

LESSON 47
“Let Us Rise Up and Build”
Ezra 1-8; Nehemiah 1-2; 4; 6; 8

OVERVIEW:

Ezra is a historical work that continues the narrative of 2 Chronicles. This is apparent when one notices that the last two verses of 2 Chronicles are repeated almost word for word in the first two and half verses of Ezra. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are the last two historical books of the Old Testament.

Malachi is the only prophet known to have served in Israel between the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and the beginning of the New Testament. Ezra and Nehemiah cover the period 538 BC to around 400 BC.

Ezra and Nehemiah used to be one book.

Some scholars say that Ezra edited the first five books of Moses.

SCRIPTURES:

EZRA
CHAPTER 1

King Cyrus of Persia lets the Jews go back to Jerusalem to build the temple—Cyrus returns vessels of house of the Lord taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

1 NOW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of ^aJeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of ^bCyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation (known as the Edict of Liberation – there are two versions: Ezra 1:2-4 is in Hebrew, the other Ezra 6:3-5 written in Aramaic.) throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, (Isaiah 44:28 and chapter 45 -That saith of ^aCyrus, *He is my ^bshepherd, and shall perform all my ^cpleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be ^dbuilt; and to the ^etemple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*)

2 Thus saith ^aCyrus 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 ^bhouse at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.

3 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.

4 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.

5 ¶ 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.

6 And all they that *were* about them ^astrengthened their hands (assisted them) with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all *that* was willingly offered.

7 ¶ Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had ^abrought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. (Ezra 5:14 indicates that Cyrus made Sheshbazzar the governor, but his name is not mentioned in the list of the returning Jews. Haggai 2:2 identifies Zerubbabel as the governor of Judah. Many scholars have therefore identified Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel as the same person. The book of I Esdras 6:18 in the Apocrypha and other authorities say

they are two people. The evidence seems to favor the idea of two separate persons. Both were of the royal line of Judah, and both were probably appointed by Cyrus. Zurbabel has become the more famous in history because he outlived the older Sheshbazzar.)

9 And this *is* the number of them: thirty ^achargers (or basins) of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second *sort* four hundred and ten, *and* other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did Sheshbazzar bring up with *them* of the ^acaptivity (or exiles) that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 2

Children of the captivity who returned to Jerusalem and to Judah are listed—Children of priests whose genealogy is lost are denied the priesthood—Faithful people contribute to building of the temple.

1 NOW these *are* the ^achildren 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 ^bBabylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;

2 ^aWhich came with ^bZerubbabel: (He was of the royal David line and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. The second temple in Jerusalem is often called the temple of Zerubbabel.) Jeshua, (also Joshua, was the Levitical high priest.) Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

3-20 Laymen, according to family and city 21-35

3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.

4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.

5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.

6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.

7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.

8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five.

9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.

10 The children of ^aBani, six hundred forty and two.

11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three.

12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two.

13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six.

14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six.

15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four.

16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.

17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three.

18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve.

19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three.

20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five.

21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three.

22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six.

23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.

24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two.

25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three.

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

Priests 36-39

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

Levites 40

- 40 ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four.

Singers 41

- 41 ¶ The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight.

Porters 42

- 42 ¶ The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, *in* all an hundred thirty and nine.

Nethinims – given ones to the temple – 43-54

- 43 ¶ The ^aNethinims: (temple servants) the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,
44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon,
45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,
46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan,
47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah,
48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam,
49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai,
50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim,
51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,
52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,
53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah,
54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

Son's of Solomon's servants 55-58

55 ¶ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda,

56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,

57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.

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

Those who claimed to be priesthood holders but who could not prove their genealogy 59-63

59 And these *were* they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, *and* Immer: but they could not ^ashew (Heb tell, declare (their lineage)) their father's house, and their seed, whether they *were* of Israel:

60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.

61 ¶ And of the ^achildren 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:

62 These sought their ^aregister (or record) *among* those that were ^breckoned by ^cgenealogy, (Heb they that traced their genealogy) but they were not found: therefore were they, as ^dpolluted, ^eput from (excluded) the ^fpriesthood. (these were those who married outside the covenant who were disqualified from holding the priesthood.)

63 And the Tirshatha (governor of Judea under the Persians) said unto them, that they should not eat of the most ^aholy things, till there stood up a priest with ^bUrim and with Thummim.

64 ¶ The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand three hundred *and* threescore,

65 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. (42,360 + 7,337 + 200 = 49,897)

66 Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;

67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; *their* asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 ¶ And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the ^ahouse of the LORD which *is* at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

69 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.

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

CHAPTER 3

Altar rebuilt—Regular sacrifices reinstated—Foundations of temple laid amid great rejoicing.

1 AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

2 Then stood up 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 ^aofferings thereon, as *it is* written in the law of Moses the ^bman of God.

3 And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear *was* upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, *even* burnt offerings morning and evening.

4 They kept also the ^afeast 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;

5 And afterward *offered* the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set ^afeasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that ^bwillingly offered a freewill offering unto the

LORD.

6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not *yet* laid.

7 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 ^acedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of ^bCyrus king of Persia.

8 ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

9 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.

10 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.

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving ^athanks unto the LORD; because *he is* ^bgood, for his mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, (probably the Hosanna Shout done today in the temple.) when they ^cpraised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, *who were* ^aancient men (old), that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, ^bwept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: (Solomon's temple had been beautiful, but in their poverty they could only build without much adornment.)

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

CHAPTER 4

Samaritans offer help, then hinder the work—Building of temple and of walls of Jerusalem ceases.

1 NOW when the ^aadversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; (These Samaritans were Assyrians by birth or subjugation. They were not a mixture of Assyrian and Jew. The Samaritans of the New Testament were a mix of Jews and Assyrians.)

2 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 ^abrought us up hither.

3 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 ^aking Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land ^aweakened the hands (an idiom meaning to cause someone to lose heart and be discouraged) of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, (the Samaritans prevented them from building the temple.)

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of ^aDarius king of Persia.

Verses 6-23 are out of place in its present location in the book. It refers to a later attempt to rebuild the city and its walls. The prohibition to build the walls was not lifted until Nehemiah's mission in 445 BC.)

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

7 ¶ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the ^aSyrian (Heb Aramaic) tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. (This was the international language of the Persian empire.)

8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

9 Then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites,

10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar (The Aramaic version of Ashurbanipal, the name of the province or satrapy that included all of Palestine and Syria.) brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are* ^aon this side the river (west of the Euphrates), and at such a time.

11 ¶ This *is* the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations.

13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and *so* thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

14 Now because ^awe have maintenance from (we are dependent on) *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

15 That search may be made in the ^abook of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the ^bbook 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.

16 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.

17 ¶ *Then* sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and *to* Shimshai the scribe, and *to* the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ^aruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to ^acease, and that this city be not builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me.

22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

23 ¶ 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.

24 *Then* ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. (A period of 15 – 17 years.)

CHAPTER 5

Haggai and Zechariah prophesy—Zerubbabel renews building of temple—Samaritans challenge the Jews' right to continue their building work.

1 THEN the ^aprophets, ^bHaggai the prophet, and ^cZechariah 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. (Two prophets inspired the people to sacrifice to build the temple.)

2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.

3 ¶ At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor ^aon this side the river, (on the west side of the Euphrates River, including Syria and Cilicia) 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?

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

5 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*.

6 ¶ 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:

7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

8 Be it known unto the ^aking, 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.

9 Then asked we those elders, *and* said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that *were* the chief of them.

11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

12 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.

13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon *the same* king ^aCyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the 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;

15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.

16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and* laid the foundation of the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and *yet* it is not finished.

17 Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which *is* there at 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. (The decrees of one king were often honored by his successors.)

CHAPTER 6

Darius renews decree of Cyrus to build the temple—It is finished and dedicated, and sacrifices and feasts commence again.

1 THEN Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the ^arolls, (or books, archives) where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a ^aroll, and

therein *was* a record thus written:

3 In the first year of Cyrus the king *the same* Cyrus the king made a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the ^ahouse 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;

4 *With* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

5 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.

6 Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor ^abeyond the river (on the west side of the Euphrates River), Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

8 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 expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

9 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:

10 That they may offer ^asacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and ^bpray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

11 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.

12 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.

13 ¶ Then Tatnai, governor ^aon this side the river (on the west side of the Euphrates River), Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of ^aHaggai 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 ^bCyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month ^aAdar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. (The second temple was completed in 516 BC, exactly 75 years after the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy. The temple may have been a little larger than Solomon's except not as lavishly appointed. Also, the Holy of Holies was empty because they did not have the Ark of the Covenant. Elder Talmage said "Notwithstanding these differences the Temple of Zerubbabel was recognized of God and was undoubtedly the site or seat of Divine revelation to duly constituted prophets." House of the Lord, p. 42-43 It was this temple that King Herod refurbished and made very beautiful during the Savior's ministry.)

16 ¶ And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the ^adedication of this house of God with joy,

17 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.

18 And they set the ^apriests in their divisions, and the Levites in their ^bcourses, for the ^cservice of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. (The priesthood holders were seated in their proper divisions and courses much like the arrangement followed in solemn assemblies today, as one supposes.)

19 And the children of the captivity kept the ^apassover upon the ^bfourteenth *day* of the first month.
20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.
21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had ^aseparated themselves unto them from the ^bfilthiness of the ^cheathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,
22 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, ^ato strengthen their hands (to assist them) in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

The lesson to learn is that Satan will use every weapon he has to keep temples from being built. We must be ever vigilant in making sure they do get built.

CHAPTER 7

Nearly 60 years separate Ezra 6:22 from Ezra 7:1. During that time, Esther is able to avert a threat of destroying the Jews, including Ezra and Nehemiah.

Ezra goes up to Jerusalem—Artaxerxes provides for beautifying the temple and sustains the Jews in their worship.

1 NOW after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of ^aHilkiah,
2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,
3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,
4 The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,
5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:
6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* a ready ^ascribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the ^bhand of the LORD his God upon him.
7 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.
8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was* in the seventh year of the king.
9 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 ^ahand of his God upon him.
10 For Ezra had ^aprepared his ^bheart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel ^cstatutes and judgments.
11 ¶ Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a ^ascribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.
12 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.
13 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.
14 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;
15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation *is* in Jerusalem,
16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which *is* in Jerusalem:

17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem.

18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the ^asilver and the gold, that do after the will of your God.

19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.

20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out of the king's treasure house.

21 And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily,

22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*.

23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

24 Also we ^acertify you (*inform*), that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, ^bNethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that *is* in thine hand, set magistrates and ^ajudges, which may judge all the people that *are* ^bbeyond the river (*on the west side of the Euphrates River*), all such as know the ^claws of thy God; and ^dteach ye them that know *them* not.

26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto ^adeath, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 ¶ Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to ^abeautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem:

28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

CHAPTER 8

Those who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem are listed—Levites are called to accompany them—Ezra and the people fast and pray for and gain guidance and protection in going to Jerusalem.

1 THESE *are* now the ^achief of their fathers (*Heb heads of their fathers; ie patriarchal leaders*), and *this is* the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.

2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush.

3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty.

4 Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zeremiah, and with him two hundred males.

5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.

6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males.

7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.

8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males.

9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.

10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males.

11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males.

12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males.

13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names *are* these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males.

14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

15 ¶ 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. (Those of the Levites who were not priests, or descendants of Aaron.)

16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for ^aMeshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding.

17 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.

18 And by the good ^ahand 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;

19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;

20 Also of the ^aNethinims, 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.

21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a ^afast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might ^bafflict (humble) ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 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 ^agood that ^bseek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them that forsake him.

23 So we ^afasted and besought our God for this: and he was ^bintreated of us.

24 ¶ Then I ^aseparated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25 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:

26 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;

27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of ^afine copper (shining brass), precious as gold.

28 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.

29 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.

30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring *them* to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

31 ¶ 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.

32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

33 ¶ Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *was* Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;

34 By number *and* by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.

35 *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.

36 ¶ And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors ^aon

this side the river (on the west side of the Euphrates River): and they ^bfurthered (raised, promoted) the people, and the house of God.

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

Nehemiah mourns and fasts and prays for the Jews in Jerusalem.

1 THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month ^aChisleu, (the ninth of the Hebrew months, beginning at the new moon of December) in the twentieth year, as I was in ^bShushan (or Susa (the chief city of all Persia)) the palace,
2 That ^aHanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.
3 And they said unto me, The ^aremnant that are left of the captivity there in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.
4 ¶ And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and ^afasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,
5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, ^athe great and terrible God (Heb the God, the great, and the revered), that ^bkeepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:
6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and ^aconfess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.
7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.
8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If ye transgress, I will* ^ascatter you abroad among the nations:
9 But *if ye* turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I ^agather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.
10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy ^apeople, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.
11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to ^afear thy name (reverence thy name): and ^bprosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

CHAPTER 2

Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem—Sanballat and others oppose Nehemiah in rebuilding walls and gates of Jerusalem.

1 AND it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that* wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence.
2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,
3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be ^asad, when the

city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?
4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.
5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.
6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.
7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors ^abeyond the river (on the west side of the Euphrates River), that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;
8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.
9 ¶ Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.
10 When ^aSanballat (The governor of Samaria) the Horonite, and ^bTobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard *of it*, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.
11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.
12 ¶ And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.
13 And I went out by night by the ^agate of the ^bvalley, (the name of a gate in the wall of Jerusalem, approx modern Jaffa gate) even before the ^cdragon (or fountain of the jackals – a well located near Jerusalem) well, and to the ^ddung port, (another gate in the wall of Jerusalem at approx junction of Hinnom and Tyropoeon valleys) and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.
14 Then I went on to the ^agate of the fountain (Perhaps a gate near En-rogel. The king's pool could be Siloam), and to the king's pool: but *there was* no place for the beast *that was* under me to pass.
15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and *so* returned.
16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told *it* to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.
17 ¶ Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* ^awaste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.
18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for *this* good work.
19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they ^alaughed us to ^bscorn, and despised us, and said, What *is* this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?
20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 4

Their enemies seek to prevent Jews from rebuilding walls of Jerusalem—Nehemiah arms the laborers and keeps the work going forward.

1 BUT it came to pass, that when ^aSanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders.

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the ^apeople had a mind to ^bwork.

7 ¶ But it came to pass, *that* when ^aSanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 ¶ Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye ^aafraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and ^bterrible, (or feared, revered) and ^cfight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your ^dwives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their ^acounsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the ^ahabergeons; (Probably armor of tough leather) and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon. (This is similar to the building of the Nauvoo temple.)

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

19 ¶ And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is* great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

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

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that* every one put them off for washing.

CHAPTER 6

Sanballat engages in intrigue against Nehemiah and the building of the wall—Jews finish construction of the wall.

1 NOW it came to pass, when ^aSanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me ^amischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6 Wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and ^aGashmu (**Geshem**) saith *it, that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou ^afeignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I *am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be ^aafraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an ^bevil report, that they might reproach me.

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

15 ¶ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* ^aElul, (the sixth Hebrew month, from the new moon of September to that of October) in fifty and two days. (Josephus said it took two years and four months to rebuild the walls. This may be a more realistic time frame.)

16 And it came to pass, that when all our ^aenemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

17 ¶ Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

18 For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of ^aMeshullam the son of Berechiah.

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

CHAPTER 8

Ezra reads and interprets the law of Moses to the people—They keep the feast of tabernacles.

1 AND all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the ^awater gate; and they spake unto ^bEzra the ^cscribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the ^alaw before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the ^abook of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a ^apulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law; and the people *stood* in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the ^alaw of God ^bdistinctly, and ^cgave the sense, (expanded the meaning. It is held by some that the explanation was in Aramaic; thus the first translating (Targum) of the scriptures occurred) and caused *them* to understand the reading. (This appears to be the first time a synagogue, or place to read the scriptures, was set up after their exile in Babylon. Some of the Jews did not understand the words that were read because their language had been changed. Only those that retained their understanding of Hebrew could understand it and explain it to others.)

9 ¶ And Nehemiah, which *is* the ^aTirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that ^btaught the people, said unto all the people, This day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; ^cmourn not, nor weep. For all the people ^dwept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send ^aportions unto them for whom nothing is prepared (give to the poor): for *this* ^bday *is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye ^csorry; for the joy of the LORD is your ^dstrength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day *is* holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great ^amirth, (rejoicing) because they had ^bunderstood the words that were declared unto them.

13 ¶ And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to ^aunderstand the words of the law.

14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in ^abooths (this is the characteristic tradition of the feast of tabernacles) in the ^bfeast of the seventh month: (The Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths and as the Feast of Ingathering.)

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as *it is* written.

16 ¶ So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate,

and in the street of the gate of ^aEphraim.

17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made ^abooths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of ^bJeshua (Joshua) the son of ^cNun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he ^aread in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a ^bsolemn assembly, according unto the manner. Elder Bruce R. McConckie said: "One of the three great feasts at which the attendance of all male Israelites was compulsory, the Feast of Tabernacles, was by all odds Israel's greatest feast. Coming only five days after the Day of Atonement, it was thus celebrated when the sins of the chosen people had been removed and when their special covenant relation to Jehovah had been renewed and restored.

Above all other occasions it was one for rejoicing, bearing testimony, and praising the Lord. In the full sense, it is the Feast of Jehovah, the one Mosaic celebration which, as part of the restitution of all things, shall be restored when Jehovah comes to reign personally upon the earth for a thousand years. Even now we perform one of its chief rituals in our solemn assemblies, the giving of the Hosanna Shout, and the worshippers of Jehovah shall yet be privileged to exult in other of its sacred rituals. Zechariah 14:16 ¶ And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to ^aworship the ^bKing, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the ^cfeast of ^dtabernacles. That will be the day when the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Manifestly, when the Feast of Tabernacles is kept in that day, its ritualistic performances will conform to the new gospel order and not include the Mosaic order of the past. (Promised Messiah, p. 432-433. It is possible that the Second Coming will occur during that time of the year when the Feast of Tabernacles occurs. Celebrating the harvest.)

Ezra and Nehemiah saved Judah from being religiously and culturally assimilated into other ways of life and from a wholesale defection from the Law of Moses.

Additional Reading:

HAGGAI CHAPTER 1

Haggai exhorts the people to build the temple.

1 IN ^athe second year of Darius the king (Probably 520 BC Darius Hystaspes reigned 521-486 BC), in the sixth ^bmonth, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto ^cZerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, (grandson of Jehoiachin, former king of Judah) governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.

3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 *Is it* time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ^acieled (Heb paneled) houses, and this house *lie* waste?

5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; ^aConsider your ways.

6 Ye have ^asown much, and bring in little; ye ^beat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that ^cearneth wages earneth ^dwages *to put it* into a bag with ^eholes.

7 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; ^aConsider your ^bways.

8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the ^ahouse; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why?

saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that *is* waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her ^afruit.

11 And I called for a ^adrought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the ^bcorn, (grain) and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

12 ¶ Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had ^asent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, *I am* with you, saith the LORD.

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

BIBLE DICTIONARY

EZRA

A famous priest and scribe who brought back part of the exiles from captivity (Ezra 7 - 10; Neh. 8; Neh. 12). The object of his mission was "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." In 458 B.C. he obtained from Artaxerxes an important edict (Ezra 7: 12-26) allowing him to take to Jerusalem any Jewish exiles who cared to go, along with offerings for the temple with which he was entrusted, and giving to the Jews various rights and privileges. He was also directed to appoint magistrates and judges. On arriving in Jerusalem his first reform was to cause the Jews to separate from their foreign wives, and a list is given of those who had offended in this way (Ezra 10). The later history of Ezra is found in the book of Nehemiah, which is a sequel to the book of Ezra. Along with Nehemiah he took steps to instruct the people in the Mosaic law (Neh. 8). Hitherto "the law" had been to a great extent the exclusive possession of the priests. It was now brought within the reach of every Jew. The open reading of "the book of the law" was a new departure, and marked the law as the center of Jewish national life.

A good many traditions have gathered round the name of Ezra. He is said to have formed the canon of Hebrew scripture and to have established an important national council, called the Great Synagogue, over which he presided. But for none of these traditions is there trustworthy evidence. The Jews of later days were inclined to attribute to the influence of Ezra every religious development between the days of Nehemiah and the Maccabees.

The book of Ezra contains also an introductory section (chs. 1 - 6) describing events that happened from 60 to 80 years before the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem, that is, the decree of Cyrus, 537 B.C., and the return of Jews under Zerubbabel; the attempt to build the temple and the hindrances due to the Samaritans; the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, and the completion of the temple, 516 B.C. There is no record in the book of any events between this date and the mission of Ezra.

Religious values in the book of Ezra are found in the teaching that (1) the promises of the Lord through his prophets shall all be fulfilled (Ezra 1: 1; cf. Jer. 25: 13; Jer. 29: 10; D&C 1: 37-38; D&C 5: 20); (2) discipline and patience are borne of disappointment, as one expectation after another was frustrated; (3) there is eternal significance in everyday life; (4) preparation is needed for the rule of Messiah, the law being the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.

BIBLE DICTIONARY
NEHEMIAH

Comfort of the Lord.

(1) A Jew (either a Levite or of tribe of Judah) who held the important office of “cupbearer” at court of Artaxerxes, from whom he obtained a royal commission authorizing him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah (which is a continuation of Ezra, the two being regarded by the Jews as forming one book) contains an account of the progress and difficulties of the work and its final completion. The book divides into four parts: (a) Neh. 1: 1 - 7: 73, Nehemiah’s first visit to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the walls in spite of much opposition; (b) Neh. 7: 73 - 10: 39, religious and social reforms; (c) Neh. 11: 1 - 13: 3, lists of names, and account of the dedication of the wall; (d) Neh. 13: 4-31, Nehemiah’s second visit after 12 years’ absence, and his further reforms.

(2) Ezra 2: 2 = Neh. 7: 7.

(3) Neh. 3: 16.

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