

# HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.<sup>1</sup>

FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERU<sup>s</sup>  
SALEM.

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*VI. From the Return out of the Babylonian Captivity to the Outbreak  
of the Rebellion of the Maccabees.*

THE HISTORY of the people of Israel begins with the migration of Abraham from the Euphrates to the Jordan ; it closes, one may say in a certain sense, with the compulsory migration of the exiles from the Jordan back to the Euphrates. The Babylonian exile constitutes the crisis in the history of the people of Israel from both the political and the religious standpoint. Politically and nationally the Babylonian captivity put an end for ever to the people of Israel. Even when, three hundred and fifty years later, there was once more a Jewish state, those who formed it were not the people of Israel, not even the Jewish nation, but that portion which remained in the mother country of a great religious organisation scattered over all Asia and Egypt. It would on this account be technically correct to entitle the second part of our theme, which is to occupy us in the last five chapters, simply Jewish history, or history of the Jewish people. Yet the change is still more tremendous which the Babylonian exile produced in the religious life of Israel, though indeed the two are most intimately and inherently connected. The very overthrow of the Judean state and the destruction of the national life had the effect of entirely reconstructing the religion of Israel. Even in the last periods of Judean independence there had been evolving a movement which had for its aim to spiritualise religion as much as possible. In order to guard

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the manuscript of Prof. C. H. Cornill, by W. H. Carruth of the University of Kansas.

it against growing worldly and to avoid with all care the danger of sullyng its purity, they had aimed at separating religion from its foundation in nature and referring it absolutely to itself and the spirit.

This was a dispensation of Providence; for thus it became possible for the religion of Israel to survive the fall of the state and the destruction of the nation, and yet to preserve them both by reconstructing them. If the destruction of the body had freed the spirit and given it an unhampered career, this spirit must needs shape for itself a new body. And Israel could constitute this new body only if it developed in accordance with the demands of this spirit. No one felt this more clearly and no one expressed it more distinctly than the Great Unknown of the last years of the Babylonian exile, whom we are accustomed to call Deutero-Isaiah because his writings are transmitted to us as the second portion of the book of Isaiah. This Deutero-Isaiah announced the universal mission of the religion of Israel more grandly than any one else: Israel is set for a light of the heathen; it is called to carry the revelation of God to the whole world even to the ultimate islands, the house of the God of Israel shall become a house of prayer for all nations; but in order to be able to fulfil this mission God must first make of Israel itself a covenant. Israel must become a covenant nation; that is, after Israel had broken the covenant and therefore perished as a nation, it must become a new people which will identify itself with the covenant, or league with God, and which is resurrected and remains alive only for and through it. Quite literally the ground had been snatched from beneath the feet of the nation, and it was therefore obliged to seek another ground and foundation, and this was necessarily religious. Thus religion became one with this nationality which completely subordinated itself to religion and proposed to be nothing but its body and mouthpiece.

With correct instinct, guided by the prophet Ezekiel, the religious genius of Israel laid its universal mission upon God for the time being, and took up the immediately more urgent task of getting the mastery in its own house, of driving ineradicable roots in Israel itself. And accordingly there is accomplished in the Babylonian exile, and as a consequence of it, that remarkable transformation which makes of the Judean state a Jewish church, of the Israelitish people a Jewish religious congregation. For the history of religion there is perhaps no other period in the history of the people of Israel of equal importance and significance with the half century of the Babylonian exile, from 586 to 537.

But from the standpoint of secular history we know nothing of Israel in this period : its destinies are those of the Babylonian Empire. This empire with such a brilliant beginning was not destined to enjoy length of days. It depended on the person of its founder, Nebuchadnezzar. When this mighty monarch died, on the 27th of March, 561, after a reign of forty-three years, the star of Babylon set. The empire maintained itself only twenty-three years longer, under four short-reigned kings, two of whom died by the hands of assassins, and then the Persian king, Cyrus, put a sudden end to it.

After the overthrow of Assyria, the most extensive empire remaining was the Median, to which indeed the lion's share of the spoils of Assyria had fallen. True, the two allies against Assyria had connected themselves by marriage, Nebuchadnezzar marrying Amytis, the daughter of Cyaxares. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar recognised clearly the danger that impended from this neighbor, and the immense fortifications of his capital and of his whole country, constructed by Nebuchadnezzar, could have no other purpose than to protect his empire against Media, as indeed they were called "the Median wall." And when in the year 585 he made every effort to mediate between his father-in-law and Alyattes of Lydia, and thus to maintain the Lydian kingdom, he was guided by the desire not to let Media become too powerful.

But destiny had already provided that the Median tree should not reach the skies. Nebuchadnezzar's brother-in-law, Astyages, who succeeded his father Cyaxares in 584, was not the man to give his realm added glory ; after he had ruled thirty-four years, Cyrus, the Median vassal king of the powerful and vigorous race of the Persians, made himself independent, defeated the Median army and captured the capital, Ecbatana, in the year 550.

In Babylon they probably rejoiced at first over the downfall of Media, but they were to learn only too soon what a bad exchange they had made.

As general, king, and man, Cyrus is the greatest personality and the noblest figure in the ancient history of the Orient. In but twelve years, with his handful of Persians, he destroyed forever three great empires, conquered all Asia, and secured to his race for two centuries the dominion of the world : with him the hegemony over Asia passes from the Semites to the Indo-Germanic races.

The formidableness of the new rival was soon recognised, and in the year 547 a great coalition was formed between Lydia, Baby-

lonia, and Egypt, which was also joined by Sparta, for the purpose of stifling in its beginnings the ambitious and growing empire of Cyrus. Cræsus of Lydia began operations in the spring of 546 and made a hostile demonstration toward Persia ; but Cyrus fell upon him at the first approach, followed on his heels as he retreated, and captured Sardis, the Lydian capital, in the autumn of the same year and took Cræsus captive : the kingdom of Lydia had ceased to be.

Why Babylon was then given a respite of eight years, and how the quarrel finally broke forth, we do not know ; but on the 3rd of November, 538, Cyrus held his triumphal entry into Babylon, and therewith the empire of Nebuchadnezzar also had ceased to be.

With what enthusiasm the Jewish exiles greeted the victorious Persian king as avenger and liberator the contemporary Hebrew literature gives the clearest evidence. And in fact, it was one of the first official acts of the new ruler in Babylon to give the Jewish exiles permission to return to their home, and to encourage in every way the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth.

Cyrus could have had in this only political motives. A clash with Egypt was inevitable, and so it was to the interest of the Persians to have on the Egyptian border a commonwealth that was bound to their ruling family by the strongest ties of gratitude, and upon the fidelity of which they could absolutely rely.

In the spring of 537, forty-nine years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the exiles set out, about fifty thousand souls all told. And evidently members of all the families and groups participated in the migration. They felt that they were representatives of all Israel, as is shown by the fact that the returning emigrants were under the authority of a council of twelve responsible men, the repeatedly mentioned "elders of the Jews," a number which can have been chosen only with reference to the number of the tribes in the nation. This council evidently had the whole internal control and the guidance of the affairs of the community, for which the Persian government did not concern itself. First among the twelve are named Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiachin, and Jeshua, grandson of Seraiah, the last priest of Solomon's temple, who had been executed by Nebuchadnezzar. Sheshbazzar, who is repeatedly mentioned as Persian Governor-General of Judæa, was, by the likeliest supposition, a son of King Jehoiachin born in Babylonia, and hence most probably the oldest, to whom the Persians, as was their custom, entrusted the vicerealty of his people.

On the site of the great brazen altar in Solomon's temple

they forthwith set up a new altar, and had it ready to celebrate the feast of tabernacles in 537 with an offering to the God of Israel. Voluntary gifts were also received for the expenses of the religious service and for proper clothing of the priests, but according to the express testimony of contemporary accounts the restoration of the temple was not immediately undertaken. They had indeed enough to do to make the desolate land habitable again and to restore Jerusalem as far as necessity commanded. About one-tenth of the returned immigrants settled in Jerusalem, the remainder in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem,—the report that the whole territory of the former Kingdom of Judah was occupied at the very beginning, is in itself improbable to a high degree, and is entirely contradictory to the impression made upon us by accredited tradition.

The returned exiles held themselves strictly and haughtily aloof from the remnants of the former population that had remained in the country; we read frequently of the value that was put upon pedigrees and the proof of pure stock.

Of the next seventeen years we have no positive knowledge, but must conclude that important events occurred within the priesthood in this period. For in the year 520 there appears all at once a "high priest" in the person of the before-mentioned Jeshua. Even Ezekiel knows absolutely nothing of a high priest; now on a sudden, he is present and very soon becomes the first personage among the people, crowding into the background even the house of David. We know beyond all doubt that certain things did happen within the priestly class during these years: several families which could not prove their pedigrees were excluded from the priesthood for the time being, and yet we find the descendants of these families mentioned as in important positions in the priesthood eighty years later, whence it appears that they must have secured admission after all. This gives us a significant hint. According to the regulations of Ezekiel only the descendants of Zadok, members of the family of the priests of the temple in Jerusalem, were to have priestly rights after the restoration of the commonwealth and to exercise priestly functions; but it was not possible to carry this out. The very number of the immigrant priests, four thousand two hundred and eighty-nine, that is, one out of every ten free men, puzzles us. These cannot all have been of the family of Zadok, or even in the main so. Whence it appears that they had been obliged to establish the new priesthood on a broader foundation: not the sons of Zadok, but the sons of Aaron are its

representatives, and in order to satisfy the claims of the house of Zadok it is probable that the high priesthood was established and reserved exclusively to this house.

Finally in the year 520 the construction of the temple was begun. Harvest failures and famine burdened the country: the prophet Haggai declared this to be a punishment from God because the people were dwelling in ceiled houses while the house of God lay in ruins. He was supported by another prophet, the priest Zechariah, who worked in the same spirit. So the work was actually begun on the 24th of September, 520, and on the 24th of December the corner-stone was laid with due solemnities,—laid by the Davidite Zerubbabel, who had succeeded his deceased uncle Sheshbazzar as governor. This was an assumption of privilege on the part of the congregation: but the Persian authority was at the time on a weak footing; almost the whole empire was in revolt against the new king, Darius. The satrap Tattenai, who was Zerubbabel's superior, saw the structure while on a tour of inspection, and demanded an explanation. He reported the circumstance to Darius, but Darius sent reply that the building was really supported by a permit from Cyrus, and that he was therefore desirous to see the work aided in every way. And in fact it was possible on the 3d of March, 515, after four and a half years' work, to celebrate the completion of the temple and solemnly dedicate the new house of God.

We know nothing about the next fifty-seven years. Only from the descriptions of the book of Malachi we can infer that conditions took a very critical turn. Lukewarmness and indifference, and even frivolous mockery, had taken the place of earnest enthusiasm: a painful disappointment had taken possession of men's minds, and they tried to make life as comfortable and agreeable as possible for themselves and to compromise with their religious duties in the easiest and cheapest way. There was, indeed, a little band of the genuinely pious, who labored only the more seriously for their own and the people's spiritual salvation; but they could accomplish nothing. At this crisis aid came to them from Babylon.

The closest connexion and the most lively intercourse was maintained between the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem and those who remained in Babylon, so that these received reliable information regarding all occurrences in the old home. The development had proceeded differently in Babylon: the Jews there, without anxiety for their existence and not compelled to wage a severe struggle for sustenance, had devoted themselves with all zeal

and undivided interest to the religious problem; and they, who still lived in a heathen land, were called upon to keep their identity as Jews, and to cultivate consciously and to manifest their Judaism.

Thus there had developed in Babylon of all places a regular theological school, which pursued the study of the law and showed also a marked literary activity: the expansion and completion of the law was the work of these circles. One of the most prominent among them was Ezra, likewise a descendant of Zadok and a near relative of the high priest's family in Jerusalem. He determined to take an active interest in this portentous crisis. He succeeded, how we do not know, in interesting King Artaxerxes Longhand in his plans and in securing an autocratic firman which named him as royal commissioner with unlimited authority to reform conditions in Jerusalem.

On the 1st of April, 458, the caravan assembled: there were seven hundred and seventy-two men, the number of women and children not being given. Ezra had refused a Persian escort. After preparing themselves by fasting and prayer, the train set out on the 12th of April and arrived safely in Jerusalem on the 1st of August. There they celebrated a great thank-offering to God for the happily completed journey.

Ezra proceeded immediately to his work. The most important point was that of the mixed marriages already contracted. In the revival of religion and nationality these presented a great difficulty: if the national identity was dimmed or entirely blotted out the religion also would inevitably perish; then indeed Israel would be swallowed up by the heathen. Therefore it was necessary to apply the knife right here, and to show the most merciless energy. According to what Ezra was told conditions were much more discouraging than he had imagined: even the priests and the Levites turned out to be involved in the abuse and deeply compromised.

And now a scene is played which has been compared not unfairly with the so-called "revivals" of the English Methodists: a deep religious excitement is aroused, and under the pressure of this temporary excitement the participants are led into resolutions which otherwise they would have refused to make. Ezra rends his garments, tears his hair and beard, and as though paralysed by what he has heard, sits stiff and silent until evening. A great circle of people gathers about him, and finally toward evening he arises, throws himself upon his knees, and speaks in tears a long,

loud confession which paints the corruption of the people in the blackest colors.

An even greater circle of men, women, and children gathers about him, who all break out into loud weeping. At this point one of Ezra's sympathisers speaks in the name of the assembly: "Yea, we have all sinned grievously! Let us make a solemn vow "to put away all our foreign wives and their offspring! Ezra, take "thou the matter in hand; we will be with thee." Ezra strikes the iron while it is hot, and puts all those present under a solemn oath straightway. But this did not settle the matter: only when they began to enforce the plan did the whole difficulty of it appear. It is true, every man had by the law the right to put away his wife, and we must take great care not to judge these occurrences from our point of view. But in the case of a marriage prompted by love and blessed with fondly cherished children, it could not but be regarded as a monstrous proposal to put away wife and children absolutely and without condition. And the most serious obstacle was found in the most respected circles of the community. These had formed many alliances with the neighboring aristocracy and with the Persian officials, and to send back to such fathers-in-law their daughters and their children was not to be thought of without hesitation.

And so it is almost five months after that prayer-meeting before there is summoned to Jerusalem, on the 20th of December, 458, a popular assembly at which every male member of the families returned from the captivity was ordered to appear under penalty of excommunication. There sat the whole assembly in the open square before the temple, trembling with excitement, cold, and rain, and when Ezra repeated his demand the matter was treated in dilatory fashion; they said it was too important and weighty a matter to be settled in haste, and asked that a commission under the leadership of Ezra should first ascertain the exact condition of affairs and then deal with the offenders individually. Four adherents of Ezra protested, it is true, against this delay, but the proposal was accepted: the assembly goes home, and Ezra is left to see what he can accomplish with his commission.

Any one who has had the questionable fortune to be chairman of a commission or of a directory can easily imagine himself in Ezra's place. The commission is organised on the 1st of January, 457, and in three months has so far accomplished its task as to have ascertained and officially identified all the men who are living in mixed marriage. At this point our report breaks off suddenly

and we have no direct account of the next thirteen years, until April, 444. Of course the reports of the period were intentionally suppressed because they were too sad and too humiliating. Plainly Ezra accomplished nothing, and an attempt to strengthen his position was a woful failure.

In April, 444, we suddenly learn that the walls of Jerusalem are torn down and its gates burned with fire. Ezra had probably recognised that he must first of all be master in his own house before he could take any energetic measures. Jerusalem was an exposed and thinly populated city, defenceless against any sudden attack, open to any surprise. Relying, therefore, upon his royal authority, Ezra had proceeded to build city walls and fortify the place.

The neighbors, suspicious and offended most deeply by the recent occurrences in Jerusalem, now publicly denounced this last proceeding to the Persian Government, attributing to Ezra's action a political motive.

We must recall that Egypt had shortly before freed itself from Persian rule. True it had been again subjected, but not by any means pacified; there are still commotions in Egypt as late as 449 and 443. Accordingly the Persians were naturally very anxious regarding the neighboring countries, and therefore a command actually arrived from Artaxerxes to desist forthwith from the building of the wall. The enemies of the Jews translated this royal command into action and destroyed the work that had been begun. This probably happened in the year 445.

But just at the moment when Ezra's cause seemed hopelessly lost there came to him unexpected assistance. A Babylonian Jew named Nehemiah had won the favor of King Artaxerxes and his wife, Damaspia, and had become royal cup-bearer. He heard of the depressing occurrences in Jerusalem and could not conceal his distress. The king whom he was serving at the time made sympathetic inquiries, and when Nehemiah is directed to ask a royal favor he applies for and receives the position of governor in Jerusalem, which was evidently vacant at the time. The king gave him leave of absence for twelve years and actually appointed him Persian governor in Judea.

Well provided with royal privileges and credentials, he sets out in order to assume his new office forthwith. Now the civil arm is at the disposal of the work of reform, and Nehemiah is the man to make use with all energy of the authority given him.

In Nehemiah we have one of the most characteristic and at-

tractive figures in the whole of Israelitish history. He owes his success above all things to the moral nobility of his personality. Entirely unselfish, inspired only by consecrated zeal for the cause, he has the power of carrying all along with him, of encouraging the timid and unenthusiastic by his own belief and confidence, and of lifting plodding and lukewarm souls out of and above themselves by his own idealism and enthusiasm. He is at the same time the soul and the arm of the whole work, taking hold everywhere himself and leading. But he proceeds in this openly and honorably, scorning all petty means and evasions: friends and foes alike know where to find him. Even where he uses force he does not cloak his purpose, but meets his man with lifted visor, everywhere throwing his whole personality into the undertaking. And since his energy was coupled with practical force and equally great shrewdness and knowledge of the world—he had not gone through the school of diplomacy at the Persian court for nothing—he was the man of destiny for this difficult task, which demanded a peculiar combination of religious enthusiasm and worldly wisdom, and he accomplished it. What Ezra attempted, Nehemiah achieved; the establishment and consolidation of the Jewish community is essentially his work and his merit.

The new governor had been but three days in Jerusalem when he undertook, with but a few companions, a night ride about the ruined walls in order to get by the pale light of the moon a complete survey of the damage. He had not proceeded far when his animal was checked by rubbish and ruins, and he was obliged to turn back.

Now he called together the whole people and the priests and elders, painted for them in vivid words the shameful condition of Jerusalem, and presented to them the authority and the privileges which he had received from the king. They proceed to work forthwith and the task is apportioned in an extremely practical way. To each family was assigned a certain part of the wall, which it was to construct, and thus the whole wall rose from the ground at once.

The whole time Nehemiah did not have his clothes off. Day and night he was on the ground, taking hold everywhere himself like the commonest laborer, supervising all and carrying great and small with him by his example and pattern.

The enemies of the Jews, among whom Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian are especially mentioned, behold with wrath and dismay what is going on in Jerusalem, and try in every way to hinder the work. When their

ridicule and mockery prove of no avail they try to use force ; but Nehemiah makes his arrangements so that the work need not be interrupted, and yet the whole force is at any moment ready for defence. Now the enemy try cunning : they undertake to lure Nehemiah away from the work under pretext of a conference ; but Nehemiah, who immediately sees through the clumsy plan, answers with delicate irony that he unfortunately could not leave Jerusalem at the moment, being occupied with an important task which urgently demanded his personal presence.

Then the enemy hit upon the plan of causing him difficulty in his own camp. There were certainly many who had but half a heart in the matter, and to whom any pretext for withdrawing in good order was welcome. And now Nehemiah's enemies hire the pitiful remnants of the prophetic class in Jerusalem, who actually sell themselves for money and work against Nehemiah by means of alleged prophetic oracles, and try to mislead and alienate the people ; but Nehemiah overcomes these difficulties also.

But now he is met by the most dangerous obstacle. By reason of the work upon the wall the common man has been deprived of the opportunity to follow his regular business ; moreover the taxes have to be collected afterwards as before, and there seem to have been in addition crop failures and dearth. Thus the poor had become deeply in debt: they had been obliged to mortgage their fields, vineyards, and houses, and even in some cases sell their children into serfdom. Now they bring their complaints before the governor, who forthwith calls a general assembly and with all the pathos of virtuous indignation rebukes the rich usurers for their unfraternal behavior. By referring to his own unselfishness in resigning all the income that belonged to the office of governor, in order not to oppress the people, but instead paying for everything out of his own pocket and besides keeping open table daily for a hundred and fifty persons, he brings such a moral pressure to bear upon the rich that they swear solemnly to cancel all their claims and return all property held in pledge.

Now the work advances with giant strides : on the 25th of September, 444, after fifty-two days' labor, the wall was finished and the gates set in place. A solemn procession which marched about with psalm-singing and music upon the top of the newly erected wall, expressed thanks to God for the success of the work and proclaimed to all the world its completion.

Thus protected against interference from without, they now proceed to the greater and more important task which Ezra had

been obliged to drop. For the very next 1st of October, 444, the whole people is summoned to Jerusalem. From the midst of the assembly itself comes the proposal that Ezra shall read from the book of the law of Moses. Ezra mounts a pulpit already erected for this purpose ; on either side of it stand seven of the most prominent men, and a number of Levites are on hand to explain to the people what Ezra has read. Again the people break out into loud weeping ; but Ezra says they are not to weep, but sit down to a joyous meal and give a share to those who have brought nothing, for this day is a sacred jubilee for Israel.

The following day Ezra continues the reading of the law, but only to the heads of families. Then the feast of tabernacles is celebrated on the 15th of October according to the directions of the law, and on the 24th of October a great and general day of repentance and prayer is held, and there the whole people takes a solemn oath to support the book of the law as read by Ezra ; the heads of families sign and seal this obligation with due solemnity : strict observation of the Sabbath, absolute prohibition of mixed marriages, observance of the sabbatical year and the remission of debts, and above all faithful payment of the dues to the temple, are the most important single points of this compact.

The 24th of October is the real birthday of Judaism, one of the most important days in the history of humanity. At last the religion of revelation had succeeded in getting a home of its own, if I may use the expression ; it had created for itself a body in and through which it could act and fulfil its lofty mission to the world.

True, not all was accomplished by this one popular assembly. Many had allowed themselves to be carried away by the mass, to whom it now came hard when obligations there assumed were taken in bitter earnest. And the very ones upon whom Nehemiah should have been able to depend, and who were the born tutors and guardians of his people, the priests, stood aside resentful or at least lukewarm. They had by this time developed into a sort of temple nobility, who were now concerned only for the privileges of their position, who fraternised with the civil nobility, but who were not disposed to accept into the bargain heavy obligations. So long as Nehemiah was governor, indeed, he was able with iron hand to suppress all opposition ; but at the end of twelve years his leave expired, and in 432 he was obliged to return to the Persian court. But with a true perception of the needs of the sit-

uation he managed to secure the governorship anew and was permitted soon to return to Jerusalem.

How far the whole work depended on him personally became evident immediately. Even this brief absence had sufficed to let everything get at odds and ends. The Sabbath was desecrated boldly, the temple tribute was not paid, mixed marriages began to recur. But the most serious offence had been committed by the high priest, Eliashib. He had given a chamber in the temple to his kinsman, Tobiah the Ammonite, whom we know as an enemy of Nehemiah, and his grandson, Manasseh, had even married Nicaso, the daughter of Sanballat, Nehemiah's chief adversary.

And now Nehemiah adopted rigorous measures. He went about the whole country to hunt out mixed marriages and appeal to the consciences of the guilty parties; he punished severely violations of the command of Sabbath rest; he had the gates of Jerusalem closed on Friday evening and kept closed the whole Sabbath, and when heathen traders tried to set up their market without the walls of Jerusalem on the Sabbath, he had them warned and threatened with violent punishment. The temple tithes, likewise, were systematised carefully and provision made for their correct payment. But Nehemiah took the most energetic measures against Eliashib, the high priest. If he might defy his authority with impunity, it would amount to nothing. Without ceremony Nehemiah had Tobiah's household stuff cast out of the chamber in the temple and had the chamber itself reconsecrated; and when Manasseh refused to put away Nicaso, he expelled him from the people and the congregation.

We have a vague hint that a considerable number of priests, who were dissatisfied with the new conditions, joined Manasseh and left Jerusalem. Manasseh went to the home of his father-in-law, Sanballat, and founded there an Israelitish worship according to the old style, which was adopted by all who were dissatisfied with the reforms. This became the religious community of the Samaritans.

This secession was a decided advantage for the reform in Jerusalem: all the hesitating elements withdrew from the city and only those remained who had firm convictions. Now the Jewish community became an harmonious and homogeneous society in which the strict tendency of the reform party prevailed; whoever was dissatisfied had simply to join the Samaritans. Thus there was a clean division on one side as well as on the other, which however was not accomplished amicably, but planted on both sides a rap-

idly growing harvest of passionate hatred. For the further history of the development of religion the Samaritans are without consequence; for a second time, and now for all times, Judah had become Israel, Israel was limited to Judah.

Regarding the length of Nehemiah's second term as governor and his further destinies we know nothing; but the after time shows plainly that he accomplished the work of his life. He impressed the stamp of his spirit upon Judaism for all time and forced it to follow the course he had marked out.

It is one of the greatest ironies of fate known to universal history, or, to speak more correctly, it is one of the most striking evidences of the wonderful ways which divine Providence takes for the attainment of its most important and most significant ends, that the final completion and the permanent consolidation of the exclusive Judaism, which sealed itself hermetically against everything non-Jewish and rejected sternly everything heathen, was accomplished and made possible only under the protection and by the aid of a heathen government, that the reformation of Ezra and Nehemiah, to use a modern phrase, hung on the sword-belt of the Persian *gens d'armes*. And yet the work was of God, and only thus could the religion of revelation be preserved. But for the energy of Nehemiah the whole history of humanity would have run an entirely different course. And therefore we too must look up to this man with gratitude and reverence to this day.

For the next two hundred and fifty years only a few scattered dates are transmitted to us. For universal history they are the most important and portentous of all—I need only name the one name, Alexander the Great. Let us examine what we know of this period and sketch the events of the history of the world only in roughest outline, so far as they are indispensable to the understanding of the history of the people of Israel.

Johanan, the grandson of the high priest Eliashib whom we know, had a brother Joshua, who was a friend of Bagoses, the Persian governor. Bagoses wanted to secure the high priesthood for Joshua; Johanan learns this and murders his brother in the temple during the service. At the news of the crime Bagoses hastens to the temple; when they beg him not to pollute the temple by his presence he answers scornfully: "Do I, perchance, pollute the temple more than the corpse of the slain man?" So he goes in, and for atonement fifty silver shekels have to be paid him for every lamb sacrificed throughout a period of seven years,—at least he made a fine stroke of business out of the death of his friend.

Further, we have the wholly disconnected remark that King Ochus destroyed Jericho and deported a great number of Jews to Hyrcania. In the reign of Ochus it is a fact that all Egypt, Phœnicia, and Coelesyria was in rebellion against the Persians: it is possible that some scattered Jews took part in this, and so there is at least every inner probability for this report.

But the days of the Persian dominion were numbered. Alexander the Great began his marvellous career of victory in 334, and the battle of Issos delivered all Syria and Egypt into his hands. Alexander hastens immediately thither in order to make sure of these countries. What Josephus tells of a visit of Alexander in Jerusalem and his meeting with the high priest Jadduah is pure legend; on the other hand it is quite probable that Alexander, who showed all possible consideration for the religious views of the people whom he subdued, may have granted the Jews exemption from tribute in the sabbatical year and permitted to those going with him to war the observance of their own religious customs. When the Samaritans rebelled against him he added a part of Samaria to Judea.

And so the Jews had been transferred from the Persian rule to that of the Greeks.

We pass over the events and confusion of the succeeding years, remembering only that the battle of Ipsus, in the year 301, put an end to the contentions of the immediate successors of Alexander: Palestine and Cœlesyria fell to Ptolemy of Egypt, and until 198 Judea remained an Egyptian province.

This century is the happiest period that Judea experienced after the loss of her independence. The very first Ptolemy favored the Jews in every way. Not only was the Egyptian administration in Judea exceedingly mild and kindly disposed, but Ptolemy endeavored also to persuade the Jews to settle in Egypt proper. It is even reported that Alexander colonised Jews in his newly founded city of Alexandria. Ptolemy pursued this policy with all energy, because, as Josephus informs us, the Jews were the only ones among all his subjects upon whose oath he could absolutely depend; therefore he preferred to appoint Jews to positions of trust, and granted them in Alexandria complete equality with the Macedonians themselves, "isopolity," as it was called. As the immediate successors of Ptolemy favored the Jews in the same way, Alexandria soon became the second Jewish city in the world, and in Egypt they were numbered by millions.

That this favoring of the Jews by the Ptolemies was based

largely on policy, and that the endeavor to attach to themselves and their family the population of an important and exposed boundary province, is evident from the very fact that Seleucas Nicator, ruler of Syria, the neighbor and rival of Egypt, hastened to grant them in his country and his cities the same privileges : he, too, gave them "isopolity" with Macedonians and Greeks. In the new capital founded by him, Antiochia, this right of citizenship even paid something : there were allowances of oil connected with it ; but since the Jews would not accept this heathen oil, as being polluted, Seleucas issued an order that it should be made up to them in money at the prevailing market price.

As Palestine belongs geographically to Asia, nature herself had assigned it to Syria ; so long as this province was in possession of Egypt, and the Egyptian boundary was thus advanced to the very gates of the capital, Antiochia, the Seleucidæ could not rest nor regard their realm as rounded out and complete. And so, as the result of the inner momentum of circumstances, there soon began the struggles of the Seleucidæ with the Ptolemies in order to take from them this province which was indispensable to Syria.

It is not our office to pursue these fluctuant events in detail. At first the advantage was decidedly on the side of Egypt. There a series of excellent and highly gifted rulers ruled, while the first Seleucidæ after the mighty Seleucas Nicator present a mournful and lamentable picture.

But soon the leaf is turned. The fourth Ptolemy, a Louis XV. on the Egyptian throne, wholly degenerated in the most shameless excesses, allowed everything to decay and rot, while at the same time in Antiochus III., incorrectly called the Great, the throne of the Seleucidæ had received at least an enterprising and energetic ruler. True, the first attack of Antiochus upon Egypt was repelled ; but when in 204 Ptolemy IV. suddenly died and the kingdom was left to his five-year-old son, the confusion in Egypt was great. Now Antiochus took swift measures. In their helplessness the Egyptian regents offered the guardianship of their youthful king to the Romans ; but the Romans were still occupied with Hannibal, and soon after had Phillip V. of Macedon to look after, and accordingly could not at the time give any attention to their Egyptian ward.

After various chances of war Antiochus succeeded in defeating decisively the Egyptian general, Scopas, at Paneas, and in forcing him to capitulate in Sidon, whither he had retreated with

his troops. Thus in the year 198 Palestine and Coelesyria became a Syrian province.

The Jews who had felt the change in condition of the Egyptian state, and who could have no sympathy for such a man as that fourth Ptolemy, received the Syrians with open arms and gave them active support in expelling the Egyptian garrisons, and Antiochus showed his appreciation of their willingness: the whole service in the temple in Jerusalem was put upon the charge of the state treasury, exemption from taxation was granted to everything intended for the temple as well as to the priesthood and all *attachés* of the temple, the entrance into the temple was forbidden to every non-Jew as well as the introduction of unclean animals into Jerusalem, under heavy fines to be paid to the priests of the temple, and all Jews were secured in unconditional religious freedom. Those who had fallen into military captivity and slavery were to be released forthwith. To the population of Jerusalem, and to all who should settle in Jerusalem within a certain period, complete freedom from taxation for three years was granted and after that exemption of one-third.

We see, the new government spares no pains to win the hearts of its Jewish subjects, and these probably looked forward to the future with joyous confidence. But how soon the picture was to be changed! When thirty years had passed over the country Judea was engaged in a desperate struggle with Syria for life and death; and with this we are once more at a turning point in the history of the Jewish people.