

ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE 124.2

Lesson 47 (Study Notes): [“Let Us Rise Up and Build”](#)

Class Member Reading: Ezra 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; Nehemiah 1; 2; 4; 6; 8; Daniel 5

End of the Babylonian Captivity

1In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, **the Lord stirred up the spirit** of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared: [\(This was in 538 BC\)](#)

2 ‘Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. ³Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; ⁴and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill-offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.’ [\(The Persians were politically savvy and diplomatic, understanding that religious tolerance could lead to greater political and economic stability. Note how the author attributes Cyrus’ actions to the God of Israel\)](#)

5 The **heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites**—everyone whose spirit God had stirred—got **ready to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord** in Jerusalem. ⁶All their neighbours aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered. ⁷King Cyrus himself brought out the **vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.** ⁸King Cyrus of Persia had them released into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to **Sheshbazzar** the prince of Judah. ⁹And this was the inventory: gold basins, thirty; silver basins, one thousand; knives, twenty-nine; ¹⁰gold bowls, thirty; other silver bowls, four hundred and ten; other vessels, one thousand; ¹¹the total of the gold and silver vessels was five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar brought up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

List of the Returned Exiles

2Now these were the people of the province who came from those captive exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia; they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, all to their own towns [\(towns where they had been DECADES earlier, nearly fifty years\).](#)

²They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah [\(Not the same Nehemiah; this was almost 100](#)

years before that one), Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The number of the Israelite people: ³the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two. ⁴Of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two. ⁵Of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five. ⁶Of Pahath-moab, namely the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. ⁷Of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ⁸Of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five. ⁹Of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty. ¹⁰Of Bani, six hundred and forty-two. ¹¹Of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three. ¹²Of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two. ¹³Of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six. ¹⁴Of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six. ¹⁵Of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four. ¹⁶Of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety-eight. ¹⁷Of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three. ¹⁸Of Jorah, one hundred and twelve. ¹⁹Of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three. ²⁰Of Gibbar, ninety-five. ²¹Of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three. ²²The people of Netophah, fifty-six. ²³Of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight. ²⁴The descendants of Azmaveth, forty-two. ²⁵Of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three. ²⁶Of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one. ²⁷The people of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two. ²⁸Of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three. ²⁹The descendants of Nebo, fifty-two. ³⁰Of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six. ³¹Of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ³²Of Harim, three hundred and twenty. ³³Of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five. ³⁴Of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five. ³⁵Of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

36 The **priests**: the descendants of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three. ³⁷Of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two. ³⁸Of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven. ³⁹Of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

40 The **Levites**: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the descendants of Hodaviah, seventy-four. ⁴¹The singers: the descendants of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight. ⁴²The descendants of the gatekeepers: of Shallum, of Ater, of Talmon, of Akkub, of Hatita, and of Shobai, in all one hundred and thirty-nine.

43 The **temple servants**: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴Keros, Siaha, Padon, ⁴⁵Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, ⁴⁶Hagab, Shamlai, Hanan, ⁴⁷Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, ⁴⁸Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, ⁴⁹Uzza, Paseah, Besai, ⁵⁰Asnah, Meunim, Nephisim, ⁵¹Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵²Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵³Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁴Neziah, and Hatipha.

55 The **descendants of Solomon's servants**: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, ⁵⁶Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁷Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, and Ami.

58 All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants were three hundred and ninety-two.

59 The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though **they could not prove their families or their descent**, whether they belonged to

Israel: ⁶⁰the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two. ⁶¹Also, of the descendants of the priests: the descendants of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name). ⁶²These looked for their entries in the genealogical records, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean; ⁶³the governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

64 The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, ⁶⁵besides their male and female **servants**, (The Jews did well in Babylon, despite feeling they were in “exile”, and then returned to a much more impoverished and struggling “homeland”) of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred male and female singers. ⁶⁶They had seven hundred and thirty-six horses, two hundred and forty-five mules, ⁶⁷four hundred and thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred and twenty donkeys.

68 As soon as they came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, **some of the heads of families made freewill-offerings for the house of God**, to erect it on its site. ⁶⁹According to their resources they gave to the building fund sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.

70 The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity; and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants **lived in their towns**, and all Israel in their towns.

Worship Restored at Jerusalem

3When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. ²Then **Jeshua son of Jozadak**, with his fellow priests, and **Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel** with his kin **set out to build the altar of the God of Israel**, to **offer burnt-offerings** on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God (They cannot yet build the temple, so they at least build an altar so they can worship. In a Mormon context this would be like performing endowments in the red brick store, or baptisms for dead in the river). ³They set up the altar on its foundation, because **they were in dread of the neighbouring peoples** (This point is important), and they **offered burnt-offerings** upon it to the Lord, morning and evening. ⁴And they **kept the festival of booths**, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, ⁵and after that the regular burnt-offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at **all the sacred festivals of the Lord**, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill-offering to the Lord. ⁶From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord. But the **foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid**. ⁷So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia.

Foundations Laid for the Temple

8 In the **second year after their arrival at the house of God at Jerusalem** (Poignant...they haven't even laid the foundation and still call it by this name), in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their people, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upwards, to have the oversight of the work on the house of the Lord. ⁹And Jeshua with his sons and his kin, and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and Hodaviah along with the sons of Henadad, the Levites, their sons and kin, together took charge of the workers in the house of God.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; ¹¹and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever towards Israel.' And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple

4 When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, ²they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for **we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here.**' (so for CENTURIES, since about 722) ³But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, 'You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us.' (Read between the lines here... this is important! These people are called "adversaries" before they are even introduced! They also have a valid claim to worship the God of Israel but are rejected)

4 Then the **people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid** to build, ⁵and they bribed officials to **frustrate their plan** throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

Rebuilding of Jerusalem Opposed

6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in his accession year, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia; the letter was written in Aramaic and translated.
⁸Rehum the royal deputy (Persian official of the “Province beyond the river”; Yehud/Judea was a smaller portion of this larger province) and Shimshai the scribe **wrote a letter against Jerusalem** to King Artaxerxes as follows ⁹(then Rehum the royal deputy, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the envoys, the officials, the Persians, the people of Erech, the Babylonians, the people of Susa, that is, the Elamites, ¹⁰and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar (Ashurbanipal) deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River wrote—and now ¹¹this is a copy of the letter that they sent):

‘To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the people of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now ¹²may it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are **rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city**; they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. ¹³Now may it be known to the king that, if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be reduced. ¹⁴Now because we share the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king’s dishonour, therefore we send and inform the king, ¹⁵so that a search may be made in the annals of your ancestors. You will discover in the annals that this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that **sedition was stirred up in it from long ago**. On that account this city was laid waste. ¹⁶We make known to the king that, if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River.’

17 The king sent an answer: ‘To Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who live in Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting. And now ¹⁸the letter that you sent to us has been read in translation before me. ¹⁹So I made a decree, and someone searched and discovered that **this city has risen against kings from long ago, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it**. ²⁰Jerusalem has had mighty kings who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. ²¹Therefore issue an order that these people be made to cease, and that **this city be not rebuilt, until I make a decree**. ²²Moreover, take care not to be slack in this matter; why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?’

23 Then when the copy of King Artaxerxes’ letter was read before Rehum and the scribe Shimshai and their associates, they hurried to the Jews in Jerusalem and **by force and power made them cease**. ²⁴At that time the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped and was discontinued until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia. (about a 20 year gap)

Restoration of the Temple Resumed

5 Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. ² Then **Zerubbabel** son of Shealtiel and **Jeshua** son of Jozadak set out to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem; and **with them were the prophets of God**, helping them.

3 At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus, 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' ⁴ They also asked them this: 'What are the names of the men who are building this building?' ⁵ But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until a report reached Darius and then answer was returned by letter in reply to it.

6 The copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates the envoys who were in the province Beyond the River sent to King Darius; ⁷ they sent him a report, in which was written as follows: 'To Darius the king, all peace! ⁸ May it be known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built of hewn stone, and timber is laid in the walls; this work is being done diligently and prospers in their hands. ⁹ Then we spoke to those elders and asked them, "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" ¹⁰ We also asked them their names, for your information, so that we might write down the names of the men at their head. ¹¹ This was their reply to us: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. ¹² But because our ancestors had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia. ¹³ However, King Cyrus of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. ¹⁴ Moreover, the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem and had brought into the temple of Babylon, these King Cyrus took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. ¹⁵ He said to him, 'Take these vessels; go and put them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site.' ¹⁶ Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from that time until now it has been under construction, and it is not yet finished." ¹⁷ And now, if it seems good to the king, have a search made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. Let the king send us his pleasure in this matter.'

The Decree of Darius

6 Then King Darius made a decree, and they searched the archives where the documents were stored in Babylon ([Interesting window into the relationship between the emperor and client](#)

kings).²But it was in Ecbatana, the capital in the province of Media, that a scroll was found on which this was written: 'A record.³In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices are offered and burnt-offerings are brought; its height shall be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits,⁴with three courses of hewn stones and one course of timber; let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.⁵Moreover, let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its place; you shall put them in the house of God.'

6 'Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and you, their associates, the envoys in the province Beyond the River, keep away;⁷**let the work on this house of God alone**; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.⁸Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God: the cost is to be paid to these people, in full and without delay, from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province Beyond the River.⁹Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt-offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail,¹⁰so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his children.¹¹Furthermore, I decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of the house of the perpetrator, who then shall be impaled on it. The house shall be made a dunghill.¹²May the God who has established his name there overthrow any king or people that shall put forth a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.'

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13 Then, according to the word sent by King Darius, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what King Darius had ordered.¹⁴So the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of the prophet Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. **They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia;**¹⁵and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 The people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, **celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.**¹⁷They offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin-offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel (*I am guessing this is an exaggeration*).¹⁸Then they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

The Passover Celebrated

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month the **returned exiles kept the passover**.²⁰ For both the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were clean. So they killed the passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow-priests, and for themselves.²¹ It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by all who had joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.²² With joy they celebrated the festival of unleavened bread for seven days; for the **Lord had made them joyful**, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

The Coming and Work of Ezra

7 After this, in the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, **Ezra** son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah,² son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,³ son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth,⁴ son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,⁵ son of Abishua, **son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of the chief priest Aaron**—⁶ this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a **scribe** skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the **hand of the Lord his God was upon him**.

7 Some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants also went up to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.⁸ They came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.⁹ On the first day of the first month the journey up from Babylon was begun, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him.¹⁰ For **Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord**, and **to do it**, and **to teach** the statutes and ordinances in Israel.

The Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra

11 This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to the **priest** Ezra, the **scribe**, a **scholar** of the text of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel:¹² Artaxerxes, king of kings, to the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven: Peace. And now¹³ I decree that any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may go with you.¹⁴ For you are sent by the king and his seven counsellors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand,¹⁵ and also to convey the silver and gold that the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,¹⁶ with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill-offerings of the people and the priests, given willingly for the house of their God in Jerusalem.¹⁷ With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, and their grain-offerings and their drink-offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.¹⁸ Whatever seems good to you and your colleagues to do with the rest of the silver and gold,

you may do, according to the will of your God. ¹⁹The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. ²⁰And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which you are responsible for providing, you may provide out of the king's treasury.

21 'I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, ²²up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred cors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and unlimited salt. ²³Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, or wrath will come upon the realm of the king and his heirs. ²⁴We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on any of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

25 'And you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God; and you shall teach those who do not know them. ²⁶All who will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment.' (A little unrealistically generous)

27 Blessed be the Lord, the God of our ancestors, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to glorify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, ²⁸and who extended to me **steadfast love** before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I **took courage**, for the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

8 These are their family heads, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: ²Of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom. Of Ithamar, Daniel. Of David, Hattush, ³of the descendants of Shecaniah. Of Parosh, Zechariah, with whom were registered one hundred and fifty males. ⁴Of the descendants of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males. ⁵Of the descendants of Zattu, Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. ⁶Of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. ⁷Of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. ⁸Of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males. ⁹Of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. ¹⁰Of the descendants of Bani, Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred and sixty males. ¹¹Of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males. ¹²Of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males. ¹³Of the descendants of Adonikam, those who came later, their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males. ¹⁴Of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them seventy males.

Servants for the Temple

15 I gathered them by the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped for three days. As I reviewed the people and the priests, I found there none of the descendants of Levi. ¹⁶Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were wise, ¹⁷and sent them to Iddo, the leader at the place called Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his colleagues the temple servants at Casiphia, namely, to send us ministers for the house of our God. ¹⁸Since the gracious hand of our God was upon us, they brought us a man of discretion, of the descendants of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and kin, eighteen; ¹⁹also Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiiah of the descendants of Merari, with his kin and their sons, twenty; ²⁰besides two hundred and twenty of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name.

Fasting and Prayer for Protection

21 Then I **proclaimed a fast** there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. ²²For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and cavalry to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king that the hand of our God is gracious to all who seek him, but his power and his wrath are against all who forsake him (**interesting conundrum**). ²³So we fasted and petitioned our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

Gifts for the Temple

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their kin with them. ²⁵And I weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, the offering for the house of our God that the king, his counsellors, his lords, and all Israel there present had offered; ²⁶I weighed out into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and one hundred silver vessels worth . . . talents, and one hundred talents of gold, ²⁷twenty gold bowls worth a thousand darics, and two vessels of fine polished bronze as precious as gold. ²⁸And I said to them, 'You are holy to the Lord, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering to the Lord, the God of your ancestors. ²⁹Guard them and keep them until you weigh them before the chief priests and the Levites and the heads of families in Israel at Jerusalem, within the chambers of the house of the Lord.' ³⁰So the priests and the Levites took over the silver, the gold, and the vessels as they were weighed out, to bring them to Jerusalem, to the house of our God.

The Return to Jerusalem

31 Then we left the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem; the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes along the way. ³²We came to Jerusalem and remained there for three days. ³³On the

fourth day, within the house of our God, the silver, the gold, and the vessels were weighed into the hands of the priest Meremoth son of Uriah, and with him was Eleazar son of Phinehas, and with them were the Levites, Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. ³⁴The total was counted and weighed, and the weight of everything was recorded.

35 At that time those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt-offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and as a sin-offering twelve male goats; all this was a burnt-offering to the Lord. ³⁶They also delivered the king's commissions to the king's satraps and to the governors of the province Beyond the River; and they supported the people and the house of God.

Nehemiah "one of the most convincing human personalities in the Bible" (Anchor Bible Dictionary)

Nehemiah Prays for His People

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, ²one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. ³They replied, 'The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity **are in great trouble and shame**; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.'

4 When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵I said, 'O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who **keeps covenant and steadfast love** with those who love him and keep his commandments; ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. ⁷We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; ⁹but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name." ¹⁰They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants

who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man!

At the time, I was **cupbearer** to the king (Position of great trust. He likely tasted the king's wine for poison and guarded the king's apartment).

Nehemiah Sent to Judah

2In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was served to him, I carried the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had never been sad in his presence before. ²So the king said to me, 'Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This can only be sadness of the heart.' Then I was very much afraid. ³I said to the king, 'May the king live for ever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my ancestors' graves, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?' ⁴Then the king said to me, 'What do you request?' So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favour with you, I ask that you **send me to Judah**, to the city of my ancestors' graves, so **that I may rebuild it.**' ⁶The king said to me (the queen also was sitting beside him), 'How long will you be gone, and **when will you return?**' So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a date. ⁷Then I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may grant me passage until I arrive in Judah;⁸ and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, directing him to give me timber to make beams for the gates of the temple fortress, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy.' And the king granted me what I asked, for the gracious hand of my God was upon me.

9 Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the **king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me** (Ezra has great power and status and more resources than any of the others who attempted to restore Jerusalem). ¹⁰When **Sanballat** the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Nehemiah's Inspection of the Walls

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. ¹²Then I **got up during the night**, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put into my heart to

do for Jerusalem. The only animal I took was the animal I rode. ¹³I went out by night by the Valley Gate past the Dragon's Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. ¹⁴Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool; but there was no place for the animal I was riding to continue. ¹⁵So I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to do the work. (intriguing details)

Decision to Restore the Walls

17 Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burnt. Come, **let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem**, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace.' ¹⁸I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, 'Let us start building!' So they committed themselves to the common good. ¹⁹But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they mocked and ridiculed us, saying, 'What is this that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?' ²⁰Then I replied to them, 'The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem.'

Hostile Plots Thwarted

4 Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. ²He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—and burnt ones at that?' ³Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, 'That stone wall they are building—any fox going up on it would break it down!' ⁴Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their taunt back on their own heads, and give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵Do not cover their guilt, and do not let their sin be blotted out from your sight; for they have hurled insults in the face of the builders.

6 So **we rebuilt the wall**, and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for **the people had a mind to work** (one key to success).

7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry, ⁸and **all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.** ⁹So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

10 But Judah said, 'The strength of the burden-bearers is failing, and there is too much rubbish, so that we are unable to work on the wall.'¹¹ And our enemies said, 'They will not know or see anything before we come upon them and kill them and stop the work.'¹² When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times, 'From all the places where they live they will come up against us.'
(Discouragement) ¹³So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, **I stationed the people** according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴After I looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and **fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.**' *Captain Moroni moment (or literary dependence in the other direction)*

15 When our enemies heard that their plot was known to us, and that God had frustrated it, **we all returned to the wall, each to his work.**¹⁶ From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and body-armour; and the leaders posted themselves behind the whole house of Judah, ¹⁷who were building the wall (*cooperation, diligence, preparation*). The burden-bearers carried their loads in such a way that **each labored on the work with one hand and with the other held a weapon.**¹⁸ And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. ¹⁹And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and widely spread out, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. ²⁰Rally to us wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet. Our God will fight for us.'

21 So we **labored** at the work, and half of them held the spears from break of dawn until the stars came out. ²²I also said to the people at that time, 'Let every man and his servant pass the night inside Jerusalem, so that **they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.**' ²³So neither I nor **my brothers** nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me ever took off our clothes; each kept his weapon in his right hand.

Intrigues of Enemies Foiled

6 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), ²Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, 'Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.' But they intended to do me harm. ³So I sent messengers to them, saying, '**I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?**' (such great personality/response) ⁴They sent to me **four times** in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. ⁵In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶In it was written, 'It is reported among the nations—and Geshem also says it—that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report you wish to become their king. ⁷You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, "There is a king in Judah!" And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So come, therefore, and let us confer together.' ⁸Then I sent to him, saying, '**No such things as you say have been done**; you are inventing them out of your own mind' ⁹—for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, 'Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.' But now, O God, **strengthen my hands.**

10 One day when I went into the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his house, he said, 'Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, tonight they are coming to kill you.' ¹¹But I said, '**Should a man like me run away?** Would a man like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!' ¹²Then I perceived and saw that God had not sent him at all, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³He was hired for this purpose, to intimidate me and make me sin by acting in this way, and so they could give me a bad name, in order to taunt me. ¹⁴Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the **prophetess** Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

The Wall Completed

15 So the **wall was finished** on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were

afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem; for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.¹⁷ Moreover, in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.¹⁸ For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.¹⁹ Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence, and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me. [Nehemiah continues to refuse to cave to pressure.](#)

8¹all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the **scribe Ezra** to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.² Accordingly, the **priest Ezra** brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month.³ He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate **from early morning until midday**, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and **the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.**⁴ The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, **helped the people to understand the law**, while the people remained in their places.⁸ So **they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation.** They **gave the sense, so that the people understood** the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and **Ezra the priest and scribe**, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.¹⁰ Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and **send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared**, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for **the joy of the LORD is your strength.**'¹¹ So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy;

do not be grieved.’¹² And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

The Festival of Booths Celebrated

13 On the second day the heads of ancestral houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law.¹⁴ And they found it written in the law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month,¹⁵ and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, ‘Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.’¹⁶ So the people went out and brought them, and made booths for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.¹⁷ And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was **very great rejoicing**.¹⁸ And **day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God**. They kept the festival for seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

Daniel **5** King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.² Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.³ So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them.⁴ They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.⁵ Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, next to the lampstand. The king was watching the hand as it wrote.⁶ Then the king’s face turned pale, and his thoughts terrified him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king said to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around his neck, and rank third in the kingdom.”⁸ Then all the king’s wise men

came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation. ⁹Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

¹⁰The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale. ¹¹There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners, ¹²because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation." ¹³Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? ¹⁴I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom." ¹⁷Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation. ¹⁸O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. ¹⁹And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed those he wanted to kill, kept alive those he wanted to keep alive, honored those he wanted to honor, and degraded those he wanted to degrade. ²⁰But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. ²¹He was driven from human society, and his mind was made like that of an animal. His dwelling was with the wild asses, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomever he will. ²²And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! ²³You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored. ²⁴"So from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; ²⁸PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." ²⁹Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made concerning him that he should rank third in the kingdom.

³⁰That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Additional Reading: Haggai 1; “Ezra” and “Nehemiah”, Bible Dictionary (ooh, bible dictionary... they are assigning supplementary, explanatory sources)

1 In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ²Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house. ³Then the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: ⁴Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ⁵Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. ⁶You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes. ⁷Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. ⁸Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the Lord. ⁹You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses. ¹⁰Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors.

¹²Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people feared the Lord. ¹³Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord’s message, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. ¹⁴And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, ¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month.

Ezra

A famous priest and scribe who brought back part of the exiles from captivity ([Ezra 7–10](#); [Neh. 8: 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 around 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 ([Ezra 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](#); see also [Jer. 25:13](#); [29:10](#); [D&C 1:37–38](#); [5:20](#)); (2) discipline and patience are born 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.

Nehemiah

Comfort of the Lord. (1) A Jew (either a Levite or of the tribe of Judah) who held the important office of “cupbearer” at the 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) [1:1–7:73](#), Nehemiah’s first visit to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the walls in spite of much opposition; (b) [8:1–10:39](#), religious and social reforms; (c) [11:1–13:3](#), lists of names, and account of the dedication of the wall; (d) [13:4–31](#), Nehemiah’s second visit after 12 years’ absence, and his further reforms.

<p>Other Reading: Haggai, Zech 1-8; Look at the rest of Ezra-Nehemiah, especially Ezra 9-10</p>
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