

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS NATION

By

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[Prepared For Free Internet Access
By Clifton A. Emahiser's
Non-Universal Teaching Ministries.
With This Work, Rev. Alban Heath
Produced A Very Scholarly Composition,
But Not Entirely Without Error.
Therefore I Have Taken Occasion To
Do A Minimal Amount Of Editing To Clarify
Certain Portions Of This, His Publication.]

LONDON
THE COVENANT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
6 Buckingham Gate, S.W.1

FOREWORD

THE title indicates the scope and purpose of this essay. It does not pretend to be more than an outline of the history of the Seventy Weeks Nation which Daniel said would arise. To have written that history in full would have required a bulky volume, which would have defeated the object in view.

My aim has been, first, to show that history answers to Prophecy in that just such a nation flourished for just such a time as Daniel forecasted, and, by so doing, to show that the Bible is God's revealed Word, in which we may have the most implicit confidence; and, secondly, to provide the interested reader with a simple guide to his own further research, should he desire to pursue the study.

The sources for this period of history are few, and, as far as the Jews are concerned, somewhat scanty. Among Greek writers, Herodotus (*circa* 484-425 B.C.), Xenophon (*circa* 435-354 B.C.), Strabo (63 B.C. - A.D. 25), and Plutarch (*circa* 46 B.C.-?) and among Roman writers, Polybius (*circa* 204-122 B.C.), Livy (59 B.C. - A.D. 17) and Tacitus (*circa* A.D. 55-120) help us a little, but our chief extra-biblical authority is the Jewish [sic Judaeon] historian Josephus (A.D. 37-100).

This essay trips hurriedly and, in some parts, lightly across the pages of history with a minimum of detail sufficient to make a continuous story, but I have tried to indicate in passing where the fuller story may be found.

“God fulfils Himself in many ways,” and to trace in history the fulfilment of His inspired Word is to find a new ground of confidence and a further cause for praise,

ALBANHEATH.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B.C.

- 745-727 Tiglath Pileser, who deported Israelites.*
727-722 Shalmaneser V, who deported Israelites.*
722-705 Sargon II, who deported Israelites.*
705-681 Sennacherib, who deported Judahites. *
604-561 Nebuchadnezzar, who deported Judahites. *
538-529 Cyrus, who overthrew neo-Babylon and issued his edict permitting the return to Jerusalem. *
515 Completion of Zerubbabel's Temple.
478 Esther married to Xerxes I.
465-424 Artaxerxes I, who issued the command to restore and to build Jerusalem.*
458 Exiles return under Ezra.
445-444 Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem and rebuilds the walls.
333-323 Alexander the Macedonian overthrows the Persian Empire and visits Jerusalem.
321 Onias I made high-priest.
320 Ptolemy I, Satrap of Egypt, takes Jerusalem and deports many Jews to Alexandria.
314 Antigonus of Syria takes Palestine from Egypt.
302 Ptolemy retakes Palestine.
301 The battle of Ipsus in which Antigonus is defeated and the empire of Alexander is divided into four kingdoms as foretold in Daniel viii, 22.
300 Simon the Just made high-priest.
292 Eleazar made high-priest.
285-247 Ptolemy II (Philadelphus), King of Egypt. During his reign the Septuagint was made.
277 Manasseh made high-priest.
250 Onias II made high-priest.

*The authority for these dates is the British Museum: A Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities.

B.C.

217 Simon I I made high-priest. The Battle of Raphia in which Ptolemy defeats Antiochus, but being prevented from entering the Holy of Holies he persecutes the Jews in Alexandria.

205 Antiochus the Great takes Palestine ? 198.

198 Onias III made high-priest.

175 Jason buys the high-priesthood from Antiochus.

172 Menelaus outbids Jason and becomes high-priest.

168 Antiochus Epiphanes takes Jerusalem, slays 40,000 people, desecrates the Temple.

167 The Maccabean revolt begins.

165 Judas Maccabeus retakes Jerusalem, purifies and re-dedicates the Temple.

163 Alcimus made high-priest. Menelaus slain.

161 Death of Judas Maccabeus, his brother Jonathan succeeds him:

153 Jonathan becomes high-priest as well as national leader, and so becomes the first of the Asmonean priest-princes.

143 Siion, the last of the Maccabean brothers, becomes high-priest.

135 Simon is murdered, and his second son, John Hyrcanus, succeeds him.

130 John Hyrcanus throws off the Syrian yoke and destroys the rival temple on Mount Gerizim.

107 Aristobulus succeeds his father, John Hyrcanus, and calls himself King of the Jews.

106 Alexander Janneus drives his brother Aristobulus from the throne.

79 Death of Janneus. His widow, Alexandra, becomes queen with the support of the Pharisees. Her son Hyrcanus is made high-priest.

B.C.

70 (69?) Death of Alexandra. (See note at the end.) Hyrcanus II succeeds her, but is driven off the throne by his younger brother .

Aristobulus.

65 Hyrcanus tries to recover the throne.

63 Pompey supports Hyrcanus and takes Jerusalem.

54 Crassus plunders the Temple.

47 Julius Caesar appoints Antipater Proconsul of Judea. Antipater makes his son Herod Governor of Galilee, and another son, Phasaël, Governor of Jerusalem.

40 The Parthians take Jerusalem and Phasaël is slain. Herod flees to Rome, and is appointed King of Judea.

37 After a seige of six months, Herod takes Jerusalem, and as King of Judea reigns thirty-four years.

35 Herod makes Aristobulus III, brother of his wife Mariamne, high-priest, but afterwards causes his death.

29 Herod has his Asmonean wife, Mariamne, executed.

17 After two years of preparation Herod begins the building of the Temple.

4 Birth of Jesus Christ.

The death of Herod.

A.D.

30 The Crucifixion.

70 The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

NOTE. – The above chronological table does not pretend to be absolutely accurate in all its details. Many difficulties are encountered in the field of chronology which cannot be discussed here. Authorities vary in their conclusions, though the differences are, in the main, slight. The above table is sufficiently accurate for a general survey. Whether, e.g., Alexandra died in 70 or 69 B.C. makes no material difference.

“Understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks (of years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

“Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, *even* in troublous times.

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

DANIEL IX, 23-27.

CHAPTER I

THE SCATTERING OF ISRAEL

THE history of the Seventy Weeks Nation has all the fascination of real tragedy. The words put into the mouth of Shylock by Shakespeare, “Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe,”¹ are amply borne out by the struggles they faced and the persecution they endured in the period we are about to review. For the purpose of this essay I have prescribed certain limits for myself, beyond which there is no need to go. It is my purpose to recount the story of the people of Judah from the end of the Captivity to the disappearance of the Seventy Weeks Nation, touching on the periods immediately before and after to that extent which may be necessary to form a connected whole.

Such a story opens up a large part of the Old Testament Scriptures. It makes the Prophets concerned real and living and their messages vital and practical. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, the Prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah become charged with reality and take on a new significance.

Owing to a certain laxity in writing about “The Captivity,” the average reader is too often left in a confused state of mind. Far from being only one Captivity there were many. Some affected Israel, or the Ten-Tribed Northern Kingdom, while others affected the Southern Kingdom, or the House of Judah. It will be well, therefore, to begin by pointing out that sections of the Israel people were deported from their homes by different heathen monarchs to different countries and at widely different periods.

The first of these deportations was in the time of

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, i, 3.

Tiglath-Pileser, who reigned over Assyria 745-727 B.C. “In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.”¹ “And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria and the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them into Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, until this day.”² These captives were of Ten-Tribed Israel as distinct from the House of Judah and they were taken to the country we now know as Mesopotamia. The British Museum authorities identify Pul with Tiglath-Pileser.³

The next deportation was in the time of Shalmaneser V, who was king of Assyria 727-722 B.C. “Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it ... And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”⁴ Samaria was the country of Israel. Again the captives were deported to Mesopotamia, and again the captives were of the House of Israel as distinct from the House of Judah.

Sargon II, 722-705 B.C., does not appear in Old Testament history. Isaiah makes one passing reference to him⁵ but his dealings with Israel find no mention in the sacred writings. But Sargon himself has left the following inscription: “(In the beginning of my reign) the city of Samaria I besieged, I captured ... 27,280 of its inhabitants I carried away; fifty chariots in the midst of them I collected

¹ 2 Kings xv, 29.

² 1 Chronicles v, 26.

³ *Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities.*

⁴ 2 Kings xviii, 9-11.

⁵ Isaiah xx, 1.

(and the rest of their goods I seized); I set my governor over them and laid upon them tribute and taxes like those of the Assyrians.”¹

Later, the Southern kingdom fell a victim to the ravages of heathen rulers. “Sennacherib king of Assyria (705-681 B.C.) did come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.”² While the Scriptures are silent on the subject of deportations at this time, Sennacherib himself has left the following record: “And Hezekiah king of Judah, who had not bowed down at my feet forty-six of his strong cities, his castles, and the smaller towns in their neighbourhood beyond number with warlike engines. ... I attacked and captured 200,150 people small and great, male and female, horses, mares, asses, camels, oxen and sheep beyond number, from the midst of them I carried off and distributed them as a spoil. He himself, like a bird in a cage, inside Jerusalem his royal city I shut him up.”³

When neo-Babylon overthrew the ascendancy of Assyria and became itself the supreme power, Nebuchadnezzar, 604-561 B.C., imposed his heavy yoke upon the king and the kingdom of Judah. The vassalage began in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar.⁴ In the days of Jehoiakim “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant.”⁵

Among the captives taken at this time was Daniel.⁴ From an incidental reference in Esther ii, 5 ff. we learn that some of the captives were exiled to Persia. Mordecai, a Benjamite, was descended from one of these.

After the death of Jehoiakim in 597 B.c., his son Jehoiachin reigned ingloriously for three months.

¹ *Assyria: Its Princes, Priests and People*, p. 178, A.H. Sayce, D.Litt.

² 2 Kings, xviii, 13 .

³ *Records of the Past*, Vol. I, p. 38

⁴ Jeremiah xxv, 1

⁵ 2 Kings xxiv, 1

During this brief reign Nebuchadnezzar “carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen, and all the smiths: none remained, save the poorest of the land. And he carried away Jehoiakin to Babylon.”¹ Among the captives of this period was Ezekiel.²

The tragic figure of Jehoiakin is burdened with many names. In 2 Kings xxiv he is called Jehoikin. Jeremiah calls him Jeconiah³ and Coniah.⁴ In the genealogical table in Matthew i, he is called Jeconias. After his brief inglorious reign he was deported to Babylon,⁵ where he languished in captivity for thirty-seven years, until the rise of Evil-merodach, 561-559 B.C., who “lifted up the head of Jahoiakin, king of Judah,”⁶ and treated him as a royal guest.⁷

The great calamity of Judah fell in 586 B.C., when the kingdom and the throne fell, and the king and the people were carried away into captivity. “Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans (Nebuchadnezzar), who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes: all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to

¹ 2 Kings xxiv, 14, 15.

³ Jeremiah xxiv, 1,

⁵ 2 Kings xxiv, 15.

⁷ Ibid. xxv, 27-30.

² Ezekiel i, 1, 2.

⁴ Jeremiah xxii, 28-30.

⁶ Ibid. xlii, 31.

him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.”¹

“And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.”²

Zedekiah was the last native king to sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. His ultimate fate is shrouded in mystery. In 591 B.C. Ezekiel had prophesied concerning him: “My snare will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it though he shall die there.”³

From the above records we learn that [all of] Israel [and a good portion of Judah] was deported to Assyria while [the remaining remnant of] Judah was deported to Babylon. [paragraph edited by C.A.E.]

In addition to these documented deportations there is evidence that other sections of the Israel people were scattered among the heathen, though we have no precise details of the conditions under which they arrived there. The Book of Esther shows that a large Jewish [sic Judaeans] population existed in the country of Elam, where they were subject to bitter persecution. Elam was situated east of Babylon. Its capital, Shushan, was some 200 miles due east of Babylon.

It is important to remember that *the* Captivity, of which so much is written, was the Babylonian Captivity, and the return of the Exiles, which was such a notable epoch in the history of the Jews [sic Judaeans], was the return to Jerusalem and Judea of those captives who had been exiled in Babylon. “After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.”⁴ It is the subsequent

¹ 2 Chronicles xxxvi, 17-20.

² 2 Kings xxv, 7.

³ Ezekiel xii, 13.

⁴ Jeremiah xxix, 10.

fortunes of these people with which we are concerned in this study.

We have no connected story of the life of the exiles in Babylon. The most we can do, if we would visualise them in captivity, is to piece together isolated facts and follow the implications of occasional references to them. It is interesting to note that during Daniel's long residence in the capital two ex-kings of Judah were living there. As we have seen above, Jehoiakin was living there for upwards of thirty-seven years. He was imprisoned there for thirty-seven years and continued there for some time after. Moffatt translates 2 Kings xxv, 27-30: "On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the imprisonment of Jehoiakin king of Judah, Evil-merodak king of Babylon, then in the first year of his reign, took Jehoiakin king of Judah out of prison; he was civil to Jehoiakin and treated him better than his fellow-monarchs in captivity at Babylon; he changed his prison dress, and Jehoiakin dined with the king every day of his life. An allowance was made for him daily by the king, to maintain him, as long as he lived." Whether "as long as he lived" refers to Evil-merodak or to Jehoiakin seems doubtful. Evil-merodak occupied the throne for two years, 561-559 B.C., when he was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar. At the time of his release from prison Jehoiakin was fifty-five. He was not an old man, but thirty-seven years' incarceration would not be likely to contribute to longevity. How long Jehoiakin lived or under what circumstances he died we have no means of knowing.

The other king in exile during Daniel's time was Zedekiah, who arrived eleven years after Jehoiakin. As shown above, his end is shrouded in mystery.

We hear an echo of the moaning of the captives in Babylon in Psalm 137:

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

The closing verses of that Psalm reveal the depth and bitterness of their resentment and their desire to see vengeance meted out to their captors.

Thus was the once mighty Israel nation broken and its people scattered.

CHAPTER II

THE RETURN OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILES

IN their darkest day of calamity the Israel people cherished the hope that they would be restored to divine favour and to their beloved homeland. So deeply had they been impressed by the words of the Prophets that they never doubted the facts, though there was divergence of views on the interpretation of the facts. Long before the great calamity befell the House of Judah, God had said through the mouth of Isaiah that he would send a man named Cyrus who would “perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”¹ A hundred and fifty years had to elapse before that word of the Lord was fulfilled.

Partisan feeling arose in Jerusalem as to the time when the better day would dawn. There was sharp contention between Jeremiah and the so-called prophet, Hananiah, the son of Azur, a prophet of Gibeon. In the exercise of what he claimed to be a prophetic gift, as early as 593 B.C., Hananiah was raising false hopes by proclaiming that the sacred vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the captives in Babylon, and Jeconiah (Jehoiakin) himself would be restored to their native land within two years. We may safely assume that the wish was father to the thought. A sharp and unseemly contention arose between Jeremiah and Hananiah. Jeremiah, claiming to speak as the Prophet of the Lord, declared with emphatic gestures that the captives would not be released until seventy years were accomplished at Babylon. He wrote to that effect to “the residue of

¹ Isaiah xliv, 28.

the elders” among the captives in the far-off land. So sure was he that he was speaking with divine authority that he advised the captives to settle down to their unpleasant lot, to identify themselves with the civic life of Babylon, to marry, to build houses and to plant gardens.¹ This was cold comfort for the restive exiles longing for release, but subsequent events proved that Jeremiah was correct. However sick the captives might be as a result, they had to accommodate themselves to deferred hope.

The better day began to dawn in 538 B.C. In that year Cyrus captured Babylon and by so doing overthrew the neo-Babylon empire, and the rise of the Medo-Persian empire as prophesied by Daniel became an accomplished fact. Cyrus is called God’s anointed.² How far he was conscious of being a divinely appointed agent may be a subject of dispute. That he did things according to God’s plan and promise history has put beyond all doubt. The very things concerning the Judah people foreshadowed a century before he was born were actually accomplished by or through him. The foundation of the reconstructed Temple was laid during his life time. It was not without significance that the word of the Lord was that Cyrus would be concerned with the laying of the foundation only. History fulfilled that prophecy, for while the foundation of the second Temple was laid while Cyrus was on the throne, the Temple itself was not completed till some fourteen years after his death. So also, the restoration of the city, which was not completed till a century later, was a direct result of the Edict of Cyrus issued in 538 B.C.

In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued his famous decree giving the exiles permission to return to their native city.

¹ On the whole incident read Jeremiah xxviii, xxix.

² See Isaiah xlv, 28; xlv, 1.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem.”¹

This came as a burst of glorious sunshine over the dark lot of the exiles. Their reaction to it is reflected in Psalm 126: “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

We may well ask What led Cyrus to do this magnanimous deed? The record says, “The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.” While that is undoubtedly true as the ultimate explanation, probably human motives were also involved. Cyrus was not only a great military general: he was an astute statesman as well. He knew the art and the value of placating his subjects and subordinates. It was an act of statesmanship on his part to place “Darius the Mede” on the throne of Babylon. Cyrus was a Persian or an Elamite. The Medes were partners in the great empire. We may assume it was calculated policy on his part to give the throne of Babylon, one of his many acquired conquests, to a Mede. If we

¹ Ezra i, 1-3; 2 Chron. xxxvi, 22, 23.

may believe Xenophon, Cyrus was blessed with a generous nature which found more pleasure in giving than receiving.¹

Both his natural disposition and his political astuteness would supply human motives for his act. The presence of discontented exiles in his newly acquired possession could be nothing better than a festering sore in the body politic. He had evidence of their potential value as citizens of his empire, while the restoration of Jerusalem and Judea would be a laurel in his crown. His whole record shows that he was humane in his treatment of the conquered, for it was not his custom to ill-treat those who fell under his yoke.

Whatever explanation we may give for this gracious act the edict meant the opening of a new chapter in the history of the Jewish [sic Judaeans]² section of the Israel people.

Taking advantage of the liberty thus granted, 49,697³ souls returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel.⁴ This multitude, with their horses, mules, camels, and thousands of donkeys swept with wild joy across the dusty roads to the accompaniment of “two hundred singing men and singing women.”⁵ The once dejected slaves of Babylon had found their voices. We may conjecture that the journey would occupy six months. With a much smaller band of followers Ezra, at a later date, spent four months on the journey.⁶ The intervening months between the time of their departure from Babylon and their arrival in Jerusalem would be, we may assume, a time of mass elation. They were going home, and the hazards of the journey were

¹ *The Institution of Cyrus*, viii, 5.

² It was at this time that the term “Jew” came into vogue. See Josephus, *Antiq.* xi, v, 7.

³ Ezra ii, 64, 65.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii, 65-67.

⁶ *Ibid.* vii, 9.

cheerfully faced since every day brought them nearer to the desired goal. The joys of anticipation, added to the knowledge that their shackles were removed, painted the future for them with rosy hues of hope. There is no reliable data to enable us to fix the date of their arrival, but, considering the time required for preparation for the journey and the months occupied in travel, the traditional date of 536 B.C. cannot be far wrong.

One of their first acts after their arrival was the building of an “altar of the God of Israel.” “From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple was not yet laid.”¹ The altar was built not only as a centre of their ritual but also for corporate protection against their foes, “For fear was upon them because of the people of those countries.”² Although there was as yet no Temple, the Temple services were organised. Then amid tumultuous scenes of enthusiasm the foundation of the Temple was laid in the second month of the second year,³ with outbursts of tears and laughter.

But troublous times were ahead. “The adversaries of Benjamin and Judah” succeeded in stopping building operations. By force and power the builders were compelled to cease their activities, and until “the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia,” i.e. 520 B.C., the incompleting structure was a mute witness to the disappointed hopes of the Jews [sic Judaeans].⁴

At this stage the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah found voice. “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel ... Thus speaketh the Lord of

¹ Ezra iii, 6.

³ Ibid. iii, 8 ff.

² Ibid. iii, 3.

⁴ On this development read Ezra iv.

hosts, saying, This people say the Time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built ... Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in ceiled houses and this house to lie waste? ... Consider your ways.”¹ Stirred to action by the stinging words of the Prophet, Zerubbabel began again the building operations, which had been suspended for probably fifteen years.² This revived activity led to official intervention by Tatnai who, as Satrap of Syria, had jurisdiction over Judea. He demanded to know by what authority Zerubbabel was acting. Official correspondence passed between Tatnai and Darius which established the fact that Cyrus had issued a decree for the building of the Temple. Since the law of the Medes and Persians altereth not, that decree was still in force. Accordingly, the work was allowed to proceed. Darius himself issued orders that the work should be done with speed. Fortified by the authority of the reigning monarch, the workers proceeded apace. “This house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king,”³ i.e. in March 515 B.C.

The new Temple was dedicated in time for the celebration of the Passover on the 14th of the following month, as prescribed in Exodus xii, 6.

Thus was laid the foundation of that nation which was destined to so chequered a career and such a tragic end.

¹ Haggai i, 1-5.

² Ezra v, 2.

³ Ezra vi, 15.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDING OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS NATION

WITH the completion and dedication of the second Temple, the first stage in the setting up of the Jewish [sic Judaeen] national life was completed. In the divine plan, the Temple was the centre of the nation's life, the nucleus around which should gather all the activities of a corporate national existence. But more than half a century was to elapse before the new Jewish [sic Judaeen] community emerged as a national entity. In 458 B.C., nearly eighty years after the first return under Zerubbabel and nearly sixty years after the dedication of the second Temple, Ezra arrived at Jerusalem armed with authority for the organisation of the nation.

Between the dedication of the second Temple in 515 B.C. and the arrival of Ezra in 458 B.C. history was being made in distant Shushan. Events that were big with fate for the world and for the Jews [sic Judaeans] were transpiring in the Persian capital. Xerxes I succeeded his father, Darius the Great, in 485 B.C., and for twenty years presided over the destinies of Persia. There is no longer any reason to question the identity of Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther with the Xerxes of secular history. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* supports this view, and Moffatt entertains no doubt on the subject, for he translates by the name of Xerxes without any qualification. The facts recorded in Esther about Ahasuerus and the facts recorded by Herodotus about Xerxes support and supplement one another.

According to the Book of Esther, in the third year of his reign, that is 483-482, Ahasuerus called together "all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia

and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces”¹ who remained together for six months. “He made a feast”; but we cannot conceive of a feast, or a banquet as Moffatt translates it, lasting for six months. Nor can we conceive of any sane king withdrawing his leading officials from their posts for so long an interval merely for a round of gaiety. Such a gathering for so long a time presupposes state business of importance. The record of Herodotus shows that such important business was under consideration at such a time. “Xerxes, after the reduction of Egypt (484. B.C.) when he was about to take in hand the expedition against Athens, convoked an assembly of the principal Persians, that he might hear their opinion and himself make known his intentions before them all.” To his gathered councillors he said, “I intend to throw a bridge over the Hellespont, and to march an army through Europe against Greece, that I may punish the Athenians for the injuries they have done to the Persians and to my father.”² The conference was protracted. Opinions for and against the project were advanced. The king’s uncle, Artabanus, expressed views unfavourable to the undertaking and Xerxes vacillated. His resolutions made by day faded into uncertainty owing to his visions by night. But in the end, the king had his way. “Thus Xerxes, son of Darius, led five millions two hundred and eighty-three thousand two hundred and twenty men to Sepias and Thermopylae.”³ That he might view the successful operations of his forces “There had been previously erected on a hill at this place (i.e. Abydos) for his express use, a lofty throne of white marble, the people of Abydos had made it, in obedience to a previous order of the king.”⁴ A military undertaking of this

¹ Esther i, 3.

³ Ibid. vii, 186.

² Herodotus vii, 8 ff.

⁴ Ibid. vii, 44.

magnitude may well have occupied the conference between the king and his officials for six months.

Following the conference “The king made a feast unto all the people that were present at Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days in the court of the garden of the king’s palace.” At the same time, “Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house.”¹ At the king’s feast, while there was no compulsory drinking, there was “royal wine in abundance.” “On the seventh day, when the king’s heart was merry with wine,” he insulted the womanhood of his queen.² His improper request was rightly resented by Vashti and she refused to comply. Her dignified and becoming refusal resulted in the loss of her position as queen. Subsequently, the Jewish maiden, Esther “obtained grace and favour in his sight ... so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.” The importance of this marriage to the Jewish nation appears a few years later.

It is recorded that this betrothal took place in the seventh year of the reign of Xerxes, i.e. 478 B.C., and the question arises, Why the delay of some four years between the divorce with Vashti and the marriage with Esther. The known circumstances supply the answer. To begin with, the preparation of Esther for presentation at court occupied a year (ii, 12). The expedition from Shushan to Europe would account for many months. In the spring of 480 B.C. Xerxes led his troops into Greece. He took Athens with the loss of 200,000 men. In the same year on October 20th he lost the great sea-battle of Salamis. On September 22nd, 479 B.C., his forces

¹ See Esther i and ii.

² Josephus, *Antiq.* xi, 6, 2, infers the request implied nothing more than a breach of etiquette in that women were forbidden to attend gatherings of men, but I read it as implying much more than that.

were defeated at Plataea and his attempt on Greece had failed. In the light of these things it is easy to see why the marriage was delayed.

On the death of Xerxes in 465 B.C. his son, Artaxerxes Longimanus, i.e. the long-handed, ascended the throne. His long reign of forty-one years supports the view that he ascended the throne as a youth or a boy. There is insufficient data at present to establish the view that he was the son of Esther though there is a strong probability that he was. His attitude toward, and his treatment of, the people of Esther are best explained on that assumption.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, that is 458 B.C., Ezra arrived in Jerusalem bearing a royal warrant for the setting up of a Jewish [sic Judaeon] national state. The document is couched in most generous terms.

“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven: all greetings, etc. And now I issue a decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, or any of their priests and Levites, who choose to go up to Jerusalem may go with you; the king and his seven advisers send you to hold an enquiry upon Judah and Jerusalem in terms of the law of your God, which is in your possession, and also to convoy the silver and gold which the king and his advisers have vowed to the God of Israel, whose dwelling place is in Jerusalem, with any silver and gold you can find in all the province of Babylon, and with what the people and the priests freely offer for the house of their God in Jerusalem. With this money you must take care to buy bullocks, rams and sheep, and the usual cereal offerings and libations, sacrificing them upon the altar in the temple of your God in Jerusalem. The rest of the silver and gold, you and your fellows may spend as you think best, carrying out the will of your God.

The utensils given you for the worship of the house of your God, you will also present before the God of Jerusalem. You will draw upon the king's treasury for any further sums which you require to spend on the house of your God. I, Artaxerxes the king, I issue this decree to all the treasurers west of the Euphrates: whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, may demand from you, is to be granted him without delay, up to forty-one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds in silver, a hundred quarters of wheat, nine hundred gallons of wine, nine hundred gallons of oil, and salt unlimited. Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be carried out in full for the God of heaven; why should God's displeasure be upon the realm of the king and his sons? You are also instructed that it is unlawful to impose toll, tribute, or taxes upon any of the priests and Levites, singers, warders, temple attendants, or servants of this temple of God. As for you, Ezra, by the wisdom of your God to which you have access, appoint magistrates and judges to rule all the people west of the Euphrates, men who know the laws of your God, and instruct any who are ignorant of them. And whosoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let sentence be executed upon him instantly: death, banishment, confiscation of property or imprisonment."

This decree is a business-like document. It contains detailed instruction to Ezra in regard to the proper institution of the Temple services and provides means for the required sacrifices and offerings. It contains explicit instructions to the provincial authorities west of the Euphrates and virtually gives Ezra authority over them all. It authorises the setting up of a judicial system in Jerusalem and gives Ezra the power of life and death. By this

decree Ezra has plenary powers to set up civil and religious organisations for the expression and protection of the corporate life of the people. There is no reference to military organisation. It may be advanced that the Law embodies military clauses, but it is better to assume that Artaxerxes intended to exclude all military power from the decree.

Armed with these wide powers, Ezra organised a body of 1,754 men to proceed to Jerusalem to give effect to the decree. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah Ezra is called a priest and a scribe. In 2 Esdras he is called a Prophet. Josephus writes of him: “There was now in Babylon a righteous man and one that enjoyed a great reputation among the multitude.”¹ The spirit of the man is reflected in his decision against the use of a military escort for the journey. He had said so emphatically that God was with them that he “was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way.”² The journey occupied four months, “For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and in the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem,³ which was the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king,”⁴ that is, he arrived in 458 B. C.

It would appear from the records that Ezra’s company included many of the official class. A number of signatories to the covenant of repentance⁵ bear the names of men of Ezra’s band, and the signatories were “princes, Levites, and priests.”⁶

Thirteen years later, under the royal warrant of Artaxerxes, the final stage in the setting up of the Seventy Weeks Nation was reached. Up to this time, the reproach of Jerusalem remained. The city

¹ *Antiq.* xi, v, 1.

³ *Ibid.* vii, 9.

⁵ Nehemiah x, 1-27.

² Ezra viii, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.* vii, 8.

⁶ Nehemiah ix, 38.

walls were still in ruins. Since protecting walls were the distinguishing marks of an ancient city, Jerusalem, in the eyes of its citizens, was under reproach. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the city and “brake down its walls.”¹ Smarting under this reproach the patriot Jeremiah exclaimed in poignant words: “The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem.”²

The reproach of the ruined walls stung the great hearted Nehemiah to action. News brought to him at Shushan by visitors from Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes³ distressed him. After prayer and much meditation he appealed to the king for leave of absence to proceed to Jerusalem on the ground that “The city, the place of my fathers sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire.”⁴ His petition was granted and in the month of Nisan (March), 445-444, he left for the sacred city. Unlike Ezra, he had a military escort probably by the expressed wish of the king.⁵ He was expected to return, and the king wished to protect the life of his valued servant.

As the king’s cupbearer, Nehemiah held an influential and a lucrative position. That he was a man of substantial means may be inferred from chapter v, 14-18. That he was equally generous with his means is certain. Under the sense of a divine urge he embarked on the enterprise of restoring the walls indifferent to the toil of manual labour. But as ever with great-souled endeavour Nehemiah found the adversary in his path.

Sanballat, the Satrap of Samaria, viewed the revival of Judah with misgiving. The ascendancy

¹ 2 Kings xxv, 10.

² Lamentations iv, 12.

³ Nehemiah i, 1; ii, 1.

⁴ Ibid. ii, 3.

⁵ Ibid. ii, 9.

enjoyed by the province of Samaria during the decay of Judah was threatened by the revival of the latter. The family of Sanballat had intermarried with that of the high-priest, and Sanballat found support against the noble Nehemiah inside the broken walls of the city. Sanballat and his confrères at first ridiculed the enterprise of Nehemiah, but this resulted in no slackening of effort by the builders. Ridicule failing, Sanballat resorted to a threat of force. “They conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”¹ To counter this Nehemiah organised his forces on the principle of “Trust in God, but keep your powder dry.” Nehemiah naïvely reports, “We made our prayer to God, and set a watch against them day and night.”² It was insinuated that Nehemiah was plotting a rebellion,³ but none of these things moved him. The work proceeded apace, and the wall was completed. “So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.”⁴

Nehemiah’s astuteness is reflected in several incidents. Three days after his arrival in Jerusalem he made a secret night inspection of the walls and gates of the city.⁵ During the building operations he used personal interest to reinforce patriotism by setting the builders to repair the walls “everyone over against his house.”⁶ When the work was finished he gave instructions to the keepers to “Let not the gates be opened until the sun be hot.”⁷

By the building of the walls and the hanging of the gates the reproach of the city was removed. The way was now open for the formal institution of the Law as related in Nehemiah, chapters viii-x. The

¹ Nehemiah iv, 8.

² Ibid. iv, 9.

³ Ibid. vi, 6.

⁴ Ibid. vi, 15.

⁵ Ibid. ii, 13.

⁶ Ibid. iii, 28.

⁷ Ibid. vii, 3.

inaugural ceremony was held under the direction of Ezra the priest. The Law of the Lord now became the code of the community in its civil and religious life. Standing on a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, Ezra and his companions “read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused (the people) to understand the reading.” A feature of this ceremony was the notable prayer of Ezra. This was followed by the covenant of repentance signed by “our princes, Levites and priests.”

While reading the Law on the second day, they were reminded of the Feast of Tabernacles appointed for the seventh month from the 15th to the 22nd. This feast was duly observed at the proper season.

There remained for attention the peopling of the city. Most of the immigrants had settled on the land, and it became necessary to see that the city was adequately populated. The balance was restored by drafting by lot one out of every ten of the rural population to the urban area. “And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem” (xi, 2).

Thus was established the Seventy Weeks Nation which, a century before, Daniel said would arise. Its starting point was to be the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. This must be regarded as the decree of Artaxerxes and not that of Cyrus. The decree of Cyrus was to restore the Temple; that of Artaxerxes meant restoring the city with its civic and religious life. Unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God.¹ They were to safeguard the principles of revealed religion and keep the flame of hope burning during the dark days until the coming of the King.

¹ Romans iii.

CHAPTER IV

A NATION WITHOUT A HISTORY

“HAPPY is that nation that has no history.” To reverse the adage, The nation that has no history is happy. History in this sense is the story of strife and conflict, war and calamity. In times of peace and prosperity, when there is little to disturb the even flow of life, incidents are rare. It is the practice of both individuals and corporate bodies to leave unrecorded the brighter side of fortune. Struggle and conflict, war and catastrophe fill chapters of the records, while periods of peace and prosperity are dismissed in silence or honoured with a few brief paragraphs. It is the unusual that arrests attention. Very little is known about the new nation during the Persian period. In the absence of records to the contrary, we are left to assume that peace and prosperity marked the life of the Jews [sic Judaeans] at this time. It is not until Alexander the Great appears on the horizon that storm clouds begin to gather and “history” begins to be written. The only information we have of the Jews [sic Judaeans] during this period is such knowledge as may be gleaned from the Prophets of the time and from the works of ancient writers.

We are left to infer that with the setting up of the Seventy Weeks Nation Judea was raised to the dignity of a province of the Persian empire.¹ For more than a century, with the exception of the few years of Cambyses, the Artaxerxes of Ezra iv, 6, the attitude of the Persian rulers to the Jewish [sic Judaeans] state was one of benevolent toleration. Cyrus, Darius Hystaspes, Xerxes I and Artaxerxes all treated the province of Judea with consideration and even magnanimity. The governors of neighbouring provinces had instructions to assist the Jews [sic Judaeans], and

¹ Ezra v, 8; Neh. i, 3.

such opposition as was offered by men like Tatnai was discontinued by imperial command. Indeed, it was never anything more than official zeal for the good of the empire and its ruler. The difficulties encountered by the young state arose not from its foes without; they sprang from its foes within.

The new state was a nation but not a kingdom. The primary meaning of the word “nation,” the dictionary tells us, is a number of people “*Born of the same stock: the people inhabiting the same country, or under the same government.*” The people of the Seventy Weeks Nation were born of the same stock. They were descendants of Abraham. One of their chief cares was to discourage any intermixture by marriage with those of other races. Pride of race was and is a distinguishing feature of the Jews [sic Judaeans]. It was customary for the Persian rulers to characterise tributary states as nations. Thus Darius the Mede notified the various nations of the empire of his decree of religious toleration for the Jews [sic Judaeans] in his own kingdom.¹

While the new state was a nation it was not a kingdom. It had no king. Neither Zerubbabel nor Ezra nor Nehemiah had received any authority to set up a throne. That some form of government was in force we must assume as a social necessity; but what form of government prevailed during the Persian period can be gathered only from the writings of the Prophets who flourished at the time, and from such ancient authors as make any reference to the Jews [sic Judaeans]. We can say definitely what the government was not. It was not a theocracy in the sense that early Israel was. Its overlord was the king of Persia. It was not a monarchy like Israel in David’s time. It was not a republic with the right of independent legislative and political action. It was not a democracy with full

¹ Daniel vi, 25.

authority vested in the people. Nor could it be called at this time a pure hagiocracy.

Tacitus sets out “to trace the origin of the people” ¹ (Jews [sic Judaeans]) but while he has much to say about their religion, based mainly upon hearsay evidence, he contributes nothing to our knowledge of their political organisation in the Persian period. “The God of the Jews [sic Judaeans] is the great governing mind, that directs and guides the whole frame of nature, eternal, infinite, and neither capable of change nor subject to decay.” ² But the Jewish [sic Judaeans] nation, as stated above, was not a theocracy, and these words, valuable as they are as a testimony to their faith, cast no light on their political institutions during the Persian period.

From Josephus, and from the contemporary Prophets, we learn that the Jewish [sic Judaeans] state was, politically, like other provinces in the empire while in religion it was granted freedom to follow the faith of Israel of old. All provinces had a titular head commonly called a governor. “They delivered the king’s commissions ... to the governors on this side of the river.” ³ Nehemiah was entrusted with messages to the governors beyond the river. ⁴ In the same manner the Jewish [sic Judaeans] State had its governor. “Let the governor of the Jews [sic Judaeans] and the elders of the Jews [sic Judaeans] build this house of God.” ⁵ Nehemiah speaks of himself as governor. “From the time I was appointed to be their governor” ⁶ and contrasts his financial policy with that of “former governors.” ⁷ Again we read of “the days of Nehemiah the governor,” ⁸ Haggai refers to Zerubbabel as governor (viceroy) of Judah, ii, 21, and Malachi asks if their imperfect offerings would be acceptable to the governor (viceroy), i, 8. The records concerning

¹ *History* v, 5.

³ *Ezra* viii, 36.

⁵ *Ezra* vi, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.* v, 15.

² *History* v, 5.

⁴ *Nehemiah* ii, 7.

⁶ *Nehemiah* v, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.* xii, 26.

Zerubbabel,¹ Ezra, and Nehemiah show that their appointments were made by authority of the king. We have seen that the elders of the Jews [sic Judaeans] are coupled with the governor in Ezra vi, 7, but they were not at this time the supreme authority in the state. Nehemiah asserts his authority over them² and there is no objection raised. From this we must infer the supreme authority was vested in the governor. It should be noted that Nehemiah was a layman and not a priest. Such rule is in keeping with that which marked the period of Moses, when Moses and not Aaron was the governor of the people. It was Moses, the national leader, and not Aaron the priest, who exercised authority at the time of the golden calf incident.³ Moses reproved both the priests and Aaron, and Aaron acknowledged Moses as his lord.⁴

A reason for the political peace at this time may be found in the loyalty of the Jewish [sic Judaeans] state to the court of Persia. That this loyalty marked the whole period till the rise of Alexander the Great is a just inference. During his seven months' siege of Tyre, 333 B.C., Alexander sent to the Jewish [sic Judaeans] high-priest in Jerusalem a demand for supplies for his army, and a further demand that the tribute formerly sent to Darius III should henceforth be sent to himself as the new master. The reply of the high-priest is a tribute to his high sense of honour and to his loyalty to the Persian overlord. "The high-priest answered the messengers, that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him; and he said he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living."⁵ The friendly attitude of the Persian court had merited such loyalty, but friendliness is not always rewarded with such noble gratitude.

During this period the chief foes of the state were

¹ 1 Esdras iii, iv.

² Nehemiah xiii, 4-14.

³ Exodus xxxii, 19-29.

⁴ Ibid. xxxii, 22.

⁵ Josephus, *Antiq.* xi, 8, 3.

within and not without. Religious infidelity and the tendency to compromise, which had wrought such havoc in the life of Israel, showed themselves again in this early period of the Jewish [sic Judaeen] state. The Temple was there, but it was not honoured as it should have been. The city walls were built, but however useful they were in protecting them against the enemy without they were no safeguard against spiritual declension and moral corruption within. During Nehemiah's temporary absence "Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: and he prepared for him a great chamber"¹ actually within the sacred precincts of the Temple. Eliashib was the high-priest; Tobiah was an Ammonite enemy of the people. During the formal institution of the Law they had read in Deuteronomy "And therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever,"² but in complete disregard of this injunction Eliashib had taken Tobiah into his bosom. Eliashib was the high-priest, and Tobiah an Ammonite, so the high-priest, who might be supposed to be a custodian of tradition, made a domicile for one of the hated race in the sacred building itself. This looked like an act of defiance. On his return, Nehemiah "cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber,"³ as at a later date the Messiah cleansed the Temple of the money changers, who had defiled the house of the Lord by turning it into a den of thieves.

It was only to be expected that the rank and file would fail in their duty to the Temple when its chief official had so conspicuously failed. The Temple dues were not being paid and the Levites were driven by

¹ Nehemiah xiii, 4.

² Ibid. xiii, 1, (but cf. Deuteronomy xxii, 34.)

³ Ibid. viii.

force of circumstances to work in their fields to the neglect of their sacred duties. “I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled everyone to his field.”¹ It was a divine provision that the Levites should have land abutting on the city for the maintenance of their cattle.² Since their services were in the interest of the whole nation, it was a divine decree that they should be a public charge. The Temple was to be the nucleus around which all the activities of the state should gather, and the nation could flourish only as long as the sacred rites were supported and maintained. Failure at the centre meant failure in the whole circumference. Malachi accuses the people of robbing God Himself by withholding their tithes and offerings³ and as a challenge to an adventurous faith bids them put God to the test.

Here then was an abuse calling for vigorous reform. With characteristic zeal Nehemiah addressed himself to the task. He accused the rulers of forsaking the house of God and caused “the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil” to be brought into the storehouses of the Temple.⁴

A further abuse was the desecration of the sabbath by free and open trading. Merchants of Tyre were established within the city. The Jews [sic Judaeans] themselves were openly violating the regulations of the sabbath day. The strong hand of Nehemiah put down such irregularities. “And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought

¹ Nehemiah xiii, 10. ² Numbers xxxv, 1-8.

³ Malachi iii, 8. ⁴ Nehemiah xiii, 12.

in on the sabbath day.”¹ “For one or two sabbaths the traders and dealers in all manner of wares trafficked outside Jerusalem. But I protested. I said to them, ‘Why are you remaining about the walls? If you do it again I will punish you.’ From that moment, they never came again on the sabbath” (Moffatt).²

From these incidents we learn that the chief authority in the new nation was not the priest but the governor. By tacit consent, he held autocratic power.

¹ Nehemiah xiii, 19. ² Ibid. xiii, 20.

CHAPTER V

THE HIERARCHY

NEHEMIAH was the last civil governor of whom we have any record. Malachi refers to a nameless governor, or viceroy, and since Malachi was probably a contemporary of Nehemiah we may assume Nehemiah was the viceroy referred to.

Between the death of Nehemiah and the advent of Alexander the Great little is known of the Jewish [sic Judaeans] State. The mild regime of the Persian overlords resulted in political peace for Judea. When secular history takes up their story the Jews [sic Judaeans] emerge as a pure hierarchy. There is no longer a civil governor. The high-priest appears as the head of the State. When this change took place we have no means of knowing. It may have been a rebound from the strong rule of Nehemiah, but more probably it was a gradual change due to neglect of the Temple by the rank and file in the way reflected in the writings of Malachi, for priestcraft flourishes when the people are indifferent to the claims of religion.

With the rise of Alexander the Great the affairs of the Jewish [sic Judaeans] nation underwent a change. History began to be made and written. Political storms were to break over the once placid surface of the Jewish [sic Judaeans] national life and the puny state found itself the sport of chance and the butt of contending rival powers. Alexander himself proved to be, on the whole, a generous enemy. While besieging Tyre about 332 B.C. he sent a demand to Jerusalem for supplies for his army and, assuming the role of conqueror, gave instructions for the tribute, formerly paid to Darius III; to be sent in future to himself. Jaddua the high-priest sent a reply which did credit to himself and the people. A little later, the Macedonian took Jerusalem

under circumstances that still have interest for the student of the times.

When Alexander had taken Gaza he turned his attention to Jerusalem. The news of his invasion of Syria had already reached the holy city, and the high-priest was alarmed at the prospect of an attack on Jerusalem. In a dream, he was warned to take courage, to adorn the city, and to open the gates to the invader. He and the priests were directed to appear in their official robes, while their attendants were to present themselves in white garments. When news of Alexander's approach reached the city, Juddua and his court went out to meet and greet the invader. The attendants were clad in white, the priests in fine linen, while, as high-priest, Juddua appeared in purple and scarlet, wearing the mitre and the golden plate inscribed with the sacred name. Such a spectacle impressed Alexander. He advanced alone, saluted Juddua, and adored the holy name. The Jews [sic Judaeans] saluted and welcomed him. When Parmenio, one of his attendants, asked why Alexander the adored of all should himself pay reverence to the high-priest of the Jews [sic Judaeans], Alexander replied: "I did not adore him, but that God who hath honoured him with his high-priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who ... exhorted me to ... pass over the sea ... for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians ... I believe that I bring this army under the Divine conduct ... and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind."¹ Alexander gave the high-priest his right hand and came into the city with the priest running beside him. Proceeding to the Temple, Alexander "offered sacrifice to God, according to the

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xi, 8, 5.

high-priest's direction, and magnificently treated the high-priest and the priests." Despite the doubts expressed ¹ about the trustworthiness of this story it is in keeping with the character and habits of Alexander. It was the policy of Alexander to blend East and West and to assimilate the various nations into one great whole. Moreover, it was his habit to worship his gods with a frequency that did credit to his finer instincts. Plutarch writes of him: "On his days of leisure, as soon as he was risen, he sacrificed to his gods."² In the light of this custom there is nothing improbable in the story of his worshipping in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Much to his delight, he was shown Daniel's prophecy to the effect that a Greek king would arise to overthrow the Persian empire.³ Believing himself to be the king referred to, he assumed the role of benevolent conqueror and lavished his favours upon the Jews [sic Judaeans]. He granted them the right to observe the laws of their forefathers, and remitted the tribute in the sabbatical year.

After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. his empire was dissolved, and there began that scramble by his generals for place and power in which the Jews [sic Judaeans] were to suffer so much. Laodemon took possession of Syria, which included Judea, but was soon challenged in his possession by Ptolemy Soter (saviour), who was installed as Satrap of Egypt. Ptolemy attempted to seize the whole of Syria. In 321 he advanced against Jerusalem and took it by adroit, not to say contemptible, methods. Taking advantage of the Sabbath, rightly assuming the Jews [sic Judaeans] would offer no resistance on that day, and giving the impression that he came to offer sacrifice, Ptolemy found easy ingress to the city. "The

¹ Milman, *History of the Jews*, Vol. I, p. 352.

² *Life of Alexander the Great*.

³ Daniel viii, 7.

conqueror carried away 100,000 captives, whom he settled chiefly in Alexandria and Cyrene,” says Milman,¹ though he thinks the number, which is given on the authority of Aristeas, may be open to question. Thus began what was to be a long, tragic chapter in the history of the Seventy Weeks Nation.

But strange are the ways of Providence! The deportation of these Jews [sic Judaeans] to Alexandria led indirectly to the issue of the Septuagint, that is, the Greek version of the Old Testament scriptures. A full account of the steps leading up to this may be read in Josephus, *Antiq.* xii, 2. During the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-247 B.C., Demetrius Phalerius, the royal librarian, advised the king to procure the Hebrew laws “as being the legislation of God” and have translations made by competent scholars. Appeal was made to Eleazer, the high-priest in Jerusalem, to send scholars capable of making the translation. It was a costly undertaking. Just how costly is difficult to determine, for Josephus does not specify whether the talents were of gold or silver. Hadyn’s *Dictionary of Dates* observes: “Septuagint Version of the Bible, made from Hebrew into Greek, 277 B.C. Seventy-two translators were shut up in thirty-six cells; each pair translated the whole; and on subsequent comparison the thirty-six copies did not vary by a word or letter. *Justin Martyr*. St. Jerome affirms that they translated only the Pentateuch; others say they translated the whole. Ptolemy Philadelphus gave the Jews about a million sterling for a copy of the Old Testament, and seventy translators half a million more for the translation. *Josephus*. Finished in seventy-two days. *Hewlett*. The above statements are merely *traditional*.” Whatever difficulty there may be in accepting all the traditions, the fact remains that the Greek Version was made

¹ *History of the Jews*, Vol. I, p. 353.

and is still in use. By its issue the wider world became acquainted with the holy law and was in a position to share in the glorious hope of a coming Messiah.

From 321 B.C. to 198 B.C. Egypt was the nominal master of Judea, but not without challenge from Syria. Judea was the bridge between those rival powers, and its geographical position exposed it to the terrors of border conflicts. The rise of the Seleucids in 312 B.C. added energy and ability to the leaders of the Syrian forces. Antiochus the Great, the outstanding genius of the Seleucids, determined to wrest Phoenicia, Coelosyria and Judea from Egypt, and, as usual, the Jewish [sic Judaeon] State suffered in the conflict. In 219 B.C. Antiochus overran Judea, which leads Josephus to observe: “Now it happened that in the reign of Antiochus the Great, who ruled over all Asia, that the Jews ... suffered greatly, and their land was surely harassed.”¹ Ptolemy accepted the challenge. Two years later he drove the Syrians from Judea. The rival forces met at Raphia, near Gaza,² when Antiochus suffered a crushing defeat.

In the exuberance of victory Ptolemy Philopator went to Jerusalem and made costly presents to the Temple. Not content with this, he essayed to enter the Holy of Holies. Simon the high-priest protested, but Ptolemy was persistent. A wild tumult of wailing and shrieking arose from the people, which appears to have been taken as a supernatural intervention to prevent the attempted sacrilege. Stricken with awe and fright, Ptolemy shook with agitation, and then fell speechless to the ground. Later he conceived an implacable hatred of the Jewish [sic Judaeon] people, and a great massacre of Jews [sic Judahites] in Alexandria ensued, the first for some two hundred years.

¹ *Antig.* xii, 3, 3.

² “Next to Gaza is Raphia, where a battle was fought between Ptolemy the Fourth and Antiochus the Great” (Strabo xvi, ii, 31).

The death of Ptolemy Philopator in 205 B.C. opened a fresh chapter of sorrow for the Jews [sic Judaeans]. The heir to the Egyptian throne was Ptolemy V (Epiphanes), a child of five.¹ This circumstance lent itself to Antiochus for his schemes of revenge. He formed a league with Philip V of Macedon, ostensibly for the support and protection of Egypt, but really with designs on the territory of the infant king. Philip “acquired confidence from a treaty which he had formed with Antiochus, king of Syria, in which they had divided the wealth of Egypt between them; in which, on hearing of the death of Ptolemy, they were both intent.”² The Egyptian forces were led by Scopas, at whose hands the Jews [sic Judaeans] suffered severely. After a fierce conflict at Paneion Antiochus gained possession of Judea in 198 B.C. So great had been the sufferings of the Jews [sic Judaeans] through the invasion of Scopas that they welcomed Antiochus as a deliverer. Doubtless with a desire to attach the people of his newly acquired province to his person, Antiochus remitted their taxes for three years, granted them a “pension” and gifts in kind for the Temple offerings, and closed the sacred precincts to all foreigners.³

The same year saw a change in the high-priesthood. Onias III (198-171 B.C.) succeeded his father, Simon II. Some four years later a marriage was arranged between Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus, and Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) when Antiochus ceded the conquered provinces to Ptolemy as part of his daughter’s dowry, though the revenue was to be shared by the two kings. Ten years later Antiochus was allowed to resume possession by his Treaty with Rome, which stipulated that he must “Resign all

¹ The Rosetta stone, the foundation of modern knowledge of Egyptian writing, contains his coronation decree.

² *Livy* xxxi, 14.

³ *Antiq.* xii, 3, 3.

pretensions in Europe and cede that part of Asia which lies on this side of Mount Taurus.”¹ The following year Antiochus the Great died and was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV (Philopator, 187-175 B.C.).

Seleucus began by treating the Jews [sic Judaeans] with generous favours, “Insomuch that Seleucus king of Asia of his own revenues bare all the costs belonging to the services of the sacrifices”²; but his reign was to witness those convulsions which proved disastrous to the Jewish [sic Judaeans] State. While Josephus makes no mention of the Heliodorus incident, the full and circumstantial account in 2 Maccabees iii ff. so fitly explains subsequent events that there seems no sufficient ground for doubting its authenticity. The peace of the city was disturbed by a personal feud between Onias the high-priest and Simon the governor of the Temple. Onias had allowed Hyrcanus, “a man of great dignity,” to deposit his wealth in the Temple for safe keeping. Simon betrayed the secret to Apollonius, governor of Coelosyria, and enlarged on “the infinite sums of money” lodged in the Temple, “and that it was possible to bring all into the king’s hands.” The news was duly reported to Seleucus, whose cupidity was aroused. He sent Heliodorus to collect the treasure, but through divine intervention the intended robbery was prevented.

Thence arose one of those bitter feuds which, from time to time, wrought havoc in the Jewish [sic Judaeans] State. “This Simon now, of whom we spake afore, having been a betrayer of the money, and of his country, slandered Onias, as if he had terrified Heliodorus, and been worker of these evils.” Each had his partisans. The realm was torn by faction, with dire results for the State. Onias “went to the king, not to be an accuser of his countrymen, but

¹ Livy xxxvii, 45.

² 2 Maccabees iii, 3.

seeking the good of all, both public and private,” but the quarrel outlasted Seleucus.

With the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) Jason plotted to obtain the high-priesthood for himself by bribing the new king. Though brother of the high-priest, ties of blood did not prevent his intrigue. He offered a large sum for the mitre. He flattered his royal master by outlining a programme “for training up the youth in the fashions of the heathen, and to write them of Jerusalem by the name of Antiochans.” The plan was approved. Onias was dethroned. The renegade, whose real name was Jeshua, or Joshua, adopted the Greek name of Jason and proceeded to hellenise the life of the nation. Greek fashions, even hats, were adopted; Greek games, including the discus, were introduced. The distinctive marks of Israel were suppressed.

Three years later Menelaus, Simon’s brother, out-Jasoned Jason by offering an increase of three hundred talents of silver for the mitre. “Then Jason, who had undermined his own brother, being undermined by another, was compelled to flee into the country of the Ammonites. So Menelaus got the principality.” The powder line was laid. In 172 B.C., Onias was murdered. In 168 Antiochus took Jerusalem, plundered and defiled the Temple, and slew 40,000 persons. In 163 Menelaus was himself slain and Alcimus became high-priest of the ruined State.

Not content with this orgy of crime and slaughter, Antiochus resolved on the suppression of the Jewish [sic Judaeen] religion and, probably, also of the Jewish [sic Judaeen] State. He had earned the nickname “madman.” He certainly behaved like one. He resolved to hellenise all the countries of his realm. He issued an edict for uniformity of worship throughout his dominions, and

commissioned “an old man of Athens” to give effect to his will in Samaria and Judea. The Samaritans submitted without resistance, and their temple on Mount Gerizim was dedicated to Zeus Zenius. Athenius began his work in Judea by converting the Temple into a shrine of Zeus Olympias. The sacred courts were turned into arenas for obscene revels of the most shameful order, “Neither was it lawful for a man to keep sabbath days or ancient feasts, or to profess himself at all to be a Jew [sic Judaeon].” Two mothers whose children had been circumcised were led through the city with their babes at their breasts and thereafter were hurled from the city walls to destruction. A company of the faithful were burnt in a cave where they had sought refuge.

The great test of conformity was the eating of swine’s flesh. This was forced upon the people. The aged Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, spat the offending food from his mouth and, when urged by his friends to pretend, he uttered the noble words which breathe the spirit of the martyr: “It becometh not our age in any way to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being fourscore years old and ten, were now gone to a strange religion; and so they, through mine hypocrisy, and a desire to live a little time and a moment longer, should be deceived by me, and I get a stain to mine old age, and make it abominable. For though for the present time I should be delivered from the punishment of men: yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive, nor dead.” In one day seven noble sons of one noble mother allowed themselves to be horribly mutilated in succession “rather than transgress the laws of our fathers.” When urged to counsel her last remaining son to recant and live, the noble matron besought him to stand firm and die. “Fear not this tormentor,

but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.” “So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord. Last of all after the sons the mother died.”¹ The career of Antiochus ended some four years later in circumstances that friend and foe alike regarded as divine retribution. “The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, smote him with an incurable disease.” “And thus he that a little afore thought that he might command the waves of the sea ... and weigh the high mountains in a balance ... was carried in an horselitter ... so that the worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man, and whiles he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army.”² With the hand of death gripping his throat, he had the effrontery to send a letter to the Jews [sic Judaeans] in which he asked them “to remember the benefits I have done unto you generally, and in special, and that every man will still be faithful to me and my son.” “Thus the murderer and blasphemer having suffered most grievously, as he entreated other men, so died a miserable death in a strange country in the mountains.”³ So passed one of the most diabolical characters of whom we have record. “He died in the course of his return at Tabae, in Persia, driven mad, as some say, by some manifestations of divine wrath.”⁴ He shares with Nero and Herod the distinction and the odium of being the most detestable monarch whose record besmirches the pages of history.

In the dark record of this hideous time there stands out in contrast the heroism and fortitude of the persecuted Jews [sic Judaeans]. We may reasonably suppose that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had

¹ For a full account, see 2 Maccabees vi, vii. ² Ibid. ix, 9.

³ Ibid. ix, 35. ⁴ Polybius xxxi, 11.

those heroes and heroines in mind when he penned the closing verses of chapter xi. With epic fortitude “They met the tyrant’s brandished steel.” But four years before the death of the execrable Antiochus their endurance had reached the breaking-point. Led by the noble Mattathias and his sons, the people fled to arms in defence of their religion and their independence, and bequeathed to posterity a thrilling chapter in the annals of enterprise, endurance and martial skill.

CHAPTER VI

THE MACCABEES

DURING the dark days referred to at the end of the previous chapter there arose the Asmonean revolt which, under the distinguished leadership of Judas Maccabeus, resulted in the overthrow of the Syrian hosts and the recovery of Jewish [sic Judaeans] independence. The epic struggle deserves far greater recognition than it has received, while the genius of its most distinguished leader and the valour of his brave army are worthy of places of honour in the world's temple of fame. Like their brethren of Israel, the Jews [sic Judaeans] have seen their proudest exploits left unrecorded on the broadsheets of popular history, or dismissed by only faint notice by sycophants whose chief aim was to glorify their masters. While such exploits as those of Leonidas and his brave band of Spartans have justly received the praise of men, the still greater exploits of Judas Maccabeus have lain buried under the lumber of forgotten things. The highest tribute the modern world has paid to Judas Maccabeus came from Handel, and is enshrined in his oratorio of that name. Literature generally has failed to appreciate the great military genius and political liberator whose name was Judas Maccabeus.

In furtherance of his hellenising policy, Antiochus sent Appelles to enforce his will against Modin, a town on a lofty eminence on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem. In Modin dwelt Mattathias, an old man of distinguished priestly line, of the course of Joarib, the first of David's twenty-four courses, and a descendant of Eleazar, the elder son of Aaron. He had five sons in the flower of their manhood: Johanan, Simon, Judas surnamed Maccabeus, Eleazar, and Jonathan. All were inspired with a fiery

zeal for the cause of the Lord and His people. Appelles addressed Mattathias with flattering words, and dangled before his aged eyes the bait of royal favour if he would fulfil the king's commands. With dignified hauteur the patriarch spurned the offer and declared that he, his sons, and his brethren would walk in the covenant of their fathers. "God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words."

At this juncture a renegade Jew [sic Judaeen] advanced to the altar to offer sacrifice after the fashion desired by the king. The indignant patriarch rocked under the stress of an emotional storm, "Wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar." The king's commissioner met with a similar fate, after which Mattathias pulled down the altar and raised the standard of revolt. Inspired by his example, his sons and the braver spirits gathered around Mattathias and, leaving all their possessions behind them, sought refuge in the mountains. The king's forces in Jerusalem followed and overtook them, and on the Sabbath day attacked and slew a thousand unresisting people. More than once the Jews [sic Judaeans] had borne disaster rather than violate what they had regarded as a principle of Sabbath observance. In view of their recent experience and of the great task ahead of them Mattathias and his followers resolved henceforth not to allow themselves to be chopped to pieces without an effort to defend themselves. They would defend themselves on the Sabbath.

Among the first to join the patriotic band were the Assideans, whom we must identify with the Pharisees. Spurred on by zeal for the Law, "Mattathias and his friends were round about, and pulled down the altars." They embarked on a campaign of compulsory circumcision for children "found

within the coast of Israel.” The stage was set for an organised revolt against their Syrian masters, but advancing age and weakness rendered Mattathias unfit for effective leadership. Calling his sons around him, he exhorted them to be loyal to the noblest ideals of their race, and for their inspiration he pointed to the example of the ancient worthies: from Abraham to Daniel. “And thus consider ... that none that put their trust in him shall be overcome.” He nominated Judas as the leader, saying, “Let him be your captain, and fight the battle of the people.” Shortly after Mattathias died.¹

Judas “the hammerer” – for such appears to be the meaning of the word “Maccabeus” – combining earnest prayer with vigorous action, proved to be a hammerer indeed. “Then Judas Maccabeus, and they that were with him, went privily into the towns, and called their kinsfolk together, and took unto them all such as continued in the Jews’ [sic Judaeans] religion, and assembled about six thousand men. And they called upon the Lord, that he would look upon the people that was trodden down of all; and also pity the temple profaned of ungodly men; and that he would have compassion upon the city, sore defaced, and ready to be made even with the ground; and hear the blood that cried unto him, and remember the wicked slaughter of harmless infants, and blasphemies committed against his name.”² Judas and his valiant band did exploits. In an engagement with Appolonius of Samaria he defeated “the great host out of Samaria,” slew Appolonius, and ever after wore his victim’s sword. Then Seron, “a prince of the army of Syria,” measured his strength against Judas but was routed with a loss of 800 men.

Antiochus was roused, and embarrassed. The hellenising policy he had followed in Judea he had

¹ See 1 Maccabees, ii.

² 2 Maccabees viii, 1-4.

pursued with equal vigour in other provinces. His exchequer was depleted. Armenia and Persia refused to pay tribute. Despite his paucity of funds he “Opened his treasure and gave his soldiers pay for a year” and then turned to Persia to avenge himself on his recalcitrant subjects, with the hope of replenishing his treasury. Dividing his forces, he placed Lysias in charge of the army west of the Euphrates while he himself prepared to advance against Persia with the remaining troops. Lysias was instructed to “destroy and root out the strength of Israel” and people the land with strangers. “Lysias chose Ptolemy ... and Nicanor, and Gorgias, mighty men” to lead the undertaking and supplied them with 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry. So confident were they of victory that slave dealers accompanied the army by invitation of Nicanor with gold and silver “to buy the children of Israel for slaves,”¹ but, like Haman, it was their fate to suffer the lot they had planned for others.

With 5,000 footmen and 1,000 horse Gorgias planned a surprise attack on Judas by night. As ever, the intelligence service of Judas was alert and news of the contemplated surprise was conveyed to the leader. Judas quietly removed his camp under cover of darkness. At daybreak, with 3,000 men, Judas met and routed Gorgias. The defeated enemy retreated with a loss of 3,000 men. Much spoil fell to the victors, including “much gold, and silver, and blue silk, and purple of the sea, and great riches.”

The following year, with 60,000 infantry and 5,000 horse, Lysias made a still more desperate effort to subdue Judas and his band. “They came into

¹ “So Nicanor undertook to make so much money of the captive Jews [sic Judaeans] as should defray the tribute of two thousand talents, which the king was to pay to the Romans” (2 Maccabees viii, io).

Idumea and pitched their tents at Bethsura, and Judas met them with 10,000 men.” Once again victory was with Judas. Lysias lost 5,000 men and retreated to Antioch for reinforcements.

This victory gave Judas possession of Jerusalem. In less than three years he had overcome the might of Antiochus and wrested the independence of Judea from the grip of the Syrians. His first act was to cleanse the polluted sanctuary. The altar of burnt offerings was pulled down and newly built. The desecrated Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated “on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called Casleu,”¹ (December), three years and ten days after its spoliation by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The success of Judas embittered the surrounding nations and systematic persecution of the Jews [sic Judaeans] in their midst arose. In Joppa, two hundred Jews [sic Judaeans] were treacherously murdered. They were decoyed on to the ships in the harbour and then deliberately drowned. Judas attacked Joppa and burned both houses and ships. Similar treatment was meted out to Jamnia. He chastened the Idumeans and the Ammonites and returned to Jerusalem to learn that his kinsfolk in Galilee and Gilead were in grave peril. Dividing his forces, Judas entrusted his brother Simon with the command of an expedition against Galilee while he and his brother Jonathan marched into Gilead. Both expeditions were successful.

Shortly after this, Antiochus Epiphanes died, as related on page 56, and his young son, Antiochus V, Eupator, was enthroned by Lysias.

The new king led an army of 100,000 foot and 20,000 horse against Bethsura and besieged it. In this attack the Syrians used elephants, an arm of war

¹ 1 Maccabees iv. 52.

with which the Maccabeans were not acquainted. Eleazer, the fourth of the Maccabean brothers, crept under the flank of one of these animals and slew it, but the elephant fell upon Eleazer and crushed him to death. Against this overwhelming force Judas was powerless. He retreated to Jerusalem. It was the Sabbatic year and Bethsura was faced with famine for food was scarce. Bethsura capitulated, and soon Jerusalem was in the throes of a siege. Relief came in an unexpected way. The army which Antiochus Epiphanes had led into Persia returned, after his death, under Philip, who was a rival of Lysias. Both claimed the guardianship of the young king. Under these circumstances, Lysias advised his master to make peace with the Jews [sic Judaeans]. This was done; but Antiochus basely broke the terms of peace as soon as he was admitted to Jerusalem by breaking down the wall Judas had built.¹

Now arose a period of internal strife among the Syrians. By ascending the throne of Syria Antiochus Epiphanes had usurped the right of Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV. On the death of the usurper, Demetrius emerged from Rome, where he had lived as a hostage, slew the youthful Antiochus and Lysias, and took the throne as Demetrius I, Soter (i.e. saviour). Demetrius was shrewd enough to take advantage of the divisions which were beginning to show themselves in the ranks of the Jews [sic Judaeans] at Jerusalem.

Onias III, who had fled to Antioch to escape from the intrigues of Menelaus, left a son, the rightful heir to the high-priesthood, whom, for convenience, we may call Onias IV. During the illegal high-priesthood of Jason and Menelaus Onias IV courted the help of Egypt. He fled thither and enjoyed the protection of the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philometor

¹ On this period see 1 Maccabees vi.

(181-146 B.C.). Onias appears to have favoured hellenism, and Egypt, with its large Jewish [sic Judaeans] population and Greek Bible, the Septuagint, offered a fertile soil for that cult. He appealed to Ptolemy for permission to build a temple in Egypt at a place he had selected “replenished with sacred animals,” “for the prophet Isaiah foretold that ‘there should be an altar in Egypt’.” Ptolemy, judging by the nature of his reply, was not very enthusiastic. “We cannot but wonder that it should be pleasing to God to have a temple erected in a place so unclean, and so full of sacred animals. But since thou sayest that Isaiah the prophet foretold this long ago, we give thee leave to do it.”¹ “So Onias took the place, and built a temple, and an altar to God, like indeed to that at Jerusalem, but smaller and poorer.”²

There were now three temples: the Temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, and the hellenistic temple in Egypt. Rivalries sprang up, and disputes followed as to which was *the* Temple. The case was argued before Ptolemy and his court. Strangely enough, no claim seems to have been made for the pre-eminence of the Egyptian Temple. Sabbeus and Theodosius were counsel for the Samaritan party. The Alexandrian Jews [sic Judaeans] sided with the Jerusalem party and “took it very ill that any should take away the reputation” of the sacred edifice in Jerusalem. In the end, Ptolemy decided in favour of Jerusalem, and Sabbeus and Theodosius forfeited their lives for their pains.³

Amid the changes in the personnel of the high-priesthood, a more serious change was made. When, by order of Antiochus Eupator, Menelaus was put to death (*circa* 163 B.C.) the high-priesthood of Jerusalem, which, since the return from exile, had

¹ For full correspondence see Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii, 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* xiii, iii, 4.

remained in the family of Jozadak, passed to another family. Alcimus became high-priest. He held the office for four years, when “he was smitten by God” and died.¹

Alcimus assumed the leadership of the hellenistic party. He had long aspired to the high-priesthood, and took an early opportunity of canvassing the support of the new king Demetrius. He had attached to his cause “all the wicked and ungodly men of Israel,” and if the Assideans (Pharisees) were not actually identified with that cause their later deeds suggest that they were in sympathy with it. Alcimus gained the ear of Demetrius before he had come near Jerusalem and represented to the king that “Judas and his brethren have slain all thy friends, and driven us out of our own land. Now therefore send some man whom thou trustest, and let him go and see what havoc he hath made among us.” Flattered by this seeming zeal for his interests, Demetrius sent his friend Bacchides, who “was a great man in the kingdom,” “that he should take vengeance of the children of Israel.” Alcimus was made high-priest.

The envoys “came with a great power into the land of Judea, where they sent messengers to Judas and his brethren with peaceable words deceitfully.” Judas declined the bait. But the Assideans, trusting in the sacred character of the high-priesthood, “were the first ... that sought peace of them,” and though assured of peace and safety, had the mortification of seeing sixty of their number treacherously murdered in one day. Entrusting the governorship to Alcimus, Bacchides returned to the king at Antioch.

Distrustful of the new regime, Judas went around the villages to rally the patriots. “When Alcimus saw that Judas and his company had gotten the

¹ *Antiq.* xii, 10, 6.

upper hand, and knew that he was not able to abide the force, he went again to the king, and said all the worst of them that he could. Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his honourable princes, a man that bare a deadly hate unto Israel, with commandment to destroy the people.” Again there was an attempt to ensnare Judas with flattering words; but without success. At the battle of Capharsalama Judas discomfited Nicanor, who retreated to the citadel of Zion with a loss of 5,000 men. Certain priests met him peaceably, but Nicanor “abused them shamefully.” He threatened to “burn up this house” unless Judas and his army were delivered into his hand. A decisive battle was fought at Adasa at the end of February, 161 B.C., when Nicanor was slain. The independence of Judea was won.¹

At this juncture, Judas made his one fatal mistake. He entered into alliance with Rome. He who all through his brilliant career had trusted in the God of Israel, now made a treaty with a heathen power.² His messengers returned from Rome carrying with them the brazen tablets on which the terms of the treaty were inscribed, but the career of Judas was ended. To avenge the death of Nicanor, Demetrius sent Bacchides with an army of 20,000 foot and 2,000 horse, against which Judas could muster only 3,000. Even this small number was reduced by continuous desertions. The treaty with Rome was not popular with the Assideans and the Jews [sic Judaeans] of the stricter sort. In the end Judas had only 800 men. The result was a foregone conclusion. “If the time be come,” said Judas to his men, “let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honour.” Victory fell to Bacchides. The crowning disaster for the Jews [sic Judaeans] was the death of their stalwart leader, whereon

¹ On this period see 1 Maccabees vii. ² See 1 Maccabees viii.

his followers fled.¹ Thus ended a noble life, honourable alike to the man who lived it and to the race that gave him birth. “How is the valiant man fallen, that delivered Israel.”

Judas was slain in 161 B.C. Thence followed a time of distress for the Jews [sic Judaeans]. Driven from Jerusalem, the followers of Judas sought refuge in the wilderness of Tekoa, where famine added to their terrors. Jonathan, the youngest of the five brothers, was elected leader, while Simon aided with his wise counsel. Their first act was to avenge the death of their brother Johanan, who had been treacherously murdered by the Arabs. Angered by this deed, Bacchides attacked them on the sabbath day in the marshes of the Jordan, but was repulsed with a loss of a thousand men. The Jews [sic Judaeans] escaped by swimming the river.

The hellenising party of Jerusalem found fresh hope and confidence when they learned that Jonathan and his men had been driven into the wilderness, and persuaded Bacchides that it would be an easy matter to capture them. Bacchides, however, was again checked by Jonathan, “Wherefore he was very wroth at the wicked men that gave him counsel to come to the country, insomuch that he slew many of them, and prepared to return to his own country.”² Jonathan felt himself strong enough to suggest terms of peace to Bacchides, “which thing he accepted and did according to his demands and sware unto him that he would never do him harm all the days of his life.”³ Prisoners of war were restored, and Bacchides appeared pleased to end his fruitless conflict.

While these events were passing at a distance from the city, other events of far-reaching importance were

¹ See 1 Maccabees ix.

² 1 Maccabees ix, 69.

³ Ibid. 70.

transpiring in the city itself. Elated at the success of Bacchides in the overthrow of Judas, Alcimus was in the act of destroying the wall of the inner sanctuary, which Judas had built, when he had a seizure and died. “Now when Bacchides saw that Alcimus was dead he returned to the king: whereupon the land of Judea had rest for two years.”¹ Alcimus died in 159 B.C., and for six years the sacred office was vacant. In 153 B.C. Jonathan, who was already the national leader, became high-priest as well. Thus arose the order of Asmonean priest-kings, the high-priest being both the civil and the religious head of the State.

¹ 1 Maccabees ix, 57.

CHAPTER VII

THE ASMONEAN¹ KINGDOM

THE rise of Jonathan initiated a new form of government. The two offices, that of the high-priest, and that of the national leader, devolved upon one man. This change came about not by any calculated policy on the part of the Jews [sic Judaeans], but arose from fortuitous circumstances. Alexander Balus, who pretended to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes, claimed the throne of Syria which was occupied by Demetrius. The rivals vied with each other for the support of Jonathan and each in turn made extravagant bids for that support. Demetrius was first in the field. He wrote empowering Jonathan to raise an army and commanded that the tower of Zion with its occupants should be handed over to Jonathan. This was followed by a letter from the pretender appointing Jonathan as high-priest. He sent also “a purple robe and a crown of gold.”² At the Feast of Tabernacles in 153 B.C. Jonathan donned these insignia. For ten years he filled the dual office of high-priest and ruler of the nation.

Jonathan renewed the treaty with Rome. He also interchanged letters with the Lacedemonians in which was established the kinship of the Jews [sic Judaeans] with the people of distant Greece. “It is found in writing, that the Lacedemonians and Jews [sic Judaeans] are brethren, and that they are of the stock of Abraham.”³ In the end, Jonathan was treacherously murdered in the city of Ptolemais, and Simon, the last of the five noble brothers, became “high-priest and governor and leader of the Jews [sic Judaeans],”⁴ in 143 B.C.

¹ Sometimes spelt “Hasmouran.”

² 1 Maccabees xi, 20.

³ 1 Maccabees xii, 21.

⁴ Ibid. xiii, 42.

“Now when it was heard at Rome, and as far as Sparta, that Jonathan was dead, they were very sorry. But as soon as they heard that his brother Simon was made high-priest in his stead and ruled the country, and the cities therein: they wrote unto him in tables of brass, to renew the friendship and league which they had made with Judas and Jonathan his brethren.”¹ Thus, “loved at home and revered abroad,” Simon embarked on that distinguished if brief career which was to earn for him the praise of posterity. Like his brother Jonathan, Simon was treacherously murdered, together with his sons Mattathias and Judas, by Ptolemeus. While on an official visit in the region of Jericho he was invited to a banquet only to meet his death at the hands of Ptolemeus, son of Abubus, son-in-law of Simon, in 135 B.C.²

Simon was succeeded by his second son, John Hyrcanus, who presided over the destinies of the Jews [sic Judaeans] for thirty years. Under John, the Jews [sic Judaeans] embarked upon a career of military conquest. In 130 B.C. the rival temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed. Idumea and Samaria, the long hated rivals of Israel, were subjugated.³ In the twenty-sixth year of his reign, the sons of John, Aristobulus and Antigonus, effected their reduction. The city of Samaria was laid waste, and its site turned into pools of water fed by its own copious springs. The Holy Land, under the name of Judea, was restored to its ancient limits under the rule of the priest-kings.

During the rule of John Hyrcanus, the Pharisees and Sadducees emerge as powerful sects. Their origin is lost in the mists of antiquity, but their

¹ 1 Maccabees xiv, 16-18.

² Ibid. xvi, 16.

³ According to Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii, ix, 1, Hyrcanus forced the Edomites to submit to circumcision. The Edomites were destined to supply a dynasty of rulers under which the Jews [sic Judaeans] suffered fatally. [Hence, the proselytized Edomite-jews must be separated from the true Judaeans as two distinct entities! *C.A.E.*]

subsequent history made indelible marks on the life of the community. The Pharisees had been among the first to identify themselves with the Maccabean revolt. At the end of his career, Hyrcanus broke with the Pharisees and joined with the Sadducees.¹ Hyrcanus died 106 B.C., the first of the Maccabean succession to escape a violent death.

Hyrcanus bequeathed the civil government to his wife, but his son, Aristobulus, imprisoned his own mother, starved her to death, caused his brother Antigonus to be murdered, seized both the government and the high-priesthood, and founded the Asmonean monarchy which was destined to last some seventy troubled years. Aristobulus I lived to enjoy his distinction for only one year, when he died in bitter remorse. Josephus reports him as saying: “A sudden punishment is coming upon me for the shedding the blood of my relations. And now, O thou most impudent body of mine, how long wilt thou retain a soul that ought to die, in order to appease the ghost of my brother and my mother?”²

He was succeeded by his brother, Alexander Janneus, who signalled his succession to the throne and priesthood by putting to death his next brother on suspicion of aspiring to the crown.³ Alexander reigned for twenty-seven troubled years. The judgment of Milman is “Alexander was an enterprising rather than a successful prince.”⁴ He spent some years in an endeavour to extend his dominions to the east of Jordan, and while the weakness of surrounding nations contributed to the success of his efforts in that direction, disaffection at home made his hold on his own people precarious. The Pharisees were his inveterate foes. For six years there was civil war. In self-defence Alexander

¹ See Josephus, *Antig.* xiii, x, 5, 6. ² *Ibid.* xiii, xi, 3.
³ *Ibid.* xiii, xii, 1, ⁴ *History of the Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 389.

employed a large body of mercenaries, yet, despite this, he could not withstand the onslaught of the insurgents. His 6,000 mercenaries were cut to pieces, and he himself escaped by fleeing to the mountains. Then occurred one of those unaccountable revulsions of popular feeling. The people gathered around him, and he found himself at the head of an army of 60,000 with whom he marched to Jerusalem in triumph. He took a terrible vengeance on the people for their recent insurrection. At a banquet, at which Alexander and his concubines were present, he publicly crucified 809 men, and slew their wives and children before their faces.¹ Strabo rightly refers to a “tyrannical government” at this time, but wrongly says, “the first person who exchanged the title of priest for that of king was Alexander.”² Yet so far had the nation become degraded that the populace was compelled to witness the spectacle of a high-priest, great-grandson of Simon the Maccabee, banqueting with his wives and concubines, while 800 men languished in the lingering throes of crucifixion, mentally tortured by the massacre of their wives and children, whom they were powerless to protect.

Four years later Alexander became mortally afflicted. He called his wife, Alexandra, and advised her to come to terms with the Pharisees in her own interest as succeeding Queen, and hoping to secure a decent funeral for himself. “If thou dost but say this to them, I shall have the honour of a more glorious funeral ... and thou wilt rule in safety.”

Alexandra wore the crown for nine years (78-69 B.C.), but her power was only nominal. Since a woman could not be high-priest, her son Hyrcanus was elected to that office. While the civil government

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii, xiv, 2.

² Book XVI, chap. ii, 40.

³ *Antiq.* xiii, xv, 5.

was nominally in the hands of the Queen, it was really in the hands of the Pharisees. They first strengthened their party by releasing all prisoners and recalling all exiles, after which they demanded that justice be done to all who had been accessory to the slaughter under Alexander.

The Pharisee party with Hyrcanus as their chief were busy with their schemes for revenge, while Aristobulus, a younger son of Alexander, led the opposition. The latter represented to the Queen that to abandon those who had loyally supported Alexander would be base ingratitude. Alexandra appears to have been in sympathy with Aristobulus, but found herself on the horns of a dilemma. To openly support Aristobulus meant to break with the Pharisees on whose sufference she relied for her crown. Moreover, the question of the succession was exercising her mind. While favouring Aristobulus, she saw that he had small chance of succeeding to the throne unless he could gain the support of the army to counteract the influence of the Pharisees. She found a way to achieve the double object. She drafted men of the Pharisee party for garrison duty at the frontier towns, and sent Aristobulus with an army, ostensibly to stop the depredations of Ptolemy, king of Chalsis, but really with secret designs on Damascus. She saw that the success of the expedition under Aristobulus would strengthen the attachment of the army to his person, and thereby improve his chances. She had judged aright. After reigning for nine years, Alexandra died *circa* 69 B.C.

Hyrcanus II, with the support of the Pharisees, nominally succeeded his mother, Queen Alexandra, but his slender hold on the diadem was quickly and successfully challenged by his brother. Anticipating the death of the queen, Aristobulus secretly left

Jerusalem and gathered to his banner the army, and those who sympathised with his cause in the frontier garrisons. The Pharisees were defeated at Jericho, and Hyrcanus sought refuge in the tower of Baris. He surrendered after a short siege, and yielded both the high-priesthood and the diadem to Aristobulus, who allowed Hyrcanus to retire peacefully.

The reign of Aristobulus II (69-63 B.C.) was marked by strife and civil discord. Seed sown by his father began to bear fruit. Alexander had appointed Antipater, a distinguished Idumean, as governor of Idumea. His son, Antipater, was brought up at the royal court, and was supposed to have embraced the Jewish [sic Judae]an religion. The ambitious Antipater gained an ascendancy over the mind of the weak Hyrcanus and, on the plea that his life was in danger, persuaded him to flee for protection to Aretas, King of Petra. Hyrcanus returned with Aretas and an army of 50,000.¹ Aristobulus was defeated and took refuge in the Temple, which was promptly besieged. The Passover was at hand, and the besieged had no lambs to sacrifice. The besiegers, ostensibly marshalled in support of the high-priest, Hyrcanus, undertook to supply the necessary victims if the besieged would lower from the walls baskets containing the price, but when the baskets were lowered they took the money and left the baskets to be hauled up empty, or loaded with pigs instead of lambs.²

One dastardly act of barbarity disfigures the record of Hyrcanus and his allies at this time. They appealed to one “Onias, a righteous man ... beloved of God,” who had won renown by praying for rain which had fallen. He was unwilling to intercede with God at this hour. When forced to speak, he prayed that God would assist neither one

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv, ii, 1,

² *Ibid.* xiv, ii, 2.

side nor the other, whereupon he was stoned to death.¹

At this time Rome, courted by both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, intervened in the dispute. She might plead in justification of this act the century old treaty between herself and the Asmonean princes, but she never needed any encouragement to plant her iron heel on the necks of smaller powers. The brothers vied with each other in bidding for the support of Pompey. Scaurus, a lieutenant of Pompey, decided in favour of Aristobulus and Aretas retired at the Roman's command under the threat of being treated as an enemy of Rome. Aristobulus attacked the retreating army of Aretas in the rear "and slew about 6,000 of the enemy."²

The following year Pompey arrived in person and heard the case of the brothers against each other and, also, the case of the people versus the two brothers. The people now protested against the hierarchical kingdom as a usurpation. The wily hand of Antipater was seen in the presence of a thousand of the most distinguished Jews [sic Judaeans] who supported Hyrcanus on the ground of primogeniture. The case for Aristobulus was supported by "a troop of insolent youths, splendidly arrayed in purple, with flowing hair and rich armour, who carried themselves as if they were the true nobles of the land," says Milman.³

With designs of his own in Arabia, Pompey had no wish to antagonise either of the brothers lest increasing bitterness on their part should prove a check on his own enterprise. "When Pompey had heard the causes of these two, and had condemned Aristobulus for his violent procedure, he then spake civilly to them, and sent them away, and told them,

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv, ii, 1.

² *Ibid.* ii, 3.

³ Vol. I, p. 396.

that when he came again into their country he would settle all their affairs after he had taken a view of the affairs of the Nabateans. In the meantime, he ordered them to be quiet, and treated Aristobulus civilly, lest he should make the nation revolt and hinder his return.”¹ But Aristobulus was not to be placated by flattery. The cold if dignified manner of Pompey had left on the mind of Aristobulus the impression that Hyrcanus was favoured. As soon as Pompey had left, Aristobulus began to prepare for resistance. The Roman returned promptly. Aristobulus met him and offered to surrender Jerusalem. But he omitted to say the city was in the hands of Hyrcanus, and when the Roman legate advanced to take possession he found his advance challenged by Hyrcanus. Pompey threw Aristobulus into chains and marched towards Jerusalem with his whole army. Hyrcanus opened the gates to the invaders and the friends of Aristobulus sought refuge in the Temple. The Temple held out for three months, when it was taken by assault and 12,000 Jews [sic citizens] were slaughtered. In 63 B.C. Pompey entered the Temple and penetrated to the Holy of Holies itself. Finding no image in the sacred shrine he had the grace to leave the sacred vessels and the Temple treasures untouched, and even ordered the Temple to be purified. The high-priesthood and the principality of Judea proper were conferred upon Hyrcanus, but he was forbidden to assume the crown. Aristobulus with his two daughters and his two sons, Alexander and Antigonus, was carried off to grace the victor’s triumph in Rome, but on the way Alexander escaped, and Aristobulus and Antigonus escaped from Rome some time later.

Hyrcanus II exercised nominal power from 63 to

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv; iii, 3.

40 B.C. but Antipater as a servant of Rome was the real ruler. Judea was nothing more than a part of Syria though its judicial and financial administration was separated from the larger province.

Alexander, who escaped as stated above, appeared with an army of 10,000 foot and 1,500 horse, and Hyrcanus was compelled to seek Roman protection. Gabinius, the pro-consul of Syria, was in command of the Roman forces while Mark Antony was one of his lieutenants. Alexander was soon at the mercy of the Roman legions but, through the intervention of his mother in Rome, he was granted an amnesty. He rewarded his benefactors by a second revolt in 56 B.C., when he was utterly defeated and saved his life only by flight.

Gabinius deprived the high-priest of supreme power and set up five great Sanhedrims at Jerusalem, Jericho, Gadara, Amanthus, and Sepporis, but Hyrcanus was restored to the principality by Julius Caesar *circa* 44 B.C.

The first triumvirate, established by Rome in 60 B.C., had assigned to Crassus the province of Syria in the year 55 B.C. In the following year he arrived at Jerusalem on his disastrous march against the Parthians. His cupidity was aroused by the display of wealth in the Temple, which had been foolishly shown to him by Eleazar, the priest who was guardian of the sacred treasure. Unlike Pompey, Crassus could not resist the temptation to enrich himself at the expense of the sacred courts. He pillaged the Temple and carried away wealth estimated at two million sterling. In his expedition against the Parthians Crassus perished and the Jews [sic Judaeans] regarded this as divine vengeance for his infamous deed.

The outbreak of civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey in 50 B.C. had disastrous repercussions

on the Seventy Weeks Nation. Caesar freed Aristobulus from imprisonment in Rome and sent him with two legions to Judea “that he might set matters right,”¹ but he was waylaid by the army of Pompey and poisoned. His son Alexander was executed by Scipio at Antioch. Thus Hyrcanus retained the sovereignty in name, but the power behind the throne was Antipater, the father of Herod. During the campaign of Rome against Egypt in 48 B.C. Antipater had rendered Caesar signal service. He was now rewarded by being appointed Procurator of all Judea, and by being made a Roman citizen. Hyrcanus was graded as Ethnarch of Judea, and was granted remission of taxation in the Sabbatic year. The few remaining years of the Asmonean Kingdom concern more the aggrandisement of the family of Antipater than the fortunes of the Asmonean dynasty.

Antipater had four sons, Phasaelus, Herod, Joseph, and Pheroras, and one daughter, Salome, and the promotion of their interests became his chief concern. In utter disregard of the claims of Hyrcanus, he appointed Phasaelus governor of Jerusalem. Herod, who figures so prominently in the sacred narrative, he appointed governor of Galilee. In 37 B.C. Herod married Mariamne, the grand-daughter of Hyrcanus I, and thus became allied with the Asmonean house of the Jews [sic. Judaeans].

The death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. robbed Hyrcanus of his imperial protector. Cassius took the administration of Syria. Heavier taxes were laid upon Judea which Malichus, the responsible collector, was unable to raise. Antipater came to his aid by making good the deficiency from the treasures of Hyrcanus, but was basely poisoned through the instrumentality of Malichus in requital.

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv, vii, 4.

The second triumvirate, 43 B.C., gave the dominion in the east to Mark Antony, who raised Herod and Phasaelus to the dignity of Tetrarchs in 41 B.C., and committed to their charge the two governments of Syria and Judea.

While Mark Antony was dallying with Cleopatra in Egypt, the spirit of revolt showed itself in Syria, aided by the Parthians. Upon this, Antigonus, the last surviving son of Aristobulus, made a bid for the throne of Judah. He offered the Parthian general a thousand talents and four hundred women of the noblest Jewish [sic Judaeen] families if he would enable him to gain possession of the Jewish [sic Judaeen] throne. With his Persian allies, Antigonus marched against Jerusalem and took it. Hyrcanus and Pharsalus were made prisoners. Herod, realising that his own life was in danger, placed his mother, his sister, and Mariamne his betrothed under the protection of his brother Joseph and an Idumean force on the west of the Dead Sea, and escaped to Rome. His ostensible mission was to plead the cause of Aristobulus, the brother of Mariamne, but the real mission was in his own interests.

Antigonus, 40-37 B.C., was the last ruler of the Asmonean dynasty. Though nominally ruler in Jerusalem, Antigonus found his Persian allies were the real masters. They plundered the city and ravaged the surrounding country. Phasaelus anticipated the executioner by committing suicide in prison. Hyrcanus was mutilated by the removal of his ears, and thus rendered ineligible for the high-priesthood in terms of Leviticus xxi, 17-24. He lived for some years, but in the end was put to death by Herod on a charge of treason in 30 B.C.

Herod's business in Rome was quickly despatched. Seven days were sufficient for the purpose, and within three months he was back, not as a mere

Tetrarch, but as king of Judea, a title conferred on him by the Roman Senate. Herod never lacked ability to ingratiate himself with those who could advance his interest. Octavius (later, Caesar Augustus) and Mark Antony both favoured his elevation to the throne. In 37 B.C. he besieged Jerusalem, which was now in the hands of Antigonus. The siege lasted six months. The scarcity of food added to the sufferings of the besieged. During the siege Herod completed his marriage with Mariamne in the hope of winning the favour of the Asmoneans. The city was taken on a Sabbath day, and such was the blood lust of the Roman legions that Herod was constrained to appeal to them not to leave him the king of a depopulated city. Antigonus was captured and sent in chains to Mark Antony, who executed him.

The last ruler of the Maccabean line was the first to suffer death under the axe of a Roman licitor.¹ For 130 years the descendants of Mattathias had ruled for good or ill. If some chapters in their record are stained with blood others are illumined with the splendours of glorious achievement. Seventy years after Aristobulus I first donned the diadem one scion of the noble house alone remained, the young Aristobulus, and his disastrous end at the hand of Herod must soon be told.

¹ Plutarch says he, Mark Antony, “beheaded Antigonus of Judea, the first king that ever suffered in such a manner” (*Life of Mark Antony*, p. 309), though a doubtful tradition says Antigonus was first tied to a stake and whipped, after which his throat was cut.

CHAPTER VIII

HEROD, CALLED “THE GREAT”

THE death of Antigonus in 37 B.C. left Herod master of the situation with the title of king. Though we have come to call him “the Great” there is no contemporary support for this claim. He founded a dynasty under whose regime the Seventy Weeks Nation was doomed to expire in cruel convulsions. Herod himself was the first and last independent sovereign of his house to reign over Palestine; his successors held office in their various provinces subject to their Roman masters.

Herod was an Idumean descended from Esau. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, but the long and dreary chapters of history show that the transfer was resented by Esau’s posterity. By the irony of fate, a descendant of Esau was destined to be instrumental in bringing about those conditions which led to the overthrow of the Seventy Weeks Nation which arose among the posterity of Jacob. That nation was doomed to expire in the bitter throes of long-drawn-out agony with which history furnishes no parallel, and many bloody scenes can be traced to the evil influence of the Idumean House of Herod.

The character of Herod must ever remain an intriguing study because of its violent contrasts. He was magnanimous, yet petty; self-willed, yet cringing; clever, but crafty; barbarously cruel, yet kind; a bully, and a snob; capable of the deepest domestic affection, yet guilty of the most revolting crimes against his wives and children. Like Henry VIII of later times, Herod was a man of many wives. “Now Herod the King had at this time nine wives; one of them Antipater’s mother (Doris),

and another the high-priest's daughter, by whom he had a son of his own name. He had also one who was his brother's daughter, and another his sister's daughter; which two had no children. One of his wives also was of the Samaritan nation ... Herod had also to wife Cleopatra of Jerusalem ... Pallas was also one of his wives ... and besides these, he had for his wives Phedra and Elpis.”¹ In addition to the nine named above, who appear to have been living at the same time, he had married and subsequently put to death Mariamne, grand-daughter of the Asmonean Hyrcanus II. Five of them with their offspring figure in the history of this time. It would carry me beyond the limits imposed for this essay to give a detailed account of Herod's life. The following table presents in simple form some of the essential features and characters of the period under review:

HEROD, CALLED “THE GREAT”

<i>His Wives</i>	<i>His Sons</i>	
1. Doris, divorced.	1 Antipater	Killed by Herod.
2. Mariamne, grand-daughter of Hyrcanus II (Asmonean). Mariamne was put to death by Herod. ²	2. Aristobulus 3 Alexander	Killed by Herod. Killed by Herod.
3. Mariamne, daughter of Simon the high priest	4. Herod Philip I ³ married Herodias	Excluded from benefits under his fathers will because of supposed treason.
4. Malthaea, a Samaritan	5. Herod Antipas 6. Archelaus	Tetrarch of Galilee. ⁴ Ethnarch of Judea. ⁵ Banishes A.D. 41
5 Cleopatra	7. Herod Philip II married Salome daughter of Philip I and Herodias	Tetrarch of Northern Perea. ⁶

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xvii, 1, 3.

³ Matthew xiv, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii, 22.

² *Ibid.* xv, vii, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.* xiv, 1.

⁶ Luke iii, 1.

Herod's succession to the throne was marked by a curious condition of things. The hellenising policy which had been so strenuously opposed by the Asmoneans, was now carried out by men who professed to be adherents to the Law. To signalise his accession to the crown, Herod made offerings to the Capitoline Jupiter as though he would rekindle the old Jewish [sic Judaeans], passionate resistance. To show that he was master, he massacred forty-five of the chief adherents to the cause of the late Antigonus and confiscated the property of others. The whole of the Sanhedrim, with the exception of two, were put to death, the two being spared because they had advised the surrender of the city during the recent siege.

Since the mutilation of Hyrcanus there had been no high-priest. It must be set down to the credit of Herod that he made no attempt to fill the sacred office himself. He brought from Babylon an obscure priest named Ananel to fill the vacancy. At this time there was one surviving scion of the Asmonean house, the youthful Aristobulus, a brother of Herod's wife Mariamne, whose claims to the holy office could not be overlooked. Alexandra, his mother, pressed his claims with such effect that Herod was constrained to install him. At the age of sixteen, the handsome Aristobulus performed the duties of the high-priest with such grace and dignity that the people could not restrain their admiration. Their appreciation inflamed the jealousy of Herod and sealed the doom of the youth. A few months later, Alexandra arranged a feast in honour of her son-in-law, Herod, in the neighbourhood of Jericho. The day was hot. As a cooling diversion Herod and his friends went to bathe. The youthful high-priest was induced to join them, and was treacherously drowned at the instigation of Herod.¹

¹ Josephus, *Antig.* xv, iii, 3.

Herod dissembled and sought to display his pretended grief by arranging an impressive funeral for the boy. Alexandra was not deceived by this palpable dissimulation. She resolved on redress. She carried her case to Mark Antony, and found a powerful ally and advocate in the person of Cleopatra of Egypt who, at this time, held Antony in her toils. Herod had serious misgivings about meeting his Roman master. In the end, he decided to face the court of Antony, but before leaving he gave secret instructions that, if his own life should be forfeit, Mariamne, his Asmonean wife, should be put to death. His costly presents to Antony, together with his personal influence with one who had favoured his kingship, carried the day in his favour. But the secret instructions for the murder of Mariamne leaked out later and liberated a train of evil influences which cost Mariamne her life and clouded the subsequent life of Herod with vain regrets. In 29 B.C. Mariamne was executed by the order of, or with the consent of, her husband.¹ Herod undoubtedly cherished a deep affection for the Asmonean princess, and his guilty conscience not only robbed him of peace but made him apprehensive of coming retribution.

After the death of the youthful Aristobulus, Herod reappointed the Babylonian Ananel to the high-priesthood. In the eighteenth year of his reign he announced his intention to build a new Temple. He contended that the existing Temple built by Zerubbabel was an unworthy successor of the Temple of Solomon, and advanced the view that the comparative meanness of the existing structure was due to restrictions imposed by the Persian overlords of that distant period. Since the reign of Herod was marked by personal ostentation and

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xv, vii, 4.

self-gratification we may reasonably conclude that his desire to see a magnificent Temple was as much for the glorification of Herod as for the honour of God. By this act he might ingratiate himself with all sections of the people, and by keeping them occupied provide an interval in which their hostility would pass. The Jews [sic Judaeans] affected little enthusiasm for the cause. They suspected him of ulterior designs. It was only on his assurance that “he would not pull down their Temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up entirely again” that they assented. To Herod’s credit it must be said that he honoured his word. The new Temple, built of white marble, was of Graeco-Roman design and became the pride of the Jewish [sic the nation’s] people.

All the direct descendants of the Asmonean princes had now been violently removed from his path, but the Idumean usurper still trembled on his throne. Aristobulus and Alexander, his own sons by Mariamne, had been sent to Rome for their education. They returned to Jerusalem, after three years abroad, with all the grace and dignity the people had learned to associate with the Asmonean house. They were received with open and general enthusiasm. Herod himself welcomed them with a show of paternal pride. But the darker side of his suspicious nature asserted itself and he viewed them as possible avengers of their mother’s death, and as a threat to his own ascendancy in the state. With his usual cunning, he caused them to be put to death.

The same brooding fear liberated the dark forces of his mind when, about 4 B.C., a caravan from the East arrived enquiring: “Where is He that is born King of the Jews [sic Judahites]?” The words sounded ominous to Herod. Was not he King of the Jews [sic Judaea]? Was this another rival for the throne given to him by Rome?

¹ Matthew, ii, 2.

He would brook no rival for the diadem. He “sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.”¹

But at this time there appeared on the horizon a foe the brutal Herod was powerless to resist. He was stricken with a loathsome disease, like that attributed to Antiochus Epiphanes in II Maccabees ix, 9, 10. A few months after Jesus, to whom God had given the throne of His father David, was born, the alien usurper of the race of Edom passed painfully into the shadows with few to grieve voluntarily at his departure.

¹ Matthew ii. 16.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST WEEK

JUST as Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, thus sacrificing a precious heritage to satisfy a passing whim, so at the end of this story we find a descendant of Esau transferring his usurped kingdom to the great foe, Rome, at whose hands the Seventy Weeks Nation was to be irretrievably broken.

By the will of Herod, altered just before his death, his Roman masters became large beneficiaries. Having been appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate, for the thirty-seven years ¹ of his reign under Roman protection he had made them most costly gifts, and affected, either in gratitude or from less worthy motives, a cringing servility to the Roman leaders. He built towns to their honour, and adorned his palaces with inscriptions to their praise. He bequeathed almost fabulous sums to Augustus Caesar and his wife. If no formal cession of the kingdom had been made, such was the influence of Rome at the death of Herod that none of his nominees for place and power felt free to assume office without Rome's consent.

During his last illness Herod made a will in favour of the sons of Malthaea, his Samaritan wife. Herod Antipas was nominated his successor, but, later, the will was changed and Archelaus was substituted for his elder brother. This change by the fickle Herod made Joseph and Mary, with their precious charge, afraid to go into Judea on their return from Egypt. ²

¹ “Having reigned, since he procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven” (Josephus, *Antiq.* xvii, viii, 1).

² Matthew ii, 22.

Seven days' mourning were appointed, after which Archelaus made a formal entry into the Temple, but the partisans of Antipas broke out in tumult. The brothers set out for Rome; Archelaus to obtain the Emperor's confirmation of his appointment, and Antipas to press his claims as the elder son.

While the case was being heard in Rome a deputation of 500 Jews appeared before the Emperor's court; and such was the number of Jews in the Roman capital at this time that the deputation was reinforced by 8,000 of their countrymen drawn from Rome itself. The deputation prayed for the cessation of royalty and the restoration of their former liberties. Augustus approved, generally, the will of Herod. Archelaus was confirmed in possession of about half of his father's kingdom, which included Judea and Samaria, but was temporarily denied the title of king. He was granted the title Ethnarch, i.e. governor, or leader, of the people, with the prospect of becoming king should he prove worthy of that honour. Antipas was made Tetrarch of Galilee¹ with revenue equal to one-third of that of his younger brother.

It was thus made abundantly clear that the real master was Augustus Caesar. The throne of David in Jerusalem was empty. Judea was nothing better than a Roman province. The family of Herod held office in various parts of the country that had once been Palestine, but only on the sufferance of their Roman masters. The death knell of the Seventy Weeks Nation had been sounded. Archelaus antagonised both his Jewish [sic Judaeans] and Samaritan subjects by his barbarous treatment of them, whereon they appealed to Caesar. The result was "In the ninth year of his government he was banished to Vienna,

¹ Matthew xi, i. The term "king" in Mark vi, 14. is only a courtesy title.

a city in Gaul, and his effects were put into Caesar's treasury.”¹ After this, Judea and Samaria were reduced to the status of an ordinary Roman province with a procurator subordinate to the prefect of Syria.

It is not considered necessary to recount in detail the reactions of Rome and Judea, since that story is sufficiently told in the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The long dreamed-of Messiah had appeared. “Then came Jesus into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.”² God had declared through Daniel: “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks,”³ “weeks of years,” as Moffatt renders it. Sixty-nine weeks of years is 483 years. From the decree of Artaxerxes to the Baptism of our Lord is exactly 483 years.⁴ This was a prophecy definitely related to the Jews [sic Judaeans]. “Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people, and upon *thy* holy city.” Daniel's people were the Jews [sic Judaeans]. At the end of the sixty-ninth week Messiah was to appear. The time allotted had expired. Messiah appeared saying, “The kingdom of God is at hand.” Immediately after His Baptism Jesus began to gather around Him those with whom He would establish on earth the abiding Kingdom. One of the first was Andrew, who communicated to his brother Peter the glad tidings: “We have found the Messias.”⁵ The Messiah, on whom their hopes had been so long set, was here, in their midst. As we have seen above, the throne in Jerusalem was vacant. The King, “whose right it is,” was ready

¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, ii, vii, 3.

² Mark i, 14.

³ Daniel ix, 25.

⁴ See the author's work on Daniel, pp. I 17-1 18.

⁵ John i, 41.

to take His throne and reign. The Kingdom was at hand. All that was needed for the union of the King with his people was their glad acceptance. “He sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: ... and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”¹ But they made light of it and would not come. He came to His own heritage, but His own people would not receive Him.² Their attitude was well expressed in another parable by our Lord: “We will not have this man to reign over us.”³

During the last week of His ministry our Lord addressed to “the chief priests and the elders of the people” a parable heavy with fate. It foreshadowed their final rejection of the Messiah, known already to Him who sees the end from the beginning, and sounded the note of doom for the Seventy Weeks Nation.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

“And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

“And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

“Again; he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

¹ Matthew, xxii, 3-10.

² John i, 11.

³ Luke xix, 14.

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

“And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

“When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

“They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

“And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

“But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”

This weighty utterance was not lost upon the priests and Pharisees. “They perceived that He spake of them.” The Kingdom that had been at hand was now removed to the remote future and transferred from the Jewish nation to another nation.

The above Parable was uttered a few days before the Crucifixion. The Messiah was to be cut off in

the midst of the seventieth week.¹ In that fateful crisis the [Edomite-] Jews made their crucial choice. “We have no king but Caesar.”²

But the seventy weeks of years had not expired at the time of the Crucifixion, nor was divine mercy exhausted. The early activities of the Pentecostal Church were concentrated on the Jews. [Question: Edomite-jews or true pureblooded Judaeans? It makes a lot of difference! *C.A.E.*] Commenting on the Parable of the marriage supper for the King’s son, Matthew xxii, 14, referred to above, Archbishop Trench observes: “This second summons I take to represent the invitation to the Jewish people [sic Edomite-jews of true Judaeans?], as it was renewed to them at the second epoch of the Kingdom, that is, after the Resurrection and Ascension.” But this gracious invitation was rudely spurned. “When the Jews [sic Edomite-jews of Judaeans?] saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said: It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles [sic lost Israel nations].”³ The fateful hour had struck. The seventy weeks of years determined “upon thy people” had expired.

But the seventy weeks of years was determined not only “upon thy people,” but also “upon thy holy city.” During the last pregnant week before the Crucifixion our Lord, pointing to the marble Temple built by Herod, said: “There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”⁴ During the same week, He pronounced doom upon the city. “When He beheld the city He wept over it ... for the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee ... and shall lay thee even with

¹ Daniel ix, 27.

³ Acts xiii, 45, 46.

² John xix, 15

⁴ Matt. xxiv, 2.

the ground.”¹ “This generation (*genea*) shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.”² The sentence of doom was passed during the seventieth week; it was carried out in the life-time of that generation. Forty years later, in 70 A.D., Titus destroyed both the city and the Temple. Scriptural usage assigns forty years to a generation. Thus, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.”³ “I was grieved with that generation (*genea*).”⁴

Jerusalem fell after a long and bloody conflict that probably has no equal in the annals of war. We are dependent on Josephus alone for our knowledge of this, and he himself was in the campaign, first as an enemy of Rome and later as a hostage in their hands. The struggle, which lasted for some three years, was precipitated by the seditious party, led by Eleazar, a youthful governor of the Temple, who refused to continue to accept offerings sent by the Roman Emperor. Ever since the time of Julius Caesar such offerings had been regularly made and accepted.⁵ The story of the struggle is far too long to tell here. The forces of Rome were severely taxed, for the Jews [sic Edomite-jews] displayed a frenzied courage before which the disciplined legions often wavered. But in the end the trained soldiers won the day. The city suffered the fate foretold by our Lord. It was levelled with the ground. Josephus assures us that the wall “was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.”⁶

The death roll seems almost unbelievable. The figures given by Josephus have been summarised and classified by Dean Milman as follows:⁷

¹ Luke xix, 41 ff.

² Matthew xxiv, 34.

³ Psalm xcv, 10.

⁴ Hebrews iii, 10.

⁵ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, ii, xvii, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.* vii, i, 1 .

⁷ Vol. II, pp. 100, 101.

BEFORE THE WAR UNDER VESPASIAN

At Jerusalem, killed by

Florus	3,600	
At Caesarea	20,000	
At Scythopolis	13,000	
At Ascalon	2,500	
At Ptolemais	2,000	
At Alexandria	50,000	
At Damascus	10,000	
At Joppa	8,400	
Upon the mountain Asamvn	2,000	
The battle near Ascalon	10,000	
The Ambuscades	<u>8,000</u>	
		129,500

DURING THE WAR IN GALILEE AND JUDEA

At Japha	15,000	
On Gerizim	11,600	
At Jotapata	40,000	
At Tarichea	4,200	
At Tarichea	6,500	
At Gamala	9,000	
At Gischala	6,000	
In Idumaea	10,000	
At Gerasa	1,000	
Near the Jordan	<u>15,000</u>	
		118,300
At Jerusalem		<u>1,100,000</u>
Carried forward		1,347,800

AFTER THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

	Brought forward	1,347,800
At Machaerus	1,700	
At Jardes	3,000	
At Masada	960	
In Cyrene	<u>3,000</u>	
		<u>8,660</u>
Total killed		<u>1,356,460</u>

PRISONERS

In Gischala	2,200	
Near the Jordan	2,500	
At Jerusalem	<u>97,000</u>	
Total prisoners		<u>101,700</u>

The Seventy Weeks Nation had run its course and ended its career in the ghastly convulsions reflected in the brief account given above. In closing this study we may well pause to ask how far the determination made for it had been fulfilled. Its charter is stated in general terms in Daniel ix, 24. Six results would be achieved, or six different processes would be completed, in the period assigned. These may be briefly dealt with seriatim.

1. To finish the transgression, that is, their transgression. By their rejection of the Messiah, more particularly by their plotting for His death, they filled up their sin.

2. To make an end of sins. In the seventieth week “God ... sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins,”¹ “and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”²; “once in the end of the world had He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”³

¹ 1 John iv, 10.

² Ibid. ii, 2.

³ Hebrews ix, 26.

3. To make reconciliation for iniquity, i.e. atonement. The Hebrew word *kaphar* means to cover. Jacob used the same word in “I will *appease* him (i.e. Esau) with the present that goeth before me” (Gen. xxxii, 20). He would hide himself under, or behind, the gift and Esau would see him not as he actually was, or had been, but as he was in the gift. God looks upon the sinner as he is in Christ, covered with His robe of righteousness. Hence Paul’s ambition to “be found in him, not having my own righteousness ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”¹ “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”²

4. To bring in everlasting righteousness. At the end of the seventy weeks period God would bring in an abiding atonement for all sin. Hitherto, there had been an annual Day of Atonement, but the repetition marked it as temporary. A permanent Atonement would be instituted, making the annual function unnecessary. At the end of the period the Messiah would be cut off. The words foretell a violent, or unnatural death. “The word, *shall be cut off*, never means anything but excision; death directly inflicted by God, or violent death at the hands of men. It is never used of mere death, nor to express sudden but natural death.”³ Isaiah had foretold that the Suffering Servant would be “cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”⁴ As a consequence of Messiah’s death “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”⁵

5. To seal up vision and prophecy. “All the

¹ Philippians iii, 9.

² 2 Corinthians v, 19.

³ Pusey, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, p. 185.

⁴ Isaiah liii, 8.

⁵ Hebrews x, 26.

prophets and the law prophesied until John.”¹ With the arrival of John the Baptist the need of Messianic prophecy ceased. John, the Forerunner, antedated the Messiah by about six months. The Messiah was the end of Prophecy. “The things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”²

6. To anoint the most holy. Kings and priests were the only officials anointed in the Old Testament times. Since the Messiah was to be both King and Priest it was fitting that He should be anointed. Our Lord was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His Baptism. “John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.”³ In the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus declared, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach,” etc.⁴

The last verse of Daniel ix fittingly summarises the divine communication. The archangel Gabriel had announced his mission to show to Daniel what was determined for his people. He now informs him that, in the last week, Messiah will “confirm the covenant with many.” While Daniel’s people, in the wider sense, were the people of Israel, in the narrower sense they were the Jews [sic legitimate Judaeans, not the Edomite-jews]. We are probably justified, therefore, in reading “confirm the covenant with many Jews [sic authentic Judaeans, not Edomite-jews].” The records of the seventieth week are concerned mainly with the relation of the Messiah to the Jews [sic true Judaeans] and their attitude toward Him. On the eve of His crucifixion Jesus “took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new covenant (diatheke), which is shed for many for the remission

¹ Matthew xi, 13.

² Acts iii, 18.

³ John i, 32.

⁴ Luke iv, 18.

of sins.”¹ Such language was calculated to appeal to their understanding. Long before, in words now hoary with age and redolent of the people’s devotion, “Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you.”² Malachi had foretold the coming of “the messenger of the covenant.”³ In the words of Isaiah, God had given His servant “for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”⁴

During the last week the covenant was confirmed with many Jews [sic Judahites]. The activities of the early Church were devoted to them and they were invited to accept the Messiah as God’s appointed Redeemer and Saviour. In His post-Resurrection commission to His disciples our Lord had said unto them, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,”⁵ from which we must infer the Jews [sic Judahites] were to be their first objective. In writing to the Romans Paul three times puts the “Jew [sic Judah] first.”⁶ In his Pentecostal address Peter stresses the same precedence. “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.”⁷ Commenting on the Parable of the marriage supper for the king’s son, Matthew xiii, 1-14, Archbishop Trench observes: “This second summons I take to represent the invitation to the Jewish [sic racially pure Judahite] people, as it was renewed to them at the second epoch of the Kingdom, that is, after the Resurrection and Ascension.” But this gracious invitation was rudely spurned. “When the Jews [sic Edomite-jews] saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

¹ Matthew xxvi, 28.

³ Malachi iii, 1.

⁵ Acts i, 8.

⁷ Acts iii, 26.

² Exodus xxiv, 8.

⁴ Isaiah xlii, 6.

⁶ Romans i, 16; ii, 9, 10.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said: It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles [sic lost Israel nations].”¹ That was in A.D. 45. The fateful hour had struck. The seventy weeks of years determined upon “Thy people” had expired. The covenant had been confirmed with many; by most of the Jews [sic citizens of Judaea] it had been rejected.

In the last week the Messiah would “cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.” As shown above, page 90, “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” As our High Priest for ever, Christ has taken His one complete and holy sacrifice and laid it upon the High Altar of God in heaven, and there “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

The desolation foreshadowed as taking place in the last week is to remain “even until the consummation, and that determined.” The desolation must be understood as meaning the state resulting from the withdrawal of the Divine presence. The sanctuary must needs be desolate when the Divine presence is withdrawn. Ezekiel saw the divine glory depart from the Temple and the city.² The desolation is to continue until the consummation which has been determined in the fore-knowledge of God. The word translated “consummation” is the Hebrew word *kalah*. It means “completion.” Isaiah used the same word in chapter x, 23, and again in xxviii, 22, where it is translated “consumption.” The former passage reads, “For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of the land,” and the latter, “For I have

¹ Acts xiii, 45, 46.

² Ezekiel xi, 23.

heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined, upon the whole earth.” In the counsel of God the end, when the forces of evil shall be overthrown, is already determined. The desolation of the Holy Place must remain until Messiah comes in glory – the glory which Ezekiel saw depart – to occupy His rightful place in the Sanctuary, and at the heart of the national life of His people. From Ezekiel xliii, 1-6 we learn that the departed glory will return at the Restoration. “And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet; where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile.” At the time determined, the sanctuary will be cleansed, and the abomination that makes desolate removed.

The Divine Programme foretold in Daniel ix, 24 was carried out to the last detail. The cessation of sacrifice and oblation foretold in ix, 27 has also come to pass. God kept His word. The words of Solomon may be used appropriately here: “There hath not failed one word of all his good promises.”¹ There remains for fulfilment the removal, at the time appointed, of the abomination that makes desolate. It will be removed when the Messiah comes to take His place on the throne of His father David. That He will so come the Scriptures make abundantly clear, and the weary world, no less than the expectant Church, calls to the heavens, “Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

The Jewish [sic Judaeen] nation, which might have shared in the benefits arising from the sacrifice of the Son of God, rejected the Messiah, with bitter consequences for itself. Christ’s haunting lament still echoes through the vaulted arches of time. “O Jerusalem,

¹ 1 Kings viii, 56.

Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.”¹

“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!”² “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.”³

¹ Luke xiii, 34.

² Ibid. xix, 42.

³ Matthew xxiii, 38.

END