

AN  
OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

FOR  
ENGLISH READERS.

*BY VARIOUS WRITERS.*

EDITED BY  
CHARLES JOHN ELLICOTT, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

VOL. III.

---

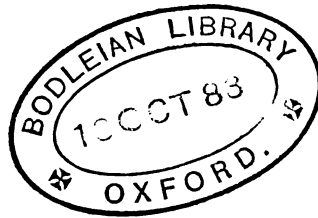
"WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT THROUGH PATIENCE AND  
THROUGH COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES WE MIGHT HAVE HOPE."

---

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:  
LONDON, PARIS & NEW YORK.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

1883.



**I. Kings.**

BY

THE REV. ALFRED BARRY, D.D.,  
*Canon of Westminster.*

---

**II. Kings.**

BY

THE REV. C. J. BALL, M.A.,  
*Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn.*

---

**I. Chronicles.**

BY

THE REV. C. J. BALL, M.A.,  
*Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn.*

---

**II. Chronicles.**

BY

THE REV. C. J. BALL, M.A.,  
*Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn.*

---

**Ezra.**

BY

THE REV. W. B. POPE, D.D.

---

**Nehemiah.**

BY

THE REV. W. B. POPE, D.D.

---

**Esther.**

BY

THE REV. R. SINKER, B.D.

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF THE KINGS . . . . .	1
I. KINGS . . . . .	8
II. KINGS . . . . .	101
INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLES . . . . .	209
I. CHRONICLES . . . . .	215
II. CHRONICLES . . . . .	337
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO EZRA AND NEHEMIAH . . . . .	457
INTRODUCTION TO EZRA . . . . .	460
EZRA . . . . .	461
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH . . . . .	483
NEHEMIAH . . . . .	484
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER . . . . .	511
ESTHER . . . . .	514

**EZRA.**





# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

TO

## EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

ALTHOUGH these two books have distinct authors, they describe consecutive periods of the same general stage of Jewish history, and in many respects are closely linked. Hence much of the matter introductory to their exposition must necessarily be common to the two, and equally applicable to both.

I. The names of Ezra and Nehemiah are combined in revelation after a manner of which Moses and Aaron furnish the only parallel. The analogy, though not perfect, will bear to be followed out to a certain extent. Strictly speaking, Zerubbabel and Joshua were the Moses and Aaron of the new Israel redeemed from captivity in Babylon. But these two names fade in the presence of their greater successors, who finished the work they only began. This has been the view of Jewish tradition; and Christian sentiment agrees with Jewish tradition. Here, however, the analogy begins to fail. Judaism has always regarded the priest Ezra alone as the restorer of the law and the polity, making Nehemiah with his book merely an adjunct; just as the Pentateuch was "the book of the law of Moses," Aaron being altogether or almost kept out of view. When we go to the Scriptures themselves, Ezra and Nehemiah, the spiritual and the civil rulers of the new constitution, have an equal dignity, and both are very subordinate characters in comparison with those first organs of Divine revelation. They introduce nothing really original; they bring no new tables from the Mount; they have no Urim and Thummim; and are rather administrators of a revived law than legislators themselves. A few minor institutions owe their origin to Nehemiah. But neither he nor Ezra was directly the founder of the synagogue and other great additions to the Mosaic economy. The greatness of these two names is, in fact, very much the result of wonderful traditions which have been most prodigal in their honour, and especially in the glorification of Ezra.

II. Ezra and Nehemiah are both, though in different ways, connected by Jewish tradition with the final settlement of the Old Testament canon. Among the early Fathers an opinion was current that, when the originals of Scripture were burned with the Temple, Ezra, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, restored the Law and the Prophets, adding or authenticating the books which were afterwards written. Another tradition is preserved in the Mishna, and has found more favour, that Ezra, or Ezra and Nehemiah, instituted the GREAT SYNAGOGUE, numbering 120 associates, and in conjunction with them settled the limits of the canon. In many parts of the Talmud such a college is referred to; but neither the canonical nor the apocryphal scriptures yield this tradition any real support. The "company of scribes" of 1 Macc. vii. 12 has been supposed to refer to this body. But 2 Macc. ii. 13 gives the tradition a different form. It alludes to and quotes certain

"writings and commentaries" of Nehemiah, and describes him as having "established a library" or collection of holy documents, including historical and prophetic books and writings of David, thus not obscurely pointing to the threefold conventional order of our present canonical volume. If we understand the "letters of kings concerning offerings" to mean the decrees of the Persian monarchs that make up a large part of our two books, the tradition may be understood to embrace the whole canon. It will be seen that there are traces in Nehemiah of interpolation as late as the days of Alexander the Great; and the question of the final ratification of the Hebrew canon is one still involved in obscurity.

III. The relation of these two to the other historical books of the canon has been matter of some controversy. Without any support from subsequent Jewish literature, a certain class of critics have invented a later editor, who, living in the time of the Greek Dominion, constructed the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah as one series of historical works. Agreeing in this, the hypotheses then differ; and their differences are of such a character as to confirm our confidence in the traditional view that the three books are distinct, that their true common editor was Ezra, and that only a very few additions were left for after-times. While the end of Chronicles is the beginning of Ezra, a long and unrecorded period comes between; Ezra and Nehemiah give the history of a totally different century of the national life; and they close the inspired historical records of the ancient nation. Malachi alone comes after them; while Haggai and Zechariah immediately precede, or rather they delivered their predictions in the days which the former part of Ezra describes. The last historical books of the Old Testament are works of which the authors were to a great extent editors also; and there is every reason to think that the chief of these editors was Ezra, who put the finishing touches on all that preceded his own annals. It can hardly be maintained that his editorship included the book of Nehemiah, seeing that this contains a long list of names almost entirely coinciding with a similar list in his predecessor.

IV. The authenticity of these two records cannot be reasonably called in question: the only attacks proceed from that style of criticism which makes the entire history of the Old Testament a series of inventions based on but a slight substratum of actual events. There is nothing here but a series of plain statements concerning a great historical fact which cannot be called in question. We observe the same use of public documents and genealogical lists with which the rest of the Bible makes us familiar. The sources are never referred to as such; for both writers, from their position, were above the necessity of giving their

## EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

authorities. But we may be sure that the history of the first return under Zerubbabel had been preserved, and only required Ezra's abridgment. The Persian documents quoted were in public archives. There is not an incident recorded, nor a character introduced, which is out of keeping with internal probability or external independent vouchers. The simplicity of the narrative and its utter absence of disguise, when recording the humble estate and deep unworthiness of the rescued people, plead irresistibly for the truth of the whole. The very dislocations of the narratives, with the repetition of lists, are in favour of the trustworthiness of the narrators. The want of strict agreement between them in names and numbers here and there simply indicates that the text, especially that of Ezra, is not in a perfect state. It must be admitted that the discrepancies between the two books themselves, as also between both and the Chronicles, are very numerous: no two lists perfectly agree either in order of names or amount of numbers. But a careful and dispassionate examination of the differences will lead to the conclusion that the text of one or the other or of both has suffered through transcription. Besides what has been said on this subject in former Introductions, something in the nature of historical vindication will be found in the course of the exposition itself.

V. As these two books give the history of the return from the Captivity, they cannot be understood without some knowledge of the character of that Captivity. In the last words of inspiration before our history commences the prophecies of Jeremiah are put into an historical form: the people were to be servants in Babylon until the reign of the kingdom of Persia; and the emptied land was to enjoy her Sabbaths, in sad vindication of ages of Sabbath neglect, "to fulfil threescore and ten years." But there was mercy in the great visitation. Though the bondmen were sometimes made to howl (Isa. lii. 5), they were also to have peace in the peace of the place of their captivity for which they prayed (Jer. xxix. 5-7). They rose to wealth in the enjoyment of civil rights; they occupied places of high trust in the courts of their oppressors; they maintained their religious customs as far as they might do so in a strange land; above all, they kept alive their hope of restoration, and in token of this carefully preserved the records of their genealogies. These important facts have their illustration at all points in the books which contain the history of the Return.

VI. It follows that the events of which Ezra and Nehemiah are the historians must be studied in the light of the purposes of God in regard to His ancient people, and can be understood only in that light. In other words, they form a chapter in the history of redemption. It must needs be that the "holy seed"—holy because of it Christ was to come according to the flesh—should be kept undefiled among the nations, that the "holy land" should be ready to become the land of Immanuel, that the "holy city" should both welcome and reject Him as its king, and that the "holy place" should receive the true High Priest, and be closed by His voice. Generally speaking, it was necessary, for the fulfilment of prophecy, for the maintenance of true religion in the world, and for the preparation of the earthly sphere of the Incarnate Son, that the ancient polity should be renewed and kept up until the "fulness of time." Their relation to the future Saviour of the world—its present Saviour not yet revealed—gave

to the Jewish remnant, and to everything connected with their history, an immeasurable importance. We may not be able to see the precise bearing on this of many details in these books and that of Esther; nor is it necessary to believe that many of them—in a certain sense the greater part of the minute narrative, with its genealogical and other lists—had any such precise bearing. Granted the general necessity for the new life of the people, as a witness of the past and the future, the particulars of its new history become on that account important. To sum up, if we consider the re-establishment of the people and the revival of the worship of Zion as a record of past prophecy fulfilled, as a means of keeping up the knowledge of God and the hope of His Kingdom in the present, and as part of the great preparation for the supreme future of finished redemption—these three in one—then scarcely any detail in these narratives will be thought to be without its meaning. Nothing is more needful as a preparation for the study of our history than the deep conviction of this principle.

VII. It is a narrower view of the same subject that sees in these histories the foundation of that Judaism of the interval with which the Gospel narrative and the Christian Church are so intimately bound up. To understand this we must remember that with Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther are to be connected the final post-exile prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The entire cycle, taken as a whole, reveals the tendencies of the Judaism which grew up after prophetic inspiration had ceased, and the finished development of which our Saviour found so utterly wanting. But in the process we must distinguish between the good and the evil. The good elements were many: the ancient Scriptures were restored to their place in the popular heart; Ezra was the first of an order of scribes entirely devoted to its exposition; and the synagogue worship, unknown in the Old Testament, was based on a revival of Sabbath devotion throughout the land. And the dispersion soon began to claim its rights beyond the land itself. Though Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt the Temple and threw walls around Jerusalem—giving no hint themselves that the kingdom of God was on its way to the Gentiles—the prophets of their new economy were less restricted. And when the intermediate "fulness of time" came, Greek Scriptures and a Jewish service in Egypt and other lands paved the way for the Gospel. The evil elements were also very many. An internal, hard, ceremonial religion became, after four centuries, what the Lord found in Pharisaism; the scepticism which Malachi rebuked developed into Sadduceism; and the descendants of the "perfect scribe" laid more than the foundation of Talmudical Rabbinism.

VIII. Out of this arises another canon, namely, that this portion of the history of the one CIVITAS DEI which runs through all ages has, like every other, its lessons to teach the Christian Church. In regard to this expositors have run into the usual opposite extremes. Some have gone so far as to find in Ezra and Nehemiah types of Christ; and their several and combined work has been made to prefigure the relations of Church and State for ever. It is easy to trace and condemn the error here. But we should be on our guard against the notion that the books contain only old history that has passed away. Devotion to the kingdom of God on the part of His servants, its grace and its dignity and its reward; opposition to that kingdom,



## EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

its low endeavours, its futility, and its condemnation—these are lessons taught in every chapter. The everlasting distinction between the saints and the children of this world, and the importance of remembering this under all circumstances, is also taught. They who condemn the intolerance of Ezra and Nehemiah, and think the rigorous separation of the ancient people from their foreign wives a great mistake of these new legislators, altogether miss the lesson the books were intended to convey. The providence of God in the world, which is now the government of His Son the Head over all things to the Church, has no sublimer illustration than they present.—It may be added that the two writers, who are also the two main actors, are noble examples of the passive and active virtues of religion. Though their writings are not quoted in the New Testament, they contain a fair proportion of those precious apophthegms and watchwords of devotion that are the heritage of God's people in every age.

IX. It is of great importance to fix in the mind, before entering on the study of our two historians, a clear idea of the relation of the events they record to profane history and secular chronology. On one or two points opinions are divided; but the following dates may on the whole be relied on as most probably satisfying all demands:—

- b.c. 558—529. Cyrus becomes king of the Medes and Persians, on the defeat of Astyages.
- 541. Belshazzar, vice-king of Babylon (Daniel's vision, chapter vii.).
- 538. Babylonian empire subverted, and Medo-Persian empire established by Cyrus.
- 536. First year of Cyrus. Return under Zerubbabel (Ezra i.).
- 535. Second Temple founded (Ezra iii. 8).
- 529. Opposition of Samaritans (Ezra iv. 6). Cambyses (Ahasuerus of Ezra iv. 6).
- 522. Building of Temple stopped. Gomates or pseudo-Smerdis (Artaxerxes of Ezra iv. 7).

- 521—486. Darius I., son of Hystaspes, king of Persia, having slain Gomates (Ezra iv. 5—24, v. 5, vi. 1). Haggai and Zechariah begin their prophecies.
- 515. Second Temple completed (Ezra vi. 15).
- 486—465. Xerxes (Ahasuerus of Esther).
- 465—425. Artaxerxes Longimanus (Ezra vii. 1, Neh. ii. 1). Return of Jews under Ezra.
- 445. Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem (Neh. ii. 1, v. 14).
- 433. Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem (Neh. xiii. 6).
- 401—399. Malachi's last predictions. Death of Cyrus the Younger (also of Thucydides and Socrates).

X. The two books are the centre of what may be called the *ESDRAS CYCLE* of Biblical literature, the details of which are complicated, and must be studied in special works on the canon. The ancient Jews regarded the two canonical works as one, and in this they were followed by the early Fathers of the Christian Church. In the catalogues handed down to us they are distinguished as I. and II. Ezra or Esdras: so the Vulgate, Origen, and the Council of Laodicea. In the Alexandrine version, however, first comes our book of Ezra, with enlargements of various kinds; then, secondly, the genuine book itself; Nehemiah is there III. Esdras; and to these is added the later apocryphal IV. Esdras, containing certain final accretions to the Ezra literature. In the Vulgate the two added books, the enlarged translation and the apocryphal, are III. and IV. Ezra. At the close of the fourth century Jerome calls II. Ezra by the name of Nehemiah; and gradually its thoroughly independent character became generally recognised. For the character of the two apocryphal books—the latter of which has very little connection with the Biblical Ezra—works on the Apocrypha must be consulted. Suffice it to say here that what may be called—following the Greek style—I. Esdras is subordinatedly useful in some points of the textual criticism of our book of Ezra, especially where its numbers differ from those of Nehemiah.

# INTRODUCTION

TO

## EZRA.

---

I. All that is certainly known concerning Ezra is found in his own narrative as continued in Nehemiah. He was a priest, descended, through Seraiah, from Eleazar the son of Aaron; and also a scribe, devoted to the exposition of the Law of Moses. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, B.C. 458, he went from Babylon to Jerusalem at the head of a second company of the children of the Captivity, and with an ample commission for the restoration of the Temple and the reform of religion. After a rigorous inquisition into the abuses connected with mixed marriages, he is lost sight of, re-appearing afterwards in Nehemiah, with whom or under whom he takes part in the dedication of the wall and the conduct of religious service generally. He then finally disappears from the sacred history. Jewish tradition glorified his memory as second only to that of Moses. He is regarded as having been the first president of the "Great Synagogue," to which is attributed the settlement of the Jewish canon; to have instituted the synagogue service; to have been the organiser of much authoritative tradition traced down from Moses; to have introduced the present Hebrew type; and done other service to Jewish literature. Josephus says that he lived to a great age, and was buried in Jerusalem. Other traditions assign him a grave near Samara, after returning to Persia, and dying there aged 120.—There is no character in the Old Testament more perfect and complete than that of Ezra. We see him as a servant and as a master, as a student of the law and as its administrator, as supreme in authority and as subordinate, in public and private, uniformly and always the same devout, disinterested, patriotic lover of his people and friend of God.

II. The question of Ezra's authorship is closely connected with an analysis of the book. It contains two

distinct records: one, of the first return from the Captivity under Zerubbabel, occupying six chapters; and the other, of the second detachment, under Ezra himself, occupying the remaining four. Between the two there is a chasm of fifty-seven years passed over in total silence. The former part, embracing a period of twenty-two years, from the memorable first year of Cyrus, B.C. 538, is mainly made up of extracts from archives which Ezra has woven into a narrative. Certain portions of this, as of the second part, are written in Chaldee: the documents, namely, are given in their original, and the writer, equally familiar with both forms of the Hebrew, does not quite limit himself to the documents themselves, the Chaldee overflowing here and there. Certainly the first six chapters may be regarded as Ezra's own compilation, and therefore as his own work. The second part gives the history of twelve months, being the record as it were of the discharge of a commission, narrating that in full and then abruptly breaking off. A close examination of the four chapters shows the same hand; the peculiar phrases—such as the "Lord God of Israel" and many others—are similar, with just those variations in uniformity which might be expected in one who had several languages at command. But there is one remarkable anomaly, that sometimes the first and sometimes the third person is used—an anomaly, however, that equally occurs in Daniel. It is to be explained at the outset by the humility of the writer, who introduces himself and his own character in the third person before he uses the direct style of narrative; and afterwards by the fact that public and great events are incorporated in the very style in which they were from time to time recorded. On the whole there is no reason to distrust the uniform tradition that has ascribed the whole book to Ezra.

# E Z R A.

CHAPTER I.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD <sup>a</sup>by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he <sup>1</sup>made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, <sup>2</sup>and put it also in writing, saying,

<sup>(2)</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath <sup>3</sup>charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. <sup>(3)</sup> Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build

B.C.  
cir. 536.

a 2 Chron. 36, 22;  
Jer. 23, 12; & 29,  
10.

1 Heb., caused a  
voice to pass.

2 Heb., lift him  
up.

b Isa. 44, 28. & 45,  
1, 13.

3 That *is*, helped  
them.

the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem.

<sup>(4)</sup> And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place <sup>2</sup>help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem.

<sup>(5)</sup> Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem. <sup>(6)</sup> And all they that *were* about them <sup>3</sup>strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods,

## I. THE FIRST RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL.

<sup>(1-4)</sup> The decree of Cyrus: marking an epoch of very great importance, and therefore repeated almost word for word from the end of Chronicles.

<sup>(1)</sup> **The first year.**—Cyrus became king of Persia in B.C. 559. Twenty years afterwards he took Babylon from Belshazzar; and this first year of his rule in Babylon was his beginning as an agent in Jewish affairs and for the Kingdom of God.

**Stirred up.**—By a direct influence, probably through the instrumentality of Daniel. This prophet we may suppose Cyrus to have found in Babylon, and to have had his mind directed to the express prediction of Isa. xlv. 28, where his name is mentioned. But the writer, who again and again records the prophetic intervention of Haggai and Zechariah (chaps. v. 1, vi. 14), makes no allusion to the part that Daniel the earlier prophet had taken. He refers only to the Divine prediction by Jeremiah, which must be fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon" (Jer. xxv. 12); "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. xxix. 10).

<sup>(2)</sup> **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia.**—In the interpretation of this decree two courses are open. We may suppose that "the spirit" of Cyrus was so effectually "stirred up" by the Spirit of God, through the prophecies of Isaiah, as to send out a written proclamation avowing his faith in Jehovah-Elohim, and thus publicly accepting the prediction: "He hath charged me to build." In this case the parenthesis of verse 3 (He is the God) may be compared with the confession of his father-in-law, Darius the Mede: "He is the living God" (Dan. vi. 26). Or we may assume that "Ormazd" in the original was reproduced in the

Hebrew version that accompanied it by its equivalent, "Jehovah." The latter supposition avoids the difficulty involved in making Cyrus disavow the national faith in the presence of his empire. The decree itself runs much in the style of those found in the majority of Persian inscriptions, such as "By the grace of Ormazd is Darius king;" and the spirit of tolerance and piety in it is perfectly in harmony with all ancient testimonies to the character of Cyrus.

<sup>(4)</sup> **Whosoever remaineth.**—*As to all the Remnant in all places.* There is a singular correspondence between this and the beginning of Nehemiah; but there this familiar name for the survivors of the great national catastrophe is used of those who had returned to Jerusalem, while here it is used for the dispersion in all the provinces of the empire (Neh. i. 3).

**Where he sojourneth.**—Every individual Jew is thus significantly supposed to be only an exile.

**Let the men of his place help him.**—The heathen subjects of Cyrus are required to assist the departing sojourner, and expected also to send freewill offerings to the Temple. Note that in all these terms the spirit and phrase of the Hebrew people are used; and that there was more in the decree than is here given, as appears in the sequel. Cyrus was under strong influence, both human and Divine.

<sup>(5-11)</sup> Immediate result of the decree.

<sup>(5)</sup> **With all them whose spirit God had raised.**—*Namely, all* is the more exact rendering. The same influence that prompted the decree of Cyrus was necessary to overcome the inertness of the captives: many preferred to remain in Babylon.—The people were enumerated as tribes, families, and fathers' houses; the second and third orders of classification are not here distinguished from each other.

<sup>(6)</sup> **Precious things.**—The Hebrew equivalent is a rare word, which, when it occurs, is connected only with the precious metals.

and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all *that* was willingly offered.

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

CHAPTER II.—(1) Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had

a 2 Kings 24. 13; 2 Chron. 36. 7.

b See ch. 5. 14.

1 Heb., the transportation.

c Neh. 7. 6, &c.

2 Or, Azariah, Neh. 7. 7.

d Neh. 7. 11.

B.C. cir. 536.

3 Or, Binnui, Neh. 7. 15.

been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; (2) which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

(3) The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. (4) The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. (5) The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. (6) The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. (7) The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. (8) The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. (9) The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. (10) The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. (11) The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. (12) The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. (13) The chil-

**Willingly offered.**—Although it is not so said, the people of Cyrus were "stirred up" like himself: how much he gave, and how much he valued the worship of the Temple, we shall hereafter see.

(7) **His gods.**—Rather, *his god*. Merodach, to wit, whom he called "his lord" (Dan. i. 2). From 2 Kings xxv. 13—17 it appears that much had been taken away which Cyrus had not been able to find.

(8) **Mithredath.**—"Dedicated to Mithra," the sun-god of the Persians, whose worship among the Vedic Indians had thus early reached Persia.

**Sheshbazzar.**—The Chaldee name of Zerubbabel, whose title, however, as Prince of Judah is given him from the Hebrew side. He was the legal heir of Jehoiachin, being the son of Pedaiiah (1 Chron. iii. 19), who possibly married the widow of Salathiel or Shealtiel. And the title "Prince of Judah," or "Prince of the captivity," was specially given to him in common with a very few others.

(9) **Chargers and knives.**—Rare words in the original, perhaps on the whole best rendered as here.

(10) **Of a second sort.**—Of inferior quality.

(11) **Five thousand and four hundred.**—The total of the several sums should be in round numbers, such as are frequently used, two thousand and five hundred. Obviously, therefore, the writer, whom we must needs suppose to have his own previous numbers before him, here includes vessels not before enumerated as chargers and basons.

**Bring up.**—They were not, as sometimes said, the freewill offering of Cyrus. Sheshbazzar brought these rich vessels "with them of the captivity," and they were sent as already belonging to God, who vindicated by His judgment on Babylon their desecration at the feast of Belshazzar.

## II.

(1—70) Enumeration of the families and dedication of the substance of the company who returned.

(1) **The children of the province that went up out of the captivity.**—They came from "the captivity," which was now as it were a generic name—"Children of the captivity" in Babylon (Dan. ii. 2), in Judah (Ezra iv. 1)—and became "children of the province," the Judæan province of Persia.

**Every one unto his city.**—So far, that is, as his city was known. The various cities, or villages, are more distinctly enumerated in Nehemiah.

(2) **Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua.**—The leaders of the people, perhaps the twelve tribes, are represented by twelve names, one of which, Nahamani, is here wanting; three others are given in slightly different forms.

(3) **The children of Parosh . . .**—Then comes the enumeration of the family and local names. In the following instances we note when two of the three authorities agree. In verse 6, Ezra is confirmed by 1 Esdras as against Nehemiah's 2,818; in verse 8, against his 945; in verse 11, against his 628; in verse 15, against his 655; in verse 17, against his 324; in verse 33, against his 721. In verse 10, the children of Bani, or Binnui, are 642, but 1 Esdras agrees with Nehemiah in making them 648; in verse 14, the two latter correct 666 into 667.—In verse 20, heads of families become places; Nehemiah substitutes Gibeon for Gibbar. Verse 30 has no representative in Nehemiah. In verse 31, "the other Elam" has the same number as Elam in verse 7; and the Nebo of verse 29 is called in Nehemiah "the other Nebo," though the

dren of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. <sup>(14)</sup> The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. <sup>(15)</sup> The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. <sup>(16)</sup> The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. <sup>(17)</sup> The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. <sup>(18)</sup> The children of <sup>1</sup>Jorah, an hundred and twelve. <sup>(19)</sup> The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. <sup>(20)</sup> The children of <sup>2</sup>Gibbar, ninety and five. <sup>(21)</sup> The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. <sup>(22)</sup> The men of Netophah, fifty and six. <sup>(23)</sup> The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. <sup>(24)</sup> The children of <sup>3</sup>Azmaveth, forty and two. <sup>(25)</sup> The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. <sup>(26)</sup> The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. <sup>(27)</sup> The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. <sup>(28)</sup> The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. <sup>(29)</sup> The children of Nebo, fifty and two. <sup>(30)</sup> The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. <sup>(31)</sup> The children of the other 'Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. <sup>(32)</sup> The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. <sup>(33)</sup> The children of Lod, 'Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. <sup>(34)</sup> The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. <sup>(35)</sup> The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty. <sup>(36)</sup> The priests: the children of 'Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. <sup>(37)</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Hariph*, Neh. 7. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Gibeon*, Neh. 7. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *Bethazmaroth*, Neh. 7. 26.

<sup>a</sup> See ver. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *Harid*, as it is in some copies.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. 24. 7.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Chron. 24. 14.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Chron. 9. 12.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Chron. 24. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Or, *Judah*, ch. 3. 9, called also 'Hodevah', Neh. 7. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Or, *Shamiah*.

<sup>7</sup> Or, *Bazlith*, Neh. 7. 54.

children of 'Immer, a thousand fifty and two. <sup>(38)</sup> The children of 'Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. <sup>(39)</sup> The children of 'Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

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

<sup>(43)</sup> The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, <sup>(44)</sup> the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, <sup>(45)</sup> the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, <sup>(46)</sup> the children of Hagab, the children of 'Shalmi, the children of Hanan, <sup>(47)</sup> the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, <sup>(48)</sup> the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, <sup>(49)</sup> the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, <sup>(50)</sup> the children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, <sup>(51)</sup> the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, <sup>(52)</sup> the children of 'Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, <sup>(53)</sup> the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, <sup>(54)</sup> the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

<sup>(55)</sup> The children of Solomon's servants:

only one, as if the "other" had slipped in from what in Nehemiah is found in the next verse. In a few cases all the authorities differ, but the differences are not important.

<sup>(36)</sup> The priests: the children of Jedaiah.—The priests are then given by family names, their numbers being very large in proportion to each of the other classes. Three only of David's priestly courses are represented (1 Chron. xxiv. 7, 8, 14); Pashur, a name mentioned elsewhere as the name of a priestly race, not being among the twenty-four in the Chronicles.

Of the house of Jeshua.—A peculiar expression, seeming to indicate merely that the present high priest belonged to the race of Jedaiah, who, in that case, is not the same as the head of the second order in the Chronicles, unless indeed he sprang from the high-priestly family of Eleazar.

<sup>(40)</sup> The Levites: the children of Jeshua.—Then follow the Levitical families, not priests:

that is, the Levites proper, the singers, the door-keepers or porters. Of the first there were only two families, and these are both traced up to one, that of Hodaviah or Judah (ch. iii. 9) or Hodevah (Neh. vii. 43). The hereditary choristers are also few: of the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the first alone is represented. Nehemiah makes their number twenty more; but 1 Esdras agrees with the text of Ezra.

<sup>(42)</sup> The children of the porters.—The porters, or gatekeepers, number six families, three of which appear in the old Jerusalem (1 Chron. ix. 17).

<sup>(43–58)</sup> The Nethinims.—By the etymology, *those given*: known by this name only in the later books. (See 1 Chron. ix. 2.) They were *hieroduli*, or temple-bondsmen: the lowest order of the ministry, performing the more laborious duties of the sanctuary. Their history runs through a long period. Moses apportioned them first, from the Midianite captives (Num. xxxi. 47); they were reinforced from the Gibeonites (Josh. ix. 23), and probably later by David (chap. viii. 20). Three

the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of <sup>1</sup>Peruda, <sup>(56)</sup> the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, <sup>(57)</sup> the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of <sup>2</sup>Ami. <sup>(58)</sup> All the <sup>3</sup>Nethinims, and the children of <sup>4</sup>Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two.

<sup>(59)</sup> And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their <sup>3</sup>seed, whether they were of Israel: <sup>(60)</sup> the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. <sup>(61)</sup> And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: <sup>(62)</sup> these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore <sup>4</sup>were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

<sup>1</sup> Or. *Perida*, Neh. 7. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Or. *Anon*, Neh. 7. 59.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. 9. 21. 27. 1 Chron. 8. 2.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Kings 9. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Or. *pedigree*.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Sam. 17. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., they were polluted from the priesthood.

<sup>5</sup> Or. *governor*.

<sup>d</sup> Ex. 28. 30.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Chron. 26. 20.

<sup>(63)</sup> And the <sup>5</sup>Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with <sup>4</sup>Urim and with Thummim.

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

<sup>(68)</sup> And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: <sup>(69)</sup> they gave after their ability unto the <sup>4</sup>treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

names—Akkub, Hagab, and Asnah—have dropped from Nehemiah's list, which gives also some unimportant changes in the spelling of the names.

<sup>(55)</sup> The children of Solomon's servants.—These are mentioned in 1 Kings ix. as a servile class, formed of the residue of the Canaanites. They were probably inferior to the Nethinims, but are generally classed with them, as in the general enumeration here. Both these classes retained during their captivity their attachment to the service into which they had been received; and, the Levites being so few, their value in the reconstitution of the Temple gave them the special importance they assume in these books.

<sup>(59–63)</sup> Finally, those who had lost the records of their lineage are mentioned. Of the people, the children of three families from Tel-melah, *Hill of salt*, Tel-harsa, *Hill of the wood*, and a few other places, are mentioned. Of the priests, there are also three families without their genealogy.

<sup>(61)</sup> Barzillai the Gileadite.—See the well-known history in 2 Sam. xvii. 27.

After their name.—Rather, after her name, she having been probably an heiress.

<sup>(62)</sup> Their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy.—Better, their record, or the record of the Enregistered.

Polluted.—Levittically disqualified.

<sup>(63)</sup> Tirshatha.—Interchangeable with Pechah, or governor, as Zerubbabel is called in chapter v. 14 and always in Haggai. It is probably an old Persian term, signifying "The Feared."

With Urim and with Thummim.—See Exod. xxviii. 30. They were pronounced to be excluded from priestly functions. Without ark or temple, the

people had not as yet that special presence of Jehovah before which the high priest could "inquire of the Lord by Urim and Thummim." Zerubbabel might hope that this privilege would return, and thought the official purity of the priestly line of sufficient importance for such an inquiry. But the holy of holies in the new temple never had in it the ancient "tokens"; and by Urim and Thummim Jehovah was never again inquired of.

<sup>(64)</sup> This sum total is the same in Nehemiah; but the several sums in Ezra make 29,818, and in Nehemiah 31,089. The apocryphal Esdras agrees in the total, but makes in the particulars 33,950, adding that children below twelve were not reckoned. Many expedients of reconciliation have been adopted; but it is better to suppose that errors had crept into the original documents.

<sup>(65)</sup> The Rabbis accounted for these "ut lætior esset Israelitarum reditus," in order that the return of the Israelites might be more joyful; but they were hired for lamentation as well as joy; and here, possibly, to supply the defect of Levites. In Nehemiah (chap. vii. 67) there are 245: see for the probable reason of the mis-transcription the 245 of the next verse in that chapter.

<sup>(67)</sup> The asses, as throughout earlier Hebrew history, are the chief and most numerous beasts of burden.

<sup>(68)</sup> They came to the site of the house not yet built, and offered for the building.

<sup>(69)</sup> The dram being a daric of a little more than our guinea, and the pound, or maneh, a little more than £4. the whole would be nearly £90,000, and not an exorbitant sum for a community far from poor. But Nehemiah's statement is smaller, and probably more correct.

One hundred priests' garments.—An almost necessary correction or supply in the defective text of

(70) So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

CHAPTER III.—(1) And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. (2) Then stood up <sup>1</sup>Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and <sup>2</sup>Zerubbabel the son of "Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is <sup>3</sup>written in the law of Moses the man of God. (3) And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. (4) They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and <sup>4</sup>offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, <sup>5</sup>as the

<sup>1</sup> Or, Joshua, 11g. L 1.

<sup>2</sup> C. Med Zorobabel, Matt. 1. 12; & Luke 3. 27.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. 1. 12; & Luke 3. 27, called Salathiel.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. 12. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Num. 20. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Ex. 23. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., the matter of the day in his day.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., the temple of the LORD was not yet founded.

<sup>5</sup> Or, workmen.

<sup>e</sup> Acts 9. 36.

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

(8) Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty

Nehemiah (chap. vii. 70) makes his "four hundred and thirty priests' garments," as contributed by the Tirshatha, "five hundred pounds of silver and thirty priests' garments." This being so, the two accounts agree, always allowing that Ezra's 61,000 is a corruption of 41,000 in the gold, and his 5,000 pounds of silver and 100 priests' garments round numbers.

(70) Some of the people.—Those of the people; placed by Nehemiah after all the others.

All Israel in their cities.—The emphasis lies in the fact that, though Judah and Benjamin contributed the largest part, it was a national revival; and the constant repetition of "in their cities" has in it the same note of triumph.

### III.

(1-13) The altar set up, and the feasts established.

(1) The seventh month was come.—Rather, approached. Tisri, answering to our September, was the most solemn month of the year, including the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, afterwards distinguished as "the feast" pre-eminently.

As one man.—Not all, but with one consent.

(2) Builded the altar.—Only as the beginning of their work. The Temple was, as it were, built around the altar, as the centre of all.

Moses the man of God.—Like David, Neh. xii. 24, 36.

(3) Upon his bases.—Upon its old site, or its place, discovered among the ruins. Thus was it signified that all the new was to be only a restoration of the old.

For fear was upon them.—Until their offerings went up they did not feel sure of the Divine protection. This was their first act of defiance in the presence of the nations around: near the altar they were strong.

(4) According to the custom.—It is necessary here to read Deut. xvi., Lev. xxiii., Num. xxix. The intention obviously is to lay stress on the provision made for an entire renewal of the Mosaic economy of service, as appears in the next verse.

(5) Both of the new moons.—And of the new moons. The whole verse is general and anticipatory. The new moons, the three feasts, and the constant presentation of freewill offerings, added to the daily sacrifice, made up the essentials of ritual; all being, like the arrangements in the Book of Leviticus, fixed before the Temple was built, and afterwards observed.

(6) From the first day.—The notes of time demand notice. The altar was raised before the month came; from the first until the fifteenth, when the Feast of Tabernacles began, the daily sacrifice was offered. The whole verse recapitulates, and its latter part is the transition to what follows.

(7) They gave money.—Their own workmen were paid in money; the Phœnicians, as in Solomon's days (1 Kings v.; 2 Chron. ii.), were paid in kind. This illustrates and is illustrated by Acts xii. 20.

The sea of Joppa.—The Jewish port to which the cedar-trees were sent by sea, and thence thirty-five miles inland to Jerusalem.

The grant.—The authority of Cyrus over Phœnicia seems not to have been doubtful.

(8) In the second year.—The second year of Cyrus, B.C. 537, was their second year in the holy place.

In the second month.—Zif, chosen apparently because it was the same month in which Solomon laid the first foundation (1 Kings vi.).

Appointed the Levites, from twenty years.—Their appointment to superintend, and their specified age, are in strict harmony with the original ordinances of David (1 Chron. xxiii.).

years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD. <sup>(9)</sup> Then stood Jeshua *with* his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of <sup>1</sup>Judah, <sup>2</sup>together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites. <sup>(10)</sup> And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. <sup>(11)</sup> And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is good*, for his mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>(12)</sup> But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: <sup>(13)</sup> so

1 Or, *Hodaviah*,  
ch. 2. 40.

B. C. 535.

2 Heb., *as one*.

B. C.  
cir. 678.

a 1 Chron. 6. 31, &  
16. 7, & 25. 1.

3 Heb., *the sons of the transportation*.

that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

CHAPTER IV.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that <sup>3</sup>the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; <sup>(2)</sup> then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye *do*; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. <sup>(3)</sup> But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

<sup>(4)</sup> Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

<sup>(9)</sup> **Together.**—*As one man.* Jeshua and Kadmiel, both of the stock of Judah, or Hodaviah (chap. ii. 40), or Hodevah (Neh. vii. 43), were the two heads of Levitical families; and their fewness is compensated by their unanimity and vigour. Henadad is not mentioned in chapter ii. 40, though it is a Levitical name in Nehemiah. Why omitted there, or why inserted here, it is not possible to determine.

<sup>(10)</sup> **After the ordinance of David, king of Israel.**—All goes back to earlier times. As the first offerings on the altar were according to what was "written in the law of Moses, the man of God," so the musical ceremonial of this foundation is according to the precedent of David (see 1 Chron. vi., xvi. 25). The trumpets belonged to the priests, the cymbals to the Levites, in the ancient ordinances of worship.

<sup>(11)</sup> **They sang together.**—They answered each other in chorus, or antiphonally.

**Shouted.**—As afterwards in religious acclamation.

<sup>(12)</sup> **But many of the priests and Levites . . . wept with a loud voice.**—This most affecting scene requires the comment of Hag. ii. and Zech. iv. The first house was destroyed in B.C. 588, fifty years before. The weeping of the ancients was not occasioned by any comparison as to size and grandeur, unless indeed they marked the smallness of their foundation stones. They thought chiefly of the great desolation as measured by the past; the younger people thought of the new future.

<sup>(13)</sup> **The noise was heard afar off.**—The people also mingled in the weeping, which was with shrill cries. The rejoicing and the sorrow were blended, and the common sound was heard from far. All here has the stamp of truth.

#### IV.

(1–24) The opposition of the Samaritans and its temporary success.

<sup>(1)</sup> **The adversaries.**—The Samaritans, so termed by Nehemiah (chap. iv. 11). These were a mixed race, the original Israelite element of which was nearly lost in the tribes imported into the northern part of the land by Sargon, Sennacherib, and Esar-haddon. (See 2 Kings xvii. 24–34.)

<sup>(2)</sup> **As ye do.**—"They feared the Lord, and worshipped their own gods" (2 Kings xvii. 33): thus they came either in the spirit of hypocrites or with an intention to unite their own idolatries with the pure worship of Jehovah. In any case, they are counted enemies of the God of Israel.

**We do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esar-haddon.**—He ended his reign B.C. 668, and therefore the Samaritans speak from a tradition extending backwards a century and a half.

**Which brought us up hither.**—Thus they entirely leave out of consideration what residue of Israel was yet to be found among them.

<sup>(3)</sup> **Ye have nothing to do with us.**—The account in 2 Kings xvii. carefully studied will show that the stern refusal of the leaders was precisely in harmony with the will of God; there was nothing in it of that intolerant spirit which is sometimes imagined. The whole design of the Great Restoration would have been defeated by a concession at this point. The reference to the command of Cyrus is another and really subordinate kind of justification, pleaded as subjects of the King of Persia, whose decree was absolute and exclusive.



(5) and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. (6) And in the reign of <sup>1</sup>Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

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

B.C. 534.  
B.C. 529.  
B.C. 522.  
1 Heb., Ahasuerus.  
2 Or, in peace.  
3 Heb., societies.  
4 Or, secretary.  
5 Chald., societies.  
6 Chald., Cheeneth.  
7 Or, finished.  
8 Chald., ceased together.  
9 Chald., give.  
10 Or, strength.  
11 Chald., see are suited with the salt of the palace.

noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and <sup>6</sup>at such a time.

(11) This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. (12) Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have <sup>7</sup>set up the walls thereof, and <sup>8</sup>joined the foundations. (13) Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not <sup>9</sup>pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the <sup>10</sup>revenue of the kings. (14) Now because <sup>11</sup>we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; (15) that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou

(5) And hired counsellors against them.—They adopted a systematic course of employing paid agents at the court: continued for eight years, till B.C. 529. Cambyzes, his son, succeeded Cyrus; he died B.C. 522; then followed the pseudo-Smerdis, a usurper, whose short reign Darius did not reckon, but dated his own reign from B.C. 522. A comparison of dates shows that this was the first Darius, the son of Hystaspes.

(6) In the beginning of his reign.—This Ahasuerus, another name for Cambyzes, reigned seven years; and his accession to the throne was the time seized by the Samaritans for their "accusation," of which we hear nothing more; suffice that the building languished.

(7) In the days of Artaxerxes.—This must be Gomates, the Magian priest who personated Smerdis, the dead son of Cyrus, and reigned only seven months: note that the expression used is "days," and not "reign" as in the previous verse. This Artaxerxes has been thought by many commentators to be the Longimanus of the sequel of this book and of Nehemiah, and they have identified the Ahasuerus of Ezra and Esther with Xerxes. This would explain the reference to "the walls" in verse 12; but in verses 23 and 24 the sequence of events is strict, and the word "ceased" links the parts of the narrative into unity. Moreover, the Persian princes had often more than one name. At the same time, there is nothing to make such an anticipatory and parenthetical insertion impossible.

In the Syrian tongue.—The characters and the words were Syrian or Aramaic; this explains the transition to another language at this point.

(8) Rehum the chancellor.—The lord of judgment, the counsellor of the Persian king, a conventional title of the civil governor.

Shimshai the scribe.—The royal secretary.

(9) Then wrote . . .—This verse and the following give the general superscription of the letter which the Persian officials wrote for the Samaritans: introduced, however, in a very peculiar manner, and to be followed by another introduction in verse 11. Of the names by which the Samaritans think fit to distinguish themselves the Apharsites and Dehavites are Persians; the Babylonians the original races of Babylon, Cuthah and Ava (2 Kings xvii. 24); the Susanchites are from Susa; the Apharsathchites, probably the Pharathia-kites, a predatory people of Media; the Archevites, inhabitants of Erech (Gen. x. 10). The Dinaites and Tarpelites can be only conjecturally identified.

(10) Asnapper cannot be Esar-haddon, but was probably his chief officer.

And at such a time.—And so forth.

(11) On this side the river.—Literally, beyond the river Euphrates, as written for the Persian court.

And at such a time.—Rather, and so forth; meaning, "Thy servants, as aforesaid," alluding to the superscription.

(12) Virulence and craft and exaggeration are stamped on every sentence of the letter. It only says, however, that "they are preparing the walls thereof, and joining the foundations." Afterwards, however, the charge is modified in verses 13 and 16.

(13) Toll, tribute, and custom.—Toll for the highways; custom, a provision in kind; tribute, the money tax.

The revenue.—Rather, at length; literally, and at length damage will be done to the kings.

(14) Maintenance.—more exactly, we eat the salt of the palace. This seems to be a general expression for dependence on the king, whose dishonour or loss they profess themselves unwilling to behold.

(15) The book of the records of thy fathers.—"The book of the records of the Chronicles" which in Esther vi. 1 is "read before the king."

find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have <sup>1</sup>moved sedition <sup>2</sup>within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. <sup>(16)</sup> We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again*, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

<sup>(17)</sup> Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their <sup>3</sup>companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. <sup>(18)</sup> The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. <sup>(19)</sup> And <sup>4</sup>I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath <sup>5</sup>made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein. <sup>(20)</sup> There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them. <sup>(21)</sup> <sup>6</sup>Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until *another*

1 Chald., made.

2 Chald., in the midst thereof.

3 Chald., societies.

B.C. 420.

4 Chald., by me a decree is set.

B.C. 520.

5 Chald., lifted up itself.

6 Chald., make a decree.

7 Chald., by arm and power.

a Hag. 1. 1.

b Zech. 1. 1.

commandment shall be given from me. <sup>(22)</sup> Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

<sup>(23)</sup> Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease <sup>7</sup>by force and power. <sup>(24)</sup> Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

CHAPTER V.—<sup>(1)</sup> Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them. <sup>(2)</sup> Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.

<sup>(3)</sup> At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who

This extended beyond his own fathers back to the times of the predecessors of the Median dynasty.

**Of old time.**—From the days of eternity, or time immemorial. The spirit of exaggeration if not of falsehood appears in every word here.

<sup>(16)</sup> **No portion on this side the river.**—The same unscrupulous use of language: that is, if the river Euphrates is meant. In the days of Solomon, and once or twice subsequently, the Israelites had advanced towards the river, but it was not likely that they would ever do so again. The letter may, however, have been intended to suggest loosely that Jerusalem might become a centre of general disaffection.

<sup>(17)</sup> **Peace, and at such a time.**—*Salutation, and so forth.* The account of the reply and the beginning of it are strangely blended, as before.

<sup>(19)</sup> **Insurrection.**—Never against Persia; but such as are alluded to in 2 Kings xxiv.

<sup>(20)</sup> **Mighty kings.**—David and Solomon, and some few kings down to Josiah, had extended their sway and made nations tributary (2 Sam. viii.; 1 Kings x.). The earlier kings' names would perhaps be referred to historically, though not immediately connected with Persian annals.

<sup>(24)</sup> **The second year.**—The record here returns to verse 5, with more specific indication of time. The suspension of the general enterprise—called "the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem"—lasted nearly two years. But it must be remembered that the altar was still the centre of a certain amount of worship.

## V.

(1–2) Now occurs the intervention of the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, whose testimonies and predictions should at this point be read. They reveal a state of apathy which Ezra does not allude to; such a state of things, in fact, as would have thwarted the whole design of Providence had it not been changed. Hence the abrupt return of the spirit of prophecy, some of the last utterances of which provoked or "stirred up"—as Cyrus had been stirred up—the spirit of the two leaders and of the heads of the families.

(2) **Then rose up.**—This does not intimate that they had become indifferent. But the voice of prophecy inspirited them to go on without formal permission of Darius, who was known secretly to favour them already.

**The prophets of God helping them.**—In these two prophets we can read the invigorating sayings that encouraged the people almost from day to day and from stage to stage of their work.

(3–17) Tatnai's appeal to Darius.

(3) **Tatnai, governor on this side the river.**—Satrap, or Pechah, of the entire province of Syria and Phœnicia, and therefore with a jurisdiction over Judæa, and over Zerubbabel its Pechah or sub-Satrap. What Shimshai was to the Samaritan Pechah, Rehum, Shethar-boznai seems to be to Tatnai—his secretary.

**Who hath commanded you?**—It is obvious that the overthrow of Smerdis, the Magian hater of

hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? <sup>(4)</sup> Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men <sup>1</sup>that make this building? <sup>(5)</sup> But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.

<sup>(6)</sup> The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king: <sup>(7)</sup> they sent a letter unto him, <sup>2</sup>wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. <sup>(8)</sup> Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with <sup>3</sup>great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. <sup>(9)</sup> Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? <sup>(10)</sup> We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. <sup>(11)</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> Chald., *that build this building?*

<sup>2</sup> Chald., *in the midst thereof.*

<sup>3</sup> Chald., *stones of rolling.*

B. C. 519.

B. C. 538.

a 1 Kings 6. 1.

b 2 Kings 24. 2: & 25. 8.

c ch. 1. 1.

d ch. 1. 8; & 6. 5.

e Or, *deputy.*

thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded <sup>4</sup>and set up. <sup>(12)</sup> But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of <sup>5</sup>Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. <sup>(13)</sup> But in the first year of <sup>6</sup>Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. <sup>(14)</sup> And <sup>7</sup>the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto *one*, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made <sup>8</sup>governor; <sup>(15)</sup> and said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. <sup>(16)</sup> Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem:

Zoroastrianism and destroyer of temples, had encouraged the builders to go on without fearing molestation from the Court of Darius. Moreover, the two prophets had made their duty too plain to be deferred. Still, the decree of the preceding chapter had never been expressly revoked.

<sup>(4)</sup> Then said we.—The LXX. must here have read, "then said they." But there is no need to change the text; the sentence is not a question, but a statement: "we said to the effect, what the names were."

What are the names of the men . . . ?—It is clear that this graphic account is much compressed. We must understand (see verse 10) that the authorities demanded the names of the chief promoters of the building in order to make them responsible.

<sup>(5)</sup> And then they returned answer.—And [till] they should receive answer. It is implied that "the eye of their God" was with special vigilance fixed on the work, and it will appear that His influence was upon the officials of Persia as well as upon the rulers of the Jews. The letter that follows shows this.

<sup>(6)</sup> The copy of the letter.—This letter of Tatnai is introduced much in the same way as Reh'm's; but its dispassionateness and good faith are in striking contrast with the latter.

Apharsachites.—Probably here the same as the Apharsites before, and suggesting some kind of Persian guard. But the reason of their introduction specifically here is obscure.

<sup>(8)</sup> To the house of the great God.—A solemn tribute to the God of the Jews, which, however, the decree of Cyrus enables us to understand in this

official document. Tatnai probably dwelt at Damascus, and when he went to Jerusalem was deeply impressed. But he only gives a statement of the progress which he observed in the Temple. "The walls" here are the walls within the Temple, not the city walls.

<sup>(11)</sup> And thus they returned us answer.—The elders of the Jews take the Syrian satrap into their confidence, and give in a few most pathetic words the record of their national honour, their national infidelity, and their national humiliation. Every word is true to the history, while the whole exhibits their deep humility and holy resolution.

<sup>(12)</sup> Gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean.—These words not only show that the people regarded themselves as punished by the sole hand of God, but also remind the overthrowers of the Chaldean power that they also themselves are no more than instruments of the same Divine will.

<sup>(15)</sup> Take these vessels, go, carry them . . . and let the house of God . . . —The three imperatives in this verse, without a copula, followed by a fourth, vividly express the feeling of the suppliants in the remembrance of the decree: thus we have another note of historical truth.

<sup>(16)</sup> Since that time.—No account is taken of the long interruption. Whether these words are part of the answer given to Tatnai by the Jewish leaders, or his own statement to Darius, it is evident that the unfinished building of a house decreed to be built by Cyrus is regarded as demanding investigation as to the nature and validity of the decree itself.

and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. <sup>(17)</sup> Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

CHAPTER VI.—<sup>(1)</sup> Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the <sup>1</sup>rolls, where the treasures were <sup>2</sup>laid up in Babylon. <sup>(2)</sup> And there was found at <sup>3</sup>Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:

<sup>(3)</sup> In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; <sup>(4)</sup> with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the king's house: <sup>(5)</sup> and also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God,

<sup>1</sup> Chald., books.

<sup>2</sup> Chald., made to descend.

<sup>3</sup> Or, Ecbatana, or, in a coffer.

B.C. 519.

<sup>4</sup> Chald., go.

<sup>5</sup> Chald., their sacrifices.

<sup>6</sup> Chald., by me a decree is made.

<sup>7</sup> Chald., made to cease.

<sup>8</sup> Chald., of rest.

which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and <sup>4</sup>brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

<sup>(6)</sup> Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and <sup>5</sup>your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: <sup>(7)</sup> let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

<sup>(8)</sup> Moreover <sup>6</sup>I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not <sup>7</sup>hindered. <sup>(9)</sup> And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: <sup>(10)</sup> that they may offer sacrifices <sup>8</sup>of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. <sup>(11)</sup> Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall

<sup>(17)</sup> Let there be search made.—All depended on the original decree, which nothing done immediately by the usurper could cancel. And the request of Tatnai seems to imply that it would be found: although the original was not found in Babylon, as was expected, a copy had been made.

## VI.

(1—15) The favourable decree of Darius, and its effect.

(1) Made a decree.—Rather, gave an order.

Were laid up.—In the original, laid down, in a chamber for the storing of documents and other treasures.

(2) At Achmetha.—That is, Ecbatana, the Median capital of Cyrus. It is probable that the original roll of parchment had been destroyed at Babylon by Smerdis, but a copy of it was found here, probably in a Chaldean transcript.

(3) Strongly laid.—“Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa. xlv. 28). The decree adds a word that signifies “with sufficient support.”

(5) And also let the golden and silver vessels . . . be restored.—The desecration of these vessels by Belshazzar (Dan. v. 2, 3) was thus to be expiated. Every word, including the twice repeated “house of God,” is most emphatic.

(6) Now therefore, Tatnai.—Here there is an abrupt transition to the decree of Darius itself, the

terms of which were either drawn up by Jewish help, or are freely rendered into the national phraseology by the historian.

Be ye far from thence.—That is, keep aloof from any kind of interference.

(8) Moreover.—I also make my decree.

Of the king's goods.—From the tribute collected to be sent to Persia sums were previously to be deducted.

(9) Both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs.—An accurate account of the provision required for the sacrifices and meat-offerings of the daily service of the Temple: how accurate will be seen by consulting Exod. xxix. and Lev. ii.

Appointment here is simply the word: that is, of direction.

(10) That they may offer sacrifices . . . and pray for the life of the king.—Two ends are to be answered: the God of heaven is to be honoured, and the dynasty of Darius interceded for by the Jews. (Comp. Jer. xxix. 7.)

Of sweet savours.—The word occurs again only in Dan. ii. 46, and there is translated “sweet odours,” meaning incense. The connection of this with the prayer following justifies the same translation here, and, moreover, indicates under what good instruction the decree was drawn up.

(11) Alter this word seems to mean “violate this command,” since the alteration of a decree was a thing unheard of.

alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, <sup>1</sup>let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. <sup>(12)</sup> And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

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

<sup>(16)</sup> And the children of Israel, the

<sup>1</sup> Chald., let him be destroyed.

<sup>2</sup> Chald., decrees.

<sup>3</sup> Chald., the sons of the transportation.

<sup>4</sup> Chald., according to the writing.

B. C. 515.

a Num. 3. 6; & R. 9.

priests, and the Levites, and the rest of <sup>3</sup>the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, <sup>(17)</sup> and offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. <sup>(18)</sup> And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of Moses.

<sup>(19)</sup> And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. <sup>(20)</sup> For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. <sup>(21)</sup> And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat, <sup>(22)</sup> and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for

**Hanged** is literally *crucified*. Among the Persians crucifixion was generally the nailing of a body to a cross after decapitation; among the Assyrians it was transfixion or impalement. Here the "being set up" refers of course to the man, and not to the beam.

<sup>(14)</sup> **Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.**—This verse includes all the agents in the great work with which the book deals: from Cyrus to Artaxerxes; the elders, that is, the heads of the Jews; the prophets (see chap. v. 1); but all is *from the God of Israel*, whose commandment Cyrus and all others fulfilled.

**Artaxerxes king of Persia.**—Evidently the Artaxerxes Longimanus of the sequel, whose contributions and help did so much toward the perfecting of the general design, though the "finishing" here mentioned took place fifty years before his reign. Observe that he alone is called "king of Persia," which shows that Ezra is writing in his time, and adds his name to the original record. Just as the later Artaxerxes is introduced, so the earlier Cyrus is, in this comprehensive review.

<sup>(15)</sup> **The third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year.**—The event around which this part of the history revolves is dated with due care; it was on the third day of the last month of the ecclesiastical year, B.C. 516—515. Haggai (chap. i. 15) gives the exact date of the re-commencement: the time therefore was four years five months and ten days. But, dating from the first foundation (Ezra iii. 10), no less than twenty-one years had elapsed.

<sup>(16—22)</sup> The dedication of the second Temple.

<sup>(16)</sup> **Children of the captivity.**—This designation

is peculiarly appropriate here, as in verse 20. "All Israel" soon follows.

<sup>(17)</sup> **Twelve he goats.**—The people are not now "Judah" or "Judah and Benjamin," but "all Israel." On the Day of Atonement, on the new moons, and on all the great feasts the kid was the sin-offering for the people. But only here is one offered for each tribe.

<sup>(18)</sup> **In the book of Moses.**—The general arrangements only were given in the Pentateuch. The "courses" were of David's time; and their restoration must have been imperfect, as neither were the twenty-four courses of priests complete nor were the Levites in full force.

<sup>(19)</sup> **Upon the fourteenth day of the first month.**—Recording the special celebration of the Passover—after the precedent of Hezekiah and Josiah—Ezra returns to the Hebrew language. The occasion was, as it were, a renewal of the redemption from Egypt, and another wilderness had been passed.

<sup>(20)</sup> **Purified together.**—This verse should be translated as follows, contrary to the present accentuation: "The priests were purified; and the Levites were purified as one man: all were pure; and killed." In this fact the present Levitical and official purity of both orders surpassed that of Hezekiah's celebration (2 Chron. xxix. 34, xxx. 3). It had come to be the practice that the Levites slaughtered all the paschal lambs.

<sup>(21)</sup> **Separated themselves . . .**—Not proselytes from the heathen are intended, but the remnant of the Jews in the land who had consorted with the foreign populations introduced by the conquerors. Their intermarriages and other acts of conformity are constantly referred to throughout Ezra and Nehemiah.

<sup>(22)</sup> **And kept the feast.**—The Mazzoth, or week

the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

CHAPTER VII.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, <sup>(2)</sup> the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, <sup>(3)</sup> the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, <sup>(4)</sup> the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, <sup>(5)</sup> the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: <sup>(6)</sup> this Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. <sup>(7)</sup> And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and

B.C. 457.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *was the foundation of the going up*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *to Ezra the priest, a perfect scribe of the law of the God of heaven, peace, &c.*

the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. <sup>(8)</sup> And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was* in the seventh year of the king. <sup>(9)</sup> For upon the first *day* of the first month <sup>1</sup> began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. <sup>(10)</sup> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

<sup>(11)</sup> Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

<sup>(12)</sup> Artaxerxes, king of kings, <sup>2</sup> unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time. <sup>(13)</sup> I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

of unleavened bread, was the symbol of entire separation from evil, to the service of that God whom on the Passover they accepted as their God. The special joy of this feast was the feeling that the Lord had "turned the heart of the king of Assyria." The king of Persia is so called as a remembrancer of their oppression by his forerunners.

## II.—THE SECOND RETURN UNDER EZRA.

### VII.

<sup>(1-10)</sup> A general summary of Ezra's expedition under Divine guidance.

<sup>(1)</sup> **After these things.**—Fifty-seven years after: this special phrase is here alone used. During the interval we must place the events of the Book of Esther.

**Ezra the son of Seraiah.**—His lineage is given, as frequently in Scripture, compendiously, and according to the genealogical law which makes every ancestor a "father" and every descendant a "son." We know not the reason why certain names supplied in 1 Chron. vi. are here omitted; but Seraiah is claimed as the father of Ezra because he was the eminent high priest who last ministered in Solomon's Temple and was slain at Riblah (2 Kings xxv. 18). The links wanting in the lineage are easily supplied.

<sup>(6)</sup> **A ready scribe.**—The "ready writer" of Ps. xlv. 1. Ezra was a priest, and this title is rightly placed before that of scribe in what follows; but here at the outset, when he first appears in history, the title is used which expressed his pre-eminent function, that of guarding and interpreting the law (verse 10).

**All his request.**—This anticipates the letter of verse 11; a series of supplementary notes intervenes.

**According to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.**—The full formula for that special providence over God's servants which both Ezra and Nehemiah recognised.

<sup>(8)</sup> **In the seventh year.**—The repeated notes of time must be marked. The journey itself comes afterwards: it is here indicated as having occupied four months. Ezra's company also is summarised beforehand, according to the manner of this book.

<sup>(10)</sup> **For Ezra had prepared his heart.**—It must be remembered that the providence of God over him immediately precedes—not as the reward of his preparing his heart, but as the reason of it. First, he gave himself to study the law, then to practise it himself, and lastly to teach its positive statutes or ordinances and its moral judgments or precepts—a perfect description of a teacher in the congregation. There is nothing discordant in Ezra saying of himself that he had thus "set his heart."

<sup>(11-26)</sup> **Credentials and commission of Ezra.** After the general statement the particulars are given, beginning with the letter of authorisation, in which we discern throughout the hand of Ezra.

<sup>(11)</sup> **Even a scribe.**—In the case of Ezra the function of scribe was more important than that of priest. The word scribe originally meant the writer or copier of the law; but now it meant the expositor of its general moral commandments and of its special ceremonial statutes. It is with the latter more especially that the commission of Ezra had to do.

<sup>(12)</sup> **Artaxerxes, king of kings.**—Artachshatra in Persian, Artachshasta in Hebrew. The Persian monarchs inherited the title here given from the Babylonians (Dan. ii. 37). It is not used by the historian, only by the king himself.

(14) Forasmuch as thou art sent <sup>1</sup> of the king, and of his <sup>a</sup> seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; (15) and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, (16) <sup>b</sup> and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: (17) that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. (18) And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. (19) The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. (20) And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's

<sup>1</sup> Chald., *from before the king.*

<sup>a</sup> Esth. i. 14.

R.C.  
cir. 457.

<sup>b</sup> ch. x. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Chald., *cora.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb., *Whatsoever is of the decree.*

treasure house. (21) And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, (22) unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred <sup>2</sup> measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*. (23) <sup>3</sup> Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? (24) Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. (25) And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, 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. (26) And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him,

**Perfect peace, and at such a time.**—Literally, *perfect, and so forth*. The expression occurs only here, and is a difficult one. Our translation follows the apocryphal Esdras, and is on the whole to be accepted, a salutation being implied.

(14) **Seven counsellors.**—These are mentioned in Esther i. 14, and were probably the heads of those families who aided Darius Hystaspis against the pseudo-Smerdis, as mentioned by Herodotus.

**According to the law of thy God.**—Ezra's commission was first to enquire into the condition of the city and province, with regard to the relation of both to the Divine law.

(16) **Which is in Jerusalem.**—The repetition of this and similar phrases is after the manner of the literature of this period; but here, as in some other places, it implies deep reverence.

(17) **Buy speedily.**—Provide *first of all* for the sacrificial ceremonial. Every sacrifice had its own meat-offerings and drink-offerings (Num. xv.). These phrases in the commission of course Ezra dictated.

(18) **The rest . . .**—This clause of large latitude would be of great importance for the general beautifying of the Temple (verse 27).

(19) **The vessels.**—Offered (see chap. viii. 25) to be added to those sent up by Zerubbabel.

(20) **Out of the king's treasure house.**—Every satrap had his local treasury. The decree gives Ezra very large powers, but the following verses add a measure of qualification.

(22) **Unto an hundred talents of silver . . .**—A certain restriction is laid upon the amount, although

the very restriction seems almost indefinite. The silver might reach £24,000 sterling. As to the rest, Palestine abounded in these productions, which were regularly remitted to the king's service. Salt especially was plentiful near the Dead Sea.

(23) **Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven.**—The last is the strongest ground for such an ample authorisation. In the solemn and devout firman the phrase "the God of heaven" occurs twice, and the Persian prince deprecates His wrath. In this seventh year of Artaxerxes, B.C. 458, the tide of success turned for Persia against the Athenians in Egypt.

**And his sons.**—Though Artaxerxes Longimanus was young at this time, he is said to have left eighteen sons.

(24) **We certify you.**—The exemption of so large a number as the entire ministry of the Temple from all kinds of taxation is emphatically introduced.

(25) **All such as know.**—The firman, or king's commission, returning directly to Ezra, makes him supreme in the province over the Jewish population.

**And teach ye them that know them not.**—That is, those Jews who had comparatively forsaken the law. Here he has absolute authority in religion.

(26) **Let judgment be executed speedily upon him.**—Hence civil authority is added to religious. All these powers were usually entrusted to the provincial administrators, with more or less of reservation, by the Persians. But it is obvious that their combination in the one person of this servant of Jehovah demanded express statement.



whether *it be* unto death, or <sup>1</sup> to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

(27) Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem: (28) and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

CHAPTER VIII. —(1) These *are* now the chief of their fathers, and *this is* the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. (2) Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. (3) Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty. (4) Of the sons of Pahath-Moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males. (5) Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. (6) Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. (7) And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah

<sup>1</sup> Child., to rooting out.

<sup>2</sup> Or, the youngest son.

B. C. 457.

<sup>3</sup> Or, Zaccur, as some read.

<sup>4</sup> Or, pitched.

the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. (8) And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. (9) Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. (10) And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. (11) And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. (12) And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan <sup>2</sup> the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. (13) And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names *are* these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. (14) Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and <sup>3</sup> Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

(15) And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there <sup>4</sup> abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. (16) Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding. (17) And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the

(27) **Blessed be the Lord God.**—This is the solitary expression of Ezra's private devotion; and it is incorporated with his record in so artless a manner as to confirm the impression that the whole narrative is from his hand.

This sudden ejaculatory thanksgiving, in the midst of his narrative, reminds us of Nehemiah's habit.

**To beautify.**—A general term, signifying all that belonged to the restoration of the Temple.

(28) **And hath extended mercy unto me.**—The honour done to himself before the council of Persia he ascribes to the mercy of God. Once more we have an anticipation of the journey, with a parenthesis intervening.

### VIII.

(1–14) A list of the chief names, given by families, of those who accompanied Ezra.

(1) **This is the genealogy.**—The names of the heads of houses is followed generally by that of the wider families they belonged to. With this list is to be compared the register of those who went up with Zerubbabel (chap. ii. 2 seq.).

(2, 3) According to 1 Chron. iii. 22, Hattush was a descendant of David, and grandson of Shechaniah.

The difficulty of the text therefore may probably be best solved by punctuating thus: "Of the sons of David. Hattush of the sons of Shechaniah. Of the sons of Pharosh, Zechariah."

(5) **The son of Jahaziel.**—Obviously a name is omitted. The LXX. have, "of the sons of Zattu, Shechaniah," before Jahaziel.

(10) Here also a name is wanting. The LXX. have, "of the sons of Bani, Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah."

(13) **And of the last sons.**—The younger branches, the elder being reported in chap. ii. 13.

(15–31) The journey through Ahava to Jerusalem.

(15) **Ahava.**—Both river and town. Nine days' journey brought them thither; and there is a place now called Hit, about eighty miles from Babylon, which has been identified with it.

**None of the sons of Levi.**—Only seventy-four had returned with Zerubbabel (chap. ii. 40); and here we have evidence that the disinclination continued. The importance of Levitical service in the Temple accounts for the anxiety of Ezra.

(16) **Men of understanding.**—Teachers, and perhaps priests. These were joined with nine chief men as a deputation to Iddo.

(17) **The place Casiphia.**—Evidently near Ahavah, and a colony of Jews presided over by Iddo,



place Casiphia, and <sup>1</sup> I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.

<sup>(18)</sup> And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; <sup>(19)</sup> and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; <sup>(20)</sup> <sup>a</sup> also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

<sup>(21)</sup> Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. <sup>(22)</sup> For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. <sup>(23)</sup> So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

<sup>1</sup> Heb., I put words in their mouth.

<sup>a</sup> See ch. 2. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., yellowe, or shining brass.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., desirable.

<sup>(24)</sup> Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, <sup>(25)</sup> and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered: <sup>(26)</sup> I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents; <sup>(27)</sup> also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of <sup>2</sup> fine copper, <sup>3</sup> precious as gold. <sup>(28)</sup> And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers. <sup>(29)</sup> Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. <sup>(30)</sup> So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

<sup>(31)</sup> Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the

one of the humble race of the Nethinims, but at present chief under the Persians. Ezra was aware of their existence in these parts.

**Ministers.**—A term obviously including Levites and Nethinims.

<sup>(18)</sup> **A man of understanding.**—Probably a proper name, *Ishsekul*. This is required by the “and” before “Sherebiah,” who was a Levite, referred to by Nehemiah (chap. viii. 7).

<sup>(20)</sup> **The Nethinims.**—It is here alone recorded that David appointed these to aid the Levites.

**All of them were expressed by name.**—Not, as some think, that they were all famous, but that Iddo sent their names in a list not given. The relief of their coming is gratefully ascribed to the “good hand of our God upon us.”

<sup>(21)</sup> **To seek of him a right way for us.**—The wilderness was now before them, and an enemy, indefinitely referred to, was in the way: probably desert tribes, always lying in wait for unprotected caravans.

**Our little ones.**—An intimation that whole households went up.

**Our substance.**—Chiefly the treasures for the Temple, though the term signifies cattle and other goods, with an undertone of abundance.

<sup>(22)</sup> **Because we had spoken unto the king.**—The whole verse goes back to the past. Ezra had

magnified God's providence before the king: His “hand” upon his own “for good”—the habitual tribute to Providence in this book and Nehemiah—and His power “against” His enemies “for evil” not being expressed. This sublime testimony made the “seeking” God a condition of safety. Hence the solemn fasting and prayer, following many precedents (Judges xx. 26; 1 Sam. vii. 6).

<sup>(24)</sup> **Sherebiah.**—Rather, to *Sherebiah*—that is, these two Levites, alone mentioned, with ten others, were associated with an equal number of priests in the charge of the Temple treasure.

<sup>(25)</sup> **And weighed.**—The gold and silver were in bars. According to the best computation, the silver would amount to a quarter of a million of our money, and the gold to about three-quarters of a million.

<sup>(27)</sup> **A thousand drams.**—*Darics*, and therefore the whole worth rather more than a thousand guineas.

**Fine copper.**—Probably the Roman Orichalcum, a metal very highly valued.

<sup>(28)</sup> **And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord.**—A unique verse in every respect. The treasures were consecrated, and they were committed to consecrated hands: a good account was to be given of them to the treasurers of the Temple.

<sup>(31)</sup> **The hand of our God was upon us.**—This sums up the history of the journey.

way. <sup>(32)</sup> And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. <sup>(33)</sup> Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; <sup>(34)</sup> by number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. <sup>(35)</sup> Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD. <sup>(36)</sup> And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

B. C. 457.

CHAPTER IX.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>(2)</sup> For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. <sup>(3)</sup> And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. <sup>(4)</sup> Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until

(32—36) The arrival in Jerusalem, and first proceedings there.

(32) **Three days.**—Devoted, as in the similar case of Nehemiah, to rest and more private devotion.

(33) **Meremoth the son of Uriah** . . . —These names of priests and Levites, who had officially received the treasures, occur again in Nehemiah.

(34) **By number and by weight.**—The number of the vessels and the weight of the ingots were recorded and laid up for security.

(36) **And they delivered the king's commissions.**—First came sacrifices of burnt offering to God (verse 35); then, having rendered to God the things which were God's, they render to Cæsar the things of Cæsar. They delivered the king's commission, or firman, to the lieutenants or satraps in military authority, and to the governors, or peshahs, or pashas, in civil authority under them. The firman was of course accepted and acted upon: "they furthered the people."

## IX.

(1) **Now when these things were done.**—The remainder of the book is occupied with the execution of Ezra's function as a moral reformer. One chief disorder is mentioned, that of the mixed marriages (verse 2), which the new lawgiver evidently regarded as fatal to the purity of the Divine service, and to the design of God in separating for a season this peculiar people.

(1—4) The report of the abuse of mixed marriages is formally brought before Ezra.

(4) **The princes.**—Heads of tribes, native rulers of Jerusalem, as distinguished from the satraps and governors. Zerubbabel's office had no successor; and the term princes expressed rather their eminence than

their authority, which had been powerless to check the abuses they complain of.

**Doing according to their abominations.**—Rather, *as it regards their abominations*. They are not charged with abandonment to idolatry, but with that peculiar laxity which appears in the sequel.

**The Ammonites.**—It is remarkable that all the ancient proscribed races are mentioned, and not the specific nations by the names of which the Samaritans were known, as if to make the case as hateful as possible. At the same time, many of these races still lingered in the neighbourhood of Judæa.

(2) **The holy seed.**—The "holy nation" or "peculiar people" of Exod. xix. 6 is called the "holy seed" by Isaiah (chap. vi. 13), with reference to its being preserved and kept holy amidst judgments; and here the same term is used with reference to its desecration by being made common among the nations.

**The princes and rulers.**—The upper classes, whether priests and Levites or laymen.

**This trespass.**—There is no question as to the unlawfulness of these intermarriages, nor any palliation on account of necessity. The rulers report it, and Ezra receives the report as evidence that the whole purpose of God with regard to the people was, at the very outset of their new economy, in course of being defeated by the guilt of the heads of Israel. Their delinquency as such is admitted on all hands.

(3) **I rent my garment and my mantle.**—The actions of Ezra betoken his horror and grief. But both the rending of the outer and inner garment and the plucking the hair were symbolical acts, teaching their lesson to the people who witnessed, and, as we see, were deeply impressed.

(4) **Trembled.**—In fear of the Divine judgments. **Transgression of those that had been carried away.**—The usual name of the people at this time. During their captivity, however, they had

the evening sacrifice. <sup>(5)</sup> And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my <sup>1</sup> heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, <sup>(6)</sup> and said,

O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our <sup>2</sup> trespass is grown up unto the heavens. <sup>(7)</sup> Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day. <sup>(8)</sup> And now for a <sup>3</sup> little space hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us <sup>4</sup> a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. <sup>(9)</sup> For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and <sup>5</sup> to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in

<sup>1</sup> Or, affliction.

<sup>2</sup> Or, guiltiness.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., moment.

<sup>4</sup> Or, a pin: that is, a constant and sure abode.

<sup>5</sup> Heb., to set up.

<sup>6</sup> Heb., by the hand of thy servants.

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 23. 32; Deut. 7. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Heb., from mouth to mouth.

<sup>9</sup> Heb., hast withheld beneath our iniquities.

Judah and in Jerusalem. <sup>(10)</sup> And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, <sup>(11)</sup> which thou hast commanded <sup>6</sup> by thy servants the prophets, saying, "The land unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it <sup>7</sup> from one end to another with their uncleanness. <sup>(12)</sup> Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. <sup>(13)</sup> And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God <sup>8</sup> hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this; <sup>(14)</sup> should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping? <sup>(15)</sup> O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day:

not been thus guilty. It was the aggravation of their guilt that they committed the trespass now.

(5-15) Ezra's prayer of confession and deprecation.

(5) **And at the evening sacrifice I arose up.**—Until the afternoon Ezra had sat silent and in grief before the Temple, and in presence of the people. Then, amidst the solemnities of the sacrifice, he uttered the prayer which he had been meditating.

(6) **And said, O my God.**—The confession begins with "O my God;" but Ezra is the representative of the people, and it proceeds "O our God" (verse 10), without once returning to the first person.

(7) **Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass.**—In these Common Prayers of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, the race of Israel is regarded as one, and national sins as one "great trespass." The repetition of "this day" at the beginning and at the end of the verse is to be observed: in the former place in reference to the sin; in the latter in reference to the punishment.

(8) **A little space.**—The "little" here and at the close of the sentence are emphatic. All the present tokens of mercy are said at the conclusion of the prayer (verse 14) to be conditional in their continuance. The little space from the time of Cyrus was nearly two generations; but it was a moment only in relation to the past and the possible future. The idea is inverted in Isa. liv. 7: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee."

**Nail in his holy place.**—The Temple was itself the sure nail on which all their hopes hung.

**A little reviving.**—Literally, *make us a little life*. The present revival was but the beginning, and still by manifold tokens precarious.

(9) **We were bondmen.**—Better, *we are bondmen*. In this lies the emphasis of the appeal.

**A wall.**—Like "the nail," a figurative expression for security. The literal wall was not yet rebuilt. This completes the description of Divine mercy: first, the people were a delivered remnant; the Temple was a sure nail for the future of religion; and their civil estate was made secure.

(10) **After this.**—But all was a mercy for which there had been no adequate return.

(11) **Saying.**—In the later Old Testament Scriptures the quotation of the earlier is often of this character, giving the substance of many passages. The same style is observable in the New Testament.

(12) **Give not your daughters.**—See Deut. vii. 3, the only place where the interdict includes both daughters and sons. It is observable that the giving of daughters in marriage to heathens is not mentioned either in Ezra or in Nehemiah.

**Nor seek their peace.**—An evident echo of that most stern injunction in Deut. xxiii. 6.

(15) **O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous.**—The solemn invocation shows that this is a summary of the whole prayer: God's righteousness is magnified, as accompanied by the grace which had preserved them, although as only a remnant; and as such covered with their trespasses; and especially with "this" the present trespass, the guilt of which underlies all.

behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

CHAPTER X.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people <sup>1</sup>wept very sore. <sup>(2)</sup> And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. <sup>(3)</sup> Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God <sup>2</sup>to put away all the 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. <sup>(4)</sup> Arise; for *this* matter *belongeth* unto thee: we also *will be* with thee: be of good courage, and do it.

<sup>(5)</sup> Then arose Ezra, and made the

<sup>1</sup> Heb., *wept* a great weeping.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., *to bring forth.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb., *devoted.*

chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware. <sup>(6)</sup> Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. <sup>(7)</sup> And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; <sup>(8)</sup> and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be <sup>3</sup>forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

<sup>(9)</sup> Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and

## X.

(1-6) The covenant of repentance and amendment. Here the narrative assumes another form; and, in accordance with the solemnity of a great public transaction, Ezra adopts the third person.

(1) **Before the house of God.**—Prostrating himself towards the Temple in the court, where all the people saw him and marked his distress.

**Wept very sore.**—The evil penetrated domestic life, and the punishment, as was already foreseen by “the women bringing the children with them,” brought special family distress.

(2) **Shechaniah.**—The son of one of the transgressors (verse 26), whose action as the representative of the people gives him an honourable memorial in Scripture.

**There is hope in Israel.**—A noble sentiment for a reformer even at the worst of times.

(3) Special covenants with God—general, as in 2 Kings xxiii. 3, and in regard to particular offences, as here, and in Jer. xxxiv. 8—were familiar in Jewish history. And at all times of critical sin or danger the voluntary intervention of individuals was held in honour. (Comp. Num. xxv. 12 seq.)

**According to the counsel of my lord.**—Better, *according to, or in, the counsel of the Lord.* Ezra would hardly be called “my lord,” nor had he given any counsel.

**According to the law.**—Which in Deut. xxiv. prescribes the terms of divorce.

(4) **Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee.**—The commission given to Ezra (chap. vii. 11 seq.) seems specially referred to, and the deep prostration of

his spirit renders the encouragement here given very appropriate. It had its effect: as Ezra's grief had made the people sorrowful, so their vigour made him energetic.

(5) **According to this word.**—“According to” occurs three times, and each instance must be noted. First, it was “in the counsel of the Lord” as God's law, rightly interpreted, demanded this measure, however seemingly harsh; secondly, it was to be done “according to the law;” and, thirdly, according to the present covenant, which went beyond the law of Moses.

(6) **The chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib.**—Ezra retired for fasting and prayer into one of the chambers opening on the court. It seems impossible to identify these names with the Eliashib of Nehemiah xii. 10 and his grandson. Both names were common.

(7-17) Conference of the people and commission to try individual cases.

(8) **Forfeited.**—This, as also what precedes and what follows, again recalls the express commission of chap. vii. But “according to the counsel” removes all appearance of arbitrariness on the part of Ezra.

(9) **Within three days.**—From the time of hearing the summons. No town was more than forty miles distant; and of course only those would come that were able, and who came within the scope of the proclamation, the precise terms of which are not given. They were not more than could assemble “in the street,” or open court of the Temple. The minute specifications of date, and the two reasons for the trembling of the people, and the whole strain of the narrative, bear witness to the veracity of an eye-witness.

for <sup>1</sup>the great rain. <sup>(10)</sup> And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and <sup>2</sup>have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. <sup>(11)</sup> Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

<sup>(12)</sup> Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. <sup>(13)</sup> But the people are many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or two: for <sup>3</sup>we are many that have transgressed in this thing. <sup>(14)</sup> Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God <sup>4</sup>for this matter be turned from us.

<sup>(15)</sup> Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah <sup>5</sup>were employed about this *matter*: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. <sup>(16)</sup> And the children of the captivity did so.

And Ezra the priest, *with* certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down

<sup>1</sup> Heb., the showers.

B. C. 456.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., have caused to dwell, or, have brought back.

<sup>3</sup> Or, we have greatly offended in this thing.

<sup>4</sup> Or, till this matter be dispatched.

<sup>5</sup> Heb., stood.

in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. <sup>(17)</sup> And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

<sup>(18)</sup> And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. <sup>(19)</sup> And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass. <sup>(20)</sup> And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. <sup>(21)</sup> And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah. <sup>(22)</sup> And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

<sup>(23)</sup> Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same *is* Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. <sup>(24)</sup> Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

<sup>(25)</sup> Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. <sup>(26)</sup> And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. <sup>(27)</sup> And of the sons of

**It was the ninth month.**—Chisleu, our December, the rainy month in Palestine.

<sup>(10)</sup> **Ezra the priest.**—He stood up, not as the commissioner of Artaxerxes, not at this moment as the scribe, but as the representative of God.

<sup>(11)</sup> **Do his pleasure.**—This procedure, humanly severe, is connected with the Divine will.

**From the people of the land, and from the strange wives.**—The marriages were but a subordinate branch, though a very important one, of the wider sin: that of confederacy with idolaters.

<sup>(13)</sup> **We are many.**—Better, *we have greatly offended in this thing*. The greatness of the offence of course implied the number of the offenders.

<sup>(14)</sup> **Stand.**—As a representative body in session.

**Until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.**—A difficult verse, owing to a slight peculiarity in the original. The meaning seems to be: *until the fierce wrath of our God—fierce while this matter lasts—be turned away from us*.

<sup>(15)</sup> **Were employed about.**—Rather, *stood against*. Nothing is said as to the reason for opposition on the part of these and the two who abetted them. But the reason is obvious enough. Some modern expositors are of their mind, and regard the act of Ezra as remedying one sin by another still greater. They bring Malachi (chap. ii. 15) to their support; but

nothing in his prediction about “the wife of thy youth,” rightly understood, tends to condemn the conduct here described.

<sup>(16)</sup> **By their names.**—As in chap. viii. 20, the names were before the writer, but are not given.

**And sat down.**—That is, *held a session*. This was ten days after the general assembly.

<sup>(17)</sup> **And they made an end.**—Though the number of transgressors was only one hundred and thirteen, two months were occupied, which shows the care taken to do justice, especially to the claims of the women put away.

(18–44) List of the transgressors.

<sup>(19)</sup> **They gave their hands.**—The four members of the high priest's family were peculiarly dealt with. They gave their distinct pledge, and offered each a special trespass offering. It is one among a multitude of similar tokens of authenticity in the history; an inventor would have given some reason for the peculiarity.

<sup>(22)</sup> **Pashur.**—Comparing chap. ii. 36–39, we find that all the priestly families that returned with Zerubbabel were implicated in the national offence.

<sup>(25)</sup> **Of Israel.**—Of the laity eighty-six are mentioned, belonging to ten races which returned with Zerubbabel.

Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. <sup>(28)</sup> Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. <sup>(29)</sup> And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. <sup>(30)</sup> And of the sons of Pahathmoab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. <sup>(31)</sup> And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, <sup>(32)</sup> Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. <sup>(33)</sup> Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh,

<sup>1</sup> Or, Machnadebai, according to some copies.

and Shimei. <sup>(34)</sup> Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, <sup>(35)</sup> Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, <sup>(36)</sup> Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, <sup>(37)</sup> Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, <sup>(38)</sup> and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, <sup>(39)</sup> and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, <sup>(40)</sup> <sup>1</sup>Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, <sup>(41)</sup> Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, <sup>(42)</sup> Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. <sup>(43)</sup> Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. <sup>(44)</sup> All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

<sup>(34)</sup> **Bani**.—Probably this should be some other name, as Bani occurs before. The peculiarly large number of the representatives of his race suggests that there is some confusion in the present text.

<sup>(44)</sup> **All these had taken strange wives**.—Though the numbers are not summed up and distributed, it is evident that this closing sentence is emphatic. Ezra ends his history with a catalogue of

the delinquents—strong testimony to the importance he attached to the reformation. The last words—literally, *and there were of them wives who had brought forth children*—tend in the same direction. Not even this pathetic fact restrained the thoroughness of the excision. But the Book of Nehemiah (chap. xiii. 23 seq.) will show that it was thorough only for a time.



# THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.





# INTRODUCTION

TO

## THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

---

I. Of Nehemiah's personal history we know little beyond the few facts preserved in this book. He was of the tribe of Judah; and probably, like Zerubbabel his predecessor, of the royal stock. He was one of the "children of the captivity"; and, through circumstances of which we know nothing, rose to eminence in the Persian court. As cupbearer of Artaxerxes he was in a position of wealth and influence: the history shows how important both were in his vocation, and how nobly he used both in the service of his country. The events recorded furnish only a scanty memorial of Nehemiah's life; but they paint his character to perfection. He was a man of profound piety, connecting everything, great or small, with the will of God, in whose presence he lived and moved and had his being: this is attested by the interjectional prayers which habitually recur. His prudence was equally marked; and there is no better example of constant dependence on God united with practical forethought. He was disinterested and unselfish: his wealth was used for public ends, and there is not the slightest reference to self apart from the common good. This set the crown on his public administration, the energy, sagacity, and even severity of which were guided solely by the demands of his vocation. He always appeals to the judgment of a merciful God; and that appeal avails against much hard modern criticism which dwells on his alleged asperity, self-confidence and self-assertion. Ancient Jewish tradition gave his name a high place, not a whit below that of Ezra.

II. Passing from the book to the writer, we have the long-contested question as to the nature and extent of his authorship. It is generally admitted that the first seven chapters, as also the greater part of the last

three, were Nehemiah's own composition. But a glance at the three intermediate chapters shows that he was not the author of these in the same sense; and this is confirmed by a minute comparison of the style and phraseology of the different portions. Those in which the writer appears in the first person, and which bear the peculiar stamp of his devotion, seem to have been extracts from his personal diary; while the others seem to have been incorporated from some public account authoritatively drawn up under the direction of Ezra and himself. But, though several hands contributed to the compilation of this middle section, it is easy to see that Nehemiah made the whole his own. For instance: the prayer in ch. ix. was probably Ezra's, but in the history surrounding the prayer there is no special mark of his style; and the remarkable transition to the "we" in ch. x., the sealing of the covenant, hardly allows either Nehemiah or Ezra to be the immediate author, but is rather like a free rendering of the very terms of the vow as written in a permanent document. The dedication of the wall is vividly described in the first person; and so is the energetic administration of reform after his return from Susa. But between these there are a few verses which seem to be derived from a national record. The six lists which are interwoven in this middle section were of course extracts from public archives. Those of ch. xi. fall appropriately into the narrative. The other lists have all the appearance of being inserted on account of their importance to the future commonwealth: one of them, that of the high priests from Jeshua to Jaddua, having been retouched at a later period. The interpolator probably added also verses 22 and 23 of the same chapter; as the notes will explain.

# THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

CHAPTER I.—<sup>(1)</sup> The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, <sup>(2)</sup> that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. <sup>(3)</sup> And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

<sup>(4)</sup> And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept,

B.C.  
cir. 446.

a 2 Kin. 25. 10.

b Dan. 9. 4.

and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, <sup>(5)</sup> and said, I beseech thee, 'O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: <sup>(6)</sup> let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. <sup>(7)</sup> We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou

<sup>(1)</sup> **The words of Nehemiah.**—Rather, *The narrative or record*. Both as referring to his affairs and as written by him.

<sup>(1-3)</sup> **Introductory:** tidings brought to Nehemiah concerning the sad estate of Jerusalem and the people.

<sup>(1)</sup> **In the month Chisleu.**—The names rather than the numbers of the months are generally employed after the captivity: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishri, Marchesvan, Chisleu, Tebeth, Shevat, Adar; with an intercalary month, the second Adar. Chisleu answers nearly to our December.

**In the twentieth year.**—Of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, which began B.C. 465 and ended B.C. 425.

**In Shushan the palace.**—Susa, the capital of Susiana; where, after the capture of the Babylonian empire, a great palace was built by Darius Hystaspis, the ruins of which are still seen. It was the principal and favourite residence of the Persian court, alternating with Persepolis, the older capital, and Babylon. Shushan was one of the most ancient cities in the world; and is associated with the visions of Daniel, and with the feast of Ahasuerus (Dan. viii. 2, Esther i. 3).

<sup>(2)</sup> **He and certain men of Judah.**—*From Judah*: Hanani was Nehemiah's own brother (ch. vii. 1). He and his companions came from "the province" of Judah (verse 3); nothing is said as to their motive in coming; and certainly there is no intimation that they had been sent to the Persian court on account of recent disturbances.

<sup>(3)</sup> **And they said.**—Nehemiah's question and his friends' answer refer first to the people and then to

the city. As to the former the terms used have a deep pathos. Those who had returned to their country—now only *the province*—are, in the question, *the Jews that had escaped*; in the answer they are *the Remnant that are left*: both being from the captivity.

**In great affliction and reproach.**—In distress because of the contempt of the people around. All these expressions are familiar in the prophets; but they are united here in a peculiar and affecting combination. As to the city, the report is that the walls were still "broken down": lying prostrate, with partial exceptions, as Nebuchadnezzar left them a hundred and forty-two years before (2 Kings xxv. 10), and, moreover, what had not been recorded, "the gates thereof burned with fire." Though the Temple had been rebuilt, there is no valid reason for supposing that the walls of the city had been in part restored and again demolished.

<sup>(4-11)</sup> **Nehemiah's appeal to God.** The prayer is a perfect example of the private and individual devotion with which the later Hebrew Scriptures abound. It begins with formal and appropriate invocation (verse 5-8), flows into earnest confession (verses 6, 7), pleads the covenant promises (verses 8-10), and supplicates a present answer (verse 11). The extant Scriptures, freely used, are the foundation of all.

<sup>(4)</sup> **Fasted.**—Like Daniel, Esther, and Ezra, Nehemiah fasted: fasting appears in later Judaism a prominent part of individual devotion, as it is in the New Testament.

<sup>(6)</sup> **Both I and my father's house have sinned.**—The supplication was for the nation; and in such cases of personal intercession the individual assumes the sin of all the past.

commandest thy servant Moses. <sup>(8)</sup> Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, "If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: <sup>(9)</sup> but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; <sup>b</sup> though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. <sup>(10)</sup> Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. <sup>(11)</sup> O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

a Dent. 4. 25, &amp;c.

b Dent. 30. 4.

1 Heb. wife.

CHAPTER II.—<sup>(1)</sup> And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence. <sup>(2)</sup> Wherefore the king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but

sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, <sup>(3)</sup> and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

<sup>(4)</sup> Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>(5)</sup> And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

<sup>(6)</sup> And the king said unto me, (the <sup>1</sup> queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. <sup>(7)</sup> Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; <sup>(8)</sup> and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

<sup>(8)</sup> The spirit of many threatenings and promises is summed up, as in the prayer of ch. ix.

<sup>(11)</sup> **This day . . . this man.**—During his "certain days" of mourning Nehemiah had fixed upon his plan, suggested by his God. "This day" is "this occasion": the appeal itself was deferred for some months. The king becomes "this man" in the presence of the "God of heaven."

**For I was the king's cupbearer.**—One of his cupbearers, therefore in high authority, having confidential access to him.

## II.

(1-8) Nehemiah's appeal to the king.

<sup>(1)</sup> **Nisan.**—The old Abib, the first month of the Jewish year, following the vernal equinox. As we are still in the twentieth year of the king, the beginning of his reign must be dated before Chisleu. The record adopts Persian dates, and the two months fell in one year.

<sup>(2)</sup> **Then I was very sore afraid.**—Waiting on Providence, Nehemiah had discharged his duties for three months without being sad in the king's presence; but on this day his sorrow could not be repressed. His fear sprang from the king's abrupt inquiry. A sad countenance was never tolerated in the royal presence; and, though Artaxerxes was of a milder character than any other Persian monarch, the tone of his question showed that in this respect he was not an exception.

<sup>(3)</sup> Nehemiah's family was of Jerusalem. He does not as yet betray to the king the deepest desire of his heart, but simply refers to the desecration of his fathers' sepulchres, an appeal which had great force with the Persians, who respected the tomb.

<sup>(4)</sup> **So I prayed to the God of heaven.**—The first note of that habit of ejaculatory prayer which is a characteristic of this book.

<sup>(6)</sup> **The queen also sitting by him.**—Probably Damaspia, the one legitimate queen: *Shegal*, as in Ps. xlv. 13, where, however, she stands as in the presence of her Divine-human Lord. This was not a public feast, as in that case the queen would not be present (Esther i. 9-12).

**I set him a time.**—Whatever that was, circumstances afterwards prolonged it.

<sup>(7)</sup> **To the governors beyond the river.**—Between the Euphrates and Susa protection was not needed.

<sup>(8)</sup> **Keeper of the king's forest.**—Asaph, a Jew, was keeper of an artificial *park* or pleasure ground near Jerusalem: the Persian *parades*, whence our "paradise." It was well planted with trees, as timber was to be supplied from it "for the gates of the palace," rather the *fortress*, which protected "the house," or temple, and was known in Roman times as *Antonia*; also for the city walls; also "for the house that I shall enter into," that is, Nehemiah's own house, for his being appointed governor is pre-supposed.

(9) Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

(10) When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

(11) So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. (12) And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. (13) And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. (14) Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

(15) Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. (16) And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what

I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. (17) Then said I unto them, 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. (18) Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

(19) But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? (20) Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER III.—(1) Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep

(9—11) His journey to Jerusalem, occupying some three months, and safe under good escort, is passed over in the narrative, as Ezra's had been. It is mentioned, however, that Sanballat, one of the "governors," was roused to hostility. After the laborious travelling Nehemiah rested three days, to review the past and prepare for the future.

(10) **Sanballat the Horonite.**—Satrap of Samaria under the Persians, whose secretary or minister was "Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite." Sanballat was from one of the Beth-horon, which had been in Ephraim, and were now in the kingdom of Samaria. His name is seemingly Babylonian, while that of Tobiah is Hebrew. The revival of Jerusalem would be a blow to the recent ascendancy of Samaria.

(11) **Three days.**—For rest and devotion, after the example of Ezra.

(12—13) Nehemiah's cautious preliminaries.

(13) **The gate of the valley**, opening on Hinnom, to the south of the city. Nehemiah passed by "the dragon well," nowhere else mentioned, and not now to be traced, and surveyed the ruins from the "dung port," whence offal was taken to the valley of Hinnom.

(14) **The gate of the fountain** of Siloah (chapter iii. 15), called also "the king's pool."

(15) **By the gate of the valley, and so returned.**—The itineration seems to have completed the circuit of the walls.

(16) **The rest that did the work**, that is, afterwards. The caution of this procedure is justified by

subsequent events: the city teemed with elements of danger. The nobles and rulers were possessed of no substantial repressive authority.

(17) **Then.**—There is no note of time. When his plans were matured, Nehemiah made an earnest appeal to their patriotism.

(18) **Then I told them.**—Nehemiah relates his providential call, with the king's commission, and the people were thoroughly enlisted in the good cause.

(19) **Geshem the Arabian.**—This name completes the triumvirate of the leaders of the opposition to the mission of Nehemiah. They were not independent chieftains: Tobiah was Sanballat's servant and counsellor, while Geshem was probably the leader of an Arabian company mostly in his service. The account of their contemptuous opposition is given in a few touches, as is the contempt with which it was met. They charged Nehemiah with rebellion, as afterwards, in chapter vi. 6.

(20) **He will prosper us.**—The reply is a defiance in the name of the God of heaven. The closing words imply that, as in the days of Zerubbabel, the Samaritan enemies desired really to have their share in the undertaking. Nehemiah makes Zerubbabel's answer, but strengthens it; they had nothing in common with Jerusalem, not even a place in its memorials, save one of shame.

### III.

(1—32) The memorial of the builders: to succeeding generations of dwellers in Jerusalem a deeply interesting chapter. It contains also a very important topographical account of the ancient city, since repeatedly

gate; they sanctified it and set up the doors of it; even unto the town of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of "Hananeel." (2) And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

(3) But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

(4) And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. (5) And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

(6) Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. (7) And next unto them

B.C.  
cir. 445.

a Jer. 31. 28.

1 Heb., at his hand.

2 Or, left Jerusalem unto the broad wall.

3 Heb., second measure.

repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river.

(8) Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. (9) And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. (10) And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. (11) Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. (12) And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

(13) The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they

destroyed. But no amount of ingenuity will avail to remove every difficulty. The text is in some places defective. It must, further, be remembered that the record does not so much describe the process as sum up the result. Much of the work of the gates must have required time, but all is described here as if everything was finished at once.

(1) **Then Eliashib.**—The account begins with due honour to the high priest and the priesthood.

**The sheep gate** was in the neighbourhood of the priests' quarter. Through it the victims passed for sacrifice, first being washed in the neighbouring pool of Bethesda. This being built, "they sanctified it," as an earnest of the subsequent consecration of the entire wall. Their work and the sanctification of it extended to two towns near each other at the north-east corner.

(2) **Next unto him.**—At his hand, the customary phrase throughout the chapter, indicating the order of the building, which, however, involves some difficulty towards the close. The phrase, as first used, does honour to the high priest, who must be supposed to have presided only over the religious ceremonial.

**The men of Jericho.**—At the point, it will be observed, opposite their own city.

(3) **The fish gate.**—Through which fish entered from the Jordan and Galilee.

**The sons of Hassenaah.**—Contrary to custom, their names are not mentioned.

**The locks thereof, and the bars thereof.**—The crossbars thereof, and the catches thereof, the latter holding the former at the two ends. Similarly in several other verses.

(4) **Repaired.**—Literally, strengthened; as before it was built.

(5) **The Tekoites.**—This verse is remarkable, as introducing men of Tekoah, not mentioned among Zerubbabel's Returned, who furnish the solitary instance

of internal opposition to the building; and as terming the common work "the work of the Lord." The ordinary people of the place, however, did double duty. (See verse 27.)

(6) **The old gate.**—Not mentioned elsewhere: probably that of Damascus; but (by a conjectural addition to the text,) it has been translated the gate of the old wall, as if distinguished from "the broad wall."

(7) **Unto the throne.**—Unto the seat of the pechah of the whole district this side the Euphrates: his residence when he came to Jerusalem.

(8) **And they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.**—The word translated "fortified" means literally left, and this yields a good sense: they left Jerusalem untouched as far as a certain portion of the wall extended which needed no restoration. The gate of Ephraim was in this (see chapter xii. 38, 39); and it is significant that nothing is said about the rebuilding of this important gate.

(9) **The half part of Jerusalem.**—Of the district belonging to Jerusalem.

(10) **The other piece.**—This expression occurs a few times when the repairers have been mentioned as having repaired a first piece. But it occurs several times when there is no such mention; and in these cases, as here, must mean only what the margin indicates, a second measure, in relation to what had just been referred to.

(12) **He and his daughters.**—Shallum was governor of the second half-district around Jerusalem; and it has been thought that the "daughters" here are the villages of the district. But needlessly: the women of Jerusalem might do voluntarily what as females they were not pressed to do.

(13) **A thousand cubits.**—Not so much "built" as "strengthened." This comparatively large space—mentioned in round numbers—had probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repairing.

built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.

(14) But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccereem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

(15) But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of "Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

(16) After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty.

(17) After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. (18) After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. (19) And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turn-

<sup>a</sup> John 9. 7.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kin. 20. 20.

<sup>1</sup> Or, Zuccai.

<sup>c</sup> Jer. 32. 2.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Chron. 27. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Or, The tower.

ing of the wall. (20) After him Baruch the son of <sup>1</sup>Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. (21) After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. (22) And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. (23) After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house. (24) After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner. (25) Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh. (26) Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in <sup>2</sup>Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. (27) After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.

(28) From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his

(14) **The son of Rechab.**—Not "a son," as if it meant that he was a Rechabite.

**Part of Beth-haccereem.**—The district around that place.

(15) **He covered it.**—Similar to *laid the beams* in verses 3, 6.

**The pool of Siloah.**—Called before "the king's pool," which received its water as "sent" through a long subterranean conduit, and supplied the king's gardens.

**The stairs.**—Down the steep sides of Ophel, of which traces are thought still to remain. From this point it is very hard to trace the exact course.

(16) **The sepulchres of David.**—Excavated on the western side of the Temple, and never yet traced.

**The pool that was made.**—This may have been the reservoir of Hezekiah (Isa. xxii. 11); and "the house of the mighty" may have been the barracks of David's elect troops (1 Chron. xi. 10).

(17) **The Levites.**—The circuit is coming round to the Temple.

**Rehum the son of Bani.**—The Levites were under him as a body.

**In his part.**—The other part of the Keilah district (now Kila) is in the next verse.

(19) **At the turning of the wall.**—Literally, *the armoury of the corner*: the north-west corner of the "city of David," with its special wall.

(20) **Earnestly repaired the other piece.**—The reason of this man's emulation in building near the high priest's house does not appear.

(21) **Another piece.**—Meremoth added to his other labour the repair of the wall under this house.

(22) **The men of the plain.**—Priests dwelling in the Jordan valley, the "Kikkar" of Scripture.

(24) **Unto the corner.**—The north-eastern angle of the "city of David."

(25) **The tower which lieth out from the king's high house.**—Better, *the high tower outlying from the king's palace.*

**That was by the court of the prison.**—The palace generally had its prison, and near this was the "prison-gate" of chap. xii. 39.

(26) **The Nethinims dwelt in Ophel.**—It has been proposed to insert "who" before dwelt (following the Syriac); but this is not necessary. Ophel was the long rounded spur running out south of the Temple, on the sides of which the ancient "temple servants" still dwelt, separated from others, on a tract of land reaching from the "water-gate toward the east" to the outlying tower of the king's citadel in the west. Nothing is said of their part in the general labour.

(27) **After them.**—Literally, *after him*, referring to Pedaiah of verse 25.

(28) **From above the horse gate.**—This gate was between the Temple and the palace, and the space from the wall of Ophel seems not to have needed repair.

house. <sup>(29)</sup> After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. <sup>(30)</sup> After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber. <sup>(31)</sup> After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the <sup>1</sup>going up of the corner. <sup>(32)</sup> And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

CHAPTER IV.—<sup>(1)</sup> But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. <sup>(2)</sup> And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they <sup>2</sup>fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? <sup>(3)</sup> Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they

<sup>1</sup> Or, corner chamber.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., leave to themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., despite.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., ascended.

<sup>5</sup> Heb., to make an error to it.

build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. <sup>(4)</sup> Hear, O our God; for we are <sup>3</sup>despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: <sup>(5)</sup> and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders. <sup>(6)</sup> So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

<sup>(7)</sup> But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem <sup>4</sup>were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, <sup>(8)</sup> and conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and <sup>5</sup>to hinder it. <sup>(9)</sup> Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. <sup>(10)</sup> And Judah said, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. <sup>(11)</sup> And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

<sup>(29)</sup> **Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah.**—The name in 1 Chron. iii. 22 of a descendant of David.

<sup>(31)</sup> **The place of the Nethinims.**—Rather, *the house*.

**And of the merchants.**—Possibly there is some connection between the traders, who brought their doves and so forth for the worshippers, and the Nethinim to whose house or depot they brought them. Near the sheep gate was the "going up of the corner," or an ascent to the gate Miphkad, about which nothing is known.

<sup>(32)</sup> **Unto the sheep gate.**—It appears that the "goldsmiths and the merchants" undertook the small space necessary to complete the circuit.

#### IV.

(1–23) The opposition of the enemies, and Nehemiah's plans of defence.

(1) **Mocked the Jews.**—The mockery comes afterwards. Here, as often in Nehemiah, a general statement is made which is afterwards expanded.

(2) **His brethren and the army of Samaria.**—The counsellors and body-guard of Sanballat.

**Will they fortify themselves?**—Rather, *will they leave them to themselves?* The nations are referred to; but contempt is not scrupulous or precise.

**Will they sacrifice?**—This is the provocation of God mentioned in verse 5.

(4) **Hear, O our God.**—The habit of Nehemiah is to

turn everything to devotion as he goes on. This prayer is full of an angry jealousy for the honour of a jealous God.

**They have provoked thee.**—The tone of its holy revenge pervades the Old Testament, and has not altogether departed in the New.

(6) **Unto the half.**—Up to half the height the wall was now continuous.

(7) **Were made up.**—Arose to the height before mentioned.

**Began to be stopped.**—The wall, they heard, was continuous. The tribes here enumerated were only small parties under the immediate influence of Sanballat: nothing beyond that would have been likely to occur among subjects in common of Persia.

(8) **And conspired.**—Not fearing the Persian authority, they resolved to attack the city; but it will be seen that they soon abandoned that project.

**To hinder it.**—Rather, *to do it hurt*.

(9) **Because of them.**—Rather, *over against them*: opposite to each point of their encampment. The setting watch was accompanied by solemn and united prayer.

(10) **And Judah said.**—As hereafter, in the case of the complaints of the people (chap. v.), the writer gives a summary of difficulties. The Jews, or "Judah"—a significant term—complained of their growing feebleness, especially as so many were diverted to the watches.

(11) **They shall not know.**—As to the adversaries, their plan was evidently to watch and surprise, instead of making the threatened attack.

(12) And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, <sup>1</sup>From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you.* (13) Therefore set I <sup>2</sup>in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. (14) And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is great and terrible*, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

(15) And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. (16) And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. (17) They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. (18) For the builders, every one had his sword girded <sup>3</sup>by his

<sup>1</sup> Or, That from all places ye must return to us.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., from the lower parts of the place, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., on his loins.

<sup>4</sup> Or, every one went with his weapon for water.

side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me. (19) And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. (20) In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

(21) So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

(22) Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. (23) So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that* every one put them off for washing.

CHAPTER V.—(1) And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. (2) For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore we take up corn *for them*, that we may eat, and live. (3) *Some* also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. (4) There were also that said, We have borrowed

(12) **From all places.**—The neighbouring Jews in their terror said by repeated messages "from all places 'Ye shall return to us,'" that is, for our protection.

(13) **After their families.**—In allusion to the ambushes of verse 11, Nehemiah set families together—besides the appointed guards—"in the lower places," where the wall was not raised to the due height, that is, really, "on the higher places," or rather, *the bare places*, whence enemies might be better seen. The "lower" were the "bare" places.

(14) **And I looked.**—It appears that the energetic appeal now described was uttered on the actual approach of an attacking party.

(15) **We returned.**—This verse remarkably condenses the frustration of the attempt and the cessation of the special guard.

(16) **My servants.**—The building was resumed with special precautions, very minutely described. "Nehemiah's own servants" are distinguished from "all the house of Judah." The former were divided into two parties, one of which wrought on the work still unfinished and the other held their weapons.

**Habergeons** are coats of mail or corselets, thin plates of metal sewn upon leather.

**The rulers were behind.**—Ready to lead the defence, if necessary.

(17) **They which builded.**—Divided into masons and their burden-bearers. The latter held in one hand

a weapon; the former built with both hands, and had their weapons at their side.

(21) **So we laboured.**—This is a general recapitulation, with additional note of the length of the day's work during this pressing season.

(23) **Saving that every one put them off for washing.**—This rendering is very improbable, as the words are simply: "every man his weapon water." Some interpret that "each man's weapon was his water": evidently too subtle a turn of thought. It is best, on the whole, to supply the ellipsis: "every man went with his weapon to the water."

## V.

(1–13) Internal difficulties, springing from usury and oppression.

(1) **Their brethren the Jews.**—Nehemiah's other troubles had come from the enemies without: he begins this account by laying emphasis on the hard treatment of Jews by Jews.

(2) **We take up.**—*Let us receive.* This is a general appeal for the governor's help.

(3) **Because of the dearth.**—Not any particular famine, strictly speaking, but their present hunger. The past mortgages had straitened their resources.

(4) **We have borrowed money for the king's tribute.**—Literally, *we have made our fields and*



money for the king's tribute, *and that upon* our lands and vineyards. <sup>(5)</sup> Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and *some* of our daughters are brought into bondage *already*: neither *is it* in our power to *redeem* them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

<sup>(6)</sup> And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. <sup>(7)</sup> Then <sup>1</sup> I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. <sup>(8)</sup> And I said unto them, We after our ability have 'redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. <sup>(9)</sup> Also I said, it is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? <sup>(10)</sup> I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *my heart consulted in me.*

<sup>a</sup> Lev. xx. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *empty, or, void.*

money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. <sup>(11)</sup> Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

<sup>(12)</sup> Then said they, We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. <sup>(13)</sup> Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and <sup>2</sup>emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

<sup>(14)</sup> Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. <sup>(15)</sup> But the former governors that *had been* before

*vineyards answerable* for the payment of the Persian tribute. They had pledged the coming produce.

<sup>(5)</sup> **We bring into bondage.**—But the climax of the cry was the bondage of their children, especially of the daughters, whom they had been obliged to sell until the Jubile for money: children as precious to their parents as were the children of the rulers to them.

<sup>(6)</sup> **And I was very angry.**—Nehemiah, recently arrived, had not known this state of things. The common wailing and the three complaints in which it found expression are distinct.

<sup>(7)</sup> **I consulted.**—But he mastered himself, and studied his plan of operation. The matter was complicated, as the transgressors had violated rather the spirit than the letter of the law. Hence the rebuke, that they exacted usury each of his brother, failed in its object; and the governor called a general assembly, not "against them," but "concerning them."

<sup>(8)</sup> **Will ye even sell your brethren?**—The appeal is a strong one. Nehemiah and his friends had redeemed Jews from the heathen with money; these men had caused Jews to be sold to Jews.

**Nothing to answer.**—They might have replied had the letter of the law been urged; but this argument puts them to shame.

<sup>(9)</sup> **Because of the reproach.**—The text of another strong argument used in the assembly. We learn in chap. vi. how watchful the heathen were: all matters were reported to them, and every act of oppression would become a reproach against the God of the Jews.

<sup>(10)</sup> **Might exact.**—We have *lent them money and corn*. By his own example the governor pleads with them: not "let us leave off this usury," but let us all and together "remit the loans."

<sup>(11)</sup> **Also the hundredth part of the money.**—The monthly payment of one per cent. per month, twelve per cent. in the year, they were required to give up for the future.

<sup>(12)</sup> **We will restore.**—The promise was given to restore the mortgaged property and to require no more interest. But Nehemiah required an oath to give legal validity to the procedure, and the priests' presence gave it the highest religious sanction.

<sup>(13)</sup> **Shook my lap.**—This symbolical act imprecated on every man who broke this covenant an appropriate penalty: that he be emptied of all his possessions, even as the fold of Nehemiah's garment was emptied. And it is observable that the iniquity thus stopped is not referred to in the subsequent covenant (chap. x.), nor is it one of the offences which the governor found on his second return (chap. xiii.).

(14—19) Nehemiah's vindication of his own conduct.

<sup>(14)</sup> **I was appointed.**—*That he appointed me, viz., Artaxerxes.*

**Twelve years.**—The whole narrative, thus far, was written after his return from Jerusalem, and on a review of his governorship; hence, "their governor in the land of Judah." Of his second appointment the same thing might have been said: but that, at the time of writing, was in the future.

**I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.**—At the close of the twelve years' term, Nehemiah could say that he and his official attendants had not drawn the customary allowances from the people.

<sup>(15)</sup> **Besides forty shekels of silver.**—*Either in bread and wine over forty shekels, or, received in bread*

me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

<sup>(16)</sup> Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. <sup>(17)</sup> Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. <sup>(18)</sup> Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

<sup>(19)</sup> *a* Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

CHAPTER VI.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the

a ch. 13. 22.

1 Or. Geshem, ver. 2.

wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) <sup>(2)</sup> that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. <sup>(3)</sup> And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? <sup>(4)</sup> Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. <sup>(5)</sup> Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; <sup>(6)</sup> Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and <sup>1</sup>Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. <sup>(7)</sup> And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now

and wine, and beyond that, forty shekels. The latter, on the whole, is to be preferred; it would amount to about four pounds from the entire people daily.

So did not I, because of the fear of God.—Nehemiah contrasts his forbearance with the conduct of former governors; we cannot suppose him to mean Zerubbabel, but some of his successors. The practice he condemns was common among the satraps of the Persian princes. Note that usury and rigour were interdicted, in Lev. xxv. 36, 43, with the express sanction, "Fear thy God."

<sup>(16)</sup> I continued.—I repaired: that is, as superintendent. His servants and himself did not take advantage of the people's poverty to acquire their land by mortgage; they were, on the contrary, absorbed in the common work.

<sup>(17)</sup> At my table.—The charge on the governor's free hospitality was heavy: "of the Jews a hundred and fifty rulers, besides those that came" occasionally from the country.

Because the bondage.—Rather, because the service of building was heavy.

The bondage.—Rather, the service was heavy.

<sup>(19)</sup> Think upon me, my God.—Inserting the present prayer far from this people, Nehemiah humbly asks his recompense not from them, but from God. Nothing was more distant from his thoughts than the fame of his good deeds.

## VI.

<sup>(1-14)</sup> The enemies, whose wrath had been before much mingled with mockery, now resort to stratagem.

<sup>(1)</sup> And the rest of our enemies.—The Three always have the pre-eminence.

The doors upon the gates.—Within the gates. This parenthesis is a note of historical accuracy, and intimates that what had been before said as to the setting up of the doors (see chap. iii.) was by way of anticipation.

<sup>(2)</sup> Sanballat and Geshem.—In the original of verse 1, Tobiah is not distinguished from Sanballat by another preposition, as Geshem is; and here he is omitted, as not to appear in the conference otherwise than as Sanballat's secretary.

In some one of the villages in the plain of Ono.—Probably, in Hakkiphirem, the name of a village in the plain of Ono, which was on the borders of Philistia, more than twenty miles from Jerusalem.

<sup>(5)</sup> The fifth time with an open letter in his hand.—Four times they strive to induce Nehemiah to meet them, under various pretexts, with the intention of doing him personal harm. Each time his reply was to the effect that he was finishing his own work, not without a touch of irony. This answer has an universal application, which preachers have known how to use. In the fifth letter the tactics are changed: the silken bag containing the missive was not sealed, and it was hoped that Nehemiah would be alarmed by the thought that its contents had been read by the people.

<sup>(6)</sup> It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it.—Nehemiah can quote the very letter, with its dialectical change of Geshem into Gashmu. Sanballat sends Tobiah in his own name, and represents Geshem as circulating a report which, reaching the distant king, would be interpreted as rebellion. It is hinted that the heathen, or the nation, would take the part of the king. And the words of the prophets concerning the future King are referred to as likely to be attributed to Nehemiah's ambition.

therefore, and let us take counsel together. <sup>(8)</sup> Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. <sup>(9)</sup> For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

<sup>(10)</sup> Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. <sup>(11)</sup> And I said, should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being as I am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. <sup>(12)</sup> And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>(13)</sup> Therefore *was* he hired, that I should

<sup>1</sup> Heb., multiplied their letters missive to Tobiah.

be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

<sup>(14)</sup> My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

<sup>(15)</sup> So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. <sup>(16)</sup> And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

<sup>(17)</sup> Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah <sup>1</sup>sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

<sup>(18)</sup> For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

Finally, the letter suggests the desirableness of friendly counsel to avert the danger.

<sup>(9)</sup> **Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.**—The answer sent was that the thing was not true, and that the report itself did not exist. The reflection in Nehemiah's journal was that they sought to make him afraid. Quoting this, he adds the prayer that he recorded when he wrote it. It is one of those sudden, interjectional petitions which abound in the narrative, and is all the more remarkable from the absence of the words "O God," which are here inserted.

<sup>(10)</sup> **I came unto the house.**—As a specimen of another kind of attack, through false prophets, Shemaiah's plot is mentioned. This man—probably a priest—Nehemiah found shut up in his house; probably he sent for the governor, and represented himself as being in danger from the common enemy. He predicted that on the night ensuing an attempt would be made on Nehemiah's life, and proposed that they should meet "within the Temple"—that is, in the holy place, between the Holiest and the outer court—for security.

<sup>(11)</sup> **Should such a man as I flee?**—First, the expression of personal dignity. Then of fear: "Who, being as I am" (a layman), "would go into the Temple to save his life?" Rather, *and live?* (Numb. xviii. 7).

<sup>(13)</sup> **An evil report.**—Nehemiah perceived that not God, but Shemaiah himself, had uttered the prophecy "against me," and that he was hired to bring the governor into discredit as a violator of law.

<sup>(14)</sup> **Think thou upon Tobiah.**—This appeal to God is to be understood as an official prophetic prayer. Nehemiah puts God's own cause into God's own hands. The mention of the name of Noadiah, nowhere else referred to, shows the circumstantial nature of the narrative, and is an indirect evidence of its truth.

<sup>(15, 16)</sup> The finishing of the wall is recorded in the simplest manner: first, with a formal specification of

the date and time; then in its effect upon the enemies, and as redounding to the glory of God.

<sup>(15)</sup> **In fifty and two days.**—The twenty-fifth day of Elul answers to about our September 15th; and, dating back, the wall began in the latter part of July, soon after Nehemiah's arrival. If we bear in mind that the wall was only partially overthrown, that the materials for restoration were at hand, and that the utmost skill had been shown in organising the bands of workmen, the time will not appear too short. There is no need to adopt the suggestion of Josephus, that the rebuilding occupied two years and four months.

**They perceived that this work was wrought of our God.**—Not miraculously, but under the Divine sanction and help. By this expression Nehemiah at once triumphs over his foes, and gives the glory where it was due. His own heroic part in the work is utterly forgotten.

<sup>(16)</sup> The enemies heard of it, and saw the result, and were ashamed.

<sup>(17–19)</sup> A supplementary account is here introduced, explaining the intrigues within Jerusalem to which reference has been made.

<sup>(17)</sup> **Many letters.**—There was a large correspondence between Tobiah and the nobles of Judah.

<sup>(18)</sup> **Sworn unto him.**—Shechaniah was of the family of Arah, which had come over with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 5). Tobiah had married his daughter, and Tobiah's son had married a daughter of Meshullam, one of the builders of the wall (chap. iii. 4, 30). This family connection led to a conspiracy by oath to thwart the governor. The names of Tobiah and his son are Hebrew; and it is probable that, though naturalised Ammonites, they were of Hebrew extraction. This renders it easier to understand the facility with which the affinity was contracted.

(19) Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

CHAPTER VII.—(1) Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, (2) that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. (3) And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. (4) Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.

(5) And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,

(6)<sup>a</sup> These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again

1 Or, matters.

2 Heb. broad in spaces.

a Ezra 2. 1, &c.

3 Or, Seratah.

B.C.  
cir. 530.

4 Or, Baní.

5 Or, Jora.

to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; (7) who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel was this;

(8) The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.

(9) The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. (10) The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.

(11) The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen.

(12) The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. (13) The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five.

(14) The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and three score. (15) The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight.

(16) The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. (17) The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two.

(18) The children of Adonikam, six hundred three score and seven. (19) The children of Bigvai, two thousand three score and seven.

(20) The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five. (21) The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.

(22) The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight. (23) The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four.

(24) The children of Hariph, an hundred

(19) Reported his good deeds.—Besides the correspondence thus carried on, these nobles strove to exalt the character of Tobiah to the governor, while they made the enemy acquainted with all that went on. This intelligence enabled him to write the disquieting letters which Nehemiah says he was in the habit of receiving.

## VII.

(1-4) Measures were taken for the security of the city, now made a complete fortress. The comparative thinness of the population taxed the governor's resources, and the result appears at a later stage.

(1) Were appointed.—Placed in charge, probably over all the walls. This was an extraordinary provision, to be explained by the fact that these organised bodies formed a large proportion of the inhabitants. The Levites had usually guarded only the Temple.

(2) Hanani.—Who probably had returned from Susa with his brother.

Hananiah the ruler of the palace.—Commander of the fortress, as in chap. ii. 8. He was in the immediate service of the Persian king, but his chief recommendation was his piety, which distinguished him from too many of the other rulers.

(3) Until the sun be hot.—General directions were given that the gates should not be thrown open so early as sunrise; they were to be opened and barred again while the guard was present; and the inhabitants were to be divided for night-watches, part on the walls and part before their own houses.

(4) Large and great.—Literally, broad on both sides, with large unoccupied spaces.

The houses were not builded.—In sufficient numbers to provide the requisite population for the city of God. The emphasis is on the fact that the people were few.

(5-73) The genealogical reckoning of the people, as the first step towards increasing the population of the metropolis, is determined on, not without express Divine suggestion; the allusion to this inspiration from God, is, as in chap. ii. 12, very emphatic. The original register of Zerubbabel is found and copied. The express language of both Ezra and Nehemiah makes it plain that this is no other than the list of those who came up with Zerubbabel and Joshua after the decree of Cyrus, in B.C. 538. Nehemiah's own census follows, in chap. xi. The exposition, especially as compared with Ezra ii., has been given on that chapter.

and twelve. <sup>(25)</sup> The children of <sup>1</sup>Gibeon, ninety and five. <sup>(26)</sup> The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred four score and eight. <sup>(27)</sup> The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. <sup>(28)</sup> The men of <sup>2</sup>Beth-azmaveth, forty and two. <sup>(29)</sup> The men of <sup>3</sup>Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. <sup>(30)</sup> The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. <sup>(31)</sup> The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two. <sup>(32)</sup> The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty and three. <sup>(33)</sup> The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two. <sup>(34)</sup> The children of the other <sup>\*</sup>Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. <sup>(35)</sup> The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. <sup>(36)</sup> The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. <sup>(37)</sup> The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one. <sup>(38)</sup> The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

<sup>(39)</sup> The priests: the children of <sup>4</sup>Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. <sup>(40)</sup> The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. <sup>(41)</sup> The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. <sup>(42)</sup> The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

<sup>(43)</sup> The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of <sup>4</sup>Hodevah, seventy and four. <sup>(44)</sup> The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight. <sup>(45)</sup> The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight.

<sup>(46)</sup> The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, <sup>(47)</sup> the children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon, <sup>(48)</sup> the children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai, <sup>(49)</sup> the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, <sup>(50)</sup> the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekodah, <sup>(51)</sup> the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah, <sup>(52)</sup> the children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim, <sup>(53)</sup> the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, <sup>(54)</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Gibbar*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Azmaveth*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *Kirjath-arim*.

<sup>a</sup> See ver. 12.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. 24. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *Hodevah*, Ezra 2. 40; or, *Judah*, Ezra 3. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Or, *Aml*.

<sup>c</sup> Ezra 2. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Or, *pedigree*.

<sup>7</sup> Or, *the governor*.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. part.

children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, <sup>(55)</sup> the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah, <sup>(56)</sup> the children of Nezia, the children of Hatipha.

<sup>(57)</sup> The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, <sup>(58)</sup> the children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, <sup>(59)</sup> the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of <sup>5</sup>Amon. <sup>(60)</sup> All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred ninety and two.

<sup>(61)</sup> And these *were* they which went up *also* from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their <sup>6</sup>seed, whether they *were* of Israel. <sup>(62)</sup> The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.

<sup>(63)</sup> And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took *one* of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.

<sup>(64)</sup> These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. <sup>(65)</sup> And <sup>7</sup>the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummin.

<sup>(66)</sup> The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, <sup>(67)</sup> beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women. <sup>(68)</sup> Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five: <sup>(69)</sup> *their* camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.

<sup>(70)</sup> And <sup>8</sup>some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. <sup>(71)</sup> And *some* of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand

and two hundred pound of silver. <sup>(72)</sup> And *that* which the rest of the people gave *was* twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and three-score and seven priests' garments.

<sup>(73)</sup> So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and *some* of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their cities.

CHAPTER VIII.—<sup>(1)</sup> And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. <sup>(2)</sup> And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all <sup>1</sup> that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. <sup>(3)</sup> And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate <sup>2</sup> from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law. <sup>(4)</sup> And Ezra the scribe stood upon a <sup>3</sup> pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah,

B.C.  
cir. 445.

a Ezra 3. 1 & 7. 6.

1 Heb., that understood in hearing.

2 Heb., from the light.

3 Heb., tower of wood.

4 Heb., eyes.

5 Or, the governor.

and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. <sup>(5)</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the <sup>4</sup> sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it all the people stood up: <sup>(6)</sup> and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. <sup>(7)</sup> Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place. <sup>(8)</sup> So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.

<sup>(9)</sup> And Nehemiah, which is <sup>5</sup> the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. <sup>(10)</sup> Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this* day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for

### VIII.

Chap. vii. 73.—chap. viii. 12.—Ezra instructs the people in the law.

Chap. vii. 73.—**And when the seventh month came.**—Here a new subject begins, as in Ezra, whom Nehemiah copies: adopting a sentence, just as Ezra adopted the last words of the Chronicles, and with similar slight changes.

<sup>(1)</sup> **As one man.**—The unanimity rather than the number is emphatic here.

**And they spake unto Ezra.**—Who appears in this book for the first time, having probably been at the court for twelve years.

<sup>(2)</sup> **Both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding.**—Men, women, and children who had reached years of discretion.

**Upon the first day of the seventh month.**—As the seventh was the most important month, in a religious sense, so the first day, the Feast of Trumpets, was the most important new moon (Lev. xxiii. 24).

<sup>(3)</sup> **From the morning.**—*From daylight.* The Book of the Law must have been a comprehensive one. Out of it Ezra and his companions read hour after hour, selecting appropriate passages.

**And the ears of all the people . . . unto the book.**—A general statement; the detail now follows.

<sup>(4)</sup> **Pulpit of wood.**—Literally, a *tower of wood*. Fourteen persons, however, were on what is afterwards called a platform, or stair, by his side.

<sup>(6)</sup> **And Ezra blessed the Lord.**—The book was formally and solemnly opened in the sight of the people. At this request the multitude arose, and, after a doxology offered by Ezra, they all uttered a double Amen, "with lifting up of their hands," in token of their most fervent assent; and then "with faces bowed to the ground," in token of adoration.

**The great God** is Nehemiah's expression, not Ezra's; the sentence used is not reported.

<sup>(8)</sup> **Gave the sense.**—They expounded obscure passages, and in doing so naturally translated into the vernacular Aramaic dialect.

**Caused them to understand the reading.**—This simply explains the former: they expounded as they read.

<sup>(9)</sup> **Mourn not, nor weep.**—The days of high festival were unsuitable for public and, as it were, objective sorrow. The Day of Atonement was coming for that; as also the special day of fasting and covenant, which was already in the plan of Nehemiah and Ezra.

<sup>(10)</sup> **For the joy of the Lord is your strength.** This beautiful sentence is, literally, *delight in Jehovah*

the joy of the LORD is your strength. (11) So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. (12) And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

(13) And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even <sup>1</sup>to understand the words of the law. (14) And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded <sup>2</sup>by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: (15) and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. (16) So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and

<sup>1</sup> Or, that they might instruct in the words of the law.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., by the hand of.

<sup>a</sup> Lev. xx. 9; Deut. 16. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., a restraint.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 8. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., strange children.

<sup>5</sup> Or, scaffold.

in the street of the gate of Ephraim. (17) And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. (18) Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was <sup>3a</sup>a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

CHAPTER IX.—(1) Now in the twenty and fourth day of <sup>b</sup>this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. (2) And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all <sup>4</sup>strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. (3) And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God. (4) Then stood up upon the <sup>5</sup>stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah,

is a strong refuge. It is capable of unlimited application in preaching and devotion.

(11) **So the Levites.**—As before, what Ezra said was repeated to the people in various directions by the Levites. But there was evidently an almost irrepressible emotion.

(12) **They had understood.**—They had caught the meaning of the command to rejoice.

(13–18) The Feast of Tabernacles.

(13) **The chief of the fathers.**—Not the vast multitude now, as the great feast was not yet.

**Even to understand.**—To consider, or give attention to: that is, to learn the full meaning of the almost forgotten festival. The dwelling in booths had fallen into disuse.

(15) **Saying.**—There is no such command in Leviticus; the Septuagint inserts, "And Ezra spake." But it is better to adopt Houbigant's slight emendation of the text, which thus runs: "And when they heard it, they proclaimed," &c. The command, then, is to go out to the Mount of Olives, and gather, not precisely the branches which the ancient law required, but such as circumstances allowed.

(16) **And in their courts.**—Not only on the roofs, but in the internal courtyards.

**Of the house of God.**—The ministers of the Temple made these; and strangers to Jerusalem made them in the streets or open spaces near the gates.

(17) **The children of the captivity.**—The pathos of this designation is evident here.

**Done so.**—Though the feast had been kept (1 Kings viii.; Ezra iii.), it had never thus been kept with universal dwelling in booths.

(18) **According unto the manner.**—For the Azereth, or supplementary feast day, see Lev. xxiii. 36.

## IX.

(1–38) The Fast, the Confession, and the Covenant.

(1) **In the twenty and fourth day.**—After one day of rest, the people assembled with all the tokens of sorrow, even to dust on the head (1 Sam. iv. 12): the external signs and the internal spirit were one.

(2) **The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers.**—The change to "seed" has here a deep propriety. They carefully avoided the many aliens among them throughout this fast.

**And stood and confessed.**—It must be remembered that these verses give the programme of what is afterwards filled up: the very praise for which they "stood" was filled with confession.

(3) **One fourth part.**—Both day and night were divided into four parts. All orders standing in their respective place, the reading occupied the morning and the worship the afternoon. It is the latter which is now made prominent, as the former had been prominent in the preceding chapter.

(4) **Stairs, of the Levites.**—The scaffold of the Levites, without the comma: the steps of ascent to the pulpit of Ezra (chap. viii. 2).

Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

(5) Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said,

Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

(6) Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

(7) Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

(8) and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: (9) and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; (10) and shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. (11) And thou

a Gen. 1. 1.

b Gen. 11. 31; & 12. 1; & 17. 5.

c Gen. 15. 6.

d Gen. 12. 7; & 15. 18; & 17. 7, 8.

e Ex. 3. 7 & 14. 10.

f Ex. 7. 8, 9, 10, 12, & 14, chapters.

g Ex. 14. 22.

h Ex. 15. 10.

i Ex. 18. 21.

j Ex. 19. 20 & 20. 1.

1 Heb., *lones of truth.*

k Ex. 16. 15 & 17. 6; Num. 21. 9.

l Deut. 1. 8.

2 Heb., *which thou hast lift up thine hand to give them.*

m Num. 14. 4.

3 Heb., *a God of pardons.*

n Ex. 32. 4.

didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. (12) Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

(13) Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: (14) and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: (15) and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

(16) But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, (17) and refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. (18) Yea, when they had made

Bani, and Chenani.—Probably, *Binnui and Hanan* (chap. x. 9, 10).

Their God.—When the people are called upon (verse 5), it is "your God"; hence these eight Levites offered a prayer which is not inserted.

(5) Hashabniah.—Not found elsewhere. No reason is given why this company is somewhat different from the former; the LXX. arbitrarily omit all names after Kadmiel. Similarly, they insert "and Ezra said" before verse 6. The psalm was perhaps composed by Ezra, but uttered by the Levites in the name of the congregation.

Stand up and bless . . . Blessed be.—Or, *let them bless.*

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone.—The three phrases mark how the address to the people glides into direct adoration of God.

Thy glorious name.—Literally found again in Ps. lxxii. 19 alone.

(6) Preservest them all.—In this comprehensive sense reproduced only in Heb. i. 3.

The host of heaven.—First the stars, but here the angels (Ps. ciii. 21).

(8) The Hivites are for some reason omitted.

(11) As a stone into the mighty waters.—Compare the Song of Moses, and mark in the Hebrew both the identity and the variation.

(13) Right judgements.—Five of the names given to the law of God in Ps. cxix. are singled out and applied to the Sinaitic legislation first, and then to the subsequent ordinances of Moses generally. But the emphasis here is on the adjectives "right," "true," "good," as belonging rather to the eternal principles of the Decalogue.

(14) Madest known unto them thy holy sabbath.—Every word here, as well as the prominence given to this among the other "commandments," must be noted as illustrating the importance of this ordinance in the covenant of chapter x. and throughout the book.

(15) Bread from heaven.—A change of phrase, which our Lord consecrated for ever (John vi.).

(16) Dealt proudly.—Like the Egyptians themselves (verse 10). It is remarkable that the same word is used as in the Hebrew of Exod. xviii. 11 and Deut. i. 43.

(17) In their rebellion.—Rather, *appointed a captain to return to their bondage in Egypt.* This is the reading of some MSS., followed by the Septuagint,



them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; <sup>(19)</sup> yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the "pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

<sup>(20)</sup> Thou gavest also thy "good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy "manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. <sup>(21)</sup> Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their "clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. <sup>(22)</sup> Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of "Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. <sup>(23)</sup> Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. <sup>(24)</sup> So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them <sup>1</sup>as they would. <sup>(25)</sup> And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, <sup>2</sup>wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and <sup>3</sup>fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

<sup>(26)</sup> Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy "prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought

a Ex. 18. 22: Num. 14. 14; 1 Cor. 10. 1.

b Num. 11. 17.

c Ex. 16. 15 & 17. 6; Josh. 5. 12.

d Deut. 8. 4.

e Num. 21. 21, &c.

1 Heb., according to their will.

2 Or, cisterns.

3 Heb., tree of food.

f 1 Kings 19. 10.

4 Heb., they returned to do evil.

5 Heb., they gave a withdrawing shoulder.

6 Heb., protract over them.

g 2 Kings 17. 18; 2 Chr. 36. 15.

7 Heb., in the hand of thy prophets.

h Ex. 24. 6.

i Heb., weariness.

9 Heb., that hath found us.

great provocations. <sup>(27)</sup> Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. <sup>(28)</sup> But after they had rest, "they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; <sup>(29)</sup> and testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and "withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. <sup>(30)</sup> Yet many years didst thou "forbear them, and testifiedst "against them by thy spirit <sup>7</sup>in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. <sup>(31)</sup> Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

<sup>(32)</sup> Now therefore, our God, the great, the "mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the "trouble seem little before thee, "that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. <sup>(33)</sup> Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: <sup>(34)</sup> neither have

and is in harmony with Num. xiv. 4, though there the appointment is only proposed.

**A God ready to pardon.**—*A God of pardons:* only in Dan. ix. 9 and Ps. cxxx. 4.

<sup>(20)</sup> **Thy good spirit.**—Probably a reference to Num. xi. 17, 25. The epithet given to the Spirit is in Ps. cxliii. 10. But His teaching function occurs here only, and is a remarkable anticipation of the New Testament.

<sup>(22)</sup> **Divide them into corners.**—Strict usage of the term would require: *Thou didst divide unto them [these nations] in their boundaries.*

**And the land.**—There is a double reference to

Sihon, king of Heshbon. This and Bashan were taken as the earnest of the possession of Canaan.

<sup>(27)</sup> **Their enemies who vexed them.**—The phraseology in this and the following verse shows that the Book of Judges is carefully remembered in the prayer.

<sup>(32)</sup> Here begins the prayer proper.

**Kings of Assyria.**—"The rod of God's anger" (Isa. x. 5). Pul, Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-haddon, are traced in the sacred record as successive scourges.

<sup>(34)</sup> **Our kings.**—Note that the prophets are omitted in this enumeration.

our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. <sup>(35)</sup> For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. <sup>(36)</sup> Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: <sup>(37)</sup> and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. <sup>(38)</sup> And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, <sup>1</sup> seal unto it.

CHAPTER X.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now <sup>2</sup> those that sealed were, Nehemiah, <sup>3</sup> the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah, <sup>(2)</sup> Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, <sup>(3)</sup> Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, <sup>(4)</sup> Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, <sup>(5)</sup> Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, <sup>(6)</sup> Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, <sup>(7)</sup> Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, <sup>(8)</sup> Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these were the

<sup>1</sup> Heb., are at the sealing, or, sealed.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., at the sealings.

<sup>3</sup> Or, the governor.

<sup>4</sup> Ezra 2. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., by the hand of.

priests. <sup>(9)</sup> And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; <sup>(10)</sup> and their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, <sup>(11)</sup> Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, <sup>(12)</sup> Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, <sup>(13)</sup> Hodijah, Bani, Beninu. <sup>(14)</sup> The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zaththu, Bani, <sup>(15)</sup> Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, <sup>(16)</sup> Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, <sup>(17)</sup> Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, <sup>(18)</sup> Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, <sup>(19)</sup> Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, <sup>(20)</sup> Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, <sup>(21)</sup> Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua, <sup>(22)</sup> Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, <sup>(23)</sup> Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, <sup>(24)</sup> Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek, <sup>(25)</sup> Rehun, Hashabnah, Maseiah, <sup>(26)</sup> and Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, <sup>(27)</sup> Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

<sup>(28)</sup> And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; <sup>(29)</sup> they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given <sup>4</sup> by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his

<sup>(37)</sup> Yieldeth much increase.—In money and kind a very large amount was sent by Syria to the Persian treasury.

Over our bodies, and over our cattle.—For military service; but the priests do not omit themselves.

In great distress.—Not so much under the Persian yoke as in the remembrance of God's judgments. The pathetic comparison between the Divine purpose in giving the land originally and their present bondage in it extends almost to every word.

<sup>(38)</sup> Because of all this.—On the ground of this confession, and to prove our sincerity.

Seal unto it.—On the sealed [document]. Each party impressed his seal on moist clay, which was then hardened. Sometimes these seals were attached to the document by separate strings. In chap. xi., "those who sealed" is, literally, those on the sealed [documents], in the plural.

## X.

(1—28) The sealers of the covenant.

(1) Zidkijah.—Probably, Zadok the scribe (chap. xiii. 13), Nehemiah's secretary. (Comp. Ezra iv. 8.)

(2) Seraiah.—The family name of the high-priestly house to which Ezra and Eliashib belonged, one of whom—probably Ezra—affixed its seal.

(8) These were the priests.—That is, the names of the priestly families. (Comp. chap. xii. 1—6.)

(9) And the Levites.—Five of these family names are traceable (Ezra ii. 40, viii. 19; Neh. vii. 43).

(14) The chief of the people.—Some of the names are personal, some belong to families, some represent places, and some are independent. Comparing the list with Ezra ii., we find that years had added to the number of the houses.

(28—39) The points of the covenant.

(28) All they that had separated themselves.—If these meant proselytes from heathenism, this verse would be a perfect description of the constituents of the people. But we have no record as yet of a recognised body of such proselytes; and the word "separated" is the same as we find, with another meaning, in chap. ix. 2. Moreover, the following verses show that the covenant bears specially in mind the danger to God's law arising out of commerce with the heathen.

Having understanding.—Children who could intelligently take the oath were included.

(29) They clave to their brethren.—It was a union of the people as such, and sprang from a deep national conviction.

Entered into a curse, and into an oath.—The oath assumed the obligation; the curse imprecated the penalty of violation. (Comp. Deut. xxix. 12.)

statutes; <sup>(30)</sup> and that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: <sup>(31)</sup> and if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

<sup>(32)</sup> Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; <sup>(33)</sup> for the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

<sup>(34)</sup> And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law: <sup>(35)</sup> and to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house

<sup>a</sup> Ex. 34. 16; Deut. 7. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Ex. 20. 10; Lev. 23. 3; Deut. 5. 12; ch. 13. 15, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Lev. 25. 4; Deut. 15. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Heb., every hand.

<sup>d</sup> See Num. 28 & 29; Ex. 23. 10; Lev. 19. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Ex. 13. 2; Lev. 23. 17; Num. 15. 19 & 18. 12, &c.

<sup>f</sup> Num. 18. 26.

of the Lord: <sup>(36)</sup> also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: <sup>(37)</sup> and *that* we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. <sup>(38)</sup> And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. <sup>(39)</sup> For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

CHAPTER XI.—<sup>(1)</sup> And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest

<sup>(31)</sup> Or on the holy day.—On the great festivals, equally with the Sabbath days of rest.

Leave the seventh year.—The Sabbatical year naturally follows; in it the ground should be left untilled.

The exaction of every debt.—The "Lord's release" of the seventh year (Deut. xv. 2).

<sup>(32)</sup> Also we made ordinances for us.—The covenant proceeds now to certain new regulations and resumption of neglected duties.

To charge ourselves.—Origin of that annual rate for the general service of the Temple which afterwards was raised to a half shekel (Matt. xvii. 24). The more ancient half shekel of the law was only an occasional tax (Exod. xxx. 13).

<sup>(34)</sup> As it is written in the law.—Lev. vi. 12 prescribes that the fire on the altar should be kept burning by wood. But here we have the origin of the "feast of the wood-offering"—a special day, subsequently substituted for the "times appointed year by year." The lot determined the order in which the various classes should supply the wood.

<sup>(35)</sup> And to bring.—Following "we made ordinances" (verse 32). The various firstfruits are specified according to the Mosaic law, which made this expression of natural piety an obligation; and the minuteness of the specification implies that neglect had crept in.

<sup>(36)</sup> The firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle.—Similarly collocated in Num. xvi. 15, 16; but there the cattle are defined as "unclean beasts," thus distinguished from "the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks." The latter were to be brought to "the

priests that minister" for sacrifice; the former were, with the sons, to be redeemed by money, according to the priests' valuation.

<sup>(37)</sup> To the chambers of the house of our God.—To the store-chambers, minutely described as they were of old in 1 Kings vi., Hezekiah appears to have added formerly a treasure-house for the tithes, referred to in the next verse (2 Chron. xxxi. 11).

In all the cities of our tillage.—Agricultural towns, so called here with reference to the fruits of the earth, which were deposited first in certain selected places.

<sup>(38)</sup> The son of Aaron.—Consult Num. xviii. 22—26, which gives the reason for the distinction, here so marked, between the priest, the son of Aaron, and the Levites, the children of Levi. A priest was present when the tithes were gathered in the Levitical cities, to secure their own "tithe of the tithe," which then the Levites carried to Jerusalem.

<sup>(39)</sup> Shall bring.—The priests themselves were exempted from the care of gathering the tithes.

We will not forsake the house of our God.—Both the pledge and the violation of it in the sequel are explained by chap. xiii. 11—14.

## XI.

(1, 2) The history reverts to chap. vii. 5; lots are cast for the transfer of one-tenth of the people to the capital.

(1) And the rulers.—The narrative joins on to chap. vii. 4. The festival month had prevented the immediate carrying out of the governor's purpose.

of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. <sup>(2)</sup> And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

<sup>(3)</sup> Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants. <sup>(4)</sup> And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin.

Of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez; <sup>(5)</sup> and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. <sup>(6)</sup> All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred three score and eight valiant men.

<sup>(7)</sup> And these are the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiiah, the son of Kolaiiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. <sup>(8)</sup> And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. <sup>(9)</sup> And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah

the son of Senuah was second over the city.

<sup>(10)</sup> Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. <sup>(11)</sup> Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God. <sup>(12)</sup> And their brethren that did the work of the house were eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, <sup>(13)</sup> and his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, <sup>(14)</sup> and their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer was Zabdiel, <sup>1</sup> the son of one of the great men.

<sup>(15)</sup> Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; <sup>(16)</sup> and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, <sup>2</sup> had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. <sup>(17)</sup> And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. <sup>(18)</sup> All the Levites in the holy city were two hun-

<sup>1</sup> Or, the son of Haggadolim.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. were over.

**The rest of the people.**—The rulers being already in the capital, Nehemiah ordered that one man in ten should be chosen by lot to transfer his family.

**Jerusalem the holy city.**—Remembering the "separation" that had taken place (chap. ix.), and the recent covenant (chap. x.), we see the solemnity of this epithet, now first used, and repeated in verse 18. "Then shall Jerusalem be holy, and no strangers shall pass through her any more" (Joel iii. 17). But the New Testament brings another comment on the phrase.

<sup>(2)</sup> **The people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves.**—We are not told that any compensation was made to them; and these words seem to indicate that the chosen ones freely submitted, their patriotism being applauded by all.—Jerusalem was the post of danger, and in any case it was a hardship to leave their country possessions (verse 3).

<sup>(3)</sup> **Of the province.**—This betrays the hand of Nehemiah, who was still a Persian official as well as a governor of Judah; and it shows that here we have a general heading for the rest of the chapter. Both city and country are included in the rest of the verse.

**Israel.**—The two Israelitish tribes were represented, but, like Judah before, this has become a generic name.

<sup>(4-19)</sup> The heads in Jerusalem: as compared with 1 Chron. ix., by no means complete. Judah and Benjamin are represented, with priests and Levites and porters.

<sup>(4)</sup> **Perez.**—In 1 Chron. ix. the descendants of Perez (or Phares) are not given; but the descendants of Zerah, present there, are absent here. This may be a question of the right reading of the text.

<sup>(5)</sup> **The son of Shiloni.**—Better, *the Shilonite*, or *descendants of Shelah*, youngest son of Judah.

<sup>(7)</sup> The Benjamites were represented by two families, and gave the city two prefects (verse 9).

<sup>(10)</sup> This should be read *Jedaiah, Joiarib, Jachin*, three priestly families (1 Chron. ix. 10).

<sup>(11)</sup> **Seraiah.**—The high-priestly family name. Eliashib was the present occupant.

<sup>(14)</sup> **Of valour.**—Able for the service of God's house: *men of ability*, therefore.

**The son of one of the great men.**—Rather, *son of Haggadolim*.

<sup>(16)</sup> **Outward business.**—This is a remarkable specification of the functions of the Levites, parallel with the "valour" of the priests just before. The preceding chapter explains the "outward business."

dred fourscore and four. <sup>(19)</sup> Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept <sup>1</sup>the gates, were an hundred seventy and two.

<sup>(20)</sup> And the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. <sup>(21)</sup> But the Nethinims dwelt in <sup>2</sup>Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa were over the Nethinims.

<sup>(22)</sup> The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. <sup>(23)</sup> For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that <sup>3</sup>a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.

<sup>(24)</sup> And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

<sup>(25)</sup> And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and in the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and in the villages thereof, <sup>(26)</sup> and at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet, <sup>(27)</sup> and at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and in the villages thereof, <sup>(28)</sup> and at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Heb., at the gates.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. 3. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Or, The tower.

<sup>4</sup> Or, a sure ordinance.

<sup>5</sup> Or, of Geba.

<sup>6</sup> Or, to Michmash.

<sup>7</sup> Ezra 2. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Or, Melicu, ver. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Or, Shebaniah, ver. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Or, Harim, ver. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Or, Meraioth, ver. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Or, Ginnethon, ver. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Or, Miniamin, ver. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Or, Moadiah, ver. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Or, Sallai, ver. 20.

<sup>16</sup> That is, the portion of thanksgiving.

villages thereof, <sup>(29)</sup> and at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, <sup>(30)</sup> Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and in the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom.

<sup>(31)</sup> The children also of Benjamin <sup>4</sup>from Geba dwelt <sup>5</sup>at Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and in their villages, <sup>(32)</sup> and at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, <sup>(33)</sup> Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, <sup>(34)</sup> Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, <sup>(35)</sup> Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.

<sup>(36)</sup> And of the Levites were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin.

CHAPTER XII.—<sup>(1)</sup> Now these are the <sup>6</sup>priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>(2)</sup> Amariah, <sup>6</sup>Malluch, Hattush, <sup>(3)</sup> <sup>7</sup>Shechaniah, <sup>8</sup>Rehum, <sup>9</sup>Meremoth, <sup>(4)</sup> Iddo, <sup>10</sup>Ginnetho, Abijah, <sup>(5)</sup> <sup>11</sup>Miamin, <sup>12</sup>Maadiah, Bilgah, <sup>(6)</sup> Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>(7)</sup> <sup>13</sup>Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua.

<sup>(8)</sup> Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Bin-nui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over <sup>14</sup>the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. <sup>(9)</sup> Also

<sup>(19)</sup> An hundred seventy and two.—In 1 Chron. ix. the number is 212. The difference between the two accounts may partly be explained by the fact that in the Chronicles the list is confined to those who came with Zerubbabel, while here addition is made of those who came with Ezra. But see the commentary on 1 Chron. ix.

<sup>(20—36)</sup> The heads in the country.

<sup>(21)</sup> Ophel.—The Nethinims on the promontory of Ophel were either within or without the city, according as the one wall or the other was taken. Here they are regarded as outside.

<sup>(22)</sup> The overseer.—*Pakid, or visitor.*

Of the sons of Asaph.—It requires no disturbance of the original to read the whole of Uzzi's pedigree: "the son of Micha, of the sons of Asaph, the singers in the service of the house of God." Thus with the prayer of verse 17 there is a parallel.

<sup>(23)</sup> The king's commandment.—It seems that Artaxerxes had gone beyond the exemption of Ezra vii. 24, and given them a daily allowance, which it was the business of Uzzi to see to.

<sup>(24)</sup> Of the children of Zerah.—This makes the absence of Zerah in the beginning of the chapter very remarkable, and suggests some accidental omission.

At the king's hand.—Pethahiah was the king's agent in all the country matters of the "province."

<sup>(25)</sup> The children of Judah are now described very generally with respect to their distribution.

Kirjath-arba.—Hebron no longer, the ancient name being now recovered.

In the villages thereof.—Literally, the daughters thereof; being a different word from the "villages" at the beginning.

<sup>(30)</sup> From Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom.—The men of Judah spread from the extreme south to the extreme north of Judah, an extent of some fifty miles.

<sup>(31)</sup> From Geba.—This verse should read: the children also of Benjamin dwell from Geba to Michmash.

<sup>(36)</sup> And of the Levites.—The fewness of the Levites in the country warranted their summary notice in this way.

## XII.

(1—9) The priests and Levites of the First Return.

(1) Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra.—The first is the family name, represented by Jeshua. Of the two others we know nothing more than this record gives.

(6) And Joiarib.—The "and" begins the list of those who did not seal the covenant. See a like "and" in verse 19.

(7) These were the chief.—Genealogically, but not according to the courses, which are in none of the lists complete.

Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches.

(10) And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, (11) and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.

(12) And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; (13) of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; (14) of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; (15) of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; (16) of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; (17) of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; (18) of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; (19) and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; (20) of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; (21) of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.

(22) The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian. (23) The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the "chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. (24) And the chief of the Levites; Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward.

a 1 Chr. 9. 14, &c.

1 Or, *transmice, or, assemblies.*

(25) Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. (26) These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

(27) And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. (28) And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; (29) also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. (30) And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

(31) Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate: (32) and after them went Hoshai, and half of the princes of Judah, (33) and Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, (34) Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, (35) and certain of the priests' sons with

(10, 11) Pedigree of certain high priests, with supplement from a later hand. The six generations stretch over 200 years—from B.C. 536 to B.C. 332.

(11) **Jonathan.**—Should be Johanan (verse 22); and "Jaddua" is most probably the high priest who confronted Alexander the Great.

(12–26) List of representatives of Zerubbabel's priests in the days of Joiakim; to which is added an account of the Levites in his day. Between these there is an interpolation (verses 22, 23).

(14) **Melicu** is the "Malluch" of verse 2, and **Hat-tush** is omitted. Other anomalies of this kind may be noticed, of which no account can now be given.

(17) **Of Miniamin.**—Some name has dropped out.

(22, 23) **The Levites.**—Here is an evident interpolation. The writer says that the records of the heads of courses was continued down to Jaddua and Darius Codomannus.

(24) **And the chief.**—The account resumes with the Levites, and gives a list of the extant officers of the Temple, many names being the same as in earlier times.

(25) **At the thresholds.**—*At the treasures, or store-chambers* attached to the several gates of the Temple.

(27–43) The dedication of the wall. Henceforth Nehemiah speaks in his own person.

(27) **They sought the Levites.**—The dedication was to be processional and musical, as well as sacrificial: after the pattern of Solomon's dedication of the Temple.

(29) **The singers.**—As the Nethinim were settled in Ophel, so the class of Levitical singers were chiefly to be found in villages to the north of the city.

(30) **Purified themselves.**—Before consecration to God there must be purification from defilement. It is made emphatic that both priests and Levites purified themselves, that is, by offerings and ablutions (comp. 2 Chron. xxix. 15; Ezra vi. 20): the gates and the wall by being sprinkled.

(31) **The princes.**—The chiefs were assembled somewhere on the south-west wall, and then divided into two companies.

(32) **After them.**—These verses show that the clerical and the lay elements were mingled.

(33) **Ezra.**—Probably the same as the Azariah preceding.

(34) **Judah and Benjamin.**—A singular collocation: the laity of Judah and Benjamin, with priests before and after.

trumpets; *namely*, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: <sup>(36)</sup> and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. <sup>(37)</sup> And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward.

<sup>(38)</sup> And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall; <sup>(39)</sup> and from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate.

<sup>(40)</sup> So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: <sup>(41)</sup> and the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; <sup>(42)</sup> and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And

<sup>1</sup> Heb., made their voice to be heard.

<sup>2</sup> That is, appointed by the law.

<sup>3</sup> Heb., for the joy of Judah.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., that stood.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Chron. 25 & 26.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. 25, 1, &c.

<sup>5</sup> That is, set apart.

<sup>c</sup> Num. 18, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Heb., there was read.

<sup>d</sup> Num. 22, 5; Deut. 23, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Heb., ears.

the singers <sup>1</sup>sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. <sup>(43)</sup> Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

<sup>(44)</sup> And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions <sup>2</sup>of the law for the priests and Levites: <sup>3</sup>for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites <sup>4</sup>that waited. <sup>(45)</sup> And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, <sup>5</sup>according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. <sup>(46)</sup> For in the days of David <sup>6</sup>and Asaph of old *there were* chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. <sup>(47)</sup> And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they <sup>7</sup>sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; <sup>8</sup>and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.

CHAPTER XIII.—<sup>(1)</sup> On that day <sup>6</sup>they read in the <sup>7</sup>book of Moses in the <sup>7</sup>audience of the people; and therein

<sup>(36)</sup> With the musical instruments of David the man of God.—No part of the service deviated from sacred precedents (comp. verse 27).

Ezra the scribe before them.—Between the singers and the princes came he who was the greatest in dignity, though the second in office.

<sup>(38)</sup> The other company.—Comparing the order with chap. iii., the reader will have a clear view of the second company. They had the longer route, proceeding to the left, rounding the north "broad wall," passing the sheep-gate, and so meeting the priestly company near the prison-gate. The space where they met had the Temple straight in front, the prison-gate on the right, and the water-gate on the left.

<sup>(39)</sup> The gate of Ephraim.—Not mentioned in the process of repairing, as having remained comparatively intact with part of the "broad wall."

<sup>(40)</sup> In the house of God.—They stood first outside, but afterwards entered to present their offerings. But the main interest of the day was the professional worship under the open heavens.

<sup>(41)</sup> And the priests.—Like the names of the priests and Levites in verse 35, these are personal; not to be found in the former lists.

<sup>(43)</sup> Rejoiced.—This verse is full of joy; but before the rejoicing comes the abundant offering of sacrifices.

<sup>(44—47)</sup> Economical arrangements.

<sup>(44)</sup> For Judah rejoiced.—Not only was the Temple service restored to something like the completeness of the Davidical period, the people also everywhere took pleasure in the ministrations of the Temple, and provided amply for them. Hence the need of men to take charge of the treasures of the firstfruits and tithes.

<sup>(45)</sup> Kept the ward.—This should be read differently. The priests and Levites *kept the ward of their God, and the ward of purification, and the singers and porters, &c.* To "keep the ward" is to observe the regular times and seasons of sacrifice and thanksgiving.

<sup>(46)</sup> Of old.—Always there is a reverence shown for the old precedents.

<sup>(47)</sup> The Levites.—Between the people and the priests came the Levites, who received the tithe and gave the priests their "tithe of the tithe" (Num. xviii. 26).

### XIII.

<sup>(1—3)</sup> Reform as to mixed marriages.

<sup>(1)</sup> On that day.—Probably the season of the Feast of Tabernacles, as before. But portions were selected to be read.

was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; <sup>(2)</sup> because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>(3)</sup> Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

<sup>(4)</sup> And before this, Eliashib the priest, <sup>1</sup>having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah <sup>(5)</sup> and he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, <sup>2</sup>which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. <sup>(6)</sup> But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and <sup>3</sup>after certain days <sup>4</sup>obtained I leave

a Num. 22 5; Josh. 24. 9.

1 Heb., being set over.

2 Heb., the commandment of the Levites.

3 Heb., at the end of days.

4 Or, I earnestly requested.

5 Heb., standing.

6 Or, storehouses.

7 Heb., at their hand.

of the king: <sup>(7)</sup> and I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. <sup>(8)</sup> And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. <sup>(9)</sup> Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

<sup>(10)</sup> And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. <sup>(11)</sup> Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. <sup>(12)</sup> Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the <sup>6</sup>treasuries. <sup>(13)</sup> And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and <sup>7</sup>next to them *was* Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of

**They read in the book of Moses.**—"It was read" in the Pentateuch, and specially Deut. xxiii. This is introduced for the sake of the action taken, and the history is given in brief, with a striking and characteristic parenthesis of Nehemiah's own concerning the curse turned into a blessing.

**Therein was found written.**—What to the people generally was not known.

**For ever.**—No Ammonite or Ammonite family could have legal standing in the congregation, "even to their tenth generation;" and this interdict was to last "for ever." It virtually though not actually amounted to absolute exclusion.

**(3) The mixed multitude.**—For the "mixed multitude," or *Ereb*, which plays so prominent a part in Jewish history, see on Exod. xii. 38. The process here was that of shutting out heathens who were in the habit of mingling with the people in the services. In chap. ix. it was, as we saw, the people's separation from the practices and spirit of the heathen.

(4-9) The scandal of the high priest.

**(4) Eliashib the priest, having the oversight.**—Probably the high priest of chap. iii. 1, whose office alone would not have given him control over "the chamber:" that is, the series of chambers running round three walls of the Temple. He "was allied unto Tobiah," but in what way is not stated.

**Before this.**—That is, before the return of Nehemiah; indeed, there is a suspicious absence of Eliashib's name throughout the high religious festivities of the preceding chapters.

**(5) A great chamber.**—The sequel shows that many small chambers had been thrown into one.

**(6) Was not I at Jerusalem.**—Parenthetical explanation of this disorderly state of things.

**King of Babylon.**—Probably it was at Babylon that Nehemiah found the court, and therefore he does not say "King of Persia."

**After certain days.**—The time is left indefinite. But the "two and thirtieth year" shows that he had been in Jerusalem twelve years before his return to the king.

**(8) It grieved me sore.**—The second time we read of Nehemiah's deep emotion: first, because of the utter dissoluteness of which this was a token; and secondly, because it was a priestly desecration.

**(9) Cleansed.**—There was a formal purification. It is a note of minute accuracy that there is no mention of tithes being brought back as yet; the next verses show why.

(10-13) The provision for the Levites.

**(10) Fled every one to his field.**—They who performed the work of the Temple were obliged to seek their sustenance by cultivating the fields apportioned to them in the Levitical cities (Num. xxxv. 2).

**(11) Contended I with the rulers.**—See their express covenant in chap. x. 39. The rich men had taken advantage of Nehemiah's absence to indulge their covetousness.

**And I gathered them together.**—The Levites were summoned back from their fields.

**(13) And I made.**—The reform was made effectual by organisation. Eliashib had failed in his duty (verse 4); and the appointment of treasurers (chap. xii. 44) is now confirmed. One of the treasurers was a layman named Hanan (chap. x. 22); but they were all faithful men, and are mentioned in connection with the building of the wall. The majority being priests and Levites, they distributed "to their brethren." Zadok was pro-



Mattaniah : for they were counted faithful, and <sup>1</sup>their office *was* to distribute unto their brethren.

(14) *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my <sup>2</sup>good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the <sup>3</sup>offices thereof.*

(15) *In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day : and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. (16) There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. (17) Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? (18) Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.*

(19) *And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged*

<sup>1</sup> Heb., it was upon them.

a ver. 22

<sup>2</sup> Heb., kindnesses.

<sup>3</sup> Or, observations.

<sup>4</sup> Heb., before the wall?

<sup>5</sup> Or, multitude.

<sup>6</sup> Heb., had made to dwell with them.

B.C.  
cir. 424.

<sup>7</sup> Heb., they discerned not to speak.

<sup>8</sup> Heb., of people and people.

<sup>9</sup> Or, reviled them.

that they should not be opened till after the sabbath : and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. (20) So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. (21) Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye <sup>4</sup>about the wall? if ye do *so* again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. (22) And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day.

Remember me, O my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the <sup>5</sup>greatness of thy mercy.

(23) In those days also saw I Jews *that* <sup>6</sup>had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab : (24) and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and <sup>7</sup>could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language <sup>8</sup>of each people. (25) And I contended with them, and <sup>9</sup>curled them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters

bably the Zidkijah of chap. x. 1, and the secretary of Nehemiah.

(14) **Remember me.**—Once more the faithful servant of God begs a merciful remembrance of what he had done for the honour of God in the "observances" of His Temple.

(15–22) Vindication of the Sabbath.

(15) **Saw I in Judah.**—In the country Nehemiah marked the most determined profanation of the Sabbath; and this extended to Jerusalem, into which all kinds of burdens were on that day, as on others, carried.

(16) **Men of Tyre.**—They brought timber for the building of the Temple, and received food in payment (Ezra iii. 7). Now they seem to have established themselves as a colony, and supplied fish, especially to the inhabitants. But their offence was the doing this "on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem." The verse closes emphatically.

(17) **That ye do.**—The nobles, in the absence of Nehemiah, had been responsible, and the sin is charged upon them. The appeal supposes their familiarity with the express prediction of Jeremiah and its literal fulfilment (Jer. xvii. 27).

(19) **Some of my servants.**—These are several times mentioned as employed in public duty. Here they are used provisionally, to keep out traffickers until the formal appointment of the Levitical guard (verse 22), after which they would be relieved.

(20) **Once or twice.**—For a time they lodged outside; the unseemliness of this, and the evidence it gave that they were only waiting to evade the law, made Nehemiah testify in word, and threaten forcible action. This effectually removed the evil.

(22) **Cleanse themselves.**—As for a sacred duty, not without reference to their past neglect, which required to be forgiven. This was a high tribute to the Sabbath ordinance, and as such in harmony with all the details of this episode.

**Remember me.**—In this prayer also Nehemiah commits his fidelity to the merciful estimate of God. But something in connection with the Sabbath, or with his retrospect of his own conduct, gives the passing prayer a peculiar pathos of humility.

(23–29) The mixed marriages again.

(23) **Saw I Jews.**—The punishment shows that these were exceptional cases; but the transgression was of the most flagrant kind (see verse 1).

(24) **Half in the speech of Ashdod.**—A mixture of Philistine and Aramaic.

(25) **Curled them.**—Nehemiah simply echoed the covenant sanction on this very point (chap. x. 29, 30).

**Certain of them.**—Some were selected for special punishment and humiliation. Ezra, on a like occasion, humbled himself by plucking off the hair of his own head (Ezra ix. 3). Then they were obliged to repeat the oath of the covenant.

unto your sons, or for yourselves. (26) Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: "nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin." (27) Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? (28) And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was

a 1 Kings 11. 1, &c.

1 Heb. for the do-  
mings.

son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. (29) Remember them, O my God, <sup>1</sup>because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. (30) Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; (31) and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me, O my God, for good.

(26) Did not Solomon . . .—Here it is implied that the language of Scripture concerning Solomon was familiar both to Nehemiah and to these transgressors. It is a remarkable instance of the faithful application of their own chronicles.

(28) I chased him from me.—Eliashib himself was allied by marriage to Tobiah, and one of his grandsons was now brought into prominence as married to Sanballat. Him Nehemiah drove into exile.

(29) Remember them.—This priestly violation of law is committed to God alone for punishment.

And of the Levites.—God chose the tribe of Levi for Himself, specially the house of Aaron, and every priest was to be "holy to the Lord" (Lev. xxi. 6, 8). This was "the covenant of the priesthood;" though there may be an undertone of reference to the great covenant in chap. x.

(30, 31) Conclusion.

(30) This is a brief recapitulation of the special work of Nehemiah after his return.

Thus cleansed I them.—After the acts of discipline described above, there was doubtless some formal service of expiation.

(31) Remember me, O my God, for good.—With these words Nehemiah leaves the scene, committing himself and his discharge of duty to the Righteous Judge. His conscientious fidelity had brought him into collision not only with external enemies but with many of his own brethren. His rigorous reformation has been assailed by many moralists and commentators in every age. But in these words he commits all to God, as it were by anticipation.—It may be added that with these words end the annals of Old Testament history.

# **THE BOOK OF ESTHER.**