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THE POSTEXILIC HISTORY OF THE JEWS FROM 538-432 B.C.

A thesis

presented to the faculty of  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

by

HERMAN JULIUS ERNST MEYER

in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY.

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## PREFACE.

Higher Criticism, the destructive "assured results of modern scholarship", which R.D. Wilson has shown as indefensible, has attacked not only the Pentateuch but all the books of Holy Writ, especially also Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Higher Criticism asserts that the account of Ezra and Nehemiah, written by an ignorant and biased Chronicler some time after 300 B.C., "must be viewed with suspicion". "And for historical purposes, H.P. Smith states. (1), "we are obliged to recognize first, that the Chronicler is dominated by a tradition, which was largely the effect of theological prepossession; secondly, that the prepossession incapacitated him for drawing a reliable picture of events; thirdly, that the decree of Cyrus is impossible; fourthly, that the letter of Artaxerxes is of no use for the period under discussion; lastly, that the theory of a return, of an interruption of the work, of any interference by Darius, is contradicted by Haggai and Zechariah, who were contemporary with the events alleged". Of Esther, which book is perhaps more attacked and sneered at than any other volume of the Bible, Smith states: it is an "unpleasant story" and "certainly unhistorical. It was written to justify the adoption of a Gentile festival, which seems to have been the New Year of the Babylon-

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(1) H.P. Smith, Old Testament History, p. 353.

ians or Persians. The material of the book is taken from Babylonian mythology, though it has been wholly Judaized".(2). Also the International Critical Commentary states of the events in Esther 6, 4-10: "this sounds more like fiction than history" (3). Such higher eriti-cal views that "the miraculous intervention of Providence", the return, "for which the majority of the exiles waited, never came" (4), that "the decree of Artaxerxes is an historic impossibility" (5), and many similar subjective preconceived notions, spewn out by Higher Critics, are gulped down whole as a rich find by such radical men as Kent in his "Biblical Geography and History" (6), and Sanders and Knott in their histories of the Hebrews. Over against all these higher critical views embodied in many of the histories of the Jews this dissertation shall set forth the clear passages of Scriptures. The purpose of this thesis is thus to give a short, chrono-logical account of the history of the Jews from 538 B.C. to 432 B.C., based not upon any of the preconceived notions of the "Higher Critics" but upon the Bible, the only infallible account that can give us a true picture of events of this period of the Jews.

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(2) H.P.Smith, op. cit. p. 485.

(3) International Critical Commentary on Esther, p. 247.

(4) H.P.Smith, op. cit. p. 353.

(5) H.P.Smith, op.cit. p. 395.

(6) Kent, Biblical Geography and History, p. 199.

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THE POSTEXILIC HISTORY OF THE JEWS (538-432).

INTRODUCTION.

In the middle of the sixth century B.C. world events took on a new turn. The Persian Cyrus (1) became founder of the Persian Empire. Cyrus, an Elamite prince (2), a descendant of Achaemenes, states of himself in the Cyrus inscription: "I am Cyrus.... son of Cambyses, king of the city of Anshan (3), grandson of Cyrus, the great-grandson of Teispes"(4). When the world seemed ready to bow down at the feet of the overpowering Medes, Cyrus, who had grown to manhood as king of Anshan and as tributary prince under the authority of Astyages, king of the Medes, began a career of almost unparalleled conquest and organization. And the result of one victory was only contributory to the next. "He was the conqueror of Asia, the liberator of the Jews, the friend and anointed of Jehovah" (5).

The first authentic notice, 556 B.C., reveals Cyrus as king of Anshan, the antagonist of Astyages (6). In 553 B.C. Astyages led an army against this new Asiatic conqueror, who wished to gain independence from him, and according to

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- (1) Dan. 6,28; Greek Kuřos; Persian Kurush; Babylonian Kuraas or Kuras, Schrader, KAT. p375.372; according to Strabo Agradates.
- (2) Sayce, Higher Criticism and the Monuments, p. 519.
- (3) A very ancient region of eastern or southern Elam with Susa as its capital, McCurdy, Hist., Prophecy and the Monuments, p. 399; Davis Dict. of the Bible, p. 158.
- (4) Cf. The Cylinder of Cyrus in Roger's Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, p. 382; Barton, p. 445; Budge, p.56.
- (5) McCurdy, p.401.
- (6) Beecher, Dated Events, p. 162.

the story which Nabonaidus has preserved for us, Astyages was delivered bound into the hands of Cyrus by his own treacherous troops (7). While 556 marks the "first year" of Cyrus as king of Anshan, Cyrus had his "first year" as king of the Medes and Persians in 550 B.C. For in that year Cyrus took Ecbatana, sacked it and brought there to an end the Median power (8). By this successful campaign Cyrus became the most powerful and dreaded enemy of Babylon. In a moment he leaped from the position of a petty prince of Anshan to the proud position of king of the Medes. Well might he assume a new title and call himself king of the Parsu, "Persians" (9). Against this successful conqueror a coalition, consisting of Amasis, king of Egypt, Nabonaidus, king of Babylon, Croesus, king of Lydia and his friendly allies, the Spartans, was formed (10). Cyrus, however, struck before the coalition had been well organized. In the month of Nisan (March-April) Cyrus led his Persian army across the Tigris near Arbela and carried his conquest into the western country (11). At first he overran Lydia.

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(7) Barton, pp. 442-443; Sayce, pp. 499-500.

(8) Schrader, KAT. p. 378.

(9) It is in 546 that Cyrus is called for the first time "king of Persia", Sayce, p. 516; cf. also Green's argument on the title "king of Persia", pp. 42-44; R.D.Wilson, pp. 49.50.

(10) Herodotus I, 77.69.

(11) The Nabunaid Chronicle in Barton, p. 443; Sayce, p. 501.

In 546 the Lydian kingdom fell when Cyrus captured Sardis and made the last king of the Lydian dynasty, the famous Croesus, prisoner (12). This decisive victory caused Amasis to leave the coalition, thus leaving Babylonia the only remaining enemy of Cyrus.

In the 17th year of Nabonaidus reign (539) the chronicler once more takes up his story. Not 538 B.C. but 539 marks the downfall of Babylonia (13). Babylon neglected the opportunity of strengthening its defences, and when in 539 Cyrus turned his arms against the unwieldy empire, its power collapsed with startling suddenness (14). In the 17th year of Nabonaidus Cyrus met Bel-shar-usur, coregent with and son of Nabonaidus, who was commander of the army of Accad near Apis and defeated him (15). On the 14th day of Tammuz (June-July) Sippar was taken without a blow and Nabonaidus fled. Two days later, on the 16th, Ugbaru (Gobryas), governor of the land of Gutium, and the soldiers of Cyrus entered Babylon "bala saltum", without a blow (16). Cyrus himself was not in command, but had remained in the background while Gobryas led the advance. Nabonaidus was taken

(12) Rawlinson, *Great Monarchies*, Vol. II, p. 437; Barton, p. 243.

(13) H.P. Smith, p. 344; Koehler, *Gesch.* II, S.548; Rogers, *History of Babyl. and Assyria*, II, p. 571.

(14) Rawlinson, *op.cit.* II, pp. 253-257.

(15) Winkler, *Hist. of B. and A.*, pp. 325-326; cf. *Cylinder of Nabonid* in Rogers, *Cuneiform Par.* p. 379; Rawlinson, *Great Mon.*, II, p. 255.

(16) Rogers, II, p. 573; according to Herodotus, I, 190. 191, Babylon was captured on the night of revelry by turning the water of the Euphrates into excavated lakes.



in the city, whither he had fled from Sippar. According to Berosus (17), Nabonaidus was probably made governor of Carmania, which had been assigned to him by Cyrus as his place of abode. On the third day of Marcheswan (Oct.-Nov.) in the 17th year of Nabonaidus (539) Cyrus himself entered Babylon (18). It was a triumphal entrance and all Babylon greeted him with plaudits and hailed him as a deliverer. He proclaimed peace to all of Babylon. Governors were appointed and an order issued for the restoration of many captive foreign idols to their native sanctuaries. From this time on Cyrus wore the title "king of the world, the great king, the mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world. I restored the gods who dwelt within them to their places and I founded for them a seat that should be long-enduring; all their peoples I collected and I restored their habitations. And the gods of Sumer and Akkad, whom Nabonaidus, to the anger of the gods had brought into Babylon, by the command of Merodach, the great lord, I settled peacefully in their sanctuaries, in seats which their hearts desired"(19). Thus Cyrus by permitting the foreign people that had been brought to Babylonia to return with their native gods to their native lands became the popular head of the kingdom.

(17) Josephus, Contra Apion, I. 20.

(18) Jos. Anti. B.X, Ch. XI, 4; Barton, p. 443.

(19) Clay, pp. 381-384; the Cyrus inscription in Barton, pp. 445-446.

From this viewpoint one can readily understand the decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem and even the form of his edict.

These conquests of Cyrus were evidently hailed with special fervor by the Jewish community. No doubt the exiles had watched with intense eagerness the advance of one who seemed to be marked out by Providence as the future deliverer of Jehovah's oppressed people. For, about 200 years ago Isaiah already had prophesied of his great victorious reign. He is called the righteous man of the east, the ruler of nations and kings ( Is. 41, 2.25 ). Again Isaiah says: "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 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 the name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" ( Is. 45, 1-4 ). Indeed Cyrus was the shepherd of the Lord, who was to perform God's pleasure; "even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" ( Is. 44,28 ).

With Cyrus, who brought about the destruction of the Babylonian empire in 539 B.C., did the supremacy exercised by Babylon over the Jewish nation from the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, pass on to Persia, and the Achaemenian monarch from then on for over two centuries controlled and directed the destinies of the Jewish people. They inaugurated their rule by an act of extraordinary grace and favor. Cyrus had no sooner made himself master of Babylon than, in the first <sup>year of his</sup> reign there, he issued a decree whereby the Jewish population was permitted and exhorted to quit the land into which they had been forcibly transplanted by Nebuchadnezzar ( II Kings 24, 14-16; 25, 11.12 ) and to return to the old and much loved habitation.

THE EVENTS FROM 538 - 515.

With the edict of Cyrus for the return from captivity opens the final era of the history of the Jewish nation. In the first year of his reign as king of Persia, Cyrus, reversing the transportation policy of the Assyrian kings, issued a decree for the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem ( Ezra 1, 1-4; II Chron. 36, 22.23; Ezra 5, 13; 5, 15; 6, 3.4. ). Since Cyrus entered Babylon in the late autumn, October 28, 539 (1), this edict would fall in the first full year of the possession of Babylon, in the year 538 (2). This edict, given by proclamation and in writing, was issued that the word of Jahweh, spoken by Jeremiah concerning the 70 years of exile which began in 606 B.C. ( Dan. 1,1; II Kings 24, 1-5; II Chron. 36, 4-8 ) and not 587/86, and were now drawing to a close, might be fulfilled ( Jer. 25, 12; 29, 10; 27,22; Dan. 9,2 ). And that this proclamation might be forthcoming the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius he was the servant of the living God (3) and not a Zoroastrian (4) nor a believer of Ormazd, the greatest of the gods (5), for Cyrus avowes his motive that Jahweh, the God of Israel, has given to him all the kingdoms of the earth and has commanded him to

(1) Kugler, p. 202-203.

(2) Int. Nat. Crit. Comm. p. 55; McCurdy, p. 436.

(3) Stoeckhardt, Bibl. Gesch. A.T. S. 356.

(4) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 55.

(5) Rawlinson, Monarchies, p. 425.

build him a house at Jerusalem ( Ezra 1,2 ). While it is stated that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to issue his edict, we must not forget that the attention of Cyrus was most probably directed by Daniel to those prophecies of Isaiah which announced his victories and declared him to be "God's shepherd" ( Isa. 13,14; 45, 14; 44, 28 ). Jos. B. XI, ch. I. 1.2 affords indirect evidence that Cyrus had probably seen through means of Daniel those prophecies in which, 200 years before he was born, his name, career, and the services he should render to the Jews, were distinctly foretold. Thus it would seem quite natural that Daniel who lived during the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus, and was furthermore prime minister at the court of Darius, the father-in-law of Cyrus, should direct the attention of Cyrus to any mention of his name in the Jewish sacred books, which was of a very flattering and laudatory character (6).

That this act of noble generosity, the proclamation addressed to Jehovah's people, for they, as Cyrus acknowledged, should rebuild the temple of the Lord God of Israel, for "he is the God who is in Jerusalem", may meet with immediate response and full cooperation on the part of everyone, certain responsibilities were placed on those Jews who would not return. While this edict was

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(6) Keil, Komm. zu Ezra, S. 408-409.

addressed to all Jews, only those chiefs and clans of Benjamin and Juda. priests and Levites. left Babylonia, whose spirit God had moved to go up to build the temple ( Ezra 1,5 ). The remaining Jews ( Ezra 7, 1-7; 8, 1-14; 8, 18-20; 1, 4-6; Neh. 1, 1.2; Zach. 6, 10 ), according to the decree, provided the returning believing Jews with provisions for the journey and with funds for the building of the temple. Willingly they helped the returning Jews with silver and gold, goods and cattle, choice things, and free will offerings for the house of the Lord ( Ezra 1, 4.6. ). For these contributions Cyrus called not upon the Babylonians (7) but in all probability only upon the Jews (8). The return of the Jews was made the more easy not only by the liberality of the gifts but also by the fact that the captive Jews had preserved their genealogies ( Ezra 2, 62 ). Cyrus himself showed his interest in their rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the temple worship by having the temple expenses defraided from his own treasury ( Ezra 6,4 ) and by delivering to the exiles the Solomonic temple vessels and implements which Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and plundered the temple under king Jehoiakim ( II Chron. 36, 7.10; Dan. 1, 1.2 ) and under king

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(7) Stoeckhardt, p. 358; Keil, S. 409-410.

(8) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 59; Koehler, Gesch. II, Note 1, S. 553-554: "Es wird daher <sup>710 1/2 3 11 - 42</sup> als Subjektsnominativus gemeint und von denjenigen Exulanten zu verstehen sein, welche in Babylonien zurueckblieben."

Zedekiah ( II Kings 25, 14 ff; Jer. 52, 18 ff.) some of the vessels were carried to Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem under king Jehoiachin however, all the golden vessels of the temple were cut in pieces ( II Kings 24, 13 )(9). These vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had placed in the house of his gods in the land of Shinar as trophies and in his temple at Babylon were counted out and delivered to Sheshbazzar by Mithredath, the treasurer ( Ezra 1, 7.8 ). While the list of utensils according to our text aggregates only 2499 ( Ezra 1, 9.10 ), the total number as given in vers 11 is 5400, and according to III Ezra 2, 12.13 , 5469. While this kind of discrepancy is often found in such lists, we attribute the difference to mistakes in numbers made by copyists, remain with <sup>the</sup> Massoretic text , and reject Stade (10), who is of the opinion that the number and form of the vessels is a mere fabrication of the Chronicler. Thus as the Israelites had gone forth from the first captivity laden with spoils of Egypt, so now they returned from the second, enriched with the free will offerings of Assyria, to be consecrated to the service of Jehovah.

Before going farther we must make certain who Sheshbazzar, the receiver of the temple treasures and the leader of the expedition, the "golah", was. Is Zerubbabel, Ezra 2,2, identical with Sheshbazzar ? While in I Chron.

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(9) Cf. Keil, S. 410.

(10) Stade, Gesch. II, S. 100.

3, 17-19, Zerubbabel is called son of Pedaiiah, in Ezra 3, 2.8; Neh. 12,1; Hag. 1,1.12.14; 2,2.23; Mat. 1, 12.13; Luke 3,27, he is known as the son of Shealtiel, who was a son of Jehoiachin, the unfortunate king of Judah who was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and brother of Pedaiiah. Shealtiel doubtless died childless; and either Pedaiiah adopted his nephew, who became his legal heir and called him his son, or else Pedaiiah entered levirate marriage with his widow, in which case the first child would be considered that of the deceased brother (11).

Sheshbazzar,  $\Sigma d b d 3 a b a r$ ,  $\text{שֶׁשׁבַּזְזָר}$ , the Hebrew or Aramaic form of the Babylonian name Shamash-aba-usur ( R.D.Wilson ), Schamasch-bal-üsur ( Winkler ), Schin-bal-ussur ( Meyer ), was not a Persian as Stade asserts (12) but a Jew. He was an heir of the house of David, "a prince of Judah" ( Ezra 1,8 ). According to Ezra 5,16, Sheshbazzar laid the foundation of the house God. To have this entrusted to a Persian would have been impossible ( Ezra 1, 3b ), and then Cyrus was to pacify (13). With Tirshatha ( $\text{תִּרְשַׁתָּה}$ ) Ezra 2, 63; Neh. 7, 65.70 ) no doubt the appointed satrap of Cyrus is meant. Now a Persian as governor would hardly be capable to decide whether Jewish priests, who could not sufficiently prove

- (11) Kugler, Von Moses bis Paulus, S. 204; Stade, Gesch. 5-10. II, S. 102, Note I; Davis, Bible Dict.p.836; Deut. 25,5-10.  
(12) Stade, Gesch. II, S. 100.  
(13) Int. Crit. Comm. pp. 69-71.



their genealogy, should perform their duties, and it is doubtful whether he could have known about the Urim and Thummim ( Ezra 2, 63; Neh. 7, 65 ). It is also hard to conceive a Persian give 1000 drams of gold, 50 basons, 30 priest's garments, and 500 pounds of silver for the temple treasury ( Neh. 7,70 ). Thus Tirshatha must have been a Jew. And the only one to whom this can apply is Sheshbazzar, whom we identify with Zerubbabel. This is opposed to the view of Nowack and R.D.Wilson, who take Zerubbabel to be the successor of Sheshbazzar. As Babylonian names were often given to Jewish children in Babylonia (14) so Zerubbabel also bore the trace of his Babylonian birthplace in his two names, Zerubbabēl, זְרֻבָבֶל, the "Babel-born", and Sheshbazzar, who was marked out by his official Persian titles, שֶׁשְׁבַזְזָר, governor ( Ezra 5, 14 ) (15) and שֶׁשְׁבַזְזָר, ( Ezra 2, 63; Neh. 7, 65.70 ), as the representative among them of the Persian king. That Zerubbabel should carry besides his Hebrew name as official of the Persian king also a Persian ( Kretzmann ) has an analogy in Daniel and his three friends who received Chaldee (Keil) names when they entered the king's service ( Dan. 1,7 ). Since according to Ezra 1,11, it was Sheshbazzar, the appointed governor, and according to Ezra 2,2; 3,2, Zerubbabel, who was not merely a primus inter

(14) Clay, p. 403.

(15) Sayce, p. 540.

pares among the exiles (16) who <sup>was</sup> leader of the exiles to Jerusalem, we shall identify Sheshbazzar with Zerubbabel. Then again if we compare Ezra 5,16, where Sheshbazzar is mentioned as laying the foundation of the temple, with Ezra 3,8;4,3; 5,2, where it is stated that Zerubbabel began the building of the temple, we must consider Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar identical (17).

Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua, the priest, ( Ezra 2,2; 3,8; Neh. 12,1; 7,7 ) the son Jehozadak ( I Chron. 6, 15 ) and grandson of Seraiah who was taken captive with king Zedekiah and slain with the nobles by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah ( II Kings 25, 18-21 ), and ten elders ( Ezra 2,2; Neh. 7,7 ) the Israelites forming the "golah" left Babylonia to come to Jerusalem and Judah.

The list of the laity that formed the first caravan was reckoned in two classes. Those who lived under the head of a clan were reckoned by families usually as "sons of Parosh", while others were designated by the cities of Judah, Benjamin and other tribes in which they lived, as "men of Anathoth" ( Ezra 2, 3-35; Neh. 7, 8-38 ). Separate from the laity were four clans of priests, Jeshua, Immer, Pashur, and Harim. Their numbers aggregated 4289. The number of the Levites who for the first time are set

(16) Stade, Gesch. II S. 102.

(17) Koehler, Gesch. II Note 2, S. 555-557; Ewald, IV, S. 114; Keil, S. 411; Milman, I, p. 331; Bleek, Einl. A.T. S. 375; Prideaux, p.144; Kugler, Von Moses bis Paulus, S. 204-207.

apart as a distinct class was very small. Only 341 Levites, 392 Nethinim, and 200 singers joined the caravan. Also laity who could not show their stock, and priests who could not prove their official status, although they were deprived of the emoluments of their office by order of the governor until a person should arise for Urim and Thummim, were permitted to join. While the separate figures of the laity, priests, Levites, Nethinim who as subordinate temple officers performed the humblest functions at the sanctuary, and sons of Solomon's servants total according to Ezra 2, 1-63:29,818, and according to Neh. 7, 7-65: 31,089, and III Ezra 5: 30,143, the total number as set down by Ezra and Nehemiah is 42,360 (18). The variations in the two lists, although the total mentioned in each case <sup>is</sup> 42, 360, are due to accidental errors made by the copyists in regard to numbers and spelling of certain proper names (19). The variations in names are explained by Seisenberger as due to three reasons: 1- Jews who enrolled to return with Zerubbabel changed their minds and remained behind, while others may have joined the caravan on the journey; 2- many may have died on account of hardships on the way; 3- and minors may have been enrolled in one list and not in another. Most of the 50,000, including 7337 men

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(18) Koehler, *Gesch.* II, Note 2, S. 558-562; cf. for the census of the exiles *Int. Crit. Comm.* pp. 71-103.

(19) Arndt, pp. 49.50.

servants and maid servants, were from the tribes of Benjamin, Judah, and Levi. But since it is not mentioned to which tribes the families belonged, and since the proclamation was responded to by all the servants of God whose spirit God had raised, and since other tribes are mentioned in the later history of the Jews, one must conclude that these numbers included some of the Ten tribes (20). These 50,000 were a considerable minority of the captives, who, as directed by Jeremiah, had settled down quietly in the land of their captivity. Others returned with Ezra in 458 ( Ezra 7, 1-7; 8, 1-14; 8, 18-20; Neh. 1,1.2.; Sach. 6,10 ). Others remained behind forming the Dispersion. How numerous they really were is brought out in the Book of Esther.

This small band of 50,000, weak in comparison with the host that crossed the Jordan under Joshua, reached their native home under their leader Zerubbabel, the Tirshatha, in the year 537/36 B.C. Since Cyrus issued the proclamation for the return in the first year of his reign (538), the exiles could not have arrived at Jerusalem earlier than 537/536. While the issuing of the edict, sometime in 538, took weeks or months before it reached all the Jews in his great realm, much more time was needed in preparation for the journey and for the trip itself. They had to sell their property and land, obtain transportation animals, and

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(20) Stoeckhardt, Gesch. A.T. S. 359.

lay in supplies for the journey. The journey across the waterless desert must have taken five or six months, for, this same perilous journey occupied Ezra four months with a caravan of only about 6000 ( Ezra 7, 8.9; 8, 31 ) The "golah" crossed the waterless desert either by the caravan route from Hit on the Euphrates over Tadmor and Damaskus or more probably, for the sake of food and water-supply, by way of the Euphrates valley and over the chalky upland near Aleppo and the Coele-Syrian vale. After months of hardships and perils the desert was crossed and the faithful believing Jews arrived in their native land in the middle of the year, the fifth or sixth month (21) ( Ezra 3, 1.6 ).

After the Israelites had again settled in their native cities from which they or their ancestors had been led into exile ( Ezra 2, 1.70; 3,1; Neh. 7, 6.73 ), they gathered at Jerusalem to take the first step toward a restoration of the temple. Serubbabel himself gave for the house of the Lord 1000 drams of gold, 50 basons, 30 priest's garments, and 500 pounds of silver ( Neh. 7,70 ). The leaders, including Tirshatha, and the people gave not 61,000 drams of gold, for the number is no doubt a copyist's mistake ( Ezra 2, 69 ), but 41,000 drams of gold, 4700 pounds of silver and 97 priest's garments. While Nehemiah submits exact figures ( Neh. 7, 70-72 ), Ezra contents himself with giving round numbers (22).

(21) Koehler, *Gesch.* II, S. 563.

(22) Arndt, pp. 50.51.

One of the most important acts after the return was the institution of regular worship. In the seventh month, Tirsi ( Sept.- Oct. ), the returned Israelites assembled to rebuild the altar in its former place. The altar was built in a very short time under the encouragement and direction of Zerubbabel and Jeshua who in Zechariah's prophecies is called Joshua and stands as the priestly representative of the returned exiles to whom divine support is given ( Zech. 3, 1-10; 6, 11-13 ). Thus without waiting for the erection of the temple the religious exercises were instituted from the first day of the seventh month (23) ( Ezra 3, 1-6 ). The daily burnt offerings were offered. The <sup>Feast</sup> of the tabernacles and the New Moons was celebrated. The Sabbath and all set feasts were instituted. Though the erection of the altar and the resumption of the regular sacrifices, which kindled the enthusiasm of the people, had taken place, yet all this was really incomplete without a suitable sanctuary. Thus plans were drawn up for the rebuilding of the temple. Masons and carpenters were hired, and Tyre and Sidon, as in the time of Solomon, again furnished cedar. During the coming winter the rubbish and debris was cleaned away from the temple hill, so that in the second month, Jyar ( April-May ), the same month in which the foundation of Solomon's temple had been laid ( I Kings 6, 1; II Chron. 3, 2 ), in the second year of their return,

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(23) Koehler, Gesch. II, Note 1, S. 565.

536/35, building operations could begin. Under the supervision of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the priests, amid the sound of trumpets, cymbals, and the responsive singing of praise and thanks for God's mercy toward Israel, was the foundation of the temple laid (  $\text{לְבַנְיָהוּ} \text{ וְלַדְּבִירִים}$ ; Ezra 3; 7-11 ). However, the joyful shouts of the people were mingled with the weeping of the priests, Levites, and elders, who had seen the glory of Solomon's temple, so that one could not distinguish the joyful shouting from the mournful weeping ( Ezra 3, 12.13). Thus on the basis of clear Scripture passages, the foundation of the temple was laid in the second year of their return, 536/35 B.C., (24) and not in the second year of Darius, 520 B.C. (25).

The work of building was not long permitted to proceed in quiet. The Samaritans, a mixed race composed of colonists whom Esarhaddon, king of Assyria (681-688), and Assnapper, who was not an officer of Esarhaddon (26), and who is not identical with Sargon ( 722-705 ) who conquered Samaria in 722, but who must be identified with Assurbanipal, king of Assyria (27), had deported to Judah and Benjamin ( Ezra 4, 2.10; II Kings 17, 24 ) and of the remnant of Israelites who were not carried away after the fall of Samaria (28), but who under the pressure of foreign immigration had fallen into idolatrous practices ( II Kings

(24) Oettli, *Gesch.* S. 503-505; Koehler, *Gesch.* II, Note I, S. 568-572.

(25) Stade, *Gesch.* II, S. 115 ff. (26) Keil, S. 438.

(27) Jeremias, S. 550; *Int. Crit. Comm.* p. 166.

(28) Stoeckhardt, S. 360.

17, 27 ff. ), were not slow to claim affinity with a people so favored by Cyrus. When this idolatrous people heard of the building operations, they came to Jerusalem with an offer of assistance on the ground that they were also worshippers of Jahweh ( Ezra 4, 1.2. ). Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the chiefs of the families flatly rejected their offer ( Ezra 4,3 ) and in turn the Samaritans became their most bitter adversaries. Constantly they opposed and discouraged them by placing every possible obstacle in their way. They even hired counsellors to represent them in their complaint. The opposition continued and the Samaritan influence at the court of Persia prevented the advancement of the building in Jerusalem during the rest of the reign of Cyrus, as well as that of Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, up to the second year of Darius.

Cyrus, who made his son Cambyses coregent the year before his death, died in 530 and was immediately succeeded by Cambyses (29). He became ruler of the great Persian empire that now extended from Northern India, including Asia Minor, to Egypt. In 525 Cambyses carried the Persian arms into Egypt which had already been promised to Cyrus ( Is. 45, 14 ). Amasis, who died in 526, did not experience the invasion; but his follower Psamtik III ( 526-525 ), who was not equal to Amasis, was beaten at Pelusium in 525 (30), and for two centuries then Egypt was subject to Persia. Before Cambyses' departure from Susa he had secretly murdered his brother Bardes ( Smerdis ),

(29) Schrader, KAT. S. 437.

(30) Rawlinson, Great Monarchies, II, p. 449.



lest he should seize the crown during his absence. The secret was divulged. And finally during Cambyses' long stay in Egypt, which caused restlessness at home, a usurper Gomates ( Gaumata ) assumed the royal insignia and gave out that he was Smerdis. In haste Cambyses had to quit Egypt to put down this unknown claimant for his throne. Passing thru Syria he died in 522 from an accidental wound on the thigh or committed suicide (31). The short-lived usurpation of Pseudo-Smerdis (32), who is not even listed in Ptolemy's canon, was terminated after eight months by a conspiracy of the Persian nobles, who after murdering Gaumata at Susa, Ecbatana, or Fort Nisaea in Media (33), were led thru a strategem to put one of their own number, Darius I, on the throne. Darius I, son of Hystaspes and connected with the Achaemenid family, was ruler from 521-486.

The permission of Cyrus to rebuild the temple had borne little fruit. The altar for burnt offerings had been erected and the yearly festivals had been observed with such maimed rites as possible from the seventh month 537/36. In the second year of their return 536/535 the foundation of the temple had been laid, but its work was soon hindered by the Samaritans. No attempt was made by the dispirited Jews to resume the building, and the foundations were left to crumble some 16 years, till 520. In this second year of

- (31) Herod. III, 64, 67 ff; Jos. B.XI. ch. 2,2; Rawlinson, Monarchies, II, p. 454; Behistun inscription of Darius.  
(32) Beecher, Dated Events, p. 163.  
(33) Rawlinson, Monarchies, II, p. 458.

Darius, who was favorably disposed toward the Jews and whose restoration of order was a signal for new hopes and efforts, God raised up two prophets. They were to stimulate Zerubbabel and the people to new efforts.

In the second year of Darius (520) the prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhorted the Jews by promises, reproofs, and warnings to resume the rebuilding of the temple on the foundation laid ( Ezra 5,1.2; 3,10.12; 4,24 ). In the first day of the sixth month, about September 520, the prophet Haggai arose and reproved the Jews that the bad harvest and poverty from which they suffered and concerning which they complained were a punishment for them; for while they lived in ceiled houses the temple had to lie waste ( Hag. 1, 1-11 ). He admonishes them to arise and build. He promises them that divine favor shall attend its erection. The admonition had its effect, and Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people began to build in the 24th day of the same month ( Hag. 1,12-15 ). At the beginning of the work, indeed, there were not wanting voices to declare that this house would never be like the old one. Doubts arose and the people's zeal cooled. Haggai, however, does not allow this material inferiority of the present building, but firm in his conviction, he appears before them on the 21st day of the seventh month ( Oct.-Nov. ) and declares unto them that the Lord of hosts is with them and that the glory of this temple would even exceed that of the former ( Hag. 2, 1-9 ) In the eighth month ( Nov.- Dec. ) Zechariah joined Haggai in admonishing the people in their temple

building and called them to repentance by the slogan: "Be not like your fathers" ( Zech. 1,1-6 ). On the 24th day of the ninth month (Dec.) Haggai delivered his last two messages. He exhorted them to continue, for as long as the temple was unbuilt, they were still tainted with guilt ( Hag. 2, 10-19 ). On the same day Haggai delivered another message addressed to Zerubbabel, the head and representative of the family of David, announcing to him that he should be Jehovah's vicegerent ( Hag. 2, 20-23 ). On the 24th day of the 11th month ( Feb.-March ) Zechariah saw eight night visions, which pertained to future events in God's kingdom ( Zech. 1,7-6,8 ). Under such encouragement and admonition the work steadily went forward. On the fourth day of the ninth month ( Dec. ) in the fourth year of Darius (518) Zechariah admonished the Jews for the last time ( Zech. 7, 1ff ). Thus the obstacle that the prophets indicate is the moral failure of their fellow citizens, while the chief obstacle that the Chronicler sees is the opposition of external adversaries.

While the temple was in building, Tatnai or Ustoni as found in contract tablets, governor of the province west of the Euphrates, and Shethar-boznai, probably the scribe, came to Jerusalem and made inquiry as to who had given them the authorization for the rebuilding of the temple. This time Zerubbabel had to deal not with malignant adversaries but with the just authorities of a settled government. The

Israelites were permitted to continue in their work, while Tatnai appealed in an Aramaic letter, the official language of the Persian kings, to Darius concerning the edict of Cyrus and asked that search be made in the king's treasure house at Babylon ( Ezra 5, 3-17 ). Babylon was searched first, then Achmetha, Ecbatana, the ancient capital of Media and the summer residence of the Persian kings ( Ezra 6, 1.2; Judith 1, 1-4 ). At Ecbatana, in the library of the treasury which was part of the residence, was found the roll of the decree of Cyrus, which contained not only the grant for the rebuilding of the temple but also specifications as to the building itself ( Ezra 6, 3-5 ). This discovery brought forth a new edict from Darius, which permitted the Jews to proceed not only with the building but even ordered Tatnai and his companions to reimburse them from the royal revenues. They were to aid the Jews not only with the royal tribute but also to supply the priests with goods for the daily oblations, so that they could offer sacrifices unto God and make intercession for the life of the king and his sons ( Ezra 6, 6-10 ). Impalement (34) and destruction of his house was the threatened penalty for anyone who would venture to change its terms ( Ezra 6, 11.12 ).

Tatnai and his companions respected the decree of Darius and the work on the temple, which had received

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(34) Jeremias, S. 550.

an impetus thru the decree of Darius, prospered under the constant encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah until the temple was completed on the third day of Adar, about March or April, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes ( Ezra 6, 13-15 ). Jos. B.XI. ch. IV. 7, and III Ezra 3,7, state that the temple was completed the 23d day of Adar. The dedication of the house of God fell in March or April 515 B.C. (35). The dedication of this house of God was kept with great joy by all Israelites. Although the number of animals sacrificed at this dedication is small compared to that offered by Solomon at the dedication of the first temple ( I Kings 8, 5.63 ), yet the number was not unsuitable to the poor conditions of the community. The twelve goats that were offered for a sin offering for "all Israel", according to the number of tribes, were decisive proof that the returned "Children of the Captivity" regarded themselves as the representatives of all Israel ( Ezra 6, 17; 8, 24.35 ). With the completion of the temple and the reorganization of its worship was also involved the reconstruction of the priesthood ( Ezra 6,18; 2, 36-39 ).

Soon other solemnities followed in the wake of the dedication. On the 14th day of the first month ( Nisan ) the Passover was celebrated. As the Passover was kept

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(35) Fuerbringer, Ein. A.T. S. 38; Beecher, Reasonable Biblical Criticism, p. 312; Koehler, Gesch. II, Note 3, S. 587. 588; according to Meyer, Entstehung des Judentums, the dedication took place on April 9, 515 B.C.; Stade accepts the year 516.

in memory of the return from captivity in Egypt ( Ex. 12,3ff ), the festival would be highly significant for those who had just returned from the exile in Babylonia. The "Children of the Captivity" were now also joined in their worship by such Jews, who during the exile had remained in Judah and had mingled freely with the surrounding people, but who now in the interest of this earnest revival of Jahweh-worship again dissociated themselves from the loose ways of their neighbors ( Ezra 6, 19-21 ). The Passover was immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread ( Ezra 6, 22; Jos. XI.ch. IV. 7 ). Seven days the Jews celebrated this feast, thanking the Lord that He had turned the heart of Darius unto them to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of the Lord (36). We see how wonderfully God inclined the hearts of several princes, Cyrus and Darius, to favor and protect his people and to aid them in the work of rebuilding the temple. However, with the year 515 heavy darkness falls upon the little community in Jerusalem and its vicinity. Nothing is heard of Zerubbabel. The city was imperfectly fortified and at certain times this little commonwealth doubtless suffered from the inroads of the Bedawin. Yet during all this period, as shown by the Book of Esther, the last chapters of Ezra, and the Book of Nehemiah, God held his overruling and protecting hand over this small community of faithful believers.

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(36) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 153.


ESTHER.

Few, comparatively, of the Jews had availed themselves of the privilege to return to the land of their fathers. Most of the existing race had been born in Babylonia; they had made that country, as well as Persia afterwards, their home and had become surrounded by associations and comforts not easily abandoned. Not more than 50,000, although Koehler is of the opinion that there were about 200,000 (1), had gone up under Zerubabel; and the second band under Ezra, more than 70 years later, numbered in all about 7000. Yet the greater number of the people remained in the land of exile. Of these the Book of Esther, which teaches us the great lesson of the overruling power of Providence, gives us an account.

In 486 Darius, next to Cyrus the greatest of the Persian kings, was succeeded by Xerxes, whose repulse from Greece fills so memorable a page in the history of Europe, but whose place in the annals of the Jews depends on his identification with Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Thus from the outset it is important to determine who the king is that is called Ahasuerus. Until recently every king of Media and of Persia, from Cyaxares to Artaxerxes Ochus (358-338), has been selected by some one for the identification with this monarch (2).

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(1) Koehler, *Gesch.* II.S.558 and Note 2.S.558ff.  
(2) *Int. Crit. Comm.* pp.51-53.

Thus Prideaux identified Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther with Artaxerxes Longimanus (3). This controversy was, however, brought to a close by the decipherment of the Persian monuments, for in them the name of Xerxes appears in such a form, as to leave no doubt that he is the king who is meant by Ahasuerus. There is absolute certainty that the Persian Khshayarsha or Ahshiwarsu (4), the Hebrew , the Greek Xerxes, and the Latin Ahasuerus are the exact equivalents of one another (5). Thus the identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes by Grotefend must meet with our approval and acceptance. With the identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes of profane history also all the statements of the Book of Esther agree (6). This Persian king ruled over Media (Esther 1,3.18), over an empire extending from India to Etheopia, comprizing 127 satrapies (Esther 1,1:8,9:9:30), and including the Islands of the Mediteranian (Esther 10,1). This is true only of Xerxes and of no other Persian ruler. Furthermore the character of Ahasuerus as portrayed in Esther agrees well with the account of the vainglorious Xerxes given by Herodotus(7). There is a general agreement among scholars today that by Ahasuerus the author means Xerxes (8). Josephus is in-

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(3) Prideaux II.p.222.

(4) Clay.p.388.

(5) R.D. Wilson in I.S.B.E.

(6) Int. Crit. Comm.p.64ff.

(7) Herod. IX. 107: VII. 35.37.

(8) Beecher, D.E. p.164: Stanley. III. 154: Keil. p.442.616.  
Fuerbringer, Einl.A.T. S.41.



correct, for he places the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah in the time of Xerxes and the events of the Book of Esther in the time of his successor Artaxerxes. Our Hebrew text is correct. For the king of Ezra and Nehemiah the Bible gives a date in his 32nd year and Josephus gives dates in his 25th and 28th years (Neh.5,14; 13,6), while Xerxes reigned only 21 years (9).

Xerxes, the son of Darius by Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus (10), was king of Persia, reigning from India to Ethiopia, the modern Nubia, over 127 geographical provinces from 486-465. After Xerxes had conquered Egypt in 485, he could now bend all his efforts against Greece, at whose hand his father Darius had twice suffered defeat. For four years he prepared for this expedition against Athens (11). While these preparations were going on, in the third year of his reign (483) Xerxes summoned a great divan of all the officials, dignitaries of the empire, and officers of the army to a 180-day feast at Susa (12). Xerxes devoted these 180 days not solely to entertaining, banqueting, and to a display of royal wealth and honor, but no doubt, also to the deliberation of weighty state affairs. At this historical assembly Xerxes with his great officers deliberates and takes measures to inaugurate his expedition and

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(9) Jos. Ant. B. XI ch.V. 7.8.

(10) Herod. VII.2.

(11) Herod. VII.20; Rawlinson, Great Monarchies, II.p.488.

(12) Beecher, D.E. p. 165.

subjugation of Greece (13).

During these royal feasts (Esther 1,4.5.9.) is happened, that when the king's mind grew merry from wine, Xerxes commanded Vashti (14), the beautiful and fair queen to grace the occasion by her appearance before the king's guests. To the dismay of the great assembly the queen refused to make her appearance. Magniloquently the king regards her refusal as a great public question. Upon the advice of Xerxes' wise men followed the rejection of Vashti, made known throughout the empire as a warning to all women that they were to obey their husbands. (Esther 1,9-22).

In order to select another queen as successor to Vashti a magnificent system of candidacy is established. The fairest maidens from all the provinces were brought to Shushan to obtain one worthy of him. Among them is the beautiful Jewish girl, Hadassah, meaning "myrtle", "bride", also known as Esther, from the Persian Sitareh, "star", Greek *ἀστὴρ* (15). Esther, the daughter

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(13) Herod. VII.7.8; Stoeckhardt S.380; Keil S.619; Milmann, I. p.338; Urquhart in I.S.B.E. under "Esther".

(14) "Vashti may most probably be a title, old Persian Vahishti, sweetest"; Keil S. 621; Urquhart in I.S.B.E. "or it may be connected with the name of an Elamite deity called Washti; or it may be the Hebrew reproduction of the Persian name which the Greeks pronounced Amestris", Davis. p.797, 218.

(15) Nowack, S. 149; Int. Crit. Comm. p.88. 170. Claim is nowadays <sup>made</sup> that the name "Esther" is a late form of the name of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar; and that Esther's other name "Hadassah" is the Babylonian word "hadashatu", used as a title of goddesses. If Esther be taken as equivalent to Ishtar, name of the Babylonian goddess, it may well be the same as the Amestris of Herodotus, which in Babylonia would be

of Abihail (Esther 2,15; 10,29), was an orphan and cousin of the keen minded Mordecai (16). He was her guardian and foster-father. After a 12-months process of beautification, Esther, still keeping secret her Jewish descent, was brought to the king in the 10th month (Dec.-Jan.) in the 7th year of his reign. Thus four years had elapsed from the time of the rejection of Vashti until Esther was brought in. This delay of four years that Xerxes was without a queen is no doubt due to his absence in Greece. After his defeat at Thermopylae and Salamis in 480, Xerxes looking for comfort returns to Susa and consoles himself by the delights of his harem and by his marriage with Esther in 479 (17).

Ammi-Ishtar or Ummi-Ishtar (R.D. Wilson in I.S.B.E.).  
If we consider the prevalent theory of a Babylonian origin for the Book of Esther, based on the effort to identify these historic personages with Elamite deities, we notice that most is a mere surmise (Davis pp. 216,219). Oppert, the distinguished Assyriologist, correctly considers these names of the Book of Esther Persian.  
(16) Mordecai, Hebrew מֹרְדֳּכַי, may be from the Persian, signifying "little man", or a Babylonian name, a diminutive of Merodach or Marduk, chief god of Babylon, (Davis, p. 514; Int. Crit. Comm. p.88). The Jew Mordecai was a son, or better, a descendant of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. The relative clause which as verse 6 follows this genealogy may refer to the last name of the series and state that Kish was carried into exile with king Jeconiah in 598 B.C., or the clause may relate to an earlier name in the list, e.g. to Jair, in which case Mordecai was a descendant of Jair, who was carried away to Babylonia with Jeconiah (Davis p.514). Mordecai has been identified with Matacas, the powerful favorite and minister of Xerxes.  
(17) Esther 2,16-23; Rawlinson Monarchies II. pp.498; Keil, S.630; Herodotus IX. 108.)

Esther's cousin Mordecai remained constantly near the palace, so that he might advise and council her. While at the gate of the palace he discovered a plot. Two royal eunuchs of the king's private apartments conspired to kill their master. This affair was revealed to Esther, who in turn informed the king. The plotters were hanged upon the gallows and a record of the services of Mordecai was entered in the chronicles of the kingdom. Not long thereafter, Haman (18), son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, a royal favorite before whom the king required all men to bow down, observed that the pious Jew Mordecai refused to prostrate himself and give him divine homage. This refusal served the purpose to provoke Haman to seek a way to destroy Mordecai and all Jews. By stating that scattered Jews were an unadaptable and unsociable race that disregarded the king's laws, he cunningly persuades Xerxes and obtains permission to issue an edict for the extermination of the whole Jewish people. In order, however, that Xerxes may not lose the revenue that accrues from them, Haman of his own fortune offers 10,000 talents of silver, about \$18,000,000 (19). No doubt part of the money Haman wished to secure from the plunder of the slaughtered Jews (20). Following

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(18) Davis, p.285.

(19) Int. Crit. Comm. p.205.

(20) Milmann, I. p.340.

a Persian custom, in the first month (Nisan), the 12th year of the king's reign, Pur or lot was cast before Haman, to discover, not as the Int. Critical Comm. (21) wants to accept, a suitable time for the presenting of his petition, but an auspicious day for the ordering of the destruction of the Jews. The fateful day should take place a twelvemonth hence. The king's scribes were called on the 13th day of the first month (March-April), and the doom of death against the whole Jewish race was stamped with the king's seal. This dispatch read to destroy and annihilate all Jews on the 13th of the 12th month of Adar in the twelfth year (474) (22). This message was then carried by swift posts into every province of his empire.

The publication of this decree was followed by universal mourning, fasting, and weeping among the Jews. Finally news of Mordecai's deep grief also reached Esther, who, through the messengers she sends him, is informed of her own and her people's danger. Mordecai begs and urges her to use her influence with the king to avert her own and her people's destruction. At first she feared to enter the presence of the king unsummoned, for to do so was capital offense. Finally upon the earnest entreaty of Mordecai, she consented to approach the king after three days of

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(21) Int. Crit. Comm. p.201.

(22) Beecher. D.E. p.167.

Stoeckhardt, S. 382; Nowack, S. 154.155.

fasting and prayer.

On the third day Esther presented herself before the king and at once wins his favor, extending the golden scepter to her. The king promises to grant her any request, but all she asks for is that the king and Haman appear for a banquet. While at the banquet the king again asks her what her petition is, assuring her that her request shall be granted. But again she refuses to tell the king what she desired and only requests the king's and Haman's presence at another banquet the following day. That evening Haman departed with joy at such honor at the queen's hand, until on his way home, he again passes Mordecai, "who stood not up nor moved from him", when his wrath waxed great. After Haman had recounted to his wife and friends his wealth and honor, he mentions the Jew, the one ungratified wish that still poisoned his whole cup of life. Finally upon the advice of his friends he prepared a fifty cubits high stake for Mordecai's impalement in the morning.

That same night the king's sleep fled. So he ordered that the chronicles of the nation be read to him. That night, by divine guidance the reader came upon that section of the chronicles which recorded Mordecai's discovery of the plot. Thus at the very moment when Haman is planning to hang Mordecai, the king's attention is unexpectedly directed to Mordecai's services. Learning that Mordecai had never been rewarded for his service in revealing the plot, he at once summons Haman, who was waiting in the court for an audience to request Mordecai's life. The

king, however, gets ahead of Haman with the question: "What shall be done unto him whom the king delighteth to honor"? Haman, believing that the king can be thinking only of him, enumerates things that were counted tokens of the highest royal honor among the Persians. With despair he hears the command: "Make haste and do thus unto Mordecai and omit nothing of all that thou hast said". (Esther 6,10). Haman, the favorite of the king, humbly attended the Jew in his triumphal ride with the proclamation: "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor" (Esther 6,11). Hurrying home from his lowly attendance upon the hated Jew, Haman was still recounting his mournful story to Zereth and his friends, when he was hastened to Esther's banquet. There, at the king's renewed request to be told her desire, she begs life for herself and her people. In astonishment he asks who the adversary is. When upon this petition of the king Esther denounces Haman as the one who sought to annihilate and slaughter her people, Xerxes, filled with indignation, rises and goes into the garden palace. Upon his return he found Haman a suppliant at the feet of Esther as she reclined upon her couch. That act sealed his doom. By the order of the king Haman is led away to be impaled upon the very stake he had prepared for the Jew.

That very same day yet, after Esther had told Xerxes her relation to Mordecai, was Mordecai elevated to the position formerly held by Haman. However, the overthrow of Haman and the elevation of Mordecai to that of grand vizier

did not satisfy Esther so long as Haman's edict of destruction remained unrevoked. So Esther once more unsummoned appears before Xerxes and obtains permission to counteract Haman's edict. While the former decree could not be revoked (Esther 1,19), he permitted her to devise measures to counteract its operation. In the third month, the 23d day of Sivan, (June-July) two months and ten days after Haman's edict, (Esther 3,12; 8,9) the scribes were again called and dispatches were sent to every race throughout his domain admonishing the Jews to stand for their life and to annihilate everyone that might be hostile to them (Ezra 8,10-15).

On the appointed 13th day of Adar 474, according to the irrevocable law of Esther 3,13, the heathen are to kill the Jews; and according to the equally irrevocable law of Esther 8,11, the Jews are to kill the heathen. Accordingly the Jews gathered themselves together keeping a wary eye upon their foes. In this they were also assisted by the government that was favorably inclined to the Jews (Esther 9,3.4). At last the day arrived. All who were known to be hostile to the Jews were hunted out and killed. On the 13th 500 were slain in Susa. But not content with their triumph, they asked and obtained the royal permission to continue their struggle for another day, and in the course of the second day slew of their enemies 300 more, making a total of 800. Among the killed were the ten sons of Haman, their great prosecutor (Esther 9,5-15). In all



the other cities and provinces the Jews, who had gathered themselves together and stood for their lives, slew seventy and five thousand (Esther 9,16). The result was deliverance and honor for the Jews. While in the provinces the 14th day of Adar, in Susa the 15th was celebrated with feasting and gladness (Esther 9,17-20).

At this time the feast of Purim was instituted by Mordecai. Over against the statement of nearly all modern critics and of the International Critical Commentary that "the origin of Purim given by this book is historically improbable", and that "no certainty has yet been reached as to the precise Babylonian feast from which it is derived", we place the statement of Holy Writ. There we are clearly taught concerning the origin of Purim. Mordecai exhorted the Jews to celebrate the festival of Purim on the 14th and 15th of Adar in memory of the day which Haman had determined by lot for their destruction, but which, directed by God's guidance, had been turned by Esther into a day of triumph (23). These days were called Purim after the name of Pur or lot (Esther 9,26; 3,7). Each successive year (Esther 9,21) throughout every generation and every province and every city were the Jews to celebrate the feast of Purim on the 14th and 15th of Adar (Esther 9, 27,28). To bring about a still greater confirmation of this feast, the queen and Mordecai wrote a second letter

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(23) (Esther 9,21-24); Stoeckhardt, S. 388; Fuerbringer, Einl. A. T. S. 43.

of Purim and sent it throughout the 127 provinces to impress on them the celebration of the feast of Purim. The explanation of Kautsch that the story of Esther was engrafted on a Jewish feast already existing and probably connected with a Persian festival, and the other many theories, (24) are only surmises. All critical theories have never offered a better explanation of the feast than that it had its origin as stated in the Book of Esther. The institution of the festival of Purim, "Feast of Lots", also known as "the day of Mordecai" (25), observed also at the time of Nicanor and celebrated by all Jews at the time of Josephus and still is being observed today, is a standing memorial of this national deliverance (26).

Few have done more to earn a nation's lasting gratitude than Mordecai, to whom, under God, the Jewish people owe their preservation. The great lesson of the overruling power of Providence that the Book of Esther teaches, calls back the poet's words:

"Behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above his own."

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(24) International Critical Commentary, p.76-94.

(25) 2 Macc.15,36.

(26) Jos. Ant. XI. ch. 6,13.

THE EVENTS RECORDED IN EZRA 7-10 (458-457).

The 58 years, from the dedication of the temple in 515 in the sixth year of Darius, to the 7th year of Artaxerxes in 458, are passed over in the phrase "after these things" ( Ezra 7,1 ). The Artaxerxes is Artaxerxes I (464-424) as the Elephantine papyri have again proved and cannot be identified with Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-358) (1). During this time we have no direct information concerning the Jews in Palestine. That they had not been either very faithful or prosperous may be inferred from the state of things as found by Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Jews that remained at Babylon were no doubt occasionally disquieted by tidings which reached them from time to time concerning the religious and moral condition of the exiles in Jerusalem. News of this precarious condition of the Jews also reached Ezra, and he comes to Jerusalem to bring about a reformation. Ezra was a descendant of Seraiah, the highpriest, who was slaughtered by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah ( II Kings 25, 18 ) (2).

(1) So Int. Crit. Comm. p. 303.

(2) Since Seraiah, the chiefpriest, was killed by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah ( II Kings 25, 18-21 ), and since Seraiah was the father of Jehozadak who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar ( I Chron. 6, 14.15. ) in 588, and since the return under Ezra took place in 458 B.C., the word "son" must be used in Ezra 5,2, in the sense of "descendant". Since, moreover, Joshua, the highpriest, who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, was the son of Jehozadak ( Ezra 5,2 ) and the grandson of Seraiah, Ezra was probably the great-grandson ( Keil, S. 457 ) or great-great-grandson of Seraiah. Thus Ezra omits his immediate ancestors. The only inference which can be drawn from this is that Ezra preferred to link himself with distinguished ancestors before the exile rather than with those since of less note.

Ezra, lineal descendant of Aaron ( Ezra 7, 1-5 ), was a סופר, a ready scribe, a learned doctor in the Mosaic law and its interpretation, and thus specially fitted for the task which he now undertook by his intimate knowledge of "the law of Moses", the one instrument by which he hoped to renovate the religious life of his countrymen in Judea.

Ezra started from Babylon, supported by the authority of the Persian monarch Artaxerxes, who issued a commission in writing directing Ezra "to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of his God which was in his hand" ( Ezra 7, 14 ). This copy of the letter commanded the Persian officials "beyond the river" to help Ezra in his enterprise not only with wheat, wine, and silver, but even granted to the Jewish priests down to the most menial of the temple servants the privilege of exemption from toll, tribute, and custom ( Ezra 7, 22-24 ). This decree puts not only an enormous sum of money at Ezra's disposition for the benefit of the temple (7,16), but it ends with a most remarkable injunction to Ezra. Artaxerxes commands Ezra: "Set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not" ( Ezra 7, 25 ). These officers, appointed by Ezra, were authorized to administer both the religious and the civil law. And both, the law of God and the law of the king, were alike to be enforced by severe penalties ( Ezra 7,26). Ezra thus had the power of life and death. With these extraordinary powers conferred by Artaxerxes upon Ezra,

did he start from Babylon the first day of the first month ( Ezra 7,9 ). A brief halt was made at the "river Ahava" to note the caravan's composition. After Ezra had carefully gone over the genealogical status of the immigrants he noticed that no Levites, who were to take of the temple service, were among the number. He at once sent back to Casiphia and succeeded in enlisting over two hundred Nethinim and Levites, so that the entire caravan now numbered over 1700 males or in all about 7000 people. After fasting and prayer for a successful journey were made, for they were without military escort, the caravan started from Ahava the 12th day of the first month (3). According to Rawlinson (4) Ezra took the course of the Euphrates up to Balis and then the established route over Aleppo to the Lower Orontes valley which would conduct him to Palestine. Safely the desert was crossed and they reached Jerusalem on the first day of the 5th month in the burning heat of July, 458. After a three days rest the rich offerings for the temple, 650 talents of silver, 100 talents of gold, and many temple vessels, which had been sent by leading Jews in Babylonia and even by Artaxerxes himself, and brought up

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- (3) While some take Ahava to be a river in Babylonia ( Stoeckhardt, S. 364 ), or a "district southwest of Susiana" ( Milmann, I.p.341 ), or identify it with modern Hit on the Euphrates due east of Damascus ( Mc.Clintock and Strong; Rawlinson, Ezra and Nehemiah, p. 30; Stanley III. p. 104 ), it is best to take Ahava to be one of the numerous canals which intersected Babylonia, flowing from the Euphrates towards a town or district "Ahava" ( S. Hunter in I.S.B.E.; Stade II, S. 155; Oettli, S. 524 ).
- (4) Ezra and Nehemiah, pp. 32-35.

under the supervision of 12 chief priests, were weighed and placed into the house of God by two priests and two Levites ( Ezra 8, 24-34 ). Soon after the arrival also this caravan offered up sacrifices. The fact that also here twelve bullocks were offered for all Israel again shows the persistent theory that the new Israel comprized the whole nation. Also the royal edicts to the king's lieutenants and governors of Syria were delivered and the subventions therein indicated were received ( Ezra 8, 36 ). Soon Ezra was settled down. His administrative functions were admitted without question, and the other officials, both ecclesiastical and civil, worked under him, apparently, without friction and jealousy ( Ezra 9,1; 10, 5.14-16 ).

This auspicious beginning was soon followed by a revulsion. There was a secret blot. The first immigrants, for they were the guilty persons, had not kept their Israelite blood pure but had intermarried with the people of the land. Although to Ezra the avowed object was to carry out a reform of the temple ceremonies on the basis of the Law-book; the first task which thus confronted him was that of dealing with mixed marriages, an abuse the extent of which was apparently unknown to him before his arrival in Palestine. After the events recorded in Ezra 8, 35.36, leaders reported to Ezra that Israelites, priests, and Levites had not separated themselves from the foreigners, but had entered mixed marriages and taken

daughters for themselves and their sons and thus mingled the holy seed (5). Ezra, the temporal and spiritual ruler of the community, was horror stricken by the discovery that many of the leading Jews, and even some of the priests, had taken foreign wives. He rent his garments, tore his hair, and sat in mourning until the evening sacrifice ( Ezra 9,3 ). At the evening oblation, having sufficiently recovered from the profound shock, his emotions found utterance in the great penitential prayer ( Ezra 9,5-15 ). In words wrung from his inmost soul Ezra reviews the history of Israel and shows that the sufferings of the people were due to their sins, and how just now God had shown a gracious purpose, which, however, was in danger of being thwarted by the violation of the prophetic word forbidding mingling with aliens. The prayer closes with a despondent cry that the people cannot stand before an offended God. The whole tenor of the prayer shows the desire to touch the heart of the guilty and to impel them to abandon the course of life which was so evil. This imploring prayer had its desired effect. It evidently made a profound impression on the assembled people who were attracted by his praying and loud weeping. The great multitude joined in lamentation as he made his confession. At this critical moment, with a deep sense of relief, came unto the helpless Ezra the splendid utterance of a distinguished lay-

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(5) Koehler, Note I, S. 608-610.; Ezra 9,1.2.

man, Schechaniah ( Ezra 10,1-4 ). He arises and in the name of the whole community confesses the guild of the people. "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the Law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it" ( Ezra 10, 2-4 ). Upon this Ezra arose, seized the opportunity and imposed on the congregation an oath that the strange wives should be put away ( Ezra 10,5 ). Immediately a proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem ordering all Israel to convene at Jerusalem within three days under penalty of confiscation and excommunication . ( Ezra 10, 7.8. ). Although it was in December the Israelites gathered themselves together within three days. It was in the depth of the Syrian winter, the 20th of Chisleu, when they appeared before Ezra in the open space before the temple. The people trembled under the remonstrance of their consecrated chief and shivered in the rain that fell in torrents ( Ezra 10,9. ). Although the people, after having made confession, were ready to meet the leaders demands, declaring with a loud voice to separate themselves from the strange wives, the promise was by no means easy to fulfill on the spur of the moment, because of the ungenial weather and the many cases. So a commission was appointed,



consisting of Ezra and a number of the "rulers", which should investigate every case of unlawful marriage and compel their husbands to part with their wives and even with their children. Before this tribunal all transgressors with their local elders and judges should appear at stated times that the truth might be clearly ascertained in each instance. The number of offenders was so large that the process of inquiry lasted for three months. This Commission of Inquiry convened the first day of the tenth month ( Ezra 10, 16 ), December 458, which was ten days after the general assembly ( Ezra 10,9 ), and finished the first day of the first month, March 457 ( Ezra 10, 17 ). The result was that four priests of the highpriestly family Jeshua, together with 13 other priests, ten Levites, and 86 laymen, ( Ezra 10, 18-44 ) and many of them of high rank ( Ezra 9,2 ), were found guilty and were forced to dismiss their foreign wives and foreign children (6). Thus this scandal was put to an end. Ezra had one plain duty to perform, to enforce the Law at whatever cost. A very fine example of church discipline for us in the 20th century to observe(7).

The record of Ezra's governorship of Judea comes to an abrupt close with the list of those who had "taken strange wives", but whose marriages had been annulled by commission. Ezra's stay in Jerusalem dates from the first day of the fifth

(6) Keil, S. 484.

(7) Stoeckhardt, S. 366.367.

month 458 to the first day of the first month 457, about eight months. Soon after his reform Ezra was probably recalled by Artaxerxes, or he returned of his own accord to make his report. which he had been commissioned to make on conditions in Palestine ( Ezra 7, 14 ).

## THE EFFORT TO REBUILD THE CITY WALLS.

Already at the building of the temple, soon after their return, the Jews experienced the opposition of the Samaritans. As pointed out before, Chapter IV. 1-5 gives us an account of this annoying conduct of the Samaritans, who, when their proffered aid was declined in building the temple, interfered with the work in every possible way. This opposition of their enemies began in the reign of Cyrus, continued thru the reign of Cambyses (529-522), Smerdis (522-521), and even until the reign of Darius Hystaspes, who held their hostility in check for a time, so that the temple could be completed in the sixth year of Darius, 515 ( Ezra 6,15 ). However, since the author wishes to show how the opposition of the Samaritans continued under the later kings, he immediately adds to verse 5 the events recorded in Ezra 4, 6-24.

The right explanation of this section depends on who is to be identified with Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes. Ewald (1), Prideaux (2), and others (3) identified Ahasuerus ( Ezra 4,6 ) with Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus; and Artaxerxes, to whom persons wrote an accusation against Judah and Jerusalem, with Pseudo Smerdis. This view cannot be held. Another explanation that seems more probable and meets

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(1) Ewald , IV. S. 137.  
(2) Prideaux, II, p. 165.170.  
(3) Beecher, D.E. p. 162.

with general acceptance is the one that Xerxes, the son and successor of Darius Hystaspes, is meant by Ahasuerus (4). No doubt the identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes ( 485-465 ) is correct, because in the following verses (7-23) Artaxerxes, the son and successor of Xerxes, is mentioned. Furthermore, we have no proof whatever that Cambyses was ever called Ahasuerus, whereas there is absolute certainty, as stated before, that the Persian Khshayarsha, the Hebrew  $\aleph \dot{\iota} \gamma \dot{\iota} \aleph \Pi \aleph$ , and the Greek Xerxes are the exact equivalents of one another. There is also no evidence that the real Smerdis or the Pseudo-Smerdis was ever called Artaxerxes (5). This false identification of these two kings was based, no doubt, in some measure on the erroneous view that Ezra 4, 6-24 had reference to the building of the temple (6). In these verses of the Aramaic section where the complaint to Xerxes is only alluded to, while the one to Artaxerxes and its answer are given in full, there is no mention whatever about building the temple, indeed it is excluded; for the complainants urge in their letter that if the Jews finish their undertaking, the city will be in a position to refuse toll, tribute, custom, and rebel against the king of Persia ( Ezra 4, 12.13 ). We must remember furthermore, that the temple had already been completed in the sixth year of Darius, 515 ( Ezra 6,15 ).

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(4) Stade, Gesch. II, S. 117.

(5) R.D.Wilson in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

(6) Clay, p. 389.

Again the restoration of the temple as the basis of that charge would be ridiculous. Soon after Xerxes accession in 485, when an accusation of rebellion would be most effective, followed the accusation in verse 6. In the following reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus ( 464- 424 ) the Jews were again accused by their adversaries. This is stated in Ezra 4, 7-23. The impulse and the preparation for the rebuilding of the walls dates not prior to Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, but it must have taken place after Ezra and his 7000 exiles. constituting the second "golah", had arrived in Jerusalem (458). For the phrase " the Jews which came up from thee to us" ( Ezra 4, 12 ) can be understood only as referring to that "golah" which came up with Ezra. Then, after the 20th year of Artaxerxes (444) when Nehemiah began rebuilding the walls, these events could not have happened. Consequently Ezra 4, 7-23 fits between the 8th and 20th year of Artaxerxes. This hostility against the Jews was no doubt caused to some extent by Ezra's drastic action in regard to annulling all alien marriages, which measures doubtless made many enemies who finally, by influence at the Persian court, obtained an injunction against permitting the Jews rebuild the wall (6). The complainants assume in the letter written by Rehum and Shimshai that if the Jews complete their project of rebuilding the city walls, they would rebel from the king,

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(6) Koehler, Gesch. II, S. 614; Oettli, S. 526.

and the territory would be lost and the king stripped of his lawful tribute ( Ezra 4, 7-16 ). The letter had its effect. The suspicions of Artaxerxes were aroused and he gave orders for the immediate stoppage of the work. He sent a reply to Rehum, Shimshai, and their associates, stating that the annals had been searched and their charges against Jerusalem sustained. Therefore he directs his officers to stop building the city until further authorization is given by him ( Ezra 4,21 ). Immediately the Samaritans, supported by the Persian officials, hastened to Jerusalem, produced the king's decree, and by force and power compelled the Jews to cease from repairing the walls ( Ezra 4, 23 ). Thus the walls which had begun to rise from the foundations were again thrown down, all work ceased, and years of inactivity set in until in 445, when Nehemiah, learning with chagrin and surprise that Jerusalem is lying waste, its walls thrown down, and its gates burned ( Neh. 1, 3; 2, 3 ), comes up from Shushan to rebuild them.

Thus, while chapter IV. 1-5 recounts the opposition of the Samaritans to the rebuilding of the temple from the reign of Cyrus to Darius, the writer, before explaining the rebuilding of the temple under Darius, tells how this hostility continued and broke out in the next reign, that of Xerxes ( Ezra 4, 6 ) and in the following reign even succeeded in getting from Artaxerxes an edict forbidding the building of the city walls ( Ezra 4, 7-23 ). With

chapter IV. 24 the author then goes back to the first stage of this hostility, the stoppage of the work upon the temple. Chapter V and VI then relate how the favor and decree of Darius, encouraging them to rebuild the temple, was secured; which effectually thwarted the plans of the plans of the Samaritans. Driver is of the opinion that Ezra 4, 6-23 relates to occurrences some 80 years later than the period the writer was describing (7). This is not true as Green points out. "The trouble is traced through each successive reign: in verse 5, Cyrus to Darius; then verse 6, Xerxes; then verse 7, Artaxerxes." This method is not so confusing. if one only adheres to the plain sense of the language, but even good style. For the author wants "to group together the successive acts of hostility which the Jews experienced from their neighbors, and let the progress of the history show how the temple and the walls of Jerusalem were finally built in spite of all that their enemies could do to prevent it".

Thus Ezra 4, 6-23 is an episode of how the Samaritan's enmity against the Jews expressed itself in their partly successful opposition against the building of the walls and fortifications of Jerusalem under Xerxes and Artaxerxes (8).

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(7) Driver, p. 515.

(8) Bleek, Einl. A.T. S. 376ff; Keil, Komm. S. 477, und Einl. A.T. S. 455; Driver, p. 541; 547; Koenig, Einl. A.T. S. 276; Green, pp. 49-51; Nowack, S.2;34; Koehler, Gesch. II. Note 2, S. 576-578.

NEHEMIAH'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM (445-433).

With the annulment of the mixed marriages the memoirs of Ezra are interrupted and 12 years are passed over in silence till 445. In all probability Ezra did not remain in Jerusalem during this time as Ewald supposes. Since Ezra's commission was only of a temporary nature, I believe that soon after he had effected his reformation he returned to the court of the king of Persia. This is borne out by the parallel case of Nehemiah. This also accounts for the abrupt termination of Ezra's narrative. Furthermore, such a general relapse of the Jews into their former irregularities would hardly have occurred, if Ezra had remained in Jerusalem. The next time Ezra makes his appearance upon the scene of history is in connection with Nehemiah.

In the ninth month ( Chisleu ), in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I (465-424), Nehemiah, son of Hachaliah, a court official, heard from his brother Hanani ( Neh. 1,2; 7,2 ) the helpless condition of the Jews in Jerusalem. Nehemiah, in all probability a Jew ( Neh. 2,3.5; 6,6.7 ), and the favored cup-bearer of Artaxerxes, which office was no trifling favor (1), was deeply moved by the depressing tidings that reached him from the province. He heard that the walls of the city were still in ruins and that the people were in great affliction, humiliation, and disgrace; evidently,

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(1) Rawlinson, Ezra and Neh. p. 86; Herod. III, 34 .



because they were defenseless against the attacks of their lawless neighbors. In distress at what he heard, Nehemiah made supplication day and night ( Neh. 1, 4-11 ). Finally on the first month of the 20th year, 444 ( Nowack; Beecher ), he asked the king's permission to visit his native Jerusalem and repair its ruined walls (2). Due to his honorable and confidential position of close intimacy with the king, Nehemiah was able to obtain his commission with full powers as governor of Judea and edicts which enabled him to restore the walls. While some scholars believe that the "broken walls" of the city were still the result of 586, when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem ( II Kings 25, 10 ), it is better on the basis of Neh. 1,2.3; 2,3.17, which implies something recent, to consider the broken walls the result of the edict of Artaxerxes ( Ezra 4, 21.24 ) (3). Besides being armed like Zerubbabel with the power of a governor called "pehah" ( Neh. 12, 26 ) and "Tirshatha" ( Neh. 8,9; 10,1 ), Nehemiah was provided with a considerable escort of Persian troops and commendatory letters to the various satraps beyond the river. These powers of the Tirshatha, which Artaxerxes conferred upon him, Nehemiah used to the utmost.

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(2) Nehemiah received the news in the month of Chisleu of the 20th year counted vernaly, and afterward asked leave of the king in the month of Nisan of the 20th year ( Neh, 1,1; 2,1 ). Either the years are counted autumnally, or else the writer has in mind the Nisan directly following the 20th year, instead of the Nisan with which that year began ( Beecher, D.E.p. 168 ). Stade (II, S. 163) and Koehler ( II S. 616 ) accept a mistake in one of the numbers.

(3) Koehler, II, Note 2, S. 616-617; Oettli, S. 528.

Without it he would have failed in his object, for from the time of his arrival Nehemiah found himself opposed by a powerful party, the Samaritans. Among them especially Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the servant, and Geshem an Arabian, who later on became known for their hostile schemes, were grieved to see Nehemiah seek the welfare of Israel ( Neh. 2, 10.19 ).

After his arrival in Jerusalem, undaunted by the threats and machinations of these irreconcilable adversaries, Nehemiah resolutely set to work to bring about the restoration of the broken circuit of the once impregnable walls of the Holy City. Three days after his arrival, waiting till nightfall, Nehemiah mounts a mule and, accompanied by a few<sup>followers</sup> on foot, makes a secret inspection of the ruined walls of Jerusalem. He begins at the Valley Gate and follows the line of the wall to the Kidron, where he finds the ravine so entirely choked with masses of rubbish that there was no room for the beast that was under him to pass; then he followed the course of the torrent northwards, surveying the scene of desolation, and finally returned by the Gate of the Valley, whence he had started ( Neh. 2, 12-15 ). Without delay Nehemiah appealed to the patriotism of the rulers and inhabitants : "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (2, 17). The appeal was instantly responded to, and the work of rebuilding the walls immediately began in earnest. It was like the

rebuilding of the walls of Athens after the invasion of Xerxes. Every class of society, every district in the country took part in it. The able-bodied population not only of Jerusalem but also of the Judaite towns, under the direction of men belonging to the leading families, took part in it ( Neh. 3 ). High above priest and Levite, on an equality with the other resident governors of the provinces west of the Euphrates, was Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, of the Persian court. Nehemiah himself superintended the work with sleepless vigilance.

At first Sanballat, an inveterate enemy, who according to the Elephantine papyri was governor of Samaria, with his fellows Tobiah and Geshem tried ridicule, and then force in hindering the construction of the wall ( Neh. 2, 19; 4, 1-3 ) (4). But neither force nor ridicule was effective against the genius of the great leader. He met these sneers by imprecation and his fighting force with a large army, for his people were ready to use either trowel or sword. When by prayer and honest effort the breeches were filled up and the wall was soon continuous to half the height, the enemy became exceeding wroth ( Neh. 4, 4-6 ). At this time a report reached Nehemiah that the enemy, enlarged by Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, were conspiring to make an aggressive attack ( Neh. 4, 7.8. ). Nehemiah was equal to the emergency. Although some of the lukewarm workers begged their brethren to cease working, he

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(4) Koehler, II. Note 1, S. 621-622.

at once made prayer unto the Lord, set watches day and night, mustered his people by their natural division of families and armed them with spears, swords, and bows behind the rapidly rising wall ( Neh. 4, 10-14 ). The report of his measure of defence was enough to daunt and thwart the plans of the enemy and the main work was again resumed with vigor ( Neh. 4, 15 ). In order to guard against any surprise attack, half of the builders, each one girded with his sword, toiled under pressure from rising of dawn to the appearance of stars, while the others, equipped with shields, spears, and bows mounted guard (Neh. 4, 15-18; 21,22). Nehemiah was constantly on the wall, keeping the trumpeter by his side, so as to rally the whole force to any point where it might become necessary to repel the attack ( Neh. 4, 19.20 ). Of Nehemiah and his body guard it is proudly reported that they took off no clothing except for washing ( Neh. 4, 23 ).

Sanballat, thwarted in his efforts to check the work on the walls by force, now falls back on treachery. At one time the enemy proposes to tempt Nehemiah to come to a conference in the plain of Ono. Nehemiah suspected a plot to kidnap him or put him out of the way by violence. For four times he repeatedly puts them off with the same statement - that the building of the walls required his personal presence ( Neh. 6, 1-4 ). The fifth time the enemies try to frighten him with an open letter, charging him that he and his party were planning rebellion and aspiring to royalty ( Neh. 6, 5-7 ). In reply to the letter, Nehemiah dryly states that Sanballat is putting forward the

figment of his own brain. These measures all proving futile, the foe tries a new method. They hire the false prophet Shemaiah, who was in the city, to give deceitful advice to Nehemiah. He affected to be alarmed for Nehemiah's safety and proposed that he and his friends should take refuge in the Holy of Holies in the temple (5). To follow this advice would show cowardice or sacrilege or both. This would result in an evil report and the exiles would have cause to reproach him. Also the plot of the prophetess Noadiah, who is named as though she were especially active, failed. Thus all the plots, even the attempts upon Nehemiah's life, were too transparent and proved ineffectual ( Neh. 6, 10-14 ). And the work of the great leader went on without interruption. The activity of the opposers, however, was not checked, for we learn that the correspondence between them and their adherents in Jerusalem became more frequent ( Neh. 6, 17-19 ). The reason Tobiah could enveigle so many Jews and keep up such intimacy with them is explained by the fact that Tobiah was connected by marriage with the leading families. But also this secret correspondence effected nothing and Nehemiah triumphed.

Among all this anxiety Nehemiah found time for internal reform. Various social evils at Jerusalem, which had arisen in connection with the building of the wall, called for his

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(5) Keil, S. 545; Int. Crit. Comm. p. 256.

immediate attention ( Neh. 5 ). Especially the condition of the poorer Jews, who had responded willingly to the call of the governor, but since they worked without pay soon became exhausted of their own slender resources, cried for redress. They complained that the burden of Persian taxation had compelled them to borrow of their wealthy neighbors at an exorbitant rate of interest. In default of repayment they were forced to mortgage their farms, vineyards, houses, and in some cases even had to sell their children as slaves. The season was also a bad one, if we may judge by their allusion to famine ( Neh. 5, 3 ). When these complaints reached Nehemiah, he was greatly incensed at their oppression. After deliberating, Nehemiah calls the nobles together and boldly rebuked them for their inhuman treatment of their "brethren". He also takes measures to relieve the distress. He abolishes the practice of lending on usury and demands that the rich money lenders restore the property which they had accepted as security from the borrowers. By this incident the governor takes occasion to set before them his method of life. He told the nobles that during the twelve years of his administration he made no use of his right to levy a tax on the people for his own support ( Neh. 5, 14.15 ) (6), but <sup>that</sup> he defrayed the expenses of his household of 150 Jews and official vi-

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(6) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 245.

sitors by drawing upon his own private fortunes ( Neh. 5, 17.18 ). By such measures and by the force of his own example Nehemiah did much to improve the social conditions of the Jews.

Finally on the 25th day of Elul ( September , 444 ), in the short space of 52 days, not in 2 years and 4 months (7), during which time Nehemiah and his servants did not leave their posts, the walls were completed and the gates set up ( Ezra 6, 15 ) (8). A solemn service of dedication was held amid great rejoicing ( Neh. 12, 27-43 ). The courage and resolution of the new governor Nehemiah had frustrated the designs of both the declared enemies of the Jews and of those within the city, who by means of alleged oracles treacherously sought to weaken his hands. Thus the Samaritans were put to shame. We cannot appreciate this stupendous accomplishment of the great leader, unless we take into account the fact that the walls were restored in the face of great danger and constant interference.

After the wall was completed in 444, Nehemiah set his brother Hanani as ruler over Jerusalem, for "he feared God above many" ( Neh. 7, 1.2. ) Since, however, the city was too large for the number of inhabitants, plans were considered for its increase ( Ezra 7, 4. ). While Ezra was making a study of the register of the genealogy of exiles that came up with Zerubbabel and planning with rulers how to increase its population ( Neh. 7, 5-72 ), probably occurred

(7) Jos. XI, ch. 5, 8.

(8) Koehler, II, Note 2, S. 627-629; Stade II, S. 173.

the event described in chapter VIII, the public promulgation of the Law in the open space before the water-gate at Jerusalem. Ezra, the spiritual leader of the people ( Ezra 7, 1-6; 10-12.21 ), relying on the support of Nehemiah, the new civil leader ( Neh. 5, 14.15.18; 12, 26; 8,9; 10,1 ), now emerged from his retirement. An opportunity had at last arrived for the carrying out of his cherished project, the reorganization of the national life on the basis of the Law-book which had been brought from Babylon. The completion of the walls had doubtless rekindled the national enthusiasm of the Jews and revived their desire to maintain their distinctive character as a "peculiar people". Ezra's appearance with the Book of the Law in his hands was evidently the response to a popular demand ( Neh. 8,1 ). On the first day of the 7th month (Tisri) in the year 444. the people gathered themselves together as one man for the purpose of hearing the contents of the Law (9). We cannot accept Oettli's view that this reading of the Law occurred in 456 (10), for the context is against it ( Neh.8,9 ). When Ezra, standing upon a platform raised for the occasion, opened the volume all the people arose and upon the pronounced benediction the people responded with an Amen ( Neh. 8,4-7 ). From morning till midday the Book was read aloud to the people, the lections being occasionally interrupted by parenthetical comments and

(9) Koehler, II. S. 636; Rawlinson, Ezra and Nehemiah, p. 132ff; Ezra 7, 73; Stoeckhardt, S. 374.  
(10) Oettli, S. 532 ff.



remarks ( Neh. 8, 7.8 ). The reading of the Law had a tremendous effect on the assembly. They broke forth into weeping at hearing the words of the "Book of the Law", which as a nation they had in so many particulars transgressed. But weeping was unsuited to the "holiness" of such a day. So Nehemiah encouraged them and bade them to depart in peace and celebrate the day with joy and gladness ( Neh. 8, 9-12 ). The reading was again resumed the following day, when directions were read describing the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles ( Neh. 8, 13-15 ). Plans were at once made for the celebration of this feast. During the seven days of its continuance ( Lev. 23, 33-36 ) when the children of Israel dwelt in booths, Ezra continued to read aloud portions of the Law ( Neh. 8, 16-18 ). On the 24th of Tisri a strict fast was proclaimed and a solemn confession and repentance were made of past transgressions of the people ( Neh. 9, 4-38 ). On this suitable occasion also a renewal of the covenant between Israel and Jehovah was made and formally sealed and signed by Nehemiah, the princes, Levites, and the priests ( Neh. 10, 1-28 ). This covenant pledged the whole community to strict observance and obedience to the Law, especially in regard to two particulars: abstaining from the custom of intermarriage with aliens and careful observance of the Sabbath, the seventh year, and other stated observances and feasts ( Neh. 10, 29-31.33 ). At the same time different minor regulations, the payment of first-fruits of the ground and firstlings of the flock, the care of the sanctuary and its service were agreed to ( Neh. 10, 35-

39 ). Since the gathering and bringing of wood proved too much for the small number of returned Nethinim, the work was distributed by lot among the priests, Levites, and the people (11). The gathering of wood was thus made a special duty of the congregation, and according to Josephus, was celebrated the 14th of Ab (12) . Perhaps the most noteworthy ordinance was that which provided that every Israelite should contribute yearly the third part of a shekel towards defraying the expenses of the temple worship ( Neh. 10, 32 ).

This reform movement brought about by Ezra ( Neh, 8-10 ) marks a turning point of deep interest in Jewish history. It transformed the nation into a more unified congregation or church and made the Law the basis of civic and social life and the common possession of each Israelite. The Law-book thus constituted the chief bond of union between the Jews of the Dispersion and the "Children of the Captivity", the restored exiles as they were usually called ( Ezra 4,1; 6, 16.19.20 ).

After the religious acts had been performed, the original intention ( Neh. 7, 4.5 ) of making a registration of the people and securing additional inhabitants for the city was carried out. While the rulers dwelt in Jerusalem and others willingly offered themselves to move there, lots were nevertheless cast to draft one out every ten of the

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(11) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 377.

(12) Jos. War of the Jews, II, ch. 17, 6; Keil, Note I, S. 569; Neh. 10,34.

country people to dwell in Jerusalem, "the holy city" ( Neh. 11,1-19 ). Finally in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes Nehemiah's first administration of 12 years came to a close and he returned to the Persian court in 433/32 ( Neh. 5, 14; 13,6 ).

## MALACHI.

During the time of Nehemiah's administration occurs also the activity of the prophet Malachi. While Stade, Bleek, and others place Malachi's activity before Ezra (458), we, upon the indirect testimony of the contents of the Book of Malachi, must fix Malachi's prophecy and activity as belonging in the time of Nehemiah. The reasons which appear conclusively to fix the time of Malachi's activity as contemporary with Nehemiah are the following: the offenses denounced by Malachi as prevailing among the people, the offering of defective sacrifices ( Mal. 1, 6-14 ), the negligence of tithes and offerings ( Mal. 2, 7-9; 3, 7-10. 14 ), and especially the corruption of priests by marrying foreign wives ( Mal. 2, 10-16 ), correspond with the actual abuses with which Nehemiah had to contend in his efforts to bring about a reformation ( Neh. 10, 28-30.13 ). Even the few words devoted by Malachi to the social wrong of the times ( Mal. 3,5 ) find their justification in the conditions which have been recorded in Nehemiah's memoirs ( Neh. 5, 1-13 ). Malachi was thus active between the 20th and 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes ( 445-433 ) and in all probability also after 433 (1). Since in Mal. 1,8 it is implied that gifts which according to Neh. 5, 15. Nehemiah always declined might be offered to the governor, it is very

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(1) Fuerbringer, Einl. A.T.S. 96; Keil, S. 682-683; Koehler II, S. 595; Robinson in I.S.B.E.

probable that the Book of Malachi was written during the absence of Nehemiah at Susa, 433-432 (2). "The Book of Malachi fits the situation amid which Nehemiah worked as snugly as a bone fits its socket" (3).

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(2) Raven, Old Testament Introduction, p. 249.

(3) Int. Crit. Comm. on Malachi, p. 7.

## NEHEMIAH'S SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

Nehemiah, who had returned to Persia after his 12-year governorship over Judah ( 433/32 ), obtained leave again "after certain days" to return to Jerusalem ( Neh. 13, 6 ). While Koehler (1) and the International Critical Commentary (2) are of the opinion that several years elapsed between the two administrations, it is best to place his second visit to Jerusalem soon after 433/32 (3). During this short interval, during which Nehemiah was absent at the Persian court, abuses which he had formerly repressed had already revived and grown up. Upon the reading of the Law, which denied the Ammonites and Moabites who had hired Balaam to curse Israel, but which curse was turned into a blessing, the people of Israel separated themselves from the mixed multitude ( Neh. 13, 1-3 ). Then it was observed that the Levites were no longer given their portion ( Neh. 13, 5.10.11 ) Eliashib, the priest, had actually allied himself to the Ammonite Tobiah, the enemy of Nehemiah, and had allowed him the use of a great chamber in the courts of the temple ( Neh. 13, 4-5 ). When this report reached Nehemiah he at once rejected him with all his household goods from the temple, and the room was once more restored to its original use ( Neh. 13, 7-14 ). Laxity in the observance of the Sabbath had again crept in ( Neh. 13, 15-22 ), and

(1) Koehler, II, S. 646, Note 4.

(2) Int. Crit. Comm. p. 45.46.

(3) Fuerbringer, S. 40; Robinson in I.S.B.E.; Oettli, S. 536; Stade, II, 187; Neh. 13, 6 ff.

intermarriage with foreigners had not entirely ceased ( Neh. 13, 23 ff. ). Some Jews had again married wives of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Even the priesthood had proved unfaithful in this particular. The highpriest Eliashib's own grandson had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. When he refused to separate from his alien wife and defied the Tirshatha, Nehemiah equally staunch passed on his opponent a sentence of exile ( Neh. 13, 28 ). According to Josephus this grandson (4) of Eliashib whom Nehemiah excommunicated was Manasseh, the brother of Jaddua, the highpriest. After his expulsion he is said to have appealed to his father-in-law Sanballat who promised him a temple on Mt. Gerizim and the priesthood of it. Here he and many leading Jews, priests, and laymen, who were bitterly opposed to Nehemiah's measures, on the basis of a modified Pentateuch, are said to have formed themselves into an independent sect, the Samaritans (5). However, this identification of Eliashib's grandson with Manasseh, founder of the Synagogue of the Samaritans, is very improbable (6). Since "Josephus makes Manasseh, son-in-law of Sanballat and brother of the highpriest Jaddus, who was son of the highpriest Johanan ( Jonathan ), the grandson of Joiada and great-grandson of Eliashib" he puts Manasseh a century too late, for Josephus records Manasseh building the temple at Gerizim in the time of Alexander (7).

(4) Josephus, Ant. XI. ch. 8,9.

(5) So also Beecher, D.E. p. 172.

(6) Oettli, S. 537.

(7) Jos. Ant. XI.ch. 8, 4; Kautsch in Schaff Herzog under "Samaritans".

No doubt Nehemiah was active at Jerusalem even after 433/32. The Chronicler mentions the succession of highpriests from Eliashib, Joiada, Jonathan, down to Jaddua, who later on became highpriest, the great-grandson of Eliashib, the highpriest in Nehemiah's time, and also gives a record of the priests to the reign of Darius, the Persian, who is Darius Nothus ( 424-405 ) (8). Probably Nehemiah governed Jerusalem for the remainder of his life trying to enforce the Law of Moses. Josephus (9) states that he died at a great age. In 407 Nehemiah was, however, no longer governor, for according to the Elephantine papyri (10) Bagohi (Bagoses) was now governor of Judea and Johanan (11) was highpriest. According to II Macc. 2, 13 Nehemiah is said to have founded a library and collected some of the sacred books. No doubt the collecting of the sacred books into a single volume - which according to legend took place under the great synagogue of 120 members with Ezra as its president, said to have been organized by Nehemiah about 410 B.C.- began during this time.

Nehemiah had reason to congratulate himself on his outcome of good deeds as governor of his people and to exclaim: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house

(8) Raven, pp. 340.341; Keil, Comm. S. 494 ff; Green, p. 44-49.

(9) Josephus, Ant. XI. ch. 5, 8.

(10) Gressmann, S. 175 ff; Barton, p. 448 ff.

(11) Josephus, XI, ch. VII, 1.



of my God, and for the offices thereof" ( Neh. 13,14 ).  
Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, with the fine cooperation of  
the hoary haired Ezra, the scribe, brought about the  
separation of the Jews from idolatrous aliens, the re-  
organization of the temple worship, and the establishment  
of the Law as the basis of Israel's life and polity.

While Zerubbabel's work and Ezra's faith in God is  
admirable, the character of Nehemiah must provoke the  
admiration of all who have made only a short study of  
his life. In my opinion his piety and prayerfulness at  
all times and under all circumstances is the most striking  
feature of Nehemiah's character ( Neh. 1,4-6.11; 2,4.12.18;  
4,3-9.20; 5,15; 6,9.14; 7,5; 10,29; 13,7.8.25.28.29.31 ).  
Then consider Nehemiah's patriotism ( Neh. 1,3.4.6-9; 2,  
1-3.12-16.17.20; 5,1-13 ). What activity, energy, and  
vigor did he show. ( Neh. 2,9-16; 4,9.15.21.23; 5,11.13.  
17; 6,2-9.10-19; 7,1-3.5; 11,1.2; 13, 6.8.9.10.11.12.15-22.  
3.23-27.29 ). Yet with all this vigor and energy Nehemiah  
was very prudent ( Neh. 2, 7-9.12-16; 4,2-11 ). Nehemiah's  
character showed also not only physical courage ( Neh. 4 )  
but also moral courage ( Neh. 2,2.5.19.20; 6,8;13,3.7.8.17-  
22.25-28 ). Again, if we compare him with the general run  
of Oriental governors, Nehemiah's hospitality, liberality,  
and unselfishness stand out in strong relief ( Neh. 5, 14.15.  
17 ). Indeed, well could Nehemiah exclaim at the cessation  
of his labors: "Think upon me, my God, for good, according  
to all that I have done for this people" ( Neh. 5, 19 ).  
"Remember me, O my God, for good" ( Neh. 13,31 ).

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Authorized Version; Masoretic Text; XLL.

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