thou art sent of the king and of his seven counsellors*;" and in Esther i. 14, where the names are given and they are styled "*the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom.*"

Darius Hystaspis is the Darius to whom Tatnai and Shethar-boznai wrote when the Jews recommenced to rebuild the Temple. He made search for the decree of Cyrus, and found it at Achmetha (*Ecbatana*). He then gave permission to the Jews to continue their work and pronounced penalties on those who should hinder them or intrigue against them.

**Xerxes**, the successor of Darius, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. The famous Xerxes connected with Grecian history. The character of Xerxes precisely resembles that of the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Xerxes scourged the sea because his bridge of boats over the Hellespont was destroyed in a storm, and put to death the engineers of the bridge because the structure they had built had not withstood the waves. In a like spirit Ahasuerus repudiated his queen Vashti because she would not violate the decorum of her sex, and ordered the

massacre of the whole Jewish race to gratify the malice of Haman. (See the Book of Esther.)

**Artaxerxes Longimanus**, son of Xerxes, commissioned Ezra to go up to Jerusalem to carry out religious reforms (Ezra vii. 1). Nehemiah was one of his cupbearers, and was allowed by the king to go to Jerusalem to superintend the rebuilding of the walls of the city (Neh. ii. 1).

**Xerxes II.** not mentioned in Scripture.

**Sogdianus**, not mentioned in Scripture.

**Darius II.**, Ochus or Nothus, "*Darius the Persian*" (Neh. xii. 22), is either Darius II. (Ochus), or Darius III. (Codomanus).

**Darius the Mede** of the Book of Daniel is most probably Astyages, the last king of the Medes. He is called the son of Ahasuerus (Dan. ix. 1). If this Darius is Astyages, the Ahasuerus of Daniel will be Cyaxares.

**On Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes of Chap. iv. 6-7 there are two theories—**

I. Ahasuerus = Cambyses : Artaxerxes = Psuedo-Smerdis.

II. Ahasuerus = Xerxes ; Artaxerxes = Artaxerxes Longimanus.

**Arguments in support of the first theory are :**

(1) Darius of v. 5 and v. 24 is clearly Darius Hystaspis.

The notices are :—

(a) That the adversaries of the Jews "*hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia*" (iv. 5).

(b) So the work "*ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia*" (iv. 24).

(2) The letters (three in number) to Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes, with the decree of the latter are recorded between these two notices of the work ceasing till the reign of Darius.

The two kings between Cyrus and Darius are Cambyses and Smerdis. Therefore these are the only two kings that can be referred to.

(3) That Psuedo-Smerdis being a Magian would strongly oppose the building of the Temple.

**But this theory is faced by the following difficulties :**

(1) The *name* Ahasuerus is admitted to be the same as Xerxes ; and the *name* Artaxerxes is clearly the same as Artaxerxes (Longimanus).

(2) The letters mention the building of the city walls (vi. 12-16), not those of the Temple.

These difficulties are generally answered thus :—

(a) That the names Xerxes and Artaxerxes are appellatives which could be applied to any Persian monarch, as Pharaoh to the kings of Egypt, and Cæsar to the Emperors of Rome.

(b) That the Samaritans would represent the operations of the Jews in the most unfavourable light. Indeed, the outer walls of the Temple were very strong fortifications.



In support of the second theory it is urged :—

- (1) That there is no trace of any promiscuous application of the names Xerxes and Artaxerxes to Persian kings.
- (2) That the reign of Psuedo-Smerdis was so short and so troubled that he would not have been inclined to trouble about so insignificant a matter.
- (3) That the writer is merely indicating the hostility of the Samaritans, and gives the full statement of their doings but not in chronological sequence. This is not an uncommon practice of writers. And if inserted in error, the mistake is not unusual.
- (4) That after the reverses of Xerxes the Persian Kings would look with suspicion on the fortification of any city near the Western Coast, the point most assailable by the Greeks. The past history of Judæa would tend to make Artaxerxes disposed to prevent the strengthening of Jerusalem lest the Jews should intrigue with the Greeks and be enabled to foment a formidable opposition supported by the strength of a fortified capital.

If this theory be correct, we have the following as the sequence of events :

- (1) The decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple.
  - (2) The opposition of the Samaritans exhibited in intrigue at the Persian court during the reigns of Cambyses and Smerdis, and continuing till the reign of Darius.
  - (3) The favourable decree of Darius and the completion of the Temple.
  - (4) The Jews then make an attempt to rebuild the walls of the city. Complaints are made immediately to the Persian court with the result that Artaxerxes Longimanus stops the work until a further decree be made, "*until another commandment shall be given from me*" (iv. 21).
  - (5) That Nehemiah obtained from the king the necessary decree.
- The First Theory is the one usually adopted. The Cambridge Editors adopt the latter Theory.

Title in Scripture.	Title in Profane History.	Date. B.C.	Reign. Years.
Cyrus (Dan. x., Ezra i.).	Cyrus.	537.	7 years.
Ahasuerus (Ezra iv. 6).	Cambyses.	530.	7 years.
Artaxerxes (Ezra iv. 7-23).	Smerdis.	522.	7 months.
Darius (Ezra iv. 24, vi.).	Darius Hystaspis.	521.	36 years.
Ahasuerus (Esther).	Xerxes.	485.	21 years.
Artaxerxes	Artaxerxes	465.	41 years.
(Ezra vii., Neh. ii.).	Longimanus.		
(Not mentioned in Scripture).	Xerxes II.	424.	46 days.
(Not mentioned in Scripture).	Sogdianus.	424.	6 months.
Darius (Neh. xii. 22).	Darius II.	423.	18 years.

## THE CAPTIVITIES.

The captivities of Israel and Judah are rather deportations or expatriations than captivities. It was the policy of Assyrian kings to transport conquered peoples from their native countries, and Nebuchadnezzar followed the same policy.

Thus the Israelites of Samaria were deported to Media, and their country colonized by captives from the eastern side of the Euphrates.

This policy was adopted with the purpose of removing any chance of revolt. It might succeed if the deported nation became absorbed into the people among whom it settled.

But the Jews with their strong feeling of nationality were a nation most unlikely to become contented settlers, and they constantly longed for return.

The Assyrian and Babylonian system proved a source of weakness to the empire, and the colonists round Babylon hailed Cyrus as their deliverer.

It is better, then, to describe these captivities as forcible deportations of the Jews from their native land, and forcible detention as settlers in the country east of the Euphrates.

The deportations of Israel were under the Assyrian kings, and their country was colonized by settlers from different countries east of the Euphrates

## Deportations of Israel.

## TWO IN NUMBER.

**First Deportation** (B.C. 740), under Tiglath-pileser, in the reign of Pekah. He carried away the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh on the east of Jordan, with the tribes in Galilee, and settled them in Assyria (2 Kings xv. 29; 1 Chron. v. 26).

The precise localities where they settled were "*Halah, and Habor, and Hara and to the river Gozan*" (1 Chron. v. 26).

**Second Deportation** (B.C. 721), under Shalmaneser, in the reign of Hosea. "*He took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes*" (2 Kings xvii. 6).

## Deportations of Judah.

## FOUR IN NUMBER AND ALL IN THE REIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

**First Deportation** (B.C. 606, from which is to be reckoned the seventy years' captivity foretold by Jeremiah). *In the reign of Jehoiakim.* Jehoiakim was carried in fetters to Babylon; the Temple was plundered; the sacred vessels were carried to Babylon and placed by Nebuchadnezzar in the house of his God (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6-7). Many of the Hebrew nobles, including Daniel and his three friends were carried off at this time (Dan. i. 1-6).

**Second Deportation** (B.C. 598). In the reign of Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the nobles and chief citizens were carried off to

Babylon, and none save the poorest of the people were left in the land. The Temple was again pillaged of such vessels as remained (2 Kings xxiv. 8-16).

**Third Deportation** (B.C. 588), conducted by Nebuzar-adan after the capture of the city in the reign of Zedekiah. The Temple, the royal palace, and the houses of the rich were burnt down, the walls of the city were destroyed; the sacred vessels were either destroyed or carried to Babylon; many of the chief priests were put to death, and the rest, with the greater part of the inhabitants, were removed to Babylon. Nebuzar-adan left only "*the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen*" (2 Kings xxv. 12).

**Fourth Deportation** (B.C. 583), conducted by Nebuzadan, who carried off the few remaining inhabitants.

*Judah was not colonized by the Babylonians.*

### Conditions of the Jews in captivity.

- (1) They were not bondsmen but colonists, and received grants of land, agricultural or pastoral, out of the conquered territories at the disposal of Nebuchadnezzar.
- (2) Many of them rose to high positions in the state, such as—
  - (a) Daniel and his three companions (Dan. ii. 48).
  - (b) Mordecai was "*next unto King Ahasuerus*" (Esther x. 3).
  - (c) Esther became the queen of Ahasuerus (Esther ii. 17).
  - (d) Nehemiah was the cup-bearer of Artaxerxes (Neh. i. 11).
- (3) They increased in number and wealth.
- (4) They maintained internal jurisdiction over their own members.
- (5) They observed distinctions of rank, and carefully preserved their genealogies.
- (6) They kept the law of Moses, as far as possible, maintaining the rite of circumcision, and observing the laws respecting food (Dan. i. 8).

### Literature of the Captivity.

- (1) The prophets of the captivity are Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
- (2) The book of Esther is concerned with the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) B.C. 485-465.
- (3) The Psalms of the Captivity are x., xiii.-xv.; xxv.-xxvii., xxxvi., xxxvii., xlix., l., liii., lxvii., lxxvii., lxxx., lxxxviii., lxxxix., xcii., xciii., cxxiii., cxxx., cxxxvii.
- (4) Among the Apocryphal Books, Tobit presents a picture of the life of a family of the tribe of Napthali among the captives whom Shalmaneser brought to Nineveh, and Baruch whilst in captivity wrote the book that bears his name.

### Effects of the Captivity.

- (1) The old tendency to idolatry was entirely eradicated.
- (2) There arose a deep reverence for the letter of the Law, and for their great Lawgiver, Moses.
- (3) The love of agriculture declined, and gave place to a taste for commerce and trade.

- (4) The vernacular language had undergone a change, the Hebrew giving place to Aramaic.  
 [When Ezra caused the Law (Hebrew) to be read to the people it was necessary to explain it to the people by having it interpreted into Aramaic (Neh. viii. 7-8).]
- (5) Many of the Jews stayed behind in Babylon, unwilling to abandon wealth, position and security at Babylon for the insecurity and hazard of a return to Jerusalem. The Ten Tribes had dispersed over many parts of Asia Minor and the Persian Empire. We thus get the First Dispersion of the Jews.

**There were Three Dispersions in all.**

**First**, the Ten Tribes in Media and Assyria by Shalmaneser, the Two Tribes in the neighbourhood of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

**Second**, under the Syrian Kings, especially Antiochus the Great.

**Third**, the African and Egyptian dispersion under Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I.

These Dispersions had a peculiar influence on the promulgation of Christianity, for, in consequence, at the the time of our Lord a general persuasion of the near approach of a great deliverer prevailed over the whole East.

It is worthy of note that the course of apostolic preaching followed in a regular progress the line of Jewish settlements.

- (6) **Change in the names of the Months.** After the captivity the old Jewish names disappear and they are replaced by Babylonian names (see Appendix, p. 45). This is one of the strongest marks of how the residence in Babylon had affected the Jews.

## THE SAMARITANS.

**Their origin.** Settlers brought from the countries east of the Euphrates to colonize the kingdom of Israel depopulated by the deportation of the Israelites.

There appear to have been three separate colonizations.

**First**, by Shalmaneser, or Sargon, after the capture of Samaria.

*"The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel"* (2 Kings xvii. 24).

**Second**, by Esarhaddon, as stated by the Samaritans themselves, *"we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither"* (Ezra iv. 2).

**Third**, by Asnapper or Osnapper, *"the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river"* (Ezra iv. 10).

Asnapper is generally identified with Assur-bani-pul (Sardanapalus) king of Assyria and grandson of Esarhaddon (see p. xxii).

The following nations are named in Ezra iv. 9. *"The Dinaites,*

*the Apharsathchites, the Turpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites."*

As all the Israelites could not possibly have been deported, intermarriages would take place, and so the Samaritans of Ezra's time were a mixed race.

**Their Religious Worship.** The strangers from Babylon, Cuthah, etc., were, of course, idolaters and worshipped their respective idols according to the places whence they came. God's displeasure was manifested against them, and He "*sent lions among them which slew some of them*" (2 Kings xvii. 25).

When they appealed to the king of Assyria he despatched one of the captive priests to teach them "*how they should serve the Lord*" (2 Kings xvii. 27). The colonists, however, set up their own gods and mingled their worship with that of Jehovah. "*They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence*" (2 Kings xvii. 33).

### **Origin of the feud between the Samaritans and Jews.**

When the Jews commenced to rebuild the Temple the Samaritans came to Zerubbabel and asked to be allowed to join in the work on the ground that they had worshipped the God of the Jews, from the time they had entered the land. Their request was refused with the curt declaration, "*Ye have nothing to do with us*" (Ezra iv. 3). From this time the Samaritans were the bitter opponents of the Jews.

**Their opposition** lasted from the reign of Cyrus to the reign of Darius (B.C. 536—B.C. 521) and was displayed.

- (1) "*They hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose*" (iv. 5) *i.e.* either bribed officials at the Persian court to interpose delays and create difficulties in order to hinder the work, or paid the officials over the province of Syria to send unfavourable reports to the capital concerning the people of Judah.
- (2) In the reign of Ahasuerus they wrote "*an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem*" (iv. 6). The accusation appears to have had no effect.
- (3) In the reign of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and others wrote to the king again to no effect (iv. 7).
- (4) In the same reign Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter to the king (see p. xxxvi.) artfully suggesting that the rebuilding of the walls would enable the Jews to resist the power of the king, stating that the city of Jerusalem had always been a "*rebellious and bad city,*"—proof of which would be found if the records of the kingdom were searched. This letter was successful in its object. Artaxerxes had the records searched and finding that the Jews had ever been in revolt against the kings of Babylon gave orders that the building should cease. Then Rehum and Shimshai went up to Jerusalem and made the Jews "*to cease by force and power*" (iv. 23).
- (5) When the building was resumed Tatnai and Shethar-boznai visited Jerusalem to inquire into what was going on. The Jews pleaded the decree of Cyrus as a justification of their proceedings.

The matter was referred to Darius, who found the decree at Achmetha and ordered that the work should not be interfered with. A clause in the decree of this king, fixing the penalty of death upon anyone interfering with the Jews, effectually put a stop to active opposition for a time.

- (6) The opposition of the Samaritans continued through the government of Nehemiah, his chief opponents being Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshur the Arabian.
- (7) The opposition and enmity of the Samaritans against the Jews was increased by the action of Nehemiah in expelling from Jerusalem Manasseh the grandson of Eliashib the High Priest for marrying the daughter of Sanballat; Manasseh took refuge with the Samaritans, and obtained permission from Darius Nothus to build a Temple on Mount Gerizim. Manasseh was the first high-priest of this Temple for which the Samaritans claimed precedence before the Temple at Jerusalem on the ground that Gerizim was the proper place for sacrifice, because Joshua had built his first altar there.

From this time Samaria was the resort of all malcontent Jews, and the enmity between the two peoples became greater than ever, being intensified by the controversy between them as to which was the true Temple.

Gradually the Samaritans abandoned idolatry and claimed to partake of Jewish blood, as instanced by the remark of the woman of Samaria to our Lord, "*Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?*" (St. John iv. 12).

### The Samaritans in the time of our Lord.

#### Their worship.

They had adopted the Mosaic Law with these differences—

- (1) They accepted only the five books of Moses.
- (2) They celebrated the Passover on Mount Gerizim.
- (3) They directed their worship towards Mount Gerizim, though the temple no longer stood there.

They claimed Jewish descent which the Jews derided, terming them Cuthæans, mere strangers from Assyria.

The bitter enmity between Jews and Samaritans is often alluded to in the New Testament.

- (1) The Samaritans refused to receive our Lord "*because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*" (St. Luke ix. 51-56).
- (2) In the parable of the Good Samaritan our Lord chooses one of the hated race in order to emphasize the lesson of neighbourliness (St. Luke x. 30-35).
- (3) The woman of Samaria expresses surprise that our Lord should ask her for water to drink. "*How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?*" (St. John iv. 9). St. John gives the reason of her surprise "*For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*" (St. John iv. 9).

- (4) An allusion is made to the dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans when the woman of Samaria remarks to our Lord, "*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*" (St. John iv. 20).
- (5) The Jews said of Jesus "*Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?*" (St. John viii. 48), "Samaritan" being the worst epithet they could apply to our Lord.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

### **Asnapper.** R.V. Osnapper.

This personage, of whom nothing definite is known, is styled "*the great and noble Asnapper*," and is said to have brought nations from Babylon and to have set them in Samaria (iv. 10).

He has been identified with:

- (1) **Esarhaddon**, Asnapper being either another name or a title of honour.
- (2) Or the general employed by Esarhaddon to settle the colonists from Babylon in Samaria.
- (3) **Assur-bani-pul** (Sardanapalus), the successor of Esarhaddon. Asnapper may be the Persian form of the name.

Assur-bani-pul was one of the greatest of the Babylonian kings and his reign was brilliant and successful; thus he fully merits the title "*great and noble*."

He was the only Assyrian king who conquered Susa. He is also recorded as having captured Babylon and conquered Elam. All these details accord suitably with the mention of Babylonians, Susanchites, and Elamites among the colonists whom he settled in Samaria (iv. 9).

**Barzillai** the Gileadite. Famous in old Testament history as having offered hospitality to David at Mahanaim, when the king had fled from Jerusalem in the revolt of Absalom.

On David's return to Jerusalem after the defeat and death of Absalom he pressed Barzillai to accompany him to the city, but Barzillai declined on the ground of age. He however sent his son Chimham with David. Thus the descendants of Barzillai settled in Judah. David commended them to the care of his successor, Solomon: "*Shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table; for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother*" (1 Kings ii. 7).

The injunction was carried out, and in the last days of the Jewish monarchy we find the name of Chimham in connection with Bethlehem, "*the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem*" (Jer. xli. 17). Possibly David or Solomon had assigned to Chimham land in the neighbourhood of David's birthplace.

The descendants of Barzillai are mentioned in the list of those who returned from captivity (Ezra ii. 61, see note on this passage).

**Bishlam**, an officer under Artaxerxes of the province of Syria. Along with Mithredath, Tabeel, and others he wrote a letter to the king complaining of the conduct of the Jews in rebuilding at Jerusalem (iv. 7).

**Cyrus** (see Kings of Persia, p. xiii.).

**Hashabiah** (see Sherebiah).

**Iddo**, described as—

*"The chief at the place Casiphia"* (viii. 17).

*"Unto Iddo and to his brethren the Nethinims at the place Casiphia"* (viii. 17).

From these notices it has been concluded that Iddo was the chief or head of a Levitical College at Casiphia.

When the people were assembled at Ahava, Ezra found that none of the Levites had answered to his appeal. Accordingly he sent messengers to Iddo asking him to supply Levites. In response thirty-eight Levites and two hundred and twenty of the Nethinim joined the band under Ezra.

The text would make it appear that Iddo was one of the Nethinim, but it is more probable that he was a Levite presiding over a Levitical College, where there would be Nethinim as well.

**Jahaziah**, see Jonathan.

**Jeshua or Joshua**. I. Son of Jehozadak, was the first high priest after the Babylonish captivity. He was probably born in Babylon, whither his father Jehozadak had been taken (1 Chron. vi. 15). He accompanied Zerubbabel from Babylon on the issue of the decree of Cyrus and took a leading part in the rebuilding of the Temple and in the administration of the Jewish community at Jerusalem. (For particulars, see Zerubbabel.)

Four of his sons (Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah) married strange wives, whom they put away in the reformation carried out by Ezra (x. 18-19).

In connection with Jeshua, Zechariah uttered two remarkable prophecies concerning our Lord, whom the prophet designates as "the Branch" (Zech. iii. 8., vi. 9-15).

II. A Levite, a head of a house, who returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel (ii. 40).

He took an active part in the rebuilding of the Temple (iii. 9).

He and his house took part in the great religious confession of God's goodness and their own wickedness at the fast proclaimed by Nehemiah (Neh. ix. 4-5).

**Johanan**, son of Eliashib.

Ezra betook himself into the chamber of Johanan in the Temple, after he had made the chief priests, the Levites and the people swear an oath to make a covenant with God to put away the foreign wives and their children (x. 6).

**Jonathan**, the son of Asahel—mentioned in x. 15 as opposing Ezra's reform in removing the strange wives.

*"Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them"* (x. 15).

*Employed about.* R.V. stood up against.

From the above it would appear that Jonathan and Jahaziah were the leaders of the opposition and that they were supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai.



**Kadmiel**, a Levite who, with his family, returned with Zerubbabel (ii. 40).

Kadmiel and his house are mentioned on two occasions.

- (1) With Jeshua, the Levite, he and his family were active in rebuilding the Temple (iii. 9).
- (2) They took part in the great religious confession of God's goodness and their own wickedness at the fast proclaimed by Nehemiah (Neh. ix. 4-5).

**Meremoth**, son of Uriah, the priest.

Ezra, on his arrival at Jerusalem, appointed Meremoth to weigh and register the gold and silver vessels which he had brought from Babylon (viii. 33).

Meremoth took an active part in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. He worked between Meshullam and the sons of Hassenah who restored the fishgate (Neh. iii. 4).

He himself restored the portion of the Temple wall adjoining the house of the high priest Eliashib (Neh. iii. 21).

**Meshullam**, see Jonathan.

**Mithredath**, or Mithradates, which means "given by Mithra," or "dedicated to Mithra." Mithra was the Persian Sun-God.

There are two persons named Mithredath.

- (1) The treasurer of Cyrus, to whom the king gave the vessels of the Temple to be by him handed over to Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) (i. 8).
- (2) A Persian officer in the reign of Artaxerxes, having some official position in the province of Syria. He joined with Bishlam and Tabeel in writing to Artaxerxes a complaint against the Jews (iv. 7).

**Nebuchadnezzar** (see Kings of Babylon, p. xii.).

**Rehum**, styled the chancellor, an official who along with Shimshai and others wrote the letter to Artaxerxes which led to the suspension of the building of the Temple (iv. 9).

For the meaning of chancellor, see p. 43.

For the contents of the letter, see iv. 11-16 and p. xxxvi.

**Shabbethai**, see Jonathan.

**Shechaniah**, the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam. When Ezra had prostrated himself before the temple in grief for the sin of the people in taking foreign wives, Shechaniah came forward and suggested that these wives and their children should be put away under a solemn covenant to God. His suggestion was adopted (x. 2-5).

**Sherebiah**, one of the chief of the priests to whom Ezra at Ahava entrusted the vessels and treasure to be their special care during the journey from Ahava to Jerusalem (viii. 24).

**Sheshbazzar** (see Zerubbabel). The Persian or Chaldean name of Zerubbabel.

Reasons for identifying Sheshbazzar with Zerubbabel—

- (1) Zerubbabel is regarded as the leader of the returned exiles (iv. 2).
- (2) Zerubbabel, as the head of David's line, is always associated with the high priest Joshua in the administration at Jerusalem.

- (3) Sheshbazzar, is styled governor, "*Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor*" (v. 14). Zerubbabel is called governor by Haggai, "*Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah*" (Hag. i. 1, ii. 2, ii. 21).
- (4) It was customary for the Babylonians to give a Chaldean name to the Jewish exiles promoted to official positions, thus Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were known by the Chaldean names of Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Dan. i. 6-7).

**Shethar-boznai** (see Tatnai), an official connected with Tatnai in the government of Syria. His office is not defined, but with regard to Tatnai he may have held a position similar to that of Shimshai towards Rehum.

**Shimshai**, styled the scribe, an official who along with Rehum and others wrote the letter to Artaxerxes which led to the suspension of the building of the Temple (iv. 9).

For the meaning of scribe, see p. 44.

For the contents of the letter, see iv. 11-16 and p. xxxvi.

**Tabel**, see Bishlam.

**Tatnai**, styled governor of this side the river. Learning that the Jews had recommenced the work of building he went up to Jerusalem with Shethar-boznai and others, and inquired by what authority the work was proceeding. As governor he would be acquainted with the decree of Artaxerxes forbidding the work. When he learnt that Cyrus had issued a decree permitting the building to be raised he wrote to king Darius to inquire whether the statement could be verified. Pending inquiry he allowed the building to proceed (v. 1-17). Search was made for the decree, and it was found at Achmetha (*Ecbatana*). The reply of king Darius, issuing a decree permitting the building, was evidently sent officially to Tatnai.

*Governor of this side of the river, i.e. the Euphrates*, implies that Tatnai was governor of the Persian Province west of the Euphrates, *i.e.* on the same side of the river as Judæa.

For the contents of the letter see v. 6-17 and p. xxxvi.

**Zerubbabel** (*Zorababel, St. Matt. and St. Luke*), son of Shealtiel (*Salathiel, St. Matt. and St. Luke*). (In 1 Chron. iii. 19, he is given as the son of Pedaiah, the brother of Shealtiel. Therefore he was most likely the nephew of Shealtiel and succeeded his uncle as the head of Judah).

Zerubbabel was the head or prince of Judah in the time of the captivity, styled later "the Prince of the Captivity." In Ezra he is designated by his Chaldean name Sheshbazzar (see Sheshbazzar).

**Notices in Ezra.**

- (1) On the issuing of the decree of Cyrus, he put himself at the head of those who desired to return to Jerusalem, and the sacred vessels were committed to his care (i. 8-11).
- (2) He is styled "*Prince of Judah*" (i. 8).
- (3) He heads the list of those who returned (ii. 2).
- (4) With Jeshua he erected the altar (iii. 2), and kept the feast of Tabernacles (iii. 4).

- (5) With Jeshua he commenced to rebuild the Temple (iii. 8).
- (6) The Samaritans came to Zerubbabel to request that they might be permitted to join in the work of rebuilding the Temple, Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused their request (iv. 2-3). The Samaritans were successful in putting a stop to the work (iv. 4-24). During the period of suspension, Zerubbabel may have been one of those who were engaged in building costly houses for themselves, and who were reproved by Haggai (Hag. i. 4).
- (7) Roused by the appeal of Zechariah and Haggai, he resumed (along with Jeshua), the building of the Temple, and finished it in the sixth year of the reign of Darius (v. 1; vi. 15).
- (8) With Jeshua he restored the courses of the priests and Levites (vi. 18).
- (9) With Jeshua he kept the Passover (vi. 22).
- (10) His name occurs at the head of the list of those who returned recorded by Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 1).
- Titles of Zerubbabel or Sheshbazzar are—
- (1) **Prince of Judah** (i. 8)—prince = "nasi," either as head of the tribe of Judah, or as the head of the royal house of David. This title is given him as expressing his relation to his own people.
- (2) **The Tirshatha** (ii. 63) = pekhah.
- (3) **Governor** or pekhah. "*Sheshbazzar whom he had made governor*" (v. 14). The local governor at Jerusalem, subject to the satrap at Syria. This title expresses his relation to the court at Babylon.

## GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

**Achmetha**, or Ecbatana, the capital of Media, and the summer residence of the Persian kings.

The decree of Cyrus was found at Achmetha, after search for it had been made at Babylon. It is suggested that the state records may have been transferred from Babylon to Ecbatana, through fear that they might be destroyed during the disturbed reign of Psuedo-Smerdis.

**Ahava**, the name of a place, which appears also to have given its name to a river. Here Ezra gathered the second company of the Jews, who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. "*I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava.*"

Ezra halted there three days, making the final preparations for the journey. During the halt we find that:—

- (1) Noting the absence of Levites he sent to Iddo, at Casiphia, asking for "*ministers for the house of God.*"
- (2) He proclaimed a fast, asking for the guidance and protection of Jehovah.
- (3) He took a careful and exact inventory of the sacred vessels and treasure which he entrusted to the special care of twelve priests to guard them during the journey, and to deliver them safe and intact on their arrival at Jerusalem.

Ezra left Babylon on the 1st day of the 1st month (vii. 9), left Ahava

(where he stayed 3 days) on the 12th day of the month. Therefore he must have arrived at Ahava on the 8th or 9th day of the month. Consequently Ahava must be on the route between Babylon and Judæa, and at no very great distance from Babylon.

On this route are a river (called in Herodotus *Is*), and a town (modern *Hit*), 80 miles from Babylon, which seem to comply with the necessary conditions. Some conjecture that Ahava was one of the canals in the vicinity of Babylon.

**Ai**, a town east of Bethel, famous as being the second city captured by Joshua after the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan. The first defeat of the Israelites, the sin of Achan, and the subsequent capture and destruction of the city are fully described in Josh. vii., viii.

*Notice in Ezra* : 223 of the children of Bethel and Ai returned from captivity (iii. 29).

**Anathoth**, a priestly city in the tribe of Benjamin, about four miles north-east of Jerusalem. It is famous as being the native city of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1) and of Abiathar (1 Kings xii. 26). When Solomon deprived Abiathar of the priesthood he banished him to Anathoth "*to his own friends*" (1 Kings ii. 26).

*Notice in Ezra* : 128 men of Anathoth returned from captivity (ii. 28).

**Azmaveth** or Beth-Azmaveth, a place in Benjamin near Anathoth.

*Notice in Ezra* : 42 of the children of Azmaveth returned from captivity (ii. 24).

**Babylon**, situated on the Euphrates which flowed through the city dividing it into two parts.

The space within the walls was, at the lowest computation, more than 100 square miles. The height of the walls is variously estimated as from 75 to over 300 feet, and the breadth from 60 to 85 feet. Within the space enclosed by the walls were gardens, parks, fields and orchards. It was celebrated for its palaces, the temple of Belus and its hanging gardens, the latter considered one of the seven wonders of the world. Merodach-Baladan, who sent ambassadors to King Hezekiah is the first Babylonian King mentioned in Scripture, but the Empire of Babylon, as we know it in the time of the captivity, was founded by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. He was governor of Babylon under the last Assyrian King at the time of the Median attack against Nineveh. He went over to the Medes, married his son, Nebuchadnezzar, to the daughter of their leader, and joined in the attack against Nineveh, which led to the capture of that city.

From that time, B.C. 625, Babylon became not only an independent city but an empire. The empire lasted till the reign of Belshazzar (B.C. 538), when the city was taken by surprise. Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates and marched up the dry bed of the river. In the slaughter that ensued Belshazzar was slain.

Though Babylon continued a royal residence under the Persian Kings it gradually fell into decay, and its ruin was completed by the removal of the seat of empire to Antioch.

The history of Babylon is a remarkable instance of the fulfilment of prophecy. Whilst Babylon was a province of Nineveh Isaiah foretold to Hezekiah the captivity in Babylon (Isaiah xxxix. 4-8).

Its present state of ruin and desolation is exactly in accord with the prophecies of Jeremiah.

**Beeroth** (*wells*), one of the four cities of the Gibeonites, about ten miles north of Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin. Baanah and Rechab, who assassinated Ish-bosheth, were natives of Beeroth (2 Sam. iv. 2).

*Notice in Ezra* : 743 of the children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah and Beeroth returned from the captivity (ii. 25).

**Bethel** (*house of God*), a town on the borders of Ephraim and Benjamin, twelve miles from Jerusalem on the road to Sichem.

The original name was Luz.

Chief notices in the Old Testament are :—

- (1) Abram built an altar there (Gen. xii. 5).
- (2) It is the scene of Jacob's dream on his way to Padan-aram (Gen. xxviii. 19).
- (3) The ark was at Bethel in the days of the Judges (Judges xx. 18-26-27).
- (4) It was one of the cities included in Samuel's circuit (1 Sam. vii. 16).
- (5) Here Jeroboam erected one of the golden calves (1 Kings xii. 20).
- (6) Elijah visited Bethel where there was a school of the prophets (2 Kings ii. 3).
- (7) The priests sent by the king of Samaria to teach the colonists "how they should fear the Lord" dwelt at Bethel (2 Kings xvii. 28).

*Notice in Ezra* : 223 of the children of Bethel and Ai returned from captivity (iii. 29).

**Bethlehem** (*house of bread*), situated about five miles south of Jerusalem. Its ancient name was Ephrath or Ephratah. It is often called Bethlehem-judah to distinguish it from Bethlehem in Zebulon. It was the birth-place of our Lord (St. Luke ii. 4).

Notices in the Old Testament.

- (1) The Levite who became the first priest of the Danites came from Bethlehem (Judges xvii. 7).
- (2) Ibzan, the judge, was a native of Bethlehem (Judges xii. 8).
- (3) It is the scene of the history of Ruth (Ruth i. 1).
- (4) The birthplace of David (1 Sam. xvii. 12).
- (5) Samuel anointed David at Bethlehem (1 Sam. xvi. 13).
- (6) The birthplace of Joab, Abishai and Asahel (2 Sam. ii. 32).

*Notice in Ezra* : 123 of the children of Bethlehem returned from captivity (ii. 21).

**Casiphia.** The site is uncertain, but it cannot have been far from Ahava, for Ezra's messengers went and returned in three days.

If Ahava is the modern Hit, Casiphia must be on the road from Babylon to Judæa.

If Ahava was one of the Babylonian canals, Casiphia is most likely some town or village near Babylon.

It would appear that at this place was a Levitical college, of which Iddo was the head, for when Ezra noticed the entire absence of Levites in his company, he sent from Ahava to Iddo, at Casiphia, requesting him to furnish Levites. Thirty-eight Levites and two hundred and twenty of the Nethinim responded to the appeal.

**Chephirah** (*the hamlet*). One of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. ix. 17).

*Notice in Ezra* : 743 of the children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah and Beeroth returned from the captivity (ii. 25).

**Gaba** or **Geba**, a priestly town in Benjamin, about eight miles north of Jerusalem, on the borders of Judah and Israel. It was fortified by Asa out of the materials left by Baasha at Ramah. (See Ramah).

*Notice in Ezra* : 621 of the children of Ramah and Gaba returned from captivity (ii. 26).

**Gibbar** or **Gibeon**, a town in the tribe of Benjamin, about five miles to the north-west of Jerusalem.

Famous in Old Testament History as—

- (1) The city of the Gibeonites, who by stratagem induced Joshua and the Israelites to make a leagus with them (Josh. ix.).
- (2) The scene of Joshua's victory over the five kings of the south (Josh. x.).
- (3) The battle between Joab's men and Abner's men (2 Sam. ii.).
- (4) The murder of Amasa by Joab (2 Sam. xx. 8).
- (5) The abode of the tabernacle in the reigns of David and Solomon (1 Kings iii. 4).
- (6) The scene of Solomon's dream and his choice of wisdom (1 Kings iii. 5).

*Notice in Ezra* : 95 of the children of Gibbar returned from captivity (iii. 20).

**Hadid**, probably the same as Adida, a town to the east of Lod or Lydda.

*Notice in Ezra* : 725 of the children of Lod, Hadid and Ono returned from captivity (ii. 33).

**Jericho** (city of palms), situated in the plain of the Jordan, exactly over against where the Israelites, under Joshua, crossed that river.

It was captured and destroyed by Joshua (Josh. vi.), who placed the rebuilding of the city under a curse.

In the days of Ahab it was rebuilt by Hiel the Bethelite (1 Kings xvi. 34).

Zedekiah was overtaken and captured at Jericho when he had escaped out of Jerusalem when that city was stormed by the Chaldeans (2 Kings xxv. 5).

It would appear to have belonged to the kingdom of Israel, and to have been selected for the establishment of a school of the prophets (2 Kings ii. 5).

At Jericho Elisha healed the spring of waters (2 Kings ii. 19-22).

*Notice in Ezra* : 345 of the children of Jericho returned from captivity (ii. 34).

**Joppa**, the modern Jaffa, the seaport of Jerusalem, and distant thirty miles from that city. The cedars from Lebanon required for rebuilding the Temple were conveyed on rafts by the Syrians to Joppa, and thence transported by land to Jerusalem, exactly as they had been supplied by Hiram, King of Tyre, to Solomon when that King built his Temple.

Jonah sailed from Joppa for Tarshish in his attempt to avoid delivering the message of God to the people of Nineveh (Jon. i. 3).

Peter raised Tabitha to life at Joppa (Acts ix. 36-43), and was staying

there at the house of Simon the tanner, when the messengers of the centurion, Cornelius, came to request him to come to Cæsarea. Here St. Peter had the vision of the sheet let down from heaven (Acts x. 5).

**Kirjath-arim** or Kirjath-jearim (*the city of the woods*). A town of Judah about nine miles to the north-west of Jerusalem, lying on the border of Judah and Benjamin. It was a Gibeonite city (Josh. ix. 17).

When the ark was restored by the Philistines it came to Bethshemesh. The men of Bethshemesh were smitten for the sin of looking into the ark, so they entreated the men of Kirjath-jearim to come and fetch it. The ark rested at Kirjath-jearim for twenty years during the reign of Saul and was brought thence by David (2 Sam. vi. 3).

*Notice in Ezra* : 743 of the children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah and Beeroth returned from the captivity (ii. 25).

**Lod**, a town of Benjamin founded by Shemia or Shemer (1 Chron. viii. 17). It is the Lydda of the Acts of the Apostles. It is situated on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa, being distant about seven miles from the latter city.

*Notice in Ezra* : 725 of the children of Lod, Hadid and Ono returned from captivity (ii. 33).

**Magbish**, a town in Benjamin, the site of which is unknown.

*Notice in Ezra* : 156 of the children of Magbish returned from captivity.

**Media** was a district lying to the south and south-west of the Caspian Sea, bounded on the north and west by Armenia and Assyria. Elam lay to the west and south-west, and Parthia to the east. Media was a tributary province of Assyria, but became an independent kingdom under Cyaxares, about B.C. 650. In his attack on Nineveh, Cyaxares was joined by the Babylonian king Nabopolassar. Nineveh fell about B.C. 625. The Median empire was the shortest in duration of all the ancient Oriental empires. It terminated with the defeat of Astyages by Cyrus, B.C. 550. Media was then joined to the Persian kingdom, and is described in Ezra as "*the province of the Medes*" (vi. 2).

**Michmas** or **Michmash**, a town in Benjamin on the frontier of Israel, occupying a strong position on the north side of a ravine which separates it from Geba. (See Ramah.)

Here Jonathan gained a notable victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. xiii. 23, xiv.).

*Notice in Ezra* : 122 men of Michmas returned from captivity (ii. 27).

**Nebo**, called in Nehemiah "*the other Nebo*" (Neh. vii. 33), to distinguish it from Nebo on the east of Jordan. As the name occurs in connection with Bethel and Ai, it must have been situated to the north of Jerusalem, within the territory of Benjamin.

*Notice in Ezra* : 52 of the children of Nebo returned from captivity (ii. 29).

**Netophah**, the birthplace of two of David's heroes, Mahari and Haled (1 Chron. xxvii. 13-15). Seraiah, a supporter of Gedaliah, was a native of Netophah (2 Kings xxv. 23). It was a priestly city (1 Chron. ix. 16), the particular Levites who inhabited it being singers (Neh. xii. 28). In Nehemiah it is closely connected with Bethlehem (Neh. vii. 26).

Hence it must have been some village in the immediate neighbourhood of that place.

*Notice in Ezra* : 56 men of Netophah returned from the captivity.

**Ono**, a town of Benjamin founded by Shemea or Shemer (1 Chron. viii. 17). It is situated about six miles north of Lod or Lydda.

*Notice in Ezra* : 725 of the children of Lod, Hadid and Ono returned from captivity (ii. 33).

**Ramah**, one of the frontier fortresses of Benjamin, situated about 5 or 6 miles north of Jerusalem.

It was the residence of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 17).

Baasha endeavoured to fortify Ramah against Asa. Asa bought the assistance of Benhadad, king of Assyria, who invaded the north of Israel and compelled Baasha to abandon his purpose. Asa fortified Geba and Mizpeh with the material left by Baasha.

The march of the King of Assyria described by Isaiah indicates the position of Ramah and other towns exactly. "*At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid*" (Is. x. 28-29).

Thus Michmash is on the north side of the ravine, Geba on the south, and Ramah still further to the south.

*Notice in Ezra* : 621 of the children of Ramah and Geba returned from captivity (ii. 26).

**Samaria**, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, built by Omri. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it would appear to have been the seat of the Persian government of Palestine, the official at Samaria being under the governor or Satrap of Syria, who had his head-quarters at Damascus.

**Senaah**, identified with Magdal-Senna or the great Senna, about five miles north of Jericho.

*Notice in Ezra* : 3,630 of the children of Senaah returned from captivity (ii. 35).

**The Route of the Caravan.** They would follow the course of the Euphrates as far as Carchemish, which commanded the passage of the Euphrates. Here they would cross the river by the fords, and proceed south-west and south, through Hamath, Riblah, Syria and Samaria. This was the line of march taken by the Assyrian and Babylonian armies in their invasions of Palestine. Carchemish, as commanding the fords of the Euphrates, occupied an important strategic position, and was the scene of two battles between the Egyptians and the Babylonians. It appears to have been taken by Pharaoh-Necho shortly after the battle of Megiddo, in which Josiah was defeated and slain. Three years later the Egyptian King experienced a crushing defeat by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish (Jer. xlvi. 2).

Riblah appears to have been the head-quarters of the Babylonian kings, whilst they directed the operations of their armies in Palestine and Phœnicia. Nebuchadnezzar encamped here during the sieges of Jerusalem and Tyre. Zedekiah was brought from Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah and Jehoahaz was summoned to Riblah, by Pharaoh—this would be on the return of the Egyptian king from his victory at Carchemish.



**Tyre**, the great maritime city of Phœnicia. The Tyrians rendered the Jews great service in the rebuilding of the Temple. They cut down cedars in Lebanon, conveyed them to the sea coast, and then transported them by rafts to Joppa, the port of Jerusalem. They were paid in kind by contributions of wheat, wine and oil. Hiram, King of Tyre, performed a similar service for King Solomon and was paid in a similar manner.

**Zidon**, or **Sidon**, a town of Phœnicia on the sea coast, twenty miles to the north of Tyre.

The people of Zidon conveyed the trunks of the cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea coast, and then made them up into great rafts, which they floated down the Mediterranean to Joppa, the port of Jerusalem. They were paid for this service with food, drink and oil (Ezra iii. 7).

## THE THREE TEMPLES.

They all stood upon Mount Moriah, on the spot which David had purchased from Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. xxiv. 24), the summit of the hill being levelled to make a space sufficiently large on which to erect the building.

**I. The First or Solomon's Temple**, erected by King Solomon B.C. 1005.

The chief features in its history are:—

- (1) It was plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt, thirty-three years after its dedication (1 Kings xiv. 25-26), B.C. 972.
- (2) It was repaired by King Joash under the guidance of Jehoiada (2 Kings xii. 11), B.C. 856.
- (3) Ahaz plundered it to bribe Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, to attack the Kings of Syria and Israel (2 Kings xvi. 10), B.C. 740.
- (4) Hezekiah repaired the Temple (2 Kings xviii. 4) B.C. 726, but was forced to take its treasures to bribe Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 15), B.C. 713.
- (5) The Temple was polluted by Manasseh, who set up altars and idols in its courts (2 Kings xxi. 3), B.C. 698. Manasseh afterwards repented and removed the altars and idols.
- (6) Josiah repaired the Temple and restored the worship (2 Kings xxii. 3), B.C. 624.
- (7) It was plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. xxxvi. 7), B.C. 606.
- (8) It was again plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. xxxvi. 10), B.C. 598.
- (9) Nebuzaradan was commanded by Nebuchadnezzar to entirely destroy it in the reign of Zedekiah (2 Kings xxv. 13), B.C. 588.

**II. The Second Temple** built by Zerubbabel. It was several times plundered, but the chief desecration was that committed by Antiochus Epiphanes, who plundered and profaned it by setting up the idol of Jupiter near the altar, B.C. 170. The sacrifices were discontinued for three years, and were restored by Judas Maccabæus.

**III. The Third, or Herod's, Temple** was a rebuilding and rebeautifying of

the Temple of Zerubbabel. Though the main building was completed in nine years, subsequently other works were undertaken, and the courts enlarged so that the whole period was forty-six years. "*Forty and six years was this temple in building*" (St. John ii. 20).

It was entirely destroyed by the Romans on the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70.

### The Temple of Zerubbabel.

The only notice of the dimensions of this Temple is contained in chapter vi. 3-4. "*Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber.*"

Josephus gives the height of the porch as sixty cubits.

We may take for granted that it was divided into two portions, viz.

(1) **The Holy Place** (dimensions unknown), which probably contained

- (a) An Altar of Incense.
- (b) A Golden Candlestick.
- (c) A Table of Shewbread.

(2) **The Holy of Holies** (dimensions unknown), which contained nothing as far as we know, nor have we any record of how it was separated from the Holy Place.

The Temple probably had chambers as in Solomon's Temple, for storehouses and for lodgings for those priests and Levites who might be on duty in the Temple, for

"*Ezra went into the chamber of Johanan th. son of Eliashib*" (Ezra x. 6).

Eliashib the priest prepared for Tobiah "*a chamber in the courts of the house of God*" (Neh. xiii. 7).

The Vessels of the Temple consisted originally of those returned to the Jews by Cyrus.

In the Court of the Temple was the Brazen Altar erected by Zerubbabel, most probably before the Porch of the Temple, upon the site of the Brazen Altar of Solomon (Ezra iii. 2-3).

The Temple was commenced in the 2nd year of the Return, viz. B.C. 536.

It was completed in the 6th year of King Darius, viz. B.C. 516.

At the Foundation of the Temple it is recorded that those "*that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice*" (iii. 2).

They wept, sorrowing for the past, remembering their exile in Babylon, and contrasting the scanty assembly with the magnificent ritual of the former Temple.

The Temple of Zerubbabel lacked five things—

- (1) The Ark and the Mercy-seat.
- (2) The Shechinah or visible token of the Divine presence.
- (3) The Holy Fire of the Altar.
- (4) The Urim and Thummin.
- (5) The Spirit of Prophecy.

Haggai declared that "*the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former*" (Hag. ii. 9).

This was fulfilled by the presence of our Lord in the Temple of Herod, which was an enlargement of the Temple of Zerubbabel.

## CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS.

**Daniel.** As the last vision of this prophet was in the third year of Cyrus, and the decree of Cyrus was issued in the first year of that monarch, the closing years of Daniel are contemporaneous with the return of the Jews under Zerubbabel.

It has been suggested—

- (1) That the Jews owed the decree of Cyrus and the favour of that monarch to the influence of Daniel, who may have shewn the King the prophecies of Isaiah (xliv. 28) and Jeremiah (xlv. 1).
- (2) That Daniel wrote the chief portion of the last chapter of 2 Chronicles and the first chapter of Ezra.

The chief reasons given for this suggestion are—

- (a) That there is no reference in Daniel between the first year of Cyrus (i. 21) and the third year of Cyrus (x). Ezra i. if placed between Dan. ix. and x. exactly fills up the gap, and records the event of the first year of Cyrus.
- (b) The manner of the chapter is exactly Daniel's.
  - (1) The text of the decree (i. 2-4).
  - (2) The name of "Mithredath the treasurer" (i. 8), compare Dan. i. 3-11.
  - (3) The mention of the sacred vessels placed by Nebuchadnezzar in the house of his god (v. 7; Dan. i. 2).
  - (4) The giving of the Chaldee name of Shethbazzar to Zerubbabel v. 8-11; (Dan. i. 7).
- (c) That the narrator evidently wrote at Babylon, not at Jerusalem (Smith's "Dict. of the Bible").

**Haggai.** Nothing is known of his tribe and parentage. According to tradition he was born in Babylon, and it is probable that he was one of the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel.

The building of the Temple was suspended by the decree of Artaxerxes, but on the accession of Darius Hystaspis, Haggai and Zechariah urged Zerubbabel to renew the undertaking. The stirring words of Haggai were successful in inspiring the Jews to complete the Temple.

The date of his prophecies is well marked. They were delivered in the second year of Darius Hystaspis (B.C. 520), continuing from the 1st day of the sixth month to the 24th day of the 9th month (Hag. i. 1; ii. 10).

The chief points of his prophecies are—

- (1) Exhortation to renew the building of the Temple. "*Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house*" (i. 8).
- (2) A rebuke to the nobles for building great houses for themselves and thus neglecting the building of the Temple. "*Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*" (i. 4).
- (3) A prediction that the glory of the second Temple should exceed the glory of the first. "*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts*" (ii. 9). This prediction was fulfilled by the presence of Jesus in the second Temple.

- (4) A prediction of the setting up of the Messiah's Kingdom under the name of Zerubbabel. "*In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts*" (ii. 23).

Haggai is tenth in order of the Minor Prophets.

**Zechariah**, son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo (Zech. i. 1); though in Ezra he is termed the son (=descendant) of Iddo (v. 1). He was born in Babylon and returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. He seems to have been both priest and prophet.

He joined Haggai in urging the renewal of the building of the Temple (Ezra v. 1).

Their efforts were successful and the "*elders of the Jews builded and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo*" (vi. 14).

He commenced to prophesy "*in the eighth month in the second year of Darius*" (Zech. i. 1), two months after Haggai began.

His prophecies are in two parts—

1. (a) Exhortations to renew the building of the Temple.
- (b) Predictions concerning the advent of the Messiah.
2. (a) The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
- (b) The future condition of the Jews.
- (c) The compunction of the Jews for having pierced the Messiah.
- (d) Their admission by baptism to the privileges of the Gospel covenant.
- (e) The final establishment of Christ's Kingdom.

After Isaiah, the prophet Zechariah refers more particularly to the character and coming of our Lord.

The most notable prophecies are—

- (1) The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding on an ass (St. Matt. xxi. 2-9). "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*" (Zech. ix. 9).
- (2) The price of our Lord's betrayal and the fate of the money (St. Matt. xxvi. 15; xxvii. 9-10, where the prophecy is erroneously attributed to Jeremiah). "*So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord*" (xi. 12-13).
- (3) The piercing of our Lord's side (St. John xix. 34-37). "*And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*" (xii. 10).

Zechariah was the eleventh in the order of the Minor Prophets.

## DECREES AND LETTERS.

**The Decree of Cyrus, B.C. 538.—**

- (1) An acknowledgment that his power is based on heavenly authority.

- (2) A statement that he has received a divine mission to restore the Temple.
- (3) A permission to the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple.
- (4) An injunction to the Babylonians to assist the Jews with contributions in addition to those given by their freewill.

#### Why was the Decree issued ?

It is expressly stated

- (1) That "*the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*" (i. 1).
- (2) That Cyrus said the Lord "*hath charged me to build him an house*" (i. 2).

From these passages it has been conjectured that on the capture of Babylon Cyrus was brought into personal contact with Daniel, who drew the King's attention to the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the king.

This is a reasonable conjecture, but there was also another motive.

The policy of Assyrian kings was to transport conquered people, or at all events the upper classes, from their native countries. This was done under the idea that a conquered nation was weakened and would find no opportunity to revolt.

The presence of so many conquered peoples in the vicinity of Babylon greatly assisted Cyrus in his invasion. They hailed him as Deliverer, and saluted him as "Great King."

Cyrus therefore reversed the policy of the Assyrians, and earned the gratitude of many of the subject nations by allowing them to return to their native countries and to take with them their gods which had been forcibly removed to Babylon. ✓

#### The Letter of Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes (iv. 11-16).

- (1) Address to the king.
- (2) A statement that the Jews were re-fortifying Jerusalem (11)—the rebellious and bad city (12).
- (3) If the city is rebuilt the Jews will refuse to pay tribute and so the king's revenue will be lessened (13).
- (4) A statement that if the records be searched it would be found that the Jews had ever been in revolt against Assyria (14-15).
- (5) An appeal to the king's fears.

If the walls be rebuilt Jerusalem would be a centre of rebellion among the nations west of Euphrates, and the king would lose this part of his realm (16). ✓

#### The Decree of Artaxerxes.

Search had been made in the records, and their charge against the Jews as being rebellious had been found to be true. Therefore Rehum and Shimshai were to take proceedings to stop the building lest the king suffer damage.

#### The Letter of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai (v. 7-17).

- (1) Address to the King (7).
- (2) A statement of the case (8-16).
  - (a) They had heard that the Jews were rebuilding at Jerusalem (8).
  - (b) Accordingly they had paid a visit to that city and found that such was the case (8-9).

- (c) They had demanded on what authority this was being done (9-10).  
 (d) The Jews had claimed the authority of the decree of Cyrus (11-16).  
 (3) They had not cared to interfere lest they should be acting against the decree of Cyrus, thinking it better to refer the matter to the king. They suggest that a search be made at Babylon for this decree (17).

### The Decree of Darius (vi. 1-12).

- (1) A statement that after search the decree of Cyrus had been found, not at Babylon but at Achmetha (1-2).  
 (2) A transcription of the decree of Cyrus (3-5).  
 (3) A command to Tatnai, Shethar-boznai and others—  
 (a) To keep away from Jerusalem and not to interfere with the work (6-7).  
 (b) To support the work by providing—  
 (1) Money for the building (8).  
 (2) Whatever may be required for the maintenance of the worship (9).  
 (4) A special request that sacrifices and prayers may be offered for the king and the continuation of his dynasty (10).  
 (5) The penalty of death is decreed against any one who should attempt to alter the decree or interfere with the building (11-12).

## EZRA'S COMMISSION.

The commission is entirely religious, being an inquiry into the religious state of affairs at Jerusalem. Ezra had no civil powers beyond this.

In this respect the mission of Ezra differs from that of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was empowered to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and was made Tirshatha or local governor of Jerusalem, and was accompanied by an armed escort of "*captains of the army and horsemen*" (Neh. ii. 9). Nehemiah carried out both civil and religious reforms. Ezra dealt with religion only.

### Analysis of the Commission.

- (1) Ezra is permitted to take with him the people, priests and Levites who were willing to leave Babylonia for Jerusalem (viii. 1-14).  
 (2) He is entrusted with the gifts of the king and the Persian nobles and empowered to collect offerings from those who are willing to contribute (15-16).  
 (3) The purpose of these offerings is definitely stated :  
 (a) To buy what is necessary for the sacrifices.  
 (b) The vessels are for the house of God.  
 (c) The surplus to be devoted to what is needful for the house.  
 (4) The treasurers beyond the river are to contribute within a certain limit. This contribution in its nature is clearly designed for the Temple and its services.  
 (5) The ministers of the Temple are declared free from taxation.  
 (6) Ezra is empowered to appoint judges over Jews, and clearly over Jews only, to judge them according to their law.

This appointment was of the highest importance to the Jews, for their ecclesiastical law was also their civil law.

- (7) Authority given to punish with death, banishment, confiscation of goods or imprisonment those who did not obey "*the law of God and the law of the king.*"

The Commission thus clearly gave authority over Jews and Jews only. Ezra was therefore empowered to restore and improve the Temple Service and to enforce the observance of the Mosaic law as far as was consistent with the king's laws.

Ezra and Nehemiah inaugurated Judaism.

### The Foundation of Judaism.

The reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah are the beginnings of the Judaism of our Lord's time.

Thus:—

- (1) The high-priest becomes the head of the people and takes the place of the king.

The monarchy, as known under David, Solomon and their successors passes away.

- (2) The Scribe takes the place of the Prophet.

- (3) The written "Law" closed and sealed by Ezra in the Canon of the Old Testament is the absolute rule of the people, whilst prophecy disappears.

- (4) The Jew though dispersed among many nations becomes rigidly exclusive.

The foundation of this exclusiveness is exhibited on three occasions.

- (a) The exclusion from priestly office of those priests who could not establish their genealogical claims to priestly descent (ii. 62).

- (b) The refusal to allow the Samaritans to join in the work of rebuilding the Temple (iv. 3).

- (c) The reforms with respect to mixed marriages (p. 30).

Rightly developed, these ideas would have resulted in purity of worship and in a widespread religion claiming universality for the worship of Jehovah in all lands and by all peoples—exclusive only in denying the existence and destroying the worship of other Gods. This idea was the basis of the Apostolic teaching.—God the God of all nations, but the only God, all others being excluded.

This beautiful idea was gradually abused till it culminated in the absurd exclusiveness, formality, letter-worship and arrogant spiritual pretensions of the Pharisees of our Lord's time.

We may here discuss the three great religious decisions of Ezra and Nehemiah.

1. The exclusion of the priests who could not establish their lineage from Aaron.

At the time only a temporary exclusion was intended. Zerubbabel and the Jewish leaders evidently contemplated an early restoration of the power of inquiry of God by means of the Urim and Thummim.

Their decision was both wise and just.

Wise. The false forms of worship of Israel and the kings of Judah had taught the lesson, that purity of worship could be attained only by a rigid determination to admit nothing doubtful.

Just, because admission was only postponed, waiting the divine decision. Such decision could not be obtained, owing to the loss of the Urim and Thummim, and so the exclusion of these priests became permanent.

## 2. The refusal to allow the Samaritans to share in the rebuilding of the Temple.

The return of the Jews was a religious, not a political restoration. The returned exiles were charged with the duty of restoring the worship of Jehovah.

The Samaritans made this request, "*Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esarhaddon*" (iv. 2). But their worship of Jehovah was little more than nominal for "*these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children*" (2 Kings xvii. 41).

Thus the Samaritans were not only of a mixed race, but their religion was impure.

The whole design of the Great Restoration would therefore have been defeated, had the Jews granted the request of the Samaritans.

The bitter experience of the past had taught the Jews the danger of any compromise in religion with neighbouring nations.

In addition, religious union with the Samaritans would have destroyed the political independence of the scanty Jewish community.

The reply of Zerubbabel is twofold.

- (1) He denies the validity of their claim. "*Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God*" (iv. 3).
- (2) He pleads the decree of Cyrus, which granted the privilege of rebuilding the Temple to the Babylonian Jews only. To admit the Samaritans to a share in the work would be to violate the terms of the decree, and might lead to a revocation of the privilege. The exact and absolute character of Persian decrees is well known. "*The law of the Meds and Persians which altereth not*" (Dan. vi. 12). Even King Darius was unable to save Daniel from the den of lions (Dan. vi. 14-16).

## 3. The Marriage Reform.

- (a) Seven nations, viz. the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites were proscribed by Moses (Deut. vii. 1), and the children of Israel were forbidden to intermarry with any of them. "*Thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son*" (Deut. vii. 3). Five of these are mentioned in Ezra, and the Ammonites, Moabites and Egyptians are added (ix. 1). The Ammonites and Moabites were expressly excluded. "*An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord*" (Deut. xxlii. 3).



(b) We find the following breaches of this law in the history of the Israelites :—

- (1) The sons of Naomi married Orpah and Ruth, Moabitish women (Ruth i. 4).
- (2) Ruth married Boaz, and was the ancestress of David (Ruth iv. 13-22).
- (3) David married Maachah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur (2 Sam. iii. 3).
- (4) Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt (1 Kings iii. 1).
- (5) The mother of Rehoboam was Naamah, an Ammonitess (1 Kings xiv. 21). (See also 1 Chcn. ii. 17 and 34.)

We find that Ezra excluded women of all foreign nations, thus exceeding the Mosaic law in the severity of his reform.

He was justified in his action for—

- (1) The Mosaic enactments had reference particularly to the occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. Moses warned them of the consequences that would ensue from mixed marriages, "*They will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods*" (Deut. vii. 4).
- (2) These marriages in olden times had resulted in idolatry.
- (3) The Babylonish captivity was a punishment inflicted upon the nation for this idolatry.
- (4) The experience of the past, therefore, taught Ezra that nothing save rigid adherence to the law would avail to prevent a repetition of idolatry and disaster.
- (5) The religious separation of the Jews was the only means of preserving Judaism.

Had Ezra acted otherwise in the critical condition of the Jewish community, the object of the return in restoring the worship of Jehovah would have been frustrated.

## THE BOOK OF EZRA.

### I. Connection with the Books of the Chronicles.

1. **General character** of the historical narrative, evidently extracts taken from various sources, is similar in each book.
2. **Ecclesiastical character.** The history of Chronicles has been termed "ecclesiastical," that of Samuel and Kings "political." We see the same characteristic in Ezra. Ezra is concerned chiefly with the re-establishment of the religious life of the Jews, rather than with the restoration of their political existence.
3. Like Chronicles the book of Ezra is conspicuous for statistical and genealogical tables, viz. :—
  - (a) The list of sacred vessels (i. 9-11).
  - (b) The list of those who returned from exile with Zerubbabel (ii.).
  - (c) The Genealogy of Ezra (vii. 1-5).
  - (d) The list of those who returned with Ezra (viii. 1-20).
  - (e) The list of those who married strange wives (x. 20-44).

4. The minute descriptions of the keeping of religious feasts is as marked a feature in Ezra as in Chronicles.
- (a) The dedication of the altar, and the feast of tabernacles (iii. 1-7).
  - (b) The foundation of the Temple (iii. 8-13).
  - (c) The dedication of the Temple (vi. 15-18).
  - (d) The celebration of the Passover (vi. 19-22).
  - (e) The re-establishment of burnt offerings, and the set feasts (viii. 35).
  - (f) The confession of the people (x. 1-14).
5. Like Chronicles Ezra gives special prominence to the Levites and other attendants of the Temple. In this connection we may notice the mention of "singers," "porters," and "Nethinim."
6. The close similarity in style and diction, such expressions as "fathers' houses," "heads of fathers' houses," "the house of God," "people of the countries," etc., occur only in the Books of Chronicles and in Ezra and Nehemiah.

So close indeed is the resemblance between Ezra and Chronicles that it is strongly maintained that the same author compiled both works.

## II. Connection with the Book of Daniel.

But in style Ezra more resembles Daniel than any other book of Scripture, excepting Chronicles.

- (1) In both books there is a mixture of Aramaic with Hebrew. There is the same mixture in Jeremiah, but the phrases in Ezra are like Daniel's but unlike Jeremiah's.
- (2) The prayer of Ezra (ix. 6-15) bears a strong resemblance to that of Daniel (ix. 4-19).

Daniel and Ezra were both Babylonian Jews, whilst Jeremiah does not appear to have visited Babylon.

## III. Place in the Canon.

In our Bible the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are placed after the Books of the Chronicles as continuing the historical narrative of those books.

In the Hebrew Bible the order is Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. Chronicles concludes the Hebrew Canon.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK.

The Book of Ezra is made up of two completely distinct sections.

### I. The Return from Captivity. The Rebuilding of the Temple.

Zerubbabel, governor.

Jeshua, high priest.

Haggai and Zechariah, prophets.

A period of twenty-three years, from B.C. 538 to B.C. 516.

### II. The Commission given to Ezra by Artaxerxes Longimanus. The Journey to Jerusalem. The Reformation with respect of the mixed marriages.

A period of about twelve months from April, B.C. 458, to April B.C. 457.

Thus we have a gap of fifty-seven years between the first section and the second

## DETAILED ANALYSIS.

### Section I. The Return under Zerubbabel.

- (1) **The Decree of Cyrus** (i. 1-4) (see p. xxxv).
- (2) **The Return under Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel** (i. 5-10).
- (3) **The Register of the Return** (ii).
  - (a) The high priest, and the head of tribes (ii. 2).
  - (b) The people according to families (ii. 3-35).
  - (c) The priests (ii. 36-39).
  - (d) The Levites, including singers and porters (ii. 40-42).
  - (e) The Nethinim (ii. 43-54).
  - (f) The children of Solomon's servants (ii. 55-58).
  - (g) Israelites and priests of uncertain genealogy (ii. 59-63).
  - (h) Total 42,360 (ii. 64.)
  - (i) Horses, mules, camels and asses (ii. 66-67).
  - (k) The sacred vessels (ii. 68-69).
  - (l) Their servants (ii. 65).
- (4) **The Building of the Altar** (iii. 1-3).
- (5) **The Feast of Tabernacles** (iii. 4-6).
- (6) **Preparations for Rebuilding the Temple** (iii. 7).  
Masons and carpenters employed, and cedar trees brought from Lebanon.
- (7) **The Foundation of the Temple** (iii. 8-13).
- (8) **The rejection of the request of the Samaritans to join in the rebuilding of the Temple** (iv. 1-4).
- (9) **The opposition of the Samaritans, continuing from the reign of Cyrus to the reign of Darius** (iv. 5).
  - (a) Bribing officials at the Persian court to hinder the work (iv. 5)
  - (b) A letter of accusation to Ahasuerus (iv. 6).
  - (c) The letter of Bishlam, Mithredath and Tabeel (iv. 7).
  - (d) The letter of Rehum and Shimshai (iv. 8-16) (see p. xxxvi.).  
The reply of Artaxerxes (iv. 17-22) (see p. xxxvi.).
  - (e) Rehum and Shimshai go up to Jerusalem, and stop the work of rebuilding (iv. 23, 24).
- (10) **The completion of the Temple, in the 2nd year of Darius.**
  - (a) The prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhort Zerubbabel to renew the work (v. 1-2).
  - (b) The visit of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai to Jerusalem to inquire into the matter (v. 3-5).
  - (c) The letter of Tatnai to Darius requesting that a search be made for the decree of Cyrus (v. 6-17) (see p. xxxvi.).
  - (d) The decree of Cyrus found at Achmetha. The edict of Darius permitting the work (vi. 1-12).
  - (e) The Temple completed and dedicated. The Temple worship organized (vi. 13-18).
  - (f) A passover kept (vi. 19-22).  
An interval of 57 years.

**Section II. The Return under Ezra.**

- (1) **Ezra's genealogy** (vii. 1-5).
- (2) **The commission to Ezra from king Artaxerxes** (vii. 11-26)  
(see p. xxxvii.).
- (3) **Ezra's thanksgiving** (vii. 27-28).
- (4) **The list of those who returned under Ezra** (viii. 1-14).
  - (a) The heads of houses (viii. 1-3).
  - (b) The people according to families (viii. 4-14).
- (5) **The events of the journey** (viii. 15-36).
  - (a) The encampment at Ahava (viii. 15-30).
    - (1) The absence of Levites (viii. 15).
    - (2) Ezra sends to Iddo at Casiphia for Levites, and is joined by 38 Levites and 220 of the Nethinim (viii. 16-21).
    - (3) A fast proclaimed, as an invocation for God's protection on the journey (viii. 22-23).
    - (4) The sacred vessels and the treasure entrusted to certain priests (viii. 24-30).
  - (b) The journey which lasted four months (viii. 31-3).
- (6) **Arrival at Jerusalem** (viii. 32-36).
  - (a) A rest of three days (viii. 32).
  - (b) The vessels and the treasure handed over on the fourth day (viii. 33-34).
  - (c) A solemn sacrifice (viii. 35).
  - (d) Ezra delivers his commission and declares his mission (viii. 36).
- (7) **The Reform.**
  - (a) The princes of the people declare to Ezra the sin of the people in respect of mixed marriages (ix. 1-2).
  - (b) Ezra's consternation (ix. 3-4).
  - (c) Ezra's confession (ix. 5-15).
  - (d) Acknowledgment of guilt and the people's covenant (x. 1-5).
  - (e) The assembly and the reform (x. 6-15).
  - (f) The inquiry (x. 16-17).
  - (g) The list of offenders (x. 18-44).
    - (1) Priests (x. 18-22).
    - (2) Levites (x. 23-24).
    - (3) The people of Israel (x. 25-44).



MAP OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

# THE BOOK OF EZRA.

## TEXT AND NOTES.

### The Decree of Cyrus.

1. Now in the <sup>1</sup>first year of Cyrus <sup>2</sup>king of Persia, that the <sup>3</sup>word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be <sup>a</sup>fulfilled, the Lord <sup>4</sup>stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a <sup>5</sup>proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in <sup>6</sup>writing, saying, <sup>2</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord <sup>b</sup>God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup> <sup>7</sup>Who is there among you of all his people? 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 <sup>d</sup>the God,) which is in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> And whosoever <sup>c</sup>remaineth in any place where he <sup>8</sup>sojourneth, let the <sup>9</sup>men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with <sup>10</sup>goods, and with <sup>11</sup>beasts, <sup>12</sup>beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

a see R.V. b see R.V. comment p. 35. c see R.V. comment p. 35. d see R.V. e see R.V.

"Now" indicates that the book is a continuation of another work, probably the Books of Chronicles.

Cyrus (Intro. p. xiii.).

<sup>1</sup> First year of his rule at Babylon B.C. 538.

<sup>2</sup> Not because he is a Persian, but because Persia was the most important of his conquests.

<sup>3</sup> "This whole land shall be a desolation; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. xxv. 11).

<sup>4</sup> "After seventy years <sup>4</sup> accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you in causing you to return to this place." (Jer. xxix. 10).

<sup>5</sup> Probably through Daniel.

<sup>6</sup> By means of heralds throughout the kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> Cyrus also issued written decrees.

Daniel had probably told Cyrus of the prophecy of Isaiah (see below). Such a prophecy of the manner in which Babylon would be captured must have made great impression upon the king.

<sup>7</sup> Any Jew.

<sup>8</sup> Dwells as a stranger—The Jews are here regarded as "exiles in a foreign land."

<sup>9</sup> i.e. the people among whom he dwells.

<sup>10</sup> Tents, provisions and other necessaries for the journey.

<sup>11</sup> Horses and baggage animals, necessary for so long a journey.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to free will offering for the rebuilding of the Temple.

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me" (Is. xlv. 1-4).

### Preparations for the Return.

5 Then rose up *the chief of the fathers* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with <sup>2</sup>all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were about them <sup>3</sup>strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was <sup>4</sup>willingly offered.

a see R.V. comment p. 35.

<sup>1</sup>The Jews had preserved the sub-divisions of their tribes.

<sup>2</sup>All the Jews did not return. Many remained in Babylon unwilling to sacrifice their property. Only those went whom God stirred up to make the sacrifice.

<sup>3</sup>Helped them in obedience to the decree (v. 4).

<sup>4</sup>The freewill offering (v. 4) for the rebuilding of the Temple.

### Cyrus restores the Sacred Vessels.

7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which <sup>1</sup>Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the <sup>2</sup>house of his gods; 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of <sup>3</sup>Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto <sup>4</sup>Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them: thirty <sup>5</sup>chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty <sup>6</sup>knives, <sup>10</sup>Thirty *basons* of gold, silver *basons* of a <sup>7</sup>second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were <sup>8</sup>five thousand and four hundred. All these did <sup>9</sup>Sheshbazzar bring up *with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.*

a see R.V. comment p. 35. b see R.V.

<sup>1</sup>Intro. p. xii.

<sup>2</sup>His god, viz. Merodach.

<sup>2</sup> Kings xxv. 14-15. Dan. v. 2.

The Temple was plundered thrice in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

(1) In the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. xxxvi. 10).

(2) Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 13).

(3) Zedekiah (2 Kings xxv. 13-17).

<sup>3</sup>Mithridates = dedicated to Mithra (Intro. p. xxiv.).

<sup>4</sup>Zerubbabel = sown in Babylon (St. Matt. i. 12, St. Luke iii. 27).

<sup>5</sup>Dishes (Glossary, p. 39).

<sup>6</sup>Sacrificial knives.

<sup>7</sup>Of inferior quality.

<sup>8</sup>The sum above is 2499.

Probably only the larger vessels are mentioned above, and the full number made up of smaller utensils.

<sup>9</sup>The Chaldee name of Zerubbabel (Intro. p. xxv).

So in the book of Daniel.

Daniel = Belteshazzar.

Hananiah = Shadrach.

Misael = Meshach.

Azariah = Abed-nego.

The route. They would travel along the Euphrates to Carchemish, where they would cross the river, then make for Riblah, and go south-west through Syria and Samaria (Intro. p. xxxi.).

### The Register of Those that Returned.

2. Now these are the children of the <sup>2</sup>province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto <sup>3</sup>his city;

<sup>1</sup>The Jews dwelling in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood as distinct from the Jews who remained in Babylon.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. of Judah, now no longer a distinct kingdom but a province of the Persian Empire.

<sup>3</sup>The city to which his forefathers belonged.

#### I. The People.

2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ✓

There are two other copies, viz., in Neh. vii. 7-69, and I. Esd. v. 8-43.

See Appendix.

Jehoshua or Joshua, the High Priest. (Intro. p. xxiii.) Not the Nehemiah of the book of Nehemiah.

3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. 6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven



hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

#### II. The Priests.

36 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

#### III. The Levites.

##### *Three classes.*

(1) Levites proper. (2) Singers. (3) Doorkeepers.

40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine.

#### IV. The Nethinim. (See Note).

43 The *Nethinims*: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44 The children of Keros,

*a* Should be Nethinim—*im* is the sign of the plural = *those given*—a name applied to the class because they were given to the Levites as helpers. (Hieroduli, or temple bondsmen.) They performed the lowest and most laborious duties of the Temple. They were foreigners and originally heathens, either prisoners of war, or Canaanites left in the land. We have several notices of their assignment to the services of the Sanctuary:

(1) Moses assigned some of the captured Midianites to the Levites, "*which kept the charge of the tabernacle*" (Numb. xxxi. 47).

(2) Joshua made the Gibeonites "*hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord*" (Josh. ix. 27).

(3) David and other kings enlarged their numbers (Ezra viii. 20).

It would appear that they gradually ceased to be regarded as slaves, and to be considered a special class (the lowest) of the Temple servants. Their voluntary return from exile to take their former low position considerably raised their status, from this time the position was honourable.

the children of Siahah, the children of Padon, 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan, 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, 54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

#### V. THE CHILDREN OF SOLOMON'S SERVANTS (see Note).

55 The<sup>1</sup>children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 59 And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's <sup>a</sup>house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 36.

<sup>1</sup>The descendants of the Canaanitish nations whom Solomon compelled to forced labour. "And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which were not of the children of Israel, Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond service unto this day" (1 Kings ix. 20-21).

Solomon's great works on the Temple, Palaces and Jerusalem originated this system of forced service. Many of these labourers worked at Lebanon and in the quarries, others in Jerusalem on the buildings.

#### VI. Priests and Israelites of Uncertain Genealogy.

61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of <sup>a</sup>Koz, the children of Barzillai; which

<sup>a</sup> see R.V.

Barzillai, a rich Gileadite, who lived at Mahanaim. He assisted David when he fled from his son Absalom. On David's return Barzillai, on the ground of his great age, declined the invitation of the king to go to Jerusalem and settle there, but his

son Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem, and seems to have settled in Bethlehem, where he founded a family called after his own name (Jer. xii. 17).

took a wife of the <sup>1</sup>daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: 62<sup>2</sup> These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore <sup>b</sup>were they, <sup>3</sup>as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63 And the <sup>4</sup>Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not <sup>5</sup>eat of the <sup>6</sup>most holy things, till there stood up a priest with <sup>7</sup>Urim and with Thummim.

<sup>b</sup> see R.V. comment p. 36.

<sup>1</sup> One of the daughters of Barzillai married a priest, who took the family name. Probably this daughter was the heiress of Barzillai.

<sup>2</sup> They were unable to show their descent from the great houses or families unto which the tribes were divided. This insistence on genealogical accuracy is an important feature in the return of the Jews from captivity.

<sup>3</sup> Levitically or ceremonially disqualified.

<sup>4</sup> Tirshatha (Glossary p. 44).

<sup>5</sup> Have any share of the offerings on which the priests subsisted. These would be—(1) the meat (*meal*) offering (Lev. ii. 3-10), (2), the sin offering (Lev. vii. 26), (3), the guilt offering (Lev. vii. 6), and the peace offering (Lev. vii. 31-34), of which certain portions were set aside for the priests.

<sup>6</sup> The term "most holy" is important. These men were not debarred from partaking of the holy things, *i.e.*, the thank-offering, the first-fruits, the tithe and the firstlings of the flock.

The prohibition excluded them from consecrating, from entering the holy place, and from offering sacrifice.

<sup>7</sup> Urim and Thummim (Glossary, p. 41).

#### VI. The Total.

64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65 Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women. 66 Their <sup>1</sup>horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their <sup>2</sup>mules, two hundred forty and five; 67 Their <sup>3</sup>camels, four hundred thirty and five; their <sup>4</sup>asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

<sup>1</sup> Horses, the first mention of horses as used for ordinary purposes; hitherto always named in connection with war. A sign of the increase of wealth to the Jews at Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> Mules, used for riding by the wealthier classes.

<sup>3</sup> Camels, beasts of burden, carrying the tents and baggage.

<sup>4</sup> Asses, used by the poorer classes.

#### THE OFFERINGS.

68 And some of the <sup>a</sup>chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered <sup>b</sup>freely for the house of God <sup>1</sup>to set it up in <sup>c</sup>his place: 69 They gave after their ability <sup>d</sup>unto the treasure of the work threescore

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. comment p. 36. <sup>c</sup> see R.V. <sup>d</sup> see R.V.

<sup>1</sup> To rebuild it upon the same site.

and one thousand <sup>1</sup>*drams* of gold, and five thousand <sup>2</sup>pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel <sup>3</sup>in their cities.

<sup>1</sup> see R. V. comment p. 36.

<sup>1</sup> Daric, a Persian gold coin worth a little more than the English guinea (Glossary, p. 41).

<sup>2</sup> Pound. Heb. *Maneh* (Glossary, p. 42).

<sup>3</sup> Gradually the people settled into the cities of their families or houses.

### The Building of the Altar.

3. And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as <sup>1</sup>one man to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his <sup>2</sup>brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his <sup>3</sup>brethren, and builded the <sup>4</sup>altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. <sup>3</sup> And they set the altar upon <sup>a</sup>his <sup>5</sup>bases; for fear was upon them <sup>6</sup>because of the people of <sup>b</sup>those countries; and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening.

<sup>a</sup> see R. V. <sup>b</sup> see R. V.

The month Tisri — a sacred month. In it were, on the 16th day—The Feast of Trumpets (Numb. xxix. 1).

10th day—The Great Day of Atonement (Numb. xxix. 7).

15th day—The Feast of Tabernacles (Numb. xxix. 12).

The 7th month of the year of the return.

<sup>1</sup> There was no one absent.

<sup>2</sup> =The priests.

<sup>3</sup> =The head of fathers' houses.

<sup>4</sup> The altar of Burnt Offering.

<sup>5</sup> Either

- (1) Upon the foundation of the old altar which was still remaining,  
or (2) in the place which it was to occupy permanently.

<sup>6</sup> For these people would regard this as the first step towards the restoration of Jewish nationality.

### The Feast of Tabernacles.

4 They kept also the <sup>1</sup>feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the <sup>a</sup>custom, as the <sup>2</sup>duty of every day required; <sup>5</sup> And afterwards offered the <sup>3</sup>continual burnt offering, <sup>b</sup>both of the

<sup>a</sup> see R. V. <sup>b</sup> see R. V. comment p. 36.

<sup>1</sup> See Intro. p. xl., and Lev. xxiii. 34-42, Deut. xvi. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> The number of sacrifices altered each day during the Feast of Tabernacles. For the exact directions see Numb. xxix. 13, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The daily morning and evening sacrifice.

<sup>4</sup>*new moons, and of all the set feasts* of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will offering unto the LORD. 6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the <sup>5</sup>foundation of the Temple of the LORD was not yet laid. 7 They gave <sup>6</sup>money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and <sup>7</sup>meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring <sup>8</sup>cedar trees *from Lebanon to the sea of* <sup>9</sup>*Joppa*, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

<sup>c</sup> see R. V. comment p. 37.

the port of Jerusalem. The remaining distance (35 miles) would be land transit.

<sup>9</sup>They availed themselves of the general decree. There is no mention of such special grant, nor does Cyrus seem to have had authority over Phœnicia.

### The Foundation of the Temple.

8 Now <sup>1</sup>in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the <sup>2</sup>second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the <sup>3</sup>remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from <sup>4</sup>twenty years old and upward, <sup>5</sup>to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. 9 Then stood <sup>6</sup>Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, <sup>7</sup>together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 And when the <sup>8</sup>builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their <sup>9</sup>apparel with <sup>10</sup>trumpets,

<sup>a</sup> see R. V. <sup>b</sup> see R. V. comment p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *New moons* (Intro. p. x.). Having built the altar they resume the burnt offerings.

(1) Daily, morning and evening.

(2) At the new moon.

(3) At all set feasts (Intro p. x.).

(4) When free will offerings were presented.

<sup>5</sup> A great work, for which preparation must be made.

<sup>6</sup> Their own workmen, being on the spot were paid in money, the Phœnicians, as in the days of Solomon, were paid in kind.

<sup>7</sup> Corn and wine.

<sup>8</sup> The cedars were felled in Lebanon conveyed to the sea, then transported in floats or rafts to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> They availed themselves of the general decree. There is no mention of such special grant, nor does Cyrus seem to have had authority over Phœnicia.

<sup>1</sup> The second year of the Return.

<sup>2</sup> The month Zif—the same month in which Solomon laid the foundation of the Temple (1 Kings vi.). Preparation being complete, the work is now put in hand.

<sup>3</sup> Originally Levites commenced their duties at thirty years of age. David made them eligible for office at twenty years of age. (1 Chron. xxiii. 24).

<sup>4</sup> The Levite, not the high priest.

<sup>5</sup> As one man

<sup>6</sup> The workmen.

<sup>7</sup> Their priestly garments.

<sup>8</sup> The trumpets belonged to the priests.

and the Levites the sons of Asaph with <sup>9</sup>cymbals, to praise the Lord, <sup>c</sup>after the <sup>d</sup>ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang <sup>e</sup>together by <sup>10</sup>course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and <sup>f</sup>chief of the fathers who were ancient men that had seen the <sup>11</sup>first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, <sup>12</sup>wept with a loud voice; and 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 noise was heard afar off.

<sup>c</sup> see R.V. <sup>d</sup> see R.V. <sup>e</sup> see R.V. comment p. 37. <sup>f</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> The cymbals were assigned by David especially to the sons of Asaph.  
<sup>10</sup> Antiphonally.

<sup>11</sup> Solomon's Temple, destroyed fifty years before. The old men could remember it.

<sup>12</sup> Wept, either contrasting the small dimensions and mean appearance of the new Temple with the magnificent structure erected by Solomon; Or, reflecting on the desolation of the land, the great misery they had gone through, and the dangers to which they were exposed.

On this Temple, see Intro. p. xxxiii.

### Opposition.

From the Reign of Cyrus to the Reign of Darius.

4. Now when the <sup>1</sup>adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the <sup>2</sup>children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they <sup>a</sup>came to Zerubbabel, and to the <sup>b</sup>chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do <sup>3</sup>sacrifice unto him since the days of <sup>4</sup>Esar-haddon king of <sup>5</sup>Assur, which brought us up hither. 3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the <sup>b</sup>chief of the fathers of Israel, said

<sup>1</sup> See Neh. iv. 11. The commencement of the feud between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Not at present adversaries but destined to become such.

On the origin of the Samaritans, etc., see Intro. p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. those Jews who had returned from Babylon to Judah.

Seek = worship.

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Kings xvii. 24-28.

<sup>4</sup> Intro. p. xii.

<sup>5</sup> Assyria (Intro. p. xi).

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35.

unto them, <sup>6</sup>Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves <sup>7</sup>together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, <sup>8</sup>as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. <sup>4</sup> Then the <sup>9</sup>people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, <sup>5</sup> And <sup>10</sup>hired counsellors against them, to <sup>11</sup>frustrate their purpose, all the days of <sup>12</sup>Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of <sup>13</sup>Darius king of Persia.

<sup>10</sup> Either bribed Persian officials or employed paid agents at the court of Persia.

<sup>11</sup> To prevent them accomplishing their purpose of rebuilding the Temple.

<sup>13</sup> Intro. p. xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Intro. p. xiv.

#### In the Reign of Ahasuerus.

6 And in the reign of <sup>14</sup>Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>6</sup> The Samaritans had mingled idolatry with the worship of Jehovah. Had they been allowed to join in restoring the Temple it would have been impossible to keep the worship pure.

Acquiescence in their request would have frustrated the object of the Return.

<sup>7</sup> All of us and no one else.

<sup>8</sup> i.e. the commission was given to us, you have no part in it.

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritans retarded the work by any means in their power.

<sup>14</sup> Intro. p. xv.

Probably Cambyses; who takes no notice of the complaints.

Or Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. Intro. p. xv.

#### The Letter to Artaxerxes.

7 And in the days of <sup>1</sup>Artaxerxes wrote <sup>2</sup>Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the <sup>3</sup>letter <sup>a</sup>was written in the <sup>4</sup>Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. <sup>5</sup> Rehum the <sup>6</sup>chancellor and Shimshai the <sup>7</sup>scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: <sup>9</sup> Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; <sup>8</sup> the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, <sup>10</sup> And the rest of the nations whom the great

<sup>a</sup> see R. V.

<sup>1</sup> Pseudo—Smerdis. Intro. p. xiv.

Or Artaxerxes Longimanus Intro. p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign colonists in Samaria.

<sup>3</sup> Not the letter of verse 8.

<sup>4</sup> Aramaic, the official language of Persia.

iv. 8—vi. 18 are written in Aramaic. Probably taken from the official archives.

<sup>5</sup> Rehum, the Satrap over the Persian province of Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine.

<sup>6</sup> = the lord of judgment.

<sup>7</sup> = the royal secretary.

Every governor was accompanied to his province by a royal scribe (Her. iii. 28). He assisted in administering the province, and also sent reports to the king.

<sup>8</sup> Samaritans. The names given are the districts from which they originally came (see pp. 11-13).

and noble <sup>b9</sup>Asnapper brought over, and set in the <sup>c</sup>cities of Samaria, and the rest <sup>d</sup>that are on this side the <sup>10</sup>river, and <sup>e</sup>at such a time.

11 This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and <sup>e</sup>at such a time. 12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, <sup>f</sup>building the rebellious and the bad city, and have <sup>g</sup>set up the <sup>11</sup>walls thereof, and <sup>h</sup>joined the foundations. 13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay <sup>i</sup>2toll, <sup>13</sup>tribute and <sup>14</sup>custom, and <sup>k</sup>so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. 14 Now because we <sup>15</sup>have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; 15 That search may be made in the book of the <sup>16</sup>records of thy <sup>17</sup>fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a <sup>18</sup>rebellious city, and <sup>19</sup>hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city <sup>m</sup>destroyed. 16 We certify the king that, if this city be <sup>n</sup>builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shall have no portion <sup>o</sup>on <sup>20</sup>this side the river.

b see R.V. c see R.V. d see R.V. comment p. 37.  
e see R.V. comment p. 37. f see R.V. g see R.V.  
h see R.V. i see R.V. k see R.V. l see R.V.  
comment p. 37. m see R.V. n see R.V. o see R.V.  
comment p. 37.

Dinaites—the Dayani, from Dayan, bordering on Cilicia and Cappadocia.  
Apharsathcites, either an accidental repetition of the Aphasites or the Pharaohakites, a migratory tribe of Media.

<sup>9</sup>Either

- (1) an official employed by Esarhaddon to colonize Samaria,
- or (2) Esarhaddon himself,
- or (3) The Assyrian king Assur - bani - pul. (Intro. p. xi.)

For discussion see Asnapper (Intro. p. xxii.).

<sup>10</sup>The Euphrates. The country west of the Euphrates is intended.

<sup>11</sup>They omit to mention the Temple which the Jews were building, but mention the walls of the city which the Jews were not building.

<sup>12</sup>toll = a payment required from travellers using the highways.

<sup>13</sup>tribute = money tax.

<sup>14</sup>custom = tribute in kind.

<sup>15</sup>A figurative expression for being in the king's pay.

Salary—Salarium or salt money—illustrates the meaning of the phrase.

<sup>16</sup>Comp. Esther ii. 23, vi. 1, x. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Fathers = predecessors.

<sup>18</sup>Ahaz first became vassal to Assyria, invoking the aid of Tiglath Pileser against Pekah and Rezin. After his reign the following kings revolted, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoia-kim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

<sup>19</sup>As a centre of rebellion. Jerusalem re-fortified would be a centre of rebellion, the Jewish kingdom might be restored, and the country west of the Euphrates lost to the Persian empire.

<sup>20</sup>On the west of the Euphrates.



Tarpelites—the Tuplai. Another suggestion.

Archevites, natives of Erech.

Apharsites, the Persians.

Babylonians, colonists from Babylon. At the time of the colonization Babylon was subject to Assyria.

Susanchites, colonists from Sushan or Susa. (Intro. p. xiii.).

Dehavites, colonists of the Persian tribe of Dai (modern Daghestan).

Elamites colonists from Elam, the country of which Susa was the capital.

#### The Reply of the King.

17 Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and <sup>a</sup>unto the rest beyond the <sup>2</sup>river, Peace, and <sup>b</sup>and <sup>3</sup>at such a time. 18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been <sup>4</sup>plainly read before me. 19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made <sup>5</sup>insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. 20 There have been <sup>6</sup>mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all <sup>c</sup>countries beyond the river; and <sup>d</sup>toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them. 21 <sup>e</sup>Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, <sup>f</sup>until another commandment shall be given from me. 22 <sup>g</sup>Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

a see R.V. comment p. 37. b see R.V. comment p. 37. c see R.V. d see R.V. e see R.V. f see R.V. g see R.V. comment p. 37.

#### The Work Stopped.

23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up <sup>1</sup>in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and <sup>2</sup>made them to cease by force and power. 24 Then ceased the work of the house of

<sup>1</sup> Decree.

<sup>2</sup> Euphrates. The country to the west of the river.

<sup>3</sup> = etcetera.

<sup>4</sup> Read and explained to me so that I understand it thoroughly.

<sup>5</sup> The revolts of Jehoiakim. Jehoiachin and Zedekiah would be found in the Babylonian records.

<sup>6</sup> David, Solomon, whose empire extended over all the country west of the Euphrates. Other great kings are Menahem and Josiah.

<sup>7</sup> See v. 13.

<sup>8</sup> They are to act on their own authority till they receive a formal decree from the king.

<sup>9</sup> Lose no time in stopping the work.

<sup>1</sup> They would lose no time in putting the command in force.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. With an army and with troops. As the city was not walled the Jews could not make resistance.

God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the <sup>3</sup>second year of the reign of <sup>4</sup>Darius king of Persia.

<sup>3</sup>B.C. 521.

<sup>4</sup>Intro. p. xiv.

The Chronology of this section (iv. 7-23) is a disputed point with commentators. Some identify Ahasuerus with Cambyses, and Artaxerxes with Pseudo-Smerdis. Others make Ahasuerus to be Xerxes, and Artaxerxes = Artaxerxes Longimanus. For the argument, see Intro. p. xv. The Cambridge Editors take the latter view, contending that the section treats of a matter of later history and has been inserted by the Compiler in this place because of its similarity of subject.

### The Prophets Haggai and Zechariah urge a Renewal of the Work.

✓ 5. Then the prophets, <sup>1</sup>Haggai the prophet, and <sup>2</sup>Zechariah the son of Iddo, <sup>3</sup>prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. 2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and <sup>4</sup>began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God <sup>5</sup>helping them. 3 At the same time came to them <sup>6</sup>Tatnai, <sup>a</sup>*governor on this side the river*, and <sup>7</sup>Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, <sup>8b</sup>*Who hath commanded you to build this house, and <sup>c</sup>to make up this wall?* 4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? 5 But the <sup>9</sup>eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they <sup>a</sup>*could not cause* them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then <sup>e</sup>*they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.*

<sup>1</sup>Intro. p. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Intro. p. xxxv., son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo.

<sup>3</sup>They warned the people against neglecting to build the Temple in order to have time for beautifying their own houses (Hag. i. 4-9).

<sup>4</sup>Recommended the work of rebuilding the Temple.

<sup>5</sup>By encouraging them to the work.

<sup>6</sup>Intro. p. xxv. The "Sisines" of 1 Esdras vi. 13.

<sup>7</sup>Satrap of the provinces west of the Euphrates.

Probably secretary to Tatnai, as Shimshai unto Rehum (iv. 8).

Tatnai as Satrap would have authority over Zerubbabel, who was the governor of a small district only.

<sup>8</sup>A quotation from Tatnai's letter to Darius.

<sup>9</sup>The favour of God is shewn in the fact that Tatnai did not stop the work, but allowed it to go on till he had learned the decision of Darius.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 37. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. <sup>c</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38. <sup>d</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38. <sup>e</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38.

#### Explanation of the visit of Tatnai.

The Samaritans would notice the renewal of the work. They would complain to Tatnai, and quote the decree of Artaxerxes (Pseudo-Smerdis).

Tatnai would regard the decree of such an usurper with suspicion, and decide to make a personal visit to Jerusalem.

He would find the complaints exaggerated so then he would decide to refer the whole matter to Darius. He learnt that the Jews were acting in accordance with a decree of Cyrus.

## The Letter of Tatnai.

6 The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor <sup>a</sup>on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were <sup>a</sup>on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king : 7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus ; Unto Darius the king, all peace. 8 Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of <sup>b</sup>Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with <sup>3</sup>great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work <sup>c</sup>goeth <sup>d</sup>fast on, and prospereth in their hands. 9 Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who <sup>e</sup>commanded you to build this house, and to <sup>e</sup>make up these walls ? 10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the <sup>5</sup>names of the men that <sup>f</sup>were the chief of them. 11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a <sup>6</sup>great king of Israel builded and <sup>g</sup>set up. 12 But after that our fathers had <sup>7</sup>provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. 13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a <sup>8</sup>decree to build this house of God. 14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the

<sup>1</sup> West of the Euphrates.

<sup>1</sup> West of the Euphrates.

<sup>2</sup> *Judah*—the name *Judea* belongs to a later date.

<sup>3</sup> *Lit. stones of rolling, i.e. so large that they had to be moved on rollers—they could not be carried.*

<sup>4</sup> *With diligence. They had been working urgently so as to complete before they were interrupted.*

<sup>5</sup> Names of persons who would be held responsible for the proceedings.

<sup>6</sup> Solomon.

<sup>7</sup> The sin of their forefathers had brought about their punishment at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

This verse gives the reason why the Temple had been destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> They quote the decree of Cyrus as the warrant for their action.

a see R.V. comment p. 37. b see R.V. comment p. 38. c see R.V. d see R.V. e see R.V. comment p. 38. f see R.V. g see R.V.

temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made <sup>9</sup>governor; 15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. 16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and <sup>10</sup>since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not <sup>h</sup>finished. 17 Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at <sup>11</sup>Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter. ✓

<sup>h</sup> see R.V.

<sup>9</sup> *Pekah* — governor over the district of Judah. Under Tatnai, just as Herod the Tetrarch would be under the Roman Procurator.

<sup>10</sup> From B.C. 536—B.C. 520. Not exactly a correct statement for the work had been suspended for a time.

<sup>11</sup> The decree was not found at Babylon but at Achmetha or Ecbatana.

### The Decree of Darius.

6. Then Darius the king made a <sup>1</sup>decree, and search was made in the <sup>a2</sup>house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. 2 And there was found at <sup>3</sup>Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of <sup>b</sup>the <sup>5</sup>Medes, a roll, and therein <sup>c</sup>was a record thus written; 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, <sup>4</sup>Let the house be builded, the place where they <sup>d</sup>offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. <sup>c</sup> see R.V. <sup>d</sup> see R.V.

<sup>1</sup> That search should be made for the Edict of Cyrus.

<sup>2</sup> The record office. Such a set of chambers has been found at Nineveh.

<sup>3</sup> Ecbatana. Intro. p. xxvi. The summer residence of the Persian kings.

<sup>4</sup> The decree of Cyrus v. 3-5, copied verbatim from the records and included in the decree of Darius.

<sup>5</sup> The Medes inhabited Media, a district between the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates, and bounded by the Caspian Sea on the South and the Black Sea on the North. Its capital was Ecbatana. In alliance with the Babylonians the Medes

strongly laid; the height thereof threescore <sup>6</sup>cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; 4 With <sup>7</sup>three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the <sup>8</sup>king's house: 5 <sup>9</sup>And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and <sup>e</sup>place them in the house of God. 6 <sup>10</sup>Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, <sup>11</sup>be ye far from thence: 7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in <sup>12</sup>his place. 8 <sup>18</sup>Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute <sup>14</sup>beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. 9 And that which they have need of, both <sup>15</sup>young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, <sup>16</sup>wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the <sup>17</sup>appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them <sup>18</sup>day by day without fail: 10 That they may <sup>19</sup>offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. 11 Also I have made a <sup>20</sup>decree, that whosoever shall alter this word.

<sup>e</sup> see R.V. f see R.V.

overthrew the Assyrian Empire. Later Cyrus conquered Media and incorporated it with the Persian Empire.

The conquest partook more of the character of a union between Persia and Media, than of a subjugation of Media, Medes being advanced to stations of high honour and importance, e.g. Darius the Mede of the book of Daniel.

<sup>6</sup> Cubit = eighteen inches. On the dimensions of the Temple, see Intro p. xxxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Either three storeys of a stone and a fourth storey of wood.

Or that the thickness of the wall must not exceed three rows of stones and an inner lining of wood.

<sup>8</sup> From the royal revenue.

<sup>9</sup> See chap. i. 7-11.

<sup>10</sup> The decree of Darius, v. 6-12, an abrupt transition to the decree of Darius itself.

<sup>11</sup> Keep away from Jerusalem, and do not interfere with the building of the Temple.

<sup>12</sup> Its place, i.e. upon the original site.

<sup>13</sup> Official sanction and support, including

(1) Contribution in money for the work (v. 8).

(2) Contribution in the things required for sacrifice.

<sup>14</sup> Of the province under Tatnai.

<sup>15</sup> Animals required for sacrifices.

<sup>16</sup> The necessary requirements for the different offerings (Ex. xxxix. 40; Lev. ii. 13).

<sup>17</sup> At the direction of the priests.

<sup>18</sup> Fresh each day, and a sufficient supply.

<sup>19</sup> Offer sacrifices and pray for the welfare of the king and the continuation of his dynasty.

<sup>20</sup> Decree—i.e. my decision.

let *timber* be pulled down from his house, and <sup>h</sup>being set up, let him be <sup>21</sup>hanged thereon; and let his house be made a <sup>22</sup>dunghill for this. 12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put <sup>i</sup>to their hand to <sup>k23</sup>alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done <sup>l</sup>with speed.

<sup>g</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38. <sup>h</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38. <sup>i</sup> see R.V. <sup>k</sup> see R.V. comment p. 38. <sup>l</sup> see R.V.

<sup>21</sup> Crucified or impaled.

<sup>22</sup> A draught house, or place for refuse.

<sup>23</sup> *i.e.* alter the decree for the purpose of destroying the house.

This clause effectually stops the intrigues of the Samaritans.

### The Execution of the Decree.

#### Completion of the Temple.

13 Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, <sup>a</sup>according to that which Darius the king had sent, <sup>b</sup>so they did speedily. 14 And the elders of the Jews builded and they prospered <sup>1</sup>through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and <sup>2</sup>Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15 <sup>3</sup>And this house was finished on the <sup>4</sup>third day of the month <sup>5</sup>Adar, which was in the <sup>6</sup>sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. <sup>b</sup> see R.V.

<sup>1</sup> The exhortations of the prophets had inspired the leaders with zeal and earnestness.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned in anticipation vii. 1. His contributions were of great assistance in perfecting the work.

This anticipatory mention of this king's name is an argument greatly in favour of the "anticipatory theory" as regards the section iv. 7-23.

<sup>3</sup> The recommencement of the work was the 24th day of the 6th month of the 2nd year of Darius (Haggai i. 15), thus 4 years, 5 months and 10 days had elapsed.

<sup>4</sup> From the decree of Cyrus (Ezra iii. 10), 21 years had elapsed.

<sup>5</sup> The 12th or last month, corresponding with March.

<sup>6</sup> B.C. 516-5.

#### Dedication and Consecration of the Temple.

16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the <sup>1</sup>children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God <sup>2</sup>with joy, 17 And offered at the dedication

<sup>1</sup> Glossary, p. 39—*i.e.* those who had returned from the Babylonish captivity.

<sup>2</sup> Joy and thanksgiving that all opposition was overcome and the Temple completed.

of this house of God an <sup>3</sup>hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for <sup>4</sup>all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18 And they set the <sup>5</sup>priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their <sup>6</sup>courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

Temple was carried on in periods, of one week each, by the different courses or divisions of all priests and Levites.

<sup>3</sup> Compare these insignificant sacrifices with the enormous number at the dedication of the First Temple (1 Kings viii. 5-63).

<sup>4</sup> The second Temple is a sign of the healing of the schism, and the establishment of a centre of religious unity.

<sup>5</sup> The priests and Levites once more assigned to their appointed duties.

<sup>6</sup> Courses or divisions. The service of the

### The Passover kept.

19 And the <sup>1</sup>children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the <sup>2</sup>first month. 20 For the priests and the Levites *“were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.”* 21 And the <sup>3</sup>children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, 22 And kept the <sup>4</sup>feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the <sup>5</sup>king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

<sup>a</sup> see R. V.

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> The Persian king, Darius. The Persian empire included the former one of Assyria.

<sup>1</sup> Glossary, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Nisan.

Instances of keeping the Passover.

- (1) By Moses, in the 2nd year after the Exodus (Numb. ix. 5).
- (2) Joshua at Gilgal after circumcising the people on their entrance into Canaan (Josh. v. 10).
- (3) Hezekiah after the purification of the Temple (2 Chron. xxx.).
- (4) By Josiah, after the reformation (2 Kings xxiii. 21).
- (5) By Zerubbabel and Joshua after the dedication of the second Temple (Ezra vi. 19).

<sup>3</sup> Two classes keep the passover (both Israelites)

- (1) Those who had returned from captivity.
- (2) Those who had been left in the land, and who, having mixed with the heathen, now separated themselves from them.

## The Genealogy of Ezra.

7. Now <sup>1</sup>after these things in the reign of <sup>2</sup>Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the <sup>3</sup>son of <sup>4</sup>Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, <sup>2</sup> The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, <sup>3</sup> The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, <sup>4</sup> The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, <sup>5</sup> The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of <sup>6</sup>Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the <sup>6</sup>chief priest.

<sup>5</sup>Note that Ezra is descended from Eleazar.

<sup>6</sup>Head priest.

<sup>1</sup>There is an interval of about fifty-seven years. During the interval must be placed the events of the Book of Esther.

<sup>2</sup>Artaxerxes Longimanus. (Intro. p. xv.). The Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther.

<sup>3</sup>Son = descendant (perhaps great-great-grandson).

<sup>4</sup>Put to death by Nebuzardan at Riblah B.C. 588 (2 Kings xxv. 18-21).

Ezra returned B.C. 458—130 years after.

For full genealogy, see p. 49.

## The Arrival of Ezra at Jerusalem.

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon ; and he was a <sup>1</sup>ready <sup>2</sup>scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given ; and the king granted him all his <sup>3</sup>request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. <sup>7</sup> And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. <sup>8</sup> And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the <sup>4</sup>seventh year of the king. <sup>9</sup> For upon the first day of the <sup>5</sup>first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the <sup>6</sup>fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. <sup>10</sup> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

<sup>1</sup>Ready = greatly learned so as to be able to give a ready answer to any question concerning the law.

<sup>2</sup>Not a secretary of state, but a student, interpreter and copier of the law. Scribe.

(1) King's secretary or chancellor (*under the kings*).

(2) Copyist of the law (*the later monarchy*).

(3) Expounders and Teachers of the law (*after the captivity*).

Glossary, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>We gather the nature of the request from the letter of Artaxerxes (v. 12-26).

Compare the list of Chap. ii. 70.

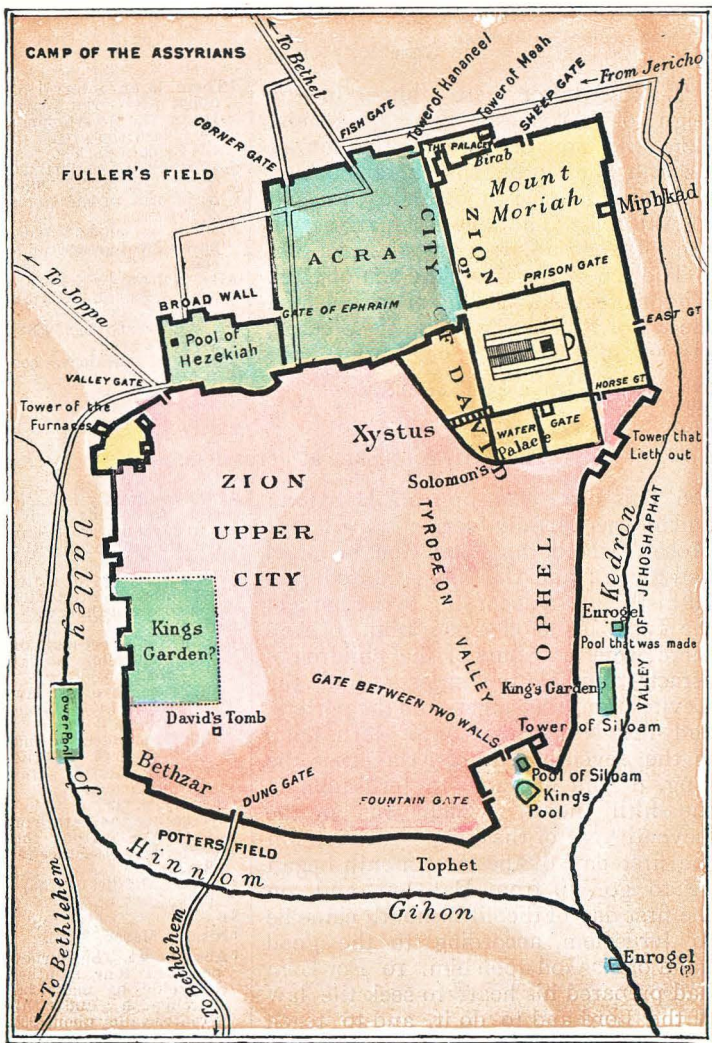
B.C. 458.

<sup>6</sup>Nisan = March, April.

<sup>6</sup>Ab = August. The journey occupied four months. It would be made by Carchemish and the Orentes valley about 900 miles. (Intro. p. xxxi.).

The caravan consisting of whole families would travel slowly, especially in summer, when it would travel only at night and early morning.





PLAN OF JERUSALEM TO ILLUSTRATE THE BOOK OF EZRA.

## The Letter of Artaxerxes.

11 Now this is the copy of the <sup>1</sup>letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, <sup>a</sup>*even a scribe* of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel. 12 Artaxerxes, <sup>2</sup>king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, <sup>b</sup>*a scribe* of the law of God of heaven, <sup>3c</sup>*perfect peace, and at such a time.* 13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of <sup>4d</sup>*his* priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their <sup>5</sup>own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. 14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his <sup>6</sup>seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; 15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose <sup>7</sup>habitation is in Jerusalem. 16 And all the silver and gold that thou <sup>e</sup>*canst* find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: 17 <sup>f</sup>*That thou mayest buy speedily* with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their <sup>g</sup>*meat offerings* and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. 18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. 19 <sup>8</sup>The vessels also that are given thee for the

<sup>a</sup> see R. V. <sup>b</sup> see R. V. <sup>c</sup> see R. V. comment p. 37.  
<sup>d</sup> see R. V. <sup>e</sup> see R. V. <sup>f</sup> see R. V. <sup>g</sup> see R. V.  
 (and burnt offering, p. x.).

<sup>1</sup> The letter is in Aramaic.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* King over many subject kings.

So Daniel addresses Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings" (Dan. ii. 37).

<sup>3</sup> A doubtful passage. It may refer to Ezra as being "perfect"—or it may be part of a formula.

<sup>4</sup> Their = priests of the people.

<sup>6</sup> No compulsion, no restraint. Those who desire to go are at liberty to accompany Ezra.

<sup>6</sup> "The seven princes of Persia and Media which saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom" (Esther i. 14). Seven nobles assisted Darius Hystaspis against Pseudo-Smerdis. These seven counsellors may be the heads of these families. Appendix p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> *i.e.* temple.

Three kinds of offerings.

- (1) From the king and his counsellors.
- (2) From the people of Babylon.
- (3) From priests and people — freewill offerings.

The vessels are those named in chap. viii. 25 27. Not sacred vessels restored to the Jews, but gifts from the king and others.

service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's <sup>9</sup>treasure house. 21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the <sup>10</sup>treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of <sup>11</sup>you, it be done *speedily*, 22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and <sup>12</sup>salt without prescribing how much. 23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, <sup>13</sup>*let it be diligently done* for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be <sup>14</sup>wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24 Also we certify <sup>15</sup>you, that <sup>16</sup>touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, <sup>17</sup>Nethinims, or <sup>18</sup>*ministers* of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose <sup>19</sup>*toll, tribute, or custom*, upon them. 25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, <sup>20</sup>set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are <sup>21</sup>beyond the river, <sup>22</sup>all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye *them that know them not*. 26 And <sup>23</sup>whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed *speedily upon him*, whether it be unto death, or to <sup>24</sup>banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

*h* see R.V. *i* see R.V. *k* see R.V. (*minister* here = servant, the original sense of the Latin, not a religious officer). *l* see R.V. *m* see R.V. *n* see R.V.

<sup>9</sup>*i.e.* the royal treasury at the capital.

<sup>10</sup>The local treasuries of the province beyond the river. Every satrapy had its local treasury.

<sup>11</sup>*i.e.* the treasurers.

The sum is limited to a definite amount.

About £37,500.

*cor* = 8 bushels.

*bath* = 6 or 7 gallons.

<sup>12</sup>For the sacrifices (Lev. ii. 13).

<sup>13</sup>Carried out to the most minute particular.

<sup>14</sup>Persia had just suffered severe disasters. Defeats by the Greeks at Marathon and Salamis, and disasters in Egypt. These are attributed to the anger of the gods.

<sup>15</sup>The treasurers.

<sup>16</sup>All persons connected with the services of the Temple are to be exempt from taxation.

<sup>17</sup>Nethinim (see p. 4).

<sup>18</sup>The lowest class employed in the service of the Temple (see p. 5).

<sup>19</sup>See p. 41.

<sup>20</sup>This appointment was of great importance to the Jews—their religious law was also the basis of their civil law. Magistrates of their own nation were the only persons able to judge and decide their civil cases.

<sup>21</sup>West of the Euphrates.

<sup>22</sup>Ezra's authority extends over all Jews in Syria, Phœnicia and Palestine, but over Jews only. He has no jurisdiction over other nations.

<sup>23</sup>Any Jew.

<sup>24</sup>Rooting out, outlawry—probably separation from the congregation

## Analysis of the Letter of Artaxerxes.

1. The Salutation. v. 12.
  2. Permission to the Jews to return with Ezra to Jerusalem. v. 13.
  3. A commission to investigate the religious condition of Judah and Jerusalem. v. 14.
  4. Ezra is instructed—
    - (a) To take the gifts of the King and his counsellors. v. 15.
    - (b) The gifts of the King's subjects. v. 16.
    - (c) The freewill offerings of the Jewish priests and people. v. 17.
- Such offerings are to be used—
- (a) For sacrifices. v. 18.
  - (b) For general purposes. v. 19.
5. Permission is given Ezra to draw upon the King's treasury for any further sum that may be required for the journey. v. 20.
  6. A credit is granted him on the local treasuries (*i.e.* on the West of the Euphrates) up to a certain amount. v. 21-23.
  7. The priest, Levites, and all attendants on the Temple are granted immunity from taxation. v. 24.
  8. Ezra is empowered to appoint judges over the Jews in the country west of the Euphrates, and to inflict the penalty of death, banishment, confiscation of goods or imprisonment upon those who violate the law. v. 25-26.

## Ezra's Thanksgiving.

27 <sup>1</sup>Blessed be *a*the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem: 28 And <sup>2</sup>hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened <sup>b</sup>as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel <sup>3</sup>chief men to go up with me.

*a* see R. V. comment p. 35. *b* see R. V.

There is here a transition from Aramaic to Hebrew. The language continues to be Hebrew till the close of the book.

<sup>1</sup>These are the words of Ezra, and do not form part of the decree. They are the solitary expression of Ezra's private devotion.

Nehemiah frequently breaks out with sudden pious thanksgivings.

<sup>2</sup>Ezra ascribes this honour done him by the Persian king to the mercy of God.

<sup>3</sup>The heads of fathers' houses.

## The List of those who accompanied Ezra.

8. These are now the <sup>1</sup>chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. 2 Of the <sup>2</sup>sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the <sup>3</sup>sons of David; Hattush. 3 Of the sons of <sup>4</sup>Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty. 4 Of the sons of

Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerachiah, and with him two hundred males. 5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. 9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. 10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. 11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. 12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. 13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

<sup>1</sup> Heads of fathers' houses.

<sup>2</sup> The priestly families.

<sup>3</sup> The royal family.

<sup>4</sup> The people generally.

V. 3. The same classification is found in II. 2.

### The Rendezvous at Ahava.

15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to<sup>1</sup> Ahava; and there *abode we in tents three days*: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there <sup>2</sup>none of the sons of Levi. 16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joarib, and for Elnathan, <sup>3</sup>men of understanding. 17 And I sent them <sup>4</sup>with commandment unto <sup>4</sup>Iddo the chief at the place <sup>5</sup>Casiphia, and <sup>6</sup>I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nehinims, at the place Casiphia, that they

<sup>1</sup> Ahava (Intro. p. xxvi.) Both a town and a river.

<sup>2</sup> The comparatively small number of Levites who returned is remarkable. Zerubbabel took 4,289 priests, but only seventy-four Levites. Ezra had to make a special appeal to the Levites, and then persuaded only thirty-eight to go with him (v. 18-20).

<sup>3</sup> Teachers and perhaps priests.

<sup>4</sup> Iddo (Intro. p. xxiii.) may have been the head of a school or college of Levites at Casiphia.

<sup>5</sup> (Intro. p. xxviii.) Situation unknown. As Ezra was at Ahava three days only (v. 15), Casiphia could not have been far from Ahava, for the messengers went and returned in three days.

<sup>6</sup> *Lit.* I put words in their mouth.

a see R. V. b see R. V. comment p. 39. c see R. V.

should bring unto us <sup>7</sup>ministers for the house of our God. 18 And <sup>d</sup>by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a <sup>b</sup>man of <sup>e</sup>understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20 Also of the <sup>f</sup>Nethinims, <sup>g</sup>whom David and the princes had <sup>e</sup>appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty <sup>f</sup>Nethinims; all of them were <sup>h</sup>expressed by name.

<sup>d</sup> see R.V. <sup>e</sup> see R.V. <sup>f</sup> see R.V. (and note p. 4).  
<sup>g</sup> see R.V.

### The Fast at Ahava.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might <sup>a</sup>afflict ourselves before our God, <sup>h</sup>to seek of him <sup>b</sup>a right way for us, and for <sup>2</sup>our little ones, and for all our <sup>3</sup>substance. 22 For I was ashamed to <sup>c</sup>require of the king a <sup>4</sup>band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the <sup>5</sup>enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them <sup>d</sup>for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. comment p. 39. <sup>c</sup> see R.V.  
<sup>d</sup> see R.V.

24 Then I <sup>1</sup>separated twelve of the <sup>a</sup>chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 And <sup>2</sup>weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels,

<sup>a</sup> see R.V.

<sup>7</sup>Servants, thus including Levites and Nethinim.

<sup>8</sup>He appears as the most earnest of the Levites under Nehemiah (Neh. viii. 7, ix. 4, x. 12, xii. 24).

<sup>9</sup>The only record that David assigned the Nethinim to assist the Levites.

<sup>10</sup>A list was made to which the compiler may have had access, but which he did not think it necessary to insert.

<sup>1</sup>Ezra desires a speedy and safe journey to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>Thus whole households went up.

<sup>3</sup>The gifts with which he was entrusted.

<sup>4</sup>Nehemiah had an escort, "Now the king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen."

<sup>5</sup>No particular enemy such as the Samaritans, but Arab robbers, who would plunder the caravan and rob stragglers.

Ezra had dwelt upon God's protection of His people, so was ashamed to ask for an escort.

<sup>1</sup>Ezra appoints twelve priests and twelve Levites to take charge of the offerings.

<sup>2</sup>Money was generally reckoned by weight.

even the offering <sup>b</sup>of the house of our God,<sup>3</sup> which the king, and his counsellors, and his <sup>c</sup>lords, and all Israel there present, had offered: 26 I even weighed <sup>d</sup>unto their hand six hundred and fifty <sup>e</sup>talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of <sup>f</sup>gold an hundred talents; 27 Also twenty <sup>g</sup>basons of gold, of a thousand <sup>h</sup>drams; and two vessels of fine <sup>i</sup>copper, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye are <sup>j</sup>holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers. 29 <sup>k</sup>Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the <sup>l</sup>chief of the priests and the Levites, and <sup>m</sup>chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the <sup>n</sup>chambers of the house of the LORD. 30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

<sup>b</sup> see R.V. <sup>c</sup> see R.V. <sup>d</sup> see R.V. comment p. 39. <sup>e</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35. <sup>f</sup> see R.V. comment p. 36. <sup>g</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35. <sup>h</sup> see R.V. <sup>i</sup> see R.V.

31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the <sup>1</sup>twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and <sup>a</sup>of such as lay in wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and <sup>b</sup>abode there three days.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V.

### Ezra presents the Gifts and Offerings.

33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God <sup>a</sup>by the

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> See vii. 15-16.

Talent of silver = £875. The whole sum = £243,750.

<sup>4</sup> £37,500.

<sup>5</sup> Talent of gold = £750. The whole sum = £675,000.

These sums are so enormous that it is supposed there has been an error in copying.

<sup>6</sup> Darics (see 41). Not a thousand darics each, but worth altogether a thousand darics.

<sup>7</sup> The Priests and Levites were consecrated, and to them were committed the consecrated vessels.

<sup>8</sup> Be vigilant and guard them from now till they are handed over to the priests at Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> So the Temple of Zerubabel had chambers like those of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings vi. 5). These chambers served as store rooms, and as meeting places for the priests.

<sup>1</sup> Ezra left Babylon the 1st day of the 1st month (vii. 8), stayed at Ahava three days, and left that place on the 12th day of the 1st month. Therefore Ahava would be nine day's journey from Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> For rest after the journey, and to make preparation for carrying out his commission.

Nehemiah also waited three days (Neh. ii. 11).

hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites: 34 <sup>b</sup>By <sup>2</sup>number and by weight of every one: and all the weight <sup>3</sup>was written at that time. 35 Also <sup>c</sup>the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt <sup>4</sup>offerings unto the God of Israel, <sup>5</sup>twelve bullocks for all Israel, <sup>6</sup>ninety and six rams, <sup>7</sup>seventy and seven lambs, <sup>8</sup>twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD.

b see R.V.

c see R.V.

1 Descendant of Phinehas.

2 The vessels and gifts were numbered, their weight taken, and checked with the list drawn up by Ezra at Ahava (v. 25-27).

3 An inventory was taken.

4 The offerings signify the restored unity of Israel.

5 one for each tribe.

6 eight for each tribe.

7 seven, the number of consecration intensified.

8 one for each tribe.

### The King's Commissions are delivered to the Governors.

36 And they delivered the king's <sup>1</sup>commissions unto the king's <sup>2</sup>lieutenants, and to the <sup>3</sup>governors <sup>4</sup>on this side the river: and they <sup>5</sup>furthered the people, and the house of God.

a see R.V. b see R.V. comment p 37.

1 The orders or decrees issued to the governors of the provinces adjoining Judæa (vii. 21-24).

2 Satrap, the governor of a province.

3 Pekhah or pasha, the governor of a small district.

4 West of the Euphrates.

5 Gave assistance to.

### The Reform. The Sin of the People.

9. Now when these things were done, the <sup>1</sup>princes <sup>a</sup>came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the <sup>b</sup>people of the lands, <sup>2</sup>doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken of their <sup>3</sup>daughters for themselves, and

a see R.V. b see R.V.

1 Heads of Tribes.

2 The mixed marriages had again led the people to join in idolatrous rites; their wives had induced them to take part in idol worship.

The prompt action of Ezra rescued the nation from this danger.

3 As wives.



for their sons: so that the <sup>4</sup>holy seed have mingled themselves with the <sup>e</sup>people of those lands: yea, the hand of the <sup>5</sup>princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 3 And when I heard this thing, I <sup>6</sup>rent my <sup>7</sup>garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that <sup>8</sup>trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the <sup>a</sup>transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat <sup>9</sup>astonished until the evening <sup>e</sup>sacrifice.

c see R.V. d see R.V. e see R.V.

### Ezra's Prayer.

5 And at the evening <sup>a</sup>sacrifice <sup>b</sup>I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, 6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our <sup>c</sup>trespass is <sup>1</sup>grown up unto the heavens. 7 Since the days of our fathers have we been <sup>d</sup>in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8 And now for a <sup>2</sup>little <sup>e</sup>space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to

a see R.V. b see R.V. comment p. 39. c see R.V. comment p. 39). d see R.V. comment p. 39. e see R.V.

<sup>4</sup>God's own peculiar people.

Princes = heads of the tribes.

Rulers = deputies, or inferior officials under the princes.

<sup>5</sup>They had set the example. They were treading in the disastrous course which had brought ruin upon the great kingdom of Solomon.

<sup>6</sup>Signs of grief.

<sup>7</sup>Ezra rent his tunic or undergarment, and his mantle, or long-flowing robe.

<sup>8</sup>In fear of God's judgments.

<sup>9</sup>Utterly bewildered.

With this prayer compare that of Nehemiah (ix. 6-38) and Daniel (ix. 4-19). The parallelism with the prayer of Daniel indicates that Daniel's prophecies were known to Ezra.

<sup>1</sup>Is become very great. The effect of the captivity had been such as to convince the nation that their former sins had been deservedly punished by national disasters.

<sup>2</sup>About eighty years from the decree of Cyrus.

give us a <sup>3</sup>nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a <sup>4</sup>little reviving in our <sup>5</sup>bondage. 9 For we *swere* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the *eddesolations* thereof, and to give us a <sup>6</sup>wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say <sup>7</sup>after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, <sup>8</sup>The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land <sup>h</sup>with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their <sup>i</sup>uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their <sup>9</sup>peace or their <sup>10</sup>wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great <sup>l</sup>trespass, seeing that thou our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us <sup>m</sup>such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in

*f* see R.V. comment p. 40. *g* see R.V. *h* see R.V. *i* see R.V. *k* see R.V. comment p. 40. *l* see R.V. comment p. 39. *m* see R.V.

(3) But God had shown them mercy in moving Cyrus and other kings to allow them to return to their land and city (v. 8-9).

(4) But in spite of God's mercy the people had again broken His commandments by marrying with heathen nations (v. 10, 11, 12).

(5) The punishment for their past sins had been well deserved. And now for this fresh disobedience, what can they expect but entire destruction? (v. 13-15).

<sup>3</sup>A pin of wood for fixing a tent. The metaphor signifies something to make them firm and secure—the nail is the Temple, on which all their hopes hung.

<sup>4</sup>*Lit.* make us a little life.

<sup>5</sup>Though they had returned from captivity they were still the subjects of the Persian kings.

<sup>6</sup>The wall of Jerusalem was not yet rebuilt. Ezra is referring to the protection of the kings of Persia acting as a defence and as a wall against their enemies.

Three stages:

(1) A renewal of national existence (*a little reviving*).

(2) The rebuilding of the Temple—the re-establishment of national religion on a sure basis (*a nail in his holy place*).

(3) The royal edict forbidding any interference with them on pain of death (*a wall in Judah and Jerusalem*).

<sup>7</sup>After this, i.e. this sin of the people in making mixed marriages.

<sup>8</sup>Deut. vii. 3.

"Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever" (Deut. xxiii. 6).

<sup>9</sup>Peace = not to make alliance with them.

<sup>10</sup>Wealth = endeavouring to become rich by means of their wealth.

Analysis of Ezra's Prayer.

(1) An expression of personal shame and national sin (v. 6).

(2) The history of Israel—a record of sin and retribution. The calamities that had befallen the nation were due to its sin (v. 7).

with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant <sup>o</sup>nor affinity with <sup>n</sup>the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry escaping? 15 O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our <sup>p</sup>trespasses: for we <sup>q</sup>cannot<sup>11</sup> stand before thee because of<sup>12</sup> this.

<sup>n</sup> see R.V.    <sup>o</sup> see R.V.    <sup>p</sup> see R.V. comment p. 39.  
<sup>q</sup> see R.V.

### The Confession and Oath of the People.

10. Now <sup>a</sup>when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and <sup>1</sup>casting himself down before the house of God, there <sup>b</sup>assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. 2 And <sup>2</sup>Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and <sup>c</sup>have taken strange wives of the <sup>d</sup>people of the land: yet now there is <sup>3</sup>hope <sup>e</sup>in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let us make a <sup>4</sup>covenant with our God to <sup>5</sup>put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the <sup>6</sup>counsel of my <sup>7</sup>lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and <sup>8</sup>let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise; for this matter <sup>9</sup>belongeth unto thee: we <sup>f</sup>also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. 5 Then arose Ezra, and made the <sup>g</sup>chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 40.    <sup>b</sup> see R.V.    <sup>c</sup> see R.V.  
<sup>d</sup> see R.V.    <sup>e</sup> see R.V.    <sup>f</sup> see R.V.    <sup>g</sup> see R.V.

<sup>11</sup> i.e. as being innocent.  
<sup>12</sup> i.e. the sin in contracting forbidden marriages.

Note the change of person from the 1st, to the 3rd.

This change of person is the great argument in favour of the Book of Ezra being the work of a compiler.

<sup>1</sup> Prostrating himself. At first he had knelt (ix. 5) in front of the Temple.

<sup>2</sup> Not mentioned elsewhere. His father had married a strange woman (x. 26).

<sup>3</sup> The matter is not hopeless. The people are willing to put away their foreign wives.

<sup>4</sup> Renewal of the covenant.  
<sup>5</sup> Divorce was easy among the Jews.

<sup>6</sup> Though he had given no express counsel his prayer would denote his opinion.

<sup>7</sup> Denotes the high position occupied by Ezra as the commissioner of the king.

<sup>8</sup> Let a bill of divorcement be given to each foreigner, so that she will be free to marry again (Deut. xxiv.).

<sup>9</sup> Is in accord with the commission given you by the king of Persia.

## The Proclamation.

6 Then Ezra rose up from before the <sup>1</sup>house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of <sup>2</sup>Eliashib: and when he <sup>3</sup>came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the <sup>a</sup>transgression of them that had been carried away.

7 And they made proclamation <sup>4</sup>throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; 8 And that whosoever <sup>b</sup>would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, <sup>b</sup>all his substance should be <sup>6</sup>forfeited, and himself <sup>7</sup>separated from <sup>c</sup>the congregation of those that had been carried away.

a see R. V. b see R. V. c see R. V.

## The Assembly.

9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within <sup>a</sup>three days. It was the <sup>1</sup>ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat <sup>b</sup>in the <sup>2</sup>street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. 10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have <sup>c</sup>transgressed, and have <sup>d</sup>taken strange <sup>e</sup>wives, to increase the <sup>e</sup>trespass of Israel. 11 Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the <sup>f</sup>people of the land, and from the strange <sup>e</sup>wives. 12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou

a see R. V. b see R. V. comment p. 40. c see R. V. d see R. V. e see R. V. comment p. 39. f see R. V. g see R. V.

<sup>1</sup> Probably in the Temple (iii. 2).

<sup>2</sup> The grandson of Jeshua, and high priest under Nehemiah (Neh. iii. i.).

<sup>3</sup> R. V. (*in Margin*) lodged there = passed the night there.

<sup>4</sup> So the returned Israelites had all settled near Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> According to the powers given to Ezra in his commission (see p. xxxvii.)

<sup>6</sup> Devoted, i.e. confiscated and appropriated to the Temple treasury.

<sup>7</sup> i.e. excommunicated.

<sup>1</sup> Chisleu, our December—the rainy month in Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> The outer court of the Temple.

Street often means an open space.

Ezra's address:

(1) the offence (v. 10).

(2) a command to the people:—

(a) to make confession.

(b) to put away the strange wives.

The people consent, but suggest that it will be better to appoint a commission to carry out the reform for:—

(a) the number of the people made the task a great one.

(b) The time of the year rendered it impossible for the people to stand long in the open air.

hast <sup>h</sup>said, so must we do. 13 But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: <sup>i</sup>for we <sup>3</sup>are many that have transgressed in this thing. 14 <sup>k</sup>Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God <sup>l</sup>for this matter be turned from us.

<sup>h</sup> see R.V.

<sup>i</sup> see R.V.

<sup>k</sup> see R.V.

<sup>l</sup> see R.V.

<sup>3</sup> A.V. "many that have transgressed."

R.V. "<sup>w</sup> have greatly transgressed."

Not only was it a heinous sin, but many had sinned.

### The Commission and its Work.

15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah <sup>1a</sup>were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 16 And the children of the captivity did <sup>2</sup>so. And Ezra the priest, with certain <sup>b</sup>chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were <sup>3</sup>separated, and <sup>4</sup>sat down in the first day of the <sup>5</sup>tenth month to examine the matter. 17 And they made an end with all the men that had <sup>c</sup>taken strange <sup>d</sup>wives by the first day of the <sup>6</sup>first month.

<sup>a</sup> see R.V. comment p. 40. <sup>b</sup> see R.V. comment p. 35. <sup>c</sup> see R.V. <sup>d</sup> see R.V.

<sup>1</sup> Stood against—i.e. they opposed the reform.

<sup>2</sup> Did as they had proposed notwithstanding the opposition of Jonathan and the others.

<sup>3</sup> Devoted their whole time to the inquiry.

<sup>4</sup> Held a court of inquiry.

<sup>5</sup> Tebeth = January.

<sup>6</sup> Nisan = April. Thus the commissioners took three months to complete their work.

### The List of those who had Married Strange Women.

18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had <sup>a</sup>taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren;

<sup>a</sup> see R.V.

(3) The people or laity 86. Total 113.

Three Groups.

(1) Priests 17

(2) Levites and ministers of the Temple 10.

viz. Levites 6.  
Singers 1.  
Porters

Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 And they <sup>1</sup>gave their *b*hands that they would put away their wives : and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass. 20 And of the sons of Immer ; Hanani, and Zebadiah. 21 And of the sons of Harim ; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah. 22 And of the sons of Pashur ; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elalah.

*b* see R.V.

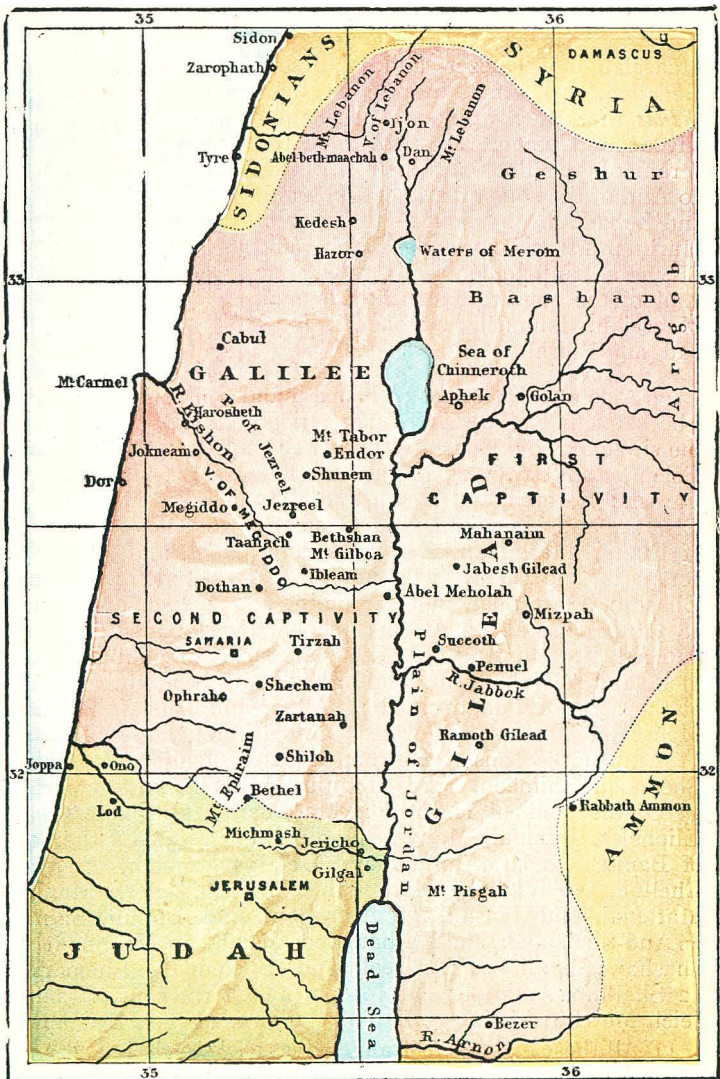
23 Also of the Levites ; Jozobad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24 Of the singers also ; Eliashib : and of the porters ; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. 25 Moreover of Israel : of the sons of Parosh ; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. 26 And of the sons of Elam ; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. 27 And of the sons of Zattu ; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. 28 Of the sons also of Bebai ; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. 29 And of the sons of Bani ; Meshullam, Mal-luch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. 30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab ; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. 31 And of the sons of Harim ; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon. 32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. 33 Of the sons of Hashum ; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. 34 Of the sons of Bani ; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, 35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, 38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, 39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, 40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, 41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah. 42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph, 43 Of the sons of Nebo ; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.

44 All these had taken strange wives : and some of them had wives by whom they had <sup>1</sup>children.

<sup>1</sup>They gave a distinct pledge and offered a special trespass offering. The giving of the hand was symbolical of a promise or pledge.

So Jehonadab and Jehu. "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand" (2 Kings x. 15).

<sup>1</sup>The children were put away as well as the mothers; thus the difficulty of Ezra's task was increased.



MAP OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

# COMMENTS

## ON THE

### REVISED VERSION.

"The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the Kingdoms of the earth" (i. 2.)

R.V. **All the Kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven given me.**

The R.V. (1) makes the phrase more emphatic; (2) accurately gives the Divine title.

"Who is there among you of all his people?" (i. 3.)

R.V. **Whosoever there is among you of all his people.**

Not interrogative but indefinite. Not an enquiry but a permission.

"The Lord God of Israel." (i. 3.)

R.V. **The Lord, the God of Israel.**

The R.V. makes this change throughout the book of Ezra.

"The chief of the fathers of Judah." (i. 5.)

The chief of the fathers.

R.V. **The Heads of fathers' houses** (see also ii. 68, iii. 12, iv. 2, viii. 1, viii. 29).

The R.V. brings out clearly the Jewish division of tribe, family, household. Each tribe was divided into families and each family into households or houses; each house had its recognized head. We find them first mentioned in Exodus. "*These be the heads of their father's houses, etc.*" (Ex. vi. 14-24). It was by their careful precision in these matters that the Jews were able to preserve the genealogies of the different families. When Joshua desired to detect the offender in the siege of Jericho we find that Achan was detected by casting lots.

The process of elision was (1) the *tribe* of Judah, the *family* of the Zarahites, the *household* of Zabdi, the *person* of Achan (Josh. vii. 18).

"Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort." (i. 10.)

Basons.

R.V. **Bowls.**

Vessels with covers or lids.

E\*



"*They could not shew their father's house.*"

(ii. 59.)

House.

**R.V. Houses.**

See R.V. i. 5. These returned exiles were unable to trace their descent from the great households into which the tribes were divided. They failed to specify their tribe or household. The R.V. brings this out clearly, whereas the A.V. would imply that they failed to shew recent ancestry. They would most likely be able to point out recent descent, but failed to trace their lineage to one of the great divisions of a tribe.

"*Therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.*" (ii. 62.)

**R.V. Therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood.**

The R.V. gives the correct account of what happened. The leaders of the return decided that as these claimants to the priesthood could not establish the genealogical accuracy of their claims, they must be declared "polluted" and so excluded from exercising the office of priest. The leaders made their own ruling and did not follow any precedent.

"*Beside their servants and their maids.*"

(ii. 65.)

**R.V. Their menservants and their maidservants.**

Clearly the more accurate rendering.

"*Offered freely for the house of God.*"

(ii. 68.)

Freely.

**R.V. Willingly.**

The willingness of the offerer, not the amount of the gift, is intended.

"Freely" leaves this in doubt.

"*One thousand drams of gold.*"

(ii. 69.)

Drams.

**R.V. Darics.**

Dram might mean the Greek "drachma." The actual coins were the Persian "darics" (see p. 41).

"*Afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts.*"

(iii. 5.)

**R.V. And the offerings of the new moons and of all the set feasts.**

The alteration is important. The A.V. implies that the continual burnt-offering belonged to the "new moons, set feasts, etc." They offered (1) the daily and morning sacrifice (*the continual burnt-offering*); (2) the offerings of the new moons; (3) those of all the set feasts. The R.V. makes this clear.

"From Lebanon to the sea of Joppa." (iii. 7.)

R.V. **From Lebanon to the sea, unto Joppa.**

The R.V. gives the right account of what happened, viz. the cedars were cut down at Lebanon, conveyed in rafts or floats by sea as far as Joppa, the nearest seaport to Jerusalem.

"To set forward the work of the house of the Lord." (iii. 8.)

To set forward.

R.V. **To have the oversight of.**

What is intended is "superintendence and direction," not a "pressing forward of the work."

"And they sang together by course." (iii. 11.)

R.V. **And they sang one to another.**

Lit. "they answered each other." This may have been in chorus or antiphonally.

The R.V. is a better rendering of the original.

"The rest that are on this side the river." (iv. 10.)

R.V. **Beyond the river.** So: v. 3; v. 6.

The river is the Euphrates. The nations referred to lived on the western side of the Euphrates, *i.e.* beyond the river with respect to the king of Persia who would receive the letter. Compare Gallia Cisalpina and Gallia Transalpina of the Romans. "The country beyond the river" was a recognized name at the Persian court for the Syrian satrapy.

"And at such a time." (iv. 10.)

R.V. **And so forth.** Also iv. 17, vii. 12.

The compiler probably suppresses unimportant matter in the address. The phrase is equivalent to the modern "*et cætera*." It is not a mark of the date of the letter.

"Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace." (iv. 14.)

Maintenance.

R.V. **Eat the salt of the Palace.**

This is a common Eastern phrase, denoting not only those who receive salaries, but all who obtain their sustenance by means of another. The Persian satraps were not paid salaries, but maintained themselves by taxing the provinces—part of the taxation was sent to the capital, the remainder was devoted to the support of the satrap and his court.

"Take heed now that ye fail not to do this." (iv. 22.)

R.V. **That ye be not slack herein.**

The king wishes to guard against remissness or dilatoriness on the part of officials. He does not anticipate disobedience, but his experience of Eastern lethargy causes him to warn the officials that he intends to require prompt obedience to his decree.

"Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?" (v. 3.)

Make up.

R.V. **Finish.**

The R.V. brings out strongly that the Jews were restoring the fortification of the city.

"But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease." (v. 5.)

Could not cause them to cease.

R.V. **Did not make them cease.**

The R.V. is a correct rendering of the original. The A.V. would imply a more direct divine interference. The favour of God is shown, in that Tatnai was content to allow the work to proceed until he had received instructions from the king.

"Till the matter came to Darius; and then they returned answer by letter." (v. 5.)

Came. . . . they returned answer by letter.

R.V. **Should come. . . . answer should be returned.**

The R.V. correctly describes what took place. Tatnai allows the work to proceed till (1) he had reported the matter to Darius; (2) he had received the reply of Darius. Then he would act upon the instructions he might receive.

"The province of Judea." (v. 8.)

Judea.

R.V. **Judah.**

The change is important though apparently trivial. Judea is a later title signifying the country inhabited by the Jews. At the time of writing, the district referred to was known as "Judah."

"Let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon." (vi. 11.)

R.V. **Let a beam be pulled out. . . . let him be lifted up and fastened thereon.**

From the R.V. we can gather clearly the nature of the punishment, viz. impalement.

"That shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God."

To alter and to destroy. (vi. 12.)

R.V. **To alter the same, to destroy.**

*i.e.* to alter the decree, for the purpose of destroying the house of God.

"Also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan men of understanding." (viii. 16)

Men of understanding.

R.V. **Which were teachers.**

The A.V. describes their abilities. The R.V. describes their position. The latter is the better rendering.

"To seek of him a right way for us." (viii. 21).

Right.

R.V. **Straight.**

Ezra desires that God will give them (1) a direct road, *i.e.* a near road, so that they may not have to go out of the direct way because of dangers or attacks by bandits or enemies; (2) a level road, easy to travel upon. It was the custom for Eastern kings to be preceded by pioneers who constructed a direct (*i.e.* near), level road for his troops. "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Is. xl. 3). The R.V. conveys these two ideas without any ambiguity. From the A.V. we might consider that Ezra was praying to be led on the *correct*, not the *wrong*, road.

"Weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth." (viii. 33.)

By.

R.V. **Into.**

Not that Meremoth had the charge of checking the weight of the silver, the gold and the vessels, but that these treasures were delivered to him and weighed and checked at the time of delivery.

"And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle." (ix. 5.)

Heaviness. R.V. **Humiliation.**

And having rent my garment and my mantle.

R.V. **Even with my garment and my mantle rent.**

The A.V. represents Ezra as having rent his clothes a second time. The R.V. represents him as appearing before the assembled people with his garments rent.

The latter is the more probable course of events.

"Our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." R.V. **Guiltiness.** (ix. 6.)

"We have been in a great trespass." (ix. 7.)

R.V. **We have been exceeding guilty.**

"In our trespasses." R.V. **Guiltiness.** (ix. 15.)

Not the sin itself, so much as a state of guilt resulting from sin.

"For we were bondmen."

(ix. 9.)

Were.

R.V. **Are.**

The bondage of the Jews was not yet over. The Jews at Jerusalem were in a state of servitude to the kings of Persia, equally with those who remained in Babylonia.

"Nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever."

(ix. 12.)

Wealth.

R.V. **Prosperity.**

The R.V. makes the passage identical with Deut. xxiii. 6. "*They shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever,*" and thus brings out the force of Ezra's appeal to the people.

Wealth formerly implied well-being generally, not as *now* applied exclusively to riches. So in the Litany, "in all time of our *wealth.*"

The R.V. replaces with a word conveying the modern meaning *i.e.* prosperity.

"Now when Ezra had prayed and when he had confessed."

(x. 1.)

R.V. **Now while Ezra prayed and made confession.**

The A.V. represents the people as assembling *after* Ezra's prayer and confession.

The R.V. represents them as assembling *during* the prayer and confession.

"Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, were employed about this matter."

(x. 15.)

Were employed about.

R.V. **Stood up against.**

From the A.V. we should conclude that the persons named were charged with carrying out the commission. The R.V. clearly indicates that they were the leaders of the opposition party.

"The people sat in the street of the house of God."

(x. 9.)

The street of the house of God.

R.V. **The broad place before the house of God.**

The word in the original conveys width, not narrowness. So the place referred to is the court or broad open place in front of the Temple.

"Threescore and one thousand drams of gold" (ii. 69). "A thousand drams."

(viii. 27.)

Drams.

R.V. **Darics.**

The A.V. "dram" would lead the reader to suppose that the coin referred to was the Greek "drachma." The coin mentioned the Persian "daric." For value, etc. see p. 41.

## GLOSSARY.

**Adversaries.** Always the Samaritans (see note, p. xix.). In iv. 1 they are called "adversaries" by anticipation. At the time of the compilation of the book the Samaritans had been constant opponents of the Jews for many years. Thus the writer naturally regards them as adversaries, and terms them such, whilst relating the circumstances which gave rise to their animosity.

**Beyond the River.** The river is the Euphrates. Persia lies to the east of the Euphrates, so the term "*beyond the river*," signifies the satrapy of Syria to the west of the Euphrates.

**Charger,** a great dish or platter. From F. *charger*, and O.E. *charge*, to load. Hence "that on which anything is laid, a dish." The word "charge" = to load, is still used of guns. "*A thousand chargers of silver*" (i. 9).

**Chief of the fathers** (see Comments on R.V., p. 33).

**Children of the Captivity,** equivalent to "the children of the province," *i.e.* those who returned from Babylon and settled in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia.

This term has reference to their captivity and would recall their past troubles. "Children of the province" describes their new condition as dwelling in their own land, yet without independence as being subjects to the Persian King in a Persian province.

**Children of Solomon's servants** (see p. 5).

**Elders,** or old men, were the representatives of the people.

They are first mentioned as acting in concert as a political body at the time of the Exodus. "*Moses came and called for the elders of the people*" (Ex. xix. 7). They retained their position under all the political changes which the Jews underwent, *viz.*

- (a) **Under Joshua.** "*Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel*" (Josh. xxiv. 1).
- (b) **Under the Judges.** "*When the people were come unto the camp the elders of Israel said, etc.*" (1 Sam. iv. 3).
- (c) **Under the Kings.** "*And the saying pleased Absalom well and all the Elders of Israel*" (2 Sam. xvii. 4).
- (d) **During the Captivity.** "*The letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives*" (Jer. xxix. 1).
- (e) **After the return.** "*But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews that they could not cause them to cease*" (Ezra v. 5).

**Nethinim** (see p. 4).

**Porters** (see p. 43).

Rending garments is a sign of woe in Scripture. "I rent my garment and my mantle" (ix. 3). Ezra rent his tunic or under garment, and the abba or long loose outer robe.

Instances of rending clothes are—

1. Reuben, when he found that Joseph was not in the pit (Gen. xxxvii. 29).
2. Jacob, when his sons showed him the blood-stained coat of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 34).
3. The brethren of Joseph, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Gen. xlv. 13).
4. Joshua, after the rout of the Israelites before Ai (Josh. vii. 6).
5. Jephthah, when his daughter met him (Judges xi. 35).
6. The Messenger who brought to Eli the tidings of the defeat of the Israelites, the capture of the ark, and the death of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. iv. 12).
7. The Messenger who brought the tidings of the death of Saul on Mount Gilboa to David at Ziklag (2 Sam. i. 2).
8. Job, on hearing of the death of his children (Job. i. 20).
9. Job's friends, when they visited him (Job ii. 12).

The action also often signifies "horror" at some intelligence or event which shocked by its enormity. Instances are—

1. Hezekiah, on hearing the speech of Rab-shakeh (2 Kings xviii. 37).
2. Mordecai, when he learnt the plot of Haman for the destruction of the Jews (Esther iv. 1).
3. The High-priest, at the blasphemy of our Lord when he claimed to be Son of God (St. Matt. xxvi. 65).
4. The men of Samaria, at the murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael (Jer. xli. 5).

**Roll.** A book or record in ancient times consisted of a single long strip of paper or parchment, which was usually kept rolled up on a stick, and was unrolled when it was desired to read it. "The house of the rolls" (vi. 1) = the house of the archives, *i.e.* chambers devoted exclusively to the storing of public documents.

**Since the days of our fathers** = from the first commencement of Israel's nationality, and points back to the days of the occupation of Canaan under Joshua.

**Singers** (see p. 43).

**The chief priests.** R.V. the chiefs of the priests = the heads of the courses.

**The children of the province, *i.e.*** of the province of Judah. Judah is now a province of Persia, not a separate kingdom. "The children of the province" are those who returned from Babylon and settled in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia.

**Urim and Thummim.** What these were we have no means of deciding. The words mean, "Light and Perfection." They were put in the breastplate of judgment worn by the High Priest. "*Thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart*" (Ex. xxviii. 30). The breastplate was worn over the ephod.

All that we know for certain is that they were worn by the priest when enquiring of the Lord.

The favourite theory is that the Urim and Thummim were identical with the twelve stones on which the names of the Tribes of Israel were engraved, and that the answer was given by the illumination of the letters which were to make up the answer.

The simplest solution is that an answer was given by the word of the Lord to the High Priest, when, clothed with the Ephod and breastplate, he had enquired of the Lord.

Instances of enquiring of the Lord are—

- (1) The children of Israel after the death of Joshua enquire of the Lord, "*Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?*" and receive as reply, "*Judah shall go up*" (Judges i. 1-2).
- (2) Again in the expedition against the men of Benjamin, they put the same question and receive the same reply (Judges xx. 18).
- (3) Saul consults Ahiah when about to engage the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv. 3, 18).
- (4) David enquires of the Lord before going to the rescue of the men of Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii. 2).
- (5) David enquires respecting the men of Keilah, if they would be treacherous and deliver him up to Saul (1 Sam. xxiii. 12).
- (6) David enquires whether he will be successful in his pursuit of the Amalekites who had sacked Ziklag (1 Sam. xxx. 8).

In Ezra we find the Tirshatha declaring that the priests who had lost their genealogy must not take part in any priestly duties till "*there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim*" (ii. 63), so that inquiry of the Lord might be made. It would seem that Zerubbabel deemed that the loss would only be temporary.

### Money, Weights and Measures.

**Bath**, a measure of about 6 or 7 gallons. It contained 6 *hins* (*hin* = a gallon nearly). Artaxerxes ordered the treasurers to provide up "*to an hundred baths of wine and to an hundred baths of oil,*" for the Temple worship (vii. 22).

**Cor** or **Homer**, equivalent to 8 bushels or 1 quarter. Artaxerxes ordered the treasurers to provide up "*to an hundred measures (cors) of wheat*" for the Temple worship (vii. 22).

**Daric**, a golden coin of Persia in value nearly equal to our sovereign.

The obverse of the coin has the figure of a king, crowned, kneeling, a sceptre or spear in his right hand, and a bow in his left.



The reverse of the coin was left rough.

Various interpretations are given of the origin of the name.

- (1) From Darius, who is said to have first had the piece coined.
- (2) From a Persian word meaning "bow" or from "*dara*" = a king, as our own sovereign.
- (3) That the piece was originally a Babylonian coin, and the name derived from "*dariku*," a Babylonian measure or weight, which, like the English pound, afterwards came to denote a coin.

The Jews brought back from exile "*threescore and one thousand drams (darics) of gold*" (ii. 69), as part of the contribution to the rebuilding of the Temple. This is the first mention of *coined* money in the Old Testament.

The general estimate of money was by weight, so Ezra weighed the money and the vessels (viii. 26-27; viii. 33).

**Pound.** "*Five thousand pound of silver*" (ii. 69). Heb. "*maneh*," equal to 60 shekels, calculated by weight.

**Shekel**, a Jewish standard of value, by weight. A shekel of silver was equivalent to about 2s. 6d. of our money, 3,000 shekels made a talent.

**Talent**, a standard of value by weight. A talent was equivalent to 3,000 shekels.

A talent of silver = £375

A talent of gold = £6,750.

### The Religious Orders.

**High Priest.** Jeshua is the only high priest mentioned in Ezra. (see p. xxiii.).

The High Priest stood at the head of the community; the office was hereditary, and so there arose a kind of priestly dynasty. From the fall of the Persian Empire the High Priest became practically king of the Jews. The royal house of David sank into insignificance.

**Priests**, only four families returned under Zerubbabel, viz. those of Jedaiah, Juimer, Pashur and Harim. 4,289 priests returned. With Ezra came two priestly families, Gershom of the line of Phinehas, son of Eliezer, and Daniel of the line of Ithamar.

The number of the courses of priests was afterwards increased, partly by accession and partly by sub-division. In Neh. xii. 1. we find twenty-two priestly houses recorded. It is probable that two names have dropped out and that early after the return the priests were divided into twenty-four courses, adopting the names denoting the original courses established by David.

**Levites**, of them we may notice:

- (1) They are mentioned as distinct from the priests on the one hand, and the singers and the porters on the other. In later times this distinction disappears.
- (2) They are few in number in comparison with the priests; 4,289 priests returned with Zerubbabel and only seventy-

four Levites. With difficulty and only after special appeal Ezra obtained thirty-eight Levites from Casiphia.

(3) They are noticeable in the support they give to Ezra in the reading of the Law. (Ezra viii.).

David divided the Levites into four classes.

- (1) The General Assistants whose duties were "to wait on the sons of Aaron in the work of the House of God."
- (2) Officers and Judges, who were engaged in administering the written Law.
- (3) The Porters, whose duties were to open and shut the Temple gates, maintain order, prevent the entrance of unclean persons or things and to act as a night-watch.
- (4) The Singers or musicians, who conducted the musical portion of the Temple service.

The usual explanation of the three offices of Levites, porters and singers named in Ezra is that by Levites is meant the first division named above, whilst the porters and singers are those of the third and fourth divisions respectively.

An ingenious theory has been propounded that the Levites of Ezra are the descendants of the priests of the high places removed by Josiah who were not allowed to perform the office of priest, but were allotted to a subordinate position in the Temple worship inferior to the priests but above the ordinary Temple assistants (ii. Kings xxiii. 9).

This theory explains—

- (1) The mention of Levites as distinct from the priests and the singers and porters.
- (2) The small number of those who returned. Their position was peculiar and humiliating. They could not exercise the office of priest, but must take an inferior position.
- (3) Their support of Ezra, in his reforms. Only men of high principle and sincere devotion would accept such a position. But men of this class would be strong in the support they would give to the furtherance of religious reform.

Nethinims (see p. 4).

Children of Solomon's servants (see p. 5).

### Officers.

Chancellor, lit. "lord of judgment," "lord of official intelligence," or "postmaster" (САУЦЕ), "Rehum the chancellor" (iv. 8). The title is connected with the Assyrian word, *dh'êm*, which denotes the official reports forwarded to the king by the provincial governors.

It is probable that Rehum was the chief official at Samaria.

Pekhah, translated "governor" (v. 14) (*pekhah*, the governor of a district), is the Babylonian equivalent of the Persian "Tirshatha," and denotes a local or provincial governor under the satraps. The governors were responsible to the satraps, and the satraps to the king.

**Satrap.** Darius Hystaspis divided the Persian Empire into great provinces, called satrapies from the title of the ruler who was a "Satrap."

The satrap was a kind of vassal king, and was generally connected with the king by birth or marriage.

He was responsible for a fixed tribute, out of which the satrap, the staff of officials and his army were paid, the balance being handed over to the royal treasury.

His power was checked by the presence of a royal scribe, whose duty it was to send to the king a report of the administration of the satrapy.

The troops of the province were under a separate commander, and the great fortresses were under the command of officers independent of the Satrap.

In the reign of Darius, Tatnai, "the governor beyond the river," appears to have been the satrap of the province west of the Euphrates.

Scribe, has two meanings :

- (1) **A Persian officer.** "Shimshai the scribe" (iv. 8), the secretary of the Governor. According to Herodotus every Persian governor was attended in his province by a royal scribe or secretary who had a separate and independent authority. He not only assisted the governor in administration, but acted as a check upon him by sending reports to the king.
- (2) **A Jewish title.** The early mention of the name is in the reigns of David and Solomon. "Seraiah, the scribe" (2 Sam viii. 17); "Sheva was scribe" (2 Sam. xx. 25); "Elihoreph and Aliah, scribes" (1 Kings iv. 3). These would be the king's secretaries.

In the reign of Hezekiah a new body of men arose, whose duty it was to transcribe old records, or to put oral tradition into writing.

From this period dates the new significance of the title, viz. a **student and interpreter of the Law**. The Captivity fostered the new order in the anxiety of the exiles to preserve the sacred books, the laws, the hymns, and the prophecies of the past.

The office is described in Ezra. "*Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments*" (vii. 10).

In the time of our Lord the scribes were an important body, and the office was a recognized profession. The scribes copied and explained the law, compiled commentaries and published explanations.

**Tirshatha**, always mentioned with the article—*the* Tirshatha. (Persian *Farsdāta*, from "*Fars*" to fear—denoting "the feared one.")

It is the Persian equivalent of the Babylonian "*pekhah*" (p. 43), denoting a local or provincial governor under the satraps. The governors were responsible to the satraps, and the satraps to the king.

The title "the Tirshatha" is applied to Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 63), who is also styled *pekhah* (v. 14). "*Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor, i.e. pekhah.*"

Haggai terms Zerubbabel "**governor (pekhah) of Judah**" (Hag. i. 1).

Nehemiah is also termed "the Tirshatha" (Neh. vii. 65-70).

Thus Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were local governors (*Tirshatha* or *pekhah*) of Jerusalem, responsible to the governor (satrap) of Syria.

**Treasurer** (the bearer of the treasure, p. ix.), the officer who had charge of the royal expenditure. Mithredath was the treasurer of Cyrus (i. 8). So, the Ethiopian Eunuch was of "*much authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians,*" and "*had charge of all her treasure*" (Acts viii, 27).

**The Tribute of the Persian provinces is described as tribute, custom, and toll.**

**Tribute**, denotes the amount required from each province for the imperial treasury. This amount would be fixed at the royal court, and the satrap would transmit the amount regularly. He would apportion the payment on the different towns and districts under his control, according to their ability to pay.

**Custom**, or provision, was generally payment in kind, levied on merchandise or the produce of a district, and was devoted to paying the expenses of provincial rule.

**Toll**, a payment levied upon travellers for the maintenance of the highways.

## APPENDIX.

		<b>Months.</b>		
Before Captivity.	After Captivity.	Assyrian Name.	Meaning.	Approximate Month.
1	Abib	Nisannu	(month of opening)	March
2	Zif	Airu	the bright	April
3	—	Sivanu	(month of brick-making)	May
4	—	Duzu	(month of the sun-god)	June
5	—	Abu		July
6	—	Ululu	(month of the Spirit)	August
7	Ethanim	Tasritu	(month of the Sanctuary)	September
8	Bul	Arakh-savna	the eighth month	October
9	—	Kisilivu		November
	Chisleu	Tabitu	the good	
	Tebet		(month)	December
10	—	Sabatu		January
11	—	Addaru	The dark	
	Adar		(month)	February
12	—	Arath-makru	Incidental month	

(SAYCE).

## Months mentioned in Ezra are—

Nisan. Ezra left Babylon "on the first day of the first month" (vii. 9).

He left the river Ahava "on the twelfth day of the first month" (viii. 31).

Adar. The Temple was completed "on the third day of the month Adar" (vi. 15).

Ab. Ezra arrived at Jerusalem "on the first day of the fifth month" (vii. 9).

Tisri. In the seventh month the returned exiles erected the altar and kept the feast of tabernacles (iii. 1-6).

Chisleu. The general assembly for reform was summoned by Ezra in "the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month" (x. 9).

### Heads of Houses who returned from Captivity.

Ezra (A.V.).	Nehemiah vii. 7 (A.V.).	1 Esdras v. 8 (A.V.).
Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel	Zorobabel
Jeshua	Jeshua	Jesus
Nehemiah	Nehemiah	Nehemias
Seraiah	Azariah	Zacharias
Reelaiah	Raamiah	Reesias
	Nahamani	Emenius
Mordecai	Mordecai	Mardocheaus
Bilshan	Bilshan	Beelsarus
Mizpah (Mispar, R.V.)	Mispereth	Aspharasus
Bigvai	Bigvai	Reelius
Rehum	Nehum	Roimus
Baanah	Baanah	Baana

### List of the Exiles who returned.

	Ezra.	Nehemiah.	Esdras.
The children of Parosh	2,172	2,172	2,172
"  Shephatiah	372	372	472
"  Arah	775	652	756
"  Pehath-Moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab	2,812	2,818	2,812
"  Elam	1,254	1,254	1,254
"  Zattu	945	845	945
"  Zaccai	760	760	
"  Bani	642	648	648
"  Bebai	623	628	623
"  Azgad	1,222	2,322	3,222
"  Adonikam	666	667	667
"  Bigvai	2,056	2,067	2,066
"  Adin	454	655	454
"  Ater, of Hezekiah	98	98	
"  Bezai	323	324	323
"  Jora	112	= Harif 112 (vii. 24).	
"  Hashum	223	328	
"  Gibbar	95	= Gibeon 95	
"  Bethlehem	123		123
The men of Netophah	56	188	56
"  Anathoth	128	128	158

	Ezra.	Nehemiah. = the men of Beth-azmaveth 42	Esdras.
The children of Azmaveth	42		
"    Kirjath-arim, Che- phirah, and Beeroth }	743	743	
The children of Rama and Gaba	621	621	
The men of Michmas	122	122	
"    Bethel and Ai	223	123	
The children of Nebo	52	52	
"    Magbish	156		156
"    " the other Elam "	1,254	1,254	
The children of Harim	320	320	
"    Lod, Hadid, and Ono	725	721	725
"    Jericho	345	345	
"    Senaah	3,630	3,930	3,330
	<b>Ezra.</b>	<b>Nehemiah.</b>	<b>Esdras.</b>
Men of the people of Israel	24,144	25,406	26,390
Priests	4,289	4,289	2,388
Levites	74	74	74
Singers	128	148	128
Porters	139	138	139
Nethinim and Solomon's servants	392	392	372
Unregistered	652	642	652
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,818</b>	<b>31,089</b>	<b>30,143</b>
	Other MSS. 30,678		

### The Gifts and Treasure brought from Babylon.

#### Ezra.

Heads of fathers' houses	61,000 darics of gold
	5,000 pounds of silver
	100 priests' garments

#### Nehemiah.

	darics of gold.	basons.	pounds of silver.	priests' garments.
Tirshatha	1,000	50		530
Heads of fathers' houses	20,000		2,200	
Rest of people	20,000		2,000	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,000</b>		<b>4,200</b>	<b>597</b>

### The Names of those who Married Strange Wives.

Of the sons of	Ezra.	1 Esdras viii. 30.	Of the sons of
„ Parosh, Zechariah	150	„ Pharez, Zacharias,	
„ Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai, the son of Zerahiah	200	„ Eliaonias the son of Zaraia	200
„ Shechaniah, the son of Jahaziel	300	„ Zathoe, Sechenias, the son of Jezelus	300
„ Adin, Ebed, the son of Jonathan	50	„ Adin, Obeth, the son of Jonathan	250
„ Elam, Jeshaiiah, the son of Athalian	70	„ Elam, Josias, the son of Gotholias	70
„ Shephathiah, Zebediah, the son of Michael	80	„ Saphatias, Zaratias, son of Michael	70
„ Joab, Obadiah, the son of Jehiel	218	„ Joab, Abadiah, the son of Jezelus	212
„ Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah	160	„ Banid, Assalimoth, the son of Josaphias	160
„ Bebai, Zechariah, the son of Bebai	28	„ Babi, Zacharias, son of Bebai	28
„ Azgad, Jonathan, the son of Hakkatan	110	„ Astath, Johannes, the son of Acatan	110
„ Adonikam, Eliphelet, Jeuel, Shemaiah	60	„ Adonikam the last, Eliphalet, Jeuel and Samaias	70
„ Bigvai, Uthai, and Zabbud	70	„ Bago, Uthi, the son of Istalcurus	70

### The Seven Counsellors of Persia.

The following description is taken from Rawlinson's "Ancient Monarchies," Vol. iii., p. 223:—

"Besides the royal family itself, or clan of the Achæmenidæ, there were six great houses which had a rank superior to that of all the other grandees. From the time of Darius I. there seem to have been seven great families, including that of the Achæmenidæ, whose chiefs had the privilege of free communication with the monarch, and from which he was legally bound to chose his legitimate wives. The chiefs appear to have been known as 'The Seven Princes,' or 'The Seven Counsellors' of the king.

"They sat next to him at the public festivals; they were privileged to tender him their advice whenever they pleased; they recommended important measures of state, and were, in part, responsible for them; they could demand admission to the monarch's presence at any time, unless he were in the female apartments; they had precedence on all great occasions of ceremony, and enjoyed a rank altogether independent of office. Sometimes—perhaps most commonly—they held office; but they rather conferred a lustre on the position which they consented to fill than derived any additional splendour from it.

## Genealogy of Ezra.

Chronicles.  
 Aaron  
 |  
 Eleazar (3rd Son)  
 |  
 Phinehas  
 |  
 Abishua  
 |  
 Bukki  
 |  
 Uzzi  
 |  
 Zerariah  
 |  
 Meraioth  
 |  
 Amariah  
 |  
 Ahitub  
 |  
 Zadok  
 |  
 Ahimaaz  
 |  
 Azariah  
 |  
 Johanan  
 |  
 Azariah  
 |  
 Amariah  
 |  
 Ahitub  
 |  
 Zadok  
 |  
 Shallum  
 |  
 Hilkiah  
 |  
 Azariah  
 |  
 Seraiah  
 |  
 Jehozadak  
 |  
 Ezra

Ezra.  
 Aaron.  
 |  
 Eleazar.  
 |  
 Phinehas.  
 |  
 Abishua.  
 |  
 Bukki.  
 |  
 Uzzi.  
 |  
 Zerariah.  
 |  
 Meraioth.  
 |

(Omitted by Ezra.)

|  
 Azariah (probably the same as  
 Zechariah, who was slain by order  
 of Joash).  
 |  
 Amariah (probably the Azariah who  
 opposed Uzziah's burning incense).  
 |  
 Ahitub.  
 |  
 Zadok (between Zadok and Shallum  
 came a high priest named Urijah,  
 who flourished under Ahaz).  
 |  
 Shallum (between Shallum and  
 Hilkiah came Azariah).  
 |  
 Hilkiah.  
 |  
 Azariah.  
 |  
 Seraiah.  
 |  
 Ezra.



## TABLE OF EVENTS IN EZRA.

Chap.	Ver.	Events recorded in Ezra.	Kings of Persia.	Date.	Adversaries of the Jews.	Contemporary Prophets.
i.	1-4.	The Decree of Cyrus permitting the rebuilding of the Temple.	Cyrus	B.C. 538.		Daniel, who lived and prophesied under the Chaldean, Median, and Persian Dynasties.
iii.	1-6.	Return of the Jews. Zerubbabel the Tirshatha and Jeshua the High-priest set up the altar and restore the services on the site of Solomon's Temple.	capture of Babylon.	536.		
iv.	6.	The "adversaries" write an accusation.	Cambyses (Ahasuerus).	529.	Samaritans, offended at being refused a share in the rebuilding of the Temple, oppose the Jews.	
iv.	7-23.	The letter of Rehum and his companions: Artaxerxes orders the work to cease.	Conquered Egypt Pseudo - Smerdis, the Magian impostor, reigned seven months. Darius I. Hystaspis.	525. 522. 522.	Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, Rehum the chancellor, and Shishai the scribe, with the Dinaites, etc.	
v.	1-2.	The Building of the Temple resumed.		520.	Tatnai, Shethar-boznai and the Apharsachites.	Haggai prophesied four months from the 1st day of the 6th month to the 24th day of the 9th month of the 2nd year of Darius. Zechariah commenced to prophesy in the 8th month of the 2nd year of Darius.
v.	3-17.	The letter of Tatnai and his companions.				
vi.	1-13.	The decree of Darius permitting the work to proceed.				
vi.	14-15.	Completion of the Temple.		516. 490.		
			Battle of Marathon. Revolt of Egypt. Xerxes (Ahasuerus of Esther). The period of Esther and Mordecai. Battle of Salamis. Artabanus, a conspirator seven months.	486. 485.  480.		
vii.	8-9.	The Mission of Ezra.	Artaxerxes I. Longimanus.	464. 458.		