

BOOK 11

**FROM THE FIRST OF CYRUS
TO THE DEATH OF
ALEXANDER THE GREAT**

Flavius Josephus

Chapter 1

Cyrus, King of the Persians, Delivered the Jews

1. In the first year of the reign of Cyrus (1) which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon, God commiserated the captivity and calamity of these poor people, according as he had foretold to them by Jeremiah the prophet, before the destruction of the city, that after they had served Nebuchadnezzar and his posterity, and after they had undergone that servitude seventy years, he would restore them again to the land of their fathers, and they should build their temple, and enjoy their ancient prosperity. And these things God did afford them; for he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia: "Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea."

2. This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: "My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple." This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, (2) and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that

they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.

3. When Cyrus had said this to the Israelites, the rulers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and priests, went in haste to Jerusalem; yet did many of them stay at Babylon, as not willing to leave their possessions; and when they were come thither, all the king's friends assisted them, and brought in, for the building of the temple, some gold, and some silver, and some a great many cattle and horses. So they performed their vows to God, and offered the sacrifices that had been accustomed of old time; I mean this upon the rebuilding of their city, and the revival of the ancient practices relating to their worship. Cyrus also sent back to them the vessels of God which king Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged out of the temple, and had carried to Babylon. So he committed these things to Mithridates, the treasurer, to be sent away, with an order to give them to Sanabassar, that he might keep them till the temple was built; and when it was finished, he might deliver them to the priests and rulers of the multitude, in order to their being restored to the temple. Cyrus also sent an epistle to the governors that were in Syria, the contents whereof here follow:

"King Cyrus To Sisinnes And Sathrabuzanes Sendeth Greeting.

"I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before. I have also sent my treasurer Mithridates, and Zorobabel, the governor of the Jews, that they may lay the foundations of the temple, and may build it sixty cubits high, and of the same latitude, making three edifices of polished stones, and one of the wood of the country, and the same order extends to the altar whereon they offer sacrifices to God. I require also that the expenses for these things may be given out of my revenues. Moreover, I have also sent the vessels which king Nebuchadnezzar pillaged out of the temple, and have

given them to Mithridates the treasurer, and to Zorobabel the governor of the Jews, that they may have them carried to Jerusalem, and may restore them to the temple of God. Now their number is as follows: Fifty chargers of gold, and five hundred of silver; forty Thericlean cups of gold, and five hundred of silver; fifty basons of gold, and five hundred of silver; thirty vessels for pouring [the drink-offerings], and three hundred of silver; thirty vials of gold, and two thousand four hundred of silver; with a thousand other large vessels. (3) I permit them to have the same honor which they were used to have from their forefathers, as also for their small cattle, and for wine and oil, two hundred and five thousand and five hundred drachme; and for wheat flour, twenty thousand and five hundred artabae; and I give order that these expenses shall be given them out of the tributes due from Samaria. The priests shall also offer these sacrifices according to the laws of Moses in Jerusalem; and when they offer them, they shall pray to God for the preservation of the king and of his family, that the kingdom of Persia may continue. But my will is, that those who disobey these injunctions, and make them void, shall be hung upon a cross, and their substance brought into the king's treasury." And such was the import of this epistle. Now the number of those that came out of captivity to Jerusalem, were forty-two thousand four hundred and sixty-two.

Footnotes:

1. This Cyrus is called God's shepherd by Xenophon, as well as by Isaiah, Isaiah 44:28; as also it is said of him by the same prophet, that "I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir," Isaiah 13:12, which character makes Xenophon's most excellent history of him very credible.
2. This leave to build Jerusalem, sect. 3, and this epistle of Cyrus to Sisinnes and Sathrabuzanes, to the same purpose, are most unfortunately omitted in all our copies but this best and completest copy of Josephus; and by such omission the famous prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah 44:28,

where we are informed that God said of or to Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid," could not hitherto be demonstrated from the sacred history to have been completely fulfilled, I mean as to that part of it which concerned his giving leave or commission for rebuilding the city Jerusalem as distinct from the temple, whose rebuilding is alone permitted or directed in the decree of Cyrus in all our copies.

3. Of the true number of golden and silver vessels here and elsewhere belonging to the temple of Solomon, see the description of the temples, chap. 13.

Chapter 2

Cambyses Forbade the Jews to rebuild the temple

1. When the foundations of the temple were laying, and when the Jews were very zealous about building it, the neighboring nations, and especially the Cutheans, whom Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, had brought out of Persia and Media, and had planted in Samaria, when he carried the people of Israel captives, besought the governors, and those that had the care of such affairs, that they would interrupt the Jews, both in the rebuilding of their city, and in the building of their temple. Now as these men were corrupted by them with money, they sold the Cutheans their interest for rendering this building a slow and a careless work, for Cyrus, who was busy about other wars, knew nothing of all this; and it so happened, that when he had led his army against the Massagetae, he ended his life. (1) But when Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, had taken the kingdom, the governors in Syria, and Phoenicia, and in the countries of Amlnon, and Moab, and Samaria, wrote an epistle to Calnbyses; whose contents were as follow: "To our lord Cambyses. We thy servants, Rathumus the historiographer, and Semellius the scribe, and the rest that are thy judges in Syria and Phoenicia, send greeting. It is fit, O king, that thou shouldst know that those Jews which were carried to Babylon are come into our country, and are building that rebellious and wicked city, and its market-places, and setting up its walls, and raising up the temple; know therefore, that when these things are finished, they will not be willing to pay tribute, nor will they submit to thy commands, but will resist kings, and will choose rather to rule over others than be ruled over themselves. We therefore thought it proper to write to thee, O king, while the works about the temple are going on so fast, and not to overlook this matter, that thou mayst search into the books of thy fathers, for thou wilt find in them that the Jews have been rebels, and enemies to kings, as hath their city been also, which, for that reason, hath been till now laid waste. We thought proper also to inform thee

of this matter, because thou mayst otherwise perhaps be ignorant of it, that if this city be once inhabited and be entirely encompassed with walls, thou wilt be excluded from thy passage to Celesyria and Phoenicia."

2. When Cambyses had read the epistle, being naturally wicked, he was irritated at what they told him, and wrote back to them as follows: "Cambyses the king, to Rathumus the historiographer, to Beeltethmus, to Semellius the scribe, and the rest that are in commission, and dwelling in Samaria and Phoenicia, after this manner: I have read the epistle that was sent from you; and I gave order that the books of my forefathers should be searched into, and it is there found that this city hath always been an enemy to kings, and its inhabitants have raised seditions and wars. We also are sensible that their kings have been powerful and tyrannical, and have exacted tribute of Celesyria and Phoenicia. Wherefore I gave order, that the Jews shall not be permitted to build that city, lest such mischief as they used to bring upon kings be greatly augmented." When this epistle was read, Rathumus, and Semellius the scribe, and their associates, got suddenly on horseback, and made haste to Jerusalem; they also brought a great company with them, and forbade the Jews to build the city and the temple. Accordingly, these works were hindered from going on till the second year of the reign of Darius, for nine years more; for Cambyses reigned six years, and within that time overthrew Egypt, and when he was come back, he died at Damascus.

Footnote:

1. Josephus here follows Herodotus, and those that related how Cyrus made war with the Scythians and Massagets, near the Caspian Sea, and perished in it; while Xenophon's account, which appears never to have been seen by Josephus, that Cyrus died in peace in his own country of Persia, is attested to by the writers of the affairs of Alexander the Great, when they agree that he found Cyrus's sepulcher at Pasargadae, near

Persepolis. This account of Xenophon is also confirmed by the circumstances of Cambyses, upon his succession to Cyrus, who, instead of a war to avenge his father's death upon the Scythians and Massagets, and to prevent those nations from overrunning his northern provinces, which would have been the natural consequence of his father's ill success and death there, went immediately to an Egyptian war, long ago begun by Cyrus, according to Xenophon, p. 644, and conquered that kingdom; nor is there, that I ever heard of, the least mention in the reign of Cambyses of any war against the Scythians and Massagets that he was ever engaged in all his life.

Chapter 3

Zorobabel Obtained Favor of Darius to rebuild the temple

1. After the slaughter of the Magi, who, upon the death of Cambyses, attained the government of the Persians for a year, those families which were called the seven families of the Persians appointed Darius, the son of Hystaspes, to be their king. Now he, while he was a private man, had made a vow to God, that if he came to be king, he would send all the vessels of God that were in Babylon to the temple at Jerusalem. Now it so fell out, that about this time Zorobabel, who had been made governor of the Jews that had been in captivity, came to Darius, from Jerusalem; for there had been an old friendship between him and the king. He was also, with two others, thought worthy to be guard of the king's body; and obtained that honor which he hoped for.

2. Now, in the first year of the king's reign, Darius feasted those that were about him, and those born in his house, with the rulers of the Medes, and princes of the Persians, and the toparchs of India and Ethiopia, and the generals of the armies of his hundred and twenty-seven provinces. But when they had eaten and drunk to satiety, and abundantly, they every one departed to go to bed at their own houses, and Darius the king went to bed; but after he had rested a little part of the night, he awaked, and not being able to sleep any more, he fell into conversation with the three guards of his body, and promised, that to him who should make an oration about points that he should inquire of, such as should be most agreeable to truth, and to the dictates of wisdom, he would grant it as a reward of his victory, to put on a purple garment, and to drink in cups of gold, and to sleep upon gold, and to have a chariot with bridles of gold, and a head tire of fine linen, and a chain of gold about his neck, and to sit next to himself, on account of his wisdom;

"and," says he, "he shall be called my cousin." Now when he had promised to give them these gifts, he asked the first of them, "Whether wine was not the strongest?"--the second, "Whether kings were not such?" - and the third, "Whether women were not such? or whether truth was not the strongest of all?" When he had proposed that they should make their inquiries about these problems, he went to rest; but in the morning he sent for his great men, his princes, and toparchs of Persia and Media, and set himself down in the place where he used to give audience, and bid each of the guards of his body to declare what they thought proper concerning the proposed questions, in the hearing of them all.

3. Accordingly, the first of them began to speak of the strength of wine, and demonstrated it thus: "When," said he, "I am to give my opinion of wine, O you men, I find that it exceeds every thing, by the following indications: It deceives the mind of those that drink it, and reduces that of the king to the same state with that of the orphan, and he who stands in need of a tutor; and erects that of the slave to the boldness of him that is free; and that of the needy becomes like that of the rich man, for it changes and renews the souls of men when it gets into them; and it quenches the sorrow of those that are under calamities, and makes men forget the debts they owe to others, and makes them think themselves to be of all men the richest; it makes them talk of no small things, but of talents, and such other names as become wealthy men only; nay more, it makes them insensible of their commanders, and of their kings, and takes away the remembrance of their friends and companions, for it arms men even against those that are dearest to them, and makes them appear the greatest strangers to them; and when they are become sober, and they have slept out their wine in the night, they arise without knowing any thing they have done in their cups. I take these for signs of power, and by them discover that wine is the strongest and most insuperable of all things."

4. As soon as the first had given the forementioned demonstrations of

the strength of wine, he left off; and the next to him began to speak about the strength of a king, and demonstrated that it was the strongest of all, and more powerful than any thing else that appears to have any force or wisdom. He began his demonstration after the following manner; and said," They are men who govern all things; they force the earth and the sea to become profitable to them in what they desire, and over these men do kings rule, and over them they have authority. Now those who rule over that animal which is of all the strongest and most powerful, must needs deserve to be esteemed insuperable in power and force. For example, when these kings command their subjects to make wars, and undergo dangers, they are hearkened to; and when they send them against their enemies, their power is so great that they are obeyed. They command men to level mountains, and to pull down walls and towers; nay, when they are commanded to be killed and to kill, they submit to it, that they may not appear to transgress the king's commands; and when they have conquered, they bring what they have gained in the war to the king. Those also who are not soldiers, but cultivate the ground, and plough it, and when, after they have endured the labor and all the inconveniences of such works of husbandry, they have reaped and gathered in their fruits, they bring tributes to the king; and whatsoever it is which the king says or commands, it is done of necessity, and that without any delay, while he in the mean time is satiated with all sorts of food and pleasures, and sleeps in quiet. He is guarded by such as watch, and such as are, as it were, fixed down to the place through fear; for no one dares leave him, even when he is asleep, nor does any one go away and take care of his own affairs; but he esteems this one thing the only work of necessity, to guard the king, and accordingly to this he wholly addicts himself. How then can it be otherwise, but that it must appear that the king exceeds all in strength, while so great a multitude obeys his injunctions?"

5. Now when this man had held his peace, the third of them, who was Zorobabel, began to instruct them about women, and about truth, who said thus: "Wine is strong, as is the king also, whom all men obey, but women are

superior to them in power; for it was a woman that brought the king into the world; and for those that plant the vines and make the wine, they are women who bear them, and bring them up: nor indeed is there any thing which we do not receive from them; for these women weave garments for us, and our household affairs are by their means taken care of, and preserved in safety; nor can we live separate from women. And when we have gotten a great deal of gold and silver, and any other thing that is of great value, and deserving regard, and see a beautiful woman, we leave all these things, and with open mouth fix our eyes upon her countenance, and are willing to forsake what we have, that we may enjoy her beauty, and procure it to ourselves. We also leave father, and mother, and the earth that nourishes us, and frequently forget our dearest friends, for the sake of women; nay, we are so hardy as to lay down our lives for them. But what will chiefly make you take notice of the strength of women is this that follows: Do not we take pains, and endure a great deal of trouble, and that both by land and sea, and when we have procured somewhat as the fruit of our labors, do not we bring them to the women, as to our mistresses, and bestow them upon them? Nay, I once saw the king, who is lord of so many people, smitten on the face by Apame, the daughter of Rabsases Themasius, his concubine, and his diadem taken away from him, and put upon her own head, while he bore it patiently; and when she smiled he smiled, and when she was angry he was sad; and according to the change of her passions, he flattered his wife, and drew her to reconciliation by the great humiliation of himself to her, if at my time he saw her displeased at him."

6. And when the princes and rulers looked one upon another, he began to speak about truth; and he said, "I have already demonstrated how powerful women are; but both these women themselves, and the king himself, are weaker than truth; for although the earth be large, and the heaven high, and the course of the sun swift, yet are all these moved according to the will of God, who is true and righteous, for which cause we also ought to esteem truth to be the strongest of all things, and that what is unrighteous is of no

force against it. Moreover, all things else that have any strength are mortal and short-lived, but truth is a thing that is immortal and eternal. It affords us not indeed such a beauty as will wither away by time, nor such riches as may be taken away by fortune, but righteous rules and laws. It distinguishes them from injustice, and puts what is unrighteous to rebuke." (1)

7. So when Zorobabel had left off his discourse about truth, and the multitude had cried out aloud that he had spoken the most wisely, and that it was truth alone that had immutable strength, and such as never would wax old, the king commanded that he should ask for somewhat over and above what he had promised, for that he would give it him because of his wisdom, and that prudence wherein he exceeded the rest; "and thou shalt sit with me," said the king, "and shalt be called my cousin." When he had said this, Zorobabel put him in mind of the vow he had made in case he should ever have the kingdom. Now this vow was, "to rebuild Jerusalem, and to build therein the temple of God; as also to restore the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged, and carried to Babylon. And this," said he, "is that request which thou now permittest me to make, on account that I have been judged to be wise and understanding."

8. So the king was pleased with what he had said, and arose and kissed him; and wrote to the toparchs and governors, and enjoined them to conduct Zorobabel and those that were going with him to build the temple. He also sent letters to those rulers that were in Syria and Phoenicia to cut down and carry cedar trees from Lebanon to Jerusalem, and to assist him in building the city. He also wrote to them, that all the captives who should go to Judea should be free; and he prohibited his deputies and governors to lay any king's taxes upon the Jews; he also permitted that they should have all that land which they could possess themselves of without tributes. He also enjoined the Idumeans and Samaritans, and the inhabitants of Celesyria, to restore those villages which they had taken from the Jews; and that, besides all this, fifty talents should be given them for the building of the temple. He also

permitted them to offer their appointed sacrifices, and that whatsoever the high priest and the priests wanted, and those sacred garments wherein they used to worship God, should be made at his own charges; .and that the musical instruments which the Levites used in singing hymns to God should be given them. Moreover, he charged them, that portions of land should be given to those that guarded the city and the temple, as also a determinate sum of money every year for their maintenance; and withal he sent the vessels. And all that Cyrus intended to do before him relating to the restoration of Jerusalem, Darius also ordained should be done accordingly.

9. Now when Zorobabel had obtained these grants from the king, he went out of the palace, and looking up to heaven, he began to return thanks to God for the wisdom he had given him, and the victory he had gained thereby, even in the presence of Darius himself; for, said he, "I had not been thought worthy of these advantages, O Lord, unless thou hadst been favorable to me." When therefore he had returned these thanks to God for the present circumstances he was in, and had prayed to him to afford him the like favor for the time to come, he came to Babylon, and brought the good news to his countrymen of what grants he had procured for them from the king; who, when they heard the same, gave thanks also to God that he restored the land of their forefathers to them again. So they betook themselves to drinking and eating, and for seven days they continued feasting, and kept a festival, for the rebuilding and restoration of their country: after this they chose themselves rulers, who should go up to Jerusalem, out of the tribes of their forefathers, with their wives, and children, and cattle, who traveled to Jerusalem with joy and pleasure, under the conduct of those whom Darius sent along with them, and making a noise with songs, and pipes, and cymbals. The rest of the Jewish multitude also besides accompanied them with rejoicing.

10. And thus did these men go, a certain and determinate number out of every family, though I do not think it proper to recite particularly the names

of those families, that I may not take off the mind of my readers from the connexion of the historical facts, and make it hard for them to follow the coherence of my narrations; but the sum of those that went up, above the age of twelve years, of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was four hundred and sixty-two myriads and eight thousand (2) the Levites were seventy-four; the number of the women and children mixed together was forty thousand seven hundred and forty-two; and besides these, there were singers of the Levites one hundred and twenty-eight, and porters one hundred and ten, and of the sacred ministers three hundred and ninety-two; there were also others besides these, who said they were of the Israelites, but were not able to show their genealogies, six hundred and sixty-two: some there were also who were expelled out of the number and honor of the priests, as having married wives whose genealogies they could not produce, nor were they found in the genealogies of the Levites and priests; they were about five hundred and twenty-five: the multitude also of servants that followed those that went up to Jerusalem were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; the singing men and singing women were two hundred and forty-five; the camels were four hundred and thirty-five; the beasts used to the yoke were five thousand five hundred and twenty-five; and the governors of all this multitude thus numbered were Zorobabel, the son of Salathiel, of the posterity of David, and of the tribe of Judah; and Jeshua, the son of Josedek the high priest; and besides these there were Mordecai and Serebeus, who were distinguished from the multitude, and were rulers, who also contributed a hundred pounds of gold, and five thousand of silver. By this means therefore the priests and the Levites, and a certain part of the entire people of the Jews that were in Babylon, came and dwelt in Jerusalem; but the rest of the multitude returned every one to their own countries.

Footnotes:

1. The reader is to note, that although the speeches or papers of these three of the king's guard are much the same, in our Third Book of Esdras, ch.

3. and 4., as they are here in Josephus, yet that the introduction of them is entirely different, while in our Esdras the whole is related as the contrivance of the three of the king's guards themselves; and even the mighty rewards are spoken of as proposed by themselves, and the speeches are related to have been delivered by themselves to the king in writing, while all is contrary in Josephus. I need not say whose account is the most probable, the matters speak for themselves; and there can be no doubt but Josephus's history is here to be very much preferred before the other. Nor indeed does it seem to me at all unlikely that the whole was a contrivance of king Darius's own, in order to be decently and inoffensively put in mind by Zorobabel of fulfilling his old vow for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and the restoration of the worship of the "one true God" there. Nor does the full meaning of Zorobabel, when he cries out, 3 Esd. 4. 41), "Blessed be the God of truth ;" and here, "God is true and righteous;" or even of all the people, 3 Esd. 4. 41, "Great is truth, and mighty above all things ;" seem to me much different from this, "There is but one true God, the God of Israel." To which doctrine, such as Cyrus and Darius; etc., the Jews' great patrons, seem not to have been very averse, though the entire idolatry of their kingdoms made them generally conceal it.

2. This strange reading in Josephus's present copies of four millions instead of forty thousand, is one of the grossest errors that is in them, and ought to be corrected from Ezra 2:61; 1 Esd. 5:40; and Nehemiah 7:66, who all agree the general sum was but about forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty. It is also very plain that Josephus thought, that when Esdras afterwards brought up another company out of Babylon and Persia, in the days of Xerxes, they were also, as well as these, out of the two tribes, and out of them only, and were in all no more than "a seed" and "a remnant," while an "immense number" of the ten tribes never returned, but, as he believed, continued then beyond Euphrates, ch. 5. sect. 2, 3; of which multitude, the Jews beyond Euphrates, he speaks frequently elsewhere, though, by the way, he never takes them to be

idolaters, but looks on them still as observers of the laws of Moses. The "certain part" of the people that now came up from Babylon, at the end of this chapter, imply the same smaller number of Jews that now came up, and will no way agree with the four millions.

Chapter 4

The Cutheans Endeavored in Vain to Obstruct the Work

1. Now in the seventh month after they were departed out of Babylon, both Jeshua the high priest, and Zorobabel the governor, sent messengers every way round about, and gathered those that were in the country together to Jerusalem universally, who came very gladly thither. He then built the altar on the same place it had formerly been built, that they might offer the appointed sacrifices upon it to God, according to the laws of Moses. But while they did this, they did not please the neighboring nations, who all of them bare an ill-will to them. They also celebrated the feast of tabernacles at that time, as the legislator had ordained concerning it; and after they offered sacrifices, and what were called the daily sacrifices, and the oblations proper for the Sabbaths, and for all the holy festivals. Those also that had made vows performed them, and offered their sacrifices from the first day of the seventh month. They also began to build the temple, and gave a great deal of money to the masons and to the carpenters, and what was necessary for the maintenance of the workmen. The Sidonians also were very willing and ready to bring the cedar trees from Libanus, to bind them together, and to make a united float of them, and to bring them to the port of Joppa, for that was what Cyrus had commanded at first, and what was now done at the command of Darius.

2. In the second year of their coming to Jerusalem, as the Jews were there in the second month, the building of the temple went on apace; and when they had laid its foundations on the first day of the second month of that second year, they set, as overseers of the work, such Levites as were full twenty years old; and Jeshua and his sons and brethren, and Codmiel the brother of Judas, the son of Aminadab, with his sons; and the temple, by the

great diligence of those that had the care of it, was finished sooner than any one would have expected. And when the temple was finished, the priests, adorned with their accustomed garments, stood with their trumpets, while the Levites, and the sons of Asaph, stood and sung hymns to God, according as David first of all appointed them to bless God. Now the priests and Levites, and the elder part of the families, recollecting with themselves how much greater and more sumptuous the old temple had been, seeing that now made how much inferior it was, on account of their poverty, to that which had been built of old, considered with themselves how much their happy state was sunk below what it had been of old, as well as their temple. Hereupon they were disconsolate, and not able to contain their grief, and proceeded so far as to lament and shed tears on those accounts; but the people in general were contented with their present condition; and because they were allowed to build them a temple, they desired no more, and neither regarded nor remembered, nor indeed at all tormented themselves with the comparison of that and the former temple, as if this were below their expectations; but the wailing of the old men and of the priests, on account of the deficiency of this temple, in their opinion, if compared with that which had been demolished, overcame the sounds of the trumpets and the rejoicing of the people.

3. But when the Samaritans, who were still enemies to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, heard the sound of the trumpets, they came running together, and desired to know what was the occasion of this tumult; and when they perceived that it was from the Jews, who had been carried captive to Babylon, and were rebuilding their temple, they came to Zorobabel and to Jeshua, and to the heads of the families, and desired that they would give them leave to build the temple with them, and to be partners with them in building it; for they said, "We worship their God, and especially pray to him, and are desirous of their religious settlement, and this ever since Shalmanezar, the king of Assyria, transplanted us out of Cuthah and Media to this place." When they said thus, Zorobabel and Jeshua the high priest, and the heads of the families of the Israelites, replied to them, that it was

impossible for them to permit them to be their partners, whilst they [only] had been appointed to build that temple at first by Cyrus, and now by Darius, although it was indeed lawful for them to come and worship there if they pleased, and that they could allow them nothing but that in common with them, which was common to them with all other men, to come to their temple and worship God there.

4. When the Cuthearts heard this, for the Samaritans have that appellation, they had indignation at it, and persuaded the nations of Syria to desire of the governors, in the same manner as they had done formerly in the days of Cyrus, and again in the days of Cambyses afterwards, to put a stop to the building of the temple, and to endeavor to delay and protract the Jews in their zeal about it. Now at this time Sisinnus, the governor of Syria and Phoenicia, and Sathrabuzanes, with certain others, came up to Jerusalem, and asked the rulers of the Jews, by whose grant it was that they built the temple in this manner, since it was more like to a citadel than a temple? and for what reason it was that they built cloisters and walls, and those strong ones too, about the city? To which Zorobabel and Jeshua the high priest replied, that they were the servants of God Almighty; that this temple was built for him by a king of theirs, that lived in great prosperity, and one that exceeded all men in virtue; and that it continued a long time, but that because of their fathers' impiety towards God, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians and of the Chaldeans, took their city by force, and destroyed it, and pillaged the temple, and burnt it down, and transplanted the people whom he had made captives, and removed them to Babylon; that Cyrus, who, after him, was king of Babylonia and Persia, wrote to them to build the temple, and committed the gifts and vessels, and whatsoever Nebuchadnezzar had carried out of it, to Zorobabel, and Mithridates the treasurer; and gave order to have them carried to Jerusalem, and to have them restored to their own temple, when it was built; for he had sent to them to have that done speedily, and commanded Sanabassar to go up to Jerusalem, and to take care of the building of the temple; who, upon receiving that epistle from Cyrus, came,

and immediately laid its foundations; "and although it hath been in building from that time to this, it hath not yet been finished, by reason of the malignity of our enemies. If therefore you have a mind, and think it proper, write this account to Darius, that when he hath consulted the records of the kings, he may find that we have told you nothing that is false about this matter."

5. When Zorobabel and the high priest had made this answer, Sisinnes, and those that were with him, did not resolve to hinder the building, until they had informed king Darius of all this. So they immediately wrote to him about these affairs; but as the Jews were now under terror, and afraid lest the king should change his resolutions as to the building of Jerusalem and of the temple, there were two prophets at that time among them, Haggai and Zechariah, who encouraged them, and bid them be of good cheer, and to suspect no discouragement from the Persians, for that God foretold this to them. So, in dependence on those prophets, they applied themselves earnestly to building, and did not intermit one day.

6. Now Darius, when the Samaritans had written to him, and in their epistle had accused the Jews, how they fortified the city, and built the temple more like to a citadel than to a temple; and said, that their doings were not expedient for the king's affairs; and besides, they showed the epistle of Cambyses, wherein he forbade them to build the temple: and when Darius thereby understood that the restoration of Jerusalem was not expedient for his affairs, and when he had read the epistle that was brought him from Sisinnes, and those that were with him, he gave order that what concerned these matters should be sought for among the royal records. Whereupon a book was found at Ecbatana, in the tower that was in Media, wherein was written as follows: "Cyrus the king, in the first year of his reign, commanded that the temple should be built in Jerusalem; and the altar in height threescore cubits, and its breadth of the same, with three edifices of polished stone, and one edifice of stone of their own country; and he ordained that the

expenses of it should be paid out of the king's revenue. He also commanded that the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged [out of the temple], and had carried to Babylon, should be restored to the people of Jerusalem; and that the care of these things should belong to Sanabassar, the governor and president of Syria and Phoenicia, and his associates, that they may not meddle with that place, but may permit the servants of God, the Jews and their rulers, to build the temple. He also ordained that they should assist them in the work; and that they should pay to the Jews, out of the tribute of the country where they were governors, on account of the sacrifices, bulls, and rams, and lambs, and kids of the goats, and fine flour, and oil, and wine, and all other things that the priests should suggest to them; and that they should pray for the preservation of the king, and of the Persians; and that for such as transgressed any of these orders thus sent to them, he commanded that they should be caught, and hung upon a cross, and their substance confiscated to the king's use. He also prayed to God against them, that if any one attempted to hinder the building of the temple, God would strike him dead, and thereby restrain his wickedness."

7. When Darius had found this book among the records of Cyrus, he wrote an answer to Sisinnus and his associates, whose contents were these: "King Darius to Sisinnus the governor, and to Sathrabuzanes, sendeth greeting. Having found a copy of this epistle among the records of Cyrus, I have sent it you; and I will that all things be done as is therein written. Fare ye well." So when Sisinnus, and those that were with him, understood the intention of the king, they resolved to follow his directions entirely for the time to come. So they forwarded the sacred works, and assisted the elders of the Jews, and the princes of the Sanhedrim; and the structure of the temple was with great diligence brought to a conclusion, by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, according to God's commands, and by the injunctions of Cyrus and Darius the kings. Now the temple was built in seven years' time. And in the ninth year of the reign of Darius, on the twenty-third day of the twelfth month, which is by us called Adar, but by the Macedonians

Dystrus, the priests, and Levites, and the other multitude of the Israelites, offered sacrifices, as the renovation of their former prosperity after their captivity, and because they had now the temple rebuilt, a hundred bulls, two hundred rains, four hundred lambs, and twelve kids of the goats, according to the number of their tribes, (for so many are the tribes of the Israelites,) and this last for the sins of every tribe. The priests also and the Levites set the porters at every gate, according to the laws of Moses. The Jews also built the cloisters of the inner temple that were round about the temple itself.

8. And as the feast of unleavened bread was at hand, in the first month, which, according to the Macedonians, is called Xanthicus, but according to us Nisan, all the people ran together out of the villages to the city, and celebrated the festival, having purified themselves, with their wives and children, according to the law of their country; and they offered the sacrifice which was called the Passover, on the fourteenth day of the same month, and feasted seven days, and spared for no cost, but offered whole burnt-offerings to God, and performed sacrifices of thanksgiving, because God had led them again to the land of their fathers, and to the laws thereto belonging, and had rendered the mind of the king of Persia favorable to them. So these men offered the largest sacrifices on these accounts, and used great magnificence in the worship of God, and dwelt in Jerusalem, and made use of a form of government that was aristocratical, but mixed with an oligarchy, for the high priests were at the head of their affairs, until the posterity of the Asamoneans set up kingly government; for before their captivity, and the dissolution of their polity, they at first had kingly government from Saul and David for five hundred and thirty-two years, six months, and ten days; but before those kings, such rulers governed them as were called judges and monarchs. Under this form of government they continued for more than five hundred years after the death of Moses, and of Joshua their commander. And this is the account I had to give of the Jews who had been carried into captivity, but were delivered from it in the times of Cyrus and Darius.

9. (1) But the Samaritans, being evil and enviously disposed to the Jews, wrought them many mischiefs, by reliance on their riches, and by their pretense that they were allied to the Persians, on account that thence they came; and whatsoever it was that they were enjoined to pay the Jews by the king's order out of their tributes for the sacrifices, they would not pay it. They had also the governors favorable to them, and assisting them for that purpose; nor did they spare to hurt them, either by themselves or by others, as far as they were able. So the Jews determined to send an embassy to king Darius, in favor of the people of Jerusalem, and in order to accuse the Samaritans. The ambassadors were Zorobabel, and four others of the rulers; and as soon as the king knew from the ambassadors the accusations and complaints they brought against the Samaritans, he gave them an epistle to be carried to the governors and council of Samaria; the contents of which epistle were these: "King Darius to Tanganas and Sambabas, the governors of the Sainaritans, to Sadraces and Bobelo, and the rest of their fellow servants that are in Samaria: Zorobabel, Ananias, and Mordecai, the ambassadors of the Jews, complain of you, that you obstruct them in the building of the temple, and do not supply them with the expenses which I commanded you to do for the offering their sacrifices. My will therefore is this, That upon the reading of this epistle, you supply them with whatsoever they want for their sacrifices, and that out of the royal treasury, of the tributes of Samaria, as the priest shall desire, that they may not leave off offering their daily sacrifices, nor praying to God for me and the Persians." And these were the contents of that epistle.

Footnote:

1. The history contained in this section is entirely wanting in all our other copies, both of Ezra and Esdras.

Chapter 5

Xerxes Was Well Disposed to Esdras and Nehemiah

1. Upon the death of Darius, Xerxes his son took the kingdom, who, as he inherited his father's kingdom, so did he inherit his piety towards God, and honor of him; for he did all things suitably to his father relating to Divine worship, and he was exceeding friendly to the Jews. Now about this time a son of Jeshua, whose name was Joacim, was the high priest. Moreover, there was now in Babylon a righteous man, and one that enjoyed a great reputation among the multitude. He was the principal priest of the people, and his name was Esdras. He was very skillful in the laws of Moses, and was well acquainted with king Xerxes. He had determined to go up to Jerusalem, and to take with him some of those Jews that were in Babylon; and he desired that the king would give him an epistle to the governors of Syria, by which they might know who he was. Accordingly, the king wrote the following epistle to those governors: "Xerxes, king of kings, to Esdras the priest, and reader of the Divine law, greeting. I think it agreeable to that love which I bear to mankind, to permit those of the Jewish nation that are so disposed, as well as those of the priests and Levites that are in our kingdom, to go together to Jerusalem. Accordingly, I have given command for that purpose; and let every one that hath a mind go, according as it hath seemed good to me, and to my seven counselors, and this in order to their review of the affairs of Judea, to see whether they be agreeable to the law of God. Let them also take with them those presents which I and my friends have vowed, with all that silver and gold that is found in the country of the Babylonians, as dedicated to God, and let all this be carried to Jerusalem to God for sacrifices. Let it also be lawful for thee and thy brethren to make as many vessels of silver and gold as thou pleasest. Thou shalt also dedicate those holy vessels which have been given thee, and as many more as thou hast a mind to make, and shall take the expenses out of the king's treasury. I have,

moreover, written to the treasurers of Syria and Phoenicia, that they take care of those affairs that Esdras the priest, and reader of the laws of God, is sent about. And that God may not be at all angry with me, or with my children, I grant all that is necessary for sacrifices to God, according to the law, as far as a hundred cori of wheat. And I enjoin you not to lay any treacherous imposition, or any tributes, upon their priests or Levites, or sacred singers, or porters, or sacred servants, or scribes of the temple. And do thou, O Esdras, appoint judges according to the wisdom [given thee] of God, and those such as understand the law, that they may judge in all Syria and Phoenicia; and do thou instruct those also which are ignorant of it, that if any one of thy countrymen transgress the law of God, or that of the king, he may be punished, as not transgressing it out of ignorance, but as one that knows it indeed, but boldly despises and contemns it; and such may be punished by death, or by paying fines. Farewell."

2. When Esdras had received this epistle, he was very joyful, and began to worship God, and confessed that he had been the cause of the king's great favor to him, and that for the same reason he gave all the thanks to God. So he read the epistle at Babylon to those Jews that were there; but he kept the epistle itself, and sent a copy of it to all those of his own nation that were in Media. And when these Jews had understood what piety the king had towards God, and what kindness he had for Esdras, they were all greatly pleased; nay, many of them took their effects with them, and came to Babylon, as very desirous of going down to Jerusalem; but then the entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country; wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Iomans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers. Now there came a great number of priests, and Levites, and porters, and sacred singers, and sacred servants to Esdras. So he gathered those that were in the captivity together beyond Euphrates, and staid there three days, and ordained a fast for them, that they might make their prayers to God for their preservation, that they might suffer no

misfortunes by the way, either from their enemies, or from any other ill accident; for Esdras had said beforehand that he had told the king how God would preserve them, and so he had not thought fit to request that he would send horsemen to conduct them. So when they had finished their prayers, they removed from Euphrates on the twelfth day of the first month of the seventh year of the reign of Xerxes, and they came to Jerusalem on the fifth month of the same year. Now Esdras presented the sacred money to the treasurers, who were of the family of the priests, of silver six hundred and fifty talents, vessels of silver one hundred talents, vessels of gold twenty talents, vessels of brass, that was more precious than gold, (1) twelve talents by weight; for these Presents had been made by the king and his counselors, and by all the Israelites that staid at Babylon. So when Esdras had delivered these things to the priests, he gave to God, as the appointed sacrifices of whole burnt-offerings, twelve bulls on account of the common preservation of the people, ninety rams, seventy-two lambs, and twelve kids of the goats, for the remission of sins. He also delivered the king's epistle to the king's officers, and to the governors of Celesyria and Phoenicia; and as they were under a necessity of doing what was enjoined by him, they honored our nation, and were assistant to them in all their necessities.

3. Now these things were truly done under the conduct of Esdras; and he succeeded in them, because God esteemed him worthy of the success of his conduct, on account of his goodness and righteousness. But some time afterward there came some persons to him, and brought an accusation against certain of the multitude, and of the priests and Levites, who had transgressed their settlement, and dissolved the laws of their country, by marrying strange wives, and had brought the family of the priests into confusion. These persons desired him to support the laws, lest God should take up a general anger against them all, and reduce them to a calamitous condition again. Hereupon he rent his garment immediately, out of grief, and pulled off the hair of his head and beard, and cast himself upon the ground, because this crime had reached the principal men among the people; and considering that

if he should enjoin them to cast out their wives, and the children they had by them, he should not be hearkener to, he continued lying upon the ground. However, all the better sort came running to him, who also themselves wept, and partook of the grief he was under for what had been done. So Esdras rose up from the ground, and stretched out his hands towards heaven, and said that he was ashamed to look towards it, because of the sins which the people had committed, while they had cast out of their memories what their fathers had undergone on account of their wickedness; and he besought God, who had saved a seed and a remnant out of the calamity and captivity they had been in, and had restored them again to Jerusalem, and to their own land, and had obliged the kings of Persia to have compassion on them, that he would also forgive them their sins they had now committed, which, though they deserved death, yet, was it agreeable to the mercy of God, to remit even to these the punishment due to them.

4. After Esdras had said this, he left off praying; and when all those that came to him with their wives and children were under lamentation, one whose name was Jechonias, a principal man in Jerusalem, came to him, and said that they had sinned in marrying strange wives; and he persuaded him to adjure them all to cast those wives out, and the children born of them, and that those should be punished who would not obey the law. So Esdras hearkened to this advice, and made the heads of the priests, and of the Levites, and of the Israelites, swear that they would put away those wives and children, according to the advice of Jechonias. And when he had received their oaths, he went in haste out of the temple into the chamber of Johanan, the son of Eliasib, and as he had hitherto tasted nothing at all for grief, so he abode there that day. And when proclamation was made, that all those of the captivity should gather themselves together to Jerusalem, and those that did not meet there in two or three days should be banished from the multitude, and that their substance should be appropriated to the uses of the temple, according to the sentence of the elders, those that were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin came together in three days, viz. on the

twentieth day of the ninth month, which, according to the Hebrews, is called Tebeth, and according to the Macedonians, Apelleius. Now as they were sitting in the upper room of the temple, where the elders also were present, but were uneasy because of the cold, Esdras stood up and accused them, and told them that they had sinned in marrying wives that were not of their own nation; but that now they would do a thing both pleasing to God, and advantageous to themselves, if they would put those wives away. Accordingly, they all cried out that they would do so. That, however, the multitude was great, and that the season of the year was winter, and that this work would require more than one or two days. "Let their rulers, therefore, [said they,] and those that have married strange wives, come hither at a proper time, while the elders of every place, that are in common to estimate the number of those that have thus married, are to be there also." Accordingly, this was resolved on by them, and they began the inquiry after those that had married strange wives on the first day of the tenth month, and continued the inquiry to the first day of the next month, and found a great many of the posterity of Jeshua the high priest, and of the priests and Levites, and Israelites, who had a greater regard to the observation of the law than to their natural affection, (2) and immediately cast out their wives, and the children which were born of them. And in order to appease God, they offered sacrifices, and slew rams, as oblations to him; but it does not seem to me to be necessary to set down the names of these men. So when Esdras had reformed this sin about the marriages of the forementioned persons, he reduced that practice to purity, so that it continued in that state for the time to come.

5. Now when they kept the feast of tabernacles in the seventh month (3) and almost all the people were come together to it, they went up to the open part of the temple, to the gate which looked eastward, and desired of Esdras that the laws of Moses might be read to them. Accordingly, he stood in the midst of the multitude and read them; and this he did from morning to noon. Now, by hearing the laws read to them, they were instructed to be righteous

men for the present and for the future; but as for their past offenses, they were displeased at themselves, and proceeded to shed tears on their account, as considering with themselves that if they had kept the law, they had endured none of these miseries which they had experienced. But when Esdras saw them in that disposition, he bade them go home, and not weep, for that it was a festival, and that they ought not to weep thereon, for that it was not lawful so to do. (4) He exhorted them rather to proceed immediately to feasting, and to do what was suitable to a feast, and what was agreeable to a day of joy; but to let their repentance and sorrow for their former sins be a security and a guard to them, that they fell no more into the like offenses. So upon Esdras's exhortation they began to feast; and when they had so done for eight days, in their tabernacles, they departed to their own homes, singing hymns to God, and returning thanks to Esdras for his reformation of what corruptions had been introduced into their settlement. So it came to pass, that after he had obtained this reputation among the people, he died an old man, and was buried in a magnificent manner at Jerusalem. About the same time it happened also that Joacim, the high priest, died; and his son Eliasib succeeded in the high priesthood. 6. Now there was one of those Jews that had been carried captive who was cup-bearer to king Xerxes; his name was Nehemiah. As this man was walking before Susa, the metropolis of the Persians, he heard some strangers that were entering the city, after a long journey, speaking to one another in the Hebrew tongue; so he went to them, and asked them whence they came. And when their answer was, that they came from Judea, he began to inquire of them again in what state the multitude was, and in what condition Jerusalem was; and when they replied that they were in a bad state (5) for that their walls were thrown down to the ground, and that the neighboring nations did a great deal of mischief to the Jews, while in the day time they overran the country, and pillaged it, and in the night did them mischief, insomuch that not a few were led away captive out of the country, and out of Jerusalem itself, and that the roads were in the day time found full of dead men. Hereupon Nehemiah shed tears, out of commiseration of the calamities of his countrymen; and, looking up to

heaven, he said, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou overlook our nation, while it suffers so great miseries, and while we are made the prey and spoil of all men?" And while he staid at the gate, and lamented thus, one told him that the king was going to sit down to supper; so he made haste, and went as he was, without wishing himself, to minister to the king in his office of cup-bearer. But as the king was very pleasant after supper, and more cheerful than usual, he cast his eyes on Nehemiah, and seeing him look sad, he asked him why he was sad. Whereupon he prayed to God to give him favor, and afford him the power of persuading by his words, and said, "How can I, O king, appear otherwise than thus, and not be in trouble, while I hear that the walls of Jerusalem, the city where are the sepulchers of my fathers, are thrown down to the ground, and that its gates are consumed by fire? But do thou grant me the favor to go and build its wall, and to finish the building of the temple." Accordingly, the king gave him a signal that he freely granted him what he asked; and told him that he should carry an epistle to the governors, that they might pay him due honor, and afford him whatsoever assistance he wanted, and as he pleased. "Leave off thy sorrow then," said the king, "and be cheerful in the performance of thy office hereafter." So Nehemiah worshipped God, and gave the king thanks for his promise, and cleared up his sad and cloudy countenance, by the pleasure he had from the king's promises. Accordingly, the king called for him the next day, and gave him an epistle to be carried to Adeus, the governor of Syria, and Phoenicia, and Samaria; wherein he sent to him to pay due honor to Nehemiah, and to supply him with what he wanted for his building.

7. Now when he was come to Babylon, and had taken with him many of his countrymen, who voluntarily followed him, he came to Jerusalem in the twenty and fifth year of the reign of Xerxes. And when he had shown the epistles to God (6) he gave them to Adeus, and to the other governors. He also called together all the people to Jerusalem, and stood in the midst of the temple, and made the following speech to them: "You know, O Jews, that God hath kept our fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in mind

continually, and for the sake of their righteousness hath not left off the care of you. Indeed he hath assisted me in gaining this authority of the king to raise up our wall, and finish what is wanting of the temple. I desire you, therefore who well know the ill-will our neighboring nations bear to us, and that when once they are made sensible that we are in earnest about building, they will come upon us, and contrive many ways of obstructing our works, that you will, in the first place, put your trust in God, as in him that will assist us against their hatred, and to intermit building neither night nor day, but to use all diligence, and to hasten on the work, now we have this especial opportunity for it." When he had said this, he gave order that the rulers should measure the wall, and part the work of it among the people, according to their villages and cities, as every one's ability should require. And when he had added this promise, that he himself, with his servants, would assist them, he dissolved the assembly. So the Jews prepared for the work: that is the name they are called by from the day that they came up from Babylon, which is taken from the tribe of Judah,. which came first to these places, and thence both they and the country gained that appellation.

8. But now when the Ammonites, and Moabites, and Samaritans, and all that inhabited Celesyria, heard that the building went on apace, they took it heinously, and proceeded to lay snares for them, and to hinder their intentions. They also slew many of the Jews, and sought how they might destroy Nehemiah himself, by hiring some of the foreigners to kill him. They also put the Jews in fear, and disturbed them, and spread abroad rumors, as if many nations were ready to make an expedition against them, by which means they were harassed, and had almost left off the building. But none of these things could deter Nehemiah from being diligent about the work; he only set a number of men about him as a guard to his body, and so unweariedly persevered therein, and was insensible of any trouble, out of his desire to perfect this work. And thus did he attentively, and with great forecast, take care of his own safety; not that he feared death, but of this persuasion, that if he were dead, the walls for his citizens would never be

raised. He also gave orders that the builders should keep their ranks, and have their armor on while they were building. Accordingly, the mason had his sword on, as well as he that brought the materials for building. He also appointed that their shields should lie very near them; and he placed trumpeters at every five hundred feet, and charged them, that if their enemies appeared, they should give notice of it to the people, that they might fight in their armor, and their enemies might not fall upon them naked. He also went about the compass of the city by night, being never discouraged, neither about the work itself, nor about his own diet and sleep, for he made no use of those things for his pleasure, but out of necessity. And this trouble he underwent for two years and four months; (7) for in so long a time was the wall built, in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Xerxes, in the ninth month. Now when the walls were finished, Nehemiah and the multitude offered sacrifices to God for the building of them, and they continued in feasting eight days. However, when the nations which dwelt in Syria heard that the building of the wall was finished, they had indignation at it. But when Nehemiah saw that the city was thin of people, he exhorted the priests and the Levites that they would leave the country, and remove themselves to the city, and there continue; and he built them houses at his own expenses; and he commanded that part of the people which were employed in cultivating the land to bring the tithes of their fruits to Jerusalem, that the priests and Levites having whereof they might live perpetually, might not leave the Divine worship; who willingly hearkened to the constitutions of Nehemiah, by which means the city Jerusalem came to be fuller of people than it was before. So when Nehemiah had done many other excellent things, and things worthy of commendation, in a glorious manner, he came to a great age, and then died. He was a man of a good and righteous disposition, and very ambitious to make his own nation happy; and he hath left the walls of Jerusalem as an eternal monument for himself. Now this was done in the days of Xerxes.

Footnotes:

1. Dr. Hudson takes notice here, that this kind of brass or copper, or rather mixture of gold and brass or copper, was called aurichalcum, and that this was of old esteemed the most precious of all metals.
2. This procedure of Esdras, and of the best part of the Jewish nation, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, of reducing the Jewish marriages, once for all, to the strictness of the law of Moses, without any regard to the greatness of those who had broken it, and without regard to that natural affection or compassion for their heathen wives, and their children by them, which made it so hard for Esdras to correct it, deserves greatly to be observed and imitated in all attempts for reformation among Christians, the contrary conduct having ever been the bane of true religion, both among Jews and Christians, while political views, or human passions, or prudential motives, are suffered to take place instead of the Divine laws, and so the blessing of God is forfeited, and the church still suffered to continue corrupt from one generation to another. See ch. 8. sect. 2.
3. This Jewish feast of tabernacles was imitated in several heathen solemnities, as Spanheim here observes and proves. He also further observes presently, what great regard many heathens had to the monuments of their forefathers, as Nehemiah had here, sect. 6.
4. This rule of Esdras, not to fast on a festival day, is quoted in the Apostolical Constitutions, B. V., as obtaining among Christians also.
5. This miserable condition of the Jews, and their capital, must have been after the death of Esdras, their former governor, and before Nehemiah came with his commission to build the walls of Jerusalem. Nor is that at all disagreeable to these histories in Josephus, since Esdras came on the seventh, and Nehemiah not till the twenty-fifth of Xerxes, at the interval of eighteen years.
6. This showing king Xerxes's epistles to God, or laying them open before God in the temple, is very like the laying open the epistles of

Sennacherib before him also by Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19:14; Isaiah 37:14, although this last was for a memorial, to put him in mind of the enemies, in order to move the Divine compassion, and the present as a token of gratitude for mercies already received, as Hayercamp well observes on this place.

7. It may not be very improper to remark here, with what an unusual accuracy Josephus determines these years of Xerxes, in which the walls of Jerusalem were built, viz. that Nehemiah came with his commission in the twenty-fifth of Xerxes, that the walls were two years and four months in building, and that they were finished on the twenty-eighth of Xerxes, sect. 7, 8. It may also be remarked further, that Josephus hardly ever mentions more than one infallible astronomical character, I mean an eclipse of the moon, and this a little before the death of Herod the Great, Antiq. B. XVII. ch. 6. sect. 4. Now on these two chronological characters in great measure depend some of the most important points belonging to Christianity, viz. the explication of Daniel's seventy weeks, and the duration of our Savior's ministry, and the time of his death, in correspondence to those seventy weeks. See the Supplement to the Lit. Accorap. of Proph. p. 72.

Chapter 6

Artaxerxes, Esther and Mordecai

1. After the death of Xerxes, the kingdom came to be transferred to his son Cyrus, whom the Greeks called Artaxerxes. When this man had obtained the government over the Persians, the whole nation of the Jews, (1) with their wives and children, were in danger of perishing; the occasion whereof we shall declare in a little time; for it is proper, in the first place, to explain somewhat relating to this king, and how he came to marry a Jewish wife, who was herself of the royal family also, and who is related to have saved our nation; for when Artaxerxes had taken the kingdom, and had set governors over the hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India even unto Ethiopia, in the third year of his reign, he made a costly feast for his friends, and for the nations of Persia, and for their governors, such a one as was proper for a king to make, when he had a mind to make a public demonstration of his riches, and this for a hundred and fourscore days; after which he made a feast for other nations, and for their ambassadors, at Shushan, for seven days. Now this feast was ordered after the manner following: He caused a tent to be pitched, which was supported by pillars of gold and silver, with curtains of linen and purple spread over them, that it might afford room for many ten thousands to sit down. The cups with which the waiters ministered were of gold, and adorned with precious stones, for pleasure and for sight. He also gave order to the servants that they should not force them to drink, by bringing them wine continually, as is the practice of the Persians, but to permit every one of the guests to enjoy himself according to his own inclination. Moreover, he sent messengers through the country, and gave order that they should have a remission of their labors, and should keep a festival many days, on account of his kingdom. In like manner did Vashti the queen gather her guests together, and made them a feast in the palace. Now the king was desirous to show her, who exceeded all other

women in beauty, to those that feasted with him, and he sent some to command her to come to his feast. But she, out of regard to the laws of the Persians, which forbid the wives to be seen by strangers, did not go to the king (2) and though he oftentimes sent the eunuchs to her, she did nevertheless stay away, and refused to come, till the king was so much irritated, that he brake up the entertainment, and rose up, and called for those seven who had the interpretation of the laws committed to them, and accused his wife, and said that he had been affronted by her, because that when she was frequently called by him to his feast, she did not obey him once. He therefore gave order that they should inform him what could be done by the law against her. So one of them, whose name was Memucan, said that this affront was offered not to him alone, but to all the Persians, who were in danger of leading their lives very ill with their wives, if they must be thus despised by them; for that none of their wives would have any reverence for their husbands, if they had" such an example of arrogance in the queen towards thee, who rulest over all." Accordingly, he exhorted him to punish her, who had been guilty of so great an affront to him, after a severe manner; and when he had so done, to publish to the nations what had been decreed about the queen. So the resolution was to put Vashti away, and to give her dignity to another woman.

2. But the king having been fond of her, did not well bear a separation, and yet by the law he could not admit of a reconciliation; so he was under trouble, as not having it in his power to do what he desired to do. But when his friends saw him so uneasy, they advised him to cast the memory of his wife, and his love for her, out of his mind, but to send abroad over all the habitable earth, and to search out for comely virgins, and to take her whom he should best like for his wife, because his passion for his former wife would be quenched by the introduction of another, and the kindness he had for Vashti would be withdrawn from her, and be placed on her that was with him. Accordingly, he was persuaded to follow this advice, and gave order to certain persons to choose out of the virgins that were in his kingdom those

that were esteemed the most comely. So when a great number of these virgins were gathered together, there was found a damsel in Babylon, whose parents were both dead, and she was brought up with her uncle Mordecai, for that was her uncle's name. This uncle was of the tribe of Benjamin, and was one of the principal persons among the Jews. Now it proved that this damsel, whose name was Esther, was the most beautiful of all the rest, and that the grace of her countenance drew the eyes of the spectators principally upon her. So she was committed to one of the eunuchs to take the care of her; and she was very exactly provided with sweet odors, in great plenty, and with costly ointments, such as her body required to be anointed withal; and this was used for six months by the virgins, who were in number four hundred. And when the eunuch thought the virgins had been sufficiently purified, in the fore-mentioned time, and were now fit to go to the king's bed, he sent one to be with the king ever day. So when he had accompanied with her, he sent her back to the eunuch; and when Esther had come to him, he was pleased with her, and fell in love with the damsel, and married her, and made her his lawful wife, and kept a wedding feast for her on the twelfth month of the seventh year of his reign, which was called Adar. He also sent angari, as they are called, or messengers, unto every nation, and gave orders that they should keep a feast for his marriage, while he himself treated the Persians and the Medes, and the principal men of the nations, for a whole month, on account of this his marriage. Accordingly, Esther came to his royal palace, and he set a diadem on her head. And thus was Esther married, without making known to the king what nation she was derived from. Her uncle also removed from Babylon to Shushan, and dwelt there, being every day about the palace, and inquiring how the damsel did, for he loved her as though she had been his own daughter.

3. Now the king had made a law, (3) that none of his own people should approach him unless he were called, when he sat upon his throne and men, with axes in their hands, stood round about his throne, in order to punish such as approached to him without being called. However, the king sat with

a golden scepter in his hand, which he held out when he had a mind to save any one of those that approached to him without being called, and he who touched it was free from danger. But of this matter we have discoursed sufficiently.

4. Some time after this [two eunuchs], Bigthan and Teresh, plotted against the king; and Barnabazus, the servant of one of the eunuchs, being by birth a Jew, was acquainted with their conspiracy, and discovered it to the queen's uncle; and Mordecai, by the means of Esther, made the conspirators known to the king. This troubled the king; but he discovered the truth, and hanged the eunuchs upon a cross, while at that time he gave no reward]: to Mordecai, who had been the occasion of his preservation. He only bid the scribes to set down his name in the records, and bid him stay in the palace, as an intimate friend of the king.

5. Now there was one Haman, the son of Amedatha, by birth an Amalekite, that used to go in to the king; and the foreigners and Persians worshipped him, as Artaxerxes had commanded that such honor should be paid to him; but Mordecai was so wise, and so observant of his own country's laws, that he would not worship the man (4) When Haman observed this, he inquired whence he came; and when he understood that he was a Jew, he had indignation at him, and said within himself, that whereas the Persians, who were free men, worshipped him, this man, who was no better than a slave, does not vouchsafe to do so. And when he desired to punish Mordecai, he thought it too small a thing to request of the king that he alone might be punished; he rather determined to abolish the whole nation, for he was naturally an enemy to the Jews, because the nation of the Amalekites, of which he was; had been destroyed by them. Accordingly he came to the king, and accused them, saying, "There is a certain wicked nation, and it is dispersed over all the habitable earth the was under his dominion; a nation separate from others, unsociable, neither admitting the same sort of Divine worship that others do, nor using laws like to the laws of

others, at enmity with thy people, and with all men, both in their manners and practices. Now, if thou wilt be a benefactor to thy subjects, thou wilt give order to destroy them utterly, and not leave the least remains of them, nor preserve any of them, either for slaves or for captives." :But that the king might not be damnified by the loss of the tributes which the Jews paid him, Haman promised to give him out of his own estate forty thousand talents whensoever he pleased; and he said he would pay this money very willingly, that the kingdom might. be freed from such a misfortune.

6. When Haman had made this petition, the king both forgave him the money, and granted him the men, to do what he would with them. So Haman, having gained what he desired, sent out immediately a decree, as from the king, to all nations, the contents whereof were these: "Artaxerxes, the great king, to the rulers of the hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, sends this writing. Whereas I have governed many nations, and obtained the dominions of all the habitable earth, according to my desire, and have not been obliged to do any thing that is insolent or cruel to my subjects by such my power, but have showed myself mild and gentle, by taking care of their peace and good order, and have sought how they might enjoy those blessings for all time to come. And whereas I have been kindly informed by Haman, who, on account of his prudence and justice, is the first in my esteem, and in dignity, and only second to myself, for his fidelity and constant good-will to me, that there is an ill-natured nation intermixed with all mankind, that is averse to our laws, and not subject to kings, and of a different conduct of life from others, that hateth monarchy, and of a disposition that is pernicious to our affairs, I give order that all these men, of whom Haman our second father hath informed us, be destroyed, with their wives and children, and that none of them be spared, and that none prefer pity to them before obedience to this decree. And this I will to be executed on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of this present year, that so when all that have enmity to us are destroyed, and this in one day, we may be allowed to lead the rest of our lives in peace hereafter." Now when this

decree was brought to the cities, and to the country, all were ready for the destruction and entire abolishment of the Jews, against the day before mentioned; and they were very hasty about it at Shushan, in particular. Accordingly, the king and Haman spent their time in feasting together with good cheer and wine, but the city was in disorder.

7. Now when Mordecai was informed of what was done, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and sprinkled ashes upon his head, and went about the city, crying out, that "a nation that had been injurious to no man was to be destroyed." And he went on saying thus as far as to the king's palace, and there he stood, for it was not lawful for him to go into it in that habit. The same thing was done by all the Jews that were in the several cities wherein this decree was published, with lamentation and mourning, on account of the calamities denounced against them. But as soon as certain persons had told the queen that Mordecai stood before the court in a mourning habit, she was disturbed at this report, and sent out such as should change his garments; but when he could not be induced to put off his sackcloth, because the sad occasion that forced him to put it on was not yet ceased, she called the eunuch Acratheus, for he was then present, and sent him to Mordecai, in order to know of him what sad accident had befallen him, for which he was in mourning, and would not put off the habit he had put on at her desire. Then did Mordecai inform the eunuch of the occasion of his mourning, and of the decree which was sent by the king into all the country, and of the promise of money whereby Haman brought the destruction of their nation. He also gave him a copy of what was proclaimed at Shushan, to be carried to Esther; and he charged her to petition the king about this matter, and not to think it a dishonorable thing in her to put on a humble habit, for the safety of her nation, wherein she might deprecate the ruin of the Jews, who were in danger of it; for that Haman, whose dignity was only inferior to that of the king, had accused the Jews, and had irritated the king against them. When she was informed of this, she sent to Mordecai again, and told him that she was not called by the king, and that he who goes

in to him without being called, is to be slain, unless when he is willing to save any one, he holds out his golden scepter to him; but that to whomsoever he does so, although he go in without being called, that person is so far from being slain, that he obtains pardon, and is entirely preserved. Now when the eunuch carried this message from Esther to Mordecai, he bade him also tell her that she must not only provide for her own preservation, but for the common preservation of her nation, for that if she now neglected this opportunity, there would certainly arise help to them from God some other way, but she and her father's house would be destroyed by those whom she now despised. But Esther sent the very same eunuch back to Mordecai [to desire him] to go to Shushan, and to gather the Jews that were there together to a congregation, and to fast and abstain from all sorts of food, on her account, and [to let him know that] she with her maidens would do the same: and then she promised that she would go to the king, though it were against the law, and that if she must die for it, she would not refuse it.

8. Accordingly, Mordecai did as Esther had enjoined him, and made the people fast; and he besought God, together with them, not to overlook his nation, particularly at this time, when it was going to be destroyed; but that, as he had often before provided for them, and forgiven, when they had sinned, so he would now deliver them from that destruction which was denounced against them; for although it was not all the nation that had offended, yet must they so ingloriously be slain, and that he was himself the occasion of the wrath of Haman, "Because," said he, "I did not worship him, nor could I endure to pay that honor to him which I used to pay to thee, O Lord; for upon that his anger hath he contrived this present mischief against those that have not transgressed thy laws." The same supplications did the multitude put up, and entreated that God would provide for their deliverance, and free the Israelites that were in all the earth from this calamity which was now coming upon them, for they had it before their eyes, and expected its coming. Accordingly, Esther made supplication to God after the manner of her country, by casting herself down upon the earth, and putting on her

mourning garments, and bidding farewell to meat and drink, and all delicacies, for three days' time; and she entreated God to have mercy upon her, and make her words appear persuasive to the king, and render her countenance more beautiful than it was before, that both by her words and beauty she might succeed, for the averting of the king's anger, in case he were at all irritated against her, and for the consolation of those of her own country, now they were in the utmost danger of perishing; as also that he would excite a hatred in the king against the enemies of the Jews, and those that had contrived their future destruction, if they proved to be contemned by him.

9. When Esther had used this supplication for three days, she put off those garments, and changed her habit, and adorned herself as became a queen, and took two of her handmaids with her, the one of which supported her, as she gently leaned upon her, and the other followed after, and lifted up her large train (which swept along the ground) with the extremities of her fingers. And thus she came to the king, having a blushing redness in her countenance, with a pleasant agreeableness in her behavior; yet did she go in to him with fear; and as soon as she was come over against him, as he was sitting on his throne, in his royal apparel, which was a garment interwoven with gold and precious stones, which made him seem to her more terrible, especially when he looked at her somewhat severely, and with a countenance on fire with anger, her joints failed her immediately, out of the dread she was in, and she fell down sideways in a swoon: but the king changed his mind, which happened, as I suppose, by the will of God, and was concerned for his wife, lest her fear should bring some very ill thing upon her, and he leaped from his throne, and took her in his arms, and recovered her, by embracing her, and speaking comfortably to her, and exhorting her to be of good cheer, and not to suspect any thing that was sad on account of her coming to him without being called, because that law was made for subjects, but that she, who was a queen, as well as he a king, might be entirely secure; and as he said this, he put the scepter into her hand, and laid his rod upon her neck, on

account of the law; and so freed her from her fear. And after she had recovered herself by these encouragements, she said, "My lord, it is not easy for me, on the sudden, to say what hath happened, for as soon as I saw thee to be great, and comely, and terrible, my spirit departed from me, and I had no soul left in me." And while it was with difficulty, and in a low voice, that she could say thus much, the king was in a great agony and disorder, and encouraged Esther to be of good cheer, and to expect better fortune, since he was ready, if occasion should require it, to grant her the half of his kingdom. Accordingly, Esther desired that he and his friend Haman would come to her to a banquet, for she said she had prepared a supper for him. He consented to it; and when they were there, as they were drinking, he bid Esther to let him know what she desired; for that she should not be disappointed though she should desire the half of his kingdom. But she put off the discovery of her petition till the next day, if he would come again, together with Haman, to her banquet.

10. Now when the king had promised so to do, Haman went away very glad, because he alone had the honor of supping with the king at Esther's banquet, and because no one else partook of the same honor with kings but himself; yet when he saw Mordecai in the court, he was very much displeased, for he paid him no manner of respect when he saw him. So he went home and called for his wife Zeresh, and his friends, and when they were come, he showed them what honor he enjoyed not only from the king, but from the queen also, for as he alone had that day supped with her, together with the king, so was he also invited again for the next day; yet," said he, "am I not pleased to see Mordecai the Jew in the court." Hereupon his wife Zeresh advised him to give order that a gallows should be made fifty cubits high, and that in the morning he should ask it of the king that Mordecai might be hanged thereon. So he commended her advice, and gave order to his servants to prepare the gallows, and to place it in the court, for the punishment of Mordecai thereon, which was accordingly prepared. But God laughed to scorn the wicked expectations of Haman; and as he knew

what the event would be, he was delighted at it, for that night he took away the king's sleep; and as the king was not willing to lose the time of his lying awake, but to spend it in something that might be of advantage to his kingdom, he commanded the scribe to bring him the chronicles of the former kings, and the records of his own actions; and when he had brought them, and was reading them, one was found to have received a country on account of his excellent management on a certain occasion, and the name of the country was set down; another was found to have had a present made him on account of his fidelity: then the scribe came to Bigthan and Teresh, the eunuchs that had made a conspiracy against the king, which Mordecai had discovered; and when the scribe said no more but that, and was going on to another history, the king stopped him, and inquired "whether it was not added that Mordecai had a reward given him?" and when he said there was no such addition, he bade him leave off; and he inquired of those that were appointed for that purpose, what hour of the night it was; and when he was informed that it was already day, he gave order, that if they found any one of his friends already come, and standing before the court, they should tell him. Now it happened that Haman was found there, for he was come sooner than ordinary to petition the king to have Mordecai put to death; and when the servants said that Haman was before the court, he bid them call him in; and when he was come in, he said, "Because I know that thou art my only fast friend, I desire thee to give me advice how I may honor one that I greatly love, and that after a manner suitable to my magnificence." Now Haman reasoned with himself, that what opinion he should give it would be for himself, since it was he alone who was beloved by the king: so he gave that advice which he thought of all other the best; for he said, "If thou wouldst truly honor a man whom thou sayest thou dost love, give order that he may ride on horseback, with the same garment on which thou wearest, and with a gold chain about his neck, and let one of thy intimate friends go before him, and proclaim through the whole city, that whosoever the king honoreth obtaineth this mark of his honor." This was the advice which Haman gave, out of a supposal that such a reward would come to himself. Hereupon the

king was pleased with the advice, and said, "Go thou therefore, for thou hast the horse, the garment, and the chain, ask for Mordecai the Jew, and give him those things, and go before his horse and proclaim accordingly; for thou art," said he, "my intimate friend, and hast given me good advice; be thou then the minister of what thou hast advised me to. This shall be his reward from us, for preserving my life." When he heard this order, which was entirely unexpected, he was confounded in his mind, and knew not what to do. However, he went out and led the horse, and took the purple garment, and the golden chain for the neck, and finding Mordecai before the court, clothed in sackcloth, he bid him put that garment off, and put the purple garment on. But Mordecai, not knowing the truth of the matter, but thinking that it was done in mockery, said, "O thou wretch, the vilest of all mankind, dost thou thus laugh at our calamities?" But when he was satisfied that the king bestowed this honor upon him, for the deliverance he had procured him when he convicted the eunuchs who had conspired against him, he put on that purple garment which the king always wore, and put the chain about his neck, and got on horseback, and went round the city, while Haman went before and proclaimed, "This shall be the reward which the king will bestow on every one whom he loves, and esteems worthy of honor." And when they had gone round the city, Mordecai went in to the king; but Haman went home, out of shame, and informed his wife and friends of what had happened, and this with tears; who said, that he would never be able to be revenged of Mordecai, for that God was with him.

11. Now while these men were thus talking one to another, Esther's eunuchs hastened Haman away to come to supper; but one of the eunuchs, named Sabuchadas, saw the gallows that was fixed in Haman's house, and inquired of one of his servants for what purpose they had prepared it. So he knew that it was for the queen's uncle, because Haman was about to petition the king that he might be punished; but at present he held his peace. Now when the king, with Haman, were at the banquet, he desired the queen to tell him what gifts she desired to obtain, and assured her that she should have

whatsoever she had a mind to. She then lamented the danger her people were in; and said that "she and her nation were given up to be destroyed, and that she, on that account, made this her petition; that she would not have troubled him if he had only given order that they should be sold into bitter servitude, for such a misfortune would not have been intolerable; but she desired that they might be delivered from such destruction." And when the king inquired of her whom was the author of this misery to them, she then openly accused Haman, and convicted him, that he had been the wicked instrument of this, and had formed this plot against them. When the king was hereupon in disorder, and was gone hastily out of the banquet into the gardens, Haman began to intercede with Esther, and to beseech her to forgive him, as to what he had offended, for he perceived that he was in a very bad case. And as he had fallen upon the queen's bed, and was making supplication to her, the king came in, and being still more provoked at what he saw, "O thou wretch," said he, "thou vilest of mankind, dost thou aim to force in wife?" And when Haman was astonished at this, and not able to speak one word more, Sabuchadas the eunuch came in and accused Haman, and said, "He found a gallows at his house, prepared for Mordecai; for that the servant told him so much upon his inquiry, when he was sent to him to call him to supper." He said further, that the gallows was fifty cubits high: which, when the king heard, he determined that Haman should be punished after no other manner than that which had been devised by him against Mordecai; so he gave order immediately that he should be hung upon those gallows, and be put to death after that manner. And from hence I cannot forbear to admire God, and to learn hence his wisdom and his justice, not only in punishing the wickedness of Haman, but in so disposing it, that he should undergo the very same punishment which he had contrived for another; as also because thereby he teaches others this lesson, that what mischiefs any one prepares against another, he, without knowing of it, first contrives it against himself.

12. Wherefore Haman, who had immoderately abused the honor he had from the king, was destroyed after this manner, and the king granted his

estate to the queen. He also called for Mordecai, (for Esther had informed him that she was akin to him,) and gave that ring to Mordecai which he had before given to Haman. The queen also gave Haman's estate to Mordecai; and prayed the king to deliver the nation of the Jews from the fear of death, and showed him what had been written over all the country by Haman the son of Ammedatha; for that if her country were destroyed, and her countrymen were to perish, she could not bear to live herself any longer. So the king promised her that he would not do any thing that should be disagreeable to her, nor contradict what she desired; but he bid her write what she pleased about the Jews, in the king's name, and seal it with his seal, and send it to all his kingdom, for that those who read epistles whose authority is secured by having the king's seal to them, would no way contradict what was written therein. So he commanded the king's scribes to be sent for, and to write to the nations, on the Jews' behalf, and to his lieutenants and governors, that were over his hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia. Now the contents of this epistle were these: "The great king Artaxerxes to our rulers, and those that are our faithful subjects, sendeth greeting. (5) Many men there are who, on account of the greatness of the benefits bestowed on them, and because of the honor which they have obtained from the wonderful kind treatment of those that bestowed it, are not only injurious to their inferiors, but do not scruple to do evil to those that have been their benefactors, as if they would take away gratitude from among men, and by their insolent abuse of such benefits as they never expected, they turn the abundance they have against those that are the authors of it, and suppose they shall lie concealed from God in that case, and avoid that vengeance which comes from him. Some of these men, when they have had the management of affairs committed to them by their friends, and bearing private malice of their own against some others, by deceiving those that have the power, persuade them to be angry at such as have done them no harm, till they are in danger of perishing, and this by laying accusations and calumnies: nor is this state of things to be discovered by ancient examples, or such as we have learned by report only, but by some examples of such

impudent attempts under our own eyes; so that it is not fit to attend any longer to calumnies and accusations, nor to the persuasions of others, but to determine what any one knows of himself to have been really done, and to punish what justly deserves it, and to grant favors to such as are innocent. This hath been the case of Haman, the son of Ammedatha, by birth an Amalekite, and alien from the blood of the Persians, who, when he was hospitably entertained by us, and partook of that kindness which we bear to all men to so great a degree, as to be called my father, and to be all along worshipped, and to have honor paid him by all in the second rank after the royal honor due to ourselves, he could not bear his good fortune, nor govern the magnitude of his prosperity with sound reason; nay, he made a conspiracy against me and my life, who gave him his authority, by endeavoring to take away Mordecai, my benefactor, and my savior, and by basely and treacherously requiring to have Esther, the partner of my life, and of my dominion, brought to destruction; for he contrived by this means to deprive me of my faithful friends, and transfer the government to others: (6) but since I perceived that these Jews, that were by this pernicious fellow devoted to destruction, were not wicked men, but conducted their lives after the best manner, and were men dedicated to the worship of that God who hath preserved the kingdom to me and to my ancestors, I do not only free them from the punishment which the former epistle, which was sent by Haman, ordered to be inflicted on them, to which if you refuse obedience, you shall do well; but I will that they have all honor paid to them. Accordingly, I have hanged up the man that contrived such things against them, with his family, before the gates of Shushan; that punishment being sent upon him by God, who seeth all things. And I give you in charge, that you publicly propose a copy of this epistle through all my kingdom, that the Jews may be permitted peaceably to use their own laws, and that you assist them, that at the same season whereto their miserable estate did belong, they may defend themselves the very same day from unjust violence, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar; for God hath made that day a day of salvation instead of a day of destruction to them; and may it be

a good day to those that wish us well, and a memorial of the punishment of the conspirators against us: and I will that you take notice, that every city, and every nation, that shall disobey any thing that is contained in this epistle, shall be destroyed by fire and sword. However, let this epistle be published through all the country that is under our obedience, and let all the Jews, by all means, be ready against the day before mentioned, that they may avenge themselves upon their enemies."

13. Accordingly, the horsemen who carried the epistles proceeded on the ways which they were to go with speed: but as for Mordecai, as soon as he had assumed the royal garment, and the crown of gold, and had put the chain about his neck, he went forth in a public procession; and when the Jews who were at Shushan saw him in so great honor with the king, they thought his good fortune was common to themselves also, and joy and a beam of salvation encompassed the Jews, both those that were in the cities, and those that were in the countries, upon the publication of the king's letters, insomuch that many even of other nations circumcised their foreskin for fear of the Jews, that they might procure safety to themselves thereby; for on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which according to the Hebrews is called Adar, but according to the Macedonians, Dystrus, those that carried the king's epistle gave them notice, that the same day wherein their danger was to have been, on that very day should they destroy their enemies. But now the rulers of the provinces, and the tyrants, and the kings, and the scribes, had the Jews in esteem; for the fear they were in of Mordecai forced them to act with discretion. Now when the royal decree was come to all the country that was subject to the king, it fell out that the Jews at Shushan slew five hundred of their enemies; and when the king had told Esther the number of those that were slain in that city, but did not well know what had been done in the provinces, he asked her whether she would have any thing further done against them, for that it should be done accordingly: upon which she desired that the Jews might be permitted to treat their remaining enemies in the same manner the next day; as also that they might hang the ten sons of Haman

upon the gallows. So the king permitted the Jews so to do, as desirous not to contradict Esther. So they gathered themselves together again on the fourteenth day of the month Dystrus, and slew about three hundred of their enemies, but touched nothing of what riches they had. Now there were slain by the Jews that were in the country, and in the other cities, seventy-five thousand of their enemies, and these were slain on the thirteenth day of the month, and the next day they kept as a festival. In like manner the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together, and feasted on the fourteenth day, and that which followed it; whence it is that even now all the Jews that are in the habitable earth keep these days festival, and send portions to one another. Mordecai also wrote to the Jews that lived in the kingdom of Artaxerxes to observe these days, and celebrate them as festivals, and to deliver them down to posterity, that this festival might continue for all time to come, and that it might never be buried in oblivion; for since they were about to be destroyed on these days by Haman, they would do a right thing, upon escaping the danger in them, and on them inflicting punishment on their enemies, to observe those days, and give thanks to God on them; for which cause the Jews still keep the forementioned days, and call them days of Phurim [or Purim.] (7) And Mordecai became a great and illustrious person with the king, and assisted him in the government of the people. He also lived with the queen; so that the affairs of the Jews were, by their means, better than they could ever have hoped for. And this was the state of the Jews under the reign of Artaxerxes.

Footnotes:

1. Since some skeptical persons are willing to discard this Book of Esther as no true history; and even our learned and judicious Dr. Wall, in his late posthumous Critical Notes upon all the other Hebrew books of the Old Testament, gives none upon the Canticles, or upon Esther, and seems thereby to give up this book, as well as he gives up the Canticles, as indefensible; I shall venture to say, that almost all the objections

against this Book of Esther are gone at once, if, as we certainly ought to do, and as Dean Prideaux has justly done, we place this history under Artaxerxes Longimanus, as do both the Septuagint interpretation and Josephus. The learned Dr. Lee, in his posthumous Dissertation on the Second Book of Esdras, p. 25, also says, that "the truth of this history is demonstrated by the feast of Purim, kept up from that time to this very day. And this surprising providential revolution in favor of a captive people, thereby constantly commemorated, standeth even upon a firmer basis than that there ever was such a man as king Alexander [the Great] in the world, of whose reign there is no such abiding monument at this day to be found any where. Nor will they, I dare say, who quarrel at this or any other of the sacred histories, find it a very easy matter to reconcile the different accounts which were given by historians of the affairs of this king, or to confirm any one fact of his whatever with the same evidence which is here given for the principal fact in this sacred book, or even so much as to prove the existence of such a person, of whom so great things are related, but. upon granting this Book of Esther, or sixth of Esdras, (as it is placed in some of the most ancient copies of the Vulgate,) to be a most true and certain history," etc.

2. If the Chaldee paraphrast be in the right, that Artaxerxes intended to show Vashti to his guests naked, it is no wonder at all that she would not submit to such an indignity; but still if it were not so gross as that, yet it might, in the king's cups, be done in a way so indecent, as the Persian laws would not then bear, no more than the common laws of modesty. And that the king had some such design seems not improbable, for otherwise the principal of these royal guests could be no strangers to the queen, nor unapprized of her beauty, so far as decency admitted. However, since Providence was now paving the way for the introduction of a Jewess into the king's affections, in order to bring about one of the most wonderful deliverances which the Jewish or any other nation ever had, we need not be further solicitous about the motives by which the king was induced to divorce Vashti, and marry Esther.

3. Herodotus says that this law [against any one's coming uncalled to the kings of Persia when they were sitting on their thrones] was first enacted by Deioeces [i.e. by him who first withdrew the Medes from the dominion of the Assyrians, and himself first reigned over them]. Thus also, lays Spanheim, stood guards, with their axes, about the throne of Tenuus, or Tenuus, that the offender might by them be punished immediately.
4. Whether this adoration required of Mordecai to Haman were by him deemed too like the adoration due only to God, as Josephus seems here to think, as well as the Septuagint interpreters also, by their translation of Esther 13:12-14, or whether he thought he ought to pay no sort of adoration to an Amalekite, which nation had been such great sinners as to have been universally devoted to destruction by God himself, Exodus 17:14-16; 1 Samuel 15:18, or whether both causes concurred, cannot now, I doubt, be certainly determined.
5. The true reason why king Artaxerxes did not here properly revoke his former barbarous decree for the universal slaughter of the Jews, but only empowered and encouraged the Jews to fight for their lives, and to kill their enemies, if they attempted their destruction, seems to have been that old law of the Medes and Persians, not yet laid aside, that whatever decree was signed both by the king and his lords could not be changed, but remained unalterable, Daniel 6:7-9, 12, 15, 17; Esther 1:19; 8:8. And Haman having engrossed the royal favor might perhaps have himself signed this decree for the Jews' slaughter instead of the ancient lords, and so might have rendered it by their rules irrevocable.
6. These words give an intimation as if Artaxerxes suspected a deeper design in Haman than openly appeared, viz. that knowing the Jews would be faithful to him, and that he could never transfer the crown to his own family, who was an Agagite, Esther 3:1, 10, or of the posterity of Agag, the old king of the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 15:8, 32, 33, while they were alive, and spread over all his dominions, he therefore endeavored to destroy them. Nor is it to me improbable that those

seventy-five thousand eight hundred of the Jews' enemies which were soon destroyed by the Jews, on the permission of the king, which must be on some great occasion, were Amalekites, their old and hereditary enemies, Exodus 17:14, 15; and that thereby was fulfilled Balaam's prophecy, "Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever" Numbers 24:20.

7. Take here part of Reland's note on this disputed passage: "In Josephus's copies these Hebrew words, 'days of Purim,' or 'lots,' as in the Greek copies of Esther, ch. 9:26, 28-32, is read 'days of Phurim,' or 'days of protection,' but ought to be read 'days of Parira,' as in the Hebrew; than which creation," says he, "nothing is more certain." And had we any assurance that Josephus's copy mentioned the "casting of lots," as our other copies do, Esther 3:7, I should fully agree with Reland; but, as it now stands, it seems to me by no means certain. As to this whole Book of Esther in the present Hebrew copy, it is so very imperfect, in a case where the providence of God was so very remarkable, and the Septuagint and Josephus have so much of religion, that it has not so much as the name of God once in it; and it is hard to say who made that epitome which the Masorites have given us for the genuine book itself; no religious Jews could well be the authors of it, whose education obliged them to have a constant regard to God, and whatsoever related to his worship; nor do we know that there ever was so imperfect a copy of it in the world till after the days of Barchochab, in the second century.

Chapter 7

The Actions of Sanballat

1. When Eliashib the high priest was dead, his son Judas succeeded in the high priesthood; and when he was dead, his son John took that dignity; on whose account it was also that Bagoses, the general of another Artaxerxes's army, (1) polluted the temple, and imposed tributes on the Jews, that out of the public stock, before they offered the daily sacrifices, they should pay for every lamb fifty shekels. Now Jesus was the brother of John, and was a friend of Bagoses, who had promised to procure him the high priesthood. In confidence of whose support, Jesus quarreled with John in the temple, and so provoked his brother, that in his anger his brother slew him. Now it was a horrible thing for John, when he was high priest, to perpetrate so great a crime, and so much the more horrible, that there never was so cruel and impious a thing done, neither by the Greeks nor Barbarians. However, God did not neglect its punishment, but the people were on that very account enslaved, and the temple was polluted by the Persians. Now when Bagoses, the general of Artaxerxes's army, knew that John, the high priest of the Jews, had slain his own brother Jesus in the temple, he came upon the Jews immediately, and began in anger to say to them, "Have you had the impudence to perpetrate a murder in your temple?" And as he was aiming to go into the temple, they forbade him so to do; but he said to them, "Am not I purer than he that was slain in the temple?" And when he had said these words, he went into the temple. Accordingly, Bagoses made use of this pretense, and punished the Jews seven years for the murder of Jesus.

2. Now when John had departed this life, his son Jaddua succeeded in the high priesthood. He had a brother, whose name was Manasseh. :Now there was one Sanballat, who was sent by Darius, the last king [of Persia], into Samaria. He was a Cutheam by birth; of which stock were the

Samaritans also. This man knew that the city Jerusalem was a famous city, and that their kings had given a great deal of trouble to the Assyrians, and the people of Celesyria; so that he willingly gave his daughter, whose name was Nicaso, in marriage to Manasseh, as thinking this alliance by marriage would be a pledge and security that the nation of the Jews should continue their good-will to him.

Footnote:

1. Concerning this other Artaxerxes, called Muemon, and the Persian affliction and captivity of the Jews under him, occasioned by the murder of the high priest's brother in the holy house itself, see Authent. Rec. at large, p. 49. And if any wonder why Josephus wholly omits the rest of the kings of Persia after Artaxerxes Mnemon, till he came to their last king Darius, who was conquered by Alexander the Great, I shall give them Vossius's and Dr. Hudson's answer, though in my own words, viz. that Josephus did not do ill in admitting those kings of Persia with whom the Jews had no concern, because he was giving the history of the Jews, and not of the Persians [which is a sufficient reason also why he entirely omits the history and the Book of Job, as not particularly relating to that nation]. He justly therefore returns to the Jewish affairs after the death of Longimanus, without any intention of Darius II. before Artaxerxes Mnemon, or of Ochus or Arogus, as the Canon of Ptolemy names them, after him. Nor had he probably mentioned this other Artaxerxes, unless Bagoses, one of the governors and commanders under him, had occasioned the pollution of the Jewish temple, and had greatly distressed the Jews upon that pollution.

Chapter 8

Alexander the Great Made his Entry into the City Jerusalem

1. About this time it was that Philip, king of Macedon, was treacherously assaulted and slain at Egae by Pausanias, the son of Cerastes, who was derived from the family of Oreste, and his son Alexander succeeded him in the kingdom; who, passing over the Hellespont, overcame the generals of Darius's army in a battle fought at Granicum. So he marched over Lydia, and subdued Ionia, and overran Caria, and fell upon the places of Pamphylia, as has been related elsewhere.

2. But the elders of Jerusalem being very uneasy that the brother of Jaddua the high priest, though married to a foreigner, should be a partner with him in the high priesthood, quarreled with him; for they esteemed this man's marriage a step to such as should be desirous of transgressing about the marriage of [strange] wives, and that this would be the beginning of a mutual society with foreigners, although the offense of some about marriages, and their having married wives that were not of their own country, had been an occasion of their former captivity, and of the miseries they then underwent; so they commanded Manasseh to divorce his wife, or not to approach the altar, the high priest himself joining with the people in their indignation against his brother, and driving him away from the altar. Whereupon Manasseh came to his father-in-law, Sanballat, and told him, that although he loved his daughter Nicaso, yet was he not willing to be deprived of his sacerdotal dignity on her account, which was the principal dignity in their nation, and always continued in the same family. And then Sanballat promised him not only to preserve to him the honor of his priesthood, but to procure for him the power and dignity of a high priest, and would make him governor of all the places he himself now ruled, if he would keep his

daughter for his wife. He also told him further, that he would build him a temple like that at Jerusalem, upon Mount Gerizzini, which is the highest of all the mountains that are in Samaria; and he promised that he would do this with the approbation of Darius the king. Manasseh was elevated with these promises, and staid with Sanballat, upon a supposal that he should gain a high priesthood, as bestowed on him by Darius, for it happened that Sanballat was then in years. But there was now a great disturbance among the people of Jerusalem, because many of those priests and Levites were entangled in such matches; for they all revolted to Manasseh, and Sanballat afforded them money, and divided among them land for tillage, and habitations also, and all this in order every way to gratify his son-in-law.

3. About this time it was that Darius heard how Alexander had passed over the Hellespont, and had beaten his lieutenants in the battle at Granicum, and was proceeding further; whereupon he gathered together an army of horse and foot, and determined that he would meet the Macedonians before they should assault and conquer all Asia. So he passed over the river Euphrates, and came over Taurus, the Cilician mountain, and at Issus of Cilicia he waited for the enemy, as ready there to give him battle. Upon which Sanballat was glad that Darius was come down; and told Manasseh that he would suddenly perform his promises to him, and this as soon as ever Darius should come back, after he had beaten his enemies; for not he only, but all those that were in Asia also, were persuaded that the Macedonians would not so much as come to a battle with the Persians, on account of their multitude. But the event proved otherwise than they expected; for the king joined battle with the Macedonians, and was beaten, and lost a great part of his army. His mother also, and his wife and children, were taken captives, and he fled into Persia. So Alexander came into Syria, and took Damascus; and when he had obtained Sidon, he besieged Tyre, when he sent all epistle to the Jewish high priest, to send him some auxiliaries, and to supply his army with provisions; and that what presents he formerly sent to Darius, he would now send to him, and choose the friendship of the Macedonians, and

that he should never repent of so doing. But the high priest answered the messengers, that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him; and he said that he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living. Upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry; and though he determined not to leave Tyre, which was just ready to be taken, yet as soon as he had taken it, he threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oaths. So when he had, with a good deal of pains during the siege, taken Tyre, and had settled its affairs, he came to the city of Gaza, and besieged both the city and him that was governor of the garrison, whose name was Babemeses.

4. But Sanballat thought he had now gotten a proper opportunity to make his attempt, so he renounced Darius, and taking with him seven thousand of his own subjects, he came to Alexander; and finding him beginning the siege of Tyre, he said to him, that he delivered up to him these men, who came out of places under his dominion, and did gladly accept of him for his lord instead of Darius. So when Alexander had received him kindly, Sanballat thereupon took courage, and spake to him about his present affair. He told him that he had a son-in-law, Manasseh, who was brother to the high priest Jaddua; and that there were many others of his own nation, now with him, that were desirous to have a temple in the places subject to him; that it would be for the king's advantage to have the strength of the Jews divided into two parts, lest when the nation is of one mind, and united, upon any attempt for innovation, it prove troublesome to kings, as it had formerly proved to the kings of Assyria. Whereupon Alexander gave Sanballat leave so to do, who used the utmost diligence, and built the temple, and made Manasseh the priest, and deemed it a great reward that his daughter's children should have that dignity; but when the seven months of the siege of Tyre were over, and the two months of the siege of Gaza, Sanballat died. Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under

terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifice to God, whom he besought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced, and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king.

5. And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession, with the priests and the multitude of the citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. It reached to a place called Sapha, which name, translated into Greek, signifies a prospect, for you have thence a prospect both of Jerusalem and of the temple. And when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, the very reverse of it happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest. The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about; whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore

the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, "I did not adore him, but that God who hath honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is that, having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the Divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind." And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city. And when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the Book of Daniel was showed him (1) wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired. And when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired. And when he said to the multitude, that if any of them would enlist themselves in his army, on this condition, that they should continue under the laws of their forefathers, and live according to them, he was willing to take them with him, many were ready to accompany him in his wars.

6. So when Alexander had thus settled matters at Jerusalem, he led his army into the neighboring cities; and when all the inhabitants to whom he

came received him with great kindness, the Samaritans, who had then Shechem for their metropolis, (a city situate at Mount Gerizzim, and inhabited by apostates of the Jewish nation,) seeing that Alexander had so greatly honored the Jews, determined to profess themselves Jews; for such is the disposition of the Samaritans, as we have already elsewhere declared, that when the Jews are in adversity, they deny that they are of kin to them, and then they confess the truth; but when they perceive that some good fortune hath befallen them, they immediately pretend to have communion with them, saying that they belong to them, and derive their genealogy from the posterity of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Accordingly, they made their address to the king with splendor, and showed great alacrity in meeting him at a little distance from Jerusalem. And when Alexander had commended them, the Shechemites approached to him, taking with them the troops that Sanballat had sent him, and they desired that he would come to their city, and do honor to their temple also; to whom he promised, that when he returned he would come to them. And when they petitioned that he would remit the tribute of the seventh year to them, because they did but sow thereon, he asked who they were that made such a petition; and when they said that they were Hebrews, but had the name of Sidonians, living at Shechem, he asked them again whether they were Jews; and when they said they were not Jews, "It was to the Jews," said he, "that I granted that privilege; however, when I return, and am thoroughly informed by you of this matter, I will do what I shall think proper." And in this manner he took leave of the Shechemites; but ordered that the troops of Sanballat should follow him into Egypt, because there he designed to give them lands, which he did a little after in Thebais, when he ordered them to guard that country.

7. Now when Alexander was dead, the government was parted among his successors, but the temple upon Mount Gerizzim remained. And if any one were accused by those of Jerusalem of having eaten things common (2) or of having broken the sabbath, or of any other crime of the like nature, he fled away to the Shechemites, and said that he was accused unjustly. About

this time it was that Jaddua the high priest died, and Onias his son took the high priesthood. This was the state of the affairs of the people of Jerusalem at this time.

Footnotes:

1. The place showed Alexander might be Daniel 7:6; 8:3-8, 20--22; 11:3; some or all of them very plain predictions of Alexander's conquests and successors.
2. Here Josephus uses the very word koinophagia, eating things common, for eating things unclean; as does our New Testament, Act x.14, 15, 28. xi. 8, 9, Rom. xiv. 14.