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NOTES ON EZRA

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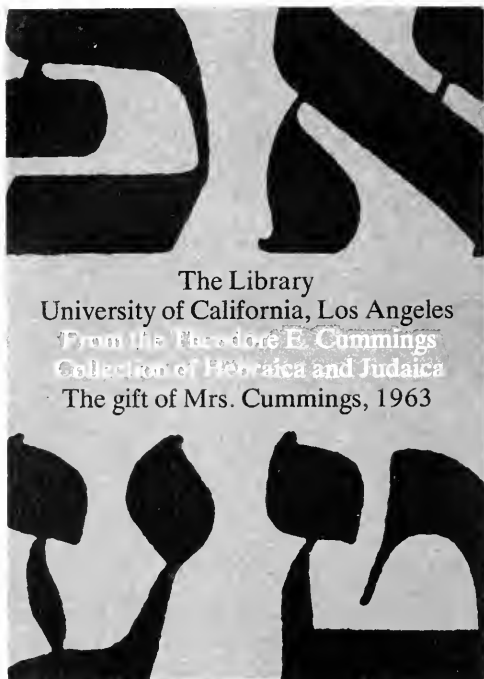
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PHILIPS' SERIES OF SCRIPTURE MANUALS.

THE BOOK OF EZRA:

WITH NOTES.

BY

J. DAVIES,

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,

*Author of "Manuals" of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, I. Samuel,
II. Samuel, I. Kings, Matthew, Mark, Luke, St. John, Church
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NOTES ON EZRA.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all dates in these pages must be regarded as B.C.

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The title of this Book is the name of its author, *Ezra*, (an epitome of whose life will be found at the end of these "Notes").

The date of the composition of the work cannot be exactly assigned, but is generally allowed to have been posterior to the retirement of Ezra from public duty, in 445.

The period comprised within *Ezra* extends from 536 to 456, about 80 years.

The Book may be divided into two parts :—

1. Chaps. i.-vi., inclusive,—narrating the return, in consequence of an edict of Cyrus, of the First Caravan of Jews; and the rebuilding of the Temple. This portion of the work relates to events which occurred previously to Ezra's going up to Jerusalem, and is supposed to have been derived from authentic annals which he found there on his arrival.

It has been supposed by many that these first six chapters were not written by Ezra, because the employment of the 1st. person plural, "we," in c. v. 4, implies that the narrator was present at the incident there recorded. But *the word relates to Tatnai and his companions, not to the Jews!* The occurrence of "we" in this instance and others in es. i.-vi. is owing to Ezra's having in these cases copied *verbatim* from the documents which he employed in his compilation.

2. Chaps. vii.-x., inclusive,—narrating the personal history of Ezra's conveyance to Jerusalem of the Second Caravan of Jews, in consequence of a decree from

Artaxerxes,—and of his reforms and regulations, after his arrival.

From c. vii. 27, to c. ix. 15, the writer speaks in the 1st. person singular, as having been an eye-witness of, and actor in, the incidents which he relates.

The book is arranged chronologically, but its parts are not intimately connected, it being a collection of detached records of remarkable events connected with the return from the Captivity, and not a complete history of the author's times.

The language of *Ezra* is Hebrew, with the exception of c. iv. 8 to vi. 18, inclusive; and vii. 22-26, which portions are in that elder form of Aramaic which is termed *Chaldee*.

SKETCH OF EVENTS LEADING TO, AND CONNECTED WITH, THE CAPTIVITIES.—Jehovah had declared again and again, from the days of Moses downwards, that, should His chosen people disobey him, and turn to serve other gods, He would bring desolation upon their land, and cause them to be carried away captive.

This punishment came upon Israel before Judah, owing to the fact that, while in the latter several pious kings, for whose sake God restrained His avenging hand, intervened between the idolatrous monarchs, the throne of the former was occupied by an unbroken succession of wicked rulers.

The Assyrian Captivity of Israel commenced in 739, when Tiglath-Pileser carried off the tribes E. of Jordan, and a large proportion of the population in the N. of Palestine W. of Jordan, planting them in Upper Mesopotamia.

In 721, Samaria was taken by Sennacherib, and the rest of the population of the kingdom of Israel were carried away, being planted partly in Upper Mesopotamia, and partly in "the cities of the Medes."

In 674, Esarhaddon sent colonists from Babylon, &c., into Israel. (Of these settlers we shall have more to say hereafter).

(Of the exiles from the kingdom of Israel, a comparatively small number returned with their brethren of Judah. This is to be accounted for by the facts that, to the banished people of Israel, Jerusalem had never been "the centre of proud aspirations," and that they, having been so much longer in exile than the people of Judah, "had become

thoroughly naturalized in their Eastern settlements." The majority, who did not return, having become engaged in trade and banking, were, in consequence of their increased numbers and the exigencies of business, gradually spread in all directions, W. and E., so that, in St. Paul's time, Jews, their descendants, abounded in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Thus, instead of the Ten Tribes being lost, as is so frequently stated, the Hebrews scattered over the world belong not solely to Judah and Benjamim, but are the representatives of *all* the tribes).

Jehovah's judgments upon Judah, long delayed, were at last inflicted, being hastened more particularly by the atrocities of the reign of Manasseh, who, in prosecution of that feud between the Crown and the Priesthood which had originated under Joash, made a strong systematic effort to utterly root out the true religion, and, in developing this design, slew large numbers of the priests.

At the same time, various natural causes were, under Jehovah's overruling hand, instrumental in effecting the ruin of Judah,—*viz.*, the just-mentioned feud between king and hierarchy; the fall of Israel; the great weakening of Judah's military strength, by Pekah; the decline of patriotism and valor, owing to Manasseh's arbitrary rule, to luxury, corruption, and oppression of the poor and lowly, on the part of priests, false prophets, and princes, and to civil discord; and the unwise policy of the monarchs, who alternately defied and bought off their powerful tyrant, instead of quietly submitting until a really fair chance of regaining independence should present itself.

The Babylonian Captivity of Judah resolves itself into 4 epochs:—

The first deportation occurred in 606, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim tributary, and carried away to Babylon many of the Temple vessels, and a number of Hebrew princes and nobles, amongst whom were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

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

The second deportation occurred in 598, when Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin having, with his mother, princes, servants, and officers, surrendered, was, with the greater portion of the re-

maining treasures of the Temple, and 18,000 nobles, rich men, soldiers, and artizans, carried away to Babylon, amongst the captives being Ezekiel and Mordecai.

The third deportation occurred in 588, when Jerusalem was, after a long siege, taken, and, with the Temple, destroyed, by Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's generalissimo.

Zedekiah, the king, was carried to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, whence, after seeing his sons slain before him, and having his eyes put out, he was conveyed captive to Babylon, where he died. Besides him, all but the poorest of the land were also led away into exile, the remaining vessels of the Temple also being transported.

The remnant left in Judah, amongst whom was Jeremiah, were placed by Nebuchadnezzar under the satrapship of Gedaliah, their quarters being at Mizpah. Gedaliah was treacherously slain by Ishmael, of the seed-royal of Judah, who then attempted to carry away the people into the country of the Ammonites. He was, however, defeated in his design, Johanan and other "captains" pursuing him, and recovering the Jewish remnant, who were then, by their leaders, against Jeremiah's Divinely-ordered opinion, induced to flee into Egypt, lest Nebuchadnezzar should hold them responsible for the murder of Gedaliah and the Chaldee soldiers whom Ishmael had slain at the same time with him.

There were then left in Judah a very few stragglers, whom Nebuzaradan finally removed to Babylon in 583. this being the fourth deportation.

No colonists were sent to take possession of Judah. Its southern part, as far as Hebron, was, however, during the exile, taken possession of by the Edomites, who were successfully attacked by the Maccabees, and finally subdued by John Hyrcanus, who incorporated them, as far as inducing their compliance with Jewish rites could do so, with the Hebrew nation.

SKETCH OF EVENTS CONNECTED WITH JUDAH, FROM THE CAPTIVITY TO THE ISSUE OF THE DECREE OF CYRUS.

Under Nebuchadnezzar.—Daniel and his three companions were, by the king's orders, trained at court, during three years, in the Chaldee language and learning, with a

view of being employed in the royal service, their names being changed, respectively, from Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah, to Beltshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These four refused, (either because of its ceremonial uncleanness, or its having been sacrificed to the Assyrian gods), the daily allowance of food and wine sent to them from the king's table, and consumed only pulse and water, upon which diet, however, they flourished remarkably. When the period of their training was expired, they, with the other youths who had been their fellow-students, were brought before the king, were found to excel all the wise men in the kingdom, and were advanced to high Court posts.

While they held these offices, Daniel unfolded to Nebuchadnezzar his dream of the Great Image Destroyed by a Stone,—in consequence of which, the king worshipped the prophet, made him viceroy of the province of Babylon, and bestowed the highest honors on his three friends.

Determined to make all the different nations composing his vast empire acknowledge his chief god, Bel, Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge image of the deity on the plain of Dura, and ordered, on pain of being consumed in "a burning fiery furnace," that, at sound of musical instruments, all the chief men of his kingdom, assembled by edict, should fall down, and worship the image. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refusing compliance, were thrown, bound, into the furnace, where, instead of being consumed, they walked, loose, and accompanied by One whom the king discerned to be a "Son of God." Being commanded by the king to come forth, they did so, unscathed, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree that all in his dominions should, on pain of death, revere the God of the Hebrews.

Nebuchadnezzar, elated with pride at the extent of his dominions, and the beauty and strength of "great Babylon," which he had almost rebuilt, again dreamed a dream, which Daniel interpreted to mean that he should be cast down from his throne, be driven forth from amongst men, and dwell amongst the beasts of the field, after which he should come to himself, and know that all his power was but delegated to him by the mighty King of heaven and earth. Accordingly, a year after, he was, while in the very utterance of boastful words, stricken with *lycanthropy*,

(a species of monomania wherein men imagine that they are beasts, quit the haunts of mankind, and live like the animals which they suppose themselves to be). For four or seven years, he remained thus: then, recovering, he blessed Jehovah, and acknowledged His Omnipotence.

Nebuchadnezzar's power and glory now returned, and increased, and he died, at an honored old age, in 561, having reigned 43 years: he was succeeded by his son,

Evil-Merodach,—who released Jehoiachin from prison, set his throne above those of the other captive kings in Babylon, and gave him a daily allowance from the royal table. Proving a cruel tyrant, Evil-Merodach was, in 559, assassinated, and succeeded, by his brother-in-law,

Neriglissar, (559—556),—who bequeathed the throne to his son,

Laborosoarchod, (556),—a cruel despot, who was slain, after reigning 9 months, and was succeeded by

Nabonadius, (the Greek *Labynetus*), (555—538).—He formed an alliance with Cræsus, king of Lydia, against Cyrus, now monarch of the Medo-Persian empire. Cræsus was totally defeated, 546, and, after six years, Cyrus marched upon Babylon,—defeated the army of Nabonadius,—drove the Babylonians within their defences,—and laid close siege to the city, which, owing to its strong fortifications, broad deep ditches, large magazines, and immense tracts of pasture-, and corn-, land within the vast enclosure of the place, successfully withstood the besiegers for nearly two years.

Nabonadius had, after his defeat outside Babylon, fled to Borsippa, leaving, to defend the beleaguered city, his son,

Belshazzar, who had, a few years previously, been taken, by his father, into co-partnership in the throne.

One night, in 538, Belshazzar held high revel with his nobles, and his wives and concubines. Intoxicated with wine, he commanded the gold and silver vessels of the Temple, which had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, to be brought forth, and from them he and his guests drank to their idols. Their carousal was suddenly arrested by the Fingers of a Man's Hand writing on the walls of the palace strange words, which, interpreted by Daniel, told the trembling, horror-stricken, monarch that

he had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting, and that God had numbered and finished his kingdom, and given it to the Medes and Persians. That very night, (as the best authorities are agreed), Cyrus, having diverted the course of the Euphrates, which ran through the midst of the city, entered the empty river-bed, at each end, and, the river-gates having been that evening negligently left open, advanced, unopposed, into Babylon, and captured it, slaying Belshazzar.

Thus he fulfilled Is. xlv. 27, (prefixing, "I am the Lord"); xlv. 1-4: and Jer. l. 35, 38; li. 28-32, (down to "stopped"), 36, ("I will dry dry"), 39, 40, (learn).

It will be remarked how minute and exact these prophecies are! In them, Cyrus is mentioned by name as the captor of Babylon,—the channel by which he should enter the city, together with his finding the river-gates open, is pointed out,—and the drunken supineness, and consequent easy slaughter, of the king and his great men, are vividly depicted.

Cyrus, having taken the city, hurried away to fresh conquests, leaving as viceroy of Babylon,

Darius the Mede, (538—536),—who is mentioned in the Biblical narrative only, nowhere in profane history.

Darius divided Babylon Proper into 120 provinces, governed by as many princes, (one over each province), who were subordinate to three presidents, of whom Daniel was chief.

The other nobles, jealous of the aged prophet, entrapped Darius into ordering that, for 30 days, none, on pain of being thrown into a den of lions, should offer petitions to anyone, either God or man, excepting the viceroy. Daniel, however, continued to pray, thrice daily, according to his custom, looking towards Jerusalem through his open lattice. Against his will, Darius was compelled to enforce the penalty, and the prophet was thrown amongst the savage beasts, but was marvellously preserved from injury. He was then released, while his accusers, with their wives and children, were cast into the den, and devoured; after which, Darius issued a proclamation, commanding all his subjects to adore Jehovah, "the living God, stedfast for ever," who . . . "worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth."

"*Expatriation*," not "*Captivity*," is the correct word to apply to the removal of Judah into exile. They were colonists, not bondmen, receiving grants of land from Nebuchadnezzar. They remained almost entirely a distinct people,—retained their institutions, officers of their own nation being allowed to exercise civil jurisdiction over the members of the various Jewish communities,—acquired property and slaves,—and, in numerous cases, (*e.g.*, those of Daniel and his companions, and Mordecai), rose to high political station and power.

The influence of the Captivity on the habits of life of the Jews was very marked. Their love of agriculture declined, and they returned with a strong taste for commerce, retail trade, and banking.

The religious and moral effect was still more marked. They learned to value their former privileges through having lost them, weeping by the rivers of Babylon, as they remembered Zion. They grew to hate idolatry, and to reverence profoundly the Law, which, as far as was possible in their foreign sojourning-place, they, with few exceptions, strictly adhered to. Thus, when the 70 years were accomplished, the repentance and reformation, upon which Jehovah had declared their return to be dependent, had been effected. The change was shewn to be radical and genuine by their conduct after their restoration to their country, where, however, unfortunately, owing to various untoward influences, their new zeal developed, and degenerated, into mere slavish obedience to the *letter* of the Law, while its *spirit* was altogether ignored.

CHAPTER I.

Cyrus issues a Proclamation, giving permission to the Jews to return to their country, and rebuild the Temple: those who wish to avail themselves of the Edict prepare for their departure, receiving presents from those "about them": Cyrus restores to Sheshbazzar the Temple vessels, 536.

'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be

fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying:—

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

And *whosoever* remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let *the men of his place* 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.

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.

And all they that were about them *strengthened their hands* with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside *all that was willingly offered*.

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*; 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. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 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.”

“Cyrus,”—(surnamed, “*the Elder*”),—was son of Cambyzes, a Persian of the royal family of the Achæmenidæ, by Mandane, daughter of Astyages, the last Median monarch of the Medo-Persian kingdom, who alienated his subjects by his cruel tyranny. The Persians took advantage of this state of affairs, and of the degeneracy of the Medes, and, under the command of Cyrus, revolted. Astyages was slain in battle, and Cyrus thereupon as-

sumed the government of the Medo-Persian empire, in which the Persian element now became dominant. He then embarked upon a career of successful conquest, during the course of which, as we have seen, he took Babylon. His story as related in profane history is almost entirely mythical, Xenophon's *Cyropædia* being merely "an ideal picture of a good and wise ruler, not an actual history of Cyrus."

"*King of Persia.*"—The so-called Persian empire was at this time greater than that of Assyria had ever been, and included, broadly speaking, Media, Persis, Assyria Proper, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiana, Asia Minor, Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine.

"*The first year of Cyrus,*"—536, when, Darius the Mede dying, Cyrus assumed the sole government of his whole empire.

"*That the word fulfilled.*"—The following are the prophecies of Jeremiah which are here referred to:—

"*This whole land,*" (i.e., Judah), "shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (c. xxv. 11).

"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,'" (c. xxix. 10).

The former of these two prophecies was publicly uttered, under Jehoiakim: the second forms part of a letter which Jeremiah sent, in the reign of Zedekiah, to the Jews in captivity, recommending them to settle quietly down in the land of exile, not heeding the false prophets who predicted a speedy return.

"*The Lord stirred up Cyrus.*"—It is generally supposed that Daniel was Divinely-instructed to shew to Cyrus the prophecies concerning him which Isaiah had, more than 150 years previously, uttered, viz. :—

1. Is. xlv. 1-4, (already quoted),—foretelling Cyrus's conquests generally, and predicting, in a marvellously exact manner, the taking of Babylon, (as a step in the plan of procuring the return of the Jews from exile), by the agency of Cyrus, as Jehovah's chosen instrument.

2. Is. xliv. 21, 22, 24, 26, 28,—"O Israel! thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins:

return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. . . . I am the Lord that maketh all things; . . . that saith to Jerusalem, 'Thou shalt be inhabited'; and to the cities of Judah, 'Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:'. . . . *that saith of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.'*"

3. Is. xlv. 13, (learn, noting that "him," "his," and "he," refer to Cyrus).

There is another remarkable instance of a person being mentioned by name, in a prophecy, *viz.*, that of Josiah, who destroyed and polluted the altar of Jeroboam, at Bethel, according to a prediction uttered, about 350 years before the event, by a prophet sent by Jehovah out of Judah to denounce Jeroboam, (read I. Kings xiii. 1, 2).

"*Made a proclamation,*"—margin, "*caused a voice to pass:*" the meaning is, that he sent *heralds* throughout his dominions.

"*Throughout all his kingdom,*"—*i.e.*, all of his kingdom where any Jews were settled, whether belonging to Israel or Judah.

"*Put . . . writing,*"—*i.e.*, sent written orders to the pashas of the different provinces.

"*The Lord . . . earth,*"—referring to Is. xlv. 1-4.

"*He hath . . . Judah,*"—referring to the other prophecies, concerning him, in Isaiah.

"*He is the God,*"—a conclusion to which the production of the prophecies of Isaiah could not fail to lead!

The facility with which Cyrus was induced to act upon these predictions is greatly attributable to the character of the Persian religion, which, originally monotheistic, was remarkably free from idolatry, and altogether innocent of any cruel and immoral rites. This being so, the monarch could not but feel sympathy with, and admiration for, the faith of the Jews, so that, when the prophecies concerning himself, as connected with them, were laid before him, no prejudice stood in the way of his restoring the exiles, and aiding them to reërect their Temple.

"*Whosoever,*"—*i.e.*, any Jew.

"*The men of his place,*"—*i.e.*, all the inhabitants, whether Jews who did not wish to return home, or subjects of Cyrus.

"*Silver, gold,*"—for the personal use of the returning exiles.

"*Goods,*"—*i.e.*, provisions for the journey.

"*Beasts,*"—horses, mules, camels, and asses, (see c. ii. 66, 67), for the purpose of carrying women, children, and baggage.

"*The freewill-offering God,*"—*i.e.*, voluntary offerings towards rebuilding the Temple.

"*Strengthened their hands,*"—in margin, "*helped them.*"

"*All offered,*"—towards the Temple.

"*The vessels gods.*"—Under Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple was thrice plundered, in the respective reigns of Jehoiakim, (606), Jehoiachin, (598), and Zedekiah, (588).

"*Sheshbazzar,*"—is Chaldæan. His *Hebrew* name was *Zerubbabel*, (= *sown in Babylon*), (in Matthew, and Luke, *Zorobabel*).

"*The prince of Judah,*"—*i.e.*, the royal head of the house of Judah. He was son of Shealtiel, or Salathiel, who was son of Jehoiachin,—was of the line of David, and an ancestor of Christ.

In I. Chron. iii. 19, Zerubbabel is called the son of *Pedaiah*, (another of Jehoiachin's sons). This is evidently an error, for Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Matthew, Luke, and Josephus, all make him to have been son of Shealtiel, or Salathiel, and the Septuagint of I. Chron., in the passage just named, agrees with them.

Zerubbabel seems to have held office in the Babylonian Court. As the natural chief of the kingdom of Judah, he was invested, by Cyrus, with the command of the remigrants, and appointed governor of Judæa.

"*Chargers,*"—*dishes*: John Baptist's head was brought in a "*charger*" to Herodias.

"*Knives,*"—for sacrificial purposes.

"*Thirty basons.*"—Solomon made 100 basons for the Temple.

"*A second sort,*"—*i.e.*, an inferior sort.

"*Five thousand and four hundred.*"—Only 2499 vessels, being those of larger size, are enumerated in the preceding verses; the other 2901 "*vessels,*" (*i.e.*, *utensils*), would consist of *bowls, spoons, censers, flesh-hooks, and cups*, which are all mentioned as being made by Solomon.

CHAPTER II.

The First Caravan of Jews returns to Judæa, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and 10 of the principal elders, 536: a list of the re-migrants: some of them are unable to trace their genealogy: on reaching Jerusalem, many of the elders make offerings towards rebuilding the Temple: the returned exiles separate to their respective cities.

“Now these are the *children of the province* that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, *every one unto his city*, which came with Zerubbabel:—

Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel:—

The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of *Pahath-moab*, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of Ater of *Hezekiah*, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. The children of *Gibbar*, ninety and five. *The children of Beth-lehem*, an hundred twenty and three. *The men of Netophah*, fifty and six. The men

of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of *Kirjath-arim*, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. The children of Ramah and *Gaba*, six hundred twenty and one. The men of *Michmas*, an hundred twenty and two. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. The children of *Nebo*, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. The children of *the other Elam*, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. The children of *Lod*, *Hadid*, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

The Priests:—

The children of *Jedaiah*, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of *Immer*, a thousand fifty and two. The children of *Pashur*, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of *Harim*, a thousand and seventeen.

The Levites:—

The children of Jeshua and *Kadmiel*, of the children of *Hodaviah*, seventy and four.

The singers:—

The children of *Asaph*, an hundred twenty and eight.

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.

The Nethinims:—

The children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, the children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, the children of Reziu, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, the children of Asnah, the children of *Mehunim*, the children of Nephusim, the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, the children

of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

The children of *Solomon's servants*:—

The children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, the children of Shephathiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.

All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two.

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 *seed*, whether they were of Israel:—

The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 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: these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: *therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.* And the *Tirshatha* said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with *Urim and with Thummim.*

The whole congregation together was *forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore*, 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.* Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 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: they gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand *drams* of gold, and five thousand *pound* of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 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."

Nehemiah, after he had finished the wall of Jerusalem, determined to reckon the people according to their genealogies. In doing this, he employed a register which he discovered, and which he records. It is substantially the same as the one in the text, prefaced by the same preamble, and having affixed to it a parallel account of offerings made for the Temple-building. There are, however, a number of differences of names and numbers between the two lists :—

1. Several names vary by a letter or two. This arises partly from differences in transcription, and partly from neglect of uniformity by our translators.

2. Several persons bear altogether different names in the two registers. This is owing to the Jewish custom of one person having more than one appellation.

3. Ezra omits names that Nehemiah supplies, and *vice versa*: and the two give, in many instances, different numbers of the members of returning families. We can only suppose that the list which Ezra copied was compiled before leaving Babylon, and contains the names and numbers of those who signified their intention to return, while that copied by Nehemiah was drawn up after the arrival in Judæa, and enumerates those who actually came back : then these differences are easily explained by allowing for changes of intention to go or to remain, and for deaths and other accidents on the way.

We shall proceed to make what other notes the chapter may call for, and then give a Table shewing the points of difference between Ezra's register and that of Nehemiah. The student is recommended to learn Ezra's list from our Table instead of from the Bible.

“Children” = dwellers in.

“The province,”—of Babylon.

“Every one unto his city.”—All the families of Jews had, from the time that Palestine was divided amongst the tribes, possessed the specified portion of the land then allotted to them respectively. Hence, it was necessary for the genealogies of the re-migrants to be ascertained, so that they might know, and enter into undisputed possession of, their property.

A more important object still was involved in this step, *viz.*, to preserve the genealogies of the tribe whence Mes-

siah was to come, so that His pedigree might be accurately traced, and the claim of anyone professing to be He might be scrutinized.

No nation ever was so careful as the Jews in preserving its genealogies, exact tables of which were kept in the Temple. These latter were, probably, lost in the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; but it is evident that most of those who went into exile preserved the records of their lineage, copies of which, from the authentic public documents, it was the custom and pride of each family to possess and carefully keep.

“*Jeshua*,” (or *Joshua*),—was the high-priest. He was son of Jehozadak, or Jozedech, the son of Seraiah, the high-priest when Nebuzaradan took Jerusalem. Seraiah was slain by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, and was succeeded by Jehozadak, who held the pontificate during a great portion of the Captivity, and was succeeded by Jeshua, (who, probably, was born in exile).

Several of Haggai’s utterances are addressed to Jeshua and his name appears in two of Zechariah’s symbolical prophecies: in the first of these, the high-priest represents the Jews clad, at first like slaves, and afterwards in new and splendid raiment of deliverance; in the second, he wears crowns, respectively of gold and silver, to symbolize the union of the kingly and the priestly diadems of Israel on Messiah’s head.

(It is usually supposed that Haggai and Zechariah went up with this first caravan).

“*Nehemiah . . . Baanah*.”—These nine persons were the principal elders, (see c. i. 5), who, with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, commanded the caravan. *Nehemiah* adds a tenth, “*Nahamani*.”

It will be noticed that the different families, or bodies, of Jews mentioned in the succeeding verses are variously denominated,—some by the name of their head, (e.g., “the children,” i.e., descendants, “of Shephatiah”),—and others by the town, or district, to which they belonged, (e.g., “the children,” i.e., inhabitants, “of Bethlehem”).

The following is a list of the names of persons and of places, respectively, which occur in the roll of remigrants:—

1. “Of the men of the people of Israel”:—

Persons. — Parosh, Shephatiah, Arah, Pahath-Moab,

Jeshua, Joab, Elam, Zattu, Zaccai, Bani, Bebai, Azgad, Adonikam, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hezekiah, Bezai, Jorah, Hashum, "the other Elam," Harim.

Places.—Gibbar, Bethlehem, Netophah, Anathoth, Azmaveth, Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, Beeroth, Ramah, Gaba, Michmas, Bethel, Ai, Nebo, Magbish, Lod, Hadid, Ono, Jericho, Senaah.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 2. "The Levites,"— | all persons. |
| 3. "The singers,"— | " " " |
| 4. "The children of Asaph,"— | " " " |
| 5. "The children of the porters,"— | " " " |
| 6. "The Nethinims":— | |

Persons.—Ziha, Hasupha, Keros, Siaha, Padon, Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, Hagab, Shalmal, Hanan, Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah, Besai, Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, Barkos, Sisera, Thamah, Neziah, Hatipha.

Tribes.—Mehunim, Nephusim.

Places.—Tabbaoth, Asnah.

7. "The children of Solomon's servants":—

Persons.—Sotai, Sophereth, Peruda, Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth, Ami.

Place.—Zebaim.

8. Those whose genealogy could not be traced:—

Persons.—Delaiah, Tobiah, Nekoda, Habaiah, Koz, Barzillai.

"*Pahath-Moab*" = *governor of Moab*: "a name, probably, commemorative of some circumstance now unknown."

"*Of Hezekiah*,"—*i.e.*, son of Hezekiah.

"*Gibbar*,"—Gibeon.

"*The children of Bethlehem . . . The men of Netophah.*" Nehemiah has, "*The men of Bethlehem and Netophah*"; the latter place was close to the former.

"*Kirjath-arim*,"—*Kirjath-jearim*.

"*Gaba*,"—*Geba*.

"*Michmas*,"—*Michmash*.

"*Nebo*,"—a town in Judah,—in *Nehemiah*, "*the other Nebo*," so called to distinguish it from another town of the same name situated near Mount Nebo.

"*The other Elam*,"—so designated to distinguish him from one of the same name previously mentioned.

"*Lod*,"—*Lydda*.

"*Hadid*,"—"Harid" in many copies of the Scriptures.

"*Jedaiah*,"—was head of the 2nd. of the 24 courses into which David divided the ordinary priests.

"*Immer*,"—head of David's 16th. course.

"*Pashur*,"—was son of Malchijah, who was head of David's 5th. course.

"*Harim*,"—head of David's 3rd. course.

Thus, representatives of only four of the original courses of priests returned from the Captivity: these were, however, subdivided into 24, which assumed, respectively, the names of David's courses, and like them, officiated, in turn, a week at a time, the course being changed every Sabbath.

"*The Levites*,"—David divided the Levites into four classes:—

1. *The General Assistants*,—who are meant in the present verse. Their duties were "to wait on the sons of Aaron in the work of the House of God."

2. *The Officers and Judges*,—engaged in administering the written Law.

3. *The Porters*,—whose duties were to open and shut the Temple gates; to keep the peace within its precincts; to prohibit any unclean, or otherwise ineligible, person from entering; and to act as night-patrols.

4. *The Musicians*,—who conducted the vocal and instrumental portion of the Temple service.

"*And Kadmiel*,"—in *Nehemiah*, "of Kadmiel:" Ezra is right.

"*Of the children of Hodaviah*,"—in *Nehemiah*, "and the children of Hodevah", (*i.e.*, Hodaviah): *Nehemiah* is right.

Thus representatives of only two of the 24 courses into which David had divided the general assistant Levites returned.

"*The singers*,"—*i.e.*, musicians, were divided into 24 courses, which were under the direction of three "fathers of the Levites," *viz.*, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, (for Jeduthun). Probably, each of these three had 8 courses under his control.

The sons of Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, with their children, formed a select body of highly-trained musicians, to the number of 288, who, with the three heads of song, seem to have been always on duty, and to have lived within the Temple precincts.

“*The children of Asaph.*”—It is hard to say from this whether the eight courses, which we have supposed Asaph to have superintended, were represented amongst the remigrants, or whether only his immediate descendants returned: probably, the latter.

“*The porters.*”—It will be observed that representatives of only 6 out of David’s 24 courses of porters returned.

“*The Nethinims,*” (should be, “*Nethinim,*” the Hebrew word meaning “*the given,*” and being applied to the class because they were *given* to the Levites as helpers),—were servants of the Levites, to perform the more laborious and meaner work of the Temple. The first Nethinim were the Gibeonites, who, for their treachery, were, (though, according to his promise, Joshua spared their lives), made “*hewers of wood and drawers of water*” for the Tabernacle, (read Joshua ix. 3-27). David and succeeding monarchs increased their number from their war prisoners: it was from this period, when they ceased to be Gibeonites only, that the title *Nethinim* was used as a proper name for the whole class. They seem gradually to have ceased to be regarded as slaves, and to have been looked upon as merely the lowest order of Temple servants. There is no doubt that, though foreigners, and originally heathens, they were Jewish proselytes, and it speaks well for their attachment to the sanctuary that so many of them volunteered to accompany the returning exiles. This conduct on their part considerably raised their *status*, which was ever after regarded as positively honorable: Ezra records that they were “*expressed by name,*”—a mark of distinction amongst the Jews. Their number proving too small for the requirements of the Temple, partial recurrence was had to the practice which prevailed before the employment of the Gibeonites of the *Congregation* supplying fuel for the altar: Nehemiah tells us that lots were cast to fix at what stated times the various households were to furnish the wood.

“*Mehunim.*”—The Mehunim were an Arab tribe of Arabia Petraea whom Uzziah conquered: doubtless, he made Nethinim of the captives he took in the war.

“*Solomon’s servants,*”—the remnant of the Canaanitish tribes, whom Solomon reduced to bondservice, (see I. Kings ix. 20, 21).

“*Tel-melah . . . Immer,*”—all places in Babylonia,—positions unknown.

“Seed,”—should be, (as in margin), “pedigree.”

“Barzillai the Gileadite,”—a rich old Gileadite of Rogelim, who handsomely succoured David, when fleeing from Absalom. On the king’s return, Barzillai accompanied him as far as the Jordan, but declined, on the ground of his great age, to proceed to Jerusalem and receive the honors David intended for him.

“Therefore priesthood.”—There being no proof that they were of the priestly family, (or even of the Jewish nation at all), they were, properly, regarded as “strangers,” whose taking part in the priestly duties was forbidden by Jehovah, under penalty of death, (see Numb. iii. 10: xvi. 39, 40).

“Were they, as polluted put,”—rather, (as in margin), “They were polluted.”

“Tirskatha” = “Governor,” (as in margin). Zerubbabel is meant. “Tirshatha” is from the Persic, *torsh*, (= severe).

“The most holy things,”—those portions of the sacrifices which were the priests’ perquisites, and the shew-bread.

“Should not eat things,”—i.e., should not be allowed to exercise the priest’s office.

“Till . . . Thummim.”—i.e., till, the Temple being built, the high-priest should stand before, and ask counsel of, the Lord, as to whether those who claimed to be priests, but who had lost their genealogy, were really what they professed to be, and were to be allowed to exercise sacerdotal functions.

“With Urim and with Thummim.”—“Urim,” and “Thummim,” are *plurales excellentiæ*, denoting, respectively, “light,” and “truth.” The high-priest was in the habit of consulting Jehovah, and Jehovah of answering, “by Urim and Thummim”; but what we are to understand by this expression is a most disputed point:—

Some allege that the words “Urim” and “Thummim” denote the precious stones in the high-priest’s breastplate, and that these gems indicated to the pontiff the Lord’s will, by some supernatural means,—perhaps by the successive illumination of the letters, (the names of the twelve tribes being cut upon the stones), which composed the response.

Others imagine that the answer “by Urim and Thummim” was given audibly to the high-priest arrayed in full robes, and standing facing the Ark.

The latest, and apparently correct, idea is that the Urim and Thummim were two images of the virtues, or powers, of *light*, and *truth*,—that they were well known to, and used by, the patriarchs, as Divinely-appointed means of enquiring of Jehovah,—that the use of them was continued in Egypt during the bondage,—and that at the establishment of the Mosaic economy they were recognised by God for the purpose of revealing his will to the high-priest. They were placed, most likely, between the two folds of the pontiff's breast-plate. The *manner* in which the Divine responses were delivered through these images it were idle to speculate upon.

“*Forty and two thousand, three hundred, and three-score.*”—Yet, a careful addition of all the separate numbers gives a total of only 29,818,—12,532 less than stated in the text! The most probable explanation is that the 29,818 include only the members of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, and that the 12,532 belonged to the other ten tribes of Israel.

Nehemiah makes the total the same as *Ezra*; but his separate numbers amount to 31,089,—*i.e.*, (on the principle of reconciliation between the two accounts which has been previously stated), 29,818 members of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, signified their intention to return, but 31,089 actually came back.

“*Servants and maids,*”—seem to have been slaves whom the Jews had acquired in exile.

Nehemiah gives the same number of servants that *Ezra* does.

“*Singing men and singing women,*”—professional musicians, vocal and instrumental, probably foreigners, not Jews.

“*To the house of the Lord,*”—*i.e.*, to where the House had been.

“*His*” = *its*.

Nehemiah states that Zerubbabel and the people contributed, as well as the “chief of the fathers,” and gives the following list of the offerings:—

1. *Zerubbabel* gave 1000 drams of gold, 50 basons, and 530 priests' garments.
2. *The fathers* gave 20,000 drams of gold, (*Ezra* has 61,000), and 2,200 pounds of silver, (*Ezra* has 5000 pounds, and adds 100 priests' garments).

3. *The people* gave 20,000 drams of gold, 2000 pounds of silver, and 67 priests' garments.

We should feel inclined to accept Nehemiah's account as correct.

"*Drams*,"—Persian gold *darics*. The heaviest specimen extant weighs 129 grains Troy, and is, therefore, worth a little over a guinea; but, allowance being made for loss of substance by wear, it is supposed that the normal weight of the daric was 150 grains Troy, its value, accordingly, being 25s. This coin took its name from either *Darius* (the Mede), or from the Persian, *dara* (= *a king*). The money which the Jews brought up with them would, naturally, be in the Babylonian coinage. The *daric*, (or dram), was afterwards generally used by them.

"*Pound*,"—the Hebrew *maneh* (= 2 lbs. 6 oz. Troy, = circ. £6 16s. 10½d.)

It is supposed that the journey to Jerusalem of the re-migrants occupied about 4 months.

(The Jews who did not return from the Captivity were called "*the Dispersion*," (see John vii. 35: James i. 1: I. Pet. i. 1). They served a most important purpose in spreading a knowledge of the true God, and so preparing the places of their abode for Christian evangelization thereafter).

**TABLE COMPARING EZRA'S AND NEHEMIAH'S
RESPECTIVE REGISTERS.**

(Wherever this line ——— appears, it shews that Nehemiah's account agrees with Ezra's).

Ezra.	Nehemiah.
1. The Tirshatha, Zerubbabel. ———	—————
2. The High-priest, Jeshua. ———	—————
3. 9 Chief Elders:—	10 Chief Elders:—
Nehemiah. ———	—————
Seraiah. ———	Azariah.
Reelaiah. ———	Raamiah.
Mordecai. ———	—————
Bilshan. ———	—————
Mizpar. ———	Mispereth.
Bigvai. ———	—————
Rehum. ———	Nehum.
Baanah. ———	—————
	Nahamani (additional).

Ezra.	Nehemiah.
4. The Priests:—	
The Children of	
Jedaiah... .. 973.	_____
Immer... .. 1052.	_____
Pashur... .. 1247.	_____
Harim... .. 1017.	_____
5. The Levites:—	
1. <i>General Assistants:—</i>	
The Children of	
Jeshua... ..	_____ }
Kadmiel. }	_____ }
Hodaviah. }	Hodevah }
74.	
2. <i>Musicians:—</i>	
The Children of	
Asaph... .. 128.	_____ 148.
3. <i>Porters:—</i> 139 in all.	
The Children of	
Shallum.	_____
Ater.	_____
Talmon.	_____
Akkub.	_____
Hatita.	_____
Shobai.	_____
6. The Nethinim,—num-	
bering, with the child-	
ren of Solomon's serv-	
ants, 392:—	_____ :—
The Children of	
Ziha.	_____
Hasupha.	Ha-shupha.
Tabbaoth.	_____
Keros.	_____
Siaha.	Sia.
Padon.	_____
Lebanah.	Lebana.
Hagabah.	Hagaba.
Akkub.	Omitted.
Hagab.	Omitted.
Shalmai.	_____
Hanan.	_____
Giddel.	_____
Gahar.	_____
Reaiah.	_____
Rezin.	_____
Nekoda.	_____
Gazzam.	_____
Uzza.	_____

Ezra.

Nehemiah.

Paseah.		Phaseah.	
Besai.		_____	
Asnah.		<i>Omitted.</i>	
Mehunim.		Meunim.	
Nephusim.		Nephesheshim.	
Bakbuk.		_____	
Hakupha.		_____	
Harhur.		_____	
Bazluth.		Bazlith.	
Mehida.		_____	
Harsha.		_____	
Barkos.		_____	
Sisera.		_____	
Thamah.		Tamah.	
Neziah.		_____	
Hatipha.		_____	
7. The Men of the people of Israel:—			
The children of			
Parosh	2172.	_____	_____
Shephatiah	372.	_____	_____
Arah	775.	_____	652.
Pahath-Moab	2812.	_____	2818.
Elam	1254.	_____	_____
Zattu	945.	_____	845.
Zaccai	760.	_____	_____
Bani	642.	Binnui.	648.
Bebai	623.	_____	628.
Azgad	1222.	_____	2322.
Adonikam	666.	_____	667.
Bigvai	2056.	_____	2067.
Adin	454.	_____	655.
Ater of Hezekiah	98.	_____	_____
Bezai	323.	_____	324.
Jorah	112.	Hariph.	_____
Hashum	223.	_____	328.
Gibbar	95.	Gibeon.	_____
Bethlehem	123.	Bethlehem, and } ..	188.
Netophah	56.	Netophah } ..	
Anathoth	128.	_____	_____
Azmaveth	42.	Beth-azmaveth	_____
Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth	743.	Kirjath-jearim, _____,	_____
Ramah, and Gaba	621.	_____	_____
Michmas	122.	_____	_____
Bethel, and Ai	223.	_____	123.
Nebo	52.	The other Nebo.. .. .	_____

Ezra.	Nehemiah.
Magbish 156.	<i>Omitted.</i>
The other Elam 1254.	————— ————
Harim 320.	————— ————
Lod, Hadid, and Ono .. 725.	————— 721.
Jericho 345.	————— ————
Senaah 3630.	————— 3930.
8. Genealogies untraceable:—	
(1). <i>Priests</i> :—	
The children of	
Habaiah.	—————
Koz.	—————
Barzillai.	—————
(2). <i>Those that went up from</i>	
<i>Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub,</i>	<i>Those that went up from</i>
<i>Adan, and Immer,</i> — in all	<i>—————, Telharsa, ————,</i>
652 :—	<i>Addon, ————, —in all</i>
The Children of	642 :—
Delaiah.	—————
Tobiah.	—————
Nekoda.	—————
9. The Children of Solomon's Servants,—num-	
bering, with the Ne-	
thinim. 392 :—	
The children of	
Sotai.	—————
Sophereth.	—————
Peruda.	Perida.
Jaalah.	Jaala.
Darkon.	—————
Giddel.	—————
Shephatiah.	—————
Hattil.	—————
Pochereth of Zebaim.	—————
Ami.	Amon.
10. Manservants, and	
Maids 7337.	————— ————
11. Singing Men and	
Singing Women, .. 200.	————— 245.
<i>Total of those</i>	
<i>thus enumer-</i>	
<i>ated 29,818.</i>	————— 31,089.
<i>Total, (includ-</i>	
<i>ing those not</i>	
<i>enumerated)... 42,360.</i>	————— ————

CHAPTER III.

The Altar of Burnt-offering is reërected: the regular sacrifices are resumed, 536.—The foundation of the Second Temple is laid, amidst mingled rejoicing and weeping, 535.

“ 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.

Then stood up Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and 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 written in the law of Moses, the man of God.

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*. *They kept also the feast of tabernacles*, as it is written, and offered *the daily burnt-offerings* by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; 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.

From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the Temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the *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.

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 years old and upward*, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.

Then stood *Jeshua* with his sons and his brethren,

Kadmiel and his sons, *the sons of Judah*, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of *Henadad*, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

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. 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.

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

"*The seventh month*,"—of 536, the year of the issuing of Cyrus's edict, and of the return.

"*The altar*."—The Altar of Burnt-Offering,—not, however, the one that had graced Solomon's Temple, but, most likely, a pile of unhewn stones. It was, evidently, set up on its former site, viz., where Araunah's threshing-floor had stood.

All the furniture of the First Temple seems to have been entirely destroyed in the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, with two exceptions:—

1. The vessels.

2. The two pillars, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, which stood one on each side of the Porch; the Brazen Sea; and the bases. These were taken to pieces, and carried to Babylon, whence they must have been brought back, with the vessels, since Jeremiah had predicted that such should be the case, (see Jer. xxvii. 19-22).

"*His bases*" = *its bases*.

"*The people of those countries*,"—refers, probably, to the Samaritans, and to the Edomites who had taken possession of the South of the kingdom of Judah.

"*Morning and evening*."—This was the *Continual*

Burnt-Offering of a lamb every morning and evening, (read Exod. xxix, 38-42).

“*They kept also the Feast of Tabernacles,*”—*i.e.*, in as far as the sacrifices connected with that festival were concerned : we shall see hereafter that they did not dwell in booths at the present celebration.

This Feast commenced on the 15th. day of the Seventh month, *i.e.*, the very month in which they were now assembled : hence the keeping of it naturally suggested itself to their minds.

“*The daily burnt-offerings,*”—*i.e.*, those offered every day during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“*The continual burnt-offering,*”—not the *daily* Continual Burnt-Offering already noticed, but the other regularly-appointed sacrifices besides those previously named.

“*The new moons.*”—*The Festival of New Moon*, or *The Month-Sabbath*, was one of the Jewish Festivals connected with the Seventh Day of Rest, and was celebrated in the beginning of the month. It “was ushered in by blowing with the silver trumpets,”—in addition to the regular daily sacrifices, ten victims were immolated as burnt-offerings, and one as a sin-offering,—sacrificial feasts were held,—and all secular pursuits were suspended.

“*All the set feasts,*”—*i.e.*, those not already mentioned.

“*A freewill-offering,*”—was one of the three kinds of Peace-offerings. The victim might be taken from the herd or the flock, might be male or female, and must be accompanied by a meat-offering. The sacrificer slew the animal,—the priest sprinkled the blood, burned the fat and the liver-lobe on the altar, and kept the wave-shoulder and breast for himself, family, and friends to eat,—and the offerer, with *his* family and friends, feasted upon the rest of the victim.

“*Carpenters,*”—rather, (as in margin), “*workmen.*”

“*Meat,*”—*i.e.*, *corn.*

“*Drink,*”—*i.e.*, *wine.*

Solomon had formerly given Hiram, king of Tyre, wheat, barley, oil, and wine, for timber and the services of workmen to fell and square it.

In that case, and in the present, each country supplied what the other was most deficient in.

“*The sea of Joppa,*”—*i.e.*, “the sea at Joppa.” Joppa was the port of Jerusalem.

"According . . . Persia."—This grant is recorded in c. vi., and will come under notice hereafter.

"Unto the house of the Lord,"—i.e., to the site whereon it had formerly stood.

"From twenty . . . upward."—It had been customary for the Levites to commence their duties at *thirty* years of age: David, however, altered this regulation, and *made them eligible for their office from twenty* years old, and upwards.

"Jeshua,"—the Levite, not the high-priest, (see c. ii. 40).

"The sons of Judah,"—should be, "the sons of *Hodaviah*," (see c. ii. 40).

"*Henadad*,"—the chief of a Levitical family.

"*Trumpets*,"—The Hebrew trumpet was a long, straight, instrument, in form resembling its modern representative. David was the first to introduce the trumpet into choir music: before which, it had, (like the "horn"), been used only to make signals, during religious festivals, or on the battle-field.

"*Cymbals*,"—Under this generic name were included cymbals proper, (such as are still used in bands),—castanets,—the *sistrum*, (a "frame of sonorous metal" crossed by bars of the same material, which passed loosely through holes in the sides, and were bent at the ends, and which, when the instrument was shaken, produced the sound),—and a kind of "triangle."

"*By course*,"—i.e., *antiphonally*, as was the regular order in the Jewish service.

"*Praising . . . ever*,"—It would appear that on this occasion. (as, also, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple), the musicians sang the Psalm which David composed and caused to be performed, when he brought the ark to Jerusalem, and placed it in the tabernacle which he had prepared for it. This song of praise is found in I. Chron. xvi. 8-36, inclusive, and appears to have been compounded, by David, of portions of three already existing Psalms of his,—viz. xvi., cv., cvi.

"*Ancient*,"—*old*.

"*The first house*,"—Solomon's Temple.

"*Wept with a loud voice*,"—Eastern weeping is always accompanied by loud cries of lamentation, which are considered the most proper expression of grief. We may imagine how strong the cries were when we read, in v. 13, that they almost overpowered the shouts of joy.

The old men wept for two reasons :—

1. They were affected by the associations which the scene awoke, and by the ruin and desolation around them.

2. They were profoundly grieved to think how mean the new Temple would be in comparison with the first.

CHAPTER IV.

The Samaritans ask permission to aid in reërecting the Temple: being refused, they hinder the work, and, finally, procure a decree from Pseudo-Smerdis prohibiting all further building at Jerusalem, 534—520.

“Now when *the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin* heard that *the children of the Captivity* builded the Temple unto the Lord God of Israel; 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.’

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.’

Then the people of the land *weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building*, 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*.

And in the reign of *Ahasuerus*, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

And in the days of *Artaxerxes* wrote *Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions*, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the *Syrian tongue*, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort :— (Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their *companions*; the *Dinaites*, the

Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. 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):—

‘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 set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.* Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. Now because *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; that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou 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 moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.* 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.’

Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river:—

‘Peace, and at such a time. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. *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.* Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?’

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 by force and power.

Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased until *the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*"

"*The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,*"—the *Cuthæans, or Samaritans*. They were a mixed race, produced by the intermarriage of the colonists whom the king of Assyria sent into Israel, and the remnant of the inhabitants of the latter.

Ezra calls them "*enemies*" because of their conduct towards the returned Jews: he does not intend to say that they were enemies previously to their offering opposition to the building of the Temple and of Jerusalem.

"*The children . . . captivity,*"—rather, (as in margin), "*the sons of the transportation.*"

"*We seek . . . ye do.*"—They certainly *did* seek God in a confused, corrupt, manner; but, certainly, not as the Jews did. The motives of the Samaritans in preferring this request were good; but we cannot see how Zerubbabel could have granted it.

"*Esarhaddon,*"—succeeded Sennacherib.

"*Assur,*"—Assyria.

"*Ye . . . God.*"—The reasons of this refusal were that

1. The Samaritans were not pure Jews by blood.
2. They were semi-idolatrous.

Nehemiah answered Sanballat and the Samaritans in the same way, "Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem."

The Assyrian colonists of Israel began by worshipping their respective idols, according to the places whence they came. Lions, however, owing to the desolate state of the country, swarmed destructively upon them. This infliction they considered to be a punishment from God, as the local deity of Palestine, for their neglecting to serve him. On intimating this to the king of Assyria, one of the exiled Jewish priests was sent amongst them to instruct them in the worship of Jehovah. Their religion then assumed a mixed form. They merely gave the Lord a position amongst their other deities,—"*They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.*"

They continued to practise this mingled system for a

considerable period ; but at the time of the return from the Captivity the true religion had gained a considerable ascendancy amongst them,—which accounts for their readiness to join the Jews in rebuilding the Temple.

The feud between the two peoples dates from the time of the request of the Samaritans to be allowed to participate in this work being refused. They did their best to prevent the building of both the Lord's House and the walls of Jerusalem ; but failed in both projects.

Manasseh, younger son of Johanan, the high-priest, (whose murder of his brother in the Temple will be hereafter narrated), married the daughter of Sanballat, Nehemiah's adversary. The elders deciding that he must either put away his wife, or be thrust out from the priesthood, Manasseh, unwilling for a divorce, repaired to Samaria, to his father-in-law, at whose suggestion a temple, of which Manasseh became the first high-priest, was erected on Mount Gerizim, which the Samaritans held to be the proper place for sacrifice, because Joshua had there built his first altar.

Thenceforth Samaria became the refuge of large numbers of malcontent Jews, and the animosity between the two peoples grew keener than ever, being exacerbated by the controversy as to which of them possessed the true Temple.

The fane of the Samaritans was afterwards destroyed by John Hyrcanus. Herod built them a new temple in Samaria, which they refused to use, cleaving to Gerizim as the proper place for worship.

By the time of Christ, the Samaritans had completely abandoned idolatry and adopted the Mosaic religion with these differences :—

1. Of the Scriptures, they accepted *only the Pentateuch*.
2. They celebrated the Passover *on Gerizim*.
3. They believed in Messiah's coming ; *not as a great King and Conqueror*, however, but *as a Peacemaker*, a Restorer of the glory of the holy Law *on Mount Gerizim*, and a great Teacher, *who would unite by his doctrine all nations in one common service to Jehovah*.

The feud between the Jews and the Samaritans had, at the period of our Lord, ripened into the bitterest hostility :—

The Jews taunted their foes with being "Cuthites,"

“strangers from Assyria,” and sneeringly designated them “proselytes of the lions,”—declared that they worshipped the idol-images which Jacob had formerly buried under the “oak” of Shechem, — cursed them openly in their synagogues, — refused to accept their testimony in law-suits, &c., — believed that to entertain one of them was to lay up certain judgment hereafter for the host, and that to taste their food was equivalent to eating swine’s flesh, — would not receive any of them as proselytes, — and denied their having any part in the Resurrection.

The Samaritans refused to entertain Jews going up to the feasts at Jerusalem, and sometimes lay in wait for, robbed, and murdered, them, — and on one occasion defiled the Temple by scattering human bones on its floor.

In the New Testament we find the following allusions to the differences between the two peoples:—

Luke ix. 51-56, — (shewing the inhospitality of the Samaritans to Jewish pilgrims, and also the bitter hatred of the Jews towards them).

Luke x. 30-35. — The parable of *The Good Samaritan*, — (illustrating the practice of the Samaritans to rob and murder Jewish travellers, and the hostility of the two nations, Christ choosing a Samaritan as the helper of the sufferer in order to magnify the charity of the act).

John iv. 9, — (shewing that the Jews would not taste aught provided by a Samaritan, and kept as far as possible from all “dealings” with them. They carried this practice to such an extreme length that, in travelling from Galilee to Judea, they generally made a round *viâ* Peræa).

John iv. 20, — (shewing the origin of the dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans).

John iv. 21. — “He will tell us all things,” — (showing the Samaritans’ belief that Christ’s great mission would be to teach).

John viii. 48, — spoken to Jesus by the Pharisees, when He had told them they were the children of the Evil One, — (showing the fiendish hatred and contempt of the Jews towards their neighbours, “Samaritan” being evidently the worst epithet they could command wherewith to brand the Saviour).

The Samaritans have now dwindled down to a few families, who dwell at Shechem, (Nablous), — possess a

MS. copy of the Law,—and believe those doctrines, and practise those rules, which have been previously described.

“*Weakened . . . building*,”—how, we are not told; but it is easy to see how a well-established, powerful, people, as the Samaritans now were, could annoy and distress the as yet unsettled, and defenceless, Jews. Amongst other things, they could stop the conveyance to Jerusalem of materials for the building, and thus effectually retard the work.

“*Counsellors*,”—agents to misrepresent the Jews, at the Persian Court.

“*All the days of Cyrus*.”—Cyrus, however, as might have been expected, evidently paid no attention to the complaints of these counsellors.

“*Darius*,”—*i.e.*, Darius *Hystaspes*. The opposition thus extended from 534 to 520, under Cyrus, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius.

“*Ahasuerus*,”—is a title, not a proper name. The Ahasuerus of the text was *Cambyses*, who succeeded his father, Cyrus, in 529, in which year the latter was slain by Tomyris, queen of the Massagetæ.

Cambyses evidently paid no attention to the Samaritans' letter.

“*Artaxerxes*” (= *great king*),—is a title, not a proper name. The Artaxerxes of the text was *Smerdis Magus*, (*i.e.*, the *Magian*, he being a member of the Magian priesthood).

Cambyses became insane, and slew his own brother, Smerdis, and dying in a distant part of his dominions, in 522, a Magian priest personated the dead Smerdis, and obtained the throne.

“*Bishlam . . . companions*,”—were Samaritans.

“*The Syrian tongue*,”—*i.e.*, *Aramaic*.

“*Chancellor*,”—Satrap of the Persian king over the province including Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine.

“*Scribe*,”—*Secretary of State*.

“*Companions*,”—rather, (as in margin), “*societies*,” (*i.e.*, of colonists).

“*Dinaites*,”—position unknown.

“*Apharsathchites*,”—probably, inhabitants of the Median *Paratacene*. Some, however, consider them to have come from *Fars*, or *Pars*, the ancient capital province whence the whole of Persia took its name.

"*Tarpelites*,"—position unknown.

"*Apharsites*,"—usually represented as meaning "*Persians*."

"*Archevites*,"—probably from *Aracha*, on the borders of Susiana and Babylonia (proper): some however, think, that the inhabitants of *Erech* are meant.

"*Susanchites*,"—from *Susa*, and its vicinity.

"*Dehavites*,"—probably, the same as the classical *Dahi*, neighbours of the Medians and Hyrcanians.

"*Elamites*,"—from *Elymaïs*.

The districts mentioned in II. Kings as those whence the colonists were sent are

Babylon; Cuthah, (probably, the Chaldee name for *Cush*, now *Khusistan*); Ava, (probably, a town and district of Susiana: perhaps *Ahwaz*, on the Karoon, represents the town Ava. Some, however, take Ava to have been the same as *Ahava*, on the Euphrates); Hamath, (not the Hamath N. of Palestine; but, probably, a town or district of Susiana); and Sepharvaim, (probably, the same as *Sippara*, on the Euphrates).

"*The rest of the nations*,"—includes those which are named in II. Kings and not in Ezra, and, doubtless, numerous others not mentioned in either book.

"*Asnapper*,"—either Esarhaddon himself, or some distinguished officer who conducted the colonists into Israel.

The settlement of these colonists took place in 674. In the previous year, Esarhaddon's captains had invaded Judah, and carried Manasseh away captive. They probably brought home to their king such an account of the desolate and exposed state of Israel that he, in his own interest, lest some other State should seize upon it, determined to re-stock the country.

"*The rest . . . river*,"—*i.e.*, those inhabitants of Rehum's province who were neither Jews nor Samaritans.

"*River*,"—the Jordan.

"*At such a time*,"—*i.e.*, the date of the writing of the letter was stated at the commencement of it.

"*Building . . . foundations*,"—This was a falsehood. No steps had been taken towards building aught but the Temple. It was not till Nehemiah's administration that the walls were raised; until then only the Temple and a few dwellings had been erected.

“*We have . . . palace,*”—more graphically put in the margin, “*We are salted with the salt of the palace.*”

The crafty Rehum, and his associates, adopt a tone of profound loyalty, and say in effect, “We live upon your bounty, and, therefore, feel it incumbent upon us to attend to your interests.”

“*Moved,*”—better, (as in margin), “*made.*”

“*They have . . . time.*”—From the time that Judah first became tributary to Assyria, under Ahaz, (who volunteered vassalage in consideration of Tiglath-Pileser’s aiding him against Pekah and Rezin), the following kings revolted from the Assyrian yoke :—

1. *Hezekiah*, who, though submitting temporarily to Sennacherib, maintained his independence.

(Under Manasseh, Esarhaddon’s captains reduced Judah to obedience).

(Under Josiah, Egypt robbed Assyria of her rule over Judah ; but the latter power regained her supremacy, under Jehoiakim).

2. *Jehoiakim*, whose allegiance was not recovered

(Judah was again enslaved under Jehoiachin).

3. *Zedekiah*, in whose reign the destruction of Jerusalem occurred.

“*For which . . . destroyed,*”—as far as the king of Assyria was concerned, this was the cause.

“*There have been . . . them.*”—This could be asserted of *Solomon* only : his kingdom extended from the River of Egypt on the S.W., to the E. arm of the Red Sea, (including portions of that arm, and of the S. desert),—thence E. to the Euphrates,—thence following the Euphrates N.W. till opposite Lebanon, —Westward, past Lebanon, to the coast of the Mediterranean, which formed the W. limit,—and from this point Southward, along the coast to the River of Egypt again.

Amongst the nations beyond Jordan eastward who paid him “toll, tribute,” &c., were the Syrian states, Ammon, Moab, and various Arabian tribes.

“*The river,*”—Jordan.

“*The second . . . Darius,*” (Hystaspes), — 520. — The fraud of Pseudo-Smerdis being discovered, he was, in 522, (after reigning less than 18 months), put to death, by 7 Persian nobles, one of whom, the Darius of the text, and known as Darius Hystaspes, ascended the throne.

CHAPTER V.

Encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel and the people recommenced the rebuilding of the Temple: Tatnai, the governor, after questioning the builders, and hearing from them that the work had received the sanction of Cyrus, writes to Darius to ask whether Cyrus's decree can be found, 520.

“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. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealthiel, 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.

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 hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?’

Then said we unto them after this manner, ‘What are the names of the men that make this building?’

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.

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:—

They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus:—

‘Under Darius the king, all peace. 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 great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked

their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. And 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 governor; 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. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. 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."

"*Son of Iddo.*"—He was son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo.

"*Prophesied,*"—spoke for Jehovah.

Haggai delivered, in all, four prophecies:—

1. On the 1st. day of the 6th. month, (of 520),—in which he urges Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people, to resume the building of the Temple, promising them Jehovah's blessing during the work, and afterwards.

From this prophecy, we gather that

(1). The Jews themselves objected to recommence the Temple work, on the pretence that the 70 years' captivity had not ended, and that, therefore, the Divinely-appointed time for reërecting Jehovah's House had not arrived. (They reckoned from 588, the year of the destruction of

the First Temple, instead of from the first deportation, in 606).

(2). While neglecting the House of the Lord, the Jews were raising splendid private dwellings for themselves.

(3). In consequence of this irreligious conduct, Jehovah had sent a blight upon flocks, herds, fields, and vineyards, (which Haggai declared that God would abundantly increase and prosper, if the people would arise and build). (Read Hag. i. 1-11).

2. On the 21st. of the 7th. month,—in which he predicts that *the glory of the Second Temple* should be *greater than that of the First, since*, “in a remarkable political revolution, *the gifts of the Gentiles would be brought into it*,” (the fulfilment of which prediction will be found noted in our sketch of the History of Zerubbabel’s Temple). (Read Hag. ii. 1-9).

3. On the 24th. of the 9th. month,—delivered when the materials had been collected, and the work begun, and promising therefore a commencement of the Divine blessing. (Read c. ii. 10-19).

4. Also on the 24th. of the 9th. month, (addressed to Zerubbabel exclusively),—informing him, (in reply, evidently, to anxious query), that the political revolutions formerly foretold would not happen for a considerable time after his death.

Zechariah’s prophecies connected with the building of the Temple were uttered

1. On the 24th. of the 11th. month,—promising that the Temple should be built, (read c. i. 16).

2. About the same time, (to Zerubbabel),—promising that, as he had laid its foundation, so should he finish it, (read c. iv. 6-9, from, “This is the word”).

3. About the same time, (to Joshua),—promising that he should finish the House, and preside in it as high-priest, (read c. vi. 11-13),—a passage strongly prophetic of THE GREAT HIGH-PRIEST, JESUS.

“*Began to build the house of God*,”—without obtaining a revocation of the edict of “Artaxerxes.”

The language of the text leads to the supposition that, up till the present time, nothing had been done towards the work but laying the foundation.

“*Governor on this side the river*” (Jordan), — *i.e.*, satrap of the province including Syria, Phœnicia, and

Palestine, in which office he succeeded Rehum. This visit of Tatnai shews that, though they had native governors with full powers of internal administration, the Jews were still under the control of the provincial governor, who, however, seems not to have interfered as long as peace was preserved and the imposts paid. There is no doubt that the Samaritans had been complaining to Darius in the same tone that they had employed towards "Artaxerxes," and that the latter had sent orders to Tatnai to enquire into the matter. The governor acted wisely, coming to see for himself whether the Jews were bent on mischief, and then sending a very fair and temperate statement of the facts to Darius.

"*We.*"—Here, Ezra, instead of continuing his narrative in the 3rd person, carries it on by a quotation, (in the 1st person), from Tatnai's letter.

"*They could not Darius,*"—i.e., the Samaritans, not being supported by Tatnai, were not able to compel the Jews to stop building, until an appeal had been made to Darius.

"*They returned answer letter,*"—i.e., Tatnai and his associates wrote to Darius, the letter subjoined.

"*Shetharboznai Apharsachites,*" (or *Apharsathchites*),—were Tatnai's brother-officers.

"*Judea.*"—Before the Captivity, the term *Judea* denoted the kingdom of Judah, as distinguished from that of Israel. After the Return, the name was applied, (as in the text), to all Palestine W. of Jordan. Under the Romans it was employed, also, "as a political and local distinction" of the southernmost of the three divisions of the country. "*Jew,*" too, was, before the Exile, confined to subjects of the kingdom of Judah; but, after the Return, was extended to all Hebrews, in whatever country dwelling, and, later on, embraced also Jewish proselytes.

"*A great king of Israel,*"—Solomon.

"*The Chaldean,*"—i.e., Chaldee-Babylonian. The Chaldees originally occupied the mountains of Armenia. They thence entered the Babylonian territory in large numbers, grew preëminent there, and, under Nabopolassar, viceroy of Babylon, seized the supreme power, and founded the Chaldee-Babylonian kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was son, and successor, of Nabopolassar.

CHAPTER VI.

The decree of Cyrus is discovered, and, by Darius, ordered to be acted upon, 519. The Second Temple is finished, and dedicated, 515: The Priests and Levites are arranged in their proper courses: The Passover is kept.

“Then Darius the king made a *decree*, and search was made in *the house of the rolls*, where the treasures were laid up in *Babylon*.

And there was found at *Achmetha*, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record *thus written*:—

‘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; with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber*: and let the expences be given out of the king’s house: and also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.’

‘Now, therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-bozuai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, *be ye far from thence*: 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.

Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king’s goods, even of *the tribute* beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. 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 : that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons. Also, I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and, being set up, let him be hanged thereon ; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. 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 !

Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

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 commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 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.

And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, 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.

And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem ; as it is written in the book of Moses.

And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. 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. 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, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days, with joy : for

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."

"*A decree*,"—that search should be made for the Edict of Cyrus.

"*The House of the Rolls*,"—*i.e.*, the Record-Office.

"*In Babylon*,"—where, as the next verse shews, the search was ineffectual.

"*Achmetha*,"—the same as the *Ecbatana* of profane history. This city was the capital of Media, and was the summer-residence of the Persian kings, from the time of Cyrus downwards, as their winter home was at Susa.

"*Thus written*,"—The succeeding paragraph contains a verbatim transcript of Cyrus's edict.

"*The height . . . and the breadth . . . cubits*,"—These are the dimensions of the Temple *Proper*. The "height" here mentioned is, according to Josephus, that of *the porch* only.

Why Cyrus should have prescribed this particular extent we cannot tell.

"*Cubits*,"—of nearly 22 inches each.

"*Three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber*,"—*i.e.*, the walls were to consist of three thicknesses of stone, wainscotted with cedar-wood, just as the walls of Solomon's Temple had been.

It seems strange that Cyrus should give such meagre directions, referring only to the length, the breadth, and the material of the walls. Perhaps the decree actually contained full particulars as to the building, and only a summary of the edict is given by Ezra; or, it may be, as seems not unlikely, that, as the Temple was to be erected at the royal expense, it was necessary to fix its dimensions and material, (and these *alone*), so as to be able to form the estimate of its cost, and provide funds accordingly.

With regard to the internal fittings and decorations, the presents received by the Jews, on their return, and the contributions of the remigrants, for Temple purposes, were, doubtless, amply sufficient.

"*Now therefore*,"—From here down to "with speed" are comprehended Darius's instructions to Tatnai.

"*Be ye far from thence*,"—*i.e.*, "*Far be it from you to interfere with the building*"!

"*The tribute*,"—paid by the people of Tatnai's province.

“*Wheat*,”—for making shew-bread, and for meat-offerings.

“*Salt*,”—was employed in the sacrifices.

“*Wine*,”—for drink-offerings.

“*Oil*,”—for meat-offerings, and burning in the Temple lamps.

“*Prospered . . . Iddo*,”—*i.e.*, they succeeded in the work, through being encouraged and supported by the Divinely-inspired exhortations and promises of these two prophets.

“*Artaxerxes*,”—*Artaxerxes Longimanus*, under whom Ezra and Nehemiah executed their reforms. The text would lead one to believe that Artaxerxes had a hand in causing the Temple to be built. It was not so; but as, after the Temple was finished, he issued an edict for its adornment and enrichment, Ezra very justly reckons him amongst those kingly benefactors to whom the Jews owed the restored “House of the Lord”.

“*The month Adar*,”—the twelfth month of the Sacred, and sixth of the Civil, Year.

“*With joy*,”—apparently, unmingled with weeping; “the ancient men” who had grieved on occasion of the foundation of the structure would now be dead.

“100 bullocks, 200 rams, 400 lambs.”—At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, and during the ensuing 14 days festival, 7 of which constituted the Feast of Tabernacles, there were offered, in all, 22,000 oxen, and 120,000 sheep.

“*A sin-offering*.”—Sin-offerings were made for sins of inadvertence.

They were presented either for the whole Congregation, or for the priests, or for a ruler, or for ordinary individuals.

“*He-goats*.”—A he-goat was the proper animal for a ruler’s sin-offering; in the present case, a sacrifice was presented for each of the 12 tribal princes as the representative of his particular tribe.

In sacrificing thus for a prince, the offerer brought the victim to the Brazen Altar,—laid his hand on its head, confessing his sin, and praying for expiation,—and then slew the animal. The priest then sprinkled, with his finger, some of the blood, 7 times, on the horns of the Altar, on the ground before which he then poured the remainder,—sacrificed the fat and the lobe of the liver,—and, with the males of his family, ate the residue.

“*Twelve . . . Israel*,”—proves that members of the Ten Tribes returned with Zerubbabel.

"Divisions": "courses."—Both priests and Levites were divided into "courses," and these are equally "divisions."

Compare I. Chron. xxiv. 1, ("divisions"), and xiii. 6, (the marginal reading of "courses").

"Kept the Passover,"—whose season, (Abib 14th), fell shortly after the dedication.

"Their brethren the priests,"—i.e., those who were not officiating at the time.

"All such . . . land,"—probably, Samaritan proselytes.

"The king of Assyria."—Darius is here so called because his empire included the former one of Assyria.

Description of the Second Temple.

It was built on the site of Solomon's Temple, (i.e., on Mount Moriah), and was connected with the city by a bridge. It seems to have been on the same plan as, though differing in dimensions from, and not so gorgeously adorned as, the First Temple.

The Courts,—were two in number, open and quadrangular, —each being enclosed by a wall:—

1. *The Outer Court, or Great Court.*

2. *The Inner Court, or Court of the Priests, or Court before the Temple.*—On a higher level than the preceding one, and containing

(1). THE ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERING.

(2). A MOLTEN SEA, ON BASES.

? (3). LAVERS?

It has been stated that, in fulfilment of a prophecy of Jeremiah, the Sea, and the Bases, (as also the porch-pillars), must have been brought back.

With regard to the other articles of Temple-furniture, it is supposed that the Second Temple contained some kind of counterpart of every article but the Ark.

Enclosed within the Court of the Priests was

The Temple proper,—consisting of the *Porch*; "the Holy Place," and the *Holy of Holies, or Oracle.*

The breadth of the Temple was 60 cubits. With regard to its length, we will only hazard the suggestion that, as Cyrus mentions "breadth," but not "length," the building was a square, each side 60 cubits long. The height of the Temple, (or, according to Josephus, of the *Porch*), was 60 cubits.

[*Dimensions of Solomon's Temple.*—Length, (including the Porch), 70 cubs.,—breadth, 20 cubs.,—height, 30 cubs., (excepting the *Holy of Holies*, which was only 20 feet high).]

1. *The Porch*,—having on either side of it the two hollow pillars of brass, (native copper), *Jachin* (= *it shall stand*), and *Boaz* (= *in strength*).

Each pillar was 18 cubits high, and 12 cubits in circumference,—and was surmounted by a capital of “molten brass” 5 cubits high, ornamented with network, wreaths of chainwork, and pomegranates.

2. *The Holy Place*,—dimensions unknown.

Its walls were of hewn stone, wainscotted with cedar.

It probably contained

(1). AN ALTAR OF INCENSE.

(2). A GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.

(These two articles are mentioned in connection with Pompey's visit to the Temple, as forming part of its furniture).

(3). TEN TABLES OF SHEWBREAD.

(In Solomon's Temple, the Holy Place was 40 cubs. long, 20 wide, and 30 high).

3. *The Holy of Holies, or Oracle*,—dimensions unknown.

Its walls were of hewn stone, wainscotted with cedar.

It was, doubtless, separated from the Holy Place by a **VAIL**.

It contained nothing, as far as we know,—the Ark and the Cherubim having been destroyed when Nebuzaradan sacked Jerusalem.

(The Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple formed a perfect cube, 20 feet every way).

Cloisters, or cells, (Josephus says), existed in the courts of the Second Temple,—for storehouses, and lodgings for those on duty in the House.

The Vessels of the Temple consisted of those returned to the Jews by Cyrus, and, probably, others which they themselves made.

(Anyone wishing to institute a more thorough comparison between the First, and the Second, Temple, will be easily able to do so by aid of the author's “Notes on I. Kings”).

The Second Temple was inferior to the First in

1. Beauty and richness.

2. The absence of

(1.) The Ark, and nearly all the other original Temple furniture.

(2.) The Shechinah, or visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence.

(3.) The Sacred Fire upon the Altar.

(It has been already stated in what respect it was *more glorious* than the First).

Subsequent history of the Second Temple:—

Not long after the days of Nehemiah, Joshua, the younger son of the then high-priest, having been promised the pontificate by Bagoses, the Persian generalissimo, domineered over his elder brother, Jonathan, (or Johanan), in the Temple, whereupon the latter slew him within the sacred precincts. Bagoses then marched upon Jerusalem, —insisted on entering the sanctuary, declaring that he was less unclean than the body of Joshua,—and levied a fine of 50 shekels on each lamb sacrificed during the next seven years.

Alexander the Great, on occasion of his celebrated visit to Jerusalem, (when he came to punish the Jews for refusing to transfer their allegiance from the king of Persia to himself; but was disarmed at sight of Jaddua, the high-priest, who went forth to meet him), *offered sacrifices to Jehovah in the Temple.*

Simon the Just, the next high-priest but one to Jaddua, repaired and re-beautified portions of the building, and rigidly maintained its services, with much pomp.

Ptolemy Philopator visited Jerusalem, when Simon II., the fourth high-priest from Simon the Just, was pontiff, —and *offered sacrifices in, and presented rich gifts to, the Temple*; but, endeavouring, against the entreaties of the priest, to enter the Holy of Holies, he was, on nearing it, stricken with a horrible dread, and removed from the building more dead than alive.

Alexander the Great, and Ptolemy Philopator, fulfilled Haggai's prophecy that the Second Temple should be more glorious than the First.

Under the next high-priest, Onias III., Seleucus, the Syrian king, sent his treasurer, Heliodorus, to plunder the Temple treasury. Heliodorus destroyed the outer

gates, (the pontiff having closed the building against him), and was about to enter the sacred precincts, when a like panic to that which had fallen upon Ptolemy struck him down, and induced him to return without having accomplished his purpose.

Onias III. was supplanted by his brother Joshua, who bribed Antiochus Epiphanes to transfer the pontificate to him; and was himself ousted by the same means by another brother, Onias IV., who took the name of *Menelaus*. In order to obtain means to pay Antiochus the promised bribe he caused a number of the golden vessels of the Temple to be abstracted, and sold at Tyre.

A disturbance at Jerusalem, caused by the strife between Joshua, (who had adopted the name of *Jason*), and Onias IV., having been represented to Antiochus as a general Jewish revolt, that monarch stormed Jerusalem,—gave it up to pillage and slaughter during three days,—and, entering the Temple, seized all its vessels and treasures, and caused a great sow to be sacrificed on the altar,—part of its flesh to be boiled,—and the liquor poured over every part of the House.

Subsequently, being disappointed in his designs on Egypt, Antiochus vented his spleen on the Jews, Jerusalem being again sacked, and a Syrian garrison lodged in the citadel on Mount Zion. As this fortress commanded the Temple, the Jews were afraid to go up thither to worship, and the daily sacrifices ceased.

The tyrant having determined on uniformity of worship throughout his territories, now caused the Temple to be consecrated to his favorite deity, Zeus Olympius. An Altar, dedicated to that divinity, was placed upon the Brazen Altar, and swine's flesh offered upon it, while the most licentious heathen ritual was introduced.

Judas Maccabæus, having recovered the province of Judæa, set to work to restore the Temple worship. He cleared the precincts of the vegetation which covered them, (shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest),—took away the polluted Brazen Altar, and substituted another,—furnished new vessels,—restored the priests,—relit the sacred fire,—and re-dedicated the structure, in B.C. 165, with an eight days' festival.

Simon Maccabæus, strengthened the fortifications surrounding the Temple.

Alexander Jannæus, who succeeded Aristobulus on the throne of Judæa, separated the Outer Court from the Inner by a wooden partition.

Pompey, during the contentions amongst the later Maccabees, took Jerusalem. The soldiers entered the Temple and slew the priests, who were, unmoved, conducting their solemn rites. Pompey, out of curiosity, entered the Holy of Holies; but left the treasury intact,—caused the building to be cleansed from the pollution of his troops,—and made Hyrcanus high-priest.

Marcus Crassus, having succeeded Pompey as prefect of Syria, with authority to make war at his own will, determined on hostilities against Parthia.

To obtain the "sinews of war" he determined to plunder the Temple, whose treasury is said to have contained at the time an amount equal to about £2,000,000, besides vessels of gold and silver of almost equal value. Eleazar, the guardian of the House, offered Crassus a solid bar of gold weighing about 1000 lbs., and concealed in a beam, if he would leave the rest of the treasures alone. The mercenary prefect, whose greed is proverbial, accepted the offer,—took the ingot,—and then plundered the Temple of all he could find in the shape of bullion, specie, and vessels.

Herod the Great, with the aid of Roman troops, stormed the House, B.C. 37, with serious damage to it. Afterwards, in order to win the good-will of the Jews, and to gratify his love for architectural display, he proposed to build a new and magnificent Temple in place of that of Zerubbabel. The consent of the nation was given, but with the wise stipulation that the old building should not be taken down until the materials for the new structure were ready. Herod consented to this proposal, and, when everything was in readiness for commencing, the Second Temple, now in a state of dilapidation, was pulled down 18 B.C.

CHAPTER VII.

In the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Second Caravan of Jews, under Ezra, returns to Jerusalem, with gold, silver, and vessels, contributed by the King, his counsellors, and

the Jews remaining in exile, 458.—Copy of the decree of Artaxerxes.

“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, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: 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.

And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of *Artaxerxes* the king.

And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month 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. 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.*

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:—

‘Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. 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. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand: 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, 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: 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. 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. *The vessels* also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 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 treasure house*. 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, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred *measures* of wheat, and to an hundred *baths* of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. 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? Also, we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinians, or ministers of this house of God, *it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them*. 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. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

(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: 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."

"Artaxerxes."—Artaxerxes Longimanus.

Darius Hystaspes died in 486, and was, in the same year, succeeded by Xerxes, his son by Atossa, Cyrus's daughter. He is the celebrated invader of Greece, and the *Ahasuerus* of the book of *Esther*. (*The student is recommended to peruse that narrative, and gain an acquaintance with the general outline of the incidents it records*).

Xerxes was slain, in 465, by Artabanus, captain of his guard, who aimed at the crown, but was circumvented by Artaxerxes Longimanus, the third son of Xerxes.

Under the reign of Darius, the Jews in exile enjoyed unbroken quiet: under Xerxes they had a narrow escape from extermination, in consequence of Haman's plot, but, from the time of the failure of that scheme, the elevation of Mordecai, and the slaughter of their enemies, the Hebrews in the Persian dominions occupied a higher and more honored position than ever before.

The circumstances leading to Ezra's expedition are not related; but it is most likely that he, being, (as is recorded), profoundly versed in the Law, and anxious for its strict observance, was not satisfied with the loose manner in which it was kept at Jerusalem, and determined to endeavour to induce Artaxerxes to let him return to his country, with a view to remedying abuses, and effecting needful reform. To accomplish his purpose, he, probably, gave the King a full account of the history of the Jews and of God's dealings with them, with which Artaxerxes must have been deeply impressed, for, (see *v. 23*), he feared Jehovah's judgments upon himself and family, should he not afford the exiles every facility for that return which He had promised, and aid them in furthering the well-being of His house. There is no doubt, too, that the connection of his father with the Jews interested the king in Ezra's appeals.

"Son of Seraiah,"—*i.e.*, descendant, (perhaps great-great-grandson), of Seraiah. It was this Seraiah who was high-priest at the taking of Jerusalem in 588, and was slain at Riblah.

His son Jehozadak, or Josedech, was high-priest during the Captivity, and was succeeded by Jeshua, or Joshua, who returned with Zerubbabel, in 536, whence, to the date of Ezra's going up to Judæa, 78 years had elapsed.

It would appear that Ezra was not a descendant of *Jehozadak*; but of another son of *Seraiah*.

The genealogical table given by Ezra in this chapter differs from another register of the high-priesthood in I. Chron. vi. 4-15. The two are appended, with their differences noted :—

Chronicles.				Ezra.			
Aaron.	..	..	..	Aaron.			
Eleazar, (3rd son).	..	..	..	Eleazar.			
Phinehas.	..	..	..	Phinehas.			
Abishua.	..	..	..	Abishua.			
Bukki.	..	..	..	Bukki.			
Uzzi...	..	..	..	Uzzi.			
Zerahiah.	..	..	..	Zerahiah.			
Meraioth.	..	..	..	Meraioth.			
Amariah.							
Ahitub.							
Zadok.							
Ahimaaz.							
Azariah.							
Johanana.)							
Azariah.	..	..	..	Azariah, (probably, the same as <i>Zechariah</i> , who was slain by order of Joash).			
Amariah.	..	..	..	Amariah, (probably, the <i>Azariah</i> who opposed Uzziah's burning in- cense).			

omitted by Ezra.

Chronicles.				Ezra.	
Ahitub.	..	..	..	Ahitub.	
Zadok.	..	..	..	Zadok.	(Between Zadok and Shallum came a high-priest named Urijah, who flourished under Ahaz).
Shallum.	..	..	..	Shallum.	(Between Shallum and Hilkiyah came Azariah).
Hilkiyah.	..	..	..	Hilkiyah.	
Azariah.	..	..	..	Azariah.	
Seraiah.	..	..	..	Seraiah.	
Jehozadak.				Ezra.	

“A ready scribe Moses,”—called also, in this Book, “A scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes, to Israel,” and

“A scribe of the law of the God of heaven.”

The Scribes, (subsequently called, also, “*Lawyers*”), took their rise with the commencement of the Mosaic polity, repeated transcripts of the Law being the only means of making it sufficiently known. At first *merely* transcribers of the sacred books, the familiarity with them thus acquired caused the Scribes to be consulted as to the *meaning* of the Law, so that gradually they came to be looked upon as *teachers* of it, and finally constituted a learned and sacred *caste*, whose functions were various and responsible, and whose power was great and extensive.

Their office involved the care of the Law,—making copies of it,—and explaining it. They were, thus, keepers of the records, consulting lawyers, authorised expounders of Holy Writ, and schoolmasters.

The scribes were honored in proportion as was the Law. From the time of the return from the Captivity, the greatest reverence was paid to the books of Moses, and, consequently, its expounders were in high repute.

In consequence of this, we find Ezra readily recognized by his fellow-countrymen as their civil head.

“*Ready*,”—means *profoundly learned in*, so as to be able to give a *ready answer* to any question concerning the Law.

“*All his request*,”—*i.e.*, to go up to Jerusalem with all who might like to accompany him, and to be allowed to execute any reforms he might think proper.

“*In the seventh year . . . king*,”—*i.e.*, in 458.

“*Ezra . . . judgments*.”—*Ezra's commission was* :—

1. To adorn the Temple, and establish its worship thoroughly.

2. To insist upon strict and general obedience to the Law.

3. To establish judges and magistrates throughout the land.

4. To teach the Law to those ignorant of it.

“*To enquire . . . hand*,”—*i.e.*, to see whether the Law was kept throughout the country.

“*The vessels*,”—may have been some of those taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, and overlooked on occasion of the departure of the first caravan, or, as seems more likely, they were a special gift of the king.

“*The king's treasure-house*,”—at Babylon.

“*Treasurers*,”—managers of the royal revenue in the province including Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine.

“*Measures*,”—“*cors*,” or “*homers*,” each about 31 pks., 1 gal., 6 pts.

“*Baths*,” (or “*ephahs*”),—each about 7 gals., 4 pts.

“*It shall not . . . them*.”—This was putting them on the same footing as the Medes and Persians, who paid no imposts whatever.

“*Blessed . . . princes*,”—a pious inter-jaculation of Ezra's.

CHAPTER VIII.

List of those composing the Second Caravan.—

After a fast at the river Ahava, the start is made: the re-migrants reach Jerusalem in safety:—the gold, silver, and vessels, are lodged in the Temple.—Ezra delivers his

commission to the king's representatives,—
all in ~~548~~. 458 78

“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:—

Of the sons of *Phinehas*; Gershon: of the sons of *Ithamar*; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. 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. Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zeremiah, and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of *Shechaniah*; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. And of the sons of Shephathiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. And of *the last sons* of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

And I gathered them together to *the river that runneth to Ahava*; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and *found there none of the sons of Levi*. 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. And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place *Casiphia*, and 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. 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; and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 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.

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. 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. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 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: 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; also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of *fine copper*, precious as gold. 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. 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*. 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.

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 way.

And *we came to Jerusalem*, and abode there three days. 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 Eleazer the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; by number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. 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.

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."

"*Me,*"—i.e., Ezra.

"*Phinehas,*"—son of Eleazar, Aaron's 3rd. son.

"*Ithamar,*"—Aaron's 4th, and youngest son.

"*Shechaniah . . . Shechaniah,*"—two different persons.

"*The last sons,*" (i.e., descendants).—A number of Adonikam's descendants had gone up with Zerubbabel: the remnant went up with Ezra, *leaving none of the family in exile.*

"*Zabud,*"—or, as some read, "*Zaccur.*"

The total, including the Levites and Nethinim hereafter mentioned, of those enumerated as accompanying Ezra, amounts to 1754. These, however, are the males only, probably, too, the *adult* males only. Adding a fair proportion of women, youths, and children, we have a sum of about 6,500 as comprising this Second Caravan.

That so few should have responded to Ezra's invitation is not wonderful. During the interval since the departure of the First Caravan, all those who had been carried into exile had died, as well as the greater portion of another generation. The Jews of Ezra's day were completely naturalized in the place of their ancestors' exile,—they were prosperous and comfortable there,—and the Judaic legend had little or no romance for them: they cared not to quit peace, plenty, and security, to go through dangers, to dwell in an impoverished and unsettled land, constantly liable to attack and disaster.

Moreover, by this time, the Jews in exile had, doubtless, considerably spread, so that there was not, as in

Zerubbabel's time, any very considerable body at any given point, so that the difficulty of assembling a large party was mightily enhanced.

It will be noticed that nearly all of those who went up with Ezra belonged to families which had supplied a large contingent to Zerubbabel, the only new family names occurring in the list in the text being Shechaniah, (two); Joab; Shelomith; and Mahli. We infer hence that the materials of the second expedition and those of the first must have been drawn mainly from the same quarter,—Babylonia.

"*The river . . . Ahava,*"—probably, only one of the canals with which Babylonia and Mesopotamia then abounded. It appears to have run into the Euphrates, and to have had the town of *Ahava* on its bank.

"*I found there none of the sons of Levi,*"—although, apparently, a number of them had promised to go.

"*Casiphia,*"—some place in Babylonia of which nothing is known.

"*Israel,*"—Jacob.

"*The enemy in the way,*"—The route this caravan pursued always has been, and is now, infested by Arab robbers, who miss no chance of plunder, either by open assault, exaction, or sly theft.

"*Talents,*"—probably Babylonish talents, worth, each, about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Jewish talent. (A Jewish talent of silver = £375; and of gold, £6000).

"*Fine copper,*"—margin, "*yellow brass,*" or "*shining brass*": the metal intended is a copper of a peculiar yellow color which the ancients valued equally with gold. The Syriac has, in the text, "*Corinthian brass,*" (so highly celebrated amongst the ancients).

"*The chambers . . . Lord,*"—shows the correctness of Josephus's assertion that there were cells in the Courts of the Second Temple.

"*Then we departed,*"—It is always the practice of caravans in Western Asia to advance a short distance from their original starting point, and then bivouac for a few days while needful arrangements are being made,—and even when everything is in readiness the custom is still observed. With such a multitude as Ezra had under his command, a stoppage for the purpose of ordering the march was absolutely necessary, especially as he had to see that the

riches he was to convoy were safely bestowed and guarded. He halted longer than is usual, because he had to send for the Levites, and to keep the fast.

"*On the twelfth . . . month.*"—We learn from the preceding chapter that the caravan started from *Babylon* on the first day of the first month, (of 458).

"*We came to Jerusalem,*"—on the first day of the fifth month, according to preceding chapter,—4 months having thus been occupied in the journey.

"*Son of Phinehas,*"—i.e., descendant of Phineas.

"*Twelve . . . Israel,*"—shews that members of the Ten Tribes were amongst those who returned with Ezra.

"*Lieutenants,*"—viceroys.

"*Governors,*"—subordinate rulers.

Zerubbabel was, doubtless, dead, at this time. Who succeeded him we know not. It is stated by many that *Ezra* was invested with the governorship of Judæa; but there is no proof of the fact either in Artaxerxes' decree, or elsewhere in the narrative. We are satisfied that he came merely as a reformer.

"*Furthered,*"—i.e., gave needful assistance to.

CHAPTER IX.

Ezra is informed by the princes that many of the Jews have contracted marriages with foreign wives: he is sore grieved thereat, and deprecates *Jehovah's* wrath by earnest prayer, 458.

"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. 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.'

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.

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 *the evening sacrifice*.

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness ; and having rent my garment and my mantle, *I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands* unto the Lord my God, 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 trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 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. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God to leave us a remnant to escape, and *to give us a nail* in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 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 to repair the desolations thereof, and *to give us a wall* in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this ? for we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded 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 from one end to another with their uncleanness. 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. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this ; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these

abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this."

"*When these things were done,*"—refers to the delivering up of the gold, &c., the offering of sacrifices, the presentation of Ezra's credentials, and the "furthering" of the people and the Temple.

"*The people . . . lands,*"—not the new-comers, but the members of the first caravan and their descendants.

"*The holy seed,*"—see Deut. vii. 6.

"*The evening sacrifice,*"—the lamb of the Continual Burnt-Offering.

"*I fell . . . hands,*"—i.e., he kneeled, and then, stretching forth his hands upon the ground, lowered his face between them,—a posture signifying, in the East, the deepest humiliation.

"*Nail,*"—rather, (as in margin), "*pin.*"

"*To give us a nail,*"—i.e., "*to establish,*" (or *fix*) "*us.*"

The metaphor is taken from the pins, to which, driven into the ground, are attached the cords that support a tent. (The expression is used in Is. xxii. 23, also).

"*To give us a wall,*"—i.e., "*to protect us*" (in possession of Jerusalem and Judæa).

"*Thy servants the prophets,*"—a *pluralis excellentiæ*, indicating *Moses*, who it was delivered these warnings.

The principal passages in which these marriage-connections were forbidden are Exod. xxxiv. 11-16: Deut. vii. 1-6, (read, or learn). Notice that the reason for these prohibitions was Jehovah's desire to restrain His people from idolatry!

"*Nor seek . . . ever,*"—was spoken by Moses specially of the Ammonites and Moabites, (see Deut. xxiii. 3-6).

(Nehemiah had afterwards just the same trouble as Ezra on the score of this unhallowed kind of marriage).

CHAPTER X.

The people assemble before Ezra, in great grief: Shechaniah proposes the putting away of all foreign wives and their children,

to which all agree, 458: the divorces are arranged in gradual order.—A list of names of those who had taken “strange women” for wives.

“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 wept very sore.

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. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God 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. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.’

Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swear.

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.

And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the *princes* and the *elders*, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

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 for the great rain.

And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them :—

‘Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 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.’

Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice : ‘As thou hast said, so must we do. 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 we are many that have transgressed in this thing. *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 for this matter be turned from us.*’

Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, *were employed* about this matter ; and Meshulam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

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 in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And *they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.*

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. 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. And of the sons of Immer ; Hanani, and Zebadiah. And of the sons of Harim ; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziab. And of the sons of Pashur ; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasa.

Also of the Levites ; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiab, (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. Of the singers also ; Eliashib : and of the porters ; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

Moreover of Israel : of the sons of Parosh ; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar. and

Malchijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam ; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. And of the sons of Zattu ; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. Of the sons also of Bebai ; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. And of the sons of Bani ; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab ; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. And of the sons of Harim ; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum ; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. Of the sons of Bani ; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chellub, Veniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, and Bani, and Binui, Shimei, and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo ; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. All these had taken strange wives : and *some of them had wives by whom they had children.*"

"*The chamber,*"—was, probably, in the Temple.

"*Princes,*"—heads of tribes.

"*Elders,*"—heads of families.

"*The street of the house of God,*"—*i.e.*, the Outer Court of the Temple : in the Old Testament "*street*" often means, (as in the text), merely *an open space*.

"*Without,*"—*i.e.*, in the open Court.

"*Let . . . us.*"—The proposal of the people was that a commission of Elders should be appointed, and that before them should appear, in turns, the men of each city, (accompanied by its elders and judges), who should then be examined as to whether they had contracted one of these unhallowed marriages, and, in case of their having done so, should be divorced.

It speaks well for the devotion to the Law of the returned exiles that they should have been so ready to give up all they held dearest in the world, because their continuing the relationship was hateful to Jehovah, and forbidden by Him.

"*Were employed,*"—margin, "*stood,*" *i.e.*, "*withstood*": these four *opposed* the people's proposition.

"*They made . . . month,*"—so that the settlement of all the cases occupied exactly 3 months.

"*Gave their hands.*"—Bargains, or covenants, are ratified in the East, as with us, by shaking hands.

"*A ram of the flock,*"—one of the appointed victims for a trespass-offering, the other allowed being a he-lamb.

Trespass-offerings were presented for *special acts* of sin committed unwittingly, or for the purgation of certain bodily impurities. It was under the former head that the present sacrifices were offered, the marriages having been contracted through heedlessness, not with a wilful intent to disobey, as is proved by the readiness with which the connections were sundered by the men.

"*Some of them . . . children.*"—The children were put away as well as the mothers, (see *v.* 3). Doubtless, provision was made for them and for the divorced wives.

Ezra's narrative ends abruptly at this stage. *From Nehemiah* we learn further particulars concerning his after career, which, with some other necessary details, here follow:—

The Persian monarchs' policy had prevented their allowing the building of the *walls* of Jerusalem, which, consequently, lay completely exposed and open. Only the Temple and about 80 private houses had been erected within the precincts of the old city since the return of Zerubbabel.

In 445, however, a deputation from Jerusalem came to Shusan with a sad account of the city's condition, which seems to have been rendered more desolate than ever by recent Samaritan attacks, and to have been threatened by Megabyzus, who, having revolted in Syria, had twice defeated Artaxerxes' armies.

Nehemiah, a Jew, probably of the tribe of Judah, and then a favoured cup-bearer of the King, deeply moved at the story, obtained permission from Artaxerxes to absent himself for a certain period from Court, in order to go up and rebuild Jerusalem. He was appointed Tirshatha, (which proves that Ezra did not hold that post), and received from the King, among other credentials, an order on Asaph, keeper of the royal forests, for all the timber he might need.

Escorted by a troop of cavalry, Nehemiah reached Jeru-

salem in safety, and, amidst general joy, the building of the walls was commenced.

Like Zerubbabel, Nehemiah was opposed by the Samaritans, headed by Sanballat, (who, though a Moabite, was, apparently, governor of Samaria), Tobiah, and Geshem, both Samaritans. But all their machinations failed,—the walls were finished, and the gates set up, all in 52 days!

Nehemiah then applied himself to matters of internal government. He first abolished a grinding system of usury, which had reduced large numbers of the people to deepest poverty and distress, and then proceeded to revise the national genealogical register,—all in 445.

In the same year, occurred the events narrated in Nehemiah viii., (read), of which the following is an epitome :—

The people assembled “before the water-gate,” (in the east of Jerusalem), on *the first day of the seventh month*, and Ezra read the Law to them, commencing with early day and ending at noon, the priests and Levites interpreting it to the congregation, who wept bitterly, (to think how far short they came of fulfilling its precepts), but were comforted by Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites, and told to keep the day as one of feasting and rejoicing, trusting in Jehovah for strength henceforth to do His will. The people acted as advised, the poor having “portions” sent them by the rich.

The next day the Elders, priests, and Levites, assembled before Ezra, to study the Law minutely, and finding that it commanded the people to dwell in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles, they determined to celebrate the next anniversary of that festival *en règle*. Accordingly, proclamation was made throughout the country, and, during the time the feast lasted the whole Congregation dwelt under booths, which had not been done since the days of Joshua.

This *Feast of Tabernacles* was celebrated with unusual gladness, and, during its progress, Ezra read daily to the people out of the Book of the Law.

“*The first day of the seventh month*,” (Tisri),—was one of the Month-Sabbaths, and, being the commencement of the Civil Year, was kept with great solemnity. It was one of the 7 days of Holy Convocation. The trumpets were then blown, not only at the time of offering the sac-

rifices, but throughout the day, whence it was called *The Feast of Trumpets*. In addition to the daily sacrifices, and those proper to the day as a Moon-Sabbath, nine burnt-offerings, and one sin-offering, were sacrificed.

The "Feast of Tabernacles," or of Ingathering, — was instituted by Jehovah to

1. Celebrate the ingathering of the harvest and of the vintage.
2. Commemorate the Israelites having dwelt in tents during their wanderings.

It commenced on the 15th. of the seventh month, and lasted seven days, the first of which, and the following eighth day, were to be days of Holy Convocation. During the continuance of the Feast, the people dwelt in booths constructed with branches of olive, palm, &c. It was the most joyous of the Jewish festivals, and during its celebration more sacrifices were offered than at any other sacred season.

The two grandest celebrations of this Feast were the one narrated in the text, and that connected with the dedication of Solomon's Temple.

It is generally supposed that after the walls of Jerusalem were built, an additional number of Jewish families returned from exile.

The Prophets who flourished during the Period first concluded were

1. Haggai, — came up with Zerubbabel, — prophesied from 520 to 518.
2. Zechariah, — came up with Zerubbabel, — prophesied from 520 to 510.

Epitome of Ezra's Life.

Ezra = *help*. The Septuagint styles him *Esdras*.

He was a lineal descendant of Eleazar, Aaron's third son, and was an accomplished scribe.

Josephus states that he was high-priest of the Jews in exile at Babylon, and that he was highly esteemed for his righteousness and virtue.

(Particulars of his conducting the Second Caravan of remigrants to Jerusalem, and of his consequent acts, down to

the time of the celebration in booths of the Feast of Tabernacles, must be here supplied by the student).

Josephus states that Ezra died at Jerusalem, shortly after the celebration of the Feast just mentioned, and was buried there with great splendour. The Talmud makes him die at Zamzumu, a town on the Tigris, where he is said to have been staying while on his way to converse with Artaxerxes about the condition of the Jews: a tomb asserted to be his is shewn on the Tigris, about 20 miles above its junction with the Euphrates. A third tradition alleges that he returned to Babylon, and died there æt. 120.

Ezra's Writings,—were, probably, produced after his retirement from public life, consequent upon Nehemiah's arrival in Judæa.

In several MSS. of the Vulgate, and in all the printed copies of the Scriptures prior to the decree of the Council of Trent, as well as in many editions since that date, there are found four books following each other, entitled, respectively, the I., II., III., and IV., *Book of Esdras*. Of these, the first two are the canonical Books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and the third and fourth are the two Apocryphal Books of *Esdras*.

Of these, **Ezra wrote only the work that bears his name.**

The Book of Nehemiah was, undoubtedly, written by Nehemiah: I. Esdras is merely an interpolated version of the authentic Book of Ezra; and II. Esdras is a forgery.

Besides these four works, *Esther* is by many authorities, (but incorrectly), attributed to Ezra.

In addition to composing the annals bearing his name, **Ezra compiled I. and II. Chronicles.**

He also, there is every reason to believe, revised, and arranged in their present order, the canonical Scriptures up to his own time. There seems little doubt that, in accomplishing this task, he corrected transcribers' errors, and, under Divine guidance, made such additions and changes, (especially of names of places which had grown obsolete), as appeared necessary.

Amongst these interpolations are, probably, the last chapter of Deuteronomy, containing an account of Moses' death; Gen. xxxvi. 31; Ex. xvi. 35; Prov. xxv. 1. (refer!)

Ezra seems to have changed the old Hebrew characters for the square Chaldean letter which the Jews now use.

Some authorities, very erroneously, affirm that he also introduced the vowel-points into the language : they really owe their origin to the seventh century A.D.

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Assyria Proper.

Mesopotomia, —with the canal, and the town, of Abava.

Babylonia, —with Chaldæa ; Erech ; and Babylon.

Susiana, —with Elymais, and Susa.

Persis.

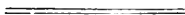
Medea, —with Achmetha (Ecbatana) ; and Paratacene.

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