

Ezra/Nehemiah

Introduction

The story of the return of the exiled from Babylon in 538 BCE is told in Ezra/Nehemiah. Cyrus granted permission to a select group of exiles to return to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

These two books, in Hebrew Scriptures, ought to be considered as one book by readers, since it is only when these are read together that one gains information concerning the re-establishment, not only of the temple and temple worship but also about the structure of the community during this difficult time. In Hebrew Scriptures they are written as one book, though in translation they generally appear, as in our English Bibles, as two distinct books. Tradition says they were written by the Chronicler (i.e. the writer of I & II Chronicles). Whether this is true is not clear to scholars, though many feel that a chronicler did a compilation from a number of different sources to form the books of Ezra/Nehemiah.

Why did Cyrus permit the return of some of the exiles? Jeremiah had set a prophetic time limit for the exiles but it is doubtful that Cyrus ever heard about it. Perhaps Cyrus felt he needed all the help he could get and by rebuilding the temple he would curry the favor of the God of Jerusalem, thus strengthening his rule.

A reference is made in the footnotes to the Elephantine Papyrus. Additional examination of that text, written in Egypt, finds that the names of several persons in Nehemiah are referred to in the Elephantine Papyrus. Brief quotations of Ezra/Nehemiah are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls found in cave 4, numbered as 4QEzra, quoting Ezra 4:2 - 6; 9 - 11; 5:17 - 6:5. These quotes are in Aramaic. These become companion pieces to the Ezra/Nehemiah account.

The narrative seems to be somewhat confused and while scholars have attempted to harmonize it, no chronology that has been suggested by various scholars has ever been generally accepted as a kind of harmony of the two books. It seems that whoever wrote the books of Ezra/Nehemiah was more concerned with concepts and important matters than chronological history. Thus in Ezra the building of the temple along with the erection of the wall of Jerusalem for safety reasons was of major importance.

Ezra is named after the principal character, a priest/scribe who led a contingent of people from Babylon and environs to Jerusalem and Judah. Portions of the book are in Aramaic. The chronicler who compiled the book accepted these portions as a part of the book without consideration of the difference of language since the chronicler no doubt was fluent in both languages.

Nehemiah is also named for the leading person in the book that bears his name. After a seemingly autobiographical start, containing memoirs of Nehemiah, the book moves to a rather disjointed and disoriented account of the later events of reconstruction of Jerusalem and teaching the newly arrived exiles about faith and how that faith should be expressed in the light of the Torah.

Ezra/Nehemiah was accepted in the canon prior to the acceptance of I & II Chronicles. This explains the rather strange location of these books in the canon, in the 3rd section of the Hebrew Scriptures after Daniel. Ezra/Nehemiah are found toward the end of the 3rd section (the writings) in the Hebrew Scriptures, followed by I & II Chronicles.

Presumably the chronicler (whoever that might be) wrote these books by 250 BCE. The date 350 BCE would be the earliest possible date for having written the work.

Other than the aforementioned Dead Sea Scroll fragments the oldest extant copy of the Hebrew scriptural manuscripts with the text of Ezra/Nehemiah, being treated as one book, is in a

Hebrew Bible dated 1448. This is included in the Bomberg edition of the Hebrew Scriptures dated 1525. The books are considered separately in the Vulgate. The earliest Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts consider them to be one book.

I Esdras (the Greek Ezra) has materials which are noted in footnotes which show some differences from the Hebrew/Aramaic versions. Some scholars feel the Hebrew source for I Esdras is superior to the Masoretic text.

There seem to be four stages in the Ezra/Nehemiah story of the re-establishment of Jerusalem:

1. A return under Cyrus, ca. 538 BCE. led by Sheshbazzar.
2. A return under Darius, ca. 521 - 458 BCE, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua, with the encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah.
3. A group led by Nehemiah who came twice under Artaxerxes I, ca. 464 - 423 BCE. to build the walls and put down opposition to the attempt to establish pure worship and a pure community.
4. A return under Artaxerxes II, ca. 404 - 358 BCE. led by Ezra, who brought a codification of the Hebrew (Mosaic) Law and sought to correct a backsliding community.

Footnotes dealing with the Septuagint (LXX) on occasion refer to specific manuscripts and editions. Among these are A (Aleph) 4 - 5 Cent.; B & C 5 Cent; L a recension by Lucian who was a scholar in Antioch who sought to make a more exact translation of the LXX. It was his desire to expunge errors that he felt had crept in by scribes who were not diligent or by heretics who inserted notes into the text. He died a martyr's death on June 7, 312. The church father, Origin also attempted an early revision of the LXX.

The Hebrew and Vulgate division of chapters does not always correspond with the chapter divisions in the English Bible. [H.10:1] is an example of a difference in numbering in the Hebrew Bible. All the variants are noted in that manner.

The outline used in the translation is an adaptation of the outline found in The Interpreter's Bible.

Ezra

<CHAPTER 1>

Sheshbazzar's Return 1:1 - 2:70

A. Preliminary: 1:1 - 4

1. Introduction 1:1-4 = II Chronicles 36:22; ¹ I Esdras 2:1 - 2

¹ In the first year of Cyrus the Persian king, ² when the word of the Lord as declared by the prophet Jeremiah was to be fulfilled, ³the Lord roused (*or, inspired*) ⁴ Cyrus the Persian king to issue a proclamation, ⁵ sending heralds throughout the realm, and also wrote an edict which said:

² Cyrus, king of Persia has declared: ⁶ The Lord the God of heaven has granted me to possess all the kingdoms of the earth and he has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. ³ If anyone among those in this realm belong to his people, may their God be with them! These are now permitted to go to Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the temple ⁷ of the Lord, the God of Israel -- he who is the God in Jerusalem. ⁸ ⁴ Additionally: those who were survivors (*or, those who remain behind*), ⁹ wherever they might reside, are to support those who leave their community ¹⁰ with silver and gold, goods, livestock, along with votive ¹¹ offerings for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem. ¹²

B. Preparation for the Return 1:5 - 11

1. Chiefs of the Fathers 1:5 = I Esdras 2:8

⁵ The heads of the ancestral families of Judah and Benjamin began at once, along with the priests and Levites, for all had been roused by the spirit of God and prepared to go to rebuild the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem.

2. Support of Neighbors 1:6 = I Esdras 2:9

⁶ All their neighbors supported ¹³ them with vessels of silver, with gold, goods, livestock, and an abundance ¹⁴ of precious objects, in addition to all that was given in their own free will offering.

¹ Ezra reproduces II Chronicles 36:22 almost exactly.

² 559 BC E was the first year of Cyrus' reign in Persia. He officially became king of Babylon in 538 BCE. This leaves the exact date for "the first year of Cyrus: in question.

³ Cf. Jeremiah 29 :10.

⁴ Hebrew: *heir*.

⁵ Literally: "he made a voice pass through," i.e. he sent a herald through.. Hebrew: *bdwz*.

⁶ The decree of Cyrus is repeated in Aramaic in a some what different form in 6:3- 5. Cf. The Cyrus Cylinder, giving credit to Marduk. ANET p. 316.

⁷ Literally: "house."

⁸ So: MT. "in Jerusalem" is often omitted by translators.

⁹ I.e. those who escaped from the sword. Cf. II Chronicles 36:20. Hebrew: *nisar* meaning "the Jews remaining."

¹⁰ NEB: "may claim aid from his neighbor."

¹¹ Hebrew: *nedabah*.

¹² Cf. this paragraph with II Chronicles 36:22-23.

¹³ Literally: "strengthened their hearts." MT: *biklekesep*. Reading, with LXX: *bakkol* = "supported."

¹⁴ Reading *larob* with the LXX & Syriac for the MT: *lebad*.

3. Cyrus' Return of Temple Vessels 1:7 - 11 = I Esdras 2:10 - 12

7 King Cyrus also retrieved the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had brought¹⁵ from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. 8 Cyrus, the Persian king, under the direction of Mithredath,¹⁶ the treasurer, released an inventory to Sheshbazzar the chief leader of Judah. 9 This was the inventory: one thousand¹⁷ bowls,¹⁸ one thousand silver basins,¹⁹ twenty nine knives,²⁰ 10 thirty golden bowls,²¹ [two thousand]²² four hundred and ten silver bowls along with one thousand other vessels. 11 All the vessels of gold and sive were five thousand four hundred [and sixty nine]²³ which were brought by Sheshbazzar, when the exiles traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem.²⁴

<CHAPTER 2>

C. Returning Israelites 2:1 - 70

1 There also were people of the province²⁵ who had experienced captivity by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon having been taken to Babylon. These returned to Jerusalem and Judea, each to his own town.²⁶

The Leaders:

2 These came with Zerubbabel,²⁷ Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah,²⁸ Reelaiah,²⁹ Mordacai, Bilshan, Mispur, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.

The Principal List:

The number of the male leaders of Israel:

3 The descendants of Parosh, two thousand, one hundred and seventy two.

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

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

6 The descendants of Pahath-moab, namely those of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.

15 Reading *hebi* rather than *host* in Hebrew along with I Esdras 2:10 & LXX.

16 A Persian name, *Mithradata*, the title of the treasurer. The name was adopted by the Akkadian, Aramaic & Persian languages.

17 Some scholars read this Hebrew word as "thirty."

18 The word used in Hebrew is a loan word '*gartle* which is not clear. Possibly it means food bowls, or platters. Others feel it means wine mixing bowls or wine coolers. A number of Hebrew words in verse 9 are unclear.

19 A hapax legomenon, possibly a Persian loan word -- *kapor* -- or an Akkadian loan word -- *kaparu*.

20 So: Vulgate & Talmud. Hebrew: *machlaph*. Literally it means: "to pass through" thus giving the thought of "knives." Some scholars follow the LXX which translates: "changes of raiment."

21 Hebrew: *kaparu*, perhaps "food bowls" or "covered bowls."

22 So: II Esdras 2:13. MT: "double." Julius A Bewer omits "two thousand" feeling it to be a corrupt text that has been transmitted.

23 So: I Esdras 2:14. MT: "five thousand four hundred."

24 The figures appear to be in hopeless confusion. These totals do not agree with I Esdras. A variety of attempts to explain the discrepancies have been offered. Possibly this exhibits an error in copying or the result of textual damage.

25 Hebrew: *m'dina*. The province was technically the Judean subdivision of the 5th Persian Satrapy. In this chapter we have an example of the humanization of society as directed in Psalm 68:6.

26 The situation was apparently such that the exiles living in the Persian Empire had become something of an irritant, thus the time had come to begin the process of sending them home.

27 The grandson of king Jehoiachin. The name means "seed of Babel" or "born in Babel."

28 Azariah in Nehemiah 7:7. Seraiah is an abbreviation of Azariah.

29 Nehemiah inserts one additional name in his list.

- 7 The descendants of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty four.
- 8 The descendants of Zattu, nine hundred and forty five.
- 9 The descendants of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty.
- 10 The descendants of Bani,³⁰ six hundred and forty two.
- 11 The descendants of Bebai, six hundred and twenty three.
- 12 The descendants of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty two.
- 13 The descendants of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty two.
- 14 The descendants of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty six.
- 15 The descendants of Adin, four hundred and fifty four.
- 16 The descendants of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety eight.³¹
- 17 The descendants of Bezai, three hundred and twenty three.
- 18 The descendants of Jorah,³² one hundred and twelve.
- 19 The descendants of Hashum, two hundred and twenty three.
- 20 The descendants of Gibbar,³³ ninety five.

The cities:

- 21 The men of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty three.
- 22 The men of Netophah,³⁴ fifty six.
- 23 The men of Anathoth,³⁵ one hundred and twenty eight.
- 24 The men of Azmaveth,³⁶ forty two.
- 25 The men of Kiriatharim,³⁷ Chephirah,³⁸ and Beeroth,³⁹ seven hundred and forty three.⁴⁰
- 26 The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty one.
- 27 The men of Michmas,⁴¹ one hundred and twenty two.
- 28 The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty three.

Additional descendants:

- 29 The descendants of Nebo,⁴² fifty two.
- 30 The descendants of Magbish,⁴³ one hundred and fifty six.
- 31 The descendants of the other Elam,⁴⁴ one thousand two hundred and fifty four.⁴⁵
- 32 The descendants of Harim,⁴⁶ three hundred and twenty .

30 Binnui in Nehemiah 7:15 and Bunni in Nehemiah 10:15.

31 I Esdras inserts an additional name, not in the Hebrew text.

32 In Nehemiah 7:24 he is listed as Hariph.

33 Nehemiah 7:25 lists the name as Gibeon. LXX: Giber.

34 The men of Bethlehem & Netopah are mentioned together in Nehemiah 7:26.

35 Ras el Kharrubeh, 3 miles NE of Jerusalem.

36 Bethazmaveth in Nehemiah 7:28. I Esdras 5:18 has Bethasmoth.

37 Nehemiah 7:29: Kiriathjearim.

38 Khirbet el Kefireh.

39 Thought to be north of Gibeon.

40 I Esdras inserts Chadasians & Ammediam between Beeroth & Ramah.

41 Modern Mukkmas. NE of Geba, on the road from Jericho to Ai.

42 Nehemiah 7:23 has "the other Nebo."

43 Omitted in Nehemiah 7:33 - 34. Possibly Kirbet Mah biegeh.

44 Possibly Beit 'Alam. I Esdras 5:22 adds one name.

45 LXX: two thousand two hundred and fifty four.

46 Possibly Kirbet Horan.

- 33 The descendants of Lod,⁴⁷ Hadid,⁴⁸ and Ono,⁴⁹ seven hundred and twenty four.
 34 The descendants of Jericho,⁵⁰ three hundred and forty five.
 35 The descendants of Senaah,⁵¹ three thousand six hundred and thirty.

Priests:

- 36 The descendants of Jedaia,⁵² of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy three.
 37 The descendants of Immez,⁵³ one thousand and fifty two.
 38 The descendants of Pashhur,⁵⁴ one thousand two hundred and forty seven.
 39 The descendants of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

Levites:

- 40 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel,⁵⁵
 of the descendants⁵⁶ of Hodaviah, seventy four.

Cantors (or Singers):

- 41 The Cantors (*or, singers*): The descendants of Asaph, one hundred and twenty eight.

Warders (or, Gate Keepers):

- 42 The descendants of the warders (*or, gate keepers*):
 the descendants of Shallum, the descendants of Ater,
 the descendants of Talmon, the descendants of Akkub,⁵⁷
 the descendants of Hatita, and the descendants of Shobai, one hundred
 and thirty nine.

Temple Servants:

- 43 The temple servants:⁵⁸ The descendants of Ziba,⁵⁹
 the descendants of Hasupha, the descendants of Tabbaoth,
 44 the descendants of Keros, the descendants of Siaka, the descendants of Padon,
 45 the descendants of Lebanah, the descendants of Hagabah,
 the descendants of Akkub,⁶⁰
 46 the descendants of Hagab, the descendants of Shamlai, the descendants of Hanan,
 47 the descendants of Giddel,⁶¹ the descendants of Gahar, the descendants of Reaiah,

47 Modern Ludd, 11 miles SE of Jaffa.

48 Modern el Hadilheh.

49 Modern Kefr'ana, NW of Lod.

50 Tel es Sultan, 1 1/2 miles NW of modern Jericho.

51 Possibly Magdalsenna, along the route from Jericho, 8 miles N of Jericho.

52 Cf. I Chronicles 24:7.

53 Cf. I Chronicles 24:8, 14.

54 The name is Egyptian. Cf. Nehemiah 11:12; I Chronicles 9:12.

55 Cf. Nehemiah 7:43.

56 LXX: "Bani" or "Banni."

57 Cf. I Chronicles 9:17.

58 Hebrew: *nethinim*. Literally, "those given (or dedicated) as temple servants." The names are largely foreign. Nehemiah writes: They resided "in the house of Nethinim."

59 An Egyptian name.

60 I Esdras, LXX adds Outa and Ketab. Scholars feel these are perhaps corruptions of names now list in the Hebrew list.

61 This name should possibly be vocalized as Gadhol, as found in some Aramaic papyri.

48 the descendants of Rezin,⁶² the descendants of Nekoda, the descendants of Gazzam,
49 the descendants of Uzza, the descendants of Paseah, the descendants of Besai,
50 the descendants of Asnah,⁶³ the descendants of Meunim, the descendants of Nephisim,⁶⁴
51 the descendants of Bakkuk, the descendants of Hakupha, the descendants of Harhur,
52 the descendants of Bozluth, the descendants of Mehida, the descendants of Harsha,
53 the descendants of Barkos,⁶⁵ the descendants of Sisera,⁶⁶ the descendants of Temah,
54 the descendants of Neziah and the descendants of Hatipha.

Descendants of Solomon's servants:

55 The descendants of Solomon's servants: The descendants of Sotai,
the descendants of Hassophereth, the descendants of Peruda,⁶⁷
56 the descendants of Jaalah, the descendants of Darkon, the descendants of Giddel,⁶⁸
57 the descendants of Shephatiah, the descendants of Hattil,
the descendants of Pochereth -hazzebaim, and the descendants of Ami.

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

*Uncertified clans:*⁶⁹

59 The following were those who came up from Telmelah, Telharsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they were unable to prove their ancestral heritage⁷⁰ descent or whether they truly were Israelites.

60 The descendants of Delaiah, the descendants of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty two. 61 Also, the descendants of⁷¹ priests; the descendants of Habaiah ,the descendants of Hakkoz and the descendants of Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and accepted her name). 62 These desired to be registered⁷² with those enrolled in the genealogies but were unable to be found there. Thus they were excluded from the priesthood, as unclean. 63 The governor⁷³ informed them that they were not permitted to partake of the most holy food until a priest could consult Urim and Thummim.⁷⁴

The total congregation:

64 The entire assembly, in toto, was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty.⁷⁵

62 Possibly an Aramaean name.

63 An Egyptian name.

64 An Arab name. Cf. Genesis 25:15.

65 An Edomite name.

66 A non-Semitic name.

67 Perida in Nehemiah 7:57.

68 Possibly Godhol. Cf. v. 47.

69 Cf. Nehemiah 7:61 - 65; I Esdras 5:36 - 40.

70 Literally: "their father's houses."

71 "The descendants of" is omitted by many scholars in translation. Cf. Nehemiah 7:63 and I Esdras 5:38. Some scholars simply read the Hebrew word as *umibbene*, "of the priests," omitting "the descendants of."

72 So, literally. LXX: "their writings." i.e. a genealogy.:

73 KJV transliterated the Hebrew word "tirshatha" meaning "one to be feared" which would not necessarily be the governor.

74 Cf. I Samuel 14:11.

75 Some scholars emend verses 12, 16 & 31 to resolve the discrepancy between the numbers and the grand total. Other scholars feel the discrepancy is because of women being included in some figures.

Private property:

⁶⁵ Along with their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty seven along with two hundred male and female cantors. ⁷⁶ ⁶⁶ They had seven hundred and thirty six horses, two hundred fifty five mules, ⁶⁷ four hundred and thirty five camels, and six thousand seven hundred and twenty donkeys.

Temple donations:

⁶⁸ When some of the heads of the ancestral families came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem they made votive (*or, free will*) offerings for the house of God, that it could be erected on the same site. ⁶⁹ This was done in accordance with their ability to contribute to the treasury for the work. Six thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver and one hundred priests' garments were given.

⁷⁰ The priests and the Levites and the descendants of the people lived [in Jerusalem] ⁷⁷ and its environs, ⁷⁸ and the cantors (*or, singers*) and warders (*or, gate keepers*) and the temple servants ⁷⁹ lived in their towns as did all of Israel.

<CHAPTER 3>

II. Building the Temple Under Darius 3:1 - 6:22

A. Reconstruction of the Altar and the Re-establishment of Sacrifices 3:1 - 6

¹ With the arrival of the seventh month ⁸⁰ and while the Israelites were settled in the towns, the people assembled unitedly in Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose, along with his priestly brothers, and Zerubbabel, ⁸¹ the son of Shealtiel, along with his relatives started rebuilding the altar of the God of Israel so that burnt offerings might be made on it, as was prescribed in the law of Moses, the man of God. ⁸² ³ The altar was set up on its original foundation ⁸³ despite their fear ⁸⁴ of the surrounding local inhabitants ⁸⁵

⁴ They offered burnt offerings to the Lord on it both morning and evening. ⁵ They kept the Feast of Booths (*or, Tabernacles*) ⁸⁶ as had been prescribed and offered the daily burnt offerings in the appropriate numbers, ⁸⁷ as it had been prescribed and required for each day. ⁵ Following this they continued with burnt offerings [for Sabbaths], ⁸⁸ the new moon and all the sacred feasts prescribed by the Lord, as well as the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord. ⁶ They began to make burnt offerings to the Lord on the first day of the seventh month, even though the foundation

⁷⁶ Cf. ANET p. 263 c.

⁷⁷ Added to correspond with I Esdras 5:46.

⁷⁸ So in I Esdras. It is omitted in Hebrew.

⁷⁹ MT adds: "in their towns" which is considered dittography. It is omitted by the LXX and I Esdras 5:46.

⁸⁰ The seventh month (Tishri, September/October) was a festival period so it was important that the altar be ready even though the building had not been started.

⁸¹ The secular leader.

⁸² To build an altar first was not unique. Cf. Genesis 12:17.

⁸³ Literally: "on its bases."

⁸⁴ Literally: "terror was on them."

⁸⁵ MT: "for in terror from the people of the land upon them." Some scholars feel this verse is a gloss.

⁸⁶ Originally no doubt a Canaanite agricultural festival. Hebrew: *Succoth*. Cf. Judges 9:2. Originally it was a joyous harvest festival at the close of the agricultural year. Later it would begin on the 15th day of the 7th month. Cf. Numbers 29:12 - 38.

⁸⁷ Literally: "by number."

⁸⁸ Inserted by I Esdras 5:51.

of the temple of the Lord had not yet been laid.⁸⁹

B. Work of the Temple Begins 3:7 - 13

1 Supplies and Labor 3: 7 - 9 = I Esdras 5:54 - 58

7 So they supplied (*or, paid*) money to the stone workers⁹⁰ and craftsmen.⁹¹ The Sidonians and Tyrians received food, drink, and oil to bring logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa in accordance with the authorization⁹² that had been granted them by king Cyrus of Persia.⁹³

8 Now in the second year, following their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem (in the second month,⁹⁴ Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak),⁹⁵ along with the rest of their companions, namely, the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from captivity to Jerusalem began to work. First Levites were appointed, aged twenty years⁹⁶ or older to supervise the work on the house of the Lord. 9 And Jeshua, his sons,⁹⁷ and other relatives, along with Kadmiel and Bani,⁹⁸ together with Kadmiel, Hodaviah⁹⁹ were appointed to superintend the workers in the temple, of God.¹⁰⁰ (along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites and their relatives).¹⁰¹ These, together took charge of those who labored on the house (*or, temple*) of the Lord.

b. Subfoundation is Laid and Dedicated 3:10- 11 = I Esdras 5:59 - 62

10 When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests came forward, in their vestments,¹⁰² with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the directions¹⁰³ king David of Israel had ordered. 11 They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

"For he is good, his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel,"

and all the people responded with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord had been laid.

c. Poplar reaction to the Building 3:12 - 13 = I Esdras 5:63 - 65

89 The implication here is to build without deliberate attempts to build on what remained of the old temple. Haggai 2:18 speaks of resuming the temple after years of neglect.

90 Hebrew: *hosebim*. TAN: "hewers." Literally: "dressers of stone" thus, quarry workers, not the ones who laid up stone walls. The translation is often "masons.". In Hebrew the word can mean those who do routine work in the general field of masonry.

91 Hebrew: *harasim*, possibly carpenters as well as brick layers, thus craftsmen.

92 A hapax legomenon. Hebrew: *risson*, "have the right to."

93 Seemingly a conscious imitation of the building of the first temple. There can be at least 2 interpretations. a. relating to the entire venture, or, b. referring to the immediately preceding sentence.

94 Since the first month of the year was dominated by Passover, it seems proper to begin the building of in the second month of the Hebrew year.

95 An apparent gloss.

96 The age of responsibility. Cf. I Chronicles 23:27; II Chronicles 31:17.

97 Some scholars feel that "his sons" ought to be translated with a name: "Binnui."

98 Cf. Footnote 56 Ezra 2:40. An alternate translation would be "his sons."

99 Possibly: "Hodiah."

100 The translation is based on an emendation based on the LXX. The text is very obscure. It could read: "his sons and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and Hodaviah..." TEV translates: "they were helped by the Levites of the clan of Henadad."

101 The phrase in parentheses is a possible gloss.

102 Literally: "dressed" which implies vestments. LXX; *ευτολισμενοι*.

103 Literally: "hands."

¹² ¹⁰⁴ But many of the aged priests and Levites and heads of clans who had seen the former ¹⁰⁵ temple ¹⁰⁶ wept when they saw the foundation being laid, though many shouted with loud joy; ¹³ so that it was impossible for the people to distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping ¹⁰⁷ because the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away. ¹⁰⁸

<CHAPTER 4>

2. *The Samaritan Conflict* 4:1 - 6:22

a. *Offer of Assistance* 4:1 - 2 = *I Esdras* 5:66 - 69

¹ When the enemies ¹⁰⁹ of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned ¹¹⁰ exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, ² They approached Zerubbabel and [Jeshua] ¹¹¹ the chiefs of the ancestral houses said to them, "We want to build with you, since we worship your God in the same way you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ¹¹² ever since the days of king Esarhaddon, ¹¹³ of Assyria.

b. *Rejection of Assistance* 4:3 = *I Esdras* 5:70 - 71

³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the chiefs of the ancestral houses in Israel replied, "Under no circumstances will you join us ¹¹⁴ in building a temple for our God!" We alone ¹¹⁵ will build it to the Lord, the God of Israel as has been commanded by king Cyrus of Persia."

c. *Plots and Frustrations* 4:4 - 5 = *I Esdras* 7:72 - 73

⁴ Following that the local population ¹¹⁶ undermined the resolve ¹¹⁷ of the people of Judah, and made them fearful about (*or, frustrated the plans of*) building, ¹¹⁸ ⁵ and they bribed (*or, suborned*) bureaucrats (*or, government officials*) to thwart their plans throughout the years. of the reign of king Cyrus of Persia until the reign of king Darius of Persia had been established.

104 The Hebrew of verses 12 & 13 is difficult to interpret, being awkward and unintelligible. Some scholars feel verses 12 & 13 are fiction and that the foundation of the temple was not laid immediately upon arrival. No definitive proof concerning this matter has been found.

105 Literally: "this was the temple in their eyes" referring to Solomon's temple.

106 Literally: "house."

107 Omitted by the LXX.

108 There is possibly some dittography which does not appear in the LXX. Emended it could read, "and there was no discerning of the shout of joy from the sound of weeping, for the people were shouting a great shout."

109 Literally: "people of the land" who evidently were a mixed racial background, residing in Samaria. According to the Elephantine Papyri the daughter of the high priest in Samaria married the son of Sanballat, the governor of the province of Trans-Euphrates (*or, beyond the river*). The governor built a temple on her behalf in Samaria which possibly would be the basis for the feeling that one must worship a local god. With the captivity and exile of people from Israel/Judah foreigners were brought in to settle the land and fill the gap left by those who went into captivity in Babylon.

110 Literally: "the sons of captivity." Hebrew: *bene ha-gola*.

111 Omitted in MT. Added in *I Esdras* 5:15.

112 There is an interesting Qere in Hebrew which might have had an anti-Semitic feeling.

113 680? 681 - 669 BCE. Esarhaddon conquered Sidon in one of his campaigns. Cf. the Esarhaddon Cylinder. There is no Biblical record that he deported people from Samaria and brought other people to reside there.

114 Literally: "It is not for you and for us." NEB "(It) is no concern of yours." TCB "You have nothing in common with us in building..."

115 So: Vulgate. The Hebrew word *qahad* must take on an unusual meaning in this context.

116 Hebrew: *'am ha 'ares*, originally "residents" but later it came to mean "the common or ignorant."

117 Literally: "relaxed the hands" or "discouraged." Cf. II Samuel 4:1; Isaiah 13:7. "to loose heart."

118 Note the subtle weapons of suggestion: 1. sneers. 2. intimidation. 3. suggestion. 4. threats. Their pressure kept up for about 16 years, to 520 BCE. It was rather effective. cf. v. 24.