

From the First Year of Cyrus to the Death of Alexander the Great

by Flavius Josephus

The sermon recounts the history of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, from Cyrus' decree to Darius' reign, highlighting the obstacles faced by the Jews and the role of Zerobabel in persuading Darius to allow the rebuilding.

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:17, Nehemiah 4:17, Nehemiah 6:15, Esther 2:7, Esther 2:17

Topics: "Old Testament History", "Faith And Perseverance"

Description

Flavius Josephus recounts the story of Esther, a Jewish woman who becomes queen to King Artaxerxes after the removal of Queen Vashti. Esther, under the care of her uncle Mordecai, is chosen as the most beautiful among many virgins to be the new queen. Meanwhile, Nehemiah, a cup-bearer to the king, hears of the plight of the Jews in Jerusalem and seeks permission to rebuild the walls of the city. Nehemiah faces opposition from neighboring nations but perseveres in his efforts, ensuring the safety of the people and the completion of the wall.

Transcript

BOOK XI.

CONTAINING THE INTERVAL OF TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE YEARS AND FIVE MONTHS.

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

CHAPTER 1.

HOW CYRUS, KING OF THE PERSIANS, DELIVERED THE JEWS OUT OF BABYLON AND SUFFERED THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY AND TO BUILD THEIR TEMPLE, FOR WHICH WORK HE GAVE THEM MONEY.

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.

CHAPTER 2.

HOW UPON THE DEATH OF CYRUS THE JEWS WERE HINDERED IN BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE BY THE CUTHEANS, AND THE NEIGHBORING GOVERNORS; AND HOW CAMBYSES ENTIRELY FORBADE THE JEWS TO DO ANY SUCH THING.

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 Massagetæ, he ended his life. (4) But when Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, had taken the kingdom, the governors in Syria, and Phoenicia, and in the countries of Ammon, and Moab, and Samaria, wrote an epistle to Cambyses; 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.

CHAPTER 3.

HOW AFTER THE DEATH OF CAMBYSES AND THE SLAUGHTER OF THE MAGI BUT UNDER THE REIGN OF DARIUS, ZOROBABEL WAS SUPERIOR TO THE REST IN THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS AND THEREBY OBTAINED THIS FAVOR OF THE KING, THAT THE TEMPLE SHOULD BE BUILT.

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." (5)

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 (6) 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.

CHAPTER 4.

HOW THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT WHILE 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 Shalmanezzer, 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 Sisinnes and his associates, whose contents were these: "King Darius to Sisinnes 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 Sisinnes, 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. (7) 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.

CHAPTER 5.

HOW XERXES THE SON OF DARIUS WAS WELL DISPOSED TO THE JEWS; AS ALSO CONCERNING 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 Romans, 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, (8) 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, (9) 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 (10) 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. (11) 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 (12) 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 (13) 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; (14) 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.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCERNING ESTHER AND MORDECAI AND HAMAN; AND HOW IN THE REIGN OF ARTAXERXES THE WHOLE NATION OF THE JEWS WAS IN DANGER OF PERISHING.

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, (15) 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 (16) 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

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