

The Ancient World From 586 to 400 B.C.

I. Introduction

Setting of This Period.—This article deals with the period of the Exile and Restoration of the Jews, at the time of two world powers, one succeeding the other—the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. This period begins with the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem, by the brutal war machine of Nebuchadnezzar. After this catastrophe we find the Jews in captivity in the Mesopotamian valley watching the signs which heralded the political weakening of their oppressors, and the rising of new powers in the east—the Medes first and the Persians a little later. When Nebuchadnezzar, the strong man of Babylon, died, three ephemeral rulers successively occupied his throne. This evidence of weakness was apparent to the watchful Jews, as was possibly also, during the next decade, the report of a new star on the horizon—Cyrus of Persia, whom Isaiah had described as their future liberator. How their hearts must have beat fast when reports of Cyrus' incredible successes reached them, the fall of Media and Ecbatana, then of Lydia with its impregnable capital, Sardis. Finally they saw the strong new nation of the east put an end to the weak Babylonian Empire.

Cyrus, the new emperor, was a largehearted, humane monarch who fulfilled the Jewish expectations and prophecies in all details. He permitted the return of the Jews and the restoration of their Temple and its service. Arriving in their old homeland, the returned captives had to struggle against numerous odds, especially against the hostile attitude and activities of their neighbors. The rebuilding of the Temple was accomplished under great difficulties in approximately twenty years. After a series of crises—of which that described in Esther was the most serious—a semi-independent status within the Persian Empire was finally obtained in the time of Artaxerxes I, who sent Ezra to Judea with extraordinary powers, in 457 B.C. Ezra's work was hindered by the national enemies, but was finally brought to a successful completion by the strong leadership of Nehemiah. With the description of his work our Biblical sources become silent and the Intertestamental Period sets in.

Purpose of Article.—The purpose of this article is to give the history of the small Jewish nation against the historical background of its time. The history of the people of God cannot rightly be understood if one studies it as an isolated unit. The events are usually described but briefly in the Bible, and can fully be understood only if studied in the light of archeological and historical evidence.

The source material for this period of less than two centuries is very rich for some sections and extremely poor for others. The Bible is almost silent about any events lying between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the return of the Jews about 50 years later. Even the historical books which inform us about the restoration of the nation (Ezra and Nehemiah) leave large gaps uncovered in their narratives.

This is also true of our extra-Biblical source material. It is very limited during the time of the Babylonian Empire, as well as during certain periods of the time of the Persians. Furthermore, this material is of great variety and differs in reliability. Official Babylonian and Persian documents are scarce. Our most voluminous sources, the Greek histories, are tainted with hatred against the Persians and are contradictory and frequently unreliable. Nevertheless for lack of something better they prove useful and important for the historian who seeks to reconstruct the story of the events of that period.

In recent years archeological discoveries have greatly added to our knowledge of this very important period in the history of God's people, and the following survey is based on the presently available evidence. The historical picture sketched in the following pages may, of course, need modification in some details as added information becomes available through future discoveries of further source material.

Chronology of the Period.—The chronology of this period is well established by means of some astronomical texts and a multitude of other dated documents. Since chronological problems are sufficiently examined in the article on chronology, pp. 85–110, we need not discuss them.

However, it should be said here that uncertainties concerning the accurate dates for certain events, as will be evident in several instances in this article, are not the result of uncertainties in the chronology of this period, but are due to fragmentary source material, or the ambiguous nature of their chronological data. Any clearly dated document of the period under discussion, be it Persian, Greek, Jewish, Egyptian, or otherwise, can easily be converted into the familiar B.C. scheme. But in many instances recorded events are not dated, or at least not exactly dated, in our Biblical and extra-Biblical sources. Such events must be put into the chronological scheme by a careful study of all factors involved. That in such cases scholarly conclusions vary, is understandable, and no date set down in this way can claim absolute accuracy; close approximation is all that can be reached.

The reader should therefore understand that where two dates are given, as, for example, for Cyrus' defeat of Astyages, our source material on which these dates are based allows two different interpretations. He should also bear in mind that a date given in this article, which differs from one found in another work dealing with the same subject, is not necessarily better or less accurate than the other. It may in some instances be based on more recent evidence, in other cases on a different interpretation of evidence which allows more than one interpretation. While dates are necessary to understand history and cannot be dispensed with, the reader should always remember that many dates of ancient history are likely to be changed through the discovery of new evidence, and he should therefore not be surprised if certain dates herewith presented should later on prove to need correction.

Fortunately, the margin of possible error with regard to the dates of the period under discussion is very small and in no instance exceeds a few years. In most cases differences between the true dates and those given in this article will vary by not more than one year, and many dates presented on the following pages are absolutely correct. In this regard the 6th and 5th centuries are founded chronologically on a more secure basis than several earlier or later periods of history.

The accompanying table presents the synchronisms between the different ruling houses of this period. The dates given for reigns of the kings of Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia (after 539 B.C.), as well as those given for the Jewish leaders, are exact, but those of the rulers of Media and Lydia are uncertain.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD FROM 586 TO 400 B.C.

EGYPT	BABYLONIA	MEDIA and PERSIA	LYDIA	JUDEA
Amasis 570-	Nebuchadnezzar 605-562	Cyaxares *625-585	Alyattes *617-560	

526	Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) Nergal-shar-usur (Neriglissar) Labashi-Marduk Nabonidus	562 560 560-556 556 556 556	Astyages Cyrus (As ruler of Medes & Persians)	*585-550 c. 553/2-530	Croesus 	
	Belshazzar (Coregent)	553? 539	(As ruler of Babylon)	539-530		Zerubbabel 537-†
Psamtik III 526-525			Cambyses	530-522		
			Bardiya (Smerdis)	522		
			Darius I	522-486		
			Xerxes	486-465		
			Artaxerxes I	465-423		Ezra 457-† Nehemiah 444-†
			Darius II	423-405/4		
			Artaxerxes II	405/4-359/8		

II. The Neo-Babylonian Empire From 586 to 539 B.C.

The history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire from its foundation by Nabopolassar during the 7th century B.C. until 586 B.C., the year in which the kingdom of Judah, with its capital, Jerusalem, was destroyed, is told in Vol. II pp. 92-94.

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.).—The great conqueror of Judah and destroyer of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar directed his attention to more than warfare. He carried on extensive building operations. Of his accomplishments in this line the king was exceedingly proud, as his many building inscriptions reveal. Babylon was practically rebuilt by this king. He enlarged the city and surrounded it with new fortifications, enclosing at the same time a new palace which he had built more than one mile north of the old palace quarter. The great temple of Marduk, called Esagila, was beautified and its temple tower Etemenanki, which had been in ruins at the time when his father took the throne, was completed. Numerous other temples were rebuilt or newly erected in Babylon

and elsewhere during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which had more building activity than any other period in the history of Mesopotamia.

Little is known of Nebuchadnezzar's military activity after the Judean campaign, for there is nothing after his 11th year in the extant Babylonian chronicles (see Bibliography, p. 84, for these, edited by D. J. Wiseman, 1956), which recount many military campaigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, and one of Nergal-shar-usur. However there is information extant indicating that Nebuchadnezzar fought for 13 years against Tyre (585–573 B.C.). That proud maritime power, trusting in its impregnable island position, refused to bow to the Babylonian monarch, and therefore drew the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar upon itself. One year before Nebuchadnezzar's campaign against Tyre began, the prophet Ezekiel foretold the fate of the rich merchant city, which comprised large residential sections on the mainland, and warehouses, arsenals, factories, and shipyards located safely on a little rock island off the coast. Nebuchadnezzar's forces conquered and destroyed mainland Tyre, to which Ezekiel's prophecies apply, but besieged the island in vain for many years. Tyre finally gave in and surrendered under the condition of retaining its king, although it had to accept a Babylonian high commissioner, who kept a watchful eye over Tyre's external and internal affairs and took care to safeguard Babylonia's interests.

During this period a campaign against unruly elements among Judah's former neighbors, Syria, Ammon, Moab, and also against Egypt, must have taken place, as Josephus claims, in the 23d regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar (582 B.C.). Also Jews who had been left in the country after the debacle of 586 B.C. seem to have taken part in the anti-Babylonian activity, and this activity resulted in the punitive action of Nebuchadnezzar by which 745 more Jews were taken to Babylon as captives, according to Jer. 52:30.

Although the siege of Tyre had not been unsuccessful, the Chaldeans were disappointed, and considered the accomplishments not commensurate with the efforts of a 13 years' siege, as Ezekiel's words (ch. 29:18–20) reveal. The prophet, however, predicted that they would find rich booty in Egypt. Little is known of Nebuchadnezzar's Egyptian campaign foretold in this prophecy. One lone tablet fragment in the British Museum speaks of Nebuchadnezzar's war against Amasis of Egypt in the former king's 37th regnal year (568 B.C.). That we cannot expect to find Egyptian records concerning this war with its apparently disastrous results for Egypt is understandable, but it is unfortunate that neither are there Babylonian records extant that allow us to see how Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled. Since Amasis continued to reign over Egypt after this campaign, Nebuchadnezzar may have pardoned and reinstated him on the throne.

Of the great king's last seven years nothing is known from secular sources. The book of Daniel speaks of a seven years' madness of Nebuchadnezzar, which apparently was followed, probably shortly after his recovery, by his death (Dan. 4). Apparently this is not recorded in contemporary records, which diligently hide deficiencies of their rulers.

Amel-Marduk, Nergal-shar-usur, and Labashi-Marduk (562–556 B.C.).—When Nebuchadnezzar, one of the most brilliant rulers of antiquity, died near the beginning of October, 562 B.C., after a reign of 43 years, his son Amel-Marduk, the Evil-Merodach of the Bible, ascended to the throne (562–560 B.C.). The ancient historians know of him only as a man who led a wicked and unbridled life, but the Bible informs us that he pardoned Jehoiachin, the imprisoned king of the Jews, and bestowed royal honors upon

him (Jer. 52:31–34), in the 37th year after he had been deported from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Amel-Marduk did not display the strength of his father, and after a reign of less than two years was murdered by revolutionaries, who put one of their own on the throne, Nergal-shar-usur (Greek: *Neriglissar*), who had not only been one of Nebuchadnezzar's most honored courtiers (Jer. 39:3, 13), but also his son-in-law, hence Amel-Marduk's brother-in-law. Nergal-shar-usur (560–556 B.C.) made an incursion into Cilicia in 557/56, recorded in the chronicle (see p. 46). He claimed to have built temples and palaces and to have destroyed enemies and burned to death his antagonists.

Since he came to the throne as a comparatively old man, he died after a short reign of less than four years. His son Labashi-Marduk succeeded him for probably less than two months, reigning for some time during the months of May and June, 556 B.C. Then a gang of conspirators tortured him to death and made Nabonidus, one of their own party, king of Babylon.

Nabonidus (556–539 B.C.).—The ancestry of the new ruler has not definitely been established, but it seems that his father had been a prince of Haran by the name of *Nabû-balâṭsu-iqbi*, and his mother was probably *Shumûa-damqa*, a priestess of Sin (the moon-god), who, according to a monument thought to be erected in her honor, had held this office in the Sin temple of Haran since the time of Ashurbanipal. One opinion is that when Haran was conquered by the Medes and Babylonians in 610 B.C., she and her young son may have been carried captive to Babylon, and that she was taken into the harem of Nebuchadnezzar, rising there in the course of time from concubine to a favorite wife. Royal favors were also bestowed on her son Nabonidus, who became an influential officer in the administration of the empire, as we see from the fact that he was probably chosen in 585 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar to act as mediator in the war between the Medes and Lydians. It is likely that he was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters and thus became the king's son-in-law, for which reason Daniel could call Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar's father, meaning according to Hebrew usage "ancestor" or "grandfather" in this case (Dan. 5:11). The following genealogical sketch will show the relationship between the various rulers of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, who are numbered in sequence from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus.

At the time Nabonidus came to the throne a strong ruler was needed. The Medes had become bold under the preceding weak rulers of Babylonia, and had annexed the region of Haran. This was an act of aggression, which if unchecked could serve as an encouragement to further raids. Nabonidus, therefore, during his first regnal years considered it his first duty to reconquer Haran. By doing this he gave promise of becoming a strong and determined ruler. However, this expectation was not met, because the king seemed to have had too wide interests and too far-reaching plans. He was fond of the worship of the moon god Sin, and rebuilt the Sin temple of Haran, which had been in ruins since 610 B.C. He also erected sacred buildings in Ur, where he made his daughter priestess of Sin, was deeply interested in the ancient history of his nation, and dug up old records. Nevertheless, he seems to have recognized dangers that loomed to the east and took measures to meet them, among which is reckoned his campaign against Arabia, to be mentioned below.

In 553 B.C., while campaigning in eastern Palestine, he fell ill and went to the Lebanon to recuperate. He immediately summoned his son Belshazzar and entrusted the kingship to him, by which act he tried to guarantee the perpetuity of his royal house, and thus to make sure that no usurper would be put on the throne at Babylon during his absence. In this way he became free to carry out new plans of empire expansion. In the meantime, Belshazzar returned to Babylon and early in 552 (probably, see p. 95) ruled over the home provinces in the name of his father as coregent. This explains why, when he wanted to honor Daniel in a special way, he could offer him only the third place in the kingdom, the highest that it was in his power to give, since he himself occupied the second place (Dan. 5:16).

As soon as Nabonidus had recovered from his illness he began an invasion of northwestern Arabia and conquered the oasis of Tema, which was to become his residence for many years to come, and where he built large palaces. The real reason for this conquest is not known. Some historians have thought that Nabonidus went to Arabia in order to have a more secure capital in the event Mesopotamia were lost to the Iranian Medes and Persians, or because he was mentally ill and needed this place of seclusion. Whatever the reason may have been, Nabonidus stayed in Tema at least until his 11th regnal year, 545 B.C., and during this time carried out several successful raids against southern Arabian tribes.

In the meantime he had estranged himself completely from the leading elements of Babylonia, especially from the priests. His long absence from the capital caused the omission of several New Year feasts which ordinarily provided much lucrative revenue to the temples, and his favoritism for Sin resulted in a hostile Marduk priesthood. The administrative mismanagement of the domestic affairs by Belshazzar may have deepened the desire among many Babylonians to have a change of administration. The two rulers seem nevertheless to have had the reins of government so securely in their hands that no revolt was attempted. If it was attempted, we may reasonably conclude that it failed, since we have no records of it.

During the early years of Nabonidus' reign a new star arose in the eastern political sky, Cyrus, a vassal king of the Medes, known as the ruler of Persian tribes, and who called himself "king of Anshan." He rebelled against his Median lord Astyages and, after having taken the capital Ecbatana, deposed its king in 553 B.C. (or according to other sources in 550), about the time Nabonidus appointed Belshazzar as coregent. Danger from the eastern tribes was now felt to be more real than before, and when Croesus of Sardis, the king of Lydia, proposed an alliance to King Amasis of Egypt and to Nabonidus against the new eastern power, Nabonidus accepted gladly.

Following the maxim that an attack is the best defense, Croesus invaded Persian territory in 547 B.C., but misjudging his strength, lost capital and kingdom before his allies had time to organize and aid him against Cyrus.

The following years Cyrus consolidated his power in the empire which now reached from the Iranian plateau to the western coast of Asia Minor. When finally in 539 B.C., after further years of preparation, Cyrus felt the time had come to march against the weak empire of Nabonidus, there fell to him without any effort the rich eastern province of Gutium which bordered on Cyrus' territory and which formed the bulwark to the Median Wall built by Nebuchadnezzar to protect his empire against a possible invasion from the east. Nabonidus was naturally alarmed. Perhaps for his protection, or to deprive Cyrus of

the help of local gods in the case of an invasion, he moved the statues of the various city gods to Babylon during the spring and summer of 539. Thus he increasingly embittered the local populations and priests, who felt that he was stealing their gods. His act also antagonized the priests of Babylon by increasing the religious competition in the capital, which was considered mainly the domain of the god Marduk.

When Cyrus was ready to march against Babylonia, Belshazzar had gathered his forces at Opis on the Tigris to meet the threat of invasion and to deny Cyrus a crossing of the river. In the ensuing battle the Babylonians suffered a disastrous defeat, and the Persians were able to push immediately through to Sippar on the Euphrates without finding any resistance. Cyrus captured this city without a fight on October 10, 539 B.C. Nabonidus himself fled in a southerly direction. Belshazzar returned to Babylon, about 35 miles south of Sippar, and trusting in its strong fortifications, remained in the city. It was here that, in a spirit of pride and arrogance and with a reckless feeling of security (PK 523), he spent his last evening with his concubines and friends in frivolous drinking, using the sacred vessels of Solomon's Temple (Dan. 1:5). On October 12, Babylon fell to Cyrus' forces, who, according to Herodotus, had diverted the Euphrates, which normally flowed through the city, and marched in unopposed. Belshazzar was slain. Nabonidus, who had fled south, apparently found his roads of escape already barred, and therefore returned to Babylon and committed himself to the mercy of his victorious enemy. According to a Greek report, his life was spared by the generous Cyrus, and he was placed as vassal ruler over the distant land of Carmania.

The empire of the Chaldeans thus came to an inglorious end after an existence of less than one century. Founded by a strong ruler, Nabopolassar, and enlarged and consolidated by his equally strong son Nebuchadnezzar, the empire had quickly fallen to pieces after the latter's death under a succession of weak rulers. The Neo-Babylonian Empire had unfolded a glory in material wealth which had rarely, if ever, existed before. For this reason it is compared to a "head of gold" in the prophetic picture of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:38). However, it had all the time possessed the following inherent weaknesses, which materially aided and accelerated its fall:

1. The Babylonian nation was aged and had been held subject for so many centuries by Amorites, Kassites, Assyrians, and now the Aramaean Chaldeans, that it lacked some of the character traits which make a nation politically strong and healthy.
2. There were no common interests and bonds that bound the different nations of the empire to the Chaldean dynasty, even the Babylonians themselves being ethnic strangers to the Chaldeans, who formed the ruling class only. When these weaknesses were compensated for by the strength of the ruler, as, for example, Nebuchadnezzar, the empire seemed strong and healthy. However, under a weak ruler like Nabonidus, who absented himself for many years from his capital, who was more interested in the antiquities of his country than in its present needs, and who favored a provincial deity more than the national patron god, besides committing other foolish acts and political blunders, the synthetic Babylonian Empire could not remain intact.

III. The Empire of the Medes

With the Medes, and the Persians who succeeded them, people of Indo-European stock appear on the scene of world history. The only other ethnically related nations that had played important roles in history before were the Hittites and the people of Mitanni, who had flourished in the second millennium of the pre-Christian era. The Medes and

Persians lived in the highland that lies between Mesopotamia and India, a rough country that produced a hardy and morally healthy and strong nation of warriors who were accustomed to hardships and privations. They called themselves *Arianu*, “nobles,” and their land *Ariana*, or *Iran*, a name it still bears.

The first Iranian tribes by the name of Medes appear as hard-fighting barbarians in the records of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Sargon II claims to have defeated and subjugated them in 715 B.C., mentioning Daiaukku as their ruler, a name Herodotus gives as Deikos (Deioces), to whom he attributes the founding of the Median kingdom, and whom he characterizes as a wise and righteous ruler. Deioces is also said to have caused the Median tribes to become a nation, and to have founded the capital Ecbatana. It is, however, difficult to identify the Deikos of Herodotus, who seems to have ruled from c. 700 to c. 647 B.C., with the Daiaukku of Sargon’s records, and of course it is possible that two persons with the same name were involved.

Phraortes, the son of Deioces, ruled after his father’s death for 22 years, from c. 647 to c. 625 B.C., and is credited with having subjugated the Persian tribes in the south. He lost his life fighting against Assyria.

Cyaxares, Phraortes’ son, ruled over the Medes for 40 years, from c. 625 to c. 585 B.C. He became the ally of Nabopolassar of Babylon against Assyria, conquering Assur alone in 614, and Nineveh jointly with the Babylonians in 612 (see Vol. II, pp. 67, 93). The Babylonians absorbed the largest and most civilized part of the fallen Assyrian Empire, while the Medes seem to have been satisfied to inherit Assyria’s northern and northeastern possessions. Cyaxares, who thus became the first great king of the Medes, is also credited by Herodotus with having defeated the Scythians, whose territory in Asia Minor then fell to him also.

During his last years Cyaxares had to fight against the Lydians, who, under Alyattes, the king of Sardis, had become the third power of Asia, and who wanted to be the masters of Anatolia. In the sixth year of their war it happened that “in the midst of the battle day turned suddenly into night.” Convinced that the displeasure of the gods rested upon them, the two warring nations became willing to conclude a peace treaty. This was accomplished with the help of some mediators among whom is mentioned Labynetus of Babylon, probably Nabonidus (see p. 47). The solar eclipse on May 28, 585 B.C. (said to have been predicted by Thales of Miletus), which was responsible for the end of the war between the Medes and Lydians, provides one of the few fixed dates for battles of antiquity. The treaty concluded with Alyattes gave Cyaxares all Anatolian territory east of the river Halys, and was strengthened by the marriage of Astyages, Cyaxares’ son, to Aryanis, the daughter of Alyattes.

Astyages, who ruled for more than 30 years (Herodotus says 35), from c. 585 to either 553/2 or 550 B.C., was the last real monarch of the Median Empire. Hardly anything is known of his long reign. The ancient historians who mention him speak of him only so far as he played a role in the affairs of Cyrus, whose grandfather he was, according to Greek sources. He had given his daughter Mandane to Cambyses I, the vassal king of the Persians at Anshan, but when his daughter had given birth to a child he seems to have been hounded by fear that Cyrus would take the throne from him. How much truth there is in the Greek legends which tell of Astyages’ attempts to kill his grandson, is unknown. It is certain, however, that his fears had not been unfounded, because Cyrus rose up

against his overlord c. 553 B.C. Twice he was defeated by the forces of Astyages, but in the third encounter the Median army commander Harpagus betrayed his lord and turned his forces over to Cyrus. Not later than 550 B.C. Cyrus was in possession of the Median capital Ecbatana. Also Astyages had fallen into Cyrus' hands, but seems to have received kind treatment, if we can believe the Greeks, who claim that he became governor of Hyrcania, south of the Caspian Sea.

When Cyrus took over the Median Empire no great changes were apparent in the outward structure of the state, because the Medes and Persians were closely related tribes, as were also, by intermarriage, the two royal houses. Hence we find the empire referred to by historians of antiquity and in contemporary documents of different countries as that of "the Medes and Persians," or many times simply as that of "the Medes," although, after Astyages' fall they played only a minor role in the affairs of state. The transition from the Median to the Persian Empire was therefore really a transition of power from one royal house to another, and a transition of offices held by Median nobles to the Persian nobility. From that time on, Persian nobility occupied first places in the administration of the government, although influential Medes were still employed, and were found throughout the Persian period in many important offices.

IV. The Persian Empire From Cyrus to Darius II

The Persian rulers of the empire period are called Achaemenid kings, since, with the exception of Darius III, all Persian monarchs claimed a certain Achaemenes as their ancestor. The inscriptions of Cyrus and Darius I provide information concerning the genealogy of the two families to which these two kings belonged, and which stem from Achaemenes and Teispes as the following diagram shows:

The sequence of the ruling kings from Achaemenes to Cyrus II is not definitely known, but it seems that most or all of those listed in the above genealogy held the throne in Persia for some time. The two ruling houses reigned either over different Persian tribes simultaneously or the rulership shifted from one house to another several times. The capital seems to have been Anshan, since the early Persian kings call themselves regularly "kings of Anshan," but its location has not definitely been established, although the proposal to identify it with Pasargadae in southwestern Iran seems to be the best made so far.

The only Persian ruler preceding Cyrus II mentioned in any extant contemporary records is Cyrus I. The inscriptions of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal mention him as *Kurash* of *Parsuash*, who after hearing of the Assyrians' victory over Elam, sent his son Arukku, probably a brother of Cambyses I, with heavy gifts to Nineveh in order to offer himself as vassal of the Assyrian emperor. This event took place shortly after 639 B.C., the year in which Elam was conquered, but apparently before king Phraortes of the Medes subjugated the Persians and made their land part of his empire.

Cyrus the Great, c. 553–530 B.C.—The Greek historians discuss at length the adventures of young Cyrus, but it is hard to separate truth from legend, and history from folklore. However, it seems credible that Cyrus' mother, Mandane, was a daughter of Astyages, the last reigning monarch of Media, and that Cyrus himself had married Kasandane, the daughter of Astyages' son Cyaxares. For reasons that are not clear to us, Cyrus rebelled against his overlord and grandfather father Astyages, probably in 553 B.C. Cyrus, whose forces were twice beaten by Astyages, was eventually successful when

Harpagus, the Median commander, betrayed his master and king, and went over to Cyrus, who by 550 B.C. had Ecbatana, the Median capital, and its king in his hand.

Although Cyrus assumed the actual and effectual kingship of the empire, he seems to have treated the Medes with deference. Astyages was sent to Hyrcania as governor of a province, and his son Cyaxares II was, according to Xenophon, put on the throne as a figurehead. Contemporary records are completely silent about the existence of Cyaxares II, but it is not impossible that Cyrus allowed the Median crown prince, who was also his father-in-law, to occupy the throne jointly with him to please the Medes. If so, this Cyaxares may have been the same king mentioned repeatedly in the book of Daniel under the name Darius the Mede (see Additional Note on Dan. 6).

During the following years Cyrus consolidated his power over his farflung empire, which reached from the borders of India in the east to the river Halys in central Asia Minor in the west. Our records tell us that he was engaged against hostile tribes east of the Tigris in 548 B.C., while preparing himself for the great test of strength that was soon to come. The cometlike rise of Cyrus to the rulership of the second largest empire of its time did not fail to make an impression on his contemporaries. Subjugated people put their hope in him. The Jews, for example, whose prophecies designated a *Koresh*, or Cyrus, as their future liberator (Isa. 44:28) must certainly have watched his rise to power with bated breath, as will be seen from the discussion in Section V of this article. But political leaders like Nabonidus of Babylonia, Amasis of Egypt, and Croesus of Lydia viewed Cyrus' emergence to power with grave misgivings, fearing for their own security and thrones. Hence, they banded themselves together by a treaty of mutual assistance.

That this fear had its valid reasons was demonstrated when Cyrus in the spring of 547 marched into the Upper Mesopotamian region lying between the river Khabur and the great bend of the Euphrates, to reoccupy a former Median province that Nabonidus had taken from the Medes. This was definitely an unfriendly act against the Babylonians, although it seems not to have resulted in any warlike actions between the forces of the two empires. Croesus, however, felt that something had to be done to meet the growing menace from the east, and being convinced that it is always advantageous to take the initiative, instead of waiting until the opponent takes it, the Lydian king crossed the Halys, and marched into Cyrus' territory. At Pteria the first battle with the Persians was fought in late summer of 547, but ended in a draw. Yet, Croesus deemed it prudent to retreat to his strong capital, Sardis, and await the arrival of his allies before taking further actions against Cyrus. He seems to have believed that Cyrus had been sufficiently weakened in the battle at Pteria so that he was no longer an immediate threat to him, and definitely did not expect the Persians to advance to the west, far from their home base, in the autumn with the severe Anatolian winter at the door.

Geniuses like Cyrus sometimes act irrationally, and do what prudent men consider to be folly. Their actions are therefore frequently unpredictable. Cyrus was of this class. Instead of returning to his home base for the winter and coming back in full strength the following year, he pressed forward and unexpectedly arrived before Sardis with his army. That Croesus had completely miscalculated his opponent, can also clearly be seen from the fact that he had dismissed his mercenaries and allowed them to spend the winter in their home towns. Croesus, trusting in the bravery of the Lydians, and the irresistible strength of his cavalry, dared to attack Cyrus immediately after his arrival. However, the ingenuity of the Persian king was once more demonstrated, when Cyrus quickly had his

baggage camels mounted by his cavalymen and thus awaited the attacking Lydians. The Lydian battle horses, accustomed neither to the appearance of those strange long-necked animals nor to their penetrating stench, shied away and turned back into the city. Very soon—between October and December, 547 B.C.—Sardis fell after a short siege, before the allies had an opportunity to come to Croesus' assistance. The Lydian king fell into the hands of Cyrus, who seems to have spared his opponent's life, although one source claims that Croesus was executed. Once more Cyrus had proved to the world that he was a man of destiny and surprises. Mixed were the feelings of his contemporaries when the news of his incredible victories reached the cities and villages of Babylonia. For the Jews in captivity this news must have sounded like sweet music, but the rulers in Babylon and Tema—Belshazzar and Nabonidus—must have been alarmed.

Nothing certain is known of Cyrus's activities during the six years that followed the conquest of Lydia. However, it is improbable that a man like Cyrus remained idle during those years. From Berossus, as quoted by Josephus, comes the report that Cyrus conquered all Asia before he marched against Babylon, and Xenophon knew of a campaign against Arabia during that time. Hence, we can conclude that Cyrus consolidated his control over the different parts of Asia Minor during the years of which contemporary sources are silent, and may also have encountered Nabonidus in Arabia, because this king claims in one text that he had personally "conquered his [Cyrus'] countries" and taken his possessions to his residence. It is uncertain whether this claim was a hollow boast, or whether Nabonidus had really defeated Cyrus at some time.

Whatever may have happened between the fall of Sardis (547) and 540 B.C., it is certain that by the end of 540 Cyrus had organized his empire into a well-knit unit and had built up a formidable army with which he was ready for the coming test of strength with Babylonia. Once more Cyrus' good fortune came unexpectedly to his help when the governor of Babylonia's easternmost province, Gutium, turned his land and people over to the Persians. Nabonidus, who had returned from Tema to Babylon, may have assisted his son Belshazzar, the commander in chief of all eastern forces, in the preparations for the unavoidable clash with Cyrus.

The great and decisive battle between the two empire forces took place at Opis on the Tigris, at or near the site of the later city of Seleucia (about 20 miles downstream from modern Baghdad), and close to the great wall of Nebuchadnezzar. The reasons for the disastrous defeat that the Babylonian army suffered at Opis are unknown. Our cryptic records tell us only that Cyrus succeeded in crossing the river Tigris and that he defeated the Babylonian army so decisively that all organized resistance suddenly ceased to exist, and the whole country lay open to the Persians. The victors immediately grasped the opportunities that offered themselves and lost no time in gaining the greatest possible profit from their victory. They followed the fleeing Babylonians to the west and the southwest, and were able to take Sippar, lying about 15 miles west of the Tigris, without battle on October 10, 539 B.C., and Babylon, which lay about 40 miles southwest of Opis, only two days later.

Nabonidus, who had been in Sippar just before the city fell, fled to the south, but for unknown reasons returned to Babylon a few days later and gave himself up to the Persians, who spared his life. After the battle of Opis, Belshazzar awaited his enemies behind the strong fortifications of Babylon. These, however, formed no protection for him. He seems to have had enemies inside Babylon who betrayed him and the city to the

Persians. Thus “Ugbaru the governor of Gutium,” who had, after the battle of Opis, marched directly toward Babylon, entered the city without a struggle on October 12, 539 B.C. Belshazzar, who had engaged in a night of drunken revelry and had literally seen “the handwriting on the wall,” was slain, but there seems to have been little bloodshed otherwise. Contrary to usual customs, the city was spared destruction by the Persians, and soldiers were placed as guards at the temples and public buildings to guarantee an orderly continuation of the daily life in Babylon, and to prevent any looting or destruction of property.

Cyrus by his leniency proved himself to be a successful conqueror, not only of kingdoms and cities but also of the hearts of men. When he, some 17 days later (Oct. 29, 539 B.C.), personally entered the capital city, “all the inhabitants of Babylon ... kissed his feet, jubilant that he [had received] the kingship, and with shining faces. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come [again] to life from death [and] had all been spared damage and disaster, and they worshiped his [very] name”.

Seldom had a great empire so easily been conquered, and even more seldom was a conqueror so readily accepted by those he had conquered as was Cyrus. The Chaldean ruling class, but especially Nabonidus, had alienated themselves so much from the Babylonians that they welcomed any change in government. The subjugated nations felt neither love nor loyalty toward their oppressors, but expected better days from the more humane rule of the Persians, who may have already given proof of their policies in those countries over which they had ruled for several years. Those policies had probably become known throughout the civilized world. Their mildness and reasonableness had caused Cyrus to gain the hearts of the peoples with little other effort on his part.

Cyrus was not only a great war lord and general, but also a wise ruler, who knew how to win the peace as well as wars. In his peaceful measures he proved his real greatness. The Assyrians and Babylonians had destroyed the cities of conquered nations and transplanted their populations to other parts of their realm, but Cyrus did not wish to follow their example and to destroy peoples in order to rule over their graves. He spared conquered cities, returned peoples previously moved from their homesteads, and enriched their wealth by measures that favored them economically. The Babylonian capital is an example. By his making Babylon one of his capitals, by his favoring Marduk, the Babylonians’ chief god, and later by his declaring himself “King of Babylon,” he endeared himself to the people. He also became popular by returning to their cities the various deities that Nabonidus had moved to Babylon, and by repairing or rebuilding local temples, one of which was that of Jerusalem. By doing this he did a favor to the Babylonians, who had hated to see the many strange gods and worshipers in their city, and he pleased beyond measure the citizens of those foreign cities and countries whose gods were returned, or whose destroyed temples were rebuilt.

He acted wisely by allowing local leaders to reign over their own peoples as governors of provinces under Persian supervision, and by refraining from imposing on the conquered nations the Persian way of life, religion, or language. These wise policies initiated by Cyrus were followed in general by his successors, although some violated these principles occasionally. However, the Persians generally made an honest attempt to honor local customs, religions, and laws. They also made use of the almost universally understood Aramaic as the official language of the empire.

It was therefore a great loss when Cyrus, only eight years after the fall of Babylon, died in a campaign against some tribes in eastern Iran, in August, 530 B.C.

Cambyes, 530–522 B.C.—Cyrus had designated his son Cambyes as successor on the throne, as we learn from several records. However, unlike his father, he was not a popular ruler. Of this fact he was well aware. Because of this, before he left for Egypt, he had his brother Bardiya, or Smerdis, secretly killed, fearing that a long absence from the capital might be used by his enemies to put Smerdis on the throne. When this murder later became known and a false Smerdis, claiming to have survived the plot, usurped the throne, this usurper was accepted by great sections of the empire, a clear proof of Cambyes' unpopularity.

We know little more of Cambyes than his Egyptian campaign. The conquest of the Nile country was the goal of his passionate ambitions. Historians disagree in their opinions as to whether Cambyes by his Egyptian campaign carried out his father's plans, or whether he made a mistake his father would never have made. It is possible that Cyrus had planned eventually to conquer Egypt, whose king Amasis was the only surviving member of the former triple alliance formed by the ruling heads of Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt against Persia. As he had wisely consolidated his rule in conquered areas after each victory before he attacked others, he may have wanted to carry out a thorough consolidation of his power throughout the former Babylonian Empire before turning against Egypt. But he died before revealing what his plans were. It is, however, also possible that he had wisely refrained from overextending his commitments, while Cambyes, the son of a genius, may have felt that only new conquests could establish his name and fame.

When Cambyes marched against Egypt about the beginning of 525 B.C., Amasis had died and Psamtik III had come to the throne. Initially his campaign was unusually successful. He enjoyed the collaboration of the Phoenician cities, including Tyre, and the island of Cyprus, who put their navies at his disposal. Also Polycrates of Samos exchanged his alliance with Egypt for one with Persia. Phanes, a general of Egyptian mercenary forces, left Psamtik and went over to Cambyes, assisting him in his campaign against his former lord, especially by guiding the Persian army safely through the desert to the Delta. The first battle took place at Pelusium, where Psamtik's mercenary army suffered a grave defeat. Cambyes immediately advanced toward Memphis and took the city after a siege. He was also successful in capturing the Pharaoh, who had reigned for less than six months.

Libya and Cyrenaica submitted voluntarily to the Persians, but a campaign into the western desert failed because of tremendous losses. Another campaign against Ethiopia, the name which was given to Nubia, was successful, but also very costly. Thus all Egypt and its dependencies were brought into the family of nations of which the Persian Empire was composed. To gain the good will of the Egyptians, Cambyes assumed the titles and performed the ceremonial functions of a Pharaoh. He organized Egypt into a strong satrapy, which remained securely in the hands of his deputies even during the years when the greatest part of the empire was in turmoil.

Herodotus describes certain cruelties against the Egyptians and insults to their gods, but his reports in this respect are certainly exaggerated. Some think that they reflect a change of policy after Cambyes' reverses. At least the Greek historian's narratives reveal the hatred the Egyptians felt against the conqueror. It is true that Cambyes

destroyed certain Egyptian temples—perhaps those in which agitation against his regime was carried on—although there are also records that he favored certain temples and made grants to them. For example, he provided for the cleansing of the temple of Neith at Saïs and guaranteed the expenses for the festivals in honor of that goddess.

Cambyses left Egypt in 522 B.C. when he received word that a man claiming to be his brother Bardiya (Smerdis) had usurped the throne. The new claimant was widely recognized in the Persian home provinces, Babylonia, and elsewhere. While passing through Syria, Cambyses suddenly died, either by suicide or as the result of an accident. Since he left no heir, the false Smerdis' throne seemed to be established. However, his reign lasted only a little more than six months, until Darius, a distant relative of Cambyses, killed him and ascended the throne himself.

Darius I, 522–486 B.C.—Concerning the manner of Darius' accession to the throne we are well informed through that king's long inscription on the rock of Behistun, which served as a key for the decipherment of cuneiform scripts in the 19th century (see Vol. I, pp. 98, 110). Here, Darius records for posterity the account of how a Magian by the name of Gaumata had usurped the throne, and had made the people believe that he was Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, whom Cambyses had supposedly killed. He says further that Persia, Media, and the other countries had accepted him even before Cambyses' death, and that Smerdis destroyed certain unnamed sanctuaries, by doing which he apparently initiated a policy directed against the policies of his predecessors. One of the policies of the false Smerdis, during his short reign, was the destruction of temples. With such a king on the throne, it is not hard to see how the enemies of the Jews could stop the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been slowly proceeding ever since Cyrus had given the permission to build it.

Although Darius, with the help of some faithful supporters, succeeded in killing the false Smerdis, called Bardiya in Babylonian documents, and in gaining the throne for himself, thus bringing it back to the Achaemenid house, it took a long time and more fighting before he was finally recognized throughout the empire. He himself mentions 19 battles fought against opponents, and 9 kings captured, before he could feel secure in the possession of the throne. Among these opponents were two pretenders in Babylon, one rising up after the other, and both claiming to be sons of Nabonidus. The turmoil into which Persia was thrown after the false Smerdis' usurpation and Cambyses' death, lasted almost two years. But Darius finally emerged as the victor over all his enemies and undisputed ruler of the greatest empire the world had ever seen. That empire reached from the Indus in the east to the Hellespont in the west, and from Mt. Ararat in the north to Nubia in the south. After Darius had crushed all opposition to his rule he began a reign of peace that lasted for almost 30 years, and that gained him the well-deserved title, "the Great."

Manifold were his peaceful deeds that promoted welfare and happiness in the countries belonging to his empire. In Egypt, Darius had the canal finished between the Nile and the Red Sea, which Necho II had started to dig many years earlier. On the coastal road between Egypt and Palestine watering stations were built, and a very efficient postal system (for government dispatches) throughout the empire was organized with relay stations for horses and riders at regular intervals. The appointment of natives to responsible offices in the provincial administrations and of royal support of the religious practices and cults of subject nations gained for the king much good will.

Numerous inscriptions from Egypt show how many temples Darius reopened or repaired in the Nile land and how he supported the Egyptian priesthood with rich gifts, so that he is called there “the friend of all gods.” This benevolent attitude, known also from Greek records, with regard to sanctuaries and cults of his western provinces is furthermore evident in regard to the Jews. His friendly decree not only allowed them to finish the building of their Temple, but guaranteed them financial aid for their religious services (Ezra 6:6–12). Further, he allowed his subjects to live according to their own laws, as can be seen, for example, from his dealings with Egypt. He commanded that all Egypt’s laws should be collected and published. Because of this the Egyptians called him their sixth lawgiver.

From all of his dealings with his subject nations a systematic effort is discernible to continue the policies of Cyrus and to create good will by a beneficent rule. The religious feelings of other nations were protected by him, their cults supported and encouraged, and their national peculiarities and customs wisely tolerated.

Darius was nevertheless a strong ruler who held his empire together with determination and prudence in true Oriental fashion. He formed the center of the empire and concentrated the glory and wealth of the nation in his palaces at Persepolis and Susa (Shushan). He had 15,000 people fed daily at his palace gates, and introduced a court ceremonial that had the purpose of instilling in his subjects an awe toward his person. Whoever approached him uninvited was liable to lose his life, and those who were allowed to appear before him had to throw themselves on the ground and keep their hands in their sleeves in the attitude of a helpless person. His will was law for all of his subjects, great and small. He chose his wives from the houses of the Persian nobles, and bound these nobles to his throne by giving to them in marriage his sons and daughters. The sons of noble Persians were educated at the palace and were his personal pages. They were taught the national virtues, the speaking of truth, horse riding, hunting, and archery. From these men the highest officers of the realm were chosen. They remained the strongest supporters of the throne after they had spent their youth in the wealth and glory of the court life and had become personally attached to the person of the king.

Darius introduced also a uniform currency by means of a gold coin, called after his name *dareikos* (daric). Coins had been used by the Lydians since the 7th century B.C., but their use had been rather limited, mostly to the Greek-speaking nations. Now Darius adopted a similar system for the whole empire. The *dareikos* had the value of about 20 silver shekels, and its minting was a royal monopoly, but the coining of silver and bronze currency was left to the various provincial governments.

The proverbial honesty of the Persians was also a great blessing to the empire. Their religion required them to be truthful in their utterances, and to care for the welfare of the countries in which they lived. Hence, the Persians laid out beautiful parks, called by the Greeks *paradeisoi* (a Persian loan word; see further on Gen. 2:8), in many large cities and did much to protect forests and promote good agricultural practices and methods.

After Darius had reigned peacefully for about 20 years, he entered a decade politically clouded. Wars against the Greeks were fought with changing fortunes until the empire’s defeat by the Hellenes. The seeds for these wars had been sown in Darius’ first European expedition against the nomadic Scythians in 513 B.C. This expedition was undertaken to defeat these barbaric tribes in their motherland to prevent their continual

raids on his possessions in Asia Minor. He occupied Thrace, lying between the Hellespont and Macedonia, with its Greek cities, then moved into Scythia, where the people desolated their own land and fled, but harassed Darius' army until he retreated. In 500 B.C., however, came the Ionian revolt led by Miletus. This revolt spread to many of the Greek cities over which Darius ruled. When Sardis, the center of the Persian administration in Asia Minor, was burned, Darius was furious, and swore never to forget or forgive the crime. It would lead too far afield to follow in this brief historical article the different phases of the Greek revolt and the Persian countermoves. Suffice it to say that the mighty city of Miletus, the center of the revolt, was destroyed in 494 B.C. and thus the burning of Sardis was avenged.

Darius, however, wanted also to punish the Athenians for their part in the uprising, and therefore started his wars against the Greek mainland. The first expedition in 492 B.C. failed because half of his fleet was destroyed by a storm at the promontory of Mt. Athos. Since Athens and Sparta continued to refuse subjection to Persian rule, a second expedition was sent out against Greece in 490 B.C., only to be disastrously defeated at Marathon. The loss of prestige the Persians thus suffered was greater than the loss in material or men, as can be seen from the fact that in 487 B.C., three years after the battle at Marathon, the Egyptians revolted and drove the Persians out of their country. Darius did not live to see the restoration of Persian rule in Egypt or the revenge of his defeat at Marathon. He died an aged and disillusioned man in November, 486 B.C. leaving the empire to his son Xerxes.

Xerxes, 486–465 B.C.—Darius had acceded to the desire of Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, and appointed her son Xerxes as his successor, although he was not the eldest son. According to Herodotus, the new king was a handsome man who had no equal among the Persians in beauty or bodily strength. However, neither as military leader nor as monarch was he a worthy successor of Cyrus or Darius. He suffered grave defeats, but love adventures and harem intrigues seem to have interested him more than politics and affairs of government. His character was unstable and vacillating but not basically bad. He was certainly not the ridiculous figure that the Greeks, who hated him, made him out to be.

Xerxes' first task after his accession to the throne was the suppression of the Egyptian revolt. In 485 B.C., he marched into Egypt and reconquered the land in a short campaign. Egypt, which had bravely but unsuccessfully defended its liberty, was brought into a much "harder servitude" than before the revolt and placed under the iron rule of Xerxes' brother Achaemenes. For nearly 25 years no trouble arose for the Persians in the Nile country.

Probably in 482, only two years after the Egyptian revolt was crushed, two serious revolts broke out in Babylon. The first one was led by Bel-shimanni in August. After its breakdown a second revolt was led by Shamash-eriba in September of the same year. Xerxes commissioned his young son-in-law Megabyzos to quench these revolts with an iron hand. Babylon, which had been spared destruction by Cyrus because of its importance as the cultural center of the world of his time, was cruelly punished for its disloyalty. It was probably in this year that Xerxes had the city's fortifications destroyed, as well as its palaces and temples, including the glorious temple Esagila with its famous ziggurat (temple tower) Etemenanki. The golden statute of Marduk, whose hands every king, including the Persian monarchs, had grasped annually on the Babylonian New Year's Day, in order to be confirmed as "king of Babylon," was deported to Persia and

the kingdom of Babylon combined with the province of Assyria. The proud title “king of Babylon” was never used again. Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,” was destroyed, never to be restored to its former glory, although it remained a city, still partly in ruins, until long after Alexander’s day (see on Isa. 13:19). The prophecies uttered more than two centuries earlier by Isaiah (ch. 13:19–22) were finally beginning to be fulfilled, and the proud nation received its reward for the pride, arrogance, and cruelty it had displayed in dealing with subjugated nations. The records of Nippur in Mesopotamia have revealed that a few years later much land was in the hands of Persians. This fact seems to indicate that Xerxes confiscated the estates of many wealthy Babylonians and handed them over to Persian nobles. That the Babylonian Jews also profited from these measures is equally evident from the cuneiform records and will be discussed in Section V of this article.

In his wars with the Greeks, Xerxes was dogged by ill fortune. For a long time the king appeared to hesitate, seemingly undecided whether to continue the wars of his father against Greece or limit his rule to Asia. Herodotus tells how one faction of his counselors, led by his uncle Artabanus, was in favor of peace, while another one, whose champion was Mardonius, wanted war, and that the war party finally gained the king’s support and preparations for a new expedition were made throughout the empire. Some think that his slowness was due to methodical preparation. The invasion of Greece started with the crossing of the Hellespont in 480 B.C. It would lead too far afield to describe the well-known third Greco-Persian war in this article, and follow the imperial forces to Artemisium and the Pass of Thermopylae, where the brave Greeks under Leonidas fought one of the most famous rear-guard actions of history. The Persians took Athens, which had been forsaken by the Athenians, but lost the naval battle at Salamis, and had to return as a defeated army.

More disastrous than the campaign of 480 B.C. was that of the following year (479 B.C.) when Xerxes’ forces, led by Mardonius, suffered in one day a double defeat, at Plataea, in Greece, and at the promontory of Mycale on the coast of Asia Minor. The Persians left Greece and limited their rule henceforth to the Asian mainland, but even there the Greeks proved their superiority as soldiers, when, under their leader Cimon, they defeated the Persians on the river Eurymedon in Pamphylia. On one day in 466 B.C., 14 years after their great defeats in Greece, the Persian army, navy, and 80 Phoenician auxiliary ships were destroyed. Concerning this battle a Greek poet could claim that “since the sea has separated Asia from Europe, and since the stormy Ares has ruled over men’s cities, no equal deed accomplished by humans has ever occurred on land or sea.”

Xerxes’ prestige must have suffered tremendously through the various catastrophes that the imperial forces experienced, but the king seems not to have been greatly disturbed about this situation. Yet, the serious debacle on the Eurymedon may have occasioned the plot against the king’s life, led by his mighty vizier Artabanus. Earlier plots, one of which is mentioned in the book of Esther (ch. 2:21–23), had been unsuccessful, but this last one succeeded, and Xerxes fell under the hands of murderers in a palace revolution.

Artaxerxes I, 465–423 B.C.—Artabanus, Xerxes’ confidant and powerful vizier, seems to have killed the king in the hope of ascending the throne himself. After having Xerxes put out of the way and thinking that he would easily control the younger prince Artaxerxes, whose weak character he well knew, he accused the crown prince Darius of

having murdered his father. Artaxerxes believed the story and therefore gave Artabanus permission to kill Darius, but when he learned from his brother-in-law, Megabyzos, who the true murderer of his father was, he slew the mighty and dangerous courtier.

Like his father Xerxes, the new young ruler was no strong leader or general. If the crown had not possessed a strong supporter in the unselfish Megabyzos, Artaxerxes might not have kept the throne for very long. He lived in his palace cities most of the time, had his wars fought by his generals, was ruled by his mother and wife, and was usually undecided what policies he should follow. Since he was easily persuaded by influential counselors to do good or bad, his word could never be relied on. It was remarkable that the empire was held together so well during his reign.

The Persian debacle at the river Eurymedon in 465 B.C. and the murder of Xerxes in the same year were probably the reason for new uprisings in the northeastern and southwestern parts of the empire—Bactria and Egypt. The revolt in Bactria was not so serious and could easily be suppressed, but the situation was different in Egypt. A Libyan ruler, Inarus, son of a Psamtik, gained control of the Delta (463 or 462 B.C.) and made Mareia, an old border fortress in the northwestern Delta, his headquarters. A battle against the Persians took place at Papremis, in which the imperial forces were defeated and the satrap Achaemenes was slain. His body was sent to Persia by Inarus. However, the Persians were able to hold Memphis and Upper Egypt, and retained some connections with their homeland via the *Wadi Hammamat* in southern Egypt and the Red Sea.

The situation in which they were became more desperate, however, when the Athenians came to the aid of Inarus in 460 B.C. and took most of Memphis, pushing the remaining Persian garrison into the citadel. Preparations for an expedition against Inarus were made in Persia, but took a long time because of other, though lesser, troubles in different parts of the empire. In the meantime Artaxerxes tried to keep friendly those nations on whose help and good will a campaign against distant Egypt depended. To these belonged the Phoenicians, and various nations in Syria and Palestine, like the Jews. The concessions made to Ezra and the Jews in 457 B.C. may have been connected with this policy of befriending various nations at this time.

Finally Megabyzos marched into Egypt in 456 B.C. The Egyptians and Athenians were beaten at Memphis and those who escaped from the debacle fled to the island of Prosopitis, where their situation soon became hopeless, since Megabyzos, aided by the Phoenician fleet, was in full control of the river. The defenders were nevertheless able to hold the island for a year and a half until it was stormed in the summer of 454 B.C. Inarus escaped to a fortress in the Delta, but finally surrendered to Megabyzos after the latter had guaranteed his life. The western Delta, however, remained in the hands of an Egyptian dynast, Amyrtaeus, who had belonged to Inarus' followers. It is not known what the Persians did against him or whether they succeeded in reconquering that section of Egypt. The reconquered portion of the country was placed under the prince Arsham (Arsames), a rich Persian who possessed large estates in Babylonia and elsewhere, and who ruled over the Nile country for almost half a century. A wealth of information about his administration is available in Aramaic, Babylonian, and Greek documents.

Inarus, trusting in the words of a Persian, had given himself up to Megabyzos, and was sent to Persia. A few years later, Artaxerxes' mother persuaded the king to have him killed in revenge for the death of Achaemenes. Megabyzos, who ruled over the large satrapy "Beyond the River," which covered all territories lying between the Euphrates

and Egypt, was so indignant at this breach of faith that he broke with his royal brother-in-law, and revolted about 450 B.C. Two armies sent against him were beaten by the able general, and the situation in which Artaxerxes found himself became serious.

It was also during this time that the Persian fleet suffered a grave defeat in the naval battle against the Athenians, near Salamis, on Cyprus. Since the very existence of the empire seemed to be at stake, Artaxerxes, tired of the long and aimless war, made peace with the Greeks in 448 B.C. This peace of Cimon, as it is called, gave the Persians freedom from Athenian interference in Cyprus and Egypt, and freed the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor from the payment of tribute. Also a compromise was reached between Artaxerxes and the mighty Megabyzos, since there seemed to be no chance of removing him by force. He was pardoned by the court and retained his high office as satrap of "Beyond the River." How all these serious events had their repercussions in the province of Judea, which lay in Megabyzos' satrapy, has already been indicated above, and will be discussed more in detail in Section VI of this article.

Little is known of the last 20 years of Artaxerxes' rule, in which the empire does not seem to have been seriously shaken by calamities of any consequence. The king remained a weak ruler and a despot who acted according to his moods—good or bad.

Darius II, 423–405/4 B.C.—When Artaxerxes died toward the end of his 41st regnal year, probably in February, 423, chaotic conditions prevailed once more. Xerxes, the eldest son, came to the throne as Xerxes II, but was killed after a few weeks by Secydianus, one of his half brothers, aided by some eunuchs. But the assassin could not keep the throne and was soon put out of the way by another half brother, Ochus, who became king as Darius II. Being a weakling, he was completely governed by Parysatis, who was his wife and sister, a woman of treacherous and cruel character. With some eunuchs she actually reigned over the empire and brought disgrace on it through a series of shameful, bloody crimes.

The result of these conditions was a contempt for royal authority throughout the kingdom and a series of revolts that plunged the government into one crises after another. One of these revolts should be mentioned. It was led by Arsites, a brother of the king, who was followed by the satrap of Syria, Artyphius, a son of Megabyzos. Both of them, trusting the word of Parysatis and Darius, finally surrendered, but were perfidiously and cruelly put to death.

During his last two years Darius was troubled by sickness, unrest in Egypt, and a domestic quarrel about the succession to the throne after his impending departure. After Inarus' unsuccessful revolt Egypt had borne its humiliating position with resignation. But the obvious and increasing weakness of the Persian government and the continuous unrest throughout the empire caused Egyptian nationalists to take heart again and to rise up against their oppressors. The revolt came fully into the open at the time of Darius' death, with the proclamation of Amyrtaeus as king of Egypt. The movement of liberation started in the Delta and succeeded slowly. It was not until the turn of the century that all Egypt was wrested from the Persians, as we know from the Brooklyn Aramaic papyri (published in 1953), to be discussed in Section VII of this article.

With Darius II's death in 405 or 404 B.C. and the accession of his eldest son, Artaxerxes II, Persian history enters the period for which no Biblical records are available. This Intertestamental Period, as it is called, will be discussed in an article in Vol. V of this commentary. Also, the Jewish documents from Egypt, to be discussed in

Section VII of this article, become silent during the early years of Artaxerxes' reign; therefore this sketch of the Persian history ends here.

The Religion of the Persians.—The original religion of the Persians was closely related to that common to all Aryan nations, like Mitanni of northern Mesopotamia in the 2d millennium B.C., or Media and India of later times. The Aryans were polytheists and their main gods were deities of nature, the sky god, called by the Persians Ahura-Mazda, “wise lord” (the Indian Varuna, lord of heaven), Mithra the god of light and of treaties, Indra the old Aryan storm god, and the horse-driving twins, both named Nasatya. The priests of this popular religion were the Magi, descending, according to Herodotus, from an old Median tribe that had taken possession of the priesthood, and held a monopoly over all religious rites and sacrifices.

A great religious change was caused by Zarathustra (Zoroaster), the founder of a new Persian monotheistic religion. The time of his activity is unknown. Every century from the 11th to the 6th has been proposed as the age in which Zoroaster lived. It seems more plausible that he lived in the latter part of this period than in the earlier centuries, probably during Cyrus' reign or just before. One basis for this view is that Darius I, who was an ardent follower of the new religion, claims that Gaumata, the false Smerdis, who had belonged to the Magi, had destroyed temples which in the first place must have been Zoroastrian sanctuaries, and which were thorns in the flesh of the Magi. This statement of Darius I thus indicates that the new religion to which the Magi were hostile already existed in the time of Cambyses, and possessed sanctuaries for its religious services.

Zoroaster's one god is Ahura-Mazda (or Ormazd), “the wise lord,” the main principle of everything good, the wise creator spirit, who reveals himself in light and fire. Pure spirits serve him as the Biblical angels serve God. The evil principle is embodied in Angra Mainyu, the chief of all demons, who adds evil to that which the god of light creates. Man is involved in this fight of the spiritual powers and has the task of leading the good principle to victory. Hence the Zoroastrians appreciated purity and truth, and despised every kind of falsehood. By purity Zoroaster understood health, life, strength, honesty, loyalty, agriculture, cattle breeding, protection of useful animals, and destruction of vermin, which were considered to be a creation of the evil one. Defilement was caused by laziness, dishonesty, or the touch of a corpse. Zoroaster thus elevated the code of ethics of his people and educated the Iranian peasants to become the bearers of a high culture, which spread throughout the empire.

Whether Cyrus and Cambyses were still worshipers of the old Iranian gods of nature or already followers of Zoroaster is not definitely known, though it seems to be rather certain that they were strongly influenced by the new religion. The false Smerdis, a former Magian, must have belonged to the old religious clan, because Darius speaks of him in a contemptuous way for having destroyed sanctuaries, which Zoroastrians like Darius used as places of worship. Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I were pure Zoroastrians, and the only god ever invoked in their Persian inscriptions is Ahura-Mazda.

Toward other religions a great tolerance was shown, and concessions were readily made toward other people with regard to their religious customs and rites, although Zoroaster himself had rejected all other gods. This tolerance toward other religious groups shows that the Persian kings were wise rulers, who were anxious to create good will among their subjects belonging to many different ethnic and religious groups. The monotheism of the Jews seems to have been especially attractive to the Persians, for

which reason great concessions were made to them. This is evidenced by the various royal decrees found in Ezra-Nehemiah, and by the Jewish documents that have come to light in Elephantine (Egypt).

When the Persian Empire passed its peak, a relaxation in the religious purity of the Persians becomes noticeable. Under Darius II, but especially under Artaxerxes II, many of the old national gods were reintroduced and received a place beside Ahura-Mazda. Also the fire, and *haoma*, an intoxicating drink forbidden by Zoroaster, were once more worshiped as divinities. But this development took place in the 4th century B.C. which goes beyond the time limits of this article.

V. The Jews in Exile

After the Jews had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar in smaller and larger groups over a period of about a quarter of a century (Dan. 1:1–3; 2 Kings 24:16; 25:11; Jer. 52:28–30) the majority of the citizens of the former kingdom of Judah lived in exile in Babylonia. The nobility, intelligentsia, military, professionals, and many of the farmers had been taken captive and moved to Mesopotamia. They lived in cities and towns of which some are mentioned in the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther (Babylon, Shushan, Tel-abib, Addon [Addan], Cherub, Immer, Casiphia, Tel-harsa, and Tel-melah), and also probably in rural districts.

During the early years of their exile a large number of the Jews may have been slaves and some may have had a hard life. Yet, the Babylonian laws made provision for a slave to earn his liberty in various ways, and the progressive Jews must have taken advantage of every opportunity that offered itself to regain their individual freedom. Ezekiel, who had been taken captive in 597 B.C., could speak six years later of “mine house” (Eze. 8:1), and the admonition of Jeremiah to the deported Jews to build houses and plant gardens in Babylonia (Jer. 29:5–7) would not have made sense if such had not been possible.

In the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (561 B.C.), he was released from prison by Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar’s son, and apparently received honorable treatment from then on (2 Kings 25:27–30; Jer. 52:31–34). The very fact the Babylonians released Jehoiachin without fear of any unrest or anti-Babylonian agitation, reveals that the Jews must have gained the respect of their masters and been considered decent and respectable citizens. In the course of time some of the Jews came to honor and office in the government, and others gained a place in the business and professional world. The books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther reveal how exiles penetrated every branch of government, and even occupied the highest offices in the life of the state. Jews were royal doorkeepers, cupbearers, provincial governors, and royal counselors (Esther 2:19; 10:3; Neh. 2:1; 5:14; etc.). Their rapid ascent in the social life of the empire may have caused the hatred they encountered in the time of Xerxes (described in Esther).

But the Bible is not the only source from which we learn of the social and material rise of the Jews in the land of their captivity. Documents discovered during the excavations of Nippur by the expedition of the University of Pennsylvania also provide light. The archives of a great banking firm in the city of Nippur, “Murashu Sons,” which consist of many thousands of clay tablets, allow us to look into the business life of this important city. Although these documents come from the time of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, hence actually from a period after the Exile, they provide valuable information from which conclusions in regard to earlier periods can be drawn. We find that among the

clients of “Murashu Sons” were many Jews, who formed a wealthy and influential minority in Nippur and the surrounding country. They appear in these documents as tenants, as creditors with large sums of money, even as inspectors in the office of revenue, and administrative heads of districts. These documents from Nippur support data in Daniel or Ezra, where we read of Jews occupying important offices in Babylonia and Persia.

The Jews not only were progressive in a material way, but experienced also a spiritual change during the years of the Exile. The common misery, the national disaster, the loss of homeland, Temple, and freedom, caused the exiles to seek spiritual values, and to listen to religious leaders more than they had done in the old homeland. For example, the Jews abandoned idolatry after the Exile, a sin into which their fathers had periodically fallen, and which had been one of the main causes for the great catastrophes that struck them in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. Men like Daniel and Ezekiel must have played influential roles as spiritual educators of the people. To them the Jewish leaders came for instruction from the Word of God (Eze. 8, 14, 20).

Many Jews undoubtedly studied the venerated books of their prophets, which they had brought to Babylonia from their homeland, and compared the inspired words of Isaiah and Jeremiah with the signs of the times. That this statement is true can be gathered from Daniel, who had learned “by books the number of the years” of the captivity of his people, mentioning as his source “Jeremiah” (Dan. 9:2). This text shows also that the faithful Bible-reading Jews believed in the fulfillment of these prophecies. They had witnessed the literal fulfillment of prophecies pronounced against tyrannical nations like Assyria, and had also seen incredible predictions about the doom of Jerusalem come true. Now, the faithful ones among the Jews waited to see the fulfillment of prophecies in regard to Babylon, in regard to the rise of a man by the name of Cyrus, and in regard to the restoration of their own nation. They read that their prophet Isaiah had predicted the rise of the Aryans more than a century before they played any role in history:

“Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them [the Babylonians], who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold” (Isa. 13:17, RSV). Because of the weakness of Babylonia after Nebuchadnezzar’s death, the prophecies uttered by Isaiah (chs. 13, 14 and 21) and Jeremiah (ch. 50:2, 3, 10, 11) against Babylon must have gained a new meaning. During the early years of their captivity no one may have known from where the liberator described in Isa. 44 and 45 might come, but when the reports reached the exiled Jews toward the middle of the 6th century B.C. that Cyrus, the hitherto unknown prince of the Persian tribes of Iran, had overthrown the Median Empire, the Jews must have become keenly interested. Did not the Scriptures mention a man by the name of Cyrus?

“Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and ungird the loins of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:
‘I will go before you
and level the mountains,

I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut asunder the bars of iron,
I will give you the treasures of darkness
and the hoards in secret places,
that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me””(Isa. 45:1–4, RSV).

These words could not be misunderstood. They clearly revealed from whom the Jews could expect their liberation, and named the man who would permit them to return to their homeland after the expiration of the 70-year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (chs. 25:11, 12; 29:10; see also Isa. 44:28).

It is therefore not surprising that the people watched Cyrus’ cometlike rise to power with bated breath. It must have been an exhilarating time for the enslaved and exiled nation, a time of tension, great hopes, and far-reaching expectations. It was also a time in which serious men like Daniel prayed more earnestly and searched themselves more thoroughly to remove every hidden sin from their lives, so God’s plans for His people might succeed (see Dan. 9).

Babylon fell to Cyrus’ forces without a pitched battle, and a man of the Jewish nation, Daniel, whose unselfish service under the Babylonians was known to the new rulers, received a highly influential position in the new administration (Dan. 6:3). Although many of his colleagues hated him, Daniel was able to hold his own, and succeeded in gaining Cyrus’ ear in regard to his people’s aspirations. When he made the new monarch acquainted with the prophecies of Isaiah, and Cyrus saw how clearly he had been described by an inspired pen more than a century before his birth, he must have come under the spell of such divine utterances. He willingly granted the request of Daniel to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple, prefacing his decree with the significant admission, “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house” (Ezra 1:2). This decree marked the end of the Jewish captivity.

VI. The Restoration of the Jews

The Return and Temple Building Under Cyrus and Cambyses.—The decree of Cyrus, which marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Jewry, was issued at Ecbatana in his first regnal year (Ezra 1:1). This, if reckoned from the fall of the Babylonian Empire according to the Jewish method, from autumn to autumn, could be in the summer of 537 B.C. (see pp. 96, 97).

The decree was issued in two forms. One was to be publicly proclaimed (2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2–4). The second one was rather a document of directives for official use only. The public decree provided for (1) the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, (2) the return of all captive Hebrews to Judea on a voluntary basis, and (3) the contribution of financial assistance to the returning Jews by their compatriots who chose to remain behind, as well as by their Gentile friends. The official decree, on the other hand, (1) contained directives and exact specifications concerning the planned new Temple, (2) made provisions for the covering of the building expenses by royal funds, and (3) gave a

command to return to the Jews the available vessels of the former Temple (Ezra 6:3–5). There was a reason why the contents of the decree that was not publicly announced were not included in the public one. Some of the provisions were not important for the public; also, an announcement of the fact that the king was willing to bear the expenses might have discouraged the making of financial offerings by the Jews and their friends.

Cyrus also appointed a Jew of royal blood, named Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel, to be the governor of the province of Judea, which was part of the satrapy “Beyond the River,” that great division of the empire that comprised all lands lying between the river Euphrates and Egypt. To this new governor were given all the vessels of the old Jerusalem Temple that were found in Babylon. In conjunction with Jeshua (or Joshua), a descendant of the last officiating high priest of the Solomonic Temple, and 9 or 10 other leading men (Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7), Zerubbabel made all preparations for the return to the old homeland. More than 42,000 exiles entered in the official list gave answer to the call of Cyrus and were willing to return to Judea.

The detailed list given in Ezra 2 reveals that most Jews had been able to save their genealogical documents throughout their captivity and thus could prove their rights and titles in their homeland. The returning nonecclesiastical exiles are classified in 17 family units numbering from about 100 to almost 3,000 men each, and 15 groups were listed according to town units, of which the smallest numbered 42 men and the largest 1,254. Besides these there was one group called “the children of Senaah,” 3,630 men, which may have consisted of poor people (see on Ezra 2:35), and 652 men who had lost all their documents by which they could have proved their rights in the Jewish congregation. Of the ecclesiastical exiles more than 4,000 priests belonging to 4 families joined Zerubbabel, and also an unknown number of priests belonging to 3 families who could not prove their rights to the priesthood. In contrast to the great number of priests (4,389) it is significant that only a small number of lower Temple personnel (733) were willing to return. The reason for this reluctance may have lain in the fact that Ezekiel had predicted that the Levites would be degraded in the future Temple service to comparatively low manual work because of their apostasy in the pre-exilic period (Eze. 44:9–16). Furthermore, we find the returning Jews accompanied by about 7,500 servants and singers (Ezra 2:64, 65).

If the decree of Cyrus was issued in the summer or autumn of 537 B.C. (see pp. 96, 97), the journey was probably started in the spring of the following year, 536 B.C., since this was the usual season for traveling. The Mesopotamian armies had customarily left their homeland for foreign campaigns in the spring. Ezra started his return journey, some 80 years later, in the spring, arriving at Jerusalem about 3 1/2 months after his departure from Babylonia. The large caravan of Zerubbabel’s followers, about 50,000 individuals who had some 8,000 beasts of burden carrying their possessions, must have needed at least as much time as Ezra to reach Jerusalem, and probably arrived in their homeland during the summer. Like all large armies they either followed the course of the Euphrates until they reached approximately the 36th parallel, or went through the former homeland of Assyria to Arbela and followed the approximate course of the present Syro-Turkish border. From there they must have crossed the north Syrian desert for almost 100 miles to the river Orontes, with the oasis of Aleppo lying in the midst of this thirsty land. After they reached the Orontes, they could have used either the inland road or that which followed the coast of Phoenicia and Palestine. If they used the first they followed the

Orontes River to its source, then continuing in a southerly direction through the highland lying between the Lebanon mountain range and the Antilebanon (including Mt. Hermon and Mt. Amana), finally crossing Galilee and Samaria before they reached their destination.

After reaching Jerusalem they first had a service of gratitude in which a large offering was made by the leading men of the congregation. The returned exiles then dispersed to reoccupy the lands of their ancestors. At the beginning of the New Year, they gathered at Jerusalem for the dedication of a newly erected altar of burnt offering, the commencement of the daily sacrificial service, and the celebration of the feasts of the 7th month. At that time plans were also laid for the rebuilding of the Temple and contracts were concluded with the Sidonians and Tyrians for the necessary lumber, and with masons and carpenters for the planned work (Ezra 2:68 to 3:7).

The actual work of rebuilding the Temple was not begun until the following year. For the laying of the foundation stone the same month was chosen in which Solomon had started to build the first Temple (Ezra 3:8; 1 Kings 6:1). This was an occasion of great joy for the faithful Jews who had waited many years for this day. However, the plans showed that the new Temple with its auxiliary buildings would not match in size and splendor those that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed, for which reason some of the older men who in their youth had seen Solomon's Temple, wept (Ezra 3:8–13).

After the work on the Temple had started, trouble began with the Samaritans. They were a fusion of several nationalities that were brought into the country of the former kingdom of Israel at various times by different Assyrian kings from several conquered areas of the former Assyrian Empire. They served their own pagan gods, together with Jehovah, whose worship they had added to their pagan worship when they came to Palestine (see 2 Kings 17:24–33). They were doubtless already hostile, for when the Jews returned from Babylon they reclaimed their ancestral possessions, some of which probably had been occupied by the Samaritans during the years of Judah's captivity. The Samaritans were not only expelled from those lands, but were denied any participation in the rebuilding of the Temple or any rights in the service at Jerusalem. The returning Jews had learned the hard lesson that close association with those who worship idols leads to idolatry, and it was idolatry that caused the catastrophe of 586 B.C. When the zealous Jews thus showed that they had learned their lesson during the years of captivity in Babylon and firmly announced to their northern neighbors that they would have nothing to do with them, a break came that was never healed (Ezra 4:1–3).

The result of this decision was an active hostility on the part of the Samaritans. They "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building" (Ezra 4:4). Another reason for the slackening of the building activity at the Temple was that the Samaritans hired "counsellors against them" (Ezra 4:5), who apparently succeeded in preventing the payments of the promised royal funds. After the death of Daniel, there may have been no Jewish sponsor at the court to further their cause and defend their interests in hours of crisis. The threats that Darius connected with the renewal of Cyrus' decree and its financial provisions in case it was not carried out, seem to indicate that he had discovered that Cyrus' decree had been thwarted (Ezra 6:8–12).

The Jews, on the other hand, had not shown enough faith to meet their disappointments with fortitude. Instead of offering to the enemy a united and determined front, they tried individually to defend themselves as well as they could, built solid

houses for themselves, and left the work at Jerusalem undone. This lack of faith in God's cause resulted in divine punishments such as inflation, drought, and bad harvests (Haggai 1:6, 11). Some work, however, seems to have been done at the Temple site throughout the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, as we learn from the words of the Jews who declared, during Darius' reign, that since the "time [of Cyrus] even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished" (Ezra 5:16).

When Cambyses crossed Palestine on his way to Egypt in 525 B.C., representatives of the Jews may have met him somewhere in one of the coastal towns to assure him of their continued loyalty. There is no evidence, but the Jewish documents of Elephantine in Egypt indicate that Cambyses was more favorably disposed toward the Jews than to the Egyptians, as can be learned from the fact that he destroyed the Egyptian temple on Elephantine, but left the neighboring Jewish temple on the same island unmolested. Hence, we are justified in concluding that he did nothing hostile to the Jews in their homeland. Any frustration they experienced in their work must have come from lower officials, and their Palestinian neighbors, who may have felt that the hostile activity against the Jews would remain unpunished, since the king was far away engaged in military campaigns. These enemies of the Jews were also aware of the great unpopularity of Cambyses throughout the empire and knew how to use these antiroyal feelings to their advantage, as we shall see in discussing the next phase of history, the interruption of all Jewish building under the usurper, Smerdis.

The Interruption of the Temple Building Under Smerdis.—Cambyses' unpopularity was so great that when the Median Gaumata, on March 11, 522 B.C., proclaimed himself king, on the claim that he was Bardiya, or Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses, he was immediately accepted by the inhabitants of a great part of the empire. The proof of this is found in Babylonian documents dated before the death of Cambyses in the reign of Bardiya, as the false Smerdis was called in Babylonia. Until his death on September 29 of the same year the false Bardiya, a follower of the old pre-Zoroastrian religion, evidently made vigorous attempts to stamp out the new religion. He had temples destroyed (presumably Zoroastrian), as Darius charged in his long Behistun inscription.

It is not difficult to understand how elements hostile toward the Jews could easily secure from the impostor a decree prohibiting the continuation of the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, and perhaps even permitting the destruction of what had already been built. Such a decree would be in harmony with Smerdis' policy of destroying temples, probably with the purpose of stamping out all religions that were a threat to the religion he advocated. His action against the Jews may also have been motivated by the fact that they had received favors from the preceding Persian kings whose work he wished to wreck.

The enemies of the Jews would undoubtedly be delighted with such a decree, and would use it as their authority for an attack upon what had already been built. This can be concluded from the fact that it was necessary to lay a new foundation (Haggai 2:18, 19) when the rebuilding of the Temple was begun again two years later. The official archives seem to have been destroyed during the attack on Jerusalem, for the Jews were not able to produce any documentary evidence to justify their building activity when Tatnai, the governor of "Across the River," a few years later made an investigation. Reference had to be made to the royal files in Babylonia for corroboration of their verbal claims (Ezra 5:13 to 6:2).

The six months of the reign of Smerdis and the succeeding months in which Darius had to fight for the throne against several pretenders, until stable political conditions returned to the empire, must have been anxious times for the Jews. The conditions described by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah allow us to understand some of the calamities that preceded the ministry of those men, whose work started in the second year of Darius (520/19 B.C.). For the Jews it must have been a great relief when they saw that Darius, a Zoroastrian who could be expected to be their friend as Cyrus and Cambyses had been, became master of the difficult political situation and was firmly settled on the throne of the Achaemenid empire.

Resumption and Completion of the Temple Building Under Darius I.—When orderly conditions had returned to the empire, two men, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, were raised up by God to initiate a new drive for a resumption of the interrupted work on the Temple. The first chapter of Haggai begins with a prophetic message to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the secular and spiritual leaders of the people, on the 1st of the 6th month (Elul) of the 2d year of Darius. Haggai appealed for a new start in building the Temple, rebuking the people at the same time for their lack of faith and zeal, and pointing out that calamities they experienced were the result of their slackness (Haggai 1:2–11). Several weeks later (on the 24th of the same month) the leaders and the people decided to heed the admonition (Haggai 1:12–15). These two dates of Haggai are generally considered to be August 29 and September 21, 520 B.C., by a spring-to-spring reckoning of the year (see p. 99 and note 12 for alternate interpretations). Haggai addressed the people and their leaders on the 21st of the 7th month, toward the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, approximately October 17, 520 B.C. This time he had no words of rebuke, but told them to be of good courage. He assured them that the glory of this new Temple, which seemed insignificant in comparison with Solomon's, would actually surpass it (Haggai 2:3–9). He thus prophesied of the work of Jesus Christ that would be accomplished in this Temple. Several weeks later, in the 8th month, Zechariah, a prophet of apocalyptic visions, joined Haggai (Zech. 1:1 ff.).

On December 18, 520 B.C., sufficient preliminary work on the site had been done so that a new foundation stone could be laid. Such a day was always connected with special festivities, and Haggai used this opportunity to deliver two speeches, one probably in the morning, the other in the afternoon. In his first address he assured the people that God would bless them from this day on as a reward for their renewed zeal. He challenged them to mark this date of the laying of the foundation stone and to see whether God would keep His promises and bring a change in their distressing political and economic situation (Haggai 2:15–19). The second speech contained further promises of what God was planning to do for His people. These promises were conditional (Haggai 2:20–23).

There was apparently no more interference from enemies, who would not dare now to enforce any hostile decree that the false Smerdis might have issued. Darius would interpret such an act as being directed against his administration.

Suddenly came "Tatnai, governor on this side of the river" (the province called "Beyond the River" from the Mesopotamian point of view), with his whole staff of officers, to Jerusalem (Ezra 5:3), probably on a routine tour of inspection. Since it had been known for a long time that the satrap of the territories of "Beyond the River" and "Babylonia" during the early years of Darius was Ushtani, it was thought that Tatnai must have been an Aramaic form of his Persian name. However, a recently published

cuneiform tablet from Babylon has revealed that this interpretation is incorrect, and that Tatnai was Ushtani's subordinate in the administration of "Beyond the River," since Ushtani could not effectively administer two large provinces personally.

Tatnai showed himself to be an impartial and conscientious official in the best Persian tradition. Seeing the industrious building activities at the Temple site, he naturally asked for the royal permit. The elders of the Jews replied—while Zerubbabel as governor wisely kept himself in the background, since he could not know the attitude of the new official. They told the story of the destruction of the first Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, their long captivity in Babylonia, and their return under Cyrus, mentioning also that he had given back to them the Temple treasures, and issued a decree permitting the rebuilding of the Temple. Tatnai was favorably impressed by the sincerity of the Jews and evidently believed their story, for he allowed them to continue their work for the time being. However, since they had been unable to produce an official written permit as proof of their claims—the permit had probably been destroyed or stolen by the Samaritans—he sent to the king a report of the whole case. To this he appended the names of the Jewish leaders, requesting an investigation in the archives of Babylon, and a royal decision concerning his attitude toward the Jews (Ezra 5:3–17).

After the receipt of Tatnai's report the government files of Babylon were searched. Once more the Persian conscientiousness became apparent when the officials charged with the investigation extended their search to Ecbatana after the archives of Babylon failed to produce any documents on the case. Finally the official copy of Cyrus' decree was found and taken to the king. The question must then have arisen as to how much money had been spent on the Jerusalem Temple since the issuance of the decree, for it provided for payment of the building expenses from royal funds. When an investigation revealed that little or nothing had ever been paid, Darius must have been angry, for such failure showed how certain royal decrees were sidetracked and their provisions not carried out. This must have been the reason that his reply to Tatnai was composed in an unusually sharp tone, and that it contained threats of terrible punishments if his new decree were not carried out. This new edict demanded, first, that Tatnai refrain from any interference with the work of the Jews; second, that the expenses promised by Cyrus be now paid from the revenue of the province of "Beyond the River"; and third, that the Jews, in their religious services, should pray for the well-being of the king and his sons (Ezra 6:1–12).

With the material support of the government and the spiritual support of their leaders and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the people seem to have worked with great zeal and joy. The whole project was finished by the 3d of Adar in the 6th year of Darius, when the dedication ceremonies were held (Ezra 6:13–15). This was, by either spring or fall reckoning, March 12, 515 B.C. The actual interval from the laying of the second foundation in December, 520 B.C., was 4 years and 3 months. This was 2 years and 3 months less than Solomon had needed to complete the building of his Temple compound. The reason for the shorter building period lay undoubtedly in the fact that part of the tremendous substructures that Solomon had built to provide a wide platform on the uneven terrain of the northeastern hill of Jerusalem were still usable, and that much building material, procured under the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, was available.

After the description of the festivities connected with the dedication of the new Temple and the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the following month

(Ezra 6:16–22,), the Biblical records become silent until the time of Xerxes. Yet, it can be taken for granted that the Jews prospered during the reign of Darius, whose rule was beneficial for all parts of the empire, as we know from the extant records of several countries.

Critical Times in Xerxes' Reign.—The book of Esther describes a crisis that developed in the 12th year of Xerxes. A brief summary here is sufficient. The personal hatred of Haman, a high counselor of the king, against Mordecai, a Jewish gate official employed in the palace at Susa (Biblical Shushan), resulted in the plan to destroy the whole Jewish nation. The king, whose unstable and undisciplined character is well known from the descriptions of ancient secular historians, granted Haman's request as a personal favor to him without investigating the reasons for it. Providence, however, had already made provision for the Jews' deliverance by having allowed the beautiful Jewish girl Esther to become Xerxes' wife in 479/78 B.C. Through the prayers of the entire Jewish nation, and Esther's personal intervention with the king, the previously given decree to kill all Jews on a certain day in March, 473 B.C., was not carried out. Although the decree could not be revoked, owing to a peculiar Persian custom, an additional royal edict allowed the Jews to defend themselves, and the day on which they would have been massacred became a day of great deliverance. Mordecai, who had received Haman's office after the latter's execution for his treachery, is credited with having done much to benefit his people (Esther 10:3). A cuneiform tablet in the Berlin Museum mentions Mordecai as an influential official at Susa in the time of Xerxes. Thus the story of Esther, frequently considered as fiction, receives valuable archeological support.

Interesting light is shed on the events described in the book of Esther by the cuneiform documents of the business house of Murashu Sons at Nippur, which come from the next two reigns after Xerxes—those of Artaxerxes I and Darius II. They reveal that the Jews formed an influential and wealthy minority in the city of Nippur and the rural areas belonging to it. Jews appear as partners in transactions in which large sums of money are involved, as administrators of districts, and as rich money lenders. All this evidence reveals that the Jews had gone through a period in which they had enjoyed certain favors, as happened under Mordecai's leadership.

When this man had become "great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren" in the Persian Empire (Esther 10:3), his name became a household word in Jewish circles, and many parents gave their children the name Mordecai. The documents of Murashu Sons from Artaxerxes I's time contain 61 personal names of Jews. It is extremely interesting to see that although 60 different persons are represented by these 61 name references, 6 different Jews bore the name Mordecai. All of them, apparently, were born shortly after the events recorded in the book of Esther had taken place. A little later the name fell into disuse again, as is seen from the fact that among the 46 names of Jews mentioned in the documents of the same firm from the time of Darius II the name Mordecai does not appear.

Return Under Artaxerxes I and the Work of Ezra.—Between the last dated events of the book of Esther (spring, 473 B.C.) and the next recorded happening of the book of Ezra (spring, 457 B.C.) lay 16 years, concerning which there are no known records that can throw any direct light on the history of the Jewish nation. Xerxes had in the meantime been murdered, and his son Artaxerxes had come to the throne. The empire lived under the cloud of the grave defeat at the Eurymedon, to which soon was added the

loss of Egypt through the rebellion of Inarus in 463 or 462 B.C. Since it was important that Judea, lying on the road to Egypt, remain loyal and friendly toward the Persian administration, especially when the campaign against Egypt would get under way (in 456 B.C.), Artaxerxes lent a willing ear to the petitions of Ezra (ch. 7:28), whose title indicates that he was “referee of Jewish affairs” in the chancellery (see on Ezra 7:12). He petitioned the king to grant the Jews a greater measure of self-government than they had possessed hitherto, and to allow the reintroduction of the Mosaic law as the law of the land in the province of Judea.

By royal decree Artaxerxes appointed Ezra to return to Judea with far-reaching authority, and called on all Jews who desired to return to their old homeland to do so. The decree further commissioned Ezra to reorganize the whole judicial system in Judea, and to install judges and magistrates with power over life and death, who should use “the law of the God of heaven” as the basis of their work (Ezra 7:11–26). The historicity of this decree has frequently been attacked, since it seemed incredible to many modern scholars that the Persian king or his counselors should have concerned themselves with details of Jewish ceremonial as the decree in Ezra 7 claims. Yet, one of the Elephantine papyri, to be discussed in Section VII, the so-called “Passover Letter” of Darius II, gives such a close parallel that the opposition to the genuineness of the decree of Artaxerxes I has lately become silent. The “Passover Letter” of Darius shows clearly that the Persian chancellery probably had a department in which experts in Jewish law and customs advised the king in legislative matters. These experts were doubtless Jews.

The chance discovery of the Phoenician Eshmunazar inscription shows that Artaxerxes appreciated the help he received from Sidon in his campaign against the rebellious Egyptians, and rewarded the Sidonians by giving them certain fertile grain lands in the region of Dor on the Palestinian coast. This historical parallel strongly suggests that the important decree by which exceptional privileges were granted to the Jews one year before Megabyzos began his expedition against Egypt was given to create good will among the Jews, and to ensure their continued loyalty in this time of political crisis. To the Jews this decree meant much, because it gave them virtually a semi-independent status. All civil and judicial powers were now returned to the local leadership, and the law of Moses became once more the law of the land. The only matter reserved by the Persians for themselves was the department of revenues. Generous royal gifts and grants from the tribute of the province for the support of the Jewish religious service were probably designed to reconcile the Jews to the fact that foreign tax collectors would remain in their country for an indefinite time.

After seeing his requests granted, Ezra made an appeal to Babylonian Jewry to accompany him to Judea. On the 1st day of Nisan all those who were willing to follow Ezra met “at the river of Ahava.” When the census was taken it became apparent that no Levites were present. After a special effort was made to secure some Levites, the congregation of probably more than 5,000, including women and children, fasted and prayed for divine protection during their long and dangerous journey. Ezra had not dared to request an escort for fear of revealing to the Persian authorities that he lacked faith in the protective power of his God (Ezra 8:1–23).

The caravan set out Nisan 12, on or about April 7, 457 B.C. (according to the table on p. 108), and after some 4 months arrived at Jerusalem about July 23. There they rested for 3 days. Then they handed over all the royal gifts for the Temple and the official decree to

the proper authorities, and celebrated their safe arrival by a great thank offering (Ezra 8:24–36). The actual work of reconstruction authorized by the decree began some weeks later, in the autumn of the year.

Little is recorded about Ezra's activity in Judea during the next 13 years until Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem as newly appointed governor. Ezra must have carried out all provisions of the decree, but no record is left of his work, with the exception of one describing his reform work with regard to mixed marriages. The report of this affair covers almost one fourth of the entire book of Ezra (chs. 9, 10), thus showing the importance of this reform.

Ezra must have been aware of the presence of pagan or semipagan women in some families, since one was found in the family of the high priest. But he worked in quietness for a while, waiting for an opportunity to deal with this matter effectively. This opportunity came on a certain day when some of the leaders officially notified him of the existence of this evil. Ezra responded at once. He began with a public prayer that was at the same time a great sermon and a call for repentance. The result was that the leaders of the country made a spontaneous decision to cleanse the nation from the pagan influence.

A public meeting was then held in the ninth month (approximately December). If this was soon after Ezra's arrival, it was in 457 B.C. The gathered congregation, shivering from the cold and rain, and anxious to return home, gave Ezra full powers to carry out the proposed reform. Little opposition was voiced against this popular decision, because only a small percentage of the people—112 men out of the tens of thousands of Jews who inhabited Judea—were involved in this affair. A committee worked then from December, 457, to April, 456 B.C., and decided every case. A list of all transgressors involved was appended as part of the permanent record of the event. It shows that 27 ecclesiastical workers, among whom were 13 priests and 4 members of the high-priestly family, besides 86 laymen, had foreign wives. The evil had not yet spread far among the people, which explains why the measures taken were so strongly supported by the people, and so easily carried out.

It is generally held that Ezra continued on in Jerusalem into the time of Nehemiah. Hence he faced, at some time preceding Nehemiah's coming (in 444 B.C.), the destructive opposition of enemies who broke down "the wall of Jerusalem" and "burned with fire" its gates (Neh. 1:3).

Scholars who equate the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7 with Artaxerxes I see in the narrative of . 7–23 a reference to this attack upon the walls and gates. They thus find in the narrative a Biblical account of the reason for the damaging of the wall as reported to Nehemiah. This view of vs. 7–23 requires a temporary reversal of Artaxerxes' favorable attitude toward the Jews as shown in his dealings with Ezra a few years before.

However, the attack referred to in Nehemiah 1:3 can be accounted for historically without Ezra 4, or any specific Biblical narrative. It is a fact that about the year 450 or 449 B.C., Megabyzos, governor of the province of "Beyond the River," which included Judea, rebelled for a period of years against the king of Persia. During this rebellion, either the Jews were loyal to their benefactor Artaxerxes, and were attacked by Samaritan partisans of Megabyzos, or the Samaritans were loyal and took the opportunity of accusing the Jews of siding with Megabyzos. In either case the rebellion of Megabyzos would furnish a plausible setting for the event mentioned in Neh. 1:3.

Nehemiah's Governorship.—Nehemiah, although a faithful Jew, had advanced in the Persian court until he held the trusted and responsible position of royal cupbearer. Some historians have concluded that he was a eunuch, as he seems to have served the king in the women's quarters (see on Neh. 2:6). He was well educated, and later proved himself a good organizer.

In December, 445 B.C., Nehemiah's brother Hanani and some other Jews arrived at Susa for a visit. They may have been the first Jews from Jerusalem whom Nehemiah had seen since Megabyzos' rebellion, which had probably resulted in the breakdown of ordinary communication with Judea. Rumors of troubles with the Samaritans may have reached Nehemiah's ears, but since nothing certain was known, he was anxious to obtain some exact word about the conditions in Judea. Hence, his first question was "concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh. 1:2). The news that he received was bad, worse than he had expected to receive. He learned to his dismay that the walls were "broken down, and the gates thereof ... burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3). The shock of this news was so great that Nehemiah, like Daniel (Dan. 9:3), fasted and prayed for days on end.

Nehemiah developed an effective plan during the following four months and also made certain preparations in anticipation of the course of action he proposed to follow. Then he used a favorable situation, when serving the king, to request that he send him to Jerusalem to complete the interrupted work of rebuilding the city's walls. Some have thought that Nehemiah, knowing Artaxerxes' unstable character, and how easily he was influenced by women, had chosen an opportune occasion when "the queen" was present; also that she may have been favorably disposed toward Nehemiah and may have assured him beforehand of her support. Although Nehemiah had prayed earnestly about this situation he was sore afraid that he might lose his life if he moved unwisely in relation to the temperamental king (Neh. 2:2, 6). But the king not only granted the request, he also appointed his cupbearer to be the new governor of Judea.

Furnished with official credentials and accompanied by an armed escort, Nehemiah lost no time, but set out as soon as he could secure release from his court duties. He arrived in Jerusalem presumably in the early summer of 444 B.C. For the first few days he kept the true purpose of his arrival secret, so that he could make moves that would assure the greatest possible success for his plans. He also wished to avoid playing into the hands of his enemies, whose work and hatred he well knew. After three days he had sized up the situation and also had probably seen the condition of the wall, with the exception of its southern sections. In order to gain firsthand knowledge of the condition of those wall sections, made an inspection tour at night, accompanied only by some trusted friends (Neh. 2:11–16).

He then laid his plans before the people's leaders, probably on the fourth day after his arrival. He told them of the royal commission, probably assuring them also that they had nothing to fear from their enemies any more. His call to build, "that we be no more a reproach" (Neh. 2:17), was an eloquent appeal to the national conscience and dignity. Some were enthusiastic about the prospects of finally having a fortified capital whose wall could offer protection in times of danger, while others seemed to show no interest. The people of cities like Jericho, Mizpah, and Gibeon willingly offered their help in building the wall of Jerusalem, but there is no mention of help from Bethlehem, Netophah, Bethel, and various other cities that had been repopulated since Zerubbabel's

time. Among the leaders the same situation was noticeable. Some supported Nehemiah enthusiastically, while others, like the nobles of Tekoa, “put not their necks to the work of their Lord” (Neh. 3:5).

Immediately after the purpose of Nehemiah’s arrival had become known, the enemies of the Jews, especially the political leaders of surrounding nations, made plans to foil Nehemiah’s aims. Of these enemies three are repeatedly mentioned as working against Nehemiah: Sanballat, who was the governor of Samaria, as we now know from the Elephantine papyri; Tobiah, a high official or nobleman of Ammon; and Geshem, the governor of the Arab Lihyanites of Dedan. These three ridiculed the Jews and their leader, accused them of making active preparations for a rebellion, made preparations to attack them by force, arranged to have Nehemiah assassinated, and made numerous attempts to sow discord among the Jews themselves. This work against Nehemiah and his activities was unceasingly carried on as long as the work of rebuilding the city’s wall was in progress, and seems to have ceased only after its completion.

Nehemiah proved to be a man of fearless determination and a good organizer. Neither did he belittle the danger that the efforts of his enemies posed, nor was he unduly disturbed about them. Those willing to assist him in his work of rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall he organized into 42 groups, and spread them over as many wall sections. In the list found in ch. 3 of his book, Nehemiah has left us an excellent source for the study of the topography of Jerusalem’s city wall, and has also provided information concerning many other important items. He tells us, for example, who took part in the work, where it was done, and also what kind of work was required. We learn in this way that some sections of the wall, as well as some gates, had been almost completed in the previous rebuilding activities, and had suffered little during the recent attack, whereas others had to be practically rebuilt. This must be concluded from the observation that the term “built” is used for the activity of some, but the work of others is described as “repaired” in the list of Neh. 3. The same conclusion can be reached by reading, for example, that one group, Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah, could repair the Valley Gate and about 550 yards of wall (Neh. 3:13), while another group could repair only a very small section extending from the door of Eliashib’s house, which apparently stood near the wall, to the end of that same building (Neh. 3:21). In some instances, of course, the number of participants may have been responsible for the great differences in the size of wall sections allotted to the various groups. A few gates, as, for example, the Ephraim Gate, mentioned later in connection with the wall’s dedication, seem to have been intact and therefore are left out in the list of sectors on which work was done.

Hence we must conclude that the work of Nehemiah was not the entire rebuilding of the whole wall and its many gates, but the repairing and completing of the interrupted activity of his predecessors. If the wall had been as it was after Nebuchadnezzar’s forces destroyed it, Nehemiah would not have been able to complete the work in 52 days (Neh. 6:15). That he could finish the work in such an exceptionally short period shows clearly that a long time of building activity must have preceded his arrival.

Although the work on the wall proceeded rapidly, it was beset with many difficulties. Nehemiah encountered lack of interest in certain circles of his people, and real opposition from others of them (Neh. 4:10; 16:10–12). Worse, there was the constant danger of a disastrous attack on the half-completed city wall by his foreign enemies who were led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Hence, he armed all workmen, had the wall guarded day

and night, and devised a system of alarm in order to be ready at all times to defend Jerusalem. His determination and personal bravery discouraged his enemies and saved the day. They never went further than making threats; no real attack materialized.

On the 25th of Elul (September 21 in 444 B.C.) the work was finished (Neh. 6:15). The wall was dedicated by an impressive ceremony. Two processions were formed, one led by Ezra, the other by Nehemiah. Starting at the Valley Gate, both companies went on top of the walls in opposite directions until they met near the northeastern corner of the city, and jointly entered the Temple to give praises to God for the help received in their work, and to celebrate the day with sacrifices (Neh. 12:27–43).

After Nehemiah had completed his main task and given Jerusalem a fortified wall, he settled down to a fruitful and peaceful work of governorship. For 12 years he served his people during his first term of office (Neh. 5:14). Although Nehemiah was the secular head of Judea in the first place, and worked in the social interests of the nation, he was also deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of his people. We find him abolishing a number of abuses of power and wealth by forcing the usurers to make proper restitution and to promise not to take advantage of their poor fellow citizens, by buying and liberating Jewish slaves, by refusing to accept any payments for himself, and by defraying from his own means his official expenses (Neh. 5:1–19). No governor, Nehemiah tells us, had ever been so unselfish and socially minded as he, and he expected to receive a divine reward for his acts of kindness (Neh. 5:15, 19).

He also took measures to repopulate Jerusalem, when after the completion of the wall he saw that the capital was an almost empty city. A census was taken, and it was decided to bring one out of every ten of the rural population of Judea to Jerusalem. Many others also were encouraged to move to the capital (Neh. 7:4, 5; 11:1, 2).

The religious needs of the people were met by great mass meetings. The first series of these is described in Neh. 8–10. Ezra and other leaders read and explained the law to the people. The result was a real spiritual revival, eventuating in a covenant signed by laity and ministers. All promised to follow the law of Moses, to keep themselves free of mixed marriages with pagans, to keep the Sabbath, to meet the expenses of the Temple upkeep and other religious services, and to care for other necessary matters.

All these events seem to have taken place during the first few months of Nehemiah's governorship. As to the remainder of his 12-year period we are left in the dark, and the only further word, found in Neh. 13, deals with some measures he was forced to take after his return to Jerusalem at the beginning of his second term of office. Unfortunately, we do not know the date of Nehemiah's second arrival, nor the length of his second term as governor of Judea.

Some time must have elapsed after his departure at the expiration of his first term before he came back, since he found certain unfortunate conditions and practices in Judea, which must have taken some time to develop. His arch-enemy, Tobiah, had been given living quarters in one of the buildings of the Temple compound, the Levites were engaged in agricultural pursuits to make a living because no tithe had been paid by the people for some time. Merchandise was being sold in Jerusalem by foreigners on the Sabbath, and pagan wives were once more found in Jewish families.

These conditions are also severely rebuked by the prophet Malachi, whose prophecies must have been delivered about this time. Immediately after his arrival, Nehemiah vigorously went to work to change this situation. He threw Tobiah's furniture out of the

Temple, and gathered the Levites, putting them back to work in the Temple and guaranteeing them their income from the tithe. He induced the people to pay their tithes regularly, took strong measures to prevent any further transgression of the Sabbath commandment, and caused the foreign wives to be expelled (Neh. 13:1–31).

With the description of the measures the historical records of the book of Nehemiah and of the Old Testament come to an end. But before leaving this last period for which an inspired record is available, one further incident should be mentioned, the unfortunate affair involving Johanan, the high priest, who is mentioned in Ezra (ch. 10:6) and Nehemiah (ch. 12:22). Josephus (*Antiquities* xi. 7.1) informs us that Johanan's brother Jesus (Joshua) was a friend of Bagoas (Persian, Bigvai), the commander of Artaxerxes. Because Bagoas promised to make Joshua high priest, Joshua got into a quarrel with his brother Johanan in the Temple and was killed by him. As a result of this heinous crime, Bagoas entered the Temple, declaring, "Am I not purer than he who was slain in the temple?" and punished the Jews by exacting for seven years a tax of 50 drachmas for every lamb in the daily sacrifice.

The story was formerly considered fiction by many historians, because Josephus spoke of Bagoas, the mighty commander of Artaxerxes III, well known from later Persian history, whereas Johanan was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, who lived several generations earlier. The Jewish papyri of Elephantine, however, attest that Johanan was high priest in 410 B.C. and that a governor by the name of Bigvai (Greek, Bagoas) ruled over Judea in 407 B.C. Hence both Bagoas and Johanan were contemporaries of Darius II. They may still have been in office a few years later when Artaxerxes II came to the throne in 405 or 404 B.C., and the crime Josephus relates may have taken place at that time. That one of the Elephantine papyri was jointly sent by Bagoas, the governor of Judea, and Delaiah, the son of Sanballat of Samaria, shows a strange combination of individuals. Bagoas may have been an enemy of Johanan already at that time.

With this high priest the last figure mentioned in the Old Testament leaves our historical horizon, and the Intertestament Period of Jewish history begins, so called because no sacred records are available for this period.

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VII. The Jews in Egypt During the 5th Century B.C.

Besides the meager and incidental notes that we find in the Old Testament concerning the Jews in Egypt, some of a prophetic and others of a historical nature (Isa. 19:18, 19; Jer. 43:7; 44:1, 15–28), rich source material exists concerning one Jewish colony. This material consists of a large number of Aramaic papyri found at Elephantine, a Nile island at the southern border of ancient Egypt, about 600 miles south of Cairo. These Elephantine papyri throw much light on contemporary historical events, particularly on the Jewish history of this period.

The History of the Discovery of the Elephantine Papyri.—The first group of these documents was bought by C. E. Wilbour in 1893, but did not come to the notice of scholars until 1947. Since Mr. Wilbour had died in Paris in 1896, the papyri remained in his trunk in a New York warehouse for years. It finally came into the Brooklyn Museum,

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Ch 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

where the precious documents within it were rediscovered. Hence, the first *known* papyri from Elephantine were those bought from natives in 1904 by Sir Robert Mond and Lady William Cecil, which were published by Sayce and Cowley in 1906. A German excavation on the island of Elephantine in 1906 and 1907 brought to light more such documents. Their publication in 1911 by Eduard Sachau, together with those published by Sayce and Cowley in 1906, gave to the scholarly world a wealth of material in Aramaic from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah that has furthered study of the postexilic period and of Biblical Aramaic.

All this material, with some stray finds made in the meantime, was republished by A. Cowley in 1923 in a handy edition. In 1953 the 17 rediscovered Wilbour papyri, now in the Brooklyn Museum, were published by Emil G. Kraeling. The number of published Aramaic papyri from Elephantine now stands at more than 100. In this connection a related find should be mentioned, although it does not come from Elephantine: 13 official Aramaic letters written on leather, which, like the Elephantine papyri, come from the 5th century B.C. They mention the same Persian governor of Egypt as the Elephantine documents and contain certain material that sheds light on the record in Nehemiah. Bought from an Egyptian dealer by L. Borchardt sometime before 1933, when the find was first announced, these documents were subsequently published by G. R. Driver (1954), and together with the new Brooklyn papyri are now arousing a keen interest among Oriental and Biblical scholars.

The Importance of the Elephantine Papyri for Biblical studies.—In several respects the Elephantine papyri have been of the utmost importance for Biblical studies. They have furnished rich material in Aramaic from the same period in which the Aramaic sections of Ezra were written, and from a slightly later time than the book of Daniel, which also contains six chapters in Aramaic. These texts have clarified the meaning of obscure Biblical words, supported the meaning of others not well known before the discovery of these texts, and enriched our Aramaic vocabulary. They have also provided much comparative material by which the similarity of the Biblical Aramaic with that of the Elephantine documents can be established. This, in turn, proves the great antiquity of the Aramaic parts of the Bible.

The official documents found among the Elephantine papyri corroborate the genuineness of the similar documents of Ezra and prove that skepticism often expressed about their authenticity was, after all, unfounded. They have, furthermore, shown that the Persian kings issued decrees that concerned themselves with details of religious matters. For example, a decree of Darius II, found in Elephantine, directed the Elephantine Jews to celebrate the Passover with a strict observance of the Mosaic regulations.

These papyri have furnished sufficient evidence to settle the old question of whether the Artaxerxes of the book of Nehemiah was the first king by that name or the second. The evidence they provide proves that Nehemiah could have been governor only under Artaxerxes I. These papyri reveal that the Johanan of Neh. 12:22 was high priest in 410 B.C. Since Johanan was the grandson of Eliashib, the high priest of Nehemiah's days, Nehemiah's governorship must have preceded the high priesthood of Johanan. Also the fact that Sanballat was governor of Samaria, as attested in the Elephantine papyri, has clarified a number of historical problems in connection with Nehemiah's story. Although Sanballat was apparently still alive in 407 B.C. when he was mentioned in a letter from Elephantine, he was now an old man whose responsibilities were borne by his sons. This

supports the conclusion that the work of Nehemiah, when Sanballat was his vigorous enemy—probably in the prime of life—was a thing of the past in 407 B.C.

The Elephantine papyri are also very important because of the fact that many of them are dated, and that some bear double dates, the Egyptian legal date and its Jewish equivalent. The double-dated documents have made it possible to reconstruct the Jewish calendar in use by the Elephantine Jews of the 5th century. This proves to have been a lunar calendar, with the New Year beginning in the autumn (see pp. 103–109; also Vol. II, pp. 117–121).

The Jewish Colony at Elephantine During the 5th Century B.C.—The island of Elephantine (Egyptian, Yeb) lies below the first Nile cataract and forms a natural barrier toward the south. It was an important border fortress at different times in Egypt's history and was called "the Gate of the South." Under the reign of Psamtik I (663–610 B.C.) this island housed a strong garrison of mercenary forces, but it is not certain whether Jews were already living there. However, Jews belonged to the forces of Psamtik II (595–589 B.C.), who, as Herodotus states, carried out a campaign against Nubia, in which, according to the Jewish Aristeeas letter, he was accompanied by Jewish mercenary troops.

It is well known that the kings of the Twenty-sixth Egyptian Dynasty leaned heavily on foreign soldiers. Inscriptions testify to the presence of Ionian, Carian, and Phoenician mercenaries in the garrisons of southern Egypt. Although Jews are not mentioned by name, one text speaks of soldiers from Palestine. It is possible that Jews of Elephantine had found their way to Egypt before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah addresses, along with other Jewish residents of Egypt, those of Pathros (Jer. 44:1), an Egyptian geographical name meaning literally "The South Land," in which the area of Elephantine is usually included.

Although the origin of the Jewish colony on Elephantine is not yet definitely known, these people must have lived on the island for some time before 525 B.C., for when Cambyses conquered Egypt, they already formed a well-settled colony in the possession of a temple where they worshiped Yahu (an abbreviated form of the name Yahweh, or Jehovah; see Vol. I, pp. 35, 171–173). They were taken over by the Persian administration into its military system and continued to constitute the garrison of the fortress Elephantine. They called themselves "the Jewish army," which army was divided into standards or companies, under Persian and Babylonian commanders, and centuries, with officers bearing Jewish and Babylonian names. No Egyptian names appear among the army personnel. We therefore conclude that the Egyptians were kept out of the army, since their loyalty to the Persian king could be questioned.

All judicial power was in the hands of the Persian commanding officer of the fortress, but internal affairs of the Jewish colony were controlled by the chief of the "congregation." The Jews were in possession of houses and other hereditary property and some of them seem to have been well-to-do people.

Being Jews they were, in the first place, worshipers of Yahu. To Him they had built a temple with five entrances of stone, and pillars of stone, but the walls were probably of brick. The roof was of cedarwood, and the wooden doors swung on bronze hinges. Gold and silver vessels belonged to the equipment of the temple, and on its altar the Jews offered burnt sacrifices, meal offerings and incense. Every Jew paid 2 shekels for the upkeep of the temple in contrast to 1/3 shekel in Judea (see Neh. 10:32). The Jews who built this temple had not been influenced by the reform of Josiah, who had reorganized

Judea's religious practices according to the laws of Moses that clearly prohibited any separatist sanctuaries (Deut. 12:13, 14; 2 Kings 23:8). Furthermore, they served not only Yahu but also several other deities besides Him, among them Ashim-Bethel and 'Anath-Bethel. While Ashim (for a similar name, see on 2 Kings 17:30) is not well known from other sources, we are well acquainted with the Canaanite goddess Anath, a bloodthirsty, immoral deity. Hence, we find the Jews of Elephantine standing in some respects on the religious level of the time of King Manasseh, with a separatist temple, and serving, besides their national God, certain deities of pagan nations, especially those that promoted fertility. Of the religious reform of Josiah nothing can be traced in Elephantine. And nothing is felt of the work of a Jeremiah, Daniel, or Ezekiel, whose influence is clearly discernible among the returned exiles then settled in Jerusalem and the province of Judea.

One very important document coming from the year 419 B.C., shows that the Persian king (Darius II) issued directives concerning the religious life of the Jews. This particular document is, unfortunately, poorly preserved, but this much is clearly ascertainable, that Darius had given an order that the Feast of Unleavened Bread be kept from Nisan 15 to 21, that the Jews should cleanse themselves for this occasion, and that they should not drink (intoxicating beverages) or eat anything that contained leaven. We do not know the reason for the issuance of the decree. But this much can be concluded with certainty, that the king had counselors versed in Jewish law able to compose such a decree, and who were also interested in having the king sign, such a directive. It is possible that this decree went to all Jews in the empire, although the only proof of its existence comes from Elephantine. The decree shows that the Persian kings supported the religious life of the Jews and the laws of Moses. This fact provides corroboration of the genuineness of the record of similar decrees found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Because of the extreme importance of the decree a translation of the poorly preserved letter containing it is offered herewith. The sections enclosed in brackets [] are reconstructed. The translation follows principally that of A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923), pp. 62, 63, but has also profited by the suggestions of Emil G. Kraeling, made in *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (1953), pp. 92–95. It varies, however, in some details in which the present translator disagrees with the previous translations.

1. [To my brethr]en
2. [Yedo]niah and his colleagues (and) the Jewish ga[rri]son], your brother Hanan[iah].
The peace of my brethren may God desire.
3. And now this year, the year 5 of Darius the king, from the king there was sent to Arsh[am saying],
4. [In the month of Nisan let there be a Passover for the Jewish garrison]. Now thus ye shall count: four[teen days]
5. [of the month Nisan and ke]ep [the Passover], and from the 15th day to the 21st day of Ni[san]
6. [are seven days of Unleavened Bread]. Be ye clean and take heed. Work no[t]
7. [on the 15th day and on the 21st day. Beer no]t shall ye drink and anything [in] which [there is] leaven
8. [do not eat, from the 15th day from] sunset till the 21st day of Nis[an, seven]

9. [days, let it not be seen among you; do not bring it into your chambers, but seal it up during [those] day[s].

10. [Let this be done as Darius] the king commanded].Address: To my brethren Yedoniah and his colleagues the Jewish garrison, your brother Hanani[ah] ...

These foreign Jews serving the Persian ruler as soldiers were disliked by the native Egyptians. This hatred was certainly increased when Cambyses, at the time of his conquest of Egypt, destroyed the Egyptian temple on Elephantine dedicated to the ram-headed god Khnum, but left the Jews and their temple unmolested. Because the Jews made proselytes among the Egyptians as the documents attest, and because they fared well financially, and treated the native Egyptians with contempt, calling their priests by a contemptuous name, and the mutual aversion increased until it produced an eruption.

When Arsham, or Arsames, the Persian satrap of Egypt, was absent from Egypt in 410 B.C. the priests of Khnum bribed the Persian commander Widrang, or Hydarnes, of Elephantine to let his son Nephayan, the commander of Syene (Aswân), come over with his non-Jewish troops to Elephantine and spoil the Jewish temple and destroy it thoroughly. When Arsames returned to Egypt the Jews had the satisfaction of seeing Hydarnes and Nephayan punished—possibly executed—for their crime. However, they did not succeed in obtaining from him a permit to rebuild their temple, since the satrap seems to have been fearful of a new outbreak. By making his permit dependent on one to be obtained from the authorities at Jerusalem, Arsames thought to shift to other shoulders the responsibility for rejecting the request. He may previously have known Nehemiah or other leaders of Judea, and probably expected that they would not give a permit for the rebuilding of a separatist temple.

The Jews of Elephantine wrote a letter to the high priest Johanan of Jerusalem placing their request before him. The Jerusalem authorities ignored this request completely and failed to send any reply. Hence, the Elephantine Jews, after having waited in vain for more than two years, wrote again in 407 B.C., this time placing their request before Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judea, and at the same time before the two sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, who apparently carried on the administration for their old father, Bagoas, who did not live on good terms with Johanan, conferred with Delaiah of Samaria and decided to allow the Jews of Elephantine to rebuild their temple. However, bloody sacrifices were not to be offered in the new temple. Receiving this permit, Arsames seems to have endorsed the grant, and the temple was rebuilt, as can be seen from the fact that in 402 B.C. the temple is again referred to, in an Aramaic document, as existing on the island.

Very soon after this time a successful rebellion of the Egyptians against the Persian rule once more brought independence to Egypt, and probably marked the end of the Jewish colony on Elephantine. The last known dated Jewish document from that island was written on June 19, 400 B.C. Then a curtain of silence fell over this interesting community. The temple was probably again destroyed, and the Jews either killed or driven out. Nothing further is known of their fate.

Bibliography

For brief suggestive bibliographies on works dealing with ancient history and archeology see Vol. I, pp. 131, 132, 148, and Vol. II, pp. 98, 99. The following additional books deal with certain phases of the period discussed in this article. As already stated in Vol. II, p. 98, the appearance of certain works in this Bibliography does not necessarily mean that the views of the authors are endorsed in this commentary.

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- WISEMAN, D. J. *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1961. 99 pp., plates. A series of tablets long owned by the museum but not published (except one, in 1923) until 1956, with text, translation, and historical introduction. In recounting the annual military campaigns these chronicles give exact dates for the accession of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, and for the capture of Jerusalem and its king (Jehoiachin) in 597; they also settle the question of the year of Josiah’s death. For further notes on this subject see Vol. II, p. 99.

Chronology of Exile and Restoration

I. Introduction

THE chronology of the historical books included in this volume (aside from that of Chronicles, which is covered in the treatment of Kings in Volume II) embraces the Babylonian exile and the restoration—that is, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the Neo-Babylonian Empire to that of Darius II in the Persian Empire that followed it. In this period, more than in any other, the Bible narrative can be aligned with the sequence of historical events and with the ebb and flow of political, religious, and social forces in the Near East. This is possible because modern archaeologists have unearthed many monumental inscriptions and thousands of public and private documents. The latter were written mostly on clay tablets in Mesopotamia, with a smaller number on papyri in Egypt, some of which were found still rolled up and sealed.

These ancient original documents include contracts, deeds, other legal papers, letters, receipts, literary, historical, or religious texts, decrees, and diplomatic correspondence, written by professional scribes, but mostly relating to individuals. They furnish significant details about property, debts, wages, taxes, and the cost of living. They throw light on social customs—slavery, marriage, divorce—and occasionally reveal unexpected items of human interest. A mere inventory of personal property draws a vivid picture of a bride's trousseau—her new dresses, one flounced, another striped, and so on—complete with her wicker clothes chest, her bronze mirror and bowls, and her little pots of cosmetics. A series of dated receipts tells a story of graft at the capital. And the date lines, in terms of the numbered years of many successive kings, are of prime importance in dating the reigns.

These ancient documents have piled up in museum storerooms faster than they can be translated and published. For example, the Brooklyn Museum Papyri, acquired more than 50 years before they were published in 1953, furnish a link in the chain of evidence for the Jewish calendar after the Exile, hence for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, and thus of the decree of Artaxerxes "to restore and to build Jerusalem," on which two important time prophecies hinge.

In Ezra and Nehemiah, in Jeremiah and Daniel, in Haggai and Zechariah, are numerous dates in terms of the years of certain kings in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. These dates can be located with a greater degree of certainty than those of any preceding or subsequent period of Bible history, and some of them are connected with important events such as the fall of Jerusalem, or prophecies such as the 70-year captivity or the 70 weeks.

Many events of the captivity and restoration of the Jews can be dated with certainty to the year, and often to the day—allowing always for the possibility of a day's variation in the calculation of a lunar-calendar date, and sometimes of a month in case of uncertainty as to which year had the 13th month (see Vol. II, pp. 119, 120). Therefore in Volume III exact B.C. dates are sometimes given, with the high probability that they are correct to the day. The Babylonian month dates are derived from Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, and the 5th century Jewish dates from the tabulation by Horn and Wood reproduced on pp. 108, 109. In some cases there is room for difference of opinion. For this reason a discussion of the means of arriving at these dates, and of the probable degree of certainty, is desirable. It is the purpose of this article to explain the dating employed in Volume III. Section II of this article will show how the archeological source documents provide the basis for a relatively complete B.C. dating of these reigns. Then Section II will take up the specific problems of Biblical chronology for this period.

II. Chronological Background of the Period Established

Ptolemy's Canon.—The reigns of Babylonian and Persian kings during the captivity-restoration period are well established by numerous source documents. Most of these have come to light in recent decades. But formerly scholars depended on the canon, or list, of kings compiled by the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy in the 2d century A.D. (see Vol. II, pp. 152–155 for a discussion, including a tabulation of the complete canon on p. 154). Ptolemy's Canon gives the lengths of the successive reigns of Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian-Egyptian, and Roman rulers from February 26, 747 B.C., to Ptolemy's day, reckoned in Egyptian years. This scale of Egyptian calendar years has been definitely fixed by a series of eclipses mentioned by Ptolemy in his astronomical work known as

The Almagest—eclipses dated to the day and hour in the Egyptian-calendar reckoning and identified with specific B.C. dates by modern astronomers.

Ptolemy's Canon was derived from ancient records, and was subsequently recopied many times before it became available to modern scholars. Therefore some chronologists of a century or two ago felt free to revise the canon dating according to their theories. But in recent times Ptolemy's accuracy has been increasingly confirmed by documents much more ancient than the canon, and free from the accumulated small errors so often found in recopied manuscripts.

Babylonian Tablets Outline the Reigns.—Since the birth of modern archeology, the gradually accumulating information derived from the Babylonian clay tablets has pieced together a pattern not only of the historical background but also of the chronology of the period. However trivial the contents of these documents, the date lines of a series of them, when arranged in time order, show approximately the time of the year at which each king came to the throne.

For example, if all the known tablets written during a series of reigns are arranged in time order, it will be noticed that the latest dated in one reign and the earliest in the succeeding reign are very close together, sometimes on the same day. A series of tablets might be compiled thus:

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Day</i>
Nebuchadnezzar (43 yrs.)	43	6	14
"	43	6	26
Amel-Marduk (2 yrs.)	"beginning of reign"	6	26
"	" " "	7	19
"	1	2	1
"	1	11	18
"	2	3	15
"	2	5	17
Nergal-shar- usur	"beginning of reign"	5	23
"	" " "	6	12 etc.

The italicized dates show that the first tablet in the reign of Amel-Marduk (Biblical Evil-merodach) is dated the 26th of the 6th month, the same day as the last dated in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and that the last dated to Amel-Marduk, on the 17th of the 5th month of his 2d year, is followed in less than a week, on the 23d of the 5th month, by a tablet dated in the reign of his successor. Thus the length of his rule is known almost exactly. The series is similar for other reigns, with the earliest tablets in the "beginning of the reign" coming in the last part of the year that had begun as the last numbered year of the preceding king. Occasionally the tablet dates overlap, because documents written in distant villages were still dated in the old reign until news of the king's death arrived, while scribes in the capital were using the new king's name.

The series of earliest and latest tablets, whenever available, corroborates the lengths of the Babylonian and Persian reigns as given in Ptolemy's Canon, and points out approximately the month and day of the new king's accession. (Two Babylonian

chronicle tablets give exact accession dates for Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar; see the entry under “Wiseman” on page 84). Dated tablets also show that the remaining portion of the last calendar year of the old king, between the change of reign and the next New Year’s Day (Nisan 1, in the spring) was called the “beginning of the reign,” or, as modern translators put it, “accession year,” while “year 1” was the first full calendar year.

Series of Tablets Give Relative Chronology.—The tablets of this type (or the similar papyri from Egypt) supply only *relative* chronology. The whole series of Babylonian regnal years remains on a sliding scale in relation to the B.C. scale until we have some established B.C. dating on which to anchor the series. Ptolemy’s Canon and his eclipse records fix the B.C. dating of the years of the *Egyptian* calendar, not that of Babylonian. Although the incomplete series of relatively dated Babylonian tablets seems to agree with Ptolemy, they are not conclusive, because they are dated in a different calendar, and are sometimes subject to varying interpretations. The Saros Tablets (from the Seleucid period) contain a list of regnal years, 18 years apart in the saros cycle. These regnal years harmonize with Ptolemy and with the dated tablets as to the lengths of the reigns, but do not independently fix any B.C. date. But two tablets have furnished a check on Ptolemy’s Canon and offer definite, contemporary evidence for the B.C. equivalents of the Babylonian years. These will be discussed next.

Two Astronomical Tablets Fix Babylonian Dating.—Of unique value are two independent tablets—contemporary texts, each giving astronomical data covering a whole year. The first of these, from the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, contains a series of observations from Nisan 1 (Babylonian New Year’s Day), year 37, through Nisan 1, year 38 (see Vol. II, p. 152). The date for a single observation might be suspected of error, but modern astronomers tell us that a combination of records such as that appearing on this tablet, relating to the positions, of sun, moon, and planets, all of which move in differing cycles, can be located exactly in *only one year*. Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th year was beyond doubt the Babylonian lunar-calendar year extending from April 23, 568 B.C. (to be exact, April 22/23, sundown to sundown) through April 12, 567 B.C. This of course places the 1st official year (that is, the first full year) of Nebuchadnezzar at 604/03 B.C., spring to spring, and similarly fixes all the years of his reign.

The second text of this kind contains a similar series of calculated astronomical data (proved correct by modern computation) fixing the 7th year of Cambyses as the Babylonian calendar year April 7, 523, to March 26, 522 B.C. (The Persian rulers, as kings of Babylon also, adopted the Babylonian calendar.) This tablet of Cambyses’ reign is particularly interesting because among other data it records an eclipse (calculated to have occurred on July 16, 523 B.C.) that is identical with one dated by Ptolemy in the same 7th year. Thus both ancient dating scales—the Egyptian solar years of Ptolemy and the Babylonian-Persian lunar years—are aligned with a fixed point in the B.C. scale and with each other.

Alignment of Egyptian and Babylonian Years.—This eclipse establishes the alignment of Ptolemy’s Egyptian years with the corresponding Babylonian years. Ptolemy began the 1st year of Cambyses by the Egyptian calendar on Thoth 1, January 3, 529 B.C., approximately three months before Cambyses’ 1st year began in the Babylonian calendar. Other source evidence shows that throughout this period any given year of any reign began, similarly, three to four months earlier in the Egyptian calendar than the same year in the Babylonian-Persian reckoning. The interval became progressively longer,

because the Babylonian year always began following a new moon of March or April (see Vol. II, pp. 116, 117), while the Egyptian year had a gradual backward shift, as can be seen by referring to Vol. II, p. 154, last column (for the reason for this shift, see note 3 below; also Vol. I, p. 176; Vol. II, p. 104).

Double-dated Papyri From Egypt Yield Exact Dates.—A contemporary check on the B.C. dating of the Persian reigns during the greater part of the 5th century B.C. is furnished by numerous documents written on papyrus in the Aramaic language and found at the Jewish settlement on the island of Elephantine, in southern Egypt (see pp. 79–81, 103–107; Vol. II, pp. 118, 119). Fourteen out of approximately one hundred of these are double-dated, carrying an Egyptian (solar) month date and a Jewish (lunar) month date, and in some cases two regnal year numbers differing in the two calendars. These double dates can be located in the B.C. scale within range of a single day.

These papyri are in complete harmony with the pattern indicated by the other chronological information on these reigns. Their Egyptian dating, agreeing with Ptolemy's regnal years, shows that Ptolemy's Canon was based on contemporary Egyptian reckoning. Their Jewish dates, reckoned by the accession-year system, harmonize with the Babylonian-Persian *numbering*, but not the *beginning*, of the years, for one of the papyri shows clearly that these Jews were using their own fall-to-fall civil year, not the spring-to-spring Babylonian year (see p. 105).

Thus by the two astronomically fixed years (the 37th of Nebuchadnezzar and the 7th of Cambyses), and by the double-dated papyri from Egypt, the regnal years of six of the Babylonian and Persian kings are positively known on contemporary evidence. Ptolemy's eclipses add two more reigns that are apparently in harmony with these six. If the lengths of the other reigns as we have them are correct (and the evidence on these—from Ptolemy's Canon, the Saros Tablets, and the series of dated tablets from Babylonia—seems to harmonize), then we can be certain of the B.C. equivalent of every regnal year of every Babylonian and Persian king throughout the period covered in this volume, as reckoned in both the Egyptian solar and the Babylonian lunar calendars.

How to Locate B.C. Dating of a Regnal Year.—The reader who desires to locate any given Babylonian or Persian regnal year may refer to the table of Ptolemy's Canon (Vol. II, p. 154). The B.C. dates given in the two supplementary columns at the right indicate the beginning of the official 1st year of each reign according to the Egyptian calendar (except that Ptolemy leaves out those kings who ruled less than a year, such as Labashi-Marduk, who followed Nergal-sharusur). From the year 1, any other year in the reign can be calculated to the day by computing years of exactly 365 days each, with no leap year. Throughout this period each Babylonian-Persian regnal year (in the Babylonian calendar) began on the next Nisan 1 after the corresponding Egyptian New Year; it always began after a new moon of late March or April. Thus the 1st year of Xerxes in the Egyptian calendar was 486/85 B.C. (beginning in December), but his year 1 in Babylonia was 485/84 B.C., spring to spring, while the corresponding Jewish year for Xerxes would presumably begin last of all, in the autumn of 485 (Tishri 1, following a new moon of late September to late October). But this Jewish sequence is not consistent. In some reigns the Jewish year would precede the corresponding Babylonian year by six months, while in others it would follow, depending on which New Year's Day—Babylonian or Jewish—arrived first after the date of accession to usher in the 1st year of the reign.

Section II has summarized the established basis on which any date in this period that is expressed in terms of regnal years can be computed. On the Egyptian and Babylonian-Persian dating scholars in general are agreed; the only room for variance of opinion is a difference in certain dates as calculated in the Babylonian spring-to-spring year and the Jewish fall-to-fall civil year. This difference will be discussed in the following sections of this article in connection with specific Biblical dates relating to the captivity and restoration of the Jews.

III. Beginning of the Captivity Under Nebuchadnezzar

The book of 2 Chronicles ends, and Ezra begins, with the narrative of the return of the Jews to Palestine from 70 years' captivity in Babylonia. The first chronological problem of this article, therefore, is the dating of the Exile.

The 70 Years Predicted by Jeremiah.—The 70 years' captivity has generally been accepted as beginning with the first deportation of Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and as ending with the return of a large group of the exiles under Zerubbabel, authorized by a decree of Cyrus in his 1st regnal year. The period has often been dated 606–536 B.C. Since an ancient lunar year cannot coincide with a Julian-calendar B.C. year beginning with January, ancient years are more accurately expressed in double form, thus: 606/05 B.C., etc. Therefore, to express it more exactly, this 70-year period would be, in the Jewish civil calendar, 606/05–537/36 B.C.

Jeremiah first predicted the 70-year captivity in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, or the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:1–11), which was, according to the Jewish civil calendar, 605/04 B.C., from autumn to autumn. However, he still spoke of a 70-year captivity in a letter to the leaders who had been exiled to Babylon along with Jehoiachin seven years after his earlier prophecy (Jer. 29:1, 10). It would seem logical, then, to suppose that the prophetic period was reckoned, not from either prediction, but from a specific event, one that most reasonably fulfilled the requirements of the prophecy, namely, the beginning of the captivity. Both of the prophet's predictions evidently referred to the captivity already begun (as will be seen) in the 3d year of Jehoiakim (Dan. 1:1–6).

The Captivity in Three Stages.—The deportation to Babylonia took place in three principal stages, in the reigns of the last three kings of Judah:

- (1) in the 3d year of Jehoiakim, when some of the Temple treasures and a number of captives, including Daniel, were taken to Babylon (Dan. 1:1–3);
- (2) at the end of the three-month reign of Jehoiachin, in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:8–16), when Jehoiachin, with others including Ezekiel, was taken captive (Eze. 1:1–3; 33:21; 40:1; see p. 92); and
- (3) in the 11th year of Zedekiah, the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the larger portion of the remaining inhabitants were deported to Babylonia (2 Kings 25:8–21; see p. 93).

Since Nebuchadnezzar's reign is fixed astronomically (see p. 88), these three stages can be dated at 605, 597, and 586 respectively (see Vol. II, pp. 160, 161).

First Stage at Nebuchadnezzar's Accession.—The beginning of the captivity came in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, before his year 1, for

- (1) the 3d year of Jehoiakim was the year in which Nebuchadnezzar came against Judah and took Daniel captive (Dan. 1:1–3, 6); and
- (2) the 4th year of Jehoiakim was the 1st of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:1).

Corroborating this are (a) the record of Josephus (*Against Apion* i. 19), derived from that of the Babylonian historian Berosus, that Nebuchadnezzar was on a military campaign to Palestine and Egypt when suddenly called home to take the throne at the death of his father, Nabopolassar, and that he left captives, including Jews, to be brought home by the army; and (b) the Babylonian Chronicle tablet (see pp. 46, 84) that dates his father's death on Ab 8 (approximately August 15 in 605) and Nebuchadnezzar's accession in Babylon on Elul 1 (approximately September 7).

Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar's official 1st year would begin in Babylonia at the next New Year's Day, in the spring of 604 B.C. (see p. 88). According to the Jewish reckoning, however, by the fall-to-fall civil year, it would be counted as beginning at the next *Jewish* New Year after the accession, about October, 605, not long after the first deportation. The prophecy of Jeremiah could have come very soon after, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. Everyone would naturally have understood his 70-year prediction as referring to the captivity that had just begun. This date for the captivity, the 3d year of Jehoiakim, 605 B.C., is in complete harmony with the dating of Nebuchadnezzar's accession, and with the return of the exiles at the end of 70 years, inclusive (see p. 97).

The Older Theory of Nebuchadnezzar's Supposed Coregency.—Earlier commentators reached a different date in their attempt to account for (1) "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" taking Daniel captive in the 3d year of Jehoiakim *before* the 1st year of his reign (the 4th year of Jehoiakim); (2) Daniel's three years of training (Dan. 1:5) before the 2d year of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1, 13); and (3) 70 years between the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar and the 1st year of Cyrus (which Ptolemy placed in 604 and 538 B.C. respectively).

In seeking to solve these apparent discrepancies, Bible scholars equated Jehoiakim's 4th year with 606 as the 1st year of a conjectured 2-year coregency of Nebuchadnezzar with his father; they assigned Nebuchadnezzar's dream to the 2d year of his sole reign, with three years in between for Daniel's schooling; and they reckoned the 70 years from 606 to 536, to which they adjusted the 1st year of Cyrus (see note 10). Eventually this explanation came to be taken for granted, and to be regarded as established history instead of a learned conjecture.

Now, however, the supposed discrepancies in the Bible have vanished completely in the light of the documents unearthed by modern archeology. The account is confirmed as it stands, for it is now known that: (1) Nebuchadnezzar was king for some months before his "first year" began; (2) Daniel's training—if it began in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, extended through the 1st year, and ended in the 2d year—would have been counted as lasting three years by the inclusive reckoning commonly used at that time (see Vol. II, pp. 136, 137); and (3) the use of the Jewish fall-to-fall civil year makes it possible to reckon the 70 years inclusively from 606/05 to 537/36 B.C. without juggling the reigns.

The Dating of the 70 Years' Captivity.—If the first year of the 70-year captivity foretold by Jeremiah was 606/05 B.C., autumn to autumn—the 3d year of Jehoiakim, in which Daniel and others were taken to Babylon—then the 70th year of that period was 537/36 B.C. It will be seen, furthermore, in Section V (pp. 96, 97) that the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel, following the decree of the 1st year of Cyrus, can be assigned reasonably to this year.

Before leaving the period of the beginning of the captivity, however, it is necessary to note the basis for the dating of the second and third steps in the process. This is found in

the chronology of Jeremiah, who predicted the 70 years' captivity, and of Ezekiel, who was exiled to Babylonia with Jehoiachin.

IV. The Chronology of Jeremiah and Ezekiel

Dates in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—The prophet Jeremiah began his work in the 13th year of Josiah, approximately 627 B.C. (Jer. 25:3), not long before the accession of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, who was soon to win Babylon's independence from Assyria, to join with the Medes and Scythians to overthrow Assyria, and then to build an empire of his own (known as the Neo-Babylonian Empire). During these international upheavals Jeremiah warned that Judah must repent or fall a prey to foreign powers. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, "the first year of Nebuchadnezzar," he foretold the 70-year captivity, and many of his messages are dated to the month, day, and regnal year of Jehoiakim or Zedekiah (see Jer. 25:1; 26:1; 45:1; 36:9, 10; 28:1; 51:59; 39:1; 32:1). His ministry to Judah ended with the third principal stage of the captivity, at the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with his king, Jehoiachin, in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (see on 2 Kings 24:12; also on 2 Chron. 36:9, 10), in the second principal stage of the captivity, in the spring of 597 B.C. Then he received his prophetic call in the 5th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Eze. 1:2), and dated his prophetic messages in years reckoned in era fashion from this captivity (see Eze. 1:1, 2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 29:1; 26:1; 30:20; 31:1; 33:21; 32:1; 40:1; 29:17). His chronological reckoning must be considered in connection with that of Jeremiah, who dealt with some of the same events. Seven principal events are tabulated here, dated in years of Jehoiachin's captivity and regnal years of Zedekiah (with B.C. dates as arrived at in the succeeding paragraphs).

Day	Month	Yr. of J's Capt.	Yr. of Zedek.	Event	Text	B.C. Date
1. 10	10	9		Beginning of siege (Eze.)	Eze. 24:1, 2	Jan. 588
2. 10	10		9	Beginning of siege (Jer.)	Jer. 39:1; 52:4	Jan. 588
3. 9	4		11	End of siege; city falls	Jer. 39:2	July 586
4. 10	5		11	City and Temple destroyed	Jer. 1:3; 52:12	Aug. 586
5. 5	10	12		Message reaches Ezekiel	Eze. 33:21	Jan. 585
6. 10	1? 7?	25		14th yr. from city's fall	Eze. 40:1	573/72
7. 25	12	37		Jehoiachin released in "the year" of Evil—	Jer. 52:31; cf. 2 Kings 25:27	March 561

merodach

The foregoing events from the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be dated consistently with one another; also with Jeremiah's statement (ch. 32:1) synchronizing Zedekiah's 10th year and Nebuchadnezzar's 18th, and with those (Jer. 52:5, 12; 2 Kings 25:2, 8) placing the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in the summer of Zedekiah's 11th year and Nebuchadnezzar's 19th. The latter's regnal years, astronomically fixed in the Babylonian spring-to-spring calendar, would begin half a year earlier in the Jewish civil (fall-to-fall) calendar (see p. 91); hence this summer date, in the half year during which the spring and fall years overlapped, would be in year 19 in either calendar, that is, in 586 B.C. But Jehoiachin's capture, which a Babylonian chronicle (see p. 46) dates on Adar 2 in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year (approximately March 16, 597 B.C.), falls in his year 8 by Jewish count (being in the nonoverlapping part of the year).

The Various Possibilities Tested.—Opinions differ as to (a) whether Jeremiah and Ezekiel counted the years from spring or fall, and (b) whether the "1st year" of Jehoiachin's captivity meant the year in which he was captured or the one beginning next thereafter, but it may be assumed (1) that both writers agree in dating the beginning of the siege, (2) that the news of the city's fall must reach Ezekiel in a reasonable time (in 6 rather than 18 months), and (3) that Jehoiachin's release must fall in either the accession year or the year 1 of Amel-Marduk (see Vol. II, p. 161). A consideration of all possible combinations of the variables (a) and (b), along with the above-mentioned specifications, seems to yield two most probable alternatives.

The B.C. Datings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—The precise methods of reckoning used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel cannot be absolutely proved on the basis of probability, since what is most probable is not always what actually happened. But the best of the various possible combinations make it most likely that Jeremiah used the fall year and Ezekiel the spring year, although it is almost equally likely that Ezekiel reckoned from the fall as well as Jeremiah. In either case Ezekiel's "1st year of the captivity" would begin in the spring or fall of 597, and Jeremiah's 1st year of Zedekiah in the fall of that year. On this basis the tabulated dates of the events (p. 92) agree remarkably.

If Ezekiel, writing in Babylonia, employed the Babylonian calendar year, his use of the spring year would have no bearing on the question of the Jewish calendar year. But it seems extremely unlikely that Jeremiah, living and writing in the capital of Judah, should have used anything but the old Jewish civil fall-to-fall year, especially since it seems to be attested in the case of Josiah, under whom Jeremiah began his ministry. Some have pointed also to Jeremiah's writing his messages in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and having the scroll read to the people in the 9th month of the 5th year (Jer. 36:1–9), as more likely indicating an interval of two months plus (in the case of the fall year beginning in the 7th month) rather than nine months plus (as in the case of a spring year beginning with the 1st month). Further, the fall-to-fall year and the inclusive reckoning not only agree with the synchronisms in Kings, but also best harmonize Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70-year captivity with the historical facts for the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, at the beginning and end of that period.

V. Captivity Ends in Reign of Cyrus

Mention of the Babylonian captivity as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy is followed immediately by that of Cyrus' decree of his 1st year in which he encouraged the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland (see 2 Chron. 36:21–23). Even

before this decree Daniel had been anticipating the end of the 70 years. When Cyrus, already named in prophecy (Isa. 44:28; Isa. 45:1), conquered the empire that had taken the Jews captive, Daniel knew that the time was near (Dan. 9:1, 2). Before proceeding to a discussion of the end of the 70-year period, it will be necessary to examine the chronology of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus and the dating of his reign.

The Conquest of Babylon by Cyrus.—Nabonidus, long known from Ptolemy's Canon (see Vol. II, p. 154) as the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, was conquered by the forces of Cyrus according to several contemporary accounts. The Cyrus Cylinder tells of the taking of Babylon without a pitched battle and of the immediate acceptance of his kingship (see p. 55). The Nabonidus Chronicle places the fall of Babylon in the 7th month of Nabonidus' 17th year. This date, as reckoned from Nebuchadnezzar's astronomically fixed 37th year onward, through the intervening reigns according to Ptolemy's Canon and the tablets, would be in October, 539 B.C. Likewise, reckoning back from Cambyses' 7th year, which is also astronomically fixed, we find that the 1st year of Cyrus as king of Babylon began in the spring of 538, the next Babylonian New Year's Day after the fall of Babylon. This date, according to both the Canon of Ptolemy and the contemporary tablets, is accepted today without scholarly dispute as the official Babylonian reckoning (for Jewish reckoning see pp. 96, 97).

Belshazzar and Darius the Mede.—But where do Belshazzar, the last "king of the Chaldeans," and Darius the Mede, who took over his kingdom, enter the picture if the reign of Cyrus followed immediately after that of Nabonidus?

It is now known that Belshazzar's kingship was not a separate chronological period following that of his father Nabonidus, but a joint rule in his father's name. Tablets have been found identifying Belshazzar as the king's eldest son, and as his representative during the father's absence at Tema, in northwestern Arabia (from probably the 3d to at least the 11th year of Nabonidus). The "Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus" says that Nabonidus "entrusted the kingship" to his eldest son "in the third year." This is generally understood to mean in the 3d regnal year (553/52, spring to spring). However, it has been suggested that "the third year" refers to the 3d after the completion of a temple at Haran. Since the text says that this entrusting of the kingship to the son took place when Nabonidus was about to begin his conquest of Tema, and since he was in Tema before the 7th regnal year, this could not have been later than the 6th year (550/49). Thus for some years Belshazzar was an actual king, subordinate in rank but not in power in the government of Babylonia. Tablets written during his administration are dated in the years of his father, Nabonidus, the titular ruler of the land. Thus Belshazzar, the son and coregent, as the *second* ruler, could appropriately offer to make Daniel "third ruler in the kingdom" (Dan. 5:16, 29). On Belshazzar see Additional Note on Daniel 5.

The chronological scheme allows just as much room for "Darius the Mede"—a name yet unknown in extra-Biblical contemporary records—as a ruler as it does for Belshazzar as a ruler, though there was a day when the latter was unknown, except in the Bible record.

That a "king" called Darius lived and reigned is not in question. The Bible record is clear. The only point in question is the relationship of his reign to that of Cyrus. It is evident that he reigned either before Cyrus or contemporaneously with him. Now the Babylonian records of that time and the Canon of Ptolemy count Cyrus' reign as

beginning immediately after the last year of Nabonidus. Therefore a reign of Darius the Mede contemporary with Cyrus would be in harmony with Scripture and secular records.

A further reason for viewing Cyrus as holding supreme power from the time of Babylon's fall may reasonably be drawn from the fact that the Bible forecast that he was to be the conqueror of that great city, and thus of the great empire it represented (see Isa. 45:1).

When Babylon fell, Darius, "of the seed of the Medes ... was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans" (Dan. 9:1). Even though Cyrus, the invincible conqueror of Babylon (Isa. 45:1), was at the same time listed in the contemporary records as ruler, and had control of the new Persian Empire, it is not unreasonable to assume that he allowed Darius the Mede certain royal prerogatives for political reasons. On this assumption we may speak of Cyrus as taking over at the death of Darius the Mede.

This commentary, which seeks always to find a harmony between the inspired record and contemporary historical documents, sets forth the view that no necessary conflict exists between belief in Darius the Mede as a "king," and also in Cyrus as a conqueror ruling immediately upon the collapse of Babylon.

The Bible does not say how long Darius the Mede reigned after he "was made king"; it merely mentions his 1st year (Dan. 9:1; cf. ch. 11:1). By the Babylonian reckoning, the fact that he had a 1st year would indicate that he ruled at least parts of two years—his accession year and his year 1 (see Vol. II, pp. 137, 138). The absence of any further mention of him may mean that he never had a year 2, and that about that time Cyrus himself took over those royal honors or functions he had formerly allowed to Darius (see note 10).

Cyrus' First Year Begins New Empire.—It has been explained that the Babylonian sources place the fall of Babylon late in 539 and year 1 of Cyrus as beginning in the spring of 538. That accounts for the importance of 538 as marking the 1st year of the new empire, under Persian leadership, that succeeded the Babylonian. Cyrus had ruled as king for a number of years before he conquered Babylon, first of Anshan, then of Persia, afterward adding Media (including much of the territory of the former Assyrian Empire), and Lydia in Asia Minor (see the Nabonidus Chronicle; the Cyrus Cylinder; Herodotus i.46, 73, 75, 87, 88, 127–130; Strabo xv.3.8; Ctesias, cited in Diodorus Siculus ii.34.6, 7; Xenophon tells a different story in his *Cyropaedia* i.1.4; i.5. 2–5; vii.5.37, 58, 70; viii.1.5–11; viii.5.17–19). But when Cyrus captured Babylon, he immeasurably increased his prestige in becoming master of the mother-city of ancient Semitic civilization, and thus the 1st year of his control of Babylon was called the 1st year of his reign. In his proclamation to his Babylonian subjects he proudly styled himself "Cyrus, king of the universe, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the world quarters." Thus Cyrus conquered the Semitic world, and he lacked only Egypt (later to be added by his son) to round out the great Persian Empire, one that embraced the eastern Mediterranean world and stretched to the borders of India.

The short-lived Neo-Babylonian Empire, flowering briefly in the glories of Nebuchadnezzar's golden city, was the first of Daniel's series of four world powers, but also the last phase of ancient Semitic domination. Now the second of Daniel's series, Cyrus' new Persian Empire, marked the passing of leadership to the Indo-European peoples, who later, through the Greeks and Romans, were to develop the civilization that gave Europe its long dominant position.

Cyrus' First Year in Relation to the Jews.—According to Scripture statements Cyrus' decree permitting the Jewish exiles to return to Judea was issued in his first year (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Ezra 5:13). Since the fall of Babylon took place in Tishri (the 7th month) of 539 (see p. 94), the year 1 of Cyrus began, by the reckoning of the Babylonian tablets, in the spring of 538. But the Jews reckoned differently; their civil years began in the autumn (see Vol. II, pp. 108–110, 116). The city fell after the Jewish New Year's Day had passed. Hence the first Jewish year of the new regime could not have begun before the next Jewish New Year, Tishri 1, in the autumn of 538. By Jewish reckoning the decree might have been promulgated late in 537. It was necessarily issued some considerable time before the actual migration. If the decree was given in 537, and the journey of the exiles followed in the spring of 536, this would fulfill the 70 years of Jeremiah. A repatriation in the Jewish fall-to-fall year 537/36 would still be 70 years, inclusive, from the beginning of the Exile in the late summer of 605 (in the Jewish year 606/05).

The available information enables us to establish the 70 years as extending from about the time of the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign to somewhere near the beginning of Cyrus' reign, but the exact B.C. dates are difficult to fix. More than one explanation has been offered in regard to the end of the period, the difference in method depending on the interpretation of the data concerning Cyrus and Darius the Mede. The dates for the captivity are not pivotal points as are the dates involved in the time prophecies of Daniel; hence are not matters of doctrine. A detailed, long-term prophecy like the 70 weeks, on the other hand, is on an entirely different basis (on its starting point see Section VIII).

It is to be hoped that just as archeology has cleared up the once-puzzling problem of Belshazzar, for instance, it will someday throw more light on Darius the Mede, the reign of Cyrus, and the end of the 70 years of Jeremiah.

Two other 70-year periods will be explained in section VI.

VI. The Period of the Rebuilding of the Temple

Building Program Begun.—Under Cyrus' decree Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, led 42,360 exiles to their homeland (see Ezra 1, 2). Then Zerubbabel's pioneers gathered at Jerusalem, and on the 1st of the 7th month reinstituted the sacrificial services on the rebuilt altar in the court of the ruined Temple (Ezra 3:1–6). Not until the following spring, in the 2d month of the 2d year of their return (v. 8), did they begin to lay the foundation of their new sanctuary, and the painful contrast between the present small beginning and the past glory made the old men weep while the multitude shouted for joy.

Hindrances Until the Reign of Darius I.—Then, says Ezra, the adversaries of the Jews in the half-pagan province of Samaria (see on 2 Kings 17:23, 34; Ezra 4:2; 9:1) offered first help and then hindrance. They "hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4:5). The sequence of Ezra 4 is debated, but the order of these kings has no bearing on any definite dates or on the fact that the reconstruction of the Temple "ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius" (Ezra 4:24). This 2d year of Darius I was 520/19 B.C.

Construction Resumed in Reign of Darius.—After the long period of discouragement, during which the building program had ceased, the flagging zeal of the returned exiles was renewed by messages from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in the

2d year of Darius (Ezra 5:1, 2). They set to work on the Temple again, whereupon Tatnai, the governor of the province of "Beyond the River," of which Judea was a part, asked for their authorization for the construction. Their claim to having authorization was verified by the finding of Cyrus' decree in Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2, margin). Darius, who was himself a monotheist and an imitator of the liberal policies of Cyrus, offered financial aid.

The Temple Finished Under Three Decrees.—Then with opposition effectively removed, and with the enthusiastic leadership of the prophets, "they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king" (Ezra 6:14, 15), or approximately March 12, 515 B.C. Thus the actual building was finished in the reign of the second of the three kings mentioned in this text as issuing decrees in relation to the Temple—the edicts of Cyrus (about 537), Darius 1 (sometime after 520), and Artaxerxes I (458/57)—but further work was done on the Temple under the third decree, that of Artaxerxes (see on Ezra 6:14 and 7:27). On 457 as the year in which Ezra put this decree into effect, see Sections VIII and IX.

Ezra's account of the resumption of the Temple construction in the 2d year of Darius mentions the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, whose books furnish several additional specific dates in this period that must be discussed next.

The Chronology of Haggai and Zechariah.—The seven dates in the books of Haggai and Zechariah will be considered together, since all but one of them fell in the 2d year of Darius I, and since the two prophets, being contemporaries and colleagues, presumably used the same calendar. These dates are specific; and only two of them are uncertain, because of difference of opinion as to whether the 2d year of Darius is to be reckoned in the Babylonian-Persian spring-to-spring calendar or by the Jewish fall-to-fall civil calendar. Since Darius reckoned his accession from the autumn of 522, his Babylonian year 1 began in the spring of 521, at the Babylonian New Year's Day, and his year 2 began in the spring of 520. But his accession year in the Jewish fall-to-fall civil calendar would end, and his 1st year begin, in the autumn of 521, when the next Jewish New Year's Day came; and his 2d year would begin in the autumn of 520. Darius' years always began a half-year later by the Jewish calendar.

Since the Babylonian year was reckoned by months 1 through 12, while the Jewish year began with the 7th month and ended with the 6th, the order of months in any specified year indicates which type it was. If the events described in Haggai are presented by him in chronological order, then the 6th month was followed by the 7th in Darius' 2d year (Haggai 1:15; 2:1); and this would indicate that Haggai was reckoning that year as consisting of months 1 through 12, beginning with the 1st month (Nisan), in the spring. This has been assumed by commentators and historians generally, not only because it is the order of the narrative, but because that was the reckoning used in Babylonia.

It is well established that the 2d year of Darius was 520/19 B.C., by either spring or fall reckoning. Then the lunar-month dates of Haggai and Zechariah, with the exception of the first two (Haggai 1:1, 15), can be assigned B.C. equivalents with certainty, for they fall in the half year in which the fall and spring years overlap.

The dates are listed here in the order in which they occur in Haggai, with those of Zechariah inserted in place. The B.C. equivalents, probably correct approximately to the day, except for the first two, are added in the last column:

<i>Text</i>		<i>Month</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>B.C. Equivalent</i>
Haggai	1:1	6	1	2d of Darius	[Aug. 29, 520?]
	1:15	6	24	"	[Sept. 21, 520?]
	2:1	7	21	"	Oct. 17, 520
Zech.	1:1	8		"	Oct./Nov. 520
Haggai	2:10,	9	24	"	Dec. 18, 520
	18,				
	20				
Zech.	1:7	11	24	"	Feb. 15, 519
	7:1	9	4	4th of Darius	Dec. 7, 518

Zechariah's Seventy-Year Periods.—It has been noted that, in addition to Jeremiah's prediction of the captivity, there were two other 70-year periods related to the Exile, both mentioned in retrospect. These were the 70 years of "indignation" against Judah and Jerusalem and the 70 years of the fast of the fifth month (in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple), in two messages of Zechariah dated respectively in the 2d and 4th years of Darius (Zech. 1:7, 12; 7:1, 3–5), or 520/19 and 518/17 B.C. If these were the 70th year of each period, the 1st year of each was, respectively, 589/88 and 587/86. Now, two events appropriate to these periods are the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, assigned on the best evidence to 589/88 B.C., and the destruction of the Temple (in the 5th month) in the summer of 586 (that is, 587/86, fall to fall). Thus these two periods may be understood as accurate time statements of 70 years, inclusive. Some explain these as referring to the 70 years of Jeremiah. But they have every appearance of being separate (see note 10).

VII. The Chronology of Esther, in the Reign of Xerxes

The identification of the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther with Xerxes is generally accepted today, since the spelling of his name in the Hebrew (*'Ahashwerosh*) is similar to that appearing in contemporary documents (see on Esther 1:1). The reign of Xerxes is known, not only from Ptolemy's Canon, but also from a double-dated Elephantine papyrus. Hence the chronology of Esther presents no problems. The months, which attest the postexilic Jewish form of the Babylonian month names, do not by their sequence determine whether the regnal years were counted from spring or fall, since the year number is not mentioned in connection with the later events. Since all the action takes place in the Persian capital, the dates are probably Persian, and hence have no bearing on the Jewish calendar. See p. 460 for the B.C. equivalents derived from the Parker-Dubberstein tables, which approximate with a very small margin of error the exact dating of the Babylonian-Persian calendar of that time.

VIII. Dating the Journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah

After the initial resettlement in the reign of Cyrus, the next two milestones in the repatriation of the Jews were the arrival of Ezra with another company of exiles under a decree of Artaxerxes (important for the period of the 70 weeks) in the 7th year of that king and the coming of Nehemiah in the 20th year. The chronology of these two events depends on determining (1) which of three kings named Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes I, 465–423; Artaxerxes II, 404–359/58; Artaxerxes III, 359/58–338/37) commissioned these two Jewish leaders, and (2) the exact regnal-year dating involved.

The Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah.—It was formerly taken for granted that the king whose 7th and 20th years are the key Biblical dates of this period was Artaxerxes I, son and successor of Xerxes, but since 1890 the opinion has been advanced, and increasingly accepted, that Ezra is to be dated in the time of Artaxerxes II. However, Nehemiah's connection with the first Artaxerxes is regarded as established, since one of the Elephantine papyri, dated 407 B.C., mentions the sons of Sanballat (see Additional Note 2 on Nehemiah 2).

If, then, the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was Artaxerxes I, the narrative of Ezra–Nehemiah unquestionably places Ezra's journey to Jerusalem in the 7th year of the same king, 13 years before Nehemiah's. Both were recognized leaders of the community in the ceremony of the dedication of the walls (Neh. 12:36, 38). Furthermore, the reading of the law on New Year's Day, the 1st of the 7th month (Neh. 8:1–6, 9), could hardly have happened many years before Ezra was sent to Jerusalem (Ezra 7) with full authority to establish the civil and religious administration in Judea and to teach the law of God in Israel (for a discussion of the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, see Additional Note on Ezra 7). Therefore we may accept the Biblical order and place the return of Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes I.

The Circumstances of Artaxerxes I's Accession.—Since both Ezra and Nehemiah are dated by the chronology of Artaxerxes I, the source materials for this dating must be examined. A few historians have counted a short reign between Xerxes and Artaxerxes because the Egyptian king list of Manetho, and two early Christian chronographers who followed him, assigned seven months to Artabanus, the murderer of Xerxes. However the ancient Greek historians, while varying on the details, present Artaxerxes as the actual king but a puppet in the hands of Artabanus, the real power behind the throne, until he learned that Artabanus had murdered his father Xerxes and, indirectly, his older brother (p. 61), and also was planning to do away with him as well and ascend the throne openly. Thereupon Artaxerxes slew Artabanus and took over the kingdom. There was, until recently, a gap in the archeological evidence for this regnal transition. In the series of commercial tablets (see p. 86) from that period there are none dated in Xerxes' last (21st) year or Artaxerxes' accession year, and none even mentioning Artabanus.

The Years of Artaxerxes I Dated by Contemporary Documents.—The years of Artaxerxes' reign according to Ptolemy's Canon (see pp. 86, 87; also Vol. II, pp. 152–154) have long been known. In recent years this dating has been confirmed by eight double-dated Aramaic papyri written in a Jewish colony in Egypt (see pp. 88, 89 above) in eight different years of that reign. Thus Artaxerxes' year 1 in the *Egyptian* calendar was, without doubt, that beginning on Thoth 1 (December 17), 465 B.C. One of these papyri, written January 2/3, 464, is dated in (Xerxes') "year 21, accession year when King Artaxerxes sat on his throne." The Jewish scribe who wrote that was for some reason reluctant to abandon Xerxes' regnal years and date in Artaxerxes' name alone, even though if Artaxerxes was king, Xerxes was certainly dead. He was not dating in an Egyptian year; the Egyptian year 21 had ended, and this was now *year 1*—for so the Egyptians called the remainder of the calendar year in which a new king came in (see Vol. II, pp. 138, 139). Evidently this Jewish scribe was using his own calendar. The *Jewish* regnal reckoning was by a fall-to-fall year (pp. 105–107 below); therefore if a January 3 date was still in Artaxerxes' accession year, his year 1 began at the next Jewish New Year, in the fall of 464.

Locating the Seventh and Twentieth Years.—According to these three calendars the 1st year of Artaxerxes, and the years 7 and 20 as well, can be tabulated:

	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 7</i>	<i>Year 20</i>
By the Egyptian calendar (Dec.–Dec.)	465/64	459/58	446/45
By the Babylonian–Persian (spring–spring)	464/63	458/57	445/44
By the Jewish civil calendar (fall–fall)	464/63	458/57	445/44

There is no reason to suppose that the Bible writers would have used the Egyptian calendar. The B.C. dating of the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem hinges on whether, by Biblical reckoning, Artaxerxes' 7th and 20th years began with the 1st month, in spring, or with the 7th month, six months later.

The Journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah.—The dates of Ezra's and Nehemiah's journeys, in terms of Artaxerxes' regnal years, are given as follows:

Year	Month	Day		
7	1	1	Ezra and party set out for Judea	Ezra 7:9
7	1	12	Ezra and party leave Ahava	Ezra 8:31
7	5	1	Ezra and party arrive at Jerusalem	Ezra 7:8, 9
20	[9]	(Kislev)	Nehemiah receives news from Judea	Neh. 1:1
20	[1]	(Nisan)	Nehemiah gains permission to leave	Neh. 2:1

Ezra arrived at Jerusalem in the summer of Artaxerxes' 7th regnal year, and Nehemiah in the same season of the 20th year (see on Ezra 7:8; Neh. 6:15). Now the Babylonian-Persian 7th year began with the spring of 458 B.C. and ended in the spring of 457, thus covering the summer of 458; but the Jewish fall-to-fall 7th year, extending from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457, covered the summer of 457. If Ezra reached Jerusalem in the Babylonian-Persian 7th year, he obviously traveled in 458. On the other hand, if he arrived in the summer of the Jewish fall-to-fall 7th year, which did not end until the autumn of 457, he traveled in 457.

There is evidence for the fall-to-fall year in various periods of Hebrew history (see Vol. II, pp. 109, 110, 134, 146); also in the very book of Ezra–Nehemiah itself, for the two dates of Neh. 1:1 and 2:1 show that Kislev (the 9th month) preceded Nisan (the 1st month) in the same 20th year. Since regnal years were then customarily calendar years, and since that year could not have begun with the 1st month, the obvious and inescapable

inference is that it was a Jewish calendar year beginning with the 7th month, that is, in the autumn. Therefore it would seem logical to assume without further question that Ezra went to Jerusalem in 457 and Nehemiah in 444, in the 7th and 20th years, respectively, of Artaxerxes I as reckoned by the Jewish civil calendar. But opinion has varied on this question, as will be seen in the next paragraph.

Changes in Dating of Artaxerxes.—Although many earlier authorities placed Ezra's return in 457, modern histories and reference books tend to give 458 for the 7th year of Artaxerxes, arrived at by the spring-to-spring reckoning. This is based on the assumption either (1) that the regnal dates of Artaxerxes, as a Persian king, must be reckoned by the Babylonian-Persian calendar, or (2) that the Jews themselves at this time counted regnal years from spring to spring. In either case the fall reckoning of Nehemiah is considered erroneous, and his Nisan events following Kislev of year 20 must be "corrected" to Nisan of year 21. But neither assumption is valid. The Elephantine papyri disprove the first and lend no support to the second. These papyri, the only direct archeological evidence for Jewish usage, have been interpreted by some (especially in the United States) as supporting the spring-to-spring reckoning, but the most recently published group of Elephantine papyri contains the first conclusive evidence on that question. How this evidence proves a Jewish fall-to-fall year will be explained in Section IX, but the conclusion may be stated here.

Dates of Ezra and Nehemiah Established.—In the light of the evidence for Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning of the year, there is no reason whatever to "correct" Nehemiah's Nisan date from the 20th to the 21st year. The logical and reasonable explanation of Neh. 1:1 and 2:1 is that they indicate the Jewish fall-to-fall year, in which months 7–12 precede months 1–6 of the same year. Therefore the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem in the 7th and 20th years of Artaxerxes I are to be dated according to the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar (in which the 7th and 20th years were 458/57 and 445/44), and thus in the spring and summer of 457 and 444 B.C. respectively (for 457 see Fig. 1, p. 104).

The conclusions concerning the dating of Ezra's and Nehemiah's journeys—long a much-confused subject—may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Most modern writers, using the Egyptian year of Ptolemy's Canon or, later, the Babylonian-Persian spring-to-spring year, have placed Ezra's journey in 458 B.C., since the 7th year by either of these calendar systems (459/58 and 458/57 respectively) includes the spring and summer of 458, but ends before the month of Nisan in 457. According to this the journey of Nehemiah would have occurred in 445, although many of those who assign Ezra's expedition to 458 place that of Nehemiah in 444, on the assumption that the latter returned in the 21st year instead of the 20th.
- (2) In the Jewish civil-calendar reckoning the 7th year of Artaxerxes was 458/57, *fall to fall*, according to the more exact evidence as we have it now from the Babylonian tablets and the Jewish papyri from Egypt. This places Ezra's return in the summer of 457 B.C. and Nehemiah's in the 20th year in 444.

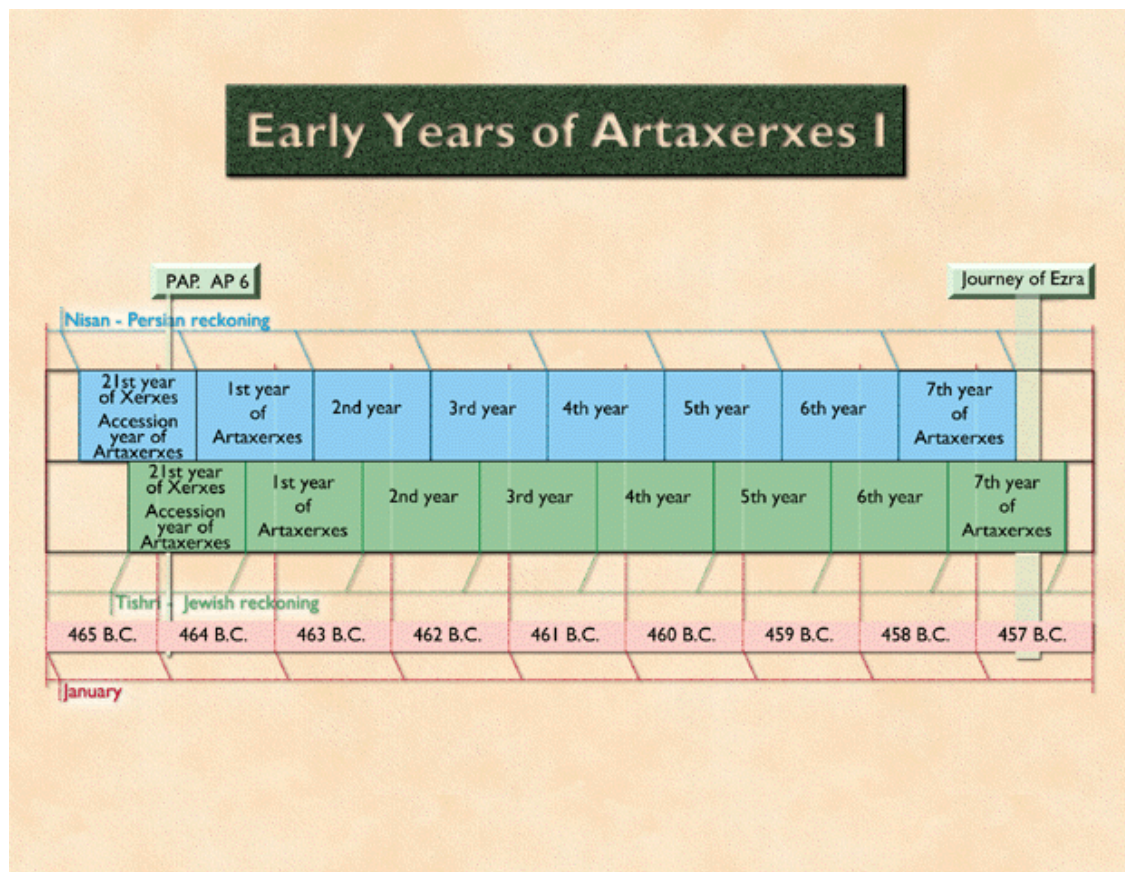
Since the evidence from the Bible and from archeology favors the fall reckoning, as in paragraph (2), the dates 457 and 444 may be taken as established.

IX. The Elephantine Papyri and the Jewish Calendar

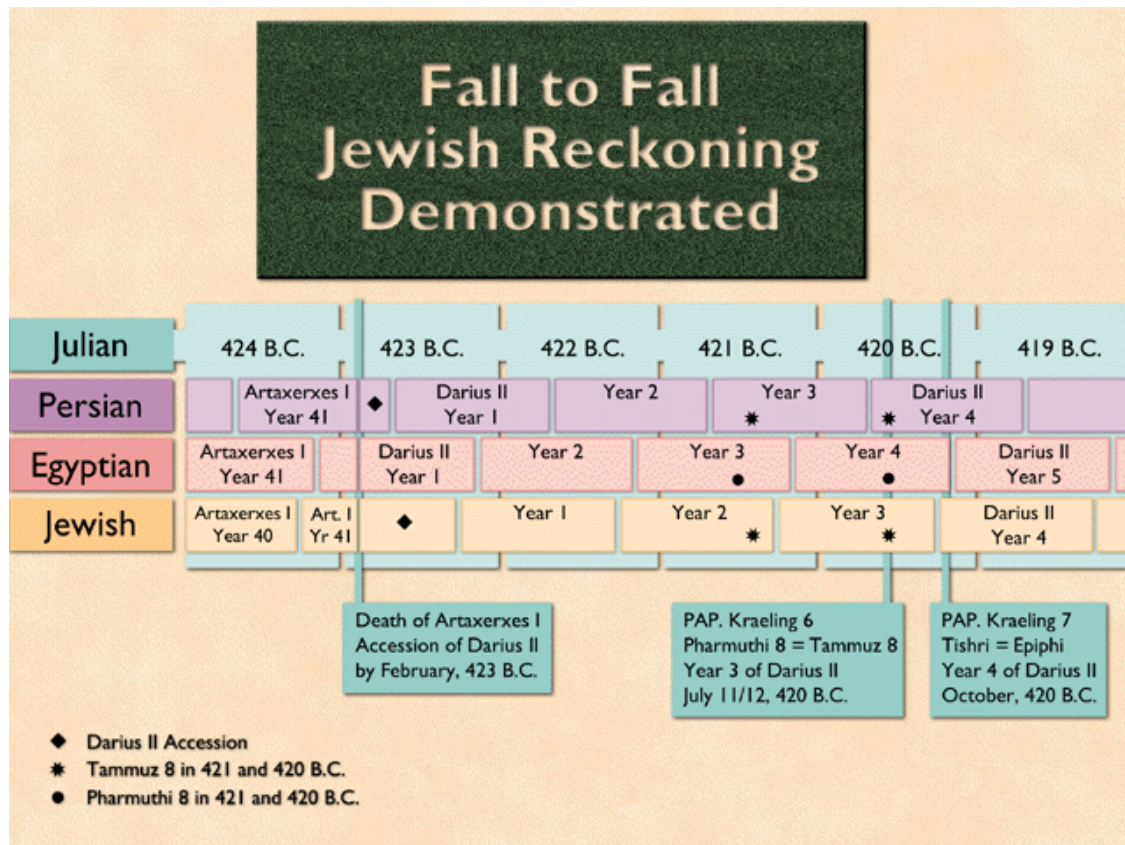
In showing that the dating of the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah hinges on the spring versus the fall year, it has been stated that Jewish papyri from Elephantine, formerly

inconclusive on this point, now furnish evidence for the fall-to-fall reckoning. For those who wish to examine the reasons why the papyri are important to the decision in favor of the fall-to-fall reckoning in Ezra–Nehemiah, the following brief survey of the evidence furnished by the papyri and of its bearing on the Biblical reckoning is provided.

Spring Year or Fall Year in Elephantine?—The double-dated Elephantine papyri were drawn up in a Jewish community under the Egyptian legal system; hence the Egyptian year number was customarily given, but the Semitic lunar-year number was often omitted (see Vol. II, pp. 117–119). In the period of these papyri the Babylonian spring year began about four months later than the corresponding Egyptian solar year, and the Jewish fall-to-fall year six months later than the Babylonian (see pp. 88–90). The Egyptian year 4, for example, of any of these reigns ran about 4 months before the Babylonian year 3 ended and year 4 began, but it would run an additional 6 months before the Jewish year number changed from 3 to 4 (see Fig. 2, p. 104).



²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Ch 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



On such a basis a series of complete double dates would show, by the Egyptian month in which the Semitic lunar-year numbers changed, whether the writers of these papyri reckoned the lunar dates from a spring or a fall New Year. But most papyri gave only one year number, even during that part of the year when two would be expected in a complete double date. Heretofore all the known double-dated papyri were inconclusive until a papyrus was found with a date line of a kind that could have been reckoned only by a spring-to-spring year or only by a fall-to-fall year.

New Papyrus Proves Fall Reckoning.—Finally one such document was found, No. 6 of the Brooklyn Museum Papyri, published by Emil G. Kraeling in 1953. It is a deed to (part of?) a house in Elephantine presented to a prospective Jewish bride. It bears only one year number, the 3d year of Darius (II), but the month and day of the Egyptian calendar agree with those of the lunar calendar only in July, 420 B.C. (see note 3, p. 88, on this). This harmony is not possible in either the Egyptian year 3 (beginning in December, 422) or the Babylonian-Persian year 3 (beginning in the spring of 421), but only with the fall-to-fall year of the Jewish civil calendar, which began in the autumn of 421 and so included July, 420. Therefore the lunar calendar in which this papyrus was dated was not the Babylonian but the Jewish civil calendar, with the year beginning in the autumn. Consequently the other papyri, inconclusive in themselves, should be interpreted in the light of this one. Obviously the Jews in Elephantine must, like Nehemiah, have used the old fall-to-fall civil calendar.

The editor and translator of Papyrus 6 mentions the fact that the date will not fit into the 3d year of the reign according to the Egyptian and Persian reckoning, and notes the

fall-to-fall year as one conclusion, but he himself accepts the alternative of conjecturing a scribe's error. There are only two alternatives. If this clearly written date is correct, the year began in the autumn, and Nehemiah's usage is unquestioned. The only reason for supposing that the papyrus date is an error is the fact that it does not agree with the current widespread scholarly opinion that the Jews adopted not only the Babylonian month names but the Babylonian calendar outright, including the spring New Year.

But not one who wishes to give all the Bible writers a hearing and to discover what they mean, without impatiently assuming that the "late editors" misunderstood the earlier writers and that the supposed errors of Scripture must be corrected by theory and conjecture, is gratified to find that it is not necessary to abandon Moses, to ignore Josiah and Jeremiah, and to assume that Nehemiah was wrong. The Jewish calendar need not agree with the Babylonian.

Significance of the Elephantine Jewish Calendar.—Were these Jews in Egypt employing the Persian calendar or the same Jewish calendar they had used in Palestine? If these colonists, on coming into Egypt (before 525 B.C.; see p. 81), had adopted a foreign calendar it would have been the Egyptian solar calendar, not a Babylonian-Persian system, for Egypt had not at that time been made part of the Persian Empire. They would not have used double dating, since some of these papyri, as well as the demotic Egyptian texts from other parts of the country, carry only the Egyptian date. Therefore the double dates show that they retained their old calendar along with that of the Egyptians.

Thus it is evident that a Persian king's years need not be reckoned by the Babylonian-Persian calendar, but are more likely to be reckoned in the national or ancestral calendar of the writer. That is exactly what we find in the only conclusive dating among these Elephantine papyri. Just as these colonists considered themselves separate from the Egyptians to the extent of retaining their own calendar, they seem to have considered themselves akin to their repatriated brethren in Palestine, as their correspondence shows. Hence their use of the fall-to-fall year, even considered apart from the Ezra-Nehemiah evidence, would lead to the conclusion that they were in accord with Palestinian custom in this.

An advocate of the theory of the late date of the Pentateuch, and of the introduction of the spring year by Josiah, is likely to see the supposed spring reckoning in the formerly inconclusive papyri as part of a chain of postexilic evidences for the spring usage from Josiah on. In this he would include Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, Esther, and even Nehemiah (for he tends to brand as erroneous the fall-to-fall sequence in Neh. 1:1 and 2:1). But actually there is no continuous chain of evidence for the spring reckoning. Jeremiah almost certainly used a fall year; Ezekiel probably did also, and even if he did not, his book and Esther are irrelevant to the problem because they were written during the Exile, in Babylonia and Persia. Haggai's usage is less than proof for the spring reckoning, and there is the possibility of Zechariah's fall reckoning. The links in this chain tend to fall apart, leaving the supposed spring year of the papyri unsupported, and Neh. 1:1 and 2:1 unchallenged.

Now the proof of Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning in the Elephantine papyri changes the picture radically. Anyone not preoccupied with the theory of the spring-beginning year can find the postexilic data reasonably consistent in indicating that the fall-beginning year was not abandoned. Thus the Elephantine calendar becomes a link in the long chain of

evidence for the fall-to-fall reckoning extending from the civil year of ancient times (see Vol. II, p. 109) to Ezra–Nehemiah (Vol. III, pp. 102, 103), including Solomon (Vol. II, pp. 110, 134), Josiah (Vol. II, p. 146), the corroborative though indirect evidence for Judah’s kings from the synchronisms (Vol. II, pp. 146, 147), and Jeremiah (Vol. III, pp. 93, 94), possibly the usage of Ezekiel and Zechariah (Vol. III, pp. 93, 94, 99). The fall-to-fall year in Elephantine thus confirms unequivocally the usage of Ezra–Nehemiah, and therefore the accuracy of the chronological data of the Bible writers of this period.

The Postexilic Jewish Calendar in Egypt.—The double-dated papyri furnish considerable information about the Jewish calendar as used at Elephantine (see Vol. II, pp. 120, 121). They also fix a number of exact dates, accurate to within a day. Since the Egyptian day began at sunrise, and the Jewish at sunset, there could be a difference of opinion in some cases as to whether a specific Egyptian day is to be aligned with the Jewish day beginning 12 hours earlier or that beginning 12 hours later (depending on whether the document was written before or after sunset). Where a papyrus date establishes a given day of the month in this manner, the whole month is similarly fixed, and the other months of that year are also known virtually to the day. It is to be remembered that an ancient lunar month cannot be fixed with complete certainty, because of the possible variation of a day or so each way (see Vol. II, p. 119). But within these limits there are a number of these completely known years in this Jewish calendar during the 5th century, and the other years of the period can be approximated with a relatively high degree of precision, allowing leeway for the exact location of some of the 13th months.

Tentative Reconstruction of Elephantine Jewish Calendar—A calendar reconstructed around the fourteen known months fixed by the double-dated papyri gives a very close approximation of the B.C. date of the 1st of each month for the Jewish years from 472/71 through 400/399 B.C. Such a tabulation has been computed by Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood on the following premises:

1. The year begins with Tishri 1, in the autumn.
2. The 1st of each month is computed theoretically, but based on a reasonable interval after conjunction (see Vol. II, pp. 115, 116, 119), so as to keep as close as possible to the observed crescent.
3. These computed months are derived from the working hypothesis of a regularly alternating sequence of 30-day and 29-day months from Nisan through Tishri, with adjustments in the other half of the year (see (Vol. II, p. 121).
4. These adjustments appear to have resulted in four types of years, those of 354, 355, 383, or 384 days (the 353- and 385-day years, used today by the Jews, must have been introduced much later; see Vol. II, p. 121, sec. 12).
5. A second Adar is assumed to have been inserted (see Vol. II, pp. 103–105) whenever Nisan 1 would precede the vernal equinox, which fell about March 26.
6. This results in the pattern of a second Adar in 7 out of each 19 years. Except in two cases, when a fixed papyrus date seems to indicate otherwise, these 13th months fell in the years commonly numbered 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 of the Babylonian 19-year cycle (see Vol. II, pp. 113, 120, 121).

Since this tabulation forms the basis for the exact Jewish dates given in this volume, it is reproduced here entire from the unpublished copy for the convenience of any readers

of this commentary who wish to make a detailed study of the dates for the period indicated.

°Tables of Elephantine Jewish Calendar, 472/471 Through 400/399 B.C.

HOW TO USE THIS CALENDAR TABULATION:—Each horizontal line of dates in this tabulation represents a regnal year as reckoned in the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar, beginning with Tishri, the 7th month. The first eight-line section comprises the 14th through the 21st years of Xerxes, and the following sections are the reigns of Artaxerxes I and so on. The boldface figures are the B.C. years (those starred are leap years); and the dates on each line (10/6, 11/5, etc.) are the Julian-calendar dates on which the 1st of each Jewish month falls.

For example, the first line represents the 14th year of the Xerxes by Jewish reckoning. It begins in 472 B.C. (second column) with Tish[ri] 1, which falls on October 6, abbreviated to 10/6 (third column), that is, the day beginning at sunset of October 5. The 1st of the next month, Mar[heshvan], is 11/5 (November 5, beginning at sunset of November 4); Kis[lev] 1 is December 4. Next comes the boldface figure 471, indicating the opening of a new B.C. year (Julian). Hence the remaining months of this Jewish year begin in 471: Teb[eth] 1 falls on January 3, 471; Sheb[at] 1 on February 1, Ad[ar] 1 on March 3, Nis[an] 1 on April 1, Iyy[ar] 1 on May 1, Siv[an] 1 on May 30, Tam[muz] 1 on June 29, Ab 1 on July 28, Elul 1 on August 27. This last date appears in a box because one of the double-dated papyri was written in that month, thus fixing the date. (The 14 dates so marked on this calendar are the basis on which the rest of the calendar is computed.)

In the next year, the 15th of Xerxes, which begins in 471 B.C. (September 25), Tebeth is still in 471; hence the boldface date 470 appears in the column between Tebeth and Shebat, which is the first month beginning in 470. This 15th year has a 13th month, the second Adar. The column headed “Ad[ar] II” shows that 7 out of 19 years contain the second Adar.

Many Biblical dates in this volume of the commentary have been computed according to this tentative reconstruction of the Jewish calendar; for example, the dates of Ezra’s journey to Judea (Ezra 7:9; 8:15, 31). In the tabulation the line numbered the 7th year of Artaxerxes I shows that year beginning by Jewish reckoning in 458 B.C., on Tishri 1, or October 2, and places Nisan 1 of that year, the date of Ezra’s departure, on March 27, 457. Ezra left Ahava on the 12th of the same month, 11 days later, which would be April 7 (that is, April 6/7, sunset to sunset); and his arrival date, the 1st of the 5th month (Ab), was July 23. Although the B.C. number at the beginning of this 7th year is 458, it changes to 457 between Tebeth 1 and Shebat 1; hence Ezra’s dates in Nisan and Ab are all in 457.

XERXES

Year Regnal B.C.	(7) Tish.	(8) Mar.	(9) Kis.	B.C.	(10) Teb.	B.C.	(11) Sheb.	(12) Ad.	(13) Ad. II	(1) Nis.	(2) Iyy.	(3) Siv.	(4) Tam.	(5) Ab	(6) Elul
14	472	10/6	11/5	12/4	471	1/3	2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
15	471	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	470	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16
16	470	10/14	11/13	12/12	469*	1/11	2/9	3/10		4/8	5/8	6/6	7/6	8/4	9/3
17	469	10/2	11/1	12/1		12/31	468	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25
18	468	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	467	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/13
19	467	10/11	11/10	12/9	466	1/8	2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/2	9/1
20	466	9/30	10/30	11/28		12/28	465*	1/26	2/25	3/26	4/24	5/24	6/22	7/22	8/20
21	465	10/18	11/17	12/16	464	1/15	2/13	3/15		4/13	5/13	6/11	7/11	8/9	9/8

ARTAXERXES I

Year Regnal B.C.	(7) Tish.	(8) Mar.	(9) Kis.	B.C.	(10) Teb.	B.C.	(11) Sheb.	(12) Ad.	(13) Ad. II	(1) Nis.	(2) Iyy.	(3) Siv.	(4) Tam.	(5) Ab	(6) Elul
464	10/7	11/6	12/6	463	1/5		2/3	3/5		4/3	5/3	6/1	7/1	7/30	8/29
463	9/27	10/27	11/25		12/25	462	1/23	2/22	3/24	4/22	5/22	6/20	7/20	8/18	9/17

462	10/16	11/15	12/14	461*	1/13		2/11	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/6	9/5
461	10/4	11/3	12/2	460	1/1		1/30	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
460	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	459	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
459	10/12	11/11	12/11	458	1/10		2/8	3/10		4/8	5/8	6/6	7/6	8/4	9/3
458	10/2	11/1	11/30		12/30	457*	1/28	2/27		3/27	4/26	5/25	6/24	7/23	8/22
457	9/20	10/20	11/18		12/18	456	1/16	2/15	3/17	4/15	5/15	6/13	7/13	8/11	9/10
456	10/9	11/8	12/7	455	1/6		2/4	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	7/31	8/30
455	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	454	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/19	9/18
454	10/17	11/16	12/15	453*	1/14		2/12	3/13		4/11	5/11	6/9	7/9	8/7	9/6
453	10/5	11/4	12/4	452	1/3		2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
452	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	451	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16	9/15
451	10/14	11/13	12/12	450	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/5	9/4
450	10/3	11/2	12/2	449*	1/1		1/30	2/29		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
449	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	448	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/13	9/12
448	10/11	11/10	12/9	447	1/8		2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/2	9/1
447	9/30	10/30	11/28		12/28	446	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22	8/21
446	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	445*	1/15	2/14	3/15	4/13	5/13	6/11	7/11	8/9	9/8
445	10/7	11/6	12/5	444	1/4		2/2	3/4		4/2	5/2	5/31	6/30	7/29	8/28
444	9/26	10/26	11/24		12/24	443	1/22	2/21	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/17	9/16
443	10/15	11/14	12/14	442	1/13		2/11	3/13		4/11	5/11	6/9	7/9	8/7	9/6
442	10/5	11/4	12/3	441*	1/2		1/31	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
441	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	440	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
440	10/12	11/11	12/10	439	1/9		2/7	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/3	9/2
439	10/1	10/31	11/29		12/29	438	1/27	2/26	3/28	4/26	5/26	6/24	7/24	8/22	9/21
438	10/20	11/19	12/18		437*	1/17		2/15	3/16		4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/10
437	10/8	11/7	12/7		436	1/6		2/4	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	7/31
436	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	435	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/19	9/18
435	10/17	11/16	12/15		434	1/14		2/12	3/14		4/12	5/12	6/10	7/10	8/9
434	10/6	11/5	12/5		433*	1/4		2/2	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28
433	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	432	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16	9/15
432	10/14	11/13	12/12		431	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/5
431	10/3	11/2	12/1		12/31	430	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
430	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	429*	1/18	2/17	3/18	4/16	5/16	6/14	7/14	8/12	9/11
429	10/10	11/9	12/9		428	1/8		2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/3
428	9/30	10/30	11/28		12/28	427	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22	8/21
427	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	426	1/15	2/14	3/16	4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/10	9/9
426	10/8	11/7	12/6		425*	1/5		2/3	3/4		4/2	5/2	5/31	6/30	7/29
425	9/26	10/26	11/24		12/24	424	1/22	2/21	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/17	9/16
424	10/15	11/14	12/13		423	1/12		2/10	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/6

DARIUS II

Year (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Regnal B.C.		Tish.	Mar.	Kis.	B.C.	Teb.	B.C.	Sheb.	Ad.	Ad. II	Nis.	Iyy.	Siv.	Tam.	A
1	423	10/4	11/3	12/3	422	1/2		1/31	3/2		3/31	4/30	5/29	6/28	7/27
2	422	9/24	10/24	11/22		12/22	421	1/20	2/19	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14
3	421	10/12	11/11	12/10	420	1/9		2/7	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/4
4	420	10/1	10/31	11/30		12/30	419	1/28	2/27		3/28	4/27	5/26	6/25	7/24
5	419	9/21	10/21	11/19		12/19	418	1/17	2/16	3/18	4/16	5/16	6/14	7/14	8/13
6	418	10/10	11/9	12/8	417	1/7		2/5	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	8/1
7	417	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	416	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/20
8	416	10/17	11/16	12/15	415	1/14		2/12	3/14		4/12	5/12	6/10	7/10	8/9
9	415	10/6	11/5	12/4	414	1/3		2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28
10	414	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	413	1/21	2/20	3/21	4/19	5/19	6/17	7/17	8/16
11	413	10/13	11/12	12/12	412	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/6
12	412	10/3	11/2	12/1		12/31	411	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25
13	411	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	410	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/14
14	410	10/11	11/10	12/9	409	1/8		2/6	3/7		4/5	5/5	6/3	7/3	8/2
15	409	9/29	10/29	11/28		12/28	408	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22
16	408	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	407	1/15	2/14	3/16	4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/11
17	407	10/8	11/7	12/6	406	1/5		2/3	3/5		4/3	5/3	6/1	7/1	8/1
18	406	9/27	10/27	11/25		12/25	405	1/23	2/22	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/18
19	405	10/15	11/14	12/13	404	1/12		2/10	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/7

ARTAXERXES II

Year		(7)	(8)	(9)		(10)		(11)	(12)	(13)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regnal		Tish.	Mar.	Kis.	B.C.	Teb.	B.C.	Sheb.	Ad.	Ad.	Nis.	Iyy.	Siv.	Tam.	Ab	Elul
B.C.										II						
1	404	10/4	11/3	12/2	403	1/1		1/30	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
2	403	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	402	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
3	402	10/12	11/11	12/11	401	1/10		2/8	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/3	9/2
4	401	10/1	10/31	11/29		12/29	400	1/27	2/26		3/27	4/26	5/25	6/24	7/23	8/22
5	400	9/20	10/20	11/18		12/18	399	1/16	2/15	3/17	4/15	5/15	6/13	7/13	8/11	9/10

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from the Babylonian tablets and the Aramaic papyri from Egypt to the specific problem of the dating of the 7th year of Artaxerxes according to the Jewish calendar. Appendix 2 is a technical analysis of the double dates of 14 Aramaic papyri (from those published by Cowley and Kraeling), showing that the B.C. dates can be consistently fixed, and demonstrating the evidence from one of them that the lunar calendar represented by these dates is reckoned from the autumn, and not from the spring. The most important reference work for the reader of this article who wishes a more thorough treatment of these points.

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