A COMMENTARY ON
AMOS, EZRA, ESTHER,
HAGGAI, NEHEMIAH.
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Lewis P. Hussell
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A COMMENTARY ON AMOS

By

Lewis P. Hussell
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the first verse, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, over Judah 792-740 BC, and Jeroboam II, over Israel 793-753 BC. (After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms: the northern ten tribes were called Israel, nick-named Ephraim, and the southern two tribes were called Judah.) In the north, the religious shrines had become centers of vice, and by Amos’s day the people had become pagan at heart. The shrines at Dan and Bethel were about calf worship and idolatry.

Into this situation, God chose as his spokesman a simple shepherd and itinerant orchard worker who was an enthusiastic worshiper of Jehovah (God). He was from the working class of people, and he understood human nature. This Tekoan shepherd launches out in his prophecy like a boiling pot. He takes on such hot topics as social injustice and economic issues. His messages touched people, politics, and purses. This commentary will explore the messages of Amos which concerned various nations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF AMOS

Amos was like a roaring lion. This true man of God takes on the establishment. Ritualism had supplanted religion. The Israelites sneered at the thought of a rugged country man, who poured out his messages like muriatic acid on a concrete floor. His messages were plain and simple, but potent: he likens their future rescue to a shepherd yanking back a leg or an ear from a lion’s mouth, or to a person escaping with only a table leg or a corner of a blanket. His messages were bad news. He portrays God as being sick-and-tired with their brand of religion.
KEYS TO OPEN AMOS

The people whom Amos addressed had plenty of “religion.” They went regularly to shrines for worship (sex and religious shrines). They looked forward to “the day of the LORD”, when God would fulfill all their expectations for their country. Amos listed all Israel’s neighbors, announcing God’s judgment for their crimes against humanity. Israelis liked this kind of talk; they felt superior to all these nations. But Amos brought unexpected bad news from God: “I hate, I despise your religious feasts.” (5:21) God did not want sacrifice or singing. He demanded justice. Having caught the Israelis’ attention, Amos circled Israel like a rabbit being chased by a beagle hound, and he dramatically tracked down Israel. God would judge Israel. The people, their beautiful homes, their sacred altars all would be destroyed.

SURVEY OF THE BOOK

Amos declared that God was going to judge his unfaithful, disobedient, covenant-breaking people. The shrines at Bethel and other places of worship were pagan; their religion was pagan to the core. It was a time of idolatry, extravagant indulgence in luxurious living, immorality, corruption of judicial procedures, and oppression of the poor. As a consequence, God would soon bring about the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom. Society and religion were as bankrupt as Fanny Mae.

It was a day when there was expansion, freedom, activity, prosperity, and peace. The rich gained their wealth by injustice and oppression. Their abounding wealth, good music, rich furnishings, banquets, life of luxury and ease were contrasted with the
misery and suffering of the poor and slaves. Sex and religious shrines abounded, with songs, offerings, good attendance, and elaborate ceremonies. Since the Israelites controlled the crucial trade routes, their merchants piled up big profits. Luxuries became readily available—new stone houses, ivory-inlaid furniture, top-grade meat and fine wine, the best body lotions. Gross immorality was aided and abetted by religious leaders; instead of plain living, they knew extravagance, carousals, lolling on soft couches, and they were idling precious time away while their country was going to ruin.

**INSPIRATIONAL INTRODUCTION**

Amos was not a man of the court like Isaiah, or a priest like Jeremiah. He earned his living from tending the flock and groves of sycamore-fig trees. His skill with words and knowledge of history leaves us breathless. Though his home was in Judah, he was sent to announce God’s judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel. He ministered for the most part at Bethel, Israel’s main religious sanctuary, where the upper class of the northern kingdom worshiped. Perhaps because he was a farmer, Amos used a plain writing style filled with strong country language. Amid such peace and prosperity, one lone voice scraped like a wire brush on raw flesh. Amos spoke bluntly with a farmer’s vocabulary, calling the city socialites, “cows.” Amos predicted that Israel would be punished, and this commentary will explore all of his predictions. After King Jeroboam, the government deteriorated. Five kings took the throne in the next 13 years, four of whom were assassinated. In 30 years, Israel would be permanently dismantled by Assyrian armies. The conquered Israelites were deported beyond the Euphrates River and never heard from again.
MEMORANDUM

The Israelites’ religious system was centered on two calf-ids. But Amos wasted little breath on that. He focused on the facts that met his eyes and ears in every marketplace: oppression of the poor, dishonest business, bribery in court, privileges bought with money. Through Amos, God showed that he must be master over all of life, including business affairs. The main text provided is from the King James Version, while some quotes are from the New American Standard 1977 Version.
1. The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2. And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

3. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

5. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

6. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:
8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

9. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

11. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

13. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 1

If we engage ourselves in the passionate reading of the Prophets, it will draw us into a spiritual life with better understanding of God. Follow along with me through the book of Amos to consider a man who spends his time on the front lines defending the downtrodden and the poor. This prophet reveals that God’s feelings have intensified, and that he is going to destroy the nations that have destroyed his people. So, God sends Amos to Damascus, Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Tyre, Edom, Bozrah, Ammon, Rabbah, Moab, Samaria, and Jerusalem to warn them of the coming punishment and dire consequences if they do not repent. Amos knew these places like the back of his hand. It was as if he had been in the detective business. He knew of their materialism, luxury, ease, drinking, bribery, extortion, shallow thinking and actual immorality. Within about 50 years, his prophecies regarding these nations would be fulfilled.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 1

1. The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.
Amos was not a professional prophet; he had not attended the school of the prophets; he was a herdsman and a tree trimmer. (Cf. Amos 7:14.) He lived in Tekoa, which was about ten miles south of Jerusalem. The earthquake mentioned must have been of considerable magnitude because people were still talking about it 200 years later.

Josephus, 2,000 years ago, speaks about this earthquake in his book, Antiquities of the Jews, and gives us insight into the cause:

“Accordingly, when a remarkable day was come, and a general festival was to be celebrated, he [King Uzziah] put on the holy garment, and went into the temple to offer incense to God upon the golden altar, which he was prohibited to do by Azariah the high priest, who had fourscore priests with him, and who told him that it was not lawful for him to offer sacrifice, and that “none besides the posterity of Aaron were permitted so to do.” And when they cried out that he must go out of the temple, and not transgress against God, he was wroth at them, and threatened to kill them, unless they would hold their peace. In the mean time a great earthquake shook the ground and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king’s face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately. And before the city, at a place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and
rolled itself four furlongs, and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king’s gardens, were spoiled by the obstruction. Now, as soon as the priests saw that the king’s face was infected with the leprosy, they told him of the calamity he was under, and commanded that he should go out of the city as a polluted person.” Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 9, Ch. 10 [underlining added]

Zechariah also mentions this earthquake in his prophecy:

Zec 14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

2. And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

When the Lord roars, it signifies the intense feelings he has against the wrongs of the heathen nations as well as those of his own people. As you read this book you will get the sense of God roaring like a lion as he attacks the nations which Amos identifies.

Carmel is located near the port of modern Haifa. The term Carmel shall wither refers to a drought that would curb the growth
of plant life and orchards and forests. Sharon, Lebanon, Bashan and Carmel were all known as places of fertility and scenic beauty. God, thus, says he will bring it to devastation.

Jerusalem is mentioned because it is the capital.

3. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

God—and Amos—now turn to Damascus, the capital of Syria to address its repeated transgressions, or as Amos says: three, yes, make it four. The Syrians had committed the Galeadites to capital punishment under the threshing instrument. This threshing instrument was made of heavy planks fastened together and armed beneath with sharp iron points. It was drawn by oxen over people, tearing them from limb to limb. (This apparatus was similar to the iron tooth harrow that we farmed with a decade ago.) The following scriptures will describe this instrument.

2 Ki 8:12 And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and
wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.

**Isa 41:15** “Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains, and pulverize them, And will make the hills like chaff.”

Isaiah and Jeremiah both deliver a message denouncing Damascus, proclaiming that the city will be removed and become a place of ruins. This prophecy was fulfilled by Tiglath-pilneser king of Assyria.

**2 Ki 16:9** “So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried the people of it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.”

The walls of Damascus were demolished, its houses pulled down, and its inhabitants carried captive; this destruction was accomplished by Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria. Damascus was one of the oldest cities mentioned in the Bible, and the head of the kingdom of Syria. Although it suffered this calamity, it was rebuilt again and again and was a city of great fame. It was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. 49:24, after which it was again raised up. Damascus was in existence during the book of Acts and is still in existence today. Isaiah and Jeremiah both have oracles concerning Damascus:
Isa 17:1-14 “The oracle concerning Damascus. “Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city, And it will become a fallen ruin. “The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks to lie down in, And there will be no one to frighten them. “The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, And sovereignty from Damascus And the remnant of Aram; They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,” Declares the LORD of hosts. Now it will come about in that day that the glory of Jacob will fade, And the fatness of his flesh will become lean. It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain, As his arm harvests the ears, Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain In the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree, Two or three olives on the topmost bough, Four or five on the branches of a fruitful tree, Declares the LORD, the God of Israel. In that day man will have regard for his Maker, And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel. And he will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands, Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made, Even the Asherim and incense stands. In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest, Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel; And the land will be a desolation. For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god. In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; But the harvest will be a heap In a day of sickness and incurable pain. Alas, the uproar of many peoples Who roar like the roaring of the seas, And the rumbling of nations Who rush on like
the rumbling of mighty waters! The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, Or like whirling dust before a gale. At evening time, behold, there is terror! Before morning they are no more. Such will be the portion of those who plunder us, And the lot of those who pillage us.”

**Jer 49:23-27** Concerning Damascus. “Hamath and Arpad are put to shame, For they have heard bad news; They are disheartened. There is anxiety by the sea, It cannot be calmed. “Damascus has become helpless; She has turned away to flee, And panic has gripped her; Distress and pangs have taken hold of her Like a woman in childbirth. “How the city of praise has not been deserted, The town of My joy! “Therefore, her young men will fall in her streets, And all the men of war will be silenced in that day,” declares the LORD of hosts. “And I shall set fire to the wall of Damascus, And it will devour the fortified towers of Ben-hadad.”

The Syrians were at length subdued by the Assyrians, the city of Damascus was conquered and destroyed, and its inhabitants were carried captive into Assyria. (2Ki.16:7-9) Thus, prophecy was fulfilled: Isa. 17: 1; Amos 1:4; Jer. 49:24. The kingdom of Syria remained a province of Assyria until the capture of Nineveh by the Babylonians in 625 BC. Syria later was invaded by the Romans in 64 BC, and became a province of Rome. Damascus was conquered by the Mohammedan
power in A.D. 634 and finally came under the rule of the Turks.

4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

Hazael, the founder of the reigning dynasty of Syria, and Benhadad were father and son, reigning in succession over Syria. God threatens to destroy their palaces with fire—a prophecy which was fulfilled when Assyria invaded Syria.

5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

For security, a bar was used to fasten one door to the other one in order to keep the intruder out. Cities would close the gates and doors and place a long bar in brackets located on the inside of the door so that no one could come in till the doors were opened in the morning. The meaning here is clear, that God would allow an intruder such as an invading army to break through the defenses of Damascus and carry its citizens into captivity. Kir was a fortress, a place to which Tiglath-pileser carried the Syrians captive after he had taken the city of Damascus. (2 Ki. 16:9; Amos 1:5; 9:7; Isa. 22:6) In simple terms, Kir was on the eastern side of the Euphrates River, and the Syrians were kept there as slaves.
Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

Gaza was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. The Philistines of Gaza were not content until they had removed the whole population and sold them to the Edomites for slaves. (Edom was located in Mount Seir and was guilty not only of receiving slaves but also of excessive brutality in war. Teman and Bozrah were two of the chief cities in Edom.) Thus, Gaza was a center of slave traffic. Gaza is also called Azzah, which is its Hebrew name Deut. 2:23; I Ki. 4:24; Jer. 25:20.

In the division of the land promised to Israel, Gaza fell to the lot of Judah. (Joshua 15:47, Judges 1:18) Its gates were carried away by Samson as related in Judges 16:1-3. Samson was afterwards made a prisoner in Gaza, and “did grind in the prison house.” Here he also pulled down the temple of Dagon and slew “all the lords of the Philistines”, himself also perishing in the ruin. (Jud. 16:21-30) The prophets pronounce the judgments of God against Gaza in Jer. 25:20; 47:5; Amos 1:6-7; Zep. 2:4. Gaza is also mentioned in Acts 8:26 when Philip is told to take the road from Jerusalem to Gaza and join himself with the Ethiopian eunuch who was on his way home to Ethiopia. Gaza was about 6 miles southwest of Jerusalem.
and was a desert, that is, a deserted town because by this time it had been destroyed by Alexander the Great.

7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

The people of Gaza were punished for their cruelty.

2Ki 18:8 He [King Hezekiah] smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

Ashdod was a stronghold, a Philistine city (Jos. 15:47), about midway between Gaza and Joppa, and 3 miles from the Mediterranean. It was one of the chief seats of the worship of Dagon (I Sam 5:5). It belonged to the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15:47), but it never came into their actual possession. It was an important city, as it stood on the highroad from Egypt to Palestine and, hence, was strongly fortified (2 Ch.26:6, Isa 20:1). All these towns were in the land of the Philistines and were to share in the chastisement that God would bring against them.
Ekron was located about 11 miles north of Gath. It was assigned to Judah (Jos. 13:3), and afterwards to Dan (Josh. 19:43), but it came again into the full possession of the Philistines (1 Sam. 5:10). It was the last place to which the Philistines carried the captured ark of the covenant before they sent it back to Israel (1 Sam. 5:10; 6:1-8). There was a noted sanctuary of Baal-zebub in Ekron. (2 Ki. 1:2, 3, 6, 16).

The following quotes will show the remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos. (Underlining has been added.)


“But when Alexander saw that Ptolemy was retired from Gaza to Cyprus, and his mother Cleopatra was returned to Egypt, he grew angry at the people of Gaza, because they had invited Ptolemy to assist them, and besieged their city, and ravaged their country . . . Alexander, who, when he came in at first, lay quiet, but afterward set his army upon the inhabitants of Gaza, and gave them leave to punish them; so some went one way, and some went another, and slew the inhabitants of Gaza; yet were not they of cowardly hearts, but opposed those that came to slay them, and slew as many of the Jews; and some of them, when they saw themselves deserted, burnt their own houses, that the enemy might get none of their spoils; nay, some of them, with their own hands, slew their children and their wives, having no other way but this of avoiding slavery for them; but the senators, who were in all five hundred, fled to Apollo’s temple, (for this attack happened to be made as they were sitting,) whom Alexander
slew; and when he had utterly overthrown their city, he returned to Jerusalem, having spent a year in that siege.”

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13:4.4 “With this Jonathan was irritated; and choosing himself out ten thousand of his soldiers, he went out of Jerusalem in haste, with his brother Simon, and came to Joppa, and pitched his camp on the outside of the city, because the people of Joppa had shut their gates against him, for they had a garrison in the city put there by Apollonius. But when Jonathan was preparing to besiege them, they were afraid he would take them by force, and so they opened the gates to him. But Apollonius, when he heard that Joppa was taken by Jonathan, took three thousand horsemen, and eight thousand footmen and came to Ashdod; and removing thence, he made his journey silently and slowly, and going up to Joppa, he made as if he was retiring from the place, and so drew Jonathan into the plain, as valuing himself highly upon his horsemen, and having his hopes of victory principally in them. However, Jonathan sallied out, and pursued Apollonius to Ashdod; but as soon as Apollonius perceived that his enemy was in the plain, he came back and gave him battle. But Apollonius had laid a thousand horsemen in ambush in a valley, that they might be seen by their enemies as behind them; which when Jonathan perceived, he was under no consternation, but ordering his army to stand in a square battle-array, he gave them a charge to fall on the enemy on both sides, and set them to face those that attacked them both before and behind; and while the fight lasted till the evening, he gave part of his forces to his brother
Simon, and ordered him to attack the enemies; but for himself, he charged those that were with him to cover themselves with their armor, and receive the darts of the horsemen, who did as they were commanded; so that the enemy’s horsemen, while they threw their darts till they had no more left, did them no harm, for the darts that were thrown did not enter into their bodies, being thrown upon the shields that were united and conjoined together, the closeness of which easily overcame the force of the darts, and they flew about without any effect. But when the enemy grew remiss in throwing their darts from morning till late at night, Simon perceived their weariness, and fell upon the body of men before him; and because his soldiers showed great alacrity, he put the enemy to flight. And when the horsemen saw that the footmen ran away, neither did they stay themselves, but they being very weary, by the duration of the fight till the evening, and their hope from the footmen being quite gone, they basely ran away, and in great confusion also, till they were separated one from another, and scattered over all the plain. Upon which Jonathan pursued them as far as Ashdod, and slew a great many of them, and compelled the rest, in despair of escaping, to fly to the temple of Dagon, which was at Ashdod; but Jonathan took the city on the first onset, and burnt it, and the villages about it; nor did he abstain from the temple of Dagon itself, but burnt it also, and destroyed those that had fled to it. Now the entire multitude of the enemies that fell in the battle, and were consumed in the temple, were eight thousand. When Jonathan therefore had overcome so great an army, he removed from Ashdod, and came to Askelon; and when he had pitched his camp without the city,
the people of Askelon came out and met him, bringing him hospitable presents, and honoring him; so he accepted of their kind intentions, and returned thence to Jerusalem with a great deal of prey, which he brought thence when he conquered his enemies . . .”

9 **Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:**

Amos began with thundering pronouncements against the enemies of Israel and Judah. His local audience in Israel must have cheered as he called down judgment on the blatant misdeeds of their neighbors: selling slaves, breaking treaties, ripping open pregnant women, desecrating the dead.

Tyre was a principal city of the Phoenicians on the east coast of the Mediterranean. They had delivered some of God’s people over to Edom who had long been bitter foes of Israel. The brotherly covenant was an understanding between the two nations of Tyre and Israel living near each other.

10 **But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.**

Tyre was captured and the city destroyed, and its citizens were carried into captivity
for 70 years by Nebuchadnezzar. After the 70 years of captivity, they return and rebuild on an island half a mile off the coast. Later, Alexander the Great destroyed the Tyranans, and they haven’t been heard of since.

The WebBible Encyclopedia says this about Tyre:

Tyre was an ancient Phoenician city [with an illustrious history]. The commerce of the whole world was gathered into the warehouses of Tyre. “Tyrian merchants were the first who ventured to navigate the Mediterranean waters; and they founded their colonies on the coasts and neighboring islands of the Aegean Sea, in Greece, on the northern coast of Africa, at Carthage and other places, in Sicily . . . and in Spain . . . and even beyond the pillars of Hercules” (Driver’s Isaiah). In the time of David a friendly alliance was entered into between the Hebrews and the Tyrians, who were long ruled over by their native kings (2sam. 5:11; 1 Ki. 5:1; 2 Ch.2:3P. Tyre consisted of two distinct parts, a rocky fortress on the mainland, called “Old Tyre.” The main city was built on a small, rocky island about half-a-mile distant from the shore. It was a place of great strength. It was besieged by Shalmaneser, who was assisted by the Phoenicians of the mainland, for five years, and by Nebuchadnezzar (BC586-573) for thirteen years . . . [He destroyed the city on the mainland and carried its citizens into captivity for 70 years.] It afterwards fell under the power of Alexander the Great, after a siege of seven months. It is referred to in Matt. 11:21; and Acts 12:20. In A.D. 1291 it was taken by the
Saracens, and has remained a desolate ruin ever since.

Both Tyre and Sidon “were crowded with glass-shops, dyeing and weaving establishments; and among their cunning workmen not the least important class were those who were celebrated for the engraving of precious stones.” 2Ch. 2:7,14.

The wickedness and idolatry of this city are frequently denounced by the prophets, and its final destruction predicted (Isaiah 23:1; Jeremiah 25:22; Ezek. 26; 28:1-19; Amos 1:9Amos 1:10; Zechariah 9:2-4).

The reader is now directed to the article that I have written regarding Tyre as the Prophet Ezekiel spoke of her in Ezekiel, chapters 26-28. I have put the entire exposition of these chapters in the appendix.

11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

Edom was both the name of a man—Esau (brother of Jacob/Israel) who was nick-named Edom, meaning “red”—and of a nation of people descended from Esau. The WebBible Encyclopedia tells us about the land of Edom:
“The land of Edom” (Gen. 36:16) was mountainous . . . It was called . . . “the mountain of Seir” . . . It is a wild and rugged region, . . . [and] its old capital was Bozrah (Isa 63:1).

The early inhabitants of the land were Horites. They were destroyed by the Edomites (Deut. 2:12) . . . At the time of the Exodus they churlishly refused permission to the Israelites to pass through their land (Num. 20:14-21), and always maintained an attitude of hostility toward them.

They were conquered by David (2 Sam 8:14 . . .), and afterwards by Amaziah (2 Ch. 25:11).

But they regained again their independence, and in later years, during the decline of the Jewish kingdom (2 Ki. 16:6), made war against Israel. They took part with the Chaldeans when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, and afterwards they invaded and held possession of the south of Palestine as far as Hebron. At length, however, Edom fell under the growing Babylonian power (Jer. 27:3-6).

The present desolate condition of that land is a standing testimony to the inspiration of these prophecies. After an existence as a people for above seventeen hundred years, they have utterly disappeared, and their language even is forgotten for ever. In Petra, “where kings kept their court,
and where nobles assembled, there no man dwells; it is given by lot to birds, and beasts, and reptiles.”

God has deeded all the land of Edom to be a wildlife refuge forever.

**Jer 27:3-6** “And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.”

A.M. Morris, in *The Prophecies Unveiled*, provides this information about Edom:

No student of prophecy will be satisfied till he learns the full story of Edom. Genesis 25 records the birth of Esau (Edom) Rebecca had two nations in her womb . . . Jacob’s deceived Esau . . . Esau’s land inheritance . . . Esau was so embittered that he decided to kill Jacob. First we see Esau in Sacred History. Then we trace his linage to Mt. Seir, and his nation was known as Edom. A full list of the dukes and kings are recorded in Genesis . . . . This nation always gave Israel trouble 2 Sam 8:14. After 7
centuries these nations existed side by side, the older made servant to the younger by David. The rivalry and cruelty of Edom were not able to keep his stubborn neck from the yoke. In the days of Jehoram, king of Judah, they revolted. 2 Kings 8:20 . . . . Later Amaziah was back at war with Edom. 2 Kings 14:7 2 Ch. 25:12 The Edomites were often subject to the Jews, and the Jews were never the servants of the Edomites. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled for 13 centuries. Take a trip up Mount Seir and you will see the ruins of thirty cities utterly laid waste and desolate, all of these ruins lay within 3 days journey of the Red Sea. These cities and their ruins can be viewed on the internet. The Edomites have disappeared from the earth. They have not been heard from since the second century. The land that they inhabited is a God forsaken land that is occupied by animals. God gave this territory to the animals and tells us that their deed is perpetual. This territory is guarded by Arabs with a degree of hostility scarcely paralleled. They do not live there and allow no one else to. Archeologist write about the numerous tombs, ancient sepulchers, mausoleums, fragments of columns, ruins of palaces. Edom is nothing more than a grave yard inhabited by snakes, scorpions, lions, etc. Esau had married two heathen wives and a daughter of Ishmael. He hated God and the Jewish religion. He sold his birthright and was a profane man. He went down the path of superstition and wickedness. They lived by kidnapping and plunder. Their territory was called the border of wickedness. “From this remote past the prophecy hung over him. And now his capital city rises up to testify to the truth of heaven. A city of rock, its temples, theaters, palaces, triumphal arches, dwelling houses, aqueducts, all hewn
out of solid rock, presenting one of the greatest lessons in the whole world. A vast amphitheater surrounded by mountains on all sides, in their native grandeur, lifting their summits five or six hundred feet high, the city of rock, the capital of Edom, (Petra) lies in desolation. The tombs and mausoleums in number and greatness testify to the fact that long ago kings ruled in that land. Where are they now? Shall we believe Moses and the prophets, when we see a city as imperishable as the rock-ribbed hills, her monuments of greatness forsaken, not a foot of man to tread her streets, worship in her temples, visit her theaters or live in her palaces? This city so singular, so remote in origin, so rich in historical associations, as beautiful in desolation, stands forth as a colossal monument to the veracity of the prophets of God.” [The Prophecies Unveiled, A.M. Morris, p. 26, 27]

**Now to the testimony of Scriptures regarding Esau and Edom.**

**Gen 25:19-33** Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is so, why then am I this way?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than
the other; And the older shall serve the younger.” When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them. When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, “Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” And Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?” And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

**Heb 12:14-17** Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

**Mal 1:2-5** “I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How hast Thou loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD.
“Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” Though Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins”; thus says the LORD of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever.” And your eyes will see this and you will say, “The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!”

Oba 1:1-17 The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom—We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, “Arise and let us go against her for battle”. “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised. “The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, You who live in the clefts of the rock, In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to earth?’ “Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD. “If thieves came to you, If robbers by night—O how you will be ruined!—Would they not steal only until they had enough? If grape gatherers came to you, Would they not leave some gleanings? “O how Esau will be ransacked, And his hidden treasures searched out! “All the men allied with you Will send you forth to the border, And the men at peace with you Will deceive you and overpower you. They who eat your bread Will set an ambush for you. (There is no understanding in him.) “Will I not on that day,” declares the LORD, “Destroy wise men from Edom And understanding from the
mountain of Esau? “Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman, In order that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter. “Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever. “On the day that you stood aloof, On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gate And cast lots for Jerusalem—You too were as one of them. “Do not gloat over your brother’s day, The day of his misfortune. And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah In the day of their destruction; Yes, do not boast In the day of their distress. “Do not enter the gate of My people In the day of their disaster. Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity In the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth In the day of their disaster. “And do not stand at the fork of the road To cut down their fugitives; And do not imprison their survivors In the day of their distress. “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. “Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, All the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, And become as if they had never existed. “But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, And it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

Eze 35:1-15 Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, And I will stretch out My hand against you, And I will make you a desolation and a waste. “I will lay waste your cities, And you will become a desolation. Then
you will know that I am the LORD. “Because you have had everlasting enmity and have delivered the sons of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of the punishment of the end, therefore, as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “I will give you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you; since you have not hated bloodshed, therefore bloodshed will pursue you. “And I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation, and I will cut off from it the one who passes through and returns. “And I will fill its mountains with its slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain by the sword will fall. “I will make you an everlasting desolation, and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD. “Because you have said, ‘These two nations and these two lands will be mine, and we will possess them,’ although the LORD was there, therefore, as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “I will deal with you according to your anger and according to your envy which you showed because of your hatred against them; so I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. “Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard all your revilings which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel saying, ‘They are laid desolate; they are given to us for food.’ “And you have spoken arrogantly against Me and have multiplied your words against Me; I have heard.” Thus says the Lord GOD, “As all the earth rejoices, I will make you a desolation. “As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you. You will be a desolation, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.””
Jer 49:14-21 I have heard a message from the LORD, And an envoy is sent among the nations, saying, “Gather yourselves together and come against her, And rise up for battle!” “For behold, I have made you small among the nations, Despised among men. “As for the terror of you, The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, O you who live in the clefts of the rock, Who occupy the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as an eagle’s, I will bring you down from there,” declares the LORD. “And Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds. “Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors,” says the LORD, “no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it. [underlining added] “Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan against a perennially watered pasture; for in an instant I shall make him run away from it, and whoever is chosen I shall appoint over it. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me into court? And who then is the shepherd who can stand against Me?” Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Edom, and His purposes which He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will drag them off, even the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them. The earth has quaked at the noise of their downfall. There is an outcry! The noise of it has been heard at the Red Sea.

Isa 34:10-17 It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall go up forever; From generation to generation it shall be desolate; None shall pass through it forever and ever. But pelican and hedgehog shall possess it, And owl
and raven shall dwell in it; And He shall stretch over it the line of desolation And the plumb line of emptiness. Its nobles—there is no one there Whom they may proclaim king—And all its princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in its fortified towers, Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities; It shall also be a haunt of jackals And an abode of ostriches. And the desert creatures shall meet with the wolves, The hairy goat also shall cry to its kind; Yes, the night monster shall settle there And shall find herself a resting place. The tree snake shall make its nest and lay eggs there, And it will hatch and gather them under its protection. Yes, the hawks shall be gathered there, Every one with its kind. Seek from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these will be missing; None will lack its mate. For His mouth has commanded, And His Spirit has gathered them. And He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it to them by line. They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

Psa 83:1-8 O God, do not remain quiet; Do not be silent and, O God, do not be still. For, behold, Thine enemies make an uproar; And those who hate Thee have exalted themselves. They make shrewd plans against Thy people, And conspire together against Thy treasured ones. They have said, “Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, That the name of Israel be remembered no more.” For they have conspired together with one mind; Against Thee do they make a covenant: The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with
them; They have become a help to the children of Lot. Selah. [underlining added]

12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Teman is the region of Idumæa, and Bozrah is the capital of Idumæa. This prophecy was fulfilled under Nebuchadnezzar when he invaded Edom.

13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

The descendants of Lot were so greedy for territory that they committed these brutal acts in order to seize the territory for themselves. (Jud 11:32; 2 Sam 12:26-31) This is an example of their brutality.

“Ammonite” is the usual name of the descendants of Ammon, the son of Lot (Gen. 19:38). From the very beginning in Deut. 2:16-20, of their history till they are lost sight of in Judges 5:2, this tribe is closely associated with the Moabites. Both of these tribes hired Balaam to curse Israel. They showed no kindness to the Israelites when they were passing through Ammonite territory, and, therefore, they were prohibited from “entering the congregation of the Lord to
the tenth generation.” They afterwards became hostile to Israel. Jephthah, leading the Israelites, waged war against them and “took twenty cities with a very great slaughter” (Judges 11:33). The Ammonites were again defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 11:11). Much of their history is found in the book of 2 Samuel, and David plays a role in these events. And here is the straw that breaks the camels back: one of Solomon’s wives was Naamah, an Ammonite. She was the mother of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, the next king of Judah after Solomon’s death. (1 Kings 14:31; 2 Ch. 12:13) The prophets predicted fearful judgments against the Ammonites because of their hostility to Israel. The scriptures tell the whole story, and some of the prophecies are quoted in full below. The national idol worshipped by this people was Moloch or Milcom, at whose altar they offered human sacrifices (1 Kings 11:5-7). The high places built for this idol by Solomon, at the instigation of his Ammonite wives, were not destroyed till the time of Josiah, in 2 Kings 23:13.

Eze 21:28-32 “And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,’ and say: ‘A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning—while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end. ‘Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were
created, in the land of your origin, I shall judge you. ‘And I shall pour out My indignation on you; I shall blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I shall give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction. ‘You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.’”

Eze 25:2-10 “Son of man, set your face toward the sons of Ammon, and prophesy against them, and say to the sons of Ammon, ‘Hear the word of the Lord GOD ! Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile, therefore, behold, I am going to give you to the sons of the east for a possession, and they will set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk. “And I shall make Rabbah a pasture for camels and the sons of Ammo a resting place for flocks. Thus you will know that I am the LORD. ‘For thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel, therefore, behold, I have stretched out My hand against you, and I shall give you for spoil to the nations. And I shall cut you off from the peoples and make you perish from the lands; I shall destroy you. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.” ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’ therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory
of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim, and I will give it for a possession, along with the sons of Ammon, to the sons of the east, that the sons of Ammon may not be remembered among the nations. [underlining added]

The following quote from Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, will supply the history of the Ammonites that fulfill the above prophecy.

“And when they were there, God signified to the prophet that the king of Babylon was about making an expedition against the Egyptians, and commanded him to foretell to the people that Egypt should be taken, and the king of Babylon should slay some of them and, should take others captive, and bring them to Babylon; which things came to pass accordingly; for on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Celesyria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites and Moabites; and when he had brought all these nations under subjection, he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned and set up another; and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon. And such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews, as it hath been delivered down to us, it having twice gone beyond Euphrates; for the people of the ten tribes were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians, in the days of king Hoshea; after which the people of the two tribes that remained after Jerusalem was taken [were carried away] by Nebuchadnezzar,
the king of Babylon and Chaldea. Now as to Shalmanezer, he removed the Israelites out of their country, and placed therein the nation of the Cutheans, who had formerly belonged to the inner parts of Persia and Media, but were then called Samaritans, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed; but the king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, placed no other nation in their country, by which means all Judea and Jerusalem, and the temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years; but the entire interval of time which passed from the captivity of the Israelites, to the carrying away of the two tribes, proved to be a hundred and thirty years, six months, and ten days.” [Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 10:9.7]

14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

Rabbath (Rabbah) was the capital of Ammon, and in the war that followed between Nebuchadnezzar and the Ammonites it was burned; its nobles were carried into captivity.
1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:
8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? Saith the LORD.

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 2

This inhuman act perpetrated by Moab upon the king of Edom was prompted by the spirit of vengeance. The most outstanding men shall be removed. Centuries have looked down on Moab and there is not a descendant living, while fifty or more of her cities lie in total ruins. The scene then passes from Moab to Judah, and Amos predicts the burning of her palaces, and then turns to Judah’s unthankfulness.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 2

1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

The origin of Moab, the eldest son of Lot (Gen. 19:37), is from an incestuous birth. When the Moabites saw the children of Israel on the plains they sent for Balak to come and curse the Israelites. Money was offered to Balaam for his divination, but God prevented the cursing of Israel, for “whom thou blesses is blessed, and he whom thou cursed is cursed.” During the time of Judges, Moab was subdued by Ehud and the land had rest for 80 years (Judges 3:30). During the days of David, he subdued Moab. After battle, David laid two lines on the ground and lined the Moabites
up along the two lines. He then killed all
the Moabites on one line, thus destroying
fifty percent of Moab (2 Sam. 8:2). Up to
the time of Jeremiah, Moab had not gone
into captivity; and the Prophet described
them in words like this: “therefore his
taste remained in him, and his scent is not
changed” (Jer. 48:11). In other words the
character of Moab had not changed. Moab
was wholly given to the god Chemosh, and
the prophets predicted that they would be
ashamed of their god as Israel was of the
golden calves at Bethel.

Moab lay east of Jordan and the Dead
Sea; Joshua was encamped there before
the invasion and destruction of Jericho. It
is interesting to know that Moses viewed
the land of Israel from Mount Pisgah in
the land of Moab; he died there and was
buried on the north side of the mountain
in a valley (Deut. 34:5,6). The prophets
predicted that Moab’s cities would
become a desolation, “without any to
dwell therein”: Nebo, Kirathaim, Nisgab,
Heshbon, Madmen, Horonaim, Luhith,
Dibon, Aroer, Holan, Jahzah and the list
goes on. So complete is the destruction of
Moab that the books written by travelers
and archeologists enumerate about 50
cities, not one of which is used as a
dwelling place by man. I was impressed
to learn that the land that was once
fertile is now unfertile. The prophet said,
“No city shall escape.” The cities are now
deserted and the land no longer used for
cultivation. It was predicted that they
would make their homes among the rocks.
Today a few people live there, and they live among the rocks for the sake of protection. I am overwhelmed by the prophecy and the fulfillment. I recommend for further examination of Edom that you read: Keith, Evidence of Prophecy, Porter’s Damascus, Volney’s Travels, and McGarvey’s Lands of the Bible.

Only you will be able to decide whether this was a guess by mortal man who couldn’t know what would be on the morrow or whether it was from Him who knows the “the end from the beginning.”

The following pages will set forth the testimony of scripture regarding what the prophets said about Moab.

**Deu 23:3** “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,

**Neh 13:1-2** On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

**Num 21:29** “Woe to you, O Moab! You are ruined, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To an Amorite king, Sihon.
Num 22:4-8 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.” And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, “Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. “Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.” So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak’s words to him. And he said to them, “Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me.” And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam.

Num 25:1-3 “While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.”

Psa 60:8 “Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Shout loud, O Philistia, because of Me!”

Isa 15:1-9 “The oracle concerning Moab. Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated and ruined; Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated and
ruined. They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, even to the high places to weep. Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba; Everyone’s head is bald and every beard is cut off. In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth; On their housetops and in their squares Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears. Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out, Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz; Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; His soul trembles within him. My heart cries out for Moab; His fugitives are as far as Zoar and Eglath-shelishiyah, For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping; Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over their ruin. For the waters of Nimrim are desolate. Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out, There is no green thing. Therefore the abundance which they have acquired and stored up They carry off over the brook of Arabim. For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab, Its wail goes as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; Surely I will bring added woes upon Dimon, A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.”

**Isa 16:1-14** “Send the tribute lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion. Then, like fleeing birds or scattered nestlings, The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon. “Give us advice, make a decision; Cast your shadow like night at high noon; Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive. “Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you; Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer.” For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased, Oppressors have completely disappeared
from the land. A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness. We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury; His idle boasts are false. Therefore Moab shall wail; everyone of Moab shall wail. You shall moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth As those who are utterly stricken. For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah as well; The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters Which reached as far as Jazer and wandered to the deserts; Its tendrils spread themselves out and passed over the sea. Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away. And gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field; In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting, No treader treads out wine in the presses, For I have made the shouting to cease. Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab, And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth. So it will come about when Moab presents himself, When he wearies himself upon his high place, And comes to his sanctuary to pray, That he will not prevail. This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. But now the LORD speaks, saying, “Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all his great population, and his remnant will be very small and impotent.”

Jer 48:1-47 Concerning Moab. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Woe to Nebo,
for it has been destroyed; Kiriathaim has been put to shame, it has been captured; The lofty stronghold has been put to shame and shattered. “There is praise for Moab no longer; In Heshbon they have devised calamity against her: ‘Come and let us cut her off from being a nation!’ You too, Madmen, will be silenced; The sword will follow after you. “The sound of an outcry from Horonaim, ‘Devastation and great destruction!’ “Moab is broken, Her little ones have sounded out a cry of distress. “For by the ascent of Luhith They will ascend with continual weeping; For at the descent of Horonaim They have heard the anguished cry of destruction. “Flee, save your lives, That you may be like a juniper in the wilderness.

Jer 48:7-47 “For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures, Even you yourself will be captured; And Chemosh will go off into exile Together with his priests and his princes. “And a destroyer will come to every city, So that no city will escape; The valley also will be ruined, And the plateau will be destroyed, As the LORD has said. “Give wings to Moab, For she will flee away; And her cities will become a desolation, Without inhabitants in them. [underlining added] “Cursed be the one who does the LORD’s work negligently, And cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood. “Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been undisturbed on his lees, Neither has he been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, And his aroma has not changed. “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I shall send to him those who tip vessels, and they will tip him over, and they
will empty his vessels and shatter his jars. “And Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence. “How can you say, ‘We are mighty warriors, And men valiant for battle’? “Moab has been destroyed, and men have gone up to his cities; His choicest young men have also gone down to the slaughter,” Declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. “The disaster of Moab will soon come, And his calamity has swiftly hastened. “Mourn for him, all you who live around him, Even all of you who know his name; Say, ‘How has the mighty scepter been broken, A staff of splendor!’ “Come down from your glory And sit on the parched ground, O daughter dwelling in Dibon, For the destroyer of Moab has come up against you, He has ruined your strongholds. “Stand by the road and keep watch, O inhabitant of Aroer; Ask him who flees and her who escapes And say, ‘What has happened?’ “Moab has been put to shame, for it has been shattered. Wail and cry out; Declare by the Arnon That Moab has been destroyed. “Judgment has also come upon the plain, upon Holon, Jahzah, and against Mephaath, against Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, against Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, against Kerioth, Bozrah, and all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near. “The horn of Moab has been cut off, and his arm broken,” declares the LORD. “Make him drunk, for he has become arrogant toward the LORD; so Moab will wallow in his vomit, and he also will become a laughingstock. “Now was not Israel a laughingstock to you? Or was he caught among thieves? For each time you speak about him you shake your head in scorn. “Leave the cities and dwell among the crags, O inhabitants of Moab,
And be like a dove that nests Beyond the mouth of the chasm. “We have heard of the pride of Moab—he is very proud—Of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation. “I know his fury,” declares the LORD, “But it is futile; His idle boasts have accomplished nothing. “Therefore I shall wail for Moab, Even for all Moab shall I cry out; I will moan for the men of Kir-heres. “More than the weeping for Jazer I shall weep for you, O vine of Sibmah! Your tendrils stretched across the sea, They reached to the sea of Jazer; Upon your summer fruits and your grape harvest The destroyer has fallen. “So gladness and joy are taken away From the fruitful field, even from the land of Moab. And I have made the wine to cease from the wine presses; No one will tread them with shouting, The shouting will not be shouts of joy. “From the outcry at Heshbon even to Elealeh, even to Jahaz they have raised their voice, from Zoar even to Horonaim and to Eglath-shelishiyah; for even the waters of Nimrim will become desolate. “And I shall make an end of Moab,” declares the LORD, “the one who offers sacrifice on the high place and the one who burns incense to his gods. “Therefore My heart wails for Moab like flutes; My heart also wails like flutes for the men of Kir-heres. Therefore they have lost the abundance it produced. “For every head is bald and every beard cut short; there are gashes on all the hands and sackcloth on the loins. “On all the housetops of Moab and in its streets there is lamentation everywhere; for I have broken Moab like an undesirable vessel,” declares the LORD. “How shattered it is! How they have wailed! How Moab has turned his back—he is ashamed! So Moab will become a laughingstock and an object of terror to all around him.” For thus says the
LORD, “Behold, one will fly swiftly like an eagle, And spread out his wings against Moab. “Kerioth has been captured And the strongholds have been seized, So the hearts of the mighty men of Moab in that day Will be like the heart of a woman in labor. “And Moab will be destroyed from being a people Because he has become arrogant toward the LORD. “Terror, pit, and snare are coming upon you, O inhabitant of Moab,” declares the LORD. “The one who flees from the terror Will fall into the pit, And the one who climbs up out of the pit Will be caught in the snare; For I shall bring upon her, even upon Moab, The year of their punishment,” declares the LORD. “In the shadow of Heshbon The fugitives stand without strength; For a fire has gone forth from Heshbon, And a flame from the midst of Sihon, And it has devoured the forehead of Moab And the scalps of the riotous revelers. “Woe to you, Moab! The people of Chemosh have perished; For your sons have been taken away captive, And your daughters into captivity. “Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab In the latter days,” declares the LORD. Thus far the judgment on Moab. [underlining added]

Eze 25:8-11 Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’ therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim, and I will give it for a possession, along with the sons of Ammon, to the sons of the east, that the sons of Ammon may not be remembered among the nations. “Thus I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD.”
Mic 6:5 “My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled And what Balaam son of Beor answered him, And from Shittim to Gilgal, In order that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

Zep 2:8-9 “I have heard the taunting of Moab And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And become arrogant against their territory. “Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, “Surely Moab will be like Sodom, And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—a place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, And the remainder of My nation will inherit them.”

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

This important city in Moab would be torched by an invading army as this prophecy was fulfilled when it was invaded by the Babylonians.

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

These princes were captured and, like the Nuremberg trials after World War 2, they were tried and convicted and then executed.
4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

The prophet did not overlook the sins of Judah. Amos now turns his attention to Judah’s transgressions and how the Lord will punish them for disregarding the law and for lying to the people about how peace was coming to the nation, saying that all was well. These lies led the people down the path to destruction.

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

In addition to keeping a person’s clothing that would be used to sleep in at night, they were drinking the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. They arrested people for petty things and then confiscated their property; they took their stash of wine and then went to the house of their idol god and drank it in revelry and debauchery. Under the mask of religion, they professed to be holy, and
now the prophet is telling them that their conduct is bringing disaster on the nation. The worst abominations and most grievous oppressions have been committed by some of the professed worshippers of the Lord.

7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

Mic 2:2 They covet fields and then seize them, And houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.

Mic 2:9 “The women of My people you evict, Each one from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever.

Mic 7:2-3 The godly person has perished from the land, And there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; Each of them hunts the other with a net. Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, And a great man speaks the desire of his soul; So they weave it together.

Zep 3:3 Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her judges are wolves at evening; They leave nothing for the morning.

Eze 22:25-27 “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her. “Her priests have done violence to My law and have
profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. “Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain.”

**Isa 10:2** So as to deprive the needy of justice, And rob the poor of My people of their rights, In order that widows may be their spoil, And that they may plunder the orphans.

**Eze 22:11** “And one has committed abomination with his neighbor’s wife, and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. And another in you has humbled his sister, his father’s daughter.

**1Co 5:1** It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.

8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

They were anxious to make loans but demanded collateral; and when the person didn’t own anything of value they would resort to the very clothes that a person was wearing. The clothing that was taken in pledge was a large enfolding cloak, which a man wrapped over his shoulders in the day; and at night when he lay down, it was his sleeping bag. Take note that
they laid the pledge by every altar. These men were pretending to be religious while all the while they were in violation of the law that they professed to be observing. What a bunch of hypocrites! And worse, they were using the clothes as bedding when they went to the place of worship. They were in violation of the law.

**Exodus 22:25-27** “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. “If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious.”

And add to all this that they were drinking the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

**9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.**

Sometimes people say, “I don’t like history,” but God keeps reminding his people to remember the past and what he has done for his people. In the text before us, he wants Israel to remember what he had done to the Amorites more than 600 years earlier. This historical fact is recorded in Num. 21:21-26.
10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

The Amorites were the most powerful of the Canaanite tribes. God had promised Abraham 1100 years before that he would give his descendants the land of the Amorites.

Gen 15:16 “Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

Six hundred years later at the Jordan crossing Joshua addresses the people and reminds them of the Amorites. In Persia, during the time of Esther, it was Haman—a descendant of the Amorites—who planned the extermination of the Jews.

Jos 24:15 “And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

We must never forget our own history. We should understand how God was directing the affairs of the Mayflower pilgrims and our founding fathers. Note: We need often to be reminded of the mercies we have received.
“Son, remember; Israel, remember,”

1. That God brought thee out of a house of bondage, rescued thee out of the land of Egypt, where you would have otherwise perished in slavery.

2. That he led thee forty years through a desert land, and fed thee in a wilderness, you would have otherwise perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us, for, if they had been cut off, we would not be here.

3. That he made room for them in Canaan. I destroyed the Amorite before them, here put for all the devoted nations. They were of great stature (whose height was like the height of the cedars) and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them; and they were also of great strength, not only tall, but strong.

4. He was strong as the oaks. Their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and over-topped all its neighbors. The Amorite was not only cut down, but plucked up: God said that he destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath, so that the Amorites were no more a nation.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? Saith the LORD.
Amos is still on his history lesson that shows Judah that they had an advantage over other nations who had no prophets or Nazarites.

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

They had tempted the Nazarites to break their vow and forbade the prophets to speak the word of God.

Mic 2:6 ‘Do not speak out,’ so they speak out. But if they do not speak out concerning these things, Reproaches will not be turned back.

13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

Amos uses the simile of a cart loaded so heavily that its wheels are compacting the ground beneath it in order to illustrate how the people of Judah were trying to squeeze God out of their lives.

14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

When God moves in judgment on them, no matter how fast they run there will be no place to run to, muscle and strength won’t count, and the high and mighty can’t get away from God.
15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

Archers will be overwhelmed and no matter how fast you can run you can’t get away from the army that God sends in judgment on that nation.

16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

The prophet says that God’s decree is that they will run out of their house leaving everything behind, including their clothes, and they will be captured and executed. Amos tells them that every means of strength, resistance, flight, swiftness of foot, of horse, or place of refuge, should fail them.
1 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

9 Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.
10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

12 Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.
InTRoDUCTIon To amos CHaPTeR 3

I srael and Judah are urged to hear the word of the Lord. God tells them that he is not threatening them without a cause. That lions don’t roar without a prey, that trumpets don’t sound without a cause, and that two cannot walk together unless they are in agreement. The prophet tells them that God does not do anything without revealing his intentions to his prophets beforehand. He tells the prophet to publish in the palaces from Ashdod to Egypt what he plans to do about their violence. He lets them know that in the day he pays them a visit, they will be lucky to escape with a table leg or a blanket. God says “I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him. I will also visit the altars of Bethel; I will smite the winter house and the summer house . . .” This visit will not be pleasant. Read the exposition for further details.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 3

1 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

God is saying that everyone who is connected with the people he brought up out of Egypt is to listen. God is speaking to
both Israel and Judah—all the people who had came out of Egypt.

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

From Adam Clarke’s Bible commentary: “I have taken no other people to be my own people. I have approved of you, loved you, fed, sustained, and defended you; but because you have forsaken me, have become idolatrous and polluted, therefore will I punish you. And the punishment shall be in proportion to the privileges you have enjoyed, and the grace you have abused.”

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

At one time Israel walked with God and he walked with them, but now they are alienated from him. They were unholy, but God is holy. God can no longer hold communion with them because they are not willing to walk with God.

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

This is a rhetorical question . . . the answer is implied in the question. The roar of a lion often terrifies the creature so that it freezes in its tracks. In chapter one and verse two, we learned that the Lord roars like a lion after its prey.
Young lions do not roar in their den; but when the prey is in their sight, they let out a roar that sometimes stops an animal in its tracks.

5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

A bird cannot be caught in a snare if there is no bait set for him. There needs to be something to lure the bird inside the snare, tripping the trap, to confine him inside the cage.

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

Amos is talking about a war trumpet, not a trumpet sounded for feasts and holy days. If the people persist in the evil in which they were engaged, then God will bring evil upon them in the form of some punishment.

7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

Before the Lord brings disaster, he warns his people by his servants the prophets. Let’s look at various examples of this in scripture first, and then my comments will follow.
Joh 14:29 “And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.

Joh 13:19 “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.

• God told Noah that he would bring the flood. Gen. 6:17
• God told Abraham and Lot that He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.
• God told Joseph about the 7 years of famine in Egypt. Gen 41:27
• God told Moses about the plagues. Ex. 9:14
• God told Jonah about the destruction of Nineveh. Jonah 1-4
• God told Amos what he would do to Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel. Amos 1, 2, 3.
• God told the apostles of the impending doom of unrepentant sinners. Matt. 25
• God told the apostles of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Matt. 24
• God told the Apostle John of the rise of the beast. Rev. 12
• God told John of the seven vials of wrath to be poured out on the beast. Rev. 16
• God told John that he would take the 10 kingdoms from the Great Whore (that seven-hilled city that ruled over the world) and reduce her dominion to 108 acres. Rev. 17
• God told John how he would put the dragon in the bottomless pit for a 1,000 years. Rev. 20

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?
Moses was not excused from speaking God’s truth, though slow of speech; nor Isaiah, though of polluted lips; nor Jeremiah, because he was a child; but God said:

**Jer 1:7** But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak.

**Eze 2:8** “Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.”

**Jer 20:9** But if I say, “I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,” Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

When God issued his denunciations of divine wrath like the roar of a lion, it was enough to make the people tremble. Amos had heard the roar of a lion as he took care of the flock and knew first hand how the roar had thrown the animals into a panic. From this picture we can see the fear that would have struck the heart of his hearers.

**9** Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.
Even though God’s proclamation would be announced in the palaces of Ashdod and in the palaces of Egypt and upon the mountains of Samaria, there was such a stockpile of evil and wrongdoing, of violence and brutality (and people taking to the streets in protest for the oppression), the prophet says their meetings and efforts to straighten things out will be futile.

10 For they know not to do right, saith the L ORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

They had stored up violence and condoned robbery even in the palace for so long that it was woven into their fabric. By now it was a way of life so the prophet uses the words, “for they know not to do right.”

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

Now we are beginning to hear the “roar of the Lion”; this is not just the voice of the prophet, but the word of the Lord GOD.

12 Thus saith the L ORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.
The prophet pictures a shepherd chasing after a lion that has carried off one of his prize animals, and he is able to recover only two legs and a piece of ear. From this analogy Amos tells Israel that they will be dragged from their beds in Samaria and removed from their living couch in Damascus.

13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

I suppose this refers to the prophet who will testify that this is not the mere word of some shepherd but the word of the Living GOD.

14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

God is going to pay them a visit, and it’s not going to be a friendly visit. His reason for the visit is that their sins are stacked up all the way to heaven. His itinerary calls for a visit to the altars of Bethel where he will dehorn the altars and then smash them to the ground.

1Ki 13:1-5 Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, a son
shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.” Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, ‘Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’” Now it came about when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

**Hos 10:13** You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors, Therefore, a tumult will arise among your people, And all your fortresses will be destroyed, As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, *When* mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children. Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.

**15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.**

The prophet declares that God will have his army tear down their vacation homes
and then their main residences; their luxurious houses will all be demolished. When the Assyrians finished with Samaria, it was a heap of rubble and an ash pile.
1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

7 And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.
8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 4

The women of Samaria had led their husbands around and now Amos tells them that they will be led away to captivity with fishhooks in their noses. God had withheld the rain, smitten them with blasting and mildew, gardens had failed, trees and crops were ravished by the locust, their young men had perished. Deuteronomy 28 was being fulfilled before their very eyes and yet they could not see it. The prophet urges them to prepare to meet their God. He’s coming down hard on them with the devastations mentioned in the text. No, it will not be a god that they carry around with them or wear around their neck. Yes, it will be the God who is the mountain shaper and the wind maker—he’s the one who brings everything out of nothing. This visit won’t be friendly (though as a father chastises the children he loves, it will be loving), and they will have no one to help them.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 4

1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

With ridicule, Amos calls the women of Samaria “cows” of Bashan. He says that these women have no feelings for the poor
or needy, and all they want is another drink. Amos uses the epithet, “fat cows of Bashan”, to describe the drunken court women of Samaria as cows that break down fences and grow fat because they are unrestrained. Amos likened these iniquitous, opulent, idle, lazy women as being fattened for the slaughter. Picture them as saying to their husbands, “bring me another tall cool drink.”

2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

Monuments discovered by archaeologist show carvings in relief of people in long lines with fish hooks in their noses, all chained together being led to the destination of their captivity.

3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

I have joined the cattle round up, riding a horse and yelling at the top of my lungs; when we got the cattle rounded up in pens, we used a cattle prod to get them in the chute for vaccination or loading to haul them to market. The prophet Amos tells the cows (women) of Samaria that they are going to be roped and hooked in the nose with a fish hook and driven off to kingdom come.
4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

The prophet is pouring out his derision and contempt upon these fat cows by telling them to come to Bethel and sin—and over at Gilgal, they would make an offering to the Golden Calf. All of this was nothing more than a religious show.

5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

They went through a ritual of thanksgiving to the idol—not only paying their tithes but publishing their free offerings. This was a religious sham.

6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

God had punished them with poor harvest, famine, and want of bread, but they still did not get hungry for God.

7 And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was
rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

God had caused a drought before harvest. Just when the barley crop needed rain to ear properly, he withheld the rain. He caused some rain here or there, but for the most part their crops were withering and still they did not thirst for God.

8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The famine became so severe that people wandered from city to city for drinking water, and yet they never wandered back to God.

9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Blight began to spread from field to field. The insect infestation (palmerworm or locust) was wiping out their fig and olive harvest, and “yet have ye not returned to me, saith the LORD.”

10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come
up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

It’s getting worse! An old Egyptian plague has arrived. Their young men have begun to disappear (through war), their prize horses are suddenly dying. It stinks to high heaven from the rotting carcasses. They are still ignoring the signs and will not return to God.

11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

He probably hit them with an earthquake and fires like those when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Some had been rescued like a burning piece of firewood—but they are still ignoring God.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

This verse is the golden text of Amos, “prepare to meet thy God!” Amos has just told them about the disasters of famine, drought, blight, plagues, war and fires to which they had not responded. Time was running out—Amos tells them to get ready to meet God. They may have escaped famine, drought, and flood, but how are they going to escape the awful wrath of God?
13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

The atom and angel maker—the mountain shaper and wind maker—the mind reader and light giver—the mountain stalker and God of Gods is the LORD. Amos reminds them that He is the one whom they need to “prepare to meet.”
1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:

5 But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.

6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:
9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.
18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 5

The prophet does not rejoice over the fact that God is going to destroy the nations around Israel and punish Israel with an exile into slavery. The nation will be greatly reduced—by ninety percent—because they had turned judgment into wormwood. They are urged to seek the Maker of the atoms and the angels and not the golden calves of Bethel. Amos has a message for the rulers who are bribed and for the fraudulent dealers. Again, he speaks of a remnant and of wailing and lamentations when God passes through with his judgment. God hates their sacrificial feasts where there is no piety. He wants an ocean of justice and a river of fairness. But, because of their stubbornness God will cause them to go beyond Damascus to a real hell hole to spend their days, and none of that generation will return.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 5

1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

Amos is mourning over Israel as Samuel did over Saul (I Sam 15:35) or as Isaiah wept in Isa 22:4, “I wept bitterly; labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people”; and as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Now Amos
is grieved at the wrongs of the nation that had always been favored with divine assistance.

2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

Amos is weeping like David over Saul and Jonathon, or like Jesus weeping at the grave of Lazarus. This mournful dirge was sung in the streets of Israel because she is to fall and none would raise her up. Israel had sunk so low that it would not be able to rise above its fate of the siege and captivity threatened. When Assyria and Babylonia came, there were no offers to help her up.

3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

The nation was destined to be greatly reduced by the exile as indicated by the contrasting terms of thousands and hundreds. The prophets predicted that ninety percent of her population would perish. She sent out her army but few returned.

4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:
Deplorable as the case against Israel was, it was still not hopeless.

5 But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.

These were places of idolatry, image worship, and houses of iniquity. The prophet begs them not to waste their time by taking trips to Bethel, for their religion was all show and no substance.

6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

If they would seek the LORD, they could avert the impending judgment; if, however, they chose not to seek Him, then God would break out like a fire, and their fire fighters would not be able to put out the fire. The house of Joseph was Ephraim and Manasseh. They were going to end up with nothing to show for their devotion to the idols but ashes and burned out houses.

7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Judgment was as bitter as wormwood. The rich could afford the best lawyers, and judges loved bribes. Plea deals behind closed doors were the norm.
8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Instead of being interested in heathen gods, Israel is exhorted to seek the maker of the heavenly bodies. He who can control the mighty waters of the sea, Jehovah is his name. He draws the water from the oceans and waters the land, and he can as easily destroy as create.

9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

God is able to support the man who is overcome with a stronger force and enable him to turn against his foe.

10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

The guilty person does not want to be reminded of his sin.

11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.
Social injustice—the rich forced the poor to furnish portions of their crops so they could live in luxury. They lived in expensive houses and planted vineyards. God says that though they may build these luxurious homes they will never live in them, and those vineyards that they planted will be destroyed by their enemy, the Assyrians, because they have run roughshod over the poor.

12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

There was no use appealing to the rulers since they could be bribed by fraudulent dealers to render a verdict against the victim. God knew first-hand of their violations and the enormity of their sins: they had kicked the poor when they were down.

13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

The wise are silent for they know that God’s judgments are right. It seemed as though justice was a lost cause. Evil was an epidemic. Good people had thrown up their hands for to oppose them was a waste of time.
14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

See verse 4

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Amos proclaims: Hate the evil and love the good. What ruins you, avoid; what helps you, cleave to. As a proof that you take advice, purify the seats of justice and then expect God to be gracious unto you. The prophet pictures God as being gracious unto the remnant. (When my mother made my shirts from feed sacks she always had a piece left over, and she called it a remnant; in the same way, God will have a few righteous people left after the war is over, and he will be gracious to them.)

16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

When you see the Assyrian forces, then there will be wailing and a public outcry of regret for the sad condition of your country. The places of shopping will be filled with an outcry of people; they will think Doomsday has arrived. The highways
will be filled with loud lament; everyone will be expressing grief and howling, “why us.”

17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.

In a metaphorical way the prophet is picturing the vineyards crying out as God sends judgment on the nation.

18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

Amos says, Why would you want to see God come? It will be bad news, not good times! In times of distress, men often call on God. But the day of the Lord will bring you national darkness and not light.

19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

They were “jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.” When people rebel against God it is inconsistent to think that God will give them relief. He compares what they had gone through in famines, pestilences, diseases, etc., to that of a man running from a lion only to meet a bear or leaning on a wall only to get bit by a snake. The day of the LORD for them would have far greater consequences than what they had already witnessed.
20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

In Amos’s day (as today), some religious people looked forward to “the day of the LORD” when God will intervene and save his people, assuming that “God is on our side.” But Amos contradicted their expectations. In a few words he depicted “the day of the LORD” as a nightmare.

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

God hates their sacrificial feasts where there is no piety and He despises them, for they pretend to be what they are not.

22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

God couldn’t stand the sham and charade of their offerings because there was nothing genuine about this people. What about our religious conferences and conventions, ecumenical councils, and fund raising schemes, and religious projects and slogans and goals of our day? When was the last time you faced reality? Has religion become just a habit and not a life-changing, soul-searching, spiritual experience with us? How many preachers, elders, deacons, bishops lead by example
in daily prayer, scripture understanding, witnessing and praising God?

23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

They sang their hymns but God never listened to them because their heart was not with him.

24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

God wanted an ocean full of judgment; yes, he wanted rivers of fairness. He wanted them to reverse their practice and render decisions that were just.

25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

God did not ask them for the sake of knowing but to remind them.

26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

They had performed religious services but they were offset by their practice of idolatry. The tabernacle of Moloch was a small portable shrine that they took with them. Here they are, carrying their cheap images and star-gods with them wherever they go for good luck. Some people wear a
cross around their neck—a string of beads called a rosary or a crucifix on a pole, or some saint on the dash-board, or hand signs, or hang a religious picture, or wear special clothing to proclaim their holiness. Hear the word of God in this matter:

**Mic 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

Because of their idolatrous practices, this nation was destined to go into captivity under both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.
1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.
9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

10 And a man’s uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 6

The Israelites were still living in denial, lying on beds of ivory, and living it up with excessive drinking; they made no proper connection with the people. They “just hadn’t gotten it.” The prophecy is getting worse—ten men in one house and all are dead, and a relative comes for the burial. The last verse of the chapter says it all, and here it is summarized: I will raise up a nation (Syria) against you, and it will make hash of you, from the extreme north to the extreme south.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 6

1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

Amos is at his sarcastic best in this message to Israel. He claims that they are living on easy street. In prosperous times like Amos’s, the Israelites grew addicted to luxury and power, forgetting all about God. Six hundred and fifty years before, Moses had warned against this very syndrome.

Deu 8:6-20 “Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing
forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And it shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before
you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.”

2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

Go north, east, or west and look at the neighboring countries and see if God hasn’t dealt better with Israel. If God has therefore dealt you a better hand, then you have some responsibility to honor him instead of the gods of your border countries.

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

They were headed down a slippery slope and a catastrophe was about to come upon them.

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

While their country was going to ruin they were living in luxury, indifferent to the fate of others and addicted to easy living and eating out. They demanded nothing but the finest of lambs and veal; all the while, their country was on a slippery slope towards an angry God.
5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

This was the jet-set and party-goers who liked the music of the night clubs. God says, “If I hear one more rendition of your songs, I’m going to scream. What I want to hear is a roaring river of justice raging through your courts. You need to wash-up, clean-up and straighten-up.”

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

These people were addicted to wine and were drinking it by the buckets. They were obsessed with life without wrinkles, so they anointed themselves with the latest fad in ointments; but they could care less where the country was heading.

7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

They will be the first to be deported . . . their new banquet will be a forced march to exile.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.
God assures them that he will stand by his word. He says that he is so repulsed by their arrogance that he is going to hand over the city and all its palaces to the Assyrians.

9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

When the army finally breaks the bars and doors they will not take any prisoners.

10 And a man’s uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

The scene described is this: Somewhere in a house is a bunch of dead people, and a relative comes to check on them and make funeral arrangements . . . he asks if there is anyone else alive and the answer is NO!

11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

God is in charge, and he is going to wreck their houses whether large or small. It will look as if a bulldozer passed through the neighborhood.
12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

The answer to both these questions is No. Horse races are not conducted in a cobblestone field, and you can not plow on top of a rock with oxen—the plow would break. If you can’t race horses on rocks or plow on a rock, then how can a nation survive that has turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock?

13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

These leaders had made great speeches about how they had created jobs and brought prosperity to the nation. They felt that their national security was in good hands.

14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

God says that he is going to move an army in from a pagan nation against the house of Israel. This army will hit them hard from one end to the other.
1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings.

2 And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

7 Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I
will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

13 But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 7

The seventh chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, there is a vision of grasshoppers or young locusts which devour the grass but are removed at Amos’s entreaty. This is followed by a vision of fire drying up creeks and springs and withering part of the land, but it is removed at Amos’s entreaty; and then of a plumb-line to mark the buildings for destruction. In the second part, Amaziah demands that Amos go back to Judah with his preaching. In consequence of the foregoing prophecies, Amos tells the priest, Amaziah, that his wife will become the town whore, that his children will all be killed, and that he will face deportation and receive a life sentence in a heathen prison.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 7

1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings.

God created the world in six days, and ceased the work of creation; but He has not ceased to govern it. In Jonah 1:4, for instance, the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and in Jonah 1:17, the LORD prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah up.
In chapter 7, the LORD prepares three things. 1) Grasshoppers. 2) Fire. 3) A plumb line. God has had it with the sex and religious shrines, and now he is going to knock these unholy shrines to pieces and destroy the house of Jeroboam.

The testimony of scripture proves that our God is in control of his creation and can form grasshoppers for the punishment of sinners. This is the same God that prepared a fish to swallow Jonah. A prophecy like the one to follow in this chapter, however, is out of place in a secularized church which preaches a religion arranged only by the whims of nature and by the policy of man. These people cannot endure the testimony of truth as contained here in this chapter and elsewhere in the Holy Bible. God bears long, but he will not bear always with a provoking people. The remembrance of the mercies formerly received, like the produce of the earth of the former growth, should make us submissive to the will of God when we meet with disappointments in the latter growth. The Lord has many ways of humbling a sinful nation. Whatever trouble we are under, we should be most earnest with God for the forgiveness of sin. Sin will soon make a great people small. Reader, consider the following verses regarding the things the Lord prepares:

Psa 148:8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word.
Psalm 107:29 He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed.

John 5:17 But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

Joel 1:1-4; “The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. Hear this, O elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days Or in your fathers’ days? Tell your sons about it, And let your sons tell their sons, And their sons the next generation. What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

Joel 2:25 Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

The king’s mowing was the first crop and the other mowing would be called the second and third crop. I suppose it was called the king’s mowing because it was normally the largest mowing. I see no reason to believe that all the farmers took the first crop and gave it to the king. I was raised on and still live on a farm, and I
well understand the first mowing which would occur around late April or early May with the prospect of two or three other mowings.

2 And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

In the vision, God revealed his plan to send the locust to devour the crops, but Amos begs the Lord not to destroy the crops. In his plea, he asks God how Jacob shall survive if all the crops are destroyed.

3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

The Lord responds to the entreaty of Amos by saying that he would not let it happen.

4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

In the next part of the vision, God shows his plan to send a forest fire that would not only devastate all the fields and orchards but even their water supply.

5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.
6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

Amos was like Moses in that he took his case to the Lord, and he begs God not to send such a devastation, adding the words, “for he is small.” Again God responded with the words, this shall not be.

Before the chapter is ended Amos will be expelled from the Northern kingdom. The Israelites will show him the border, so they will no longer have someone to plead with God in their behalf. When the righteous are killed or expelled from the land, then we can expect sudden calamity. In this verse, while Amos is still in Israel, God again responds to the request of Amos.

7 Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

A plumb line is a weight on the end of a string; we use it to make certain that walls are vertical. A wall may look right, but if it doesn’t match a plumb line, it is out of kilter. Similarly God will use a plumb line to judge whether Israel is “straight” by his standards.
9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

God has spared them for the last time—He has hung a plumb line, and it reveals all that we have discussed in previous chapters regarding Israel. So, now he is going to destroy the sanctuaries (sex and religious shrines) and destroy the house (family line) of Jeroboam, for he was the one who instituted their idol religion.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

Jeroboam is informed that Amos is a dangerous person and is stirring up anarchy, that he must be silenced and expelled from the land.

11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

Amaziah wants to censor God’s message. The plan is to kick him out of the country. Amos is not very popular with his the king is going to die at the sharp end of a knife prediction, or that Israel will be slaves abroad and everything they worked for is to be destroyed.
12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

Amaziah to Amos: Get out of here with your visions and prophesy somewhere else, and don’t come back! Go take care of your goats, pick your figs and trim your trees. Your visa has just expired and won’t be renewed.

13 But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.

Bethel is the king’s “chapel”; if the king needs to know anything about what God is going to do he has plenty of preachers at his “chapel.” Amos is not polished enough to preach at the royal shrine.

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

It was not my idea to become a prophet, I never made any plans to attend a prophetic school, my father was not a prophet, and I was a goat farmer and raised a few figs. It was God’s idea to take me off the farm, and he gave me the messages that I preach.

15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.
God’s messengers never leave without having the last word. Remember what Micaiah said on the way out of the palace of Ahab: “If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me.” 2Ch 18:27

16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

Now Amos tells Amaziah that he has a special message for him. You can reject God’s message for the house of Isaac, but you will never forget what God is going to do to your house.

17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

- Your wife will be the town’s whore.
- Your sons and daughters will be killed by the sword.
- All your land will be surveyed and sold.
- The pagans will lock you in a “Hell hole” the rest of your life.
- Israel will be exiled to a foreign land for slaves.
1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.
9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 8

A bowl of summer fruit—the season is over—the end has come upon my people Israel. The dancing and singing will be silenced. The land is going to tremble—worse than after a flood. Their potlucks are turned into funerals and their country music into sob songs. The Israelites are pictured living in a foreign land with the pagans ruling over them. A few can remember the old-time prophets and they long to hear the word “just one more time.” But God says, “I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread or water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 8

1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

The fruit basket would include such fruits as grapes, pomegranates and figs.

2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

This bowl of summer fruit came at the end of the harvest, and God is about to have a harvest of judgment on Israel.
3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

Dead bodies will be strewn everywhere and the singers will be howling. As the dead bodies are picked up for burial no one wants to talk about the reason for God’s anger.

4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

They had trodden all over the poor; people had lost their homes and their farms were swallowed up by the rich. When the poor failed, it only afforded the rich another opportunity to make money.

5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

I was raised on a farm and my parents did not go to church, but when Sunday came they refused to work the fields. Today, Christians are weary of the restraints of the “blue laws” and have cancelled most of them because no common work may be done therein. This is the character of many who are called Christians. Because of our carnal heart, we want no restraints and
we, thus, profane holy days. The Israelites were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still on these days. These people are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, who love market days better than Sabbath days, who would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

They would do anything to make a fast buck. Dishonesty came in many forms—the rates of exchange for money and cheating with weights and measures.

6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

They bought the poor for silver which was of little value. Joseph and Jesus were both sold for thirty pieces of silver. The courts were so corrupt that a pair of sandals would buy a slave. First, by dishonesty and oppression they gained their lands and goods. Then, the poor would sell themselves and these double-dealers would buy them for little or nothing.

Lev 25:39 And if a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave’s service.

They had created these terrible conditions and now claimed to be working within the framework of the law.
After sifting the wheat through a sieve, they would mix a portion of the hulls, chaff, small seeds, and unfilled grains amongst the good grain, thus giving the buyer a poor measure.

7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

God swears that he is keeping track of their sins and won’t forget their deeds.

8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

When God pours out his wrath, it will be like a river rising above flood stage and sweeping everything in its path to ruin. Amos pictures the land trembling and the people mourning.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

When leaders fall and nations collapse, God likens it to the sun going down, or the moon turning to blood, or the sky falling. Now, let’s take a look at the blackness and darkness that happened to Israel. Suddenly, the unlooked-for crash came. Pekah was the king of Israel and had reigned for seventeen years when he, along
with Rezin the king of Syria, attempted to extirpate the line of David and set up a Syrian of the line of Tabeel on his throne.

**Isa 7:6** “Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls, and set up the son of Tabeel as king [instead of King Ahaz] in the midst of it,” [Tabeel was an Ephramite.]

Ahaz was weak, with no human power to resist; his “heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind.”

**Isa 7:2** When it was reported to the house of David, saying, “The Arameans have camped in Ephraim,” his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.”

**2Ki 15:29** In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

Pekah’s sun had set, and all was night with no dawn. Shortly after this, Pekah himself was murdered by Hoshea as he had himself murdered Pekahiah.

**2Ki 15:30** And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.
After anarchy for nine years, Hoshea established himself on the throne; the nine remaining years were spent in the last convulsive efforts of an expiring monarchy, in which he was subject to Shalmaneser. Hoshea then rebels against Shalmaneser expecting help from Egypt’s King So—which help was like depending on a broken reed. Shalmaneser conquered all of the ten northern tribes of Israel, and the lamp went out. There was darkness in all the land. The following scriptures will tell the full story.

2Ki 17:1-18 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Now this came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who
had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. And the sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right, against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. And they set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. And they served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.” Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. Then they made their sons
and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. So the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.

After reading the above comments and scriptures, you can see how there was darkness over all the land.

10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Its Doomsday for them—their parties will be turned into funerals and their songs will not be lyrics of happiness, but a funeral dirge.

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

In the previous chapter we noted that Amaziah had banished Amos from the northern kingdom territory, telling him to take his vision and messages from God and go back to his goat keeping and his tree trimming job in Tekoa. They didn’t need his kind in the king’s chapel. One judgment, however, stands out above
all others: the nation will experience the silence of God, a famine of the words of the Lord. A few more prophets succeeded Amos; but after Malachi, no prophet appeared in Israel for four centuries—not until John the Baptist came to announce Jesus. The ten tribes were banished to Iran, and then the people run everywhere to hear the word of the LORD, but they won’t hear it.

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

Judgment day had happened to the nation that did not want God to interfere in their lives, and now they are pictured as seeking the word of the Lord and not finding it. The previous verses and comments left us with the full picture of the nation whose sun had gone down. Take a hard look at the following verse, for it sets the record straight.

Eze 7:26 ‘Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumor will be added to rumor; then they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest and counsel from the elders.’

13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

Their lives were falling to pieces because of the lack of water during the drought and famine. This was a drought in which the
bread and water of the life-giving word of God was scarce.

**Eze. 7:27** “The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with horror, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. According to their conduct I shall deal with them, and by their judgments I shall judge them. And they will know that I am the LORD.”

God stopped speaking to them through the prophets; He breathed not his Holy Spirit upon them. He did not appear to them, but is silent and hidden. There was enmity between God and Israel.

**14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.**

God had repeatedly told them to swear by his name, but this rebellious people swore by their idols. God says, however, that their idols shall fall and never rise again.

**Jos 23:7** in order that you may not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them.

**Hos. 8:5** He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, saying, “My anger burns against them!” How long will they be incapable of innocence?
Hos 8:6 For from Israel is even this! A craftsman made it, so it is not God; Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces.

Ch 24:18 And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt.
Amos Chapter 9

1 I saw the LORD standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

2 Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

5 And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

6 It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

7 Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I
brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.
INTRODUCTION TO AMOS CHAPTER 9

Too little, too late. God is pictured as standing on the altar in the courtyard of the idol’s temple, and he is going to bring it down with a crash. People will try to hide but he who has the keys of Hell and Death will find them; justice is on the way. It is as sure as the rising of a mighty flood. The prophet Amos declares that the “eyes of the LORD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth . . .” The house of David will again rule—the Messiah Jesus has fulfilled this prophecy.

EXPOSITION TO AMOS CHAPTER 9

1 I saw the LORD standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

God is pictured as standing upon the altar in the courtyard giving the order to demolish the heathen temple. The altar which Amos sees God standing on is the altar which Jeroboam had set up for sacrifices and which had become the center of their calf-worship. Its destruction was foretold on the very day of its dedication by “a man of God” in 1 Kings 13.
1Ki 13:1-4 Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’” Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, ‘Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’” Now it came about when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.

In one blow, God hit the top of the shrine’s pillars and the whole building shook, staggered, and fell as though it had been hit with a 9.0 magnitude earthquake. God gave the orders to smite the columns that supported the building which had a “capital” or chapter (in the form of a globe shaped like a pomegranate) on the top of the columns. The building will collapse on the priests—and in addition to all this, God has set his eye upon them for evil and not for good. The Lord will scatter them and visit them with calamities and shake them like grain in a sieve. There was nothing that would protect them. It would be impossible for them to escape. After the
roof collapsed on them, anyone left alive
God says he will kill.

2 Though they dig into hell, thence
shall mine hand take them; though they
climb up to heaven, thence will I bring
them down:

No place to run to—no place to hide. The
underworld can’t protect you—Heaven
won’t accept you. God will see to it that
none escapes. The prophet takes the most
extreme spaces, starting with heaven and
ending with hell, and tells us that the
Almighty would find them and punish
them. Hiding somewhere in a cave on
Mt. Carmel or committing suicide and
going into Sheol would not keep God from
tracking them down for punishment. No
one can escape the judgment of God. The
two farthest extremes are heaven and hell.

3 And though they hide themselves in
the top of Carmel, I will search and take
them out thence; and though they be
hid from my sight in the bottom of the
sea, thence will I command the serpent,
and he shall bite them:

A favorite place to hide was among the
rocks and caves on Mount Carmel, but
God says his search party will find them
and bring them to justice. The other
extreme was hiding in the bottom of the
sea, God says he will send his sea serpent
after them.
4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

God is going to see to it that justice is rendered. Suicide bombers are running straight into the wrath of God. God says he will make sure that they receive evil and not good. There is no way of escape! We serve an inescapable God.

Psa. 139:2-12 Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all. Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, And laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,” Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee.

5 And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn:
and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

When God decides to bring judgment on a nation, there are no bounds or lack of means at his disposal. It can rain and wash the top soil away and cause a flood like the rising of the Nile which covered the delta and drowned many people. Amos pictures God using every avenue of punishment at his disposal.

6 It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

God is pictured as building the upper stories in the heavens with the earth as the ground floor and calling for the vapors from the sea to water the earth. Amos describes the God-ordained rain cycle that was only “discovered by scientists” millennia later. This is the Great God that we serve.

7 Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

Amos rips away the carnal security that these people relied upon, namely that
they were the chosen people of God. To them their election was an unquestionable pledge that God would not allow them to go into captivity as Amos was predicting. However, what they failed to recognize was that the *election benefit* was to those who kept the law. While we serve a God that chose Abraham and made the nation of the Jews his chosen people, he is always involved with all other nations. Has God cast off the Jew? The answer to this question is in the following verses of Scripture. For a complete understanding of the Jew and his future, one must study Romans chapters 9-11.

**Rom 11:1** I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

**Rom 11:11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

**Rom 11:15** For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

**Rom 11:23** And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.

**Rom 11:25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.

Election, therefore, will not save sinful Israel from destruction. The elect (remnant), however, will be preserved as noted in the verse below. It must be observed that God made an end of all the nations where he scattered his people, as we observed in our study of chapter one.

Jer 30:11 For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

The punishment of reprobates is final and fatal, but that of God’s people, temporary and corrective. Babylon was utterly destroyed: Israel, after chastisement, was delivered.

Jer 10:24-25 O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

Jer 31:36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.
Israel’s national polity was broken up by the Romans. But the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people amidst violent persecutions, and scattering among all nations for eighteen centuries—unamalgamated—is a perpetual standing miracle, especially considering that all other peoples under such circumstances have become incorporated with their adopted nations.

**Jer 33:20** Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

**Jer 33:21** Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

**Jer 31:35-36** Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

**Lev 26:42** Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

**Psa 89:34-37** “My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. “Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. “His
descendants shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me. “It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful.” Selah.

9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

God will cause the Israelites to be tossed about through all nations as corn is shaken about in a sieve, in such a way, however, that while the chaff and dust (the wicked) fall through (perish), all the solid grains (the godly elect) will remain (are preserved), Rom. 11:26.

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

Their smug security was the cause of their destruction.

Eze 20:38 and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

Zep 3:11-13 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,
and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

**Zec 13:8-9** And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

**Mal 3:1** Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

**Mal 3:2-5** But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan,
and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Jer 18:18 Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

Let’s let the scriptures speak to us regarding “raising up the tabernacle of David”. As in many Old Testament prophecies, there is a dual application. As you read the scriptures you will see that the prophets envisioned the return of the remnant from among the nations where they had been sifted. They were to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, and the Levites were to offer sacrifices. The prophets also see the house of David ruling over them. Zerrubabel and Nehemiah were both of the house of David, and the rulers between the Old Testament and the New Testament were of the house of David.
In the secondary fulfillment, we see the apostle James at the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 make it clear that Jesus was the fulfillment of what the prophets said regarding the Tabernacle of David. I have underlined some of the passages quoted below to show the reader that the return from captivity is the first fulfillment of the prophecy.

**Acts 15:15-17** And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

**Isa 9:6-7** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

**Isa 11:1** And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

**Jer 23:5-6** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper,
and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

**Jer 30:9** But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

**Jer 33:14** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

**Jer 33:15-17** In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

**Jer 33:20-26** Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have
spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Eze 34:23-24 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

Eze 37:24-25 And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

Hos 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to
be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

**Luk 1:31-33** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

**Act 2:30-36** Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.
Oba 1:18-21 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.

13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

There will be such an abundance of crops that by the time you have gathered it all in, it will be time to plant again. The grapes, which were planted on the hill sides, would yield a bountiful harvest.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.
God is once again blessing the Israelites; the books of Nehemiah and Ezra record the return of Israel from captivity and the rebuilding programs:

- Rebuilding cities.
- Planting vineyards and good wine.
- Tending their gardens.
- Planting their farms.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

The prophet envisions them firmly planted in their home land.
APPENDIX

TYRE

THE FALL OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

A Commentary on Ezekiel 26-28 regarding Tyre
By Lewis P. Hussell

Tyre was one of the two greatest cities in the world—as great in that day as New York or London of our day. Tyre was situated midway between the East and the West, and at the junction of three continents. The people of Tyre carried on the trade of the world. The Mediterranean Sea became the mere highway of their commerce. They passed the Strait of Gibraltar on one hand, and reached India on the other. They settled Cyprus, Sicily, and Sardinia. In Spain they founded Gades (now Cadiz); and in Africa, Utica and Carthage, the latter destined to be in time the dreaded rival of Rome. They planted depots on the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. They obtained tin from The British Isles, amber from the Baltic, silver from Tarshish (southern Spain) and gold from southeastern Arabia. They carried on vast mining operations, and were marvelous workers in ivory, pottery and metals, so that their bronzes and painted vases became the models of early Grecian art. Sidon was noted for its glass working, in which the blowpipe, lathe, and graver were used. The costly purple dye of Tyre, obtained in minute drops from shellfish,
was famous, and was the rarest and most beautiful shade worn only by kings.

For years the armed forces of other nations had attacked this proud city, but always un成功fully. Very soon after Ezekiel’s prophecy in chapters 26-28, there was a 13-year siege by Nebuchadnezzar (See Josephus) Nebuchadnezzar took the city and demolished the mainland. The people fled to the island located half a mile off shore. Cf. Ez. 27:4; 28:2. The mainland became known as Old Tyre and the island as New Tyre.

Humphrey Prideaux gives a fuller account in The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and . . ., Volume 1:

Nebuchadnezzar made himself master of Tyre, after a continual siege of thirteen years, and utterly destroyed the place—that is, the city which was on the continent. These ruins were afterwards called Palae Tyrus, or Old Tyre. But, before it came to this extremity, the inhabitants had removed most of their effects onto an island about half a mile distant from the shore, and there built them a new city. And therefore, when Nebuchadnezzar entered that, which he had so long besieged, he found little there wherewith to reward his soldiers in the spoil of the place, which they had so long labored to take; and therefore wreaking his anger upon the buildings, and the few inhabitants who were left in them, he razed the whole town to the ground, and slew all he found therein. After this it never more recovered it former glory; but the city on the island became the Tyre that was afterward so famous by that name; the other on the continent never arising any higher than to become a village
by the name of Old Tyre, as was before said. (Prideaux’s *Connection* . . . , 1676 Page 127)

Today, there is a small new town called Sur which is erroneously designated as Tyre by some maps, but it is not Tyre. Sur is in a different location out in the peninsula and inhabited by a few fisherman. It is not, however, on the sight of Ancient Tyre, which has never been rebuilt. It was predicted that Tyre would be forgotten for 70 years.

**Jer. 25:11,12.** “This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.”

Tyre served the Babylonians for 70 years, afterwards rebuilding its city on the island.

**Isa. 23:15-17** At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king’s life. But at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute:

Take up a harp, walk through the city, O prostitute forgotten; play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered.

At the end of seventy years, the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.
By the year 606 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the nation of Judah. The Jews were conquered and taken captive to Babylon between 606 and 580 BC. The people of Tyre were looking with greedy eyes upon Judah, and they were making plans on going down and taking part of the spoil now that their rival king had invaded and conquered it.

250 years later, Alexander the Great accomplished the reduction of Tyre. He built a causeway 200 feet wide and half a mile long to the island; thus turning the island into a peninsula, he scaled the wall and conquered the people. After a siege of 7 months the city was captured: 8,000 citizens were slaughtered, 2,000 crucified, and 30,000 sold into slavery. Alexander performed a feat of military ingenuity by building a 2,000 ft. mole in the sea. To safeguard his siege operations, mobile protective shields, so-called ‘tortoises’, had to be employed. Despite this, the construction was greatly hindered by an incessant hail of missiles. In the meantime, engineers on shore were building mobile protective towers many stories high. They were the highest siege towers ever used in the history of war. A drawbridge on the front enabled a surprise attack to be made on the enemy’s wall. Each of these towers was one hundred and sixty feet high. When these monsters were prepared, they were rolled toward the walls of Tyre. The impregnable Tyre met their fate at Alexander’s hand. The History for Ready Reference tells the story:
Josephus places the settlement of Tyre 240 years before the building of Solomon’s Temple . . . Pliny, who wrote when its boundaries could still be traced, computes the circuit of Palae-Tyrus and the island together at nineteen Roman miles . . . Tyre offered a qualified surrender to Alexander the Great, which did not satisfy the haughty Macedonian, and he instantly laid siege to the city. Having no adequate fleet with which to reach the island-town, he resolved to carry a causeway across the channel, which separated the island from Old Tyre, on the mainland, and he demolished the buildings of the latter to provide materials for the work. It was an undertaking of immense magnitude and difficulty, and the ingenious Tyreians found many modes of interfering with it. They succeeded in destroying the mole when half of it had been built; but Alexander, with obstinate perseverance, began his work anew, on a larger scale than before. He also collected a strong fleet of war-galleys, from Cyprus and from the Phoenicians who had submitted to him, with which the opposition of the enemy was checked and his own operations advanced. (History for Ready Reference, 1895, Vol 5 p. 3159-3160)

The prophets in the Bible not only foretold the overthrow of old Tyre, but also of this new city, built, as it were, “in the midst of the sea.”

**Eze 27:32** And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?
Isaiah makes it clear that Tyre was located on an island when he says: “Cross over to Tarshish; wail, you people of the island.” (Isa 23:6)

Zechariah says that Tyre heaped up gold and silver like dirt on the streets, that she was a sea power and would be consumed by fire.

**Zech 9:3, 4** “Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.”

This new city was truly a stronghold, for not only were her walls 150 feet high, but she was located on an island a half mile from shore, making it impossible for other nations to attack her. Ezekiel also plainly predicts that the second destruction of Tyre should be by fire.

**Ezek 28:18.** “By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.”

This fire is cited by Archibald Alexander: “Accordingly, Alexander the Great besieged and took the city, and set it on fire.” (*The Evidences of Christianity*, 1836 p. 155)
Cotovicus, a Dutch traveler, who visited Syria in 1598, writes, “that this city so often restored after being overthrown, now at length appears to be utterly ruined; so that it has ceased to be any longer a city, and only some inconsiderable vestiges of her former ruins are now visible. If you except a few arches and baths, and some ruined walls, and collapsed towers, and mere rubbish, there is now nothing of Tyre to be discerned.” (Quoted in Alexander’s *Evidences of Christianity*, 1836 p. 156)

Alexander continues: “This city, standing in the sea, on a peninsula, at a distance, promises something very magnificent; but when you come nearer, you find no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times, and which the prophet Ezekiel describes in chapters 26, 27, 28 of his prophecy. On the north side, it has an old ungarrisoned Turkish castle, besides which you see nothing but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc. there being not so much as one entire house left; its present inhabitants only a few poor wretches, harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly on fishing, who seem to be preserved in this place, by divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, that it should be ‘as the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on.’” (Quoted in *The Evidences of Christianity*, 1836 p. 157)

Now for my commentary on the destruction of Tyre according to the Scriptures in Ezekiel chapters 26, 27 and 28.
Ezek. 26:1-21

1 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:

   It was on Feb. 3rd, 585 BC, when Ezekiel received a message from the Sovereign Lord! “Son of Man,” Tyre thinks that she is going to be heir to Judea. She gloats by saying “Aha, now I will control the trade route instead of Judea.” The message continues to tell of the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar.

2 “Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, ‘Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,’

   Since Jerusalem is in ruins by the Babylonians Tyre will be able to plunder Judea. They think that they will grow fat on her ruin.

3 therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.

   The Sovereign Lord says He is coming after Tyre, and that he will bring nations against Tyre like waves of the sea. Other nations had brought their forces against Tyre but were always unsuccessful.
4 They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.

According to the Sovereign Lord, they are going to tear down her walls and take a sledgehammer to her towers and leave nothing but a bare rock where fishermen will dry their nets. The Babylonians besieged Tyre for 13 years and finally broke through her stronghold and began their destruction. But Tyre had fled, along with all her riches to an island a half-mile off shore. The Babylonians had no way of reaching them. As a reward for carrying out the siege the Sovereign Lord tells Nebuchadnezzar that he will give him Egypt.

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth. He will loot and plunder the land as pay for his army. I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts because he and his army did it for me, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Ezekiel 29:19, 20

5 Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations,

Furthermore, God will leave the place uninhabited and a place to be plundered. The Sovereign Lord says Tyre will be nothing more than a bare rock off shore where fishing nets will be spread to dry. This part of the prophecy will not
be fulfilled for another 250 years when Alexander the Great accomplished the reduction of Tyre. He will scrape up the remains of old buildings and build a causeway 200 feet wide to the Island and then destroy New Tyre. Off shore, Tyre had built a new stronghold with walls 150 feet in height after her 70 years of captivity.

6 and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Notice how the word of God mentions both mainland and island. All her subdivisions, villages, and sister towns will be destroyed by the sword, and when it happens they will know that it was of God. This was all accomplished by the army of Nebuchadnezzar.

7 “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army.

The Sovereign Lord speaks with authority and certainty: He declares that King Nebuchadnezzar will come with his cavalry, war chariots, and soldiers. The mainland was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and her people exiled for 70 years.

8 He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp
up to your walls and raise his shields against you.

The Lord declares that he will destroy her townships, build ramps against her walls, and her mainland will fall by the sword. Every word of the Sovereign Lord has been fulfilled regarding this prophecy. I have already stated in my introduction that Alexander the Great built siege towers with a drawbridge 160 feet tall. He rolled it down the causeway and up to the wall. The drawbridge opened on top of the wall, and the soldiers overpowered the guards.

9 He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons.

The walls of Tyre will fall victim to the battering rams and the towers will be broken down. When the siege was over, the mainland was destroyed. They killed or carried captive the remaining inhabitants. Pliny calculated the circuit of the city at 19 Roman miles. The Babylonians destroyed all of her high walls and homes and stores.

10 His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the war horses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through.

The Sovereign Lord says that they will pass through Tyre’s broken gates and the
city will choke on the dust and its walls will shake from the vibration of the war chariots and the battle cry.

11 The hoofs of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground.

They will throw a chain around your pillars and hook a team of horses to them and they will collapse. Your people will be slain by the sword. The butcher of Baghdad will butcher you.

12 They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.

Your homes inhabited by the rich and famous will be burnt to the ground, and what remains of your goods will be carted off to Babylon. During the 13-year siege, the Tyrrhenian’s sent women and children and the larger part of their wealth to other nations. The Babylonians were disappointed to find little or no loot inside the city. However, God rewarded them by giving them Egypt.

13 I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more.
Your bars, your opera houses, your places of entertainment will all be destroyed.

14 I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

God again affirms that Tyre will be like a bare rock and further declares that it will never be rebuilt, and all that will be left is a place to dry fishing nets. To this day Tyre has never been rebuilt—and it never will be rebuilt.

15 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Tyre: Will not the coastlands tremble at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan and the slaughter takes place in you?

The towns located along the coast and the islands will tremble when they hear the screaming of her people and the report of the wholesale slaughter; they will be heart stricken.

16 Then all the princes of the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and take off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled at you.
God will bring every ruler down to the ground trembling; they will cast off their royal apparel and will be dressed in terror and dismay. They will not be able to stop trembling, they will be terrified and horror-struck. The neighboring towns submitted to Babylonian and Grecian rule.

17 Then they will take up a lament concerning you and say to you: “How you are destroyed, O city of renown, peopled by men of the sea! You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens; you put your terror on all who lived there.

They will be like mourner at a funeral listening to the funeral dirge. They will bemoan the fact that they were the world’s sea power and no nation on earth was able to destroy them.

18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the islands in the sea are terrified at your collapse.’

Here is their lament: Oh famous city . . . we had the greatest naval power . . . we struck terror around the world . . . how could this happen to us?

19 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I make you a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited, and when I bring the ocean depths over you and its vast waters cover you,
The Sovereign Lord says that they will sink to the bottom. The city will no longer be inhabited. Today their seaport is gone and much of ancient Tyre is under water. Her ships went to the bottom of the ocean.  

20 then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place in the land of the living.  

Tyre, you are headed for the grave! You are going to everlasting ruins. Check it out for yourself! That group of people is not among the living.  

21 I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD.”  

Again, Tyre, you are headed for the grave! You are going to everlasting ruins. They will sift through your garbage dumps and seek to understand how you lived. They will draw a map of where you lived but no one will be living there. Today all that can be found are a few arches and baths, and some ruined walls, and collapsed towers and rubbish, there is nothing of value left at Tyre.
Ezekiel 27:1-36

1 The word of the LORD came to me:

Ezekiel receives another message from God.

2 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre.

The Eternal God tells Ezekiel to sing a funeral song. We preachers are called upon to preach a funeral but in that part of the world they often sang a dirge.

3 Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You say, O Tyre, “I am perfect in beauty.”’

Gods says, You are to sing this song about Tyre, the world trade center, located at the gateway to the sea. This ancient seaport was located on the Mediterranean and was carrying on a worldwide trade. Her merchants were wealthy and in their own words said, “I am perfect in beauty.” It must have been a home of the rich and famous.

4 Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection.

Ezekiel, here is your song! Tell them that it is from the Sovereign Lord. Your harbors extend into the sea and you imported and exported from many isles.
You employed the best craftsman to build your homes and businesses. When Solomon was about to build the temple he sent the following message to the king of Tyre:

“Send me, therefore, a man skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, and in purple, crimson and blue yarn, and experienced in the art of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem with my skilled craftsmen, whom my father David provided.” 2 Chron. 2:7

5 They made all your timbers of pine trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.

God says to Tyre: The planking for your ships was made of Cyprus and pine was used for the timbers because of its strength. The mast that held the main sail was from a cedar tree in Lebanon. Goods and materials were being shipped to Tyre from 40 countries or cities. Senir was the Amorite name of Mt. Hermon, and Lebanon was located at the end of the Mediterranean.

6 Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, inlaid with ivory.

Hand carved oars came from the oaks of Bashan and oarlocks made from bronze. Your decks were elegant; they were made of Cyprus and inlaid with ivory. Bashan was located East and Northeast of the Sea
of Galilee in ancient Palestine. Cyprus is an island south of Turkey colonized by the Phoenicians.

7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah.

God to Tyre: Your sails were made of embroidered silk from Egypt. Egypt was famous for embroidered linen. Purple and scarlet awning covered your main cabin so the Captain of the ship would be protected from the scorching sun. Egypt was a country in N.E. Africa.

8 Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, O Tyre, were aboard as your seamen.

Your oarsmen, who rowed the ship out of the harbor through the straits to the ocean, were from Sidon and Arvad. (These men were slaves and were paid no salary for their work.) Your pilots were older skilled captains who had proved their sea worthiness. Up the coast from Tyre was Sidon; its modern name is Saida.

9 Veteran craftsmen of Gebal were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for your wares.

Tyre had the best craftsman waterproofing the ship. Ships were lined
up coming into its harbor from every port in the world loaded with merchandise. This was the largest seaport of ancient times carrying on trade not only by sea but also by caravan routes all the way to India. Gebal was a seaport of Phoenicia, 25 miles N. of Beirut. It was noted for expert stone masonry and shipbuilding.

10 “Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendor.

Tyre hired “soldiers of fortune” to guard its city and harbors. These soldiers had come from Persia, Lydia, and Libya. Persia is now Iran, Lydia was an ancient kingdom in western Asia Minor.

11 Men of Arvad and Helech manned your walls on every side; men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty to perfection.

Men of Arvad and as far away as Cilicia were guards in the towers on top of the walls. Arvad was a small island off the coast of Syria and about 40 miles north of Tripoli. Helech was probably Cilicia, an area in southeast Turkey. Gammad meant “valiant men” or brave warriors.

12 “Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise.
Tarshish referred to buyers located in Spain who shipped silver, iron, tin and lead in return for Tyre’s merchandise to them.

13 ‘Greece, Tubal and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged slaves and articles of bronze for your wares.

Tyre bought slaves and bronze dishes from the merchants of Greece, Tubal, and Meshech. Anyone in need of a slave could purchase one in the slave market at Tyre. Bronze is the only metal that will last where salt water is present. Therefore, all the lights, oarlocks, bolts, navigational equipment, nails and miscellaneous hardware on the ships or located in the harbors were made of bronze. The capital of Greece was Athens, and Greece consisted of many islands in the Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean seas.

14 “Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your merchandise.

Armenian feudal lords supplied Tyre with horses, horsemen and mules. A barter type of trade was carried on so that caravans would come loaded with goods, and leave loaded with goods from other countries that came through the port of Tyre. Togarmah was a city in eastern Asia Minor (Armenia).

15 “The men of Rhodes traded with you, and many coastlands were your
customers; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony.

The men of Dedan (Rhodes) traded with Tyre, as did people along the coastlines and islands, all eager customers. These places paid Tyre with ivory tusks and ebony. The famous lighthouse of Rhodes was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

16 "‘Aram did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your merchandise.

Syria was another of Tyre’s merchants, trading turquoise, purple dyes, fine linen, and jewelry.

17 "‘Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, oil and balm for your wares.

Judah and Israel traded also traded with Tyre providing wheat, wax, olive oil, and honey. Farmers from Israel shipped their produce up to Tyre. Minnith was a city in Israel which once belonged to the Amorites.

18 "‘Damascus, because of your many products and great wealth of goods, did business with you in wine from Helbon and wool from Zahar.
Damascus trade white wool and choice wine. Helbon’s wine was supposed to be the world’s best wine. Helbon was a village in Syria.

19 “‘Danites and Greeks from Uzal bought your merchandise; they exchanged wrought iron, cassia and calamus for your wares.

Danites and Greeks traded wrought iron, sugarcane, cinnamon and spices. Danites were from the tribe of Dan. Uzal is now Yemen; it was located on the Tygris river and was famous for sword blades.

20 “‘Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you.

Dedan (Ethiopia) traded their expensive saddle blankets.

By now, you are beginning to see that Tyre was a world import and export city.

21 “‘Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats.

The Arabians sold Tyre rams, lambs and goats. These animals would furnish a supply of meat, plus some animals to be resold. These would all be sold to world traders at the livestock sales. Arabia was a nomadic tribe that raised sheep and goats in the northern part of the Arabian desert.
22 "The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold.

The merchants of Sheba (Africa) and their trading company sold Tyre the finest spices and all kinds of precious stones. The spices would be sold in the stores, and the jewelers would sell rings and bracelets and charms made from these gems. Raamah was a place in Arabia near the Persian Gulf.

23 "Haran, Canneh and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Asshur and Kilmad traded with you.

Six trading companies from the area of Haran traded their goods. Haran was a city in Mesopotamia. Canneh was a city in Assyria and Eden was a city on the Euphrates and Tygris Rivers (Isa. 37:12). Asshur is also known as Nineveh.

24 In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted.

Among the things traded by the Haran group of merchants were chests, clothing, and fine carpets.

25 "The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea."
A fleet of ships from Tarshish (Spain) came filled to the brim with merchandise and left with a load of cargo to other seaports.

26 Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas. But the east wind will break you to pieces in the heart of the sea.

This sea-going trade capital was headed for disaster. Alexander the Great will come from the East. 250 years after this prophecy, Alexander accomplished the complete destruction of Tyre. He built a causeway 200 feet wide and half a mile long to the island. Thus, after turning the island into a peninsula, his troops scaled the wall and conquered the people. After a siege of seven months, the city was captured: 8,000 citizens were slaughtered, 2,000 were crucified, and 30,000 sold into slavery. Alexander performed a feet of military ingenuity by building a 2,000-ft. “mole” in the sea. To safeguard his operations, Alexander employed the use of mobile protective shields, or ‘tortoises’ as they were called. Despite these efforts, the construction was greatly hindered by and incessant hail of missiles. In the meantime, engineers on shore were building mobile protective towers many stories high. A drawbridge on front enabled a surprise attack to be made on the enemy’s wall. They were the highest siege towers—each was one hundred and sixty feet high—ever used in the history of war. When these monsters were prepared, they were rolled toward the walls of Tyre, the impregnable
Tyre met its fate at the hand of Alexander the Great.

According to prophecy, Tyre was to be “broken in the heart of the sea.” When Alexander arrived (in 332 BC) Tyre was not on the mainland (having moved its wealth and inhabitants when under siege by Nebuchadnezzar, 586-573 BC), but on an island, “in the heart of the sea.” Was there ever a prophecy fulfilled with such accuracy and detail?

27 Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck.

Imports, exports, sailors, wealth, cargo, crew, captains and caulkers were headed for the bottom of the sea. When Alexander the Great finished the reduction of Tyre nothing was left standing. His army burned, plundered and pillaged the city and sunk their boats. They even destroyed the port.

Historian Edward Creasy wrote, “Alexander did far more against Tyre than Shalmaneser or Nebuchadnezzar had done. Not content with crushing her, he took care that she never should revive; for he founded Alexandria as her substitute, and changed forever the track of the commerce of the world.” (Fifteen Decisive
Battles of the World, by Edward Creasy, 1851, ch. 4).

28 The shorelands will quake when your seamen cry out.

The whole countryside was shaken with terror. Men’s hearts were failing them for fear.

29 All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the seamen will stand on the shore.

The rowers, the pilots, and all the sailors come ashore because the trade has come to a sudden halt.

30 They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes.

These men cried and pulled their hair and wept and rolled in the dust.

31 They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning.

So enraged were they that they even tore out their hair. They put on sackcloth, but it was too little too late!

32 As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: “Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?”
They were not only out of work but their homes were destroyed and their lives were in jeopardy. Now they are pictured as singing this sad funeral song. Was there ever such a city as Tyre, now silent at the bottom of the sea? Every day their conversation was about the world trade center, they were still talking about it generations later.

33 When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth.

When the merchandise of Tyre’s warehouses was loaded on ships and sent to other ports, it enriched kings and all who could afford its exports. Nations were glad to import and export with Tyre, as the economy of all was enriched.

34 Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you.

Alexander the Great broke down the 150-feet high walls, or as the Scripture says of Tyre, “shattered by the sea in the depths of the water.” By the time Alexander finished destroying the city and massacring her people, nothing was left except a place to dry fishing nets.

35 All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you; their kings shudder
with horror and their faces are distorted with fear.

The countenance of Tyre’s neighbors and other nations has changed; they are horrified, appalled, aghast at Tyre’s fate. These people were so panic-stricken that it showed it on their faces, for they see the doom that has come to the people of Tyre. Alexander will capture 40,000 citizens of Tyre: 8,000 citizens will be slaughtered, 2,000 will be crucified, and 30,000 will be sold as slaves. Is it any wonder that the Scripture says that kings shudder with horror and their faces are distorted with fear?

36 The merchants among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.””

The people of Tyre have ceased to be, and they shall be no more forever.

Ezekiel 28:1-26

1 The word of the LORD came to me:

God had a special message for this “One and Only”—for this arrogant king of Tyre who thought of himself as God.

2 “Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “In the pride of your heart you say, “I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.” But you are a
man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.

In his haughtiness and pride, the king of Tyre claims that he is god and is seated on a throne in Tyre. In a similar way, the popes of the Roman Catholic Church claim that they are God. Pope Leo XIII said: “We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.” (“Apostolic Letter of Pope Leo XIII”, June 20, 1894)

3 Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?

This king becomes arrogant and claims that he is as wise as Daniel, God’s prophet and famous leader in Babylon and Persia under four kings.

4 By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries.

God is going to use some irony. This type of satire will show how ridiculous the king’s claim is. The prophet Zechariah said that the king of Tyre had amassed gold and silver like dirt on the street. (Zech. 9:3, 4)

5 By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.
There seems to be little doubt that the king had amassed a fortune. Unfortunately, when he had lined his coffers with gold and silver, he let it “go to his head.” This egotistical fool was proud of his accomplishments and now he claims he is God.

6 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god,

Therefore, God is going to give the king of Tyre an evaluation. The Sovereign Lord is the one who is going to conduct the investigation and scrutinize his character.

7 I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor.

God is saying: “Just wait and see! I will bring a ruthless nation against you and then we will see if you are as wise as Daniel and as strong as God.” The kings of Tyre had outwitted the Babylonians by moving their possessions off shore and building a fortified city on an island where they would be secure from any army on earth. Little did they know the ingenuity of God’s next messenger, Alexander the Great.

8 They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas.
Alexander’s army will bring the king and Tyre down to the grave. They will die in their island home pierced and wounded. The word that was pronounced by the prophet was fulfilled according to the specifications of the Sovereign Lord.

9 Will you then say, “I am a god,” in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a man, not a god, in the hands of those who slay you.

God asks: When you come face to face with barbarous soldiers see if your claim to be God will affect them? They will kill you without mercy.

10 You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hands of foreigners. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.’”

The uncircumcised, not Jews, but foreigners, will kill the king of Tyre. God says, “You are gonna die.” Every student of the word of God knows that when the Sovereign Lord declares something that it will not fail.

11 The word of the LORD came to me:

The prophet keeps telling us that this “word” was directly from God. The Bible is unlike any book ever written. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
12 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Now the prophet is instructed to taunt the king with more banter. He mocks him with the following jibe. In this taunt the prophet is merely stating the evaluation that the king had placed on himself.

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.

We sometimes say, yea, ‘sure you was’! The king fancies himself reincarnated, as though he had been in Eden. This eccentric old fool has such an outlandish view of himself that God is going to show what a laughingstock he really is. He has the nine precious stones that were on the high priest breastplate, and fancies himself as an Eden sentry guard.

14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

Yes, sure you have been with the creator . . . yes you had access to the
Commentary on Amos, Ezra, Esther, Haggai, Nehemiah.

mountain of God and walked on beds of coals . . . It will be amusing when you meet face to face with your enemies. These claims that are made by the king are whimsical and ludicrous.

15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

God, through the prophet Haggai, is still mocking the king who thinks of himself as perfect, who fancies himself as having been reincarnated from some angelic being in Eden’s garden.

16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.

Wealth, greed, covetousness had led to violence and a multitude of sins, so now the king is going to lose his kingdom. In scripture, a mountain is often used to represent a kingdom. Like Belshazzar in Daniel 5, he is weighed in the balance and found light as a feather. He fancied himself as a cherub with a throne like Jehovah, but all this was merely make-believe. His ruin is certain, and the last verse of the lament will give us the end of this bigoted, pompous, opinionated king. The reader should consult Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Ezekiel 28:16 page 1064.
17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

He (Ethbaal King of Tyre) thought of himself as the world’s best looking man. He had a proud heart; his depraved heart blinded his mind. The song says that he is going down for the count. Kings from all the other countries will hear of his demise. This entire chapter and the two preceding it are about Tyre. This is not about someone getting thrown out of heaven but rather a king losing his life as the great city of Tyre is razed and burned.

18 By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.

The king’s sins and iniquities had come about through dishonest trade, and the guilt had desecrated his sanctuaries. Note that the king had desecrated his own sanctuaries, not the sanctuaries of God. This verse declares that he was rotten through and through. Therefore, a fire will consume and devour him. Alexander the Great set his palace on fire and burned the king to the ground. He was cremated, or as the scripture declares ‘reduced to ashes.’
19 All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”

All the nations from port to port were appalled at the fate of this king. This terror stricken king was to come to an end and be no more. Note: If these verses relate to the devil then this verse declares that the devil is “no more”. Such teaching is not consistent with the text, leading people to a mystical interpretation rather than to the very strong reality of God dealing with man.

A Prophecy Against Sidon

20 The word of the LORD came to me:

Another message comes from God to Ezekiel. Sidon was located down the coastline from Tyre and in scripture is often mentioned in the same verse.

21 “Son of man, set your face against Sidon; prophesy against her

Ezekiel is told to look down the beach to the next port, which is Sidon.

22 and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “I am against you, O Sidon, and I will gain glory within you. They will know that I am the LORD, when I inflict punishment on her and show myself holy within her.

God plans to execute judgment against her also. When God executes his plans
it will declare his holiness. To allow sin to go unpunished is not holiness. When this prophecy was completed, the people knew that it was a judgment of God. Jesus speaks of Tyre and Sidon in Matthew 11:21: “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

The Sovereign Lord wants you to know that this was His bidding and not just a “happen so”.

23 I will send a plague upon her and make blood flow in her streets. The slain will fall within her, with the sword against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

The Eternal One says that blood shall flow in Sidon, and a sword was to come from every quarter. The plague was probably cholera, which is a normal outbreak from unburied bodies in time of war.

24 “No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbors who are painful briers and sharp thorns. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.

The malicious enemies, namely Tyre and Sidon, are likened to a pricking brier and sharp thorns. Jehovah declares through the prophet, Ezekiel, that they will be no more.
25 “‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will show myself holy among them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Jacob.

God’s holiness was to be vindicated when he gathered his people, who at this time were scattered as a result of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The Sovereign Lord gathered all these people of Israel who had been dispersed into captivity, and they returned to their own nation of Israel. According to scripture and history, people from all 12 tribes returned. (The Antiquities of the Jews, by Josephus, 11.5.2)

26 They will live there in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards; they will live in safety when I inflict punishment on all their neighbors who maligned them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.’”

Halleluiah! Here is the good news! The exiles are coming home . . . they will build new houses, plant vineyards, dwell in confidence and live in peace. God saved the best to last . . . “they shall know that I am the Lord their God.”

Reader, do you know this Sovereign Lord?
A COMMENTARY ON EZRA

By:

Lewis P. Hussell
There was no TV coverage—no newspapers. But heralds were sent to all parts of the kingdom to announce the news. The king had issued an edict allowing the Jews to return from Persia to their homeland. The first contingent, which consisted of 42,360 people led by Zerubbabel, returned in BC 536. In BC 458 Ezra led another group the long journey back to their homeland, and finally a third group left Persia under the leadership of Nehemiah BC 445. The book of Ezra will tell us of the first two returns and the book of Nehemiah will guide us through the third return.

These are moments in history that capture our attention. Babylon had held the Jewish war captives for 70 years; but in BC 536, Persia, under Cyrus and Darius, overthrew the Babylonians. Cyrus’s decree let the Jewish exiles return home under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple of their God. By the year of BC 530, the temple foundation was laid.

The book of Ezra will tell us in detail how the work of rebuilding was stopped. The books of Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi relate the inspiration given the Jewish people to finish the building project. Ezra is the main character of this book, and I will explore in detail his work. Enjoy the book and let it stir your spiritual passion.
Cyrus Helps the Exiles to Return

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’”

5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. 6 All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings. 7 Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. 8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the
treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

9 This was the inventory:
  gold dishes 30
  silver dishes 1,000
  silver pans 29

10 gold bowls 30
  matching silver bowls 410
  other articles 1,000

11 In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.
INTRODUCTION

Cyrus allows the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus’s kingdom stretched all the way from India to Ethiopia. The first year of his reign was BC 538. The Lord fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah and stirred the heart of Cyrus to issue a public notice which was posted in all 127 provinces. The notice begins by saying that God was behind the temple-building project, and that he, Cyrus, was acting in God’s behalf. Cyrus empties the museum, crates up the entire collection of artifacts, and lets Ezra take it back to its rightful owner. Then God stirred the hearts of priests, Levites, and tribal leaders to pack for moving. Cyrus was a “hands on” king, and he orders his treasurer to turn over to Sheshbazzar (the new governor appointed by the king) all 5,400 items. Keep reading for more details as I explore this book verse by verse, chapter by chapter.

EXPOSITION TO EZRA 1

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

Cyrus had been ruling over Persia for 20 years, but this is the first year of his reign, beginning
in March BC 538, after conquering Babylon. In 2Chronicles 36:22, we have the same wording as this verse. In Isaiah, God calls Cyrus his “Shepherd and his anointed.” (Isa. 44:28 Isa. 45:1) Jeremiah had foretold the length of the captivity in Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10. The Jews had been taken to Babylon as war slaves in BC 606, so 70 years later would make it BC 536. The proclamation of Cyrus would have been carried by postmen to all parts of the providence and posted for public reading.

2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

The word “God of heaven” occurs 22 times in the Old Testament and seventeen times here in this book. Cyrus acknowledges that “the God of heaven” had given him this kingdom. Dan 2:38-40.

3 Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.

Cyrus is benevolent to the Jews and lets them return to their homeland.

4 And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and
with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”’

The survivors are the remnant that was left from the massacre in Judah by the Babylonians.

5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

“Family heads” simply meant that they represented all the branches of the family. God had moved the heart of the remnant ones to pack up and move to their homeland.

6 All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

When God calls you to do something, he will equip you for the task. In this verse we see the neighbors assisting them with cash, supplies, and livestock—and then a freewill offering for the temple treasury.

7 Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.

Cyrus has all the temple articles inventoried and catalogued so they can be sent back to the temple that God has told him to build. These
valuables had been kept in the house of the gods of the Babylonians for public display.

8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

This verse tells us the name of the treasurer: Sheshbazzar.

Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were probably the same person; Sheshbazzar was likely the Persian name and Zerubbabel was the Jewish name. (Remember that Daniel was called Belteshazzar by the Babylonians.) Here are my reasons for believing that they are the same person. Both men were Governors (Ezra 5:14, Haggai 1:1; 2:2). Both laid the foundation (Ezra 3:2-8; 5:16; Haggai 1:14,15; Zech. 4:6-10). Josephus—the Jewish historian, AD37 to circa 100—identifies Sheshbazzar as Zorobabel.

Over 1900 years ago Josephus wrote the following regarding the events that occurred during the reign of Cyrus. Below is a quote from his book, “Antiquities of the Jews”—Book 11, Chapter 1, article 1-3.

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

1. IN the first year of the reign of Cyrus (1) which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their
own land into Babylon, God commiserated the captivity and calamity of these poor people, according as he had foretold to them by Jeremiah the prophet, before the destruction of the city, that after they had served Nebuchadnezzar and his posterity, and after they had undergone that servitude seventy years, he would restore them again to the land of their fathers, and they should build their temple, and enjoy their ancient prosperity. And these things God did afford them; for he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia: “Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.”

2. This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: “My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.” This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them,
that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, (2) and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.

3. When Cyrus had said this to the Israelites, the rulers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and priests, went in haste to Jerusalem; yet did many of them stay at Babylon, as not willing to leave their possessions; and when they were come thither, all the king’s friends assisted them, and brought in, for the building of the temple, some gold, and some silver, and some a great many cattle and horses. So they performed their vows to God, and offered the sacrifices that had been accustomed of old time; I mean this upon the rebuilding of their city, and the revival of the ancient practices relating to their worship. Cyrus also sent back to them the vessels of God which king Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged out of the temple, and had carried to Babylon. So he committed these things to Mithridates, the treasurer, to be sent away, with an order to give them to Sanabassar, that he might keep them till the temple was built; and when it was finished, he might deliver them to the priests and rulers of the multitude, in order to their being restored
to the temple. Cyrus also sent an epistle to the governors that were in Syria, the contents whereof here follow:

“I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before. I have also sent my treasurer Mithridates, and Zorobabel, the governor of the Jews, that they may lay the foundations of the temple, and may build it sixty cubits high, and of the same latitude, making three edifices of polished stones, and one of the wood of the country, and the same order extends to the altar whereon they offer sacrifices to God. I require also that the expenses for these things may be given out of my revenues. Moreover, I have also sent the vessels which king Nebuchadnezzar pillaged out of the temple, and have given them to Mithridates the treasurer, and to Zorobabel the governor of the Jews, that they may have them carried to Jerusalem, and may restore them to the temple of God. Now their number is as follows: Fifty chargers of gold, and five hundred of silver; forty Thericlean cups of gold, and five hundred of silver; fifty basons of gold, and five hundred of silver; thirty vessels for pouring [the drink-offerings], and three hundred of silver; thirty vials of gold, and two thousand four hundred of silver; with a thousand other large vessels.

(3) I permit them to have the same honor
which they were used to have from their forefathers, as also for their small cattle, and for wine and oil, two hundred and five thousand and five hundred drachme; and for wheat flour, twenty thousand and five hundred artabae; and I give order that these expenses shall be given them out of the tributes due from Samaria. The priests shall also offer these sacrifices according to the laws of Moses in Jerusalem; and when they offer them, they shall pray to God for the preservation of the king and of his family, that the kingdom of Persia may continue. But my will is, that those who disobey these injunctions, and make them void, shall be hung upon a cross, and their substance brought into the king’s treasury.” And such was the import of this epistle. Now the number of those that came out of captivity to Jerusalem, were forty-two thousand four hundred and sixty-two.

9 This was the inventory:
   gold dishes 30
   silver dishes 1,000
   silver pans 29

10 gold bowls 30
   matching silver bowls 410
   other articles 1,000

11 In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.
Verses 9 and 10 identify articles which add up to 2,499—only a part of the total inventory numbered in verse 11. When all the other articles that are not mentioned by name are counted, we have 5,400.
The List of the Exiles Who Returned

1 Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, 2 in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah):

The list of the men of the people of Israel:

3 the descendants of Parosh 2,172

4 of Shephatiah 372

5 of Arah 775

6 of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,812

7 of Elam 1,254

8 of Zattu 945

9 of Zaccai 760

10 of Bani 642

11 of Bebai 623

12 of Azgad 1,222
13 of Adonikam 666
14 of Bigvai 2,056
15 of Adin 454
16 of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
17 of Bezai 323
18 of Jorah 112
19 of Hashum 223
20 of Gibbar 95
21 the men of Bethlehem 123
22 of Netophah 56
23 of Anathoth 128
24 of Azmaveth 42
25 of Kiriath Jearim, [a] Kephirah and Beeroth 743
26 of Ramah and Geba 621
27 of Micmash 122
28 of Bethel and Ai 223
29 of Nebo 52
30 of Magbish 156
31 of the other Elam 1,254
32 of Harim 320

33 of Lod, Hadid and Ono 725

34 of Jericho 345

35 of Senaah 3,630

36 The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973

37 of Immer 1,052

38 of Pashhur 1,247

39 of Harim 1,017

40 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (through the line of Hodaviah) 74

41 The singers: the descendants of Asaph 128

42 The gatekeepers of the temple: the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 139

43 The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

44 Keros, Siaha, Padon,

45 Lebanon, Hagabah, Akkub,

46 Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan,

47 Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah,

48 Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,
49 Uzza, Paseah, Besai,
50 Asnah, Meunim, Nephussim,
51 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Har hur,
52 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,
53 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,
54 Neziah and Hatipha
55 The descendants of the servants of Solomon: the descendants of Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda,
56 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,
57 Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Ami
58 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392
59 The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel:
60 The descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 652
61 And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name).
62 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.
63 The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

64 The whole company numbered 42,360,

65 besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 200 men and women singers.

66 They had 736 horses, 245 mules,

67 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

68 When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site.

69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 drachmas of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

70 The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.
INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

This chapter lists the family names of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Remember that they were slaves in Babylon and after the war were taken to Persia and now are allowed to return to the land of their ancestors.

Three families had lost their genealogical records, so until they had God’s approval they were not allowed to officiate in priestly duties. A total of 49,897 people, including servants and singers, return to their homeland of Israel. You are now invited to join with me in a verse by verse exposition.

EXPOSITION OF EZRA 2

1 Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town,

There are two registers compiled of the family names of the captives; one is by Ezra and the other by Nehemiah. There is a slight difference, and probably the following explanation would account for the difference. I believe that the account by Ezra was the census taken when he led the contingent from Persia, and the other census by Nehemiah was taken some
years later in Jerusalem. Cf. Neh. 7:4-73 with the list provided by Ezra.

2 in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah):

The list of the men of the people of Israel:

The eleven men mentioned in this verse were leaders of the expedition. The fact that “Israel” is used shows that all twelve tribes were represented and not just the two tribes of Judah.

3 the descendants of Parosh 2,172

4 of Shephatiah 372

5 of Arah 775

6 of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,812

7 of Elam 1,254

8 of Zattu 945

9 of Zaccai 760

10 of Bani 642

11 of Bebai 623

12 of Azgad 1,222

13 of Adonikam 666
14 of Bigvai 2,056
15 of Adin 454
16 of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
17 of Bezai 323
18 of Jorah 112
19 of Hashum 223
20 of Gibbar 95

The census information collected will serve as a source for several purposes: 1. Military draft. 2. Tax revenue. 3. Property rights. 4. Ancestry (to determine who was a priest or Levite). 4. Collection of monies for the temple. 5. Place of residence (to determine who would live in Jerusalem and who would live in nearby cities).

21 the men of Bethlehem 123
22 of Netophah 56
23 of Anathoth 128
24 of Azmaveth 42
25 of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth 743
26 of Ramah and Geba 621
27 of Micmash 122
28 of Bethel and Ai 223
29 of Nebo 52
30 of Magbish 156
31 of the other Elam 1,254
32 of Harim 320
33 of Lod, Hadid and Ono 725
34 of Jericho 345
35 of Senaah 3,630

Note that the registry is focused on Bethlehem because, as previously stated, Jerusalem was in the first registry.

36 The priests: the descendants of Jedahiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973
37 of Immer 1,052
38 of Pashhur 1,247
39 of Harim 1,017

The priest that return number 4,289 or about 10% of the total captives to return under Ezra.

40 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (through the line of Hodaviah) 74
Levites number 74 and are the priest assistants. Nehemiah tells us what the Levites did in Nehemiah 8:7-9. The book of IChr. 2:3,4 tells us that in David’s day, there were 38,000 Levites and lists of job classification as supervisors over the construction of the temple, government officials, judges, gatekeepers, and musicians. The Babylonians had nearly wiped out the Levites in an effort to destroy all the political and religious apparatus of the Jews.

41 The singers: the descendants of Asaph 128

This group of singers number 128 and are from the Asaph clan. More singers are mentioned in verse 65. A roster containing 288 sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthan for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied with harps, lyres and cymbals is listed in I Chron. 25

42 The gatekeepers of the temple: the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 139

Gatekeepers number 139, and they are responsible for the security of the city gates. I Chron. 23:5 says there are 4,000 gatekeepers in the days of David and Solomon.

43 The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

44 Keros, Siaha, Padon,
45 Lebanon, Hagabah, Akkub,

46 Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan,

47 Giddel, Gahar, Reaijah,

48 Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,

49 Uzza, Paseah, Besai,

50 Asnah, Meunim, Nephussim,

51 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

52 Bzluth, Mehida, Harsha,

53 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

54 Neziah and Hatipha

55 The descendants of the servants of Solomon: the descendants of Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda,

56 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,

57 Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Ami

58 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392

Nethinims and descendants of Solomon’s servants number 392. This group is called temple servants. I suppose their responsibilities were ground maintenance,
cleaning and all menial tasks that servants normally perform.

59 The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel:

60 The descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 652

61 And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name).

62 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

63 The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

This group numbers 652, but they lacked a record of their genealogy. They were staking claim to the priesthood without proper identification—so Governor Zerubbabel orders an investigation that will be confirmed with Urim and Thummin.

64 The whole company numbered 42,360,
The total here in Ezra is 42,360. Looking back at the various lists and adding up the numbers we come up with 29,818. I suppose this larger number would include women and children who are not named in the previous list.

65 besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 200 men and women singers.

This verse cites 200 singers; verse 41, however, lists 128 singers. There is no discrepancy since verse 41 names the descendants of Asaph and this group would also include other singers not of that clan.

66 They had 736 horses, 245 mules,

736 Horses—used to pull wagons and plows and for transportation and war.

245 Mules—used as pack animals and coronation ceremonies.

67 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

The camels were used in caravans as pack animals and for milk. 6720 donkeys. These animals were used as beasts of burden and for riding.

68 When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site.
The returnees were so grateful to get back to their homeland that they wanted to contribute to the rebuilding fund.

69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 drachmas of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

Nehemiah and Ezra have two different amounts for the offering. I think we can account for this as meaning that a contribution was taken up at two different times, thus two different amounts. Compare Nehemiah 7:70-72

70 The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

The re-settling was done according to family origin, that is, where their family had lived before the captivity.
Rebuilding the Altar

1 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem.

2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.

4 Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.

5 After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.

6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD’s temple had not yet been laid.
Rebuilding the Temple

7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

8 In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD.

9 Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers—all Levites—joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel.

11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept
aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.
INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 3

It was the dreams that fueled the passion of the exiles. This book shows us that God will supply the desire as he moves in our heart. This chapter begins with building an altar according to the instruction in the Law of Moses. It was built on the old site and sacrifices were offered. They also observed the festival of tabernacles. All of this occurred before the foundation of the temple was laid. They hired masons and carpenters from Tyre to help in preparing and transporting materials for the temple. The work force had supervisors who were under the direction of Jeshua, the General Foreman. They dug the footers and laid the foundation stones; and upon completion of the foundation, a religious gathering occurred. A band played music, singers sang, it was a joyous occasion—and shouting could be heard for a great distance.

EXPOSITION TO EZRA 3

Rebuilding the Altar

1 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem.

They were so exuberant and joyful that God had blessed them by returning them
to their homestead, and now they came together in Jerusalem for worship. The 7th month was filled with special activities. On the first day was the feast of trumpets (Num. 29:1-6), on the 10th day was the day of Atonement (Num. 29:7-11), and on the 15th day was the feast of tabernacles (Num. 29:12-38).

2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

Jeshua is sometimes written Joshua. Cf. Haggai 1:1; Zech 3:1. They built an altar (Deut 12:5, 6; Deut 27:4-8).

3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.

They offered animal sacrifices on the altar morning and evening.

4 Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.

They lived in booths during the seven days of the feast.
Lev. 23:34 Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD’s Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days.

Zech. 14:16 “Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.”

Deut 16:13-17. “Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. Be joyful at your Feast—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.”
5 After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.

In Num. 29:12-34, Moses had specified what they were to do each day of their assembly.

6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD’s temple had not yet been laid.

They had not dug the footers or placed any stones in the ditch for a foundation until this holy convocation was over.

Rebuilding the Temple

7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

The workmen, carpenters, and masons were paid on the barter system: oil, wine, and grain were used in lieu of currency. The people of Tyre were noted as the world’s best builders. The Israelites made a contract with the Tyreans to provide the timbers and stones and transport
them to Joppa. From there, laborers would transport them overland to Jerusalem.

8 In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD.

Both Solomon’s temple and Zerubbabel’s began in the second month (1 Ki. 6:1). Levites were required to be 30 years old before entering into service; however, due to the small number of Levites returning from Babylon, they reduced the age to twenty (Num. 4:1-3).

9 Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers—all Levites—joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

The Levites are the supervisors over the construction of the temple.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places
to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel.

2Ch. 5:13 “The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: “He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud,”

11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: “He is good; his love to Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

This was like a dedication ceremony in which the singers and musicians played music and sang songs. They had a ceremony like that of 2 Chron. 5:13. I have presided over church ground—breaking ceremonies which were similar but not as grand. They sang antiphonally these words “He is good: his love to Israel endures forever.”

12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.
In BC 586 the Babylonians destroyed the Temple of Solomon. Now 50 years later (after the fall of Babylon), Zerubbabel will rebuild the temple. There was weeping and shouting for joy because these old men could remember the grandeur of the first temple.

13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Weeping and shouting was reverberating from the hills and echoing up the valleys and could be heard for miles around.
Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel,

2 they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.

5 They hired counselors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Later Opposition Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

6 At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.
7 And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language.

8 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows:

9 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, together with the rest of their associates—the judges and officials over the men from Tripolis, Persia, Erech and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa,

10 and the other people whom the great and honorable Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates.

11 (This is a copy of the letter they sent him.) To King Artaxerxes, From your servants, the men of Trans-Euphrates:

12 The king should know that the Jews who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.

13 Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and the royal revenues will suffer.

14 Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonored, we are sending this message to inform the king,
15 so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place of rebellion from ancient times. That is why this city was destroyed.

16 We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.

17 The king sent this reply:
   To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates:
   Greetings.

18 The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence.

19 I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition.

20 Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them.

21 Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order.

22 Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?

23 As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went
immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

24 Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.
INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 4

As the exiles rebuild, they were approached by their enemies who volunteered to help them with their project. But Zerubbabel and the leaders told them that they had neither part nor lot in the matter. These same people did everything possible to stop the work. First they tried to frighten them and then tried bribery. This went on during the administration of Cyrus and Darius. Later, after Cyrus is dead and Xerxes came to the throne, the enemies tried to get the new king to shut the project down. We are told that the letter was in the Aramaic language, and the king responded by shutting the job down. The work had stopped and would not resume for the next sixteen years.

EXPOSITION TO EZRA 4

Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel,

Esarhaddon ruled Syria from BC 681-669. After conquering Israel, he removed its inhabitants and transported them to an area beyond the Euphrates. He then repopulated the land with foreigners who, in turn, intermarried with the Jews—and
this half-breed became known as the Samaritans.

2 they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

The Samaritans claimed to worship the same God as Israel, but their religion was a mixture of heathenism and Judaism.

3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

With their hypocritical pretense of wanting to help build the temple, Zerubbabel will have no part of their help. He knew that the motive was to destroy the work.

4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.

Perhaps with threats to cut off their supplies and threatening to send lawyers to the kings court.

5 They hired counselors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia
and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

They began a campaign of false accusation and scare tactics. They sent their lawyers to the king and lobbied him for support.

Later Opposition Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

6 At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

The present King Darius died in BC486, and now his son, Ahasuerus, comes to the Persian throne in BC 485-465. The enemies write a letter to Ahasuerus (same king as the book of Esther) but nothing was done at this time.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language.

Artaxerxes, BC 464-424, who succeeded his father Xerxes, receives a complaint from the Samaritans alleging that the Jews would rebel.

8 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter
against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows:

This letter is designed to bring political pressure on the Jews.

9 Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, together with the rest of their associates—the judges and officials over the men from Tripolis, Persia, Erech and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa,

This letter states that the other countries are in full agreement with the contents of the letter.

10 and the other people whom the great and honorable Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates.

This letter was a smear tactic to undermine the building project and shut off all funds from Persia. The letter is supposed to represent all the provinces east of the Euphrates. Mention is made of Asnapper who was known by another name, Ashurbanipal.

11 (This is a copy of the letter they sent him.)

To King Artaxerxes,

From your servants, the men of Trans-Euphrates:
The term “servants” really means that they were government officials ruling over a province in the Persian Empire.

12 **The king should know that the Jews who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.**

They tell the king that the track record of the Jews is rebellious and that he can expect the same when the walls and foundations are finished.

13 **Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and the royal revenues will suffer.**

The enemies contend that this city was known for its rebellion, and they wanted the king to issue a mandate to stop the work. According to this verse, the walls were being set up. These are not the city walls which were built under Nehemiah, but the temple walls.

14 **Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonored, we are sending this message to inform the king,**

This letter is filled with rhetoric and is designed to bring action from the king against the work.
15 so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place of rebellion from ancient times. That is why this city was destroyed.

The letter suggests that the king take into account the past track record of these Jews and look at the official historical records.

16 **We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.**

The letter warns the king that the tax he is receiving from this territory is in jeopardy and that control of all territory east of the Euphrates would be lost. This letter urges the king to put a stop to the building project immediately.

17 **The king sent this reply:**

To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates:

Greetings.

Rehum and his associates were waiting for a reply.

18 **The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence.**
The king replies to the letter which had been read to him.

19 I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition.

The allegations made by the Samaritans were confirmed by official records. Here are some of the revolts that were probably looked at by the king’s staff. Re-revolt of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedikiah. (2 Kings 24:1-20). The report was serious enough to move the king to action.

20 Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them.

Artaxerxes was heir to the territory that was formerly ruled over by the Babylonians, and this was a super-power or world empire. He takes a hard look at the David/Solomon Empire and can readily see that this new settlement in Jerusalem might aspire to the same greatness.

21 Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order.

This project was red tagged—a cease and desist order is issued.
22 Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?

The king and his advisors realize that this could be a detriment to the Persian rule and therefore order that the work be discontinued.

23 As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

They came with enough show of force and an official order from Persia to stop the work.

24 Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

The king’s letter gave the enemy the impetus to enforce the king’s edict. So they came to Jerusalem with enough show of force to stop all work on the walls of the temple. This project will be shut down for the next 15 years.
Tattenai’s Letter to Darius

1 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

2 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

3 At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

4 They also asked, “What are the names of the men constructing this building?”

5 But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates, the officials of Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius.

7 The report they sent him read as follows:
   To King Darius:
   Cordial greetings.
8 The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

9 We questioned the elders and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

10 We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

11 This is the answer they gave us: “We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.

12 But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

13 “However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

14 He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon. “Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor,
15 and he told him, ‘Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.’

16 So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present it has been under construction but is not yet finished.”

17 Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.
INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 5

This chapter introduces us to Haggai and Zechariah, two of the prophets of that era. Zerubbabel, the Governor of Judea, re-starts the building project which had been stopped years earlier. However, Tattenai, a regional Governor of Trans-Euphrates in the Persian empire, (there were 20 such Governors—also called Satraps—who had control over the 127 provinces of the empire) and his staff pay a visit to Jerusalem. They did not like what they saw. Their regional report was sent to Darius with a request to look up the original decree and issue a ruling to block all efforts to rebuild the temple. A full examination of the letter is reserved for the commentary.

EXPOSITION OF EZRA CHAPTER 5

Tattenai’s Letter to Darius

1 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were as hopeful as a new vacuum cleaner salesman. They were as optimistic as an unrepentant sinner’s plan to get to heaven. The people respond in faith and action follows.
2 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua put their noses to the grindstone and work like galley slaves to accomplish the building project that had been on hold. All that Governor Zerubbabel needed was the excitement of an ecstatic prophet.

3 At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

Regional governor, Tattenai, and his staff on this side the Euphrates river pay the Jews a visit and want to know who gave them the authority to restart the building of the temple. (Governor Zerubbabel, who ruled over a small territory, was under the regional Governor Tattenai.) Now that the building had resumed, the Jews will run into resistance.

4 They also asked, “What are the names of the men constructing this building?”

Governor Tattenai needed the names of the men behind this supposedly illegal move to rebuild so that he can report them to the king and have them prosecuted. If Tattenai can get the names of the construction workers he can have them prosecuted.
5 But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

Psalm 33:18 “But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,”

The Jews continued the work and would not shut the project down till official orders arrived from the king. The eye of God is on our dollar bill. The founding fathers believed that God was looking with favor on their undertaking so they used the Latin words (Annuit Coeptis) which means “God has favored our undertaking”. Under the pyramid on the dollar bill is another Latin phrase (Novus Ordo Seclorum) which means “A new order has begun.”

6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates, the officials of Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius.

Tattenai and his staff draft a letter as a last-straw effort to stop the Jews from building. These gifted liars were like a meddlesome squirrel eating bird seed.

7 The report they sent him read as follows:
   To King Darius:
   Cordial greetings.
This letter was sent to King Darius because Tattenai thought his case was as strong as a plumber’s prize pipe joint. Tattenai realized that he had considerable power but must nevertheless act under due process of the Persian law.

8 The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

Tattenai sets forth the following facts.

• We are doing our job for you.
• The work of the Jews is going on at a fast pace.
• Therefore, we need an urgent reply.

9 We questioned the elders and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?

Comments for verses nine and ten are found after verse eleven.

10 We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

11 This is the answer they gave us: “We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.
The answer that Nehemiah gave to Tattenai was that their God had so authorized it, but he did not tell them the names of any of the project engineers.

12 But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

Nehemiah was forthright in giving the exact reason why Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple. Tattenai tells the king Nehemiah’s reply in his letter.

13 “However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

Up to this point Nehemiah’s case looked as hopeless as happiness in Hell, but Tattenai makes the terrible blunder of telling the king that the Jews claim there was an original decree authorizing this project. Tattenai further urges the king to check the records for such a decree. Tattenai feels that Zerubbabel’s story about the decree is as fishy as a phony pedigree; and as soon as the king sees what the Jews are up to, he will come down hard on them.

14 He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon. “Then King Cyrus gave them to a man
named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor,

15 and he told him, ‘Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.’

We learned in chapter one about the articles being returned to Jerusalem.

16 So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present it has been under construction but is not yet finished.”

Tattenai’s letter was as frail as tissue paper—he urges the king to look for such a document believing full well that it didn’t exist.

17 Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

Tatiana’s letter was like bailing out a boat with a sieve. His arguments will turn out to be as light as a load of helium. His argument was as overworked and as futile as a conversation with a stone.
The Decree of Darius

1 King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon.

2 A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:

Memorandum:

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem:
   Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be ninety feet high and ninety feet wide,

4 with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury.

5 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

6 Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you, their fellow officials of that province, stay away from there.

7 Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.
8 Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

9 Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail,

10 so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

11 Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it. And for this crime his house is to be made a pile of rubble.

12 May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.

I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13 Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence.
14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

15 The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

17 For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

18 And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

The Passover

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover.

20 The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were all ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests and for themselves.
21 So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.

22 For seven days they celebrated with joy the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because the LORD had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.
INTRODUCTION TO EZRA 6

In the fortress at Ecbatana, a copy of the original decree was found in the archives. All the specs for the temple were in the original decree, including height and width. It was to be built on the original site—and the royal treasury of Persia was to pay all expenses, and the museum pieces were to be returned. So, Darius sent the following official letter to Tattenai: Stay away—do not disturb them, keep your mouth shut, allow the work to proceed. You must pay all construction costs from taxes collected in your province, supply all sacrifices plus wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil for daily needs. Any violations of my decree will result in beatings, and confiscation of property.

Darius issued the decree, and it must be obeyed with all diligence. I hope this commentary will illuminate the text and move you to be an Ezra to someone.

EXPOSITION OF EZRA 6

The Decree of Darius

1 King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon.

Orders from the king to pull the files on the supposed decree were in the works. This decree would have been rolled up on
parchment and sealed with the king’s seal. Then it was placed in an elongated clay cylinder, sealed with a label on the end of the cylinder, and filed on a shelf for future reference. Search is under way in the city of Babylon.

2 A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:

The search moves from Babylon to Ecbatana in Persia which was the summer palace of the king. It appears that the only people aware of such a decree were the Jews. Discovery of this document was a fly in the buttermilk of Tattenai.

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be ninety feet high and ninety feet wide,

The king replies by citing the original decree of his predecessor.

4 with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury.

Authorization had been given for the cost of the construction to be paid by the royal treasury.
5 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

This is an exact quote from the original decree. Cyrus’s public proclamation can be found in chapter 1:2-4. The 3 rows of stones and the timber that Tattenai saw at Jerusalem are the ones named in the decree. Cyrus realizes that his regional Governor Tattenai is filled with envy and a lust for power. No Persian decree can be ignored, altered, or rescinded.

Esther 1:19 “Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she.

The Persians were as infallible as the Popes.

6 Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you, their fellow officials of that province, stay away from there.

Up to this point, the king has been quoting from the previous decree; but now he makes his own decree that to Tattenai and
others to stay away from Jerusalem and not hinder the work.

7 Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

The King is hot under the collar for he realizes that the Jews are legal in rebuilding the temple, so he issues a decree of his own ordering the regional government to stop opposing them. The king has some strong words for Tattenai; he tells them not to interfere and to aid them in their work.

8 Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

When this order reaches Tattenai and his cohorts, they will be as overworked as a circus sweeper when the elephants have a digestive problem. They must supply the Jews all the necessary material and pay all cost for the product from taxes collected by Tattenai for the King. He not only can’t stop the project, he must also fund it. The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

9 Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests
in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail,

Judah’s jealous enemies are as shocked at the reply as a sheik with a dry oil well. Now they must supply even the sacrifices. Tattenai must have been infuriated at furnishing sacrifices day by day.

10 so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

The king further issues a decree and requests that Ezra pray for the life of the king and his sons. Tattenai must by now be bristling with rage. He is probably as steaming as a pressure cooker.

11 Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it. And for this crime his house is to be made a pile of rubble.

The king issues a warning to anyone who would alter his word in this matter. Any disobedience would be a capital crime and would carry a death penalty. He would be sent blindfolded to the gallows and his property confiscated and his house turned into a dunghill (public restroom). (KJ)

12 May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this
decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.

I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

The king further places a curse upon anyone who would alter or destroy the house of God that bore the name of God. He mandates that this order be carried out without haste. Any delay would be considered rebellion and would meet with stern measures.

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13 Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence.

Tattenai and his group of wind bags will now turn into a hand of hope. These enemies are as finished as a polished parquet floor.

14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

The elders went after the project like a meat cutter with a meat cleaver. The
prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, are the cheer leaders. Three kings are associated with this work: Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes; all are kings of Persia. This is not a complete list of the Persian kings, but the temple is started and completed under the commandments of these three kings.

15 The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Early spring in the year of BC 515, the temple is completed.

16 Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

Psalm 147

1 Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

4 He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.
6 The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp.

8 He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills.

9 He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

10 His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man;

11 the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

12 Extol the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion,

13 for he strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you.

14 He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

15 He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.

16 He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes.

17 He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast?
18 He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

19 He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel.

20 He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the LORD.

17 For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

As in the dedication of Solomon’s temple, sacrifices were offered for all 12 tribes.

18 And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

The duties of priests are found in Num18 when the divisions occurred under David.

The Passover

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover.

What a celebration—the temple is completed, the priests are sanctified, and
sacrifices are offered. Now it is time for a seven-day Passover observance with trumpets and fanfare, singing and festivity. It was a renowned and time-honored occasion.

20 The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were all ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

The priests and their assistants, the Levites, kill the Passover lamb not only for themselves but for all present.

21 So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.

The foreign people among them ceased their heathen practices and are seeking the God of Israel. They, too, are partaking of the sacrifice.

22 For seven days they celebrated with joy the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because the LORD had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

Cyrus is here called the king of Assyria because that was the former name of the area over which Cyrus is now ruling.
Ezra Chapter 7

Ezra Comes to Jerusalem

1 After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes
king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of
Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of
Ahitub,

3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of
Meraioth,

4 the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of
Bukki,

5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son
of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest-

6 this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher
well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD,
the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted
him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD
his God was on him.

7 Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites,
singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also
came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King
Artaxerxes.

8 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of
the seventh year of the king.

9 He had begun his journey from Babylon on the
first day of the first month, and he arrived in
Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him.

10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

King Artaxerxes’ Letter to Ezra

11 This is a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest and teacher, a man learned in matters concerning the commands and decrees of the LORD for Israel:

12] Artaxerxes, king of kings,
To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven:
Greetings.

13 Now I decree that any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go.

14 You are sent by the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand.

15 Moreover, you are to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his advisers have freely given to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

16 together with all the silver and gold you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and priests for the temple of their God in Jerusalem.
17 With this money be sure to buy bulls, rams and male lambs, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and sacrifice them on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

18 You and your brother Jews may then do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, in accordance with the will of your God.

19 Deliver to the God of Jerusalem all the articles entrusted to you for worship in the temple of your God.

20 And anything else needed for the temple of your God that you may have occasion to supply, you may provide from the royal treasury.

21 Now I, King Artaxerxes, order all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you-

22 up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of olive oil, and salt without limit.

23 Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and of his sons?

24 You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.

25 And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates
and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them.

26 Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

27 Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king’s heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way.

28 and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king’s powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.
Dramatic changes are about to occur—the crowd is electrified. Ezra is weeping and confessing their national sins, and begging God for forgiveness. The fire of revival can be felt from priest to peasant. They had never heard such a passionate preacher. Ezra loses no time in getting to the point. He opens the old book and the sweet flow of the love of God and his word flows like a river. There was a passion for God and a hunger for getting right with the Lord. May God stir our hearts today for a national response to have the fervor and emotion that would transport us into a spiritual ecstasy and rapture like Ezra’s time—and of the Protestant Reformation. May God lift us out of our apathy, indifference, and coldness. Pray for God to awake us.

EXPOSITION TO EZRA 7

Ezra Comes to Jerusalem

1 After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,
4 the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest-

Sixty years elapsed between chapter 6 and 7. During that time period, the story of Ester unfolded. (The book of Esther follows Nehemiah.) The genealogy of Ezra is given tracing his roots back to Aaron.

6 this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

This is the second trip that Ezra makes from Babylon. It was a long journey of approximately 900 miles and would take 119 days to make. In addition to being a priest, he was a scribe. He knew more than one language and could translate and copy the law or any document. In addition to his education, the hand of God was upon him.

7 Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

We place the date at BC 458. On this journey Ezra is accompanied by a new
group of settlers, and among them are priests, Levites, singers, porters and nethinims. He began his journey on April 8th, BC 458, and arrives in Jerusalem August 4th, BC458—a trip of 119 days. From Babylon to Jerusalem it is 500 miles across the desert, but the route that they travelled NW along the Euphrates river and then South from Syria to Jerusalem—would have been much farther.

8 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king.

Ezra left Babylon on the 8th of April and arrived in Jerusalem the 4th of August. The seventh year of the king would make it BC 458.

9 He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him.

This long and dangerous journey was successful because the “good hand of his God was upon him.”

10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.
Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers.

4 Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Ezra had prepared his heart. A person may be well educated and seminary-trained, but if his heart is not prepared, he will be of no profit to the kingdom. In addition to heart preparation, he was seeking the law of God and teaching its statutes and
judgments. Some pulpit ministers are trained in the fundamentals of political science, sports physiology physical fitness and theories of various kinds. Would to God we had a few Ezra’s with prepared hearts to teach the statutes and judgments of God.

**King Artaxerxes’ Letter to Ezra**

11 This is a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest and teacher, a man learned in matters concerning the commands and decrees of the LORD for Israel:

The king gave Ezra a letter of recommendation to carry with him so he could pass through all the provinces without any delays. There would be many border crossings and this official letter with the king’s signature would act as an official passport. No army or border guards dared to lay a hand on Ezra and his group. Without such a letter, it is doubtful that they could have passed through the various God-hating, Jew-despising countries.

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings,
   To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven:
   Greetings.

The letter states that Artaxerxes is “king of kings” because he ruled over all the other kings and they took orders from him. This
letter calls Ezra a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven.

13 Now I decree that any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go.

The king has seven cabinet advisors, and they compose this decree for the king. He states that the Jews are leaving Persia of their own freewill and that they have not been forced to leave.

14 You are sent by the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand.

Ezra was to send back a report of his findings. He was to see if they were worshiping according to the Law of Moses. Ezra had a full copy of the law with him.

15 Moreover, you are to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his advisers have freely given to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

The king and his cabinet make an offering to God at Jerusalem.

16 together with all the silver and gold you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and priests for the temple of their God in Jerusalem.
The house of God is abounding with silver and gold from home and abroad, from Israelites to heathen.

17 With this money be sure to buy bulls, rams and male lambs, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and sacrifice them on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

The monies were to be spent on sacrifices.

18 You and your brother Jews may then do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, in accordance with the will of your God.

The king gave Ezra liberty not only to spend money on sacrifices but to buy anything else that he desired in accordance with God’s will.

19 Deliver to the God of Jerusalem all the articles entrusted to you for worship in the temple of your God.

These vessels are in addition to the vessels that were delivered upon the first expedition. It is noteworthy to add that the vessels are provided by the king.

20 And anything else needed for the temple of your God that you may have occasion to supply, you may provide from the royal treasury.

The king’s treasure house was located in Persepolis, and Ezra was given the right to
requisition any needed supplies from the royal treasury. The king has given Ezra a blank check.

21 Now I, King Artaxerxes, order all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you-

In addition to accessing the royal treasury, king Artaxerxes gives Ezra the right to access the treasury of provincial governments.

22 up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of olive oil, and salt without limit.

Artaxerxes places a limit on the amount as follows: Four tons of silver, 625 bushels of wheat and 600 gallons of wine, 600 gallons of oil, and salt without limit. However, these limits apply only to the provinces and not to the royal treasury.

23 Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and of his sons?

The kings orders are to be expedited immediately or, as we say, ASAP. The fear of God was in the heart of the king.
24 You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.

No taxes! As the Jews passed through the provinces, they could not have any duties, poll tax, road tax, import taxes or any other type of tax levied upon them. Furthermore, they could not be detained or held at border crossings.

25 And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them.

Ezra is granted the authority to set up a judicial system that would extend from the Euphrates to the Nile. This judicial system, however, would be imposed only on Jews, while Ezra was also instructed to teach the laws of God to those who knew them not.

26 Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

These new judges were to provide swift judgment which would include the death penalty or banishment or losing title to
personal property or real property or sent to prison.

27 Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king’s heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way

The king is set on reestablishing moral, spiritual, and religious reforms.

28 and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king’s powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

God had strengthened the hand of Ezra, so we may say that Ezra was in full control. The king and his staff and mighty princes and the hand of God upon Ezra led him to the selection and appointment of great men to lead the nation. Pray that God may send us an Ezra.
List of the Family Heads Returning With Ezra

1 These are the family heads and those registered with them who came up with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

2 of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom;
   of the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel;
   of the descendants of David, Hattush

3 of the descendants of Shecaniah;
   of the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered 150 men;

4 of the descendants of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men;

5 of the descendants of Zattu, [a] Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men;

6 of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men;

7 of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men;

8 of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him 80 men;

9 of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men;
10 of the descendants of Bani, [b] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men;

11 of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him 28 men;

12 of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men;

13 of the descendants of Adonikam, the last ones, whose names were Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men;

14 of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

The Return to Jerusalem

15 I assembled them at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.

16 So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, and Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of learning,

17 and I sent them to Iddo, the leader in Casiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and his kinsmen, the temple servants in Casiphia, so that they might bring attendants to us for the house of our God.

18 Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man, from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah’s sons and brothers, 18 men;
19 and Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiah from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and nephews, 20 men.

20 They also brought 220 of the temple servants—a body that David and the officials had established to assist the Levites. All were registered by name.

21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.”

23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brothers,

25 and I weighed out to them the offering of silver and gold and the articles that the king, his advisers, his officials and all Israel present there had donated for the house of our God.

26 I weighed out to them 650 talents of silver, silver articles weighing 100 talents 100 talents of gold,

27 20 bowls of gold valued at 1,000 darics, and two fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold.
28 I said to them, “You as well as these articles are consecrated to the LORD. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers.

29 Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel.”

30 Then the priests and Levites received the silver and gold and sacred articles that had been weighed out to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem.

31 On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way.

32 So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days.

33 On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we weighed out the silver and gold and the sacred articles into the hands of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest. Eleazar son of Phinehas was with him, and so were the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui.

34 Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time.

35 Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven male lambs and, as a sin offering,
twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

36 They also delivered the king’s orders to the royal satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, who then gave assistance to the people and to the house of God.
Ezra and the returning exiles are on their 900-mile journey to the homeland of their fathers when the roster was looked at and Ezra saw that no Levites were among them. Ezra realized that the worship would be hamstrung without these men. So, they remained camping at the Ahava Canal for 3 days while Ezra sent some of his staff to Iddo in Casiphia to help find some Levites. They prayed and fasted for a safe journey which would take a little more than 3 months. God heard their prayer. Twelve leaders from among the priests were in charge of the safe arrival of silver and gold etc. They were to guard it with their life. On the 8th of April, BC 458, they broke camp and started the long journey from the Ahava Canal. Upon arrival, they rested 3 days, and on the 4th day they deposited the valuables in the temple, entrusting them to those in charge. The exiles sacrificed burnt offerings, and a copy of the king’s decrees was delivered to governors in Trans-Euphrates. Upon reading the decree, these governors then cooperated by supplying the aforementioned materials. The commentary section will provide additional information.
EXPOSITION OF EZRA 8

List of the Family Heads Returning With Ezra

1 These are the family heads and those registered with them who came up with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

The Mayflower kept a log book with a passenger list; the Lewis and Clark expedition kept a log book; Ezra had a log book in which he kept the names and records of the returning exiles. However, only the head of each clan is recorded in his book.

2 of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom; of the descendants of Ithamar, Daniel; of the descendants of David, Hattush

There are 1496 men—besides women and children—and 40 Levites and 220 temple servants. Gershom was the first son of Moses and Zipporah. (Ex 2:22) Ithamar was the fourth son of Aaron (Ex 6:23). David was the son of Jesse.

3 of the descendants of Shecaniah; of the descendants of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered 150 men;

Zechariah was a popular name, and 30 people had that name in the Bible, besides the father of John the Baptist.
4 of the descendants of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him 200 men; Elihoenai:

The name, Elihoenai, occurs in no other place in the Bible.

5 of the descendants of Zattu, Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him 300 men;

Shechaniah:

This name occurs in: I Ch. 3:21,22; 8:3,5; 10:2; Neh. 3:29; 6:18; 12:3.

6 of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him 50 men;

Ebed is a shortened name for Obadiah.

7 of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him 70 men;

Athaliah: An infamous queen bore this name (2 Kings 11).

8 of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him 80 men;

Michael: Ten people had this name in the Bible, including the archangel and David’s first wife.

9 of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him 218 men;
Jehiel: His name occurs 15 times in 1 and 2 Chronicles and Ezra.

10 of the descendants of Bani, Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him 160 men;

Shelomith: His name occurs 9 times in the Bible in Lev; I Ch, 2 Ch, and Ezra.

11 of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him 28 men;

Bebai: His name is found only in Ezra and Nehemiah.

12 of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him 110 men;

Azgad: His name only occurs in Ezra and Nehemiah.

13 of the descendants of Adonikam, the last ones, whose names were Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, and with them 60 men;

Adonikam: His name is in Ezra and Nehemiah.

14 of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them 70 men.

Bigvai: Two of his sons are named, with mention of 70 other men that came home from captivity with Ezra.
The Return to Jerusalem

15 I assembled them at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.

Ezra encounters the same problem as Zerubbabel. Only 74 Levites came back with Zerubbabel, so the priests are short of assistants. Ezra delays the caravan till a search could be made for Levites to accompany them.

16 So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam, who were leaders, and Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of learning,

These chief men and the learned men are sent on a mission to find Levites.

17 and I sent them to Iddo, the leader in Casiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and his kinsmen, the temple servants in Casiphia, so that they might bring attendants to us for the house of our God.

Iddo was probably what we call a town manager, and these leading men take a strong message to him from Ezra to help find some Levites. Casiphia was located on the Tigris River north of Babylon.
18 Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man, from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah’s sons and brothers, 18 men;

Ezra believes that it is by divine providence of God that their prayers were answered. God even supplied them a bonus—a man of understanding and eighteen recruits.

19 and Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiah from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and nephews, 20 men.

Twenty more recruits: Ezra’s men now have twenty Levites that will join the caravan to Jerusalem.

20 They also brought 220 of the temple servants—a body that David and the officials had established to assist the Levites. All were registered by name.

220 More assistants join the caravan.

21 There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

They prayed and fasted for a safe and prosperous journey.

22 I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us
from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.”

Ezra was a man of great faith; he believed that God would not let their journey fail. Ezra had told the king of his trust in the Almighty God so now he was ashamed to ask for an army escort of cavalry.

23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

They again fast and pray for their trip, and God listened and supplied.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests, together with Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brothers,

Ezra chose 12 leading priests to be the Brinks bank. They are in charge of all the silver, gold, and other valuables.

25 and I weighed out to them the offering of silver and gold and the articles that the king, his advisers, his officials and all Israel present there had donated for the house of our God.

All of the treasures were counted and listed so that at the end of the journey the inventory list will show that none of the valuables is missing.
26 I weighed out to them 650 talents of silver, silver articles weighing 100 talents, 100 talents of gold,

This is an enormous amount of silver and gold, and it was worth millions of dollars. Their job was not only to handle all loading and unloading from the pack animals but to make sure that it was guarded 24/7.

27 20 bowls of gold valued at 1,000 darics, and two fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold.

These polished bowls and fine articles will be wrapped and handled with extreme care as prized possessions. Thus far we can see that Ezra was an excellent organizer and guide. He is in charge of the entire caravan.

28 I said to them, “You as well as these articles are consecrated to the LORD. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers.

Ezra tells the men in charge that they are holy men and are entrusted with holy things. He impressed upon them that this was more than just a job—they were entrusted with God’s treasure.

29 Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel.”
Ezra further instructs them to guard the valuables carefully and that accountings will he made at the temple in Jerusalem.

30 Then the priests and Levites received the silver and gold and sacred articles that had been weighed out to be taken to the house of our God in Jerusalem.

So the priests and Levites are the guards appointed over the precious valuables.

31 On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way.

The 12th day of the first month corresponds to April 8th of our calendar.

32 So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days.

The hand of God by his providence led them safely through dangerous territory. The long journey of about 900 miles taking 119 days leaves them weary, so they rest 3 days before any uncrating or finding a new home.

33 On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we weighed out the silver and gold and the sacred articles into the hands of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest. Eleazar son of Phinehas was with him, and so were the Levites Jozabad
son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui.

On day four, which will be August 8th, they unpack, uncrate and weigh all the gold and silver and count everything. It was a full inventory and everything was accounted for.

34 **Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time.**

A full scale inventory was made—numbers and weight corresponded with the original inventory. Everything was accounted for.

35 **Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven male lambs and, as a sin offering, twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.**

They have a worship service—more like a thanksgiving service—praising and thanking God for the safe and prosperous journey.

36 **They also delivered the king’s orders to the royal satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, who then gave assistance to the people and to the house of God.**

They took the kings decree of chapter seven and gave a copy to all the governors
of the Trans-Euphrates area. As you may recall, this decree will tell all the governors to furnish all of the building materials, food, and any and all expenses related to the building of the house of God.
Ezra’s Prayer About Intermarriage

1 After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, “The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.

2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.”

3 When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled.

4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

5 Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God

6 and prayed:
   “O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are
higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.

7 From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

8 “But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.

9 Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

10 “But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands

11 you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other.

12 Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.’
13 “What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this.

14 Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?

15 O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.”
SOME of the Israelites had intermarried with the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. So the holy race was being polluted with the detestable practices of the heathen and to make matters worse, the officials and leaders are some of the worst offenders. Ezra flies into a rage, he is appalled, enraged, incensed, furious and irate. Ezra realized that these priests and leaders are not fit to associate with the common folk. He lays the scripture on them and then sat down appalled till the evening sacrifice. At 3 O’clock he stood up, his clothes were torn and he lifted his hands in prayer and said he was ashamed, he said that their sins were piled higher than their heads that their guilt had reached to heaven. Ezra recounts God’s grace in their history and claims that they have polluted the land. He claims that they are an escaped remnant and that none of them could face God in such a condition. He resented what was happening like a new broom in an old mess. The answer to Ezra’s prayer will come in the next chapter.
EXPOSITION OF CHAPTER 9

Ezra’s Prayer About Intermarriage

1 After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, “The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.

The whistle blowers tell Ezra that the holy people are mixed up with heathenism. This report reaches the ears of Ezra about four months after his arrival. Malachi wrote about this problem in Malachi 2:10-16:

“Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty. Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or...
accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, Why? It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel, and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment, says the LORD Almighty.”

From Malachi we learn that these Jews were divorcing the wives of their youth and marrying foreign girls. Not only were they marrying pagan women, but they were worshipping their gods. Eight nations were mentioned, but only seven were forbidden for intermarriage.

Dt. 7:1-7 “When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no
mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.”

Dt. 20:17, 18 “Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.”

The proverb was fulfilled: “They jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.”

I Kings 11:1-10 “King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and
Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD’s command.”

Neh. 13:23-30. “Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the
language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?” One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me. Remember them, O my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task.”

2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.”
The very ones who should have been speaking out were the greatest perpetrators. This act of infidelity towards God took the people in the wrong direction. This betrayal was led by the leaders. The holy seed was all mixed up with these pagans. They were as guilty as a killer caught in the act.

3 When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled.

Ezra slumped to the ground, pulled out his hair, ripped his garment and was convulsed with rage. He sat down astounded. He was in such a state of shock because the priests were involved in this sinful and shameful act. They were as knotty as a fouled fishing line.

4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra was so outraged that he didn’t say anything till three o’clock in the afternoon. Many were trembling with fear and the pressure was mounting. Ezra was about to burst like an over inflated tire at the unprincipled act of demoralization. He knew that if this were left unchecked it would demoralize the whole community like gangrene untreated. This hellish act was like a housewarming in Hades.
5 Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God.

He had been in despair and now he picked himself up, gathers his senses, ripped some more clothes, fell to his knees and stretches out his hands to God. Ezra felt as helpless as an innocent man in a kangaroo court. He was as afflicted as a miser whose money turns out to be counterfeit.

6 and prayed:

“O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.

O, my God, I can’t bear to face you. He was as heated as the water in a Turkish bath. This man, who was as holy as the ground at the burning bush, is furious at the sins of the leaders.

7 From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

Ezra was ashamed and disgraced that “since the days of our fathers” God had taken them to the wood shed. Ezra was as
humbled as King Henry VIII when barefoot in the snow three days, seeking access for the pardon of the pope. Ezra believes that their sins were higher than the heavens and that their guilt was reprehensible. So great was their indiscretion that it was a deed without a name. Ezra prays as a man caught red-handed. The real question was what God would do to the corporate body.

8 “But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.

God’s grace had been shown unto them by touching the heart of the kings of Persia; now a remnant has escaped and, like a nail driven into a board and clinched on the back side, they had come home to rebuild. They had been revived like a parched tree in a drought that gets a steady rain. However, the guilt of public shame looms like a dark, ominous cloud over them.

9 Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.
Ezra sees them—past and present. He is like a beggar at the gate regarding Israel’s future. Ezra had come back like a ladder of hope, only to see them refusing to climb to heights with God. Ezra sees the leaders as hypocritical as a pious pervert. Sin was on the loose, and he was trying to bring them back to the Law of Moses.

10 “But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands

The law had forbidden intermarriage with these nations (Dt 7:1-3; 23:7). They had thrown God’s law to the wind and the land was filled with obscene vulgarities. There are not enough words in the dictionary to describe their guilt.

11 you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other.

Not only were the people polluted and unholy, but the land had been filled with moral rot from one end to another.

12 Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave
it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.’

Ezra does not mince his words but tells them that this intermarriage is unholy and must stop immediately. He urges them not to worry about what the heathen thought or said—their opinions mattered little to Ezra. He urges the Israelites to stop worrying about getting rich, but rather to cultivate the good grace of God. Build up a lasting estate—a legacy of riches that do not fade or wither but rather pass on to your children and grandchildren.

13 “What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this.

Ezra reminds God that on top of all that they had gone through, their accumulated guilt, that He had not punished them as much as they deserved but gave them deliverance from Babylonian slavery to return to the home of their ancestors.

14 Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?

Israel was at it one more time marrying the women of idolatry and raising their children by women with no moral
principles. Will God be so angry that he will totally abandon them, leaving them no way of escape and no remnant?

15 O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.”

Ezra stood as a convicted criminal before the court, pleading with the judge of all the earth. He confesses that they were guilty and unworthy to stand before God. Ezra finally throws himself on the mercy of the court of heaven.
The People’s Confession of Sin

1 While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly.

2 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel.

3 Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law.

4 Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.”

5 So Ezra rose up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel under oath to do what had been suggested. And they took the oath.

6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.
7 A proclamation was then issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem for all the exiles to assemble in Jerusalem.

8 Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

9 Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain.

10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel’s guilt.

11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.”

12 The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: “You are right! We must do as you say.

13 But there are many people here and it is the rainy season; so we cannot stand outside. Besides, this matter cannot be taken care of in a day or two, because we have sinned greatly in this thing.

14 Let our officials act for the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at a set time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us.”
15 Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this.

16 So the exiles did as was proposed. Ezra the priest selected men who were family heads, one from each family division, and all of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to investigate the cases,

17 and by the first day of the first month they finished dealing with all the men who had married foreign women.

Those Guilty of Intermarriage

18 Among the descendants of the priests, the following had married foreign women:

   From the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah.

19 (They all gave their hands in pledge to put away their wives, and for their guilt they each presented a ram from the flock as a guilt offering.)

20 From the descendants of Immer:

   Hanani and Zebadiah.

21 From the descendants of Harim:

   Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uzziah.

22 From the descendants of Pashhur:

   Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and Elasah.
23 Among the Levites:
   Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer.

24 From the singers:
   Eliashib.
   From the gatekeepers:
      Shallum, Telem and Uri.

25 And among the other Israelites:
   From the descendants of Parosh:
      Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah and Benaiah.

26 From the descendants of Elam:
   Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah.

27 From the descendants of Zattu:
   Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza.

28 From the descendants of Bebai:
   Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai.

29 From the descendants of Bani:
   Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Jeremoth.

30 From the descendants of Pahath-Moab:
   Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh.

31 From the descendants of Harim:
   Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

32 Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah.
33 From the descendants of Hashum:
    Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet,
    Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei.

34 From the descendants of Bani:
    Maadai, Amram, Uel,

35 Beniaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi,

36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

37 Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasu.

38 From the descendants of Binnui:
    Shimei,

39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,

40 Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,

42 Shallum, Amariah and Joseph.

43 From the descendants of Nebo:
    Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai,
    Joel and Benaiah.

44 All these had married foreign women, and some
    of them had children by these wives.
Ezra prayed, wept, confessed and was in a turmoil of passion, completely appalled at the exiles’ great sin of unfaithfulness toward God. Boiling with indignation he threw himself on the ground and a group came and wept with him. Shecaniah suggested the following plan: Make a covenant with God and then divorce the heathen women. He encourages Ezra to take courage and that all is not lost. So Ezra stood up and made them swear with a solemn oath that they would keep the law of God. A proclamation was issued for all exiles to come to Jerusalem. Three days later on the 19th of December, sitting or standing in a soaking rain the Israelites confessed their sins and promised to separate themselves from the pagan women. This required some time, however, for the judicial system to hear the cases and issue judgment. The plan was followed, and beginning on December 29th, court was in session and concluded by March 27th. Priests were named, gatekeepers were named—everyone guilty had his name published. Without an Ezra the nation would have repeated their sinful excesses. Pray that God will send us an Ezra!
EXPOSITION OF CHAPTER 10

The People’s Confession of Sin

1 While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly.

Ezra’s prayer was as strong as a tidal wave. He was as mighty as truth on the march. He was furious—still as angry as a volcano. Throwing himself down before the house of God attracted attention and the crowd of people were all heart-broken.

2 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel.

Shecaniah was as helpful as the hand of hope. We will learn in verse 26 that 6 members of the Elam clan were involved in this intermarriage relationship, and Shecaniah’s father is named among the six.

3 Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law.
Ezra was as agitated as a fat man’s belly in a vibrator belt. Shecaniah proposes that they bind themselves with an oath according to the law and that the children accompany their mothers in their departure. It was customary for a divorced woman to take the children with her. Cf. Gen. 21:14.

4 Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.”

Shecaniah further exhorts Ezra to rise up and take full charge of the matter, and that they would back him up.

5 So Ezra rose up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel under oath to do what had been suggested. And they took the oath.

Ezra was still prostrate. Now he gets up and makes the chief priests and Levites take an oath—he launches into this matter like a head-on crash in a Midwest blizzard.

6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

Ezra was as hot under the collar as Hades in a heat wave. He regarded these intermarriages as disobedience and unfaithfulness towards God, producing
a forbidden half-breed of the godly and the pagan. They were to Ezra as a worm crossed with a Giraffe. He placed the priests and Levites and all Israel under oath. Ezra goes to a storeroom in the temple dedicated to Johohanan as he continues to fast and mourn over the state of the nation.

7 A proclamation was then issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem for all the exiles to assemble in Jerusalem.

Ezra was a man of conviction and action. A proclamation was issued by the rulers for all Israel to assemble in Jerusalem.

8 Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

This was a very stern and bold move on the part of the leaders. They would ban anyone who didn’t show up from their community of believers, take their property and sell it, and put the monies from the sale in the temple treasury.

9 Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain.
The people of Judah and Benjamin would be the first to appear since they lived closer. They tackle the problem with intense enthusiasm. It was their ninth month, or our December, and it was cold and rainy—the people stood in the court yard drenched and shivering.

10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel’s guilt.

Ezra was as harsh as a drill sergeant’s dressing down a recruit. They knew they were treading on thin ice. They had added insult to injury by divorcing the wives of their youth and marrying these heathen women.

11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.”

Ezra was as aggressive as a shopper at a bargain table. The ultimatum is laid down in simple terms: divorce these women immediately and send them away.

12 The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: “You are right! We must do as you say.

Ezra cleaned up the mess like a pressure cleaner on a moldy sidewalk.
13 **But there are many people here and it is the rainy season; so we cannot stand outside.** Besides, this matter cannot be taken care of in a day or two, because we have sinned greatly in this thing.

Due to the enormity of this matter and the fact that each case would have to be examined separately—investigation, fact finding, paper work, the names of all the offenders needing to be laid before the court for judgment . . .

14 **Let our officials act for the whole assembly.** Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at a set time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us.”

It was decided that this matter would be settled in the courtroom in various cities by the judges.

**Deut. 16:18.** “Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly.”

The lower courts would then submit their finding and decisions to the higher court in Jerusalem.

15 **Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by**
Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this.

These four men are not in favor with the decision and let the court know their disapproval. It appears one of the four had a foreign wife, and verse 29 tells us his name is Meshullam. Their objections are overruled and the proceedings go forward.

16 So the exiles did as was proposed. Ezra the priest selected men who were family heads, one from each family division, and all of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to investigate the cases,

The proceedings take a total of three months, and the findings produced one hundred and ten men guilty of the charges.

17 and by the first day of the first month they finished dealing with all the men who had married foreign women.

The cases were all settled, and official documents were filed with the court register.

Those Guilty of Intermarriage

18 Among the descendants of the priests, the following had married foreign women:
From the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah.

The list begins with the priests and descends down the scale to all the Israelites.

19 (They all gave their hands in pledge to put away their wives, and for their guilt they each presented a ram from the flock as a guilt offering.)

They raised their hands and took an oath that they would put away their foreign wives and offer a sin offering.

20 From the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebediah.

A list of the offenders becomes a part of the permanent records.

21 From the descendants of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uzziah.

Harim is not found guilty, but his sons are found guilty.

22 From the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and Elasah.

The sons of Pashhur, who was a clan leader, were found guilty as charged.
23 Among the Levites:
   Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer.

The assistants of the priests known as Levites are charged and found guilty.

24 From the singers:
   Eliashib.

   From the gatekeepers:
   Shallum, Telem and Uri.

Only one singer and three gate keepers were guilty. It is interesting to note that none of Solomon’s descendants was involved.

25 And among the other Israelites:
   From the descendants of Parosh:
      Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah and Benaiah.

26 From the descendants of Elam:
   Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah.

27 From the descendants of Zattu:
   Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza.

28 From the descendants of Bebai:
   Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai.

29 From the descendants of Bani:
   Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Jeremoth.
30 From the descendants of Pahath-Moab: 
   Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh.

31 From the descendants of Harim: 
   Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

32 Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah.

33 From the descendants of Hashum: 
   Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei.

34 From the descendants of Bani: 
   Maadai, Amram, Uel,

35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi,

36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

37 Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasu.

38 From the descendants of Binnui: 
   Shimei, 39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,

40 Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,

42 Shallum, Amariah and Joseph.

43 From the descendants of Nebo: 
   Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah.
All the clan leaders that had sons involved appear on record. Ezra probably copied the names of all the guilty parties from official court records.

44 All these had married foreign women, and some of them had children by these wives.

The divorce proceedings went forward even though children were involved.
A COMMENTARY ON
ESTHER

By: Lewis P. Hussell
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is not certain who wrote the book of Ester, but generally it is believed that it was written by Mordecia. The internal evidence of the book indicates that the writer was a Jew and had a full acquaintance with the Persian customs and manners and of the court.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ESTHER

Mordecia was a descendant of the deported captives from Judah and was now living in Susa, the capital of Elam; and it is his niece that plays the important role in the book. The book opens with a feast that lasts for six months and a divorce from the queen. The scene shifts to a young, ravishing girl who wins the king’s heart. The king falls in love with a girl slated to be killed by his own government; that is when we are introduced to Haman, a descendent of the Amorites who were a Jew-hating race of people. King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) takes a neutral roll initially because he is manipulated by his ingenious prime minister. Esther and Mordecai appeal to God. Mordecia, with a rough camel’s-hair garment and disheveled hair publicizes his protest to the ordered slaughter of the Jews with a tormented spirit. Now it is Esther’s turn to play the important role. After Esther gives two private banquets and there is a hanging ceremony, Prime Minister Haman is out of the picture, and it is Esther and Mordecia who are running the country. This paves the way in the future for the Jewish exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple—all paid for by the government of Persia.
KEYS TO OPEN ESTHER

The ongoing conflict of anti-Semitism from the days of Esau down to the present time can be felt and experienced in this book. The book does not use the word, "God", but every page reveals the workings of God protecting the people of his covenant. God is at work shaping the outcome of all generations.

SURVEY OF THE BOOK

First we have a drunken Persian party in which the king gets bad advice from his marriage counselors and a divorce ensues; then a young girl wins a beauty pageant; four years later she is the queen of the great Persian Empire. This rags-to-riches romance is breath taking. She is not only beautiful but is sharp and gutsy. Soon the anti-Semite Haman plans on killing all the Jews, and that is where Esther literally comes into the picture. From then on, she will play the dominant role. Her husband, King Xerxes, finally gets his act straight and calls off the massacre of the Jews. The hangman (Haman) is hanged and the two prominent characters will end up running the country and paving the way for Ezra and a contingency of priests and peasants to return to their homeland.

INSPIRATIONAL INTRODUCTION

This book opens a window and lets us get a glimpse of the world after Babylonian captivity. We will explore the scheme to exterminate all the Jews who had survived the captivity. Three characters shape the plot. Mordecai will anchor the story. Haman will mastermind the massacre, and a young enchanting girl will emerge from the shadows to take on the title role. Between
Queen Vashti’s dismissal and Esther’s acceptance as the new queen, four years passed. Why did Xerxes wait so long? Historians say that during these four years he was off fighting, unsuccessfully trying to conquer Greece. The six-month conference described in chapter one was, most likely, a consultation to prepare for the invasion. I will be your tour guide as we examine the book.

**MEMORANDUM**

Could it be that our God has his finger in the state of world affairs? Read the following Scriptures and then you will understand and base your faith on the word of God. The following quotes are from the New American Standard 1977.

- **Dan 2:21** “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.”
- **Dan 4:17** “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men.”
- **Psa 18:33** “He makes my feet like hinds’ feet, And sets me upon my high places.”
- **Psa 68:6** “God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.”
- **Psa 75:7** “But God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another.”
- **Psa 107:41** “But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction, And makes his families like a flock.”

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ESTHER CHAPTER 1

1 Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:

2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace;

6 Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.

7 And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.
8 And the drinking 1 Now it came to pass in the
days of Ahasuerus, (this is was according to the
law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed
to all the officers of his house, that they should do
according to every man’s pleasure.

9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the
women in the royal house which belonged to king
Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king
was merry with wine, he commanded Mehumman,
Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and
Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the
presence of Ahasuerus the king,

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with
the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes
her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at
the king’s commandment by his chamberlains:
therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger
burned in him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew
the times, (for so was the king’s manner toward all
that knew law and judgment:

14 And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar,
Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan,
the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw
the king’s face, and which sat the first in the
kingdom;)

15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti
according to law, because she hath not performed
the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

17 For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king’s princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.

19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

20 And when the king’s decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

22 For he sent letters into all the king’s provinces, into every province according to the writing
thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 1

The party had been going on for 180 days. The tents had been erected, supported by gold and silver pillars, with fancy curtains made of linen and dyed purple; thousands of guests were being served out of cups made of gold, the pavement was of precious stones, drink was on the house and no limit to the amount consumed. Toward the end of the partying, Ahasuerus sends for his beautiful wife to come and dance in front of his guests; her refusal leads to a divorce.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 1

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

Ahasuerus is the Hebrew name and Xerxes is the Greek name of this king. He ruled over 60 nations that stretched from India to Ethiopia. This was a one-world government.

2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,
In the time of Daniel, Susa was in the possession of the Babylonians, to whom Elam had probably passed at the division of the Assyrian empire made by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar. The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus transferred Susa to the Persian dominion; and it was not long before the king determined to make it the capital of their whole empire, and the chief place of his own residence. Today, the ruins of Shushan, or Susa, are about three miles in circumference. The great central hall was supposed to be 343 feet long and 244 feet wide. The king’s gate where Mordecai sat was located near the entry, and everyone had to pass through this security entry room in order to gain entry to the palace. The ruins cover about 4,940 acres; however the extent of the city itself covered an estimated 37,000 acres.

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

In 483 B.C., Xerxes assembled the governors of provinces at Susa, in connection with his contemplated expedition against Greece. They probably paraded their war machine through the city much like what we see today on television by the North Koreans.

4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his
excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

This kingdom had looted other nations and was rich beyond words. The feasting and partying went on for six months. They were laying plans to invade Greece.

5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace;

After 180 days, this flamboyant grandiose affair climaxes with a seven-day feast. It was a super, ostentatious banquet.

6 Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.

White and blue were the colors of the Persians which decorated the halls and porches. It was the custom of the Persians to recline on couches while dining and this custom was adopted by the Jews who had spent much time in Persia. The patio was paved with the most expensive mosaic of marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

7 And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from
another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

All the gold cups were hand-made by the finest artisans, and no duplicates. This wine was probably the wine of Helbon spoken of in Ezekiel 27:18. This wine was the wine of the rich and was supposed to be the best that money could buy. There was no shortage of wine so everyone could drink all he desired.

8 And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man’s pleasure.

The Greek historian, Herodotus, wrote that the Persians “are very fond of wine, and drink it in large quantities . . . It is also their general practice to deliberate upon affairs of weight when they are drunk. Sometimes, however, they are sober at their first deliberation, but in this case they always reconsider the matter under the influence of wine.” When the master of ceremony raised his cup to drink, each guest was obliged to keep the round, or leave the company: hence the proverb drink-or-be-gone. However, the king said that the drinking should be to every man’s pleasure and that no one should be compelled to drink.

9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.
Over at the royal house, the queen was having a feast for her friends.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

This drinking party had been in full swing for a whole week, and the king—under the influence of wine—calls seven chamberlains (seven “eunuchs”, NASB). These castrated men were in a high level of trust and attended to the harem.

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

They were sent to the queen’s feast to request the presence of the queen at her husband’s party. Her husband has been on a week-long binge and in his drunken state wants to show off his beautiful wife. The Targum adds naked. The Targums are interpretive renderings of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures. In synagogue services, the reading of the Scriptures was followed by a translation into the Aramaic vernacular of the populace.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.
Vashti refuses to show up for the men’s party! This produces panic among the nobility—they are worried about women having a mind of their own so they have the king issue an irrevocable decree to put women in their place. Vashti is to be commended for possessing prudence and modesty and not wanting to expose herself to this bunch of drunken men.

13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king’s manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

These men are astrologers who by the zodiac predicted the future. They are asked by the king to give their judgment on the matter of Vashti’s refusal to come to the king’s party.

14 And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king’s face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;

These seven men are the king’s counselors or advisers, and they were his handlers, so their advice is sought in the matter.

15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?
It is interesting to note that this weak king seeks the advice of his councilors regarding a personal matter with his wife when she refuses to show herself to this bunch of drunken Persians.

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

The advisors tell the king that this will get out and will ruin the men because their wives will no longer respect what they say.

17 For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

The advisors want to make sure that no woman makes light of what her husband says. Her example must not be tolerated. They want the king to make her an example by removing her as the Queen.

18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king’s princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.
This amounted to a divorce, and the queen would lose her privilege as the wife of the king. They are going to take extreme measures to stop this “woman’s right movement.” These officials are afraid that when the wives of the princes get wind of this insolence they will get out of control. They are telling this drunken king that the country doesn’t need a bunch of women who don’t know their place.

19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

The king is urged to take immediate action and that it be made a law of the Medes and Persians, revoking her rights as queen and banning her from the king’s presence. They urge the king to get another woman to be queen, and it should be one who knows her place.

20 And when the king’s decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

They get the king to issue an irrevocable decree to keep women in their place—that
is: wherever, whenever, or whatever their husbands want them to be!

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

The proposal met with unanimous approval and the lawyers are instructed to prepare the document for the king’s signature.

22 For he sent letters into all the king’s provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

The king does as his advisors instruct him, and the decree is duplicated, translated, and mailed to every city and province in the empire: from India in the East, to Asia Minor, to Greece in the West, to Egypt, and some of coastal Africa to the South. As we view that part of the world today, you will see the same treatment of women. Today it imprisons women under the burqas and makes girls marry strangers against their will, forces women into polygamous marriages, mutilates their genitals, forbids them to drive cars, and subjects them to the humiliation of “instant” divorce.
1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

2 Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

7 And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom
Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

8 So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women’s house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

12 Now when every maid’s turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king’s house.
14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king’s chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king’s gate.

20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.
21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai’s name.

23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 2

This chapter covers a period of four years since the king has divorced his wife, Queen Vashti. A young Jewish girl from Benjamin’s tribe who had been carried off into captivity lines up in a beauty pageant; and since she is a total knock-out, she wins the right to be the queen of Persia. I will walk you through the process and selection of the new queen.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 2

1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

After the king sobered up, he reflects on the decision that had been made. Josephus 11:6:2 says:

“The king having been fond of her did not well bear a separation, and yet by the law he could not admit of reconciliation; so he was under trouble, as not having it in his power to do what he desired to do. But when his friends saw him so uneasy, they advised him to cast the memory of his wife, and his love for her, out of his mind.”
Josephus wrote the whole story of Esther in his book 2,000 years ago, and it remains, in my opinion, the best that has ever been written about Esther. I have copied his entire book and put it in the appendix in hope that you would read his comments.

2 Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

Young virgins from India to Ethiopia show up for the beauty pageant to compete for the privilege of being the queen. A search party is formed to find young virgins well favored, with style and good looks to be the next reigning queen.

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

All the women in the harem are under the supervision and care of Hege; the caretaker of the harem was always a eunuch. For the next six months these women will be given the very best cosmetics and their skin will be bathed in special oils. I suppose the six months will also assure the king that he will not be fathering a child that is not his. A group of young women will spend the next year or so in
beauty treatments, polished in grace and elegance in the finishing school, trained how to be charming, and taught how to act as a reigning beauty.

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

These girls must possess the right decorum and understand protocol so that when they are in public they will not embarrass the king. It was also important that she be able to produce a male offspring who would be the future king. Guidelines are sent to all parts of the kingdom, and the beauty contest is under way.

5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

The genealogy shows that Mordecai was from the family of King Saul, and, therefore, Esther was from royalty. As divine providence would have it, or as we say, it just so happens, a Jew has a relative who is gorgeous and in full bloom and he suggests that she enter the contest.

6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.
It is evident that Jair was the one that was carried off into captivity because otherwise it would make Mordecai more than a hundred years old. At this point, the writer introduces us to a little history as to the circumstances of how this attractive young belle gets in the running.

7 And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

The writer wants us to know that the pretty girl is an orphan and was raised by her uncle. Hadassah was her Persian name and Esther was her Jewish name. Esther is as beautiful as the sunset that ends a perfect day.

8 So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

It appears that Mordecai introduces Esther to Hegai who is in charge of all of the women in the harem.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for
purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

Hegai immediately spotted her as a winner. He saw that she was attractive, shapely, and gorgeous. He puts her in the top running to be the next queen, and he provides all the clothes, perfumes, support teams, and the best apartment while in training.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

Esther was bold but not brash—if she had revealed her family origin, she would be disqualified from the competition.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women’s house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Mordecai lets Esther know that he is there if she needs him.

12 Now when every maid’s turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six
months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

All the girls will need refinement classes as they were “diamonds in the rough.” They will learn elegance, sophistication, classiness, and graduate from the finishing school.

13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king’s house.

Her wardrobe was filled with the best style of the day. Her gowns were custom made and fitted by the best designers.

14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

The king is infatuated with Esther, and she is in the top running. She has spent a night in his bedroom and he is delighted with her. He remembers her name.

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the
king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king’s chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

Her beautician, her clothing designer—all her attendants—admired her. She had charm, elegance, refinement and unadorned gracefulness.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

The king’s divorce from Vashti had occurred four years earlier, and now all preparations have been made for this royal wedding.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

The head of the harem and the head chamberlain had recommended Esther, but the final choice among the contestants was left to the king.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.
The king throws a huge banquet, with her name at the head of the invitations. Everyone who is someone is there. He calls for a national holiday and hands out presents as if it were Christmas time.

19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king’s gate.

It would appear that Mordecai has been promoted all the way up the line to the king’s gate. This will put him close to the throne room and in favor with the king.

20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

The king has not been introduced to her relatives.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

Two men are planning to assassinate the king.

22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai’s name.
Esther tells the king of the plot upon his life and gives the credit to Mordecai.

23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

This was a capital offence, and therefore the death penalty was carried out.
1 After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

2 And all the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, bowed, and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

3 Then the king’s servants, which were in the king’s gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king’s commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and
from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy. 11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

12 Then were the king’s scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king’s ring.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.
14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king’s commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.
Haman is promoted to 2\textsuperscript{nd} in command and power goes to his head. He struts like a banty roster and shows his authority like a lighted billboard. He remembers that the Jews were ordered to destroy the Amalekites and now he plans their destruction. They throw the dice till they arrived at a lucky day and set it as the time to destroy all the Jews.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 3

1 After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Haman was descended from Agag, the king whom Samuel had told King Saul to destroy.

I Samuel 15:2-5 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two
hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.”

2 And all the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, bowed and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

It was probably on religious grounds that Mordecai refused to bow, for it was considered worship, and he was not about to worship an Agagite.

3 Then the king’s servants, which were in the king’s gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king’s commandment?

Mordecai decides to obey God rather than man and is willing to suffer the consequences. His precedent set a standard for God’s people for all time. These meddlesome servants were prying into the matter and trying to stir up trouble.

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.
His conscience forbade him to bow before Haman. They want Haman to see if his excuse as a Jew would be valid.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Haman was as angry as an open wound.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Haman was as wily as a weasel at work. Thoughts were planted in his mind and now he formulates a larger plan on how to get rid of Mordecai by exterminating the entire Jewish race.

7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

They kept casting lots to see which month would be their lucky time to eliminate the Jews and the lot fell on the month of Adar which corresponds to our March or April.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered
abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.

Haman is careful not to use the word Jew, but like a trial lawyer he describes them as scattered, dispersed, diverse, and profiles them as a people that have no respect for the king’s laws. His recommendation to the king is that they should not be permitted to continue in Persia.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.

Haman submits a plan in which he will finance the project and bring revenues into the treasury. The Jews’ property and possessions would be impounded and placed into the royal treasury.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy.

The plan is working like a well-oiled machine. The king trusts the judgment of Haman and seeks no other council. All Haman needs to do is prepare the
documents by his staff, and he will stamp the approval on all of them.

11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

The king tells Haman to keep his money and do what he thinks best to this group of people who Haman describes as weird.

12 Then were the king’s scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king’s ring.

Persia boasted one of the first efficient communication systems. The king kept men and horses stationed a day’s journey apart on all major highways. Each messenger rode for a day and relayed the message on to the next station. “Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers,” wrote the historian Herodotus. The pony express of the USA was patterned after the system in Persia. Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor night, could stop their course.
13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

The orders were to wipe the Jews of the face of this earth and to take all of their property and belongings.

14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

A copy of the edict was sent to all provinces and to all authorities and posted in the town square and public buildings.

15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king’s commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

The king and Haman are having a drink and celebrating that the Jews are going to be exterminated. The city was shocked and confused over such a decision. Everyone was at a loss and baffled that the Jewish race was to be massacred and all of their possessions given to the royal treasury.
1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

2 And came even before the king’s gate: for none might enter into the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 So Esther’s maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king’s chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king’s gate.

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.
8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,
16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.
In this chapter we will see Mordecai put on the burlap and call for demonstrations in the streets. Soon Esther learns that her uncle is one of the demonstrators, and she sends a servant to inquire what this was all about. When she learns that all the Jews are to be exterminated, she realizes that any interference in kingdom matters could end in her death. Her uncle has a bold plan, and in my comments you will be exposed to the strategy.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 4

1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

Mordecai went downtown with his clothes torn and an old piece of burlap wrapped around him, and ashes smeared on his forehead; his mournful cry could be heard for blocks. It was an open demonstration against the policy of the Persian government to eliminate the Jews.

2 And came even before the king’s gate: for none might enter into the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth.
He demonstrated just outside the court gates leading to the palace; however, no one was admitted into the palace in such a mournful state.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

In every town and village people would be seen wearing sackcloth and ashes and calling the people’s attention to the destruction of the Jews.

4 So Esther’s maids and her chamberlains came and told it her.

Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

Esther has her butler pull some clothes off the rack and sends them out with a servant for Mordecai to wear. She is grieved that he is involved in these demonstrations and is probably wondering what will happen to her when the king discovers that she is a Jew. Esther is living in the palace and, at this point, knows nothing about the decree.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king’s chamberlains, whom he had
appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

Esther is desirous to know all the why’s and wherefore’s so she sends Hatach to bring her back a complete report

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king’s gate.

This palace servant meets with Mordecai and he will get an ear full, and the buzz in the palace will be all about this anti-Semitic Haman.

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

Mordecai told the entire story to Hatach—how Haman promised to deposit money in the royal bank to finance the massacre of the Jews.

8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.
Mordecai has a copy of the press release that was sent out into all 127 provinces and requests that it be shown to Esther. He urges her to go to the king and intercede for her nation.

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Hatach is the go-between for Esther and Mordecai.

10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

She talks it over with Hatach and tells him that no one approaches the king without being sent for or else the two axe men that stand before the king will chop their heads off.

11 All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

This king was known by all subjects to be notorious and anyone who came into the inner court would be killed. Esther knew that if she tried to bypass protocol she could meet a similar fate. This account shows that anyone who went into the
parlor without being called for would be endangering the life of the king. No doubt this law came into effect in order to protect the king and for awe and reverence of his majesty.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther’s words.

I also want to mention that no one was allowed to see the queen except her maids, nurses and servants. Special clearance through security would be the only exception. Wives and queens and concubines had often poisoned their husbands. It was security—security—security.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews.

Esther is possibly the only Jew in the palace who has heard of the extermination plan. No doubt Esther thinks at this point that the king is in on the plan as deep as Haman.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?
Mordecai believed that somehow God would preserve his people, yet at this point he didn’t know how or when. Mordecai urges her to act even if it means death. He is saying that it is better to die in a noble cause than to sit idle and die anyway. He lets her know that just because she was living in the queen’s quarters, when she is discovered to be a Jew, she would not escape. He suggests that she was made a queen for such a time as this. Mordecai intimates that she is the instrument by which God would bring about their deliverance.

15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

These messages were being passed along by an agent known as Hatach.

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

Compton’s Interactive Bible states:

“Other historical sources portray Xerxes as a dangerously impulsive king. When a bridge he had ordered built was destroyed in a storm, he commanded that the sea receive 300 lashes, and then had the bridge
builders beheaded. When one of his loyal subjects contributed a huge sum toward a military expedition, Xerxes was so enraptured that he returned the money, along with a handsome gift of his own. But when the same man asked Xerxes to let just one of his sons go free from the draft, Xerxes, enraged, ordered the son cut into two and the army to march between the pieces.”

Fasting is only an accessory to praying! Some try to make out that Mordecai and Esther were secular and didn’t have any regard for God—nothing could be further from the truth. For the next three days, they will be praying and fasting for Esther.

17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Mordecai goes and carries out Esther’s instructions.
1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is;
8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

9 Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.

14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 5

Esther has psyched herself up, dressed herself in a costume befitting the presence of a king, with a little spray of perfume and nervous as a caged lion, she walks toward the throne room. The king can see her coming from a distance. He holds out the golden scepter. They make eye contact and touch for just a moment, and then he wants to know what’s happening and what she wants. He says he’d give her half the kingdom if she wants it—but to his surprise, she wants a dinner engagement. How about tonight? This chapter is filled with suspense and anticipation. Fasten your seat belt and join me in the exposition.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 5

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

First, there were three days of fasting (fasting is the prelude and setting to prayer) and thought. Now she prepares herself by putting off her mourning attire and dresses in her royal attire, at first she was scared to death but now she is bold and daring. Two security men move
into position as she approaches the king. One misstep on the part of Esther, and her head would be lopped off and rolling across the pavement.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

She was uninvited but not unprepared—Esther was as worried as a mouse in cat country. The king is flanked on the right and left with advisors and court personnel. She had gained his attention by her very presence and demeanor, and had gained his favor.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

The king readily tells her that she may have whatever she desires: anything she wants, even up to half-of-the-kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

The king has no idea what she has come to the throne room for, but Esther wants the king and Haman to come to her banquet.
5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

The king orders his assistants to go and tell Haman to get dressed for a banquet over at the queen’s residence.

6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

After small talk and enjoying the luscious meal, it was customary to sip some wine and eat some fruit and nuts. The king is curious as to what Esther has up her sleeve and again repeats his up-to-half-the-kingdom offer.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is;

She is going to keep him in suspense by putting him off till tomorrow.

8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.
One invitation leads to another, and one can only imagine the apprehension that the king is experiencing at this moment (I have a hunch that he is thinking that she is going to tell him that she was pregnant, thus the magnanimous offer of half the kingdom. A son by Esther would make her mother of the future king.)

9 Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

Haman has been enjoying this special treatment, but when Mordecai was oblivious to him, that was his “fly in the buttermilk.”

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

Haman was furious, but he kept his frenzy bottled up till he could talk it over with his friends and his wife.

11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.
Haman went home to “sing his own praises”. He brags about money, his children, his promotion—it was all big talk.

12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

Haman is still “blowing his own horn” and crowing, but before tomorrow he will be eating crow.

13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.

The only thought that enters his mind is how to get rid of Mordecai.

14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

Haman sends for the kingdom construction crew to erect the gallows and plans to speak to the king early the next morning about this insubordinate subject at the entrance gate. Zeresh suggests that the gallows be fifty cubits high (75 feet tall). This is probably a hypebole (suggesting
that it be a large gallows). We often use such an exaggeration for effect and not meant to be taken literally, such as he’s strong as an ox. Seventy-five feet tall would be as high as a ten story building.
1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

4 And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king’s house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 And the king’s servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now

Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,
8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

12 And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

14 And while they were yet talking with him, came the king’s chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.
The king has a case of insomnia so he asks his chamberlain to read to him the courthouse records. During the reading, it was discovered that one of the gate keepers had prevented the king’s assassination. Upon further inquiry he learns that no reward had been given to this man. He has Haman do the honor of the ticker tape parade. The whole chapter is filled with intrigue and excitement. Let me be your servant and walk you through the worst day of Haman’s life.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 6

1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Due to the overwhelming divine providence of God, the king could not sleep this particular night (only hours before Haman is to seek Mordecai’s death), and so, the diary or journal was brought and read to him. I have read that the diary was written in verse and was rather interesting to read.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
Not just this chapter, but the entire book, reveals that the hand of God is still with the Jews and that his plan is coming to fruition.

3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

The inquiry is made as to what honor had been given to Mordecai.

4 And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king’s house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

The king is still in his pajamas and before he gets busy in his office, he wants to know who is in the lobby. It just happens that Haman has come to work early hoping to catch the king before he got busy for the day and request permission to hang Mordecai. The king does not know that there was bad blood between Haman and Mordecai.

5 And the king’s servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

Haman is proud that the king would permit him to come to his bed chamber before he is up.
6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

Haman strides in strutting like a turkey gobbler in early spring.

7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

Now Haman thinks that the king is going to honor him, so he will lay it on thick.

8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

Haman wants the man dressed in the king’s royal robe and the royal crown upon his head, riding on the king’s gelding with the parade trappings on the horse, including a saddle with engravings and gold inlays and a bridle with ornate inlays and a garland around the horse’s neck.

9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus
shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Haman, thinking that he himself is intended, desires to give himself the greatest honors. He thinks that the king desires honors for no one but him. He wants to do it up with pomp and grandeur. He wants reverence and bowing knees and everyone to take notice. Adding to all this, he wants the horse led by the noblest prince, and this prince would be proclaiming that the king delights to honor the man in the saddle.

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

The king says “Go” and don’t skimp on any of the details that you just laid out.

11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Furious and fuming, but obedient, Haman takes the reigns in his hands and parades the horse up main street like a Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade, shouting at the top of his lungs: “This is the man the king wants to honor.” By now he knows that his
plan to ask the king to allow him to hang Mordecai is not going to work. By the time the parade is over, Haman has a burden that is too heavy to carry. He is feeling damned on the inside as he hurries home, only to be met with a plague of “looks like something bad is going to happen.”

12 And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

First we observe that Mordecai returns to his post of duty. He is not proud or puffed up from the parade in his honor. But Haman was as sunk as a man heading for the gallows. Nothing is going right! He has spent the day honoring the man he had planned to execute. He is met with miserable comforters like Job when Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar showed up. At this juncture, he could crawl under the belly of a rattlesnake and never touch him.

13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

The same people earlier had not hesitated to advise Haman to hang the unimportant Jew; but now, that unimportant Jew has
become, as by a miracle, a man highly honored by the king. The fact that the Jews are under the special protection of providence is impressed upon them. Scripture tells us that “... I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:3

14 And while they were yet talking with him, came the king’s chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

The courier has arrived in his horse-drawn carriage to whisk Haman off to Esther’s banquet, where she is about to spring the trap that he is walking into. As the scripture says in Psalm 7:15:

“He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,

And has fallen into the hole which he made.”
1 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.
8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified.
A second dinner party was planned to which Esther again invited the king and his henchman, Haman. While sipping wine and eating dainties, the king is still curious about Esther’s request; so, again he broaches the question, and now she is primed and geared up. Esther rolls out one of the documents and points out that she and other loyal palace personnel and the entire nation were slated for execution. The king sees that he has been bamboozled by his chief of staff. He takes a walk to collect himself and returns to find Haman bending over his wife in an inappropriate position and yells, *So you are trying to rape my wife in the dining hall.* The story unfolds like an accordion.

**EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 7**

1 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

*Compton’s Complete Interactive Bible* says:

“Esther knew well the perils of standing up to autocratic Xerxes: she had gotten her job because of the king’s furious response to a queen’s brashness (1:12-2:7). Esther’s “banquet plot” shows that she had mastered the wiles necessary to soften the king. She grew increasingly bold and more direct, finally convincing
the king to issue another decree, counteracting the one against the Jews—a rare turnabout for a Persian ruler.”

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

Esther now was bound with the threefold cord of a promise thrice made to reveal to the King at this very banquet what she was wanting.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

She answers the king’s question: If I’ve brought you any pleasure, please give me the one thing I ask for. Please do not kill my people. Please, please, please let me and my people live.

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage.

If we had been put on the slave market I wouldn’t have brought it up; I wouldn’t even have bothered you with it but we
have been sold to destruction; I and my people are to be massacred and totally eliminated.

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

This is such a monstrous deed—who would do such a thing?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

Esther says, I'll tell you who it is and he is sitting right here at the table with us. Haman is terror stricken. At this point the king realizes that he has been hoodwinked! The love of his life is destined for annihilation, along with the man who saved his life and the entire populace of Jews from India to Ethiopia.

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

The king is so angry that he storms out of the room and takes a stroll in the palace gardens. While he is gone, Haman is like a condemned criminal on death row making
his last appeal to the governor (in this case, Esther).

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

Haman is down on his knees begging. When the king returns he sees Haman lying across the couch where Esther is, and he roars, “What are you doing? You tried to kill hundreds of thousands of people and now you are trying to rape my wife in the banquet hall! As the king’s words echo around the banquet room, the security guards pin Haman to the floor and pull a black bag over his head.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

Harbonah tells the king that Haman had the construction company build a gallows 75 feet high to put Mordecai on. “Hang him on his own gallows!” yells the king. “Hang him! Hang him! Hang him!” reverberates around the room like an echo chamber. The king doesn’t call for his seven wise
men that bungled everything in the first chapter; he merely takes everything into his own hands.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified.

The king didn’t cool off till the execution of Haman took place.
1 On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews’ enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king’s provinces:

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.
8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.

9 Then were the king’s scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus’ name, and sealed it with the king’s ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.
14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.
Riches and honor were bestowed on Esther, and the wealth of a sinner (Haman) was laid up for Esther the queen while Mordecai gets a promotion and a pay raise. This courageous queen’s name becomes immortal, and thousands of years later she is remembered for her courageous actions. The old burlap bags are discarded and royal apparel is seen. It’s time for a party—and you are invited to see and listen to the excitement. From tears and fears and fasting to feasting, the story unfolds like a Chinese fan.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 8

1 On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews’ enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

Haman was hanged as a traitor and all his property forfeited; the king gives it to Esther, the queen. Mordecai is brought before the king and introduced as the queen’s uncle. Esther needs someone to manage her estate so she makes Mordecai her steward. Please take some time to ponder the scriptures cited below. (Quotations are from NAS77.)

- Pro 13:22 “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.”

- Psa 103:6 “The LORD performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed.”
- Job 27:17 “He may prepare it, but the just will wear it And the innocent will divide the silver.”
- Job 27:18 “He has built his house like the spider’s web, Or as a hut which the watchman has made.”

2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Mordecai becomes the number two man and receives the ring with the official seal of the king. God is still not mentioned in this book, but it is obvious that he is around working behind the scenes. He will continue protecting his people and will bring a savior through David’s family to the entire world.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Hamangthe Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

Esther is still in the begging mode: she knows how to seek, ask and knock. The decree for slaughter of the Jews is still in effect, and thousands of Jews are under the interdict.

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4 Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

From knees-to-please, Esther now stood in the king’s presence pleading like a good lawyer the case for her people.

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king’s provinces:

Are you falling in love with Esther? The only person that could plead a better case was Moses. I like the “you-and-me” part where she implores the king in these words, “If it please the king” and “I be pleasing in his eyes”. Esther gets personal in her one-on-one entreaty, and her interaction with the king obtains results. It was therefore requisite in this case that he somehow reverse the decree written by Haman.

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

The petitioning of Esther continues for her people; she tells the king that she cannot bear it; that it will break her heart; that she shall die to see all her
people massacred throughout the realm. The thought of massacre is shocking and shuddering; she is hoping that this intolerable act will be rescinded.

7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

The king’s response to Esther was that the estate of Haman was under her control, and that the arch enemy Haman had been hanged and could do no more damage to the Jews.

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.

The king gives Esther permission to write another decree that will protect the Jews, which will be put in writing and sealed with the king’s ring so that no one can render it null and void. Esther wants to in effect overcome the former decree (which is irrevocable) by empowering the Jews in a new decree.

9 Then were the king’s scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was
written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

The king’s secretaries are brought in, and Mordecai dictated a new decree and sent it to the satraps and governors in the entire kingdom from India to Ethiopia. It was sealed with the signet ring so that it was irrevocable.

10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus’ name, and sealed it with the king’s ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:

It was sent out priority mail.

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

This new edict authorized the Jews to defend themselves to the death and to kill
anyone who would threaten them and to confiscate their property.

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

This was the day that had formerly been fixed.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

The Persians had a system of “pony express” and mail traveled at the fastest rate known to man in those days.

14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

This was no time to trifle when so many lives were in danger.

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.
A few days ago, we saw Mordecai in his mourning clothes; now he is wearing a royal robe of violet and white, a huge gold crown, and a purple cape of fine linen, and the people of Shushan were exploding with joy and laughter.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

All over town from coffee shop to silver smiths, people were talking about the news of Haman’s hanging and Mordecai’s advancement. They were walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

The mail travelled fast from hamlet to village and there was delight and pleasure; there was feasting and celebrating. And many non-Jews became Jews. Now it was dangerous not to be a Jew!
1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,
9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

16 But the other Jews that were in the king’s provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,
17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,

21 To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;
25 But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur.

Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year;

28 And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,

31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they
had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 9

All of the Amalekites dwelling in the Persian Empire thought they were strong enough to take on the Jews, yet the entire group met with utter failure. Their properties and other belongings became the property of the state. Provincial governments, because of the king’s signature on the forthcoming documents, aided the Jews. Mordecai became great, and Esther helped rule the kingdom, thus paving a way for future generations of Jews who wanted to return to their homeland. A national holiday was enacted, and it was called Purim by the decree of Esther.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 9

1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

The whole outcome expected by the enemies back-fired, and just the opposite took place.

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all
the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

The Jews were armed and had the backing of the king.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

The ruling provincial governments, which would include the police force, sheriff department, and National Guard, all join in on the side of Mordecai the Jew who now was in second command.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

His prominence and reputation caused him to grow into a powerhouse.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

They struck down and finished off the Jew haters.
6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

I suppose that this was in the citadel or command post where they retained an army outpost to quell rebellion and prevent any uprising.

7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,

9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

- Exo 20:5 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,”
- Exo 34:7 “who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”
- Num 14:18 “The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression;
but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.”

- Deu 5:9 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,”

When Jehu took over the kingdom formerly held by Ahab and Jezebel, he slew all 70 of Ahab’s sons.

- 2Ki 10:7 And it came about when the letter came to them, that they took the king’s sons, and slaughtered them, seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to him at Jezreel.

- 2Ki 10:11 So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests, until he left him without a survivor.

- 1Ki 16:11 “And it came about, when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends.”

- 1Ki 16:12 “Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet,”
• 1Ki 16:13 “for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.”
• Jer 39:6 “Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes at Riblah; the king of Babylon also slew all the nobles of Judah.”

All of the sons of King Saul were killed.

It must be noted here that the Jews were not after their money or property and did not touch them; they were interested only in their own protection.

From the Matthew Henry Commentary: “The Chaldea paraphrase says that none appeared against the Jews but Amalekites only, who were infuriated, and had their hearts hardened, as Pharaoh’s against Israel.”

It does not appear that the Jews slew any person who did not rise up to destroy them.

11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? now what is thy
petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.

The king is totally committed to cleaning up this rat’s nest.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

Haman’s sons would have profited through the inheritance and legacy of Haman, and Esther wants to make sure that such does not happen. In order for this to not occur in future generations she has Haman’s sons executed.

14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

The names of Haman’s sons occur in verses seven, eight, nine and ten.

15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

It was necessary for the Jews to kill all of these God-hating enemies.
16 But the other Jews that were in the king’s provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,

This number probably includes the total number in the entire kingdom.

17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

This was not a day of mourning and fasting, but feasting and gladness. This was the day that they celebrated with a victory party.

18 But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

See comments on previous verse.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.
After feasting and celebrating, the Jews send portions of food to the people who are not able to come and join in the partying.

Christians retell the Christmas story each December, acting it out in church plays and manger scenes; and the Jews commemorate great moments from their history. Jewish families read the book of Esther aloud on the day of Purim. Jews observe Purim on the 14th day of the Jewish calendar month of Adar (usually February or March) everywhere except in Jerusalem, which schedules it on the 15th day of the month.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,

Mordecai’s secretarial staff was busy writing these letters and sending them on their mail system to be announced in all town squares and posted in public buildings for all people in all languages to read.

21 To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

It is interesting to note Matthew Henry’s commentary comparing Mordecai and Nehemiah:
“I cannot but observe what a difference there is between Mordecai’s style and Nehemiah’s. Nehemiah, at every turn, takes notice of divine Providence and the good hand of his God upon him, which is very proper to stir up devout affections in the minds of his readers; but Mordecai never so much as mentions the name of God in the whole story. Nehemiah wrote his book at Jerusalem, where religion was in fashion and an air of it appeared in men’s common conversation; Mordecai wrote his at Shushan the palace, where policy reigned more than piety, and he wrote according to the genius of the place. Even those that have the root of the matter in them are apt to lose the savour of religion, and let their leaf wither, when they converse wholly with those that have little religion. Commend me to Nehemiah’s way of writing; that I would imitate, and yet learn from Mordecai’s that men may be truly devout though they do not abound in the shows and expressions of devotion, and therefore that we must not judge nor despise our brethren.”

22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.
This national holiday was observed with solemnity and with dancing and feasting and sending of portions of food to the people who were diseased or crippled or too old to attend, and giving of gifts. We are reminded at our national holiday of Christmas that Jesus, our savior, was born in Bethlehem, and we, too, feast and celebrate and give gifts.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

This feast of Purim has become a feast to be observed perpetually to all generations and is still observed today worldwide.

24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;

The reason for the feast of Purim is clearly stated in the verse.

25 But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

As we saw, at the request of Esther and her wise counsel, the king wrote to all the provinces where the Jews were to
overthrow the devised plan against them; and Haman and his sons were hanged.

26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur.

Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

See comments on verse 23.

27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year.

Jews and proselytes alike have made sure that this feast and celebration was to be carried out every year.

28 And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary (A Catholic Commentary), p. 629, says that this whole book was only a dream. If this were just a dream, then how do we explain that in every generation, every family,
every province, and every city in the entire world, this celebration takes place every year? There has never been a dream that has created an International Holiday celebrated annually.

29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

Perhaps some of the Jews were not enthusiastic about keeping the celebration year after year, so Esther and Mordecai publish a second letter regarding Purim.

30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,

The letters were not just filed away somewhere but sent to all points from India to Ethiopia.

31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

It appears that these letters were confirming the official days appointed and matters of fasting and lamentation or mourning.
32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

The rules for conducting the entire celebration were written in a book.
1 And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.
INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 10

Taxes are raised to cover the excessive spending that had taken place under the past administration and to keep a balanced budget. The greatness of Mordecai is recorded in the history of the kingdom. We are also told that he was second in command.

EXPOSITION TO ESTHER CHAPTER 10

1 And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

The islands of Tyre and Cyprus were under the control of the Persians and so the taxes levied across the empire included these islands.

2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

Because of the many coincidences in Esther, some have considered it “just a story,” having little or no historical validity. Yet as archaeologists have learned more about ancient Persian history, the details of Esther have proven remarkably reliable. Certainly the book presents itself as history: here the author confidently
asserts that readers can check the facts in the historical records. These records are lost, but evidently they were known to the early readers of Esther. (Compton’s Complete Interactive Bible)

3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed

God’s name never appears in the book of Esther, but I see him on every page—his plan and his action. God leaves us spellbound. His fingerprints are all over this story. God doesn’t take any credit. He just get the job done.
APPENDIX

THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS
By Flavius Josephus

BOOK XI, Chapter 6

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

1. AFTER the death of Xerxes, the kingdom came to be transferred to his son Cyrus, whom the Greeks called Artaxerxes. When this man had obtained the government over the Persians, the whole nation of the Jews, (15) with their wives and children, were in danger of perishing; the occasion whereof we shall declare in a little time; for it is proper, in the first place, to explain somewhat relating to this king, and how he came to marry a Jewish wife, who was herself of the royal family also, and who is related to have saved our nation; for when Artaxerxes had taken the kingdom, and had set governors over the hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India even unto Ethiopia, in the third year of his reign, he made a costly feast for his friends, and for the nations of Persia, and for their governors, such a one as was proper for a king to make, when he had a mind to make a public demonstration of his riches, and this for a hundred and fourscore days; after which he made a feast for other nations, and for their ambassadors, at Shushan, for seven days. Now this feast was ordered after the manner following: He caused a tent to be pitched, which was supported by pillars of gold and silver, with curtains of linen and
purple spread over them, that it might afford room for many ten thousands to sit down. The cups with which the waiters ministered were of gold, and adorned with precious stones, for pleasure and for sight. He also gave order to the servants that they should not force them to drink, by bringing them wine continually, as is the practice of the Persians, but to permit every one of the guests to enjoy himself according to his own inclination. Moreover, he sent messengers through the country, and gave order that they should have a remission of their labors, and should keep a festival many days, on account of his kingdom. In like manner did Vashti the queen gather her guests together, and made them a feast in the palace. Now the king was desirous to show her, who exceeded all other women in beauty, to those that feasted with him, and he sent some to command her to come to his feast. But she, out of regard to the laws of the Persians, which forbid the wives to be seen by strangers, did not go to the king (16) and though he oftentimes sent the eunuchs to her, she did nevertheless stay away, and refused to come, till the king was so much irritated, that he brake up the entertainment, and rose up, and called for those seven who had the interpretation of the laws committed to them, and accused his wife, and said that he had been affronted by her, because that when she was frequently called by him to his feast, she did not obey him once. He therefore gave order that they should inform him what could be done by the law against her. So one of them, whose name was Memucan, said that this affront was offered not to him alone, but to all the Persians, who were in danger of leading their lives very ill with their wives, if they must be thus despised by them; for that none of their wives would have any reverence for their husbands, if they had" such an
example of arrogance in the queen towards thee, who rulest over all.” Accordingly, he exhorted him to punish her, who had been guilty of so great an affront to him, after a severe manner; and when he had so done, to publish to the nations what had been decreed about the queen. So the resolution was to put Vashti away, and to give her dignity to another woman.

2. But the king having been fond of her, did not well bear a separation, and yet by the law he could not admit of a reconciliation; so he was under trouble, as not having it in his power to do what he desired to do. But when his friends saw him so uneasy, they advised him to cast the memory of his wife, and his love for her, out of his mind, but to send abroad over all the habitable earth, and to search out for comely virgins, and to take her whom he should best like for his wife, because his passion for his former wife would be quenched by the introduction of another, and the kindness he had for Vashti would be withdrawn from her, and be placed on her that was with him. Accordingly, he was persuaded to follow this advice, and gave order to certain persons to choose out of the virgins that were in his kingdom those that were esteemed the most comely. So when a great number of these virgins were gathered together, there was found a damsel in Babylon, whose parents were both dead, and she was brought up with her uncle Mordecai, for that was her uncle’s name. This uncle was of the tribe of Benjamin, and was one of the principal persons among the Jews. Now it proved that this damsel, whose name was Esther, was the most beautiful of all the rest, and that the grace of her countenance drew the eyes of the spectators principally upon her. So she was committed to one of the eunuchs to take the care of her; and
she was very exactly provided with sweet odors, in
great plenty, and with costly ointments, such as
her body required to be anointed withal; and this
was used for six months by the virgins, who were
in number four hundred. And when the eunuch
thought the virgins had been sufficiently purified,
in the fore-mentioned time, and were now fit to go
to the king's bed, he sent one to be with the king
ever day. So when he had accompanied with her,
he sent her back to the eunuch; and when Esther
had come to him, he was pleased with her, and fell
in love with the damsel, and married her, and made
her his lawful wife, and kept a wedding feast for
her on the twelfth month of the seventh year of his
reign, which was called Adar. He also sent angari,
as they are called, or messengers, unto every
nation, and gave orders that they should keep a
feast for his marriage, while he himself treated the
Persians and the Medes, and the principal men of
the nations, for a whole month, on account of this
his marriage. Accordingly, Esther came to his royal
palace, and he set a diadem on her head. And
thus was Esther married, without making known
to the king what nation she was derived from. Her
uncle also removed from Babylon to Shushan, and
dwelt there, being every day about the palace, and
inquiring how the damsel did, for he loved her as
though she had been his own daughter.

3. Now the king had made a law, (17) that none of his
own people should approach him unless he were
called, when he sat upon his throne and men, with
axes in their hands, stood round about his throne,
in order to punish such as approached to him
without being called. However, the king sat with
a golden scepter in his hand, which he held out
when he had a mind to save any one of those that
approached to him without being called, and he
who touched it was free from danger. But of this matter we have discoursed sufficiently.

4. Some time after this [two eunuchs], Bigthan and Teresh, plotted against the king; and Barnabazus, the servant of one of the eunuchs, being by birth a Jew, was acquainted with their conspiracy, and discovered it to the queen’s uncle; and Mordecai, by the means of Esther, made the conspirators known to the king. This troubled the king; but he discovered the truth, and hanged the eunuchs upon a cross, while at that time he gave no reward: to Mordecai, who had been the occasion of his preservation. He only bid the scribes to set down his name in the records, and bid him stay in the palace, as an intimate friend of the king.

5. Now there was one Haman, the son of Amedatha, by birth an Amalekite, that used to go in to the king; and the foreigners and Persians worshipped him, as Artaxerxes had commanded that such honor should be paid to him; but Mordecai was so wise, and so observant of his own country’s laws, that he would not worship the man (18) When Haman observed this, he inquired whence he came; and when he understood that he was a Jew, he had indignation at him, and said within himself, that whereas the Persians, who were free men, worshipped him, this man, who was no better than a slave, does not vouchsafe to do so. And when he desired to punish Mordecai, he thought it too small a thing to request of the king that he alone might be punished; he rather determined to abolish the whole nation, for he was naturally an enemy to the Jews, because the nation of the Amalekites, of which he was; had been destroyed by them. Accordingly he came to the king, and accused them, saying, “There is a
certain wicked nation, and it is dispersed over all the habitable earth the was under his dominion; a nation separate from others, unsociable, neither admitting the same sort of Divine worship that others do, nor using laws like to the laws of others, at enmity with thy people, and with all men, both in their manners and practices. Now, if thou wilt be a benefactor to thy subjects, thou wilt give order to destroy them utterly, and not leave the least remains of them, nor preserve any of them, either for slaves or for captives.” But that the king might not be damnified by the loss of the tributes which the Jews paid him, Haman promised to give him out of his own estate forty thousand talents whensoever he pleased; and he said he would pay this money very willingly, that the kingdom might be freed from such a misfortune.

6. When Haman had made this petition, the king both forgave him the money, and granted him the men, to do what he would with them. So Haman, having gained what he desired, sent out immediately a decree, as from the king, to all nations, the contents whereof were these: “Artaxerxes, the great king, to the rulers of the hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, sends this writing. Whereas I have governed many nations, and obtained the dominions of all the habitable earth, according to my desire, and have not been obliged to do any thing that is insolent or cruel to my subjects by such my power, but have showed myself mild and gentle, by taking care of their peace and good order, and have sought how they might enjoy those blessings for all time to come. And whereas I have been kindly informed by Haman, who, on account of his prudence and justice, is the first in my esteem, and in dignity, and only second to
myself, for his fidelity and constant good-will to me, that there is an ill-natured nation intermixed with all mankind, that is averse to our laws, and not subject to kings, and of a different conduct of life from others, that hateth monarchy, and of a disposition that is pernicious to our affairs, I give order that all these men, of whom Haman our second father hath informed us, be destroyed, with their wives and children, and that none of them be spared, and that none prefer pity to them before obedience to this decree. And this I will to be executed on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of this present year, that so when all that have enmity to us are destroyed, and this in one day, we may be allowed to lead the rest of our lives in peace hereafter.” Now when this decree was brought to the cities, and to the country, all were ready for the destruction and entire abolition of the Jews, against the day before mentioned; and they were very hasty about it at Shushan, in particular. Accordingly, the king and Haman spent their time in feasting together with good cheer and wine, but the city was in disorder.

7. Now when Mordecai was informed of what was done, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and sprinkled ashes upon his head, and went about the city, crying out, that “a nation that had been injurious to no man was to be destroyed.” And he went on saying thus as far as to the king’s palace, and there he stood, for it was not lawful for him to go into it in that habit. The same thing was done by all the Jews that were in the several cities wherein this decree was published, with lamentation and mourning, on account of the calamities denounced against them. But as soon as certain persons had told the queen that Mordecai stood before the court in a mourning
habit, she was disturbed at this report, and sent out such as should change his garments; but when he could not be induced to put off his sackcloth, because the sad occasion that forced him to put it on was not yet ceased, she called the eunuch Acratheus, for he was then present, and sent him to Mordecai, in order to know of him what sad accident had befallen him, for which he was in mourning, and would not put off the habit he had put on at her desire. Then did Mordecai inform the eunuch of the occasion of his mourning, and of the decree which was sent by the king into all the country, and of the promise of money whereby Haman brought the destruction of their nation. He also gave him a copy of what was proclaimed at Shushan, to be carried to Esther; and he charged her to petition the king about this matter, and not to think it a dishonorable thing in her to put on a humble habit, for the safety of her nation, wherein she might deprecate the ruin of the Jews, who were in danger of it; for that Haman, whose dignity was only inferior to that of the king, had accused the Jews, and had irritated the king against them. When she was informed of this, she sent to Mordecai again, and told him that she was not called by the king, and that he who goes in to him without being called, is to be slain, unless when he is willing to save any one, he holds out his golden scepter to him; but that to whomsoever he does so, although he go in without being called, that person is so far from being slain, that he obtains pardon, and is entirely preserved. Now when the eunuch carried this message from Esther to Mordecai, he bade him also tell her that she must not only provide for her own preservation, but for the common preservation of her nation, for that if she now neglected this opportunity, there would certainly arise help to
them from God some other way, but she and her father’s house would be destroyed by those whom she now despised. But Esther sent the very same eunuch back to Mordecai [to desire him] to go to Shushan, and to gather the Jews that were there together to a congregation, and to fast and abstain from all sorts of food, on her account, and [to let him know that] she with her maidens would do the same: and then she promised that she would go to the king, though it were against the law, and that if she must die for it, she would not refuse it.

8. Accordingly, Mordecai did as Esther had enjoined him, and made the people fast; and he besought God, together with them, not to overlook his nation, particularly at this time, when it was going to be destroyed; but that, as he had often before provided for them, and forgiven, when they had sinned, so he would now deliver them from that destruction which was denounced against them; for although it was not all the nation that had offended, yet must they so ingloriously be slain, and that he was himself the occasion of the wrath of Haman, “Because,” said he, “I did not worship him, nor could I endure to pay that honor to him which I used to pay to thee, O Lord; for upon that his anger hath he contrived this present mischief against those that have not transgressed thy laws.” The same supplications did the multitude put up, and entreated that God would provide for their deliverance, and free the Israelites that were in all the earth from this calamity which was now coming upon them, for they had it before their eyes, and expected its coming. Accordingly, Esther made supplication to God after the manner of her country, by casting herself down upon the earth, and putting on her mourning garments, and bidding farewell to meat and drink, and all
delicacies, for three days’ time; and she entreated God to have mercy upon her, and make her words appear persuasive to the king, and render her countenance more beautiful than it was before, that both by her words and beauty she might succeed, for the averting of the king’s anger, in case he were at all irritated against her, and for the consolation of those of her own country, now they were in the utmost danger of perishing; as also that he would excite a hatred in the king against the enemies of the Jews, and those that had contrived their future destruction, if they proved to be contemned by him.

9. When Esther had used this supplication for three days, she put off those garments, and changed her habit, and adorned herself as became a queen, and took two of her handmaids with her, the one of which supported her, as she gently leaned upon her, and the other followed after, and lifted up her large train (which swept along the ground) with the extremities of her fingers. And thus she came to the king, having a blushing redness in her countenance, with a pleasant agreeableness in her behavior; yet did she go in to him with fear; and as soon as she was come over against him, as he was sitting on his throne, in his royal apparel, which was a garment interwoven with gold and precious stones, which made him seem to her more terrible, especially when he looked at her somewhat severely, and with a countenance on fire with anger, her joints failed her immediately, out of the dread she was in, and she fell down sideways in a swoon: but the king changed his mind, which happened, as I suppose, by the will of God, and was concerned for his wife, lest her fear should bring some very ill thing upon her, and he leaped from his throne, and took her in his arms, and
recovered her, by embracing her, and speaking comfortably to her, and exhorting her to be of good cheer, and not to suspect any thing that was sad on account of her coming to him without being called, because that law was made for subjects, but that she, who was a queen, as well as he a king, might be entirely secure; and as he said this, he put the scepter into her hand, and laid his rod upon her neck, on account of the law; and so freed her from her fear. And after she had recovered herself by these encouragements, she said, “My lord, it is not easy for me, on the sudden, to say what hath happened, for as soon as I saw thee to be great, and comely, and terrible, my spirit departed from me, and I had no soul left in me.” And while it was with difficulty, and in a low voice, that she could say thus much, the king was in a great agony and disorder, and encouraged Esther to be of good cheer, and to expect better fortune, since he was ready, if occasion should require it, to grant her the half of his kingdom. Accordingly, Esther desired that he and his friend Haman would come to her to a banquet, for she said she had prepared a supper for him. He consented to it; and when they were there, as they were drinking, he bid Esther to let him know what she desired; for that she should not be disappointed though she should desire the half of his kingdom. But she put off the discovery of her petition till the next day, if he would come again, together with Haman, to her banquet.

10. Now when the king had promised so to do, Haman went away very glad, because he alone had the honor of supping with the king at Esther’s banquet, and because no one else partook of the same honor with kings but himself; yet when he saw Mordecai in the court, he was very much
displeased, for he paid him no manner of respect when he saw him. So he went home and called for his wife Zeresh, and his friends, and when they were come, he showed them what honor he enjoyed not only from the king, but from the queen also, for as he alone had that day supped with her, together with the king, so was he also invited again for the next day; yet,” said he, “am I not pleased to see Mordecai the Jew in the court.” Hereupon his wife Zeresh advised him to give order that a gallows should be made fifty cubits high, and that in the morning he should ask it of the king that Mordecai might be hanged thereon. So he commended her advice, and gave order to his servants to prepare the gallows, and to place it in the court, for the punishment of Mordecai thereon, which was accordingly prepared. But God laughed to scorn the wicked expectations of Haman; and as he knew what the event would be, he was delighted at it, for that night he took away the king’s sleep; and as the king was not willing to lose the time of his lying awake, but to spend it in something that might be of advantage to his kingdom, he commanded the scribe to bring him the chronicles of the former kings, and the records of his own actions; and when he had brought them, and was reading them, one was found to have received a country on account of his excellent management on a certain occasion, and the name of the country was set down; another was found to have had a present made him on account of his fidelity: then the scribe came to Bigthan and Teresh, the eunuchs that had made a conspiracy against the king, which Mordecai had discovered; and when the scribe said no more but that, and was going on to another history, the king stopped him, and inquired “whether it was not added that Mordecai had a reward given him?” and when he
said there was no such addition, he bade him leave off; and he inquired of those that were appointed for that purpose, what hour of the night it was; and when he was informed that it was already day, he gave order, that if they found any one of his friends already come, and standing before the court, they should tell him. Now it happened that Haman was found there, for he was come sooner than ordinary to petition the king to have Mordecai put to death; and when the servants said that Haman was before the court, he bid them call him in; and when he was come in, he said, “Because I know that thou art my only fast friend, I desire thee to give me advice how I may honor one that I greatly love, and that after a manner suitable to my magnificence.” Now Haman reasoned with himself, that what opinion he should give it would be for himself, since it was he alone who was beloved by the king: so he gave that advice which he thought of all other the best; for he said, “If thou wouldst truly honor a man whom thou sayest thou dost love, give order that he may ride on horseback, with the same garment on which thou wearest, and with a gold chain about his neck, and let one of thy intimate friends go before him, and proclaim through the whole city, that whosoever the king honoreth obtaineth this mark of his honor.” This was the advice which Haman gave, out of a supposal that such a reward would come to himself. Hereupon the king was pleased with the advice, and said, “Go thou therefore, for thou hast the horse, the garment, and the chain, ask for Mordecai the Jew, and give him those things, and go before his horse and proclaim accordingly; for thou art,” said he, “my intimate friend, and hast given me good advice; be thou then the minister of what thou hast advised me to. This shall be his reward from us, for preserving my life.” When he
heard this order, which was entirely unexpected, he was confounded in his mind, and knew not what to do. However, he went out and led the horse, and took the purple garment, and the golden chain for the neck, and finding Mordecai before the court, clothed in sackcloth, he bid him put that garment off, and put the purple garment on. But Mordecai, not knowing the truth of the matter, but thinking that it was done in mockery, said, “O thou wretch, the vilest of all mankind, dost thou thus laugh at our calamities?” But when he was satisfied that the king bestowed this honor upon him, for the deliverance he had procured him when he convicted the eunuchs who had conspired against him, he put on that purple garment which the king always wore, and put the chain about his neck, and got on horseback, and went round the city, while Haman went before and proclaimed, “This shall be the reward which the king will bestow on every one whom he loves, and esteems worthy of honor.” And when they had gone round the city, Mordecai went in to the king; but Haman went home, out of shame, and informed his wife and friends of what had happened, and this with tears; who said, that he would never be able to be revenged of Mordecai, for that God was with him.

11. Now while these men were thus talking one to another, Esther’s eunuchs hastened Haman away to come to supper; but one of the eunuchs, named Sabuchadas, saw the gallows that was fixed in Haman’s house, and inquired of one of his servants for what purpose they had prepared it. So he knew that it was for the queen’s uncle, because Haman was about to petition the king that he might be punished; but at present he held his peace. Now when the king, with Haman, were at the banquet, he desired the queen to tell him
what gifts she desired to obtain, and assured her that she should have whatsoever she had a mind to. She then lamented the danger her people were in; and said that “she and her nation were given up to be destroyed, and that she, on that account, made this her petition; that she would not have troubled him if he had only given order that they should be sold into bitter servitude, for such a misfortune would not have been intolerable; but she desired that they might be delivered from such destruction.” And when the king inquired of her whom was the author of this misery to them, she then openly accused Haman, and convicted him, that he had been the wicked instrument of this, and had formed this plot against them. When the king was hereupon in disorder, and was gone hastily out of the banquet into the gardens, Haman began to intercede with Esther, and to beseech her to forgive him, as to what he had offended, for he perceived that he was in a very bad case. And as he had fallen upon the queen’s bed, and was making supplication to her, the king came in, and being still more provoked at what he saw, “O thou wretch,” said he, “thou vilest of mankind, dost thou aim to force in wife?” And when Haman was astonished at this, and not able to speak one word more, Sabuchadas the eunuch came in and accused Haman, and said,” He found a gallows at his house, prepared for Mordecai; for that the servant told him so much upon his inquiry, when he was sent to him to call him to supper.” He said further, that the gallows was fifty cubits high: which, when the king heard, he determined that Haman should be punished after no other manner than that which had been devised by him against Mordecai; so he gave order immediately that he should be hung upon those gallows, and be put to death after that manner. And from hence
I cannot forbear to admire God, and to learn hence his wisdom and his justice, not only in punishing the wickedness of Haman, but in so disposing it, that he should undergo the very same punishment which he had contrived for another; as also because thereby he teaches others this lesson, that what mischiefs any one prepares against another, he, without knowing of it, first contrives it against himself.

12. Wherefore Haman, who had immoderately abused the honor he had from the king, was destroyed after this manner, and the king granted his estate to the queen. He also called for Mordecai, (for Esther had informed him that she was akin to him,) and gave that ring to Mordecai which he had before given to Haman. The queen also gave Haman’s estate to Mordecai; and prayed the king to deliver the nation of the Jews from the fear of death, and showed him what had been written over all the country by Haman the son of Ammedatha; for that if her country were destroyed, and her countrymen were to perish, she could not bear to live herself any longer. So the king promised her that he would not do any thing that should be disagreeable to her, nor contradict what she desired; but he bid her write what she pleased about the Jews, in the king’s name, and seal it with his seal, and send it to all his kingdom, for that those who read epistles whose authority is secured by having the king’s seal to them, would no way contradict what was written therein. So he commanded the king’s scribes to be sent for, and to write to the nations, on the Jews’ behalf, and to his lieutenants and governors, that were over his hundred twenty and seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia. Now the contents of this epistle were these: “The great king Artaxerxes to our
rulers, and those that are our faithful subjects, sendeth greeting. (19) Many men there are who, on account of the greatness of the benefits bestowed on them, and because of the honor which they have obtained from the wonderful kind treatment of those that bestowed it, are not only injurious to their inferiors, but do not scruple to do evil to those that have been their benefactors, as if they would take away gratitude from among men, and by their insolent abuse of such benefits as they never expected, they turn the abundance they have against those that are the authors of it, and suppose they shall lie concealed from God in that case, and avoid that vengeance which comes from him. Some of these men, when they have had the management of affairs committed to them by their friends, and bearing private malice of their own against some others, by deceiving those that have the power, persuade them to be angry at such as have done them no harm, till they are in danger of perishing, and this by laying accusations and calumnies: nor is this state of things to be discovered by ancient examples, or such as we have learned by report only, but by some examples of such impudent attempts under our own eyes; so that it is not fit to attend any longer to calumnies and accusations, nor to the persuasions of others, but to determine what any one knows of himself to have been really done, and to punish what justly deserves it, and to grant favors to such as are innocent. This hath been the case of Haman, the son of Ammedatha, by birth an Amalekite, and alien from the blood of the Persians, who, when he was hospitably entertained by us, and partook of that kindness which we bear to all men to so great a degree, as to be called my father, and to be all along worshipped, and to have honor paid him by all in the second rank after the royal honor due
to ourselves, he could not bear his good fortune, nor govern the magnitude of his prosperity with sound reason; nay, he made a conspiracy against me and my life, who gave him his authority, by endeavoring to take away Mordecai, my benefactor, and my savior, and by basely and treacherously requiring to have Esther, the partner of my life, and of my dominion, brought to destruction; for he contrived by this means to deprive me of my faithful friends, and transfer the government to others: (20) but since I perceived that these Jews, that were by this pernicious fellow devoted to destruction, were not wicked men, but conducted their lives after the best manner, and were men dedicated to the worship of that God who hath preserved the kingdom to me and to my ancestors, I do not only free them from the punishment which the former epistle, which was sent by Haman, ordered to be inflicted on them, to which if you refuse obedience, you shall do well; but I will that they have all honor paid to them. Accordingly, I have hanged up the man that contrived such things against them, with his family, before the gates of Shushan; that punishment being sent upon him by God, who seeth all things. And I give you in charge, that you publicly propose a copy of this epistle through all my kingdom, that the Jews may be permitted peaceably to use their own laws, and that you assist them, that at the same season whereto their miserable estate did belong, they may defend themselves the very same day from unjust violence, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar; for God hath made that day a day of salvation instead of a day of destruction to them; and may it be a good day to those that wish us well, and a memorial of the punishment of the conspirators against us: and I will that you take notice, that every city, and every nation, that shall
disobey any thing that is contained in this epistle, shall be destroyed by fire and sword. However, let this epistle be published through all the country that is under our obedience, and let all the Jews, by all means, be ready against the day before mentioned, that they may avenge themselves upon their enemies.”

13. Accordingly, the horsemen who carried the epistles proceeded on the ways which they were to go with speed: but as for Mordecai, as soon as he had assumed the royal garment, and the crown of gold, and had put the chain about his neck, he went forth in a public procession; and when the Jews who were at Shushan saw him in so great honor with the king, they thought his good fortune was common to themselves also, and joy and a beam of salvation encompassed the Jews, both those that were in the cities, and those that were in the countries, upon the publication of the king’s letters, insomuch that many even of other nations circumcised their foreskin for fear of the Jews, that they might procure safety to themselves thereby; for on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which according to the Hebrews is called Adar, but according to the Macedonians, Dystrus, those that carried the king’s epistle gave them notice, that the same day wherein their danger was to have been, on that very day should they destroy their enemies. But now the rulers of the provinces, and the tyrants, and the kings, and the scribes, had the Jews in esteem; for the fear they were in of Mordecai forced them to act with discretion. Now when the royal decree was come to all the country that was subject to the king, it fell out that the Jews at Shushan slew five hundred of their enemies; and when the king had told Esther the number of those that were slain in that city,
but did not well know what had been done in the provinces, he asked her whether she would have any thing further done against them, for that it should be done accordingly: upon which she desired that the Jews might be permitted to treat their remaining enemies in the same manner the next day; as also that they might hang the ten sons of Haman upon the gallows. So the king permitted the Jews so to do, as desirous not to contradict Esther. So they gathered themselves together again on the fourteenth day of the month Dystrus, and slew about three hundred of their enemies, but touched nothing of what riches they had. Now there were slain by the Jews that were in the country, and in the other cities, seventy-five thousand of their enemies, and these were slain on the thirteenth day of the month, and the next day they kept as a festival. In like manner the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together, and feasted on the fourteenth day, and that which followed it; whence it is that even now all the Jews that are in the habitable earth keep these days festival, and send portions to one another. Mordecai also wrote to the Jews that lived in the kingdom of Artaxerxes to observe these days, and celebrate them as festivals, and to deliver them down to posterity, that this festival might continue for all time to come, and that it might never be buried in oblivion; for since they were about to be destroyed on these days by Haman, they would do a right thing, upon escaping the danger in them, and on them inflicting punishment on their enemies, to observe those days, and give thanks to God on them; for which cause the Jews still keep the forementioned days, and call them days of Phurim [or Purim.] (21) And Mordecai became a great and illustrious person with the king, and assisted him in the government of the people. He
also lived with the queen; so that the affairs of the Jews were, by their means, better than they could ever have hoped for. And this was the state of the Jews under the reign of Artaxerxes.
A COMMENTARY ON HAGGAI

By

Lewis P. Hussell
In the year 586 BC the city of Jerusalem, along with the Temple, was reduced to ruins. The people were led away into captivity (those who weren’t killed), although a few were allowed to remain behind to live in the ruins; but these finally moved to Egypt and were not heard from after a generation or so. Many of the Jews returned to their homeland after 70 years of captivity in Babylon and Persia, but not all wanted to return. The prospect of returning to an impoverished land and attempting to rebuild on the ruins of the past had little appeal. Only a few caught a vision of the pioneer spirit and became serious about the challenges that lay ahead. The following dates are the milestones in God’s work of returning the Jews to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem.

536 BC—The first group of about 50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the priest and religious leader. Haggai returned with this group. See my comments on Ezra 2.

Upon the return of the first group, work began on the Temple. The altar of sacrifice was restored and the foundation for the new Temple was laid. However, at this point the people ceased their work. The city and houses and wall were all in ruins, the land had been neglected for 70 years and food was scarce. Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses (529-522 BC). After this king came Darius I (522-486 BC). Two years into his reign (520 BC), and 16 years after work had ceased on the Temple, God raised up the prophet Haggai “to combat apathy and depression by giving inspired leadership” for the reconstruction of the Temple. In this book that is called by his name you will meet a man of whom I call, “God’s cheer leader.”
457 BC—A second group, led by Ezra, consisting of about 2,058 persons, returns. Several reforms are instituted, including an essential one addressing the problem of inter-marriage with the nations. See my comments on Ezra 8-10.

445 BC—A third group, led by Nehemiah, returns. Under his leadership the walls are rebuilt. See my comments on Nehemiah 2.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HAGGAI

God raised up Haggai to challenge the people to get to work. It was after the building had stopped that the name of Haggai appears in Ezra. (Ezra 4:24, 5:1) The key word is CONSIDER which is repeated five times in 38 verses. The expression, “The Word of the Lord” is found five times, and the statement “saith The Lord” is quoted 20 times. This makes the book one of authority.

KEYS TO OPEN HAGGAI

Like Malachi, Haggai uses a number of questions to highlight key issues (see 1:4, 9; 2:3,19). He also makes effective use of repetition: “Give careful thought” occurs in 1:5, 7; 2:15,18, and “I am with you” in 1:13; 2:4. “I will shake the heavens and the earth” is found in 2:6, 21. The major sections of the book are marked by the date on which the word of the Lord came “to” (or “through”) Haggai (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20). Several times the prophet appears to echo other Scriptures (compare Hag 1:6 with Dt 28:38-39 and Hag 2:17 with Dt 28:22). All of these scriptures are quoted in full in the main text to this commentary.
SURVEY OF THE BOOK

The messages of Haggai were given during a four-month period in 520 B.C., the second year of King Darius. The first message was delivered on the first day of the sixth month (Aug. 29), the last was on the 24th day of the ninth month.

Haggai and Zechariah began to preach in the second year of King Darius, 520 B.C. (see 1:1; Zec 1:1). The Jews were more to blame for their inactivity than their opponents, and Haggai tried to arouse them from their lethargy. When the governor of Trans-Euphrates and other officials tried to interfere with the rebuilding efforts, Darius fully supported the Jews (Ezra 5:3-6; 6:6-12). In 516 B.C. the temple was finished and dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18).

INSPIRATIONAL INTRODUCTION

Haggai returned to Jerusalem with the first group of 50,000 persons led by Zerubbabel in 536 BC. It is possible Haggai wrote some psalms during this time. Charles Haddon Spurgeon credits Haggai and Zechariah as being the author/co-author of several psalms (Psalms 138, 146-149) and believes that they were written for the occasion of the Temple dedication (The Treasury Of David Vol. 7, p. 383). The prophet dates his own work very precisely. Haggai 1:1 cites the “second year of Darius the king.” Thus, the prophecy is dated in the year 520 BC. This book consists of four brief, but powerful, oracles, each of which is precisely dated within this single year. They were delivered “between August and the last of November in the year 520 BC”
MEMORANDUM

For two decades, the Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem ignored God’s strong desire for them to rebuild the temple. When they finally responded and got to work, God’s sternness melted immediately. “I am with you,” he told them. Prior to that, the Jews were busy building their own houses and were complaining that:

- The weather was bad (Haggai 1:10)
- There was not much to eat or drink (Haggai 1:6)
- Their money did not buy much (Haggai 1:6)

God revealed to them that building this temple was not a new plan, but that he had planned this more than 1,000 years before when he brought them out of Egypt. This new temple would be greater than the old one, and his glory would fill it, and that the desire of all nations would come to it. Centuries later, the Messiah would come to this temple.
1 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 the son of Sheltie, governor of Judah, and To Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, this people say, the Time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.

3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.

8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.
9 Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Satin the LORD of hosts.

Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

13 Then spake Haggai the LORD’s messenger in the LORD’s message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.
INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI CHAPTER 1

This group of exiles had lived in Babylon, which is now Iraq. King Cyrus of Persia had conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. He told them to build their own temple, but they built only an altar and foundation for the temple and then stopped the work for 16 years. In the year of 520 BC, Haggai told them it was time for them to finish what they had started. Haggai showed them that God was angry with them. He cited three examples: inflation—bad crops—bad weather. Haggai inspired the people to get busy on the project, and within four years it was completed.

EXPOSITION TO HAGGAI CHAPTER 1

1. 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 the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest saying,

Under the edict of Cyrus, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, led a group of 42,360 exiles (Ezra 2:64) to Jerusalem. Upon their arrival they began building the temple, but they encountered opposition from the Arabians, Horinites and the Ammonites whose propaganda
was successful in stopping the work. Thus, no more work was done in the
days of Cyrus, nor yet in the reign of his successors. During this same period, the
people lost heart and enthusiasm. They had anticipated prosperity and happiness.
They had expected peace and plenty. They expected the blessings of God without
any problems. Instead, they faced ruined buildings, barren land, shortages and a
hostile people. Their zeal waned, and the thought of rebuilding became a matter
of indifference. In the meantime some changes occurred: Darius took the throne
and obstacles were removed; the original decree was found and every assistance
was now offered. There was only one thing missing: “the will of the people.” God sends
Haggai to stir up the people.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

(Since the Bible is interpreted through the Bible, other verses are presented throughout
this commentary for the reader’s fuller understanding.)

_Ezra 5:1, 2_ When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo,
prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel,
who was over them, then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose
and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with
them supporting them.
**Zec 1:1** In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,

**Ezr 3:8** Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.

**Zec 4:6-10** Then he answered and said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” Also the word of the LORD came to me saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. “For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.
The importance of the house of the LORD—When the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, He said, “You are living in good houses, but the house of the LORD is in ruins.” The LORD of everything says, “Think again about what you are doing. You planted many seeds, but not much grew. There is not enough to eat. There is not enough to drink. Your clothes do not keep you warm. Your money bag is full of holes.” The LORD of everything says: “Consider your ways.” This is a story of procrastination and wrong priorities. Are we putting business, education or recreation or building our own house ahead of the Lord’s house?

- A few men build cities, the rest live in them.
- A few men construct subways, the rest ride in them.
- A few men erect factories, the rest toil in them.
- A few men dream of foundations and skyscrapers, the rest live in them.

Remember that cowards never start.
The weak die on the way.
Only the strong come through!

“Caesar saw Britain not the grueling marches, treacherous tribes, and danger on every hand between him and his goal. He had an objective and a sense of direction. Napoleon saw Italy but not the Alps. Washington saw the Hessians at Trenton. A smaller man would have seen
the ice-filled Delaware.” (from, I Dare You, by William H. Danforth, pg. 108.)

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Ezr 4:23, 24** then as soon as the copy of King Artaxerxes document was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their colleagues, they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by force of arms. Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

**Pro 22:13** the sluggard says, “There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!”

**Ecc 11:4** He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.

3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Haggai was a man of single vision: “Build the Temple!” His desire was to see the Temple reconstructed and the worship of God reinstated. The people had become discouraged and, as a result, forgetful of God. They needed to prioritize their work. They were thinking of themselves and building their own houses, but not His! Haggai was sent as a motivator and edifier. “Get your priorities right! Put God first, and He’ll take care of your other needs (Matthew 6:33).” This fired-up prophet motivated the people,
and within three weeks and a few days the people began work on the Temple again. One of the reasons for his success was his dependence on the Word of the Lord! Twenty-six times (in a book of only 38 verses) he appeals to God as the authority and source of his message. Such expressions as “saith the Lord,” “declares the Lord of hosts,” and the like are very common. Haggai knew how to stir the people, move their hearts, and get results. God sent the right man at the right time for the right job. It got results then, and such preaching will get results today! The Temple was completed in 516 BC, twenty years after it was started and seventy years after it was destroyed in 586 BC (Ezra 6:15). This new Temple was later desecrated in the time of Antiochus Epiphanies (168 BC), but afterward cleaned up. It was added on to by Herod the Great. While Ezekiel was in captivity he has a vision of the temple and that is the temple that is being rebuilt by Zerubbabel. It was essentially this same Temple that Jesus and the apostles entered time and again during their ministries.

4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

The people had become self-centered and satisfied with their own houses, gardens, and own pleasures. They had been back for 20 years and had made one attempt at building the temple, had become discouraged, and halted the work. The
foundation was a nagging reminder that they had neglected God, and the prophets wouldn’t let them forget it!

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Psa 74:7,8** They have burned Thy sanctuary to the ground; They have defiled the dwelling place of Thy name. They said in their heart, “Let us completely subdue them.” They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

**Jer 52:13** And he burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire.

**Lam 2:7** The Lord has rejected His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has delivered into the hand of the enemy The walls of her palaces. They have made a noise in the house of the LORD As in the day of an appointed feast.

**Mic 3:12** Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.

**Jer 26:18** “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus the LORD of hosts has said, “Zion will be plowed as a field, And Jerusalem will become ruins, And the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.”’”
Psa 132:3,4 "Surely I will not enter my house, Nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, Or slumber to my eyelids; 5 Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

2Sa 7:2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains.”

Eze 24:21 ‘Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword.

5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

“Consider” is used 5 times by Haggai in two short chapters.

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Lam 3:40 Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the LORD.

Luke 15:17 “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;
ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Man has blamed seed, weather and nature when all the time God was withholding his favor. The following scriptures will set the record straight.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Lev 26:20** ‘And your strength shall be spent uselessly, for your land shall not yield its produce and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

**Deu 28:38-40** “You shall bring out much seed to the field but you shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. “You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall devour them. “You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off.

**2Sa 21:1** Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, “It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.”

**Psa 107:34** A fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
Isa 5:10 “For ten acres of vineyard will yield only one bath of wine, And a homer of seed will yield but an ephah of grain.”

Jer 14:4 “Because the ground is cracked, For there has been no rain on the land; The farmers have been put to shame, They have covered their heads.

Hos 4:10 And they will eat, but not have enough; They will play the harlot, but not increase, Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.

Hos 8:7 For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

Joel 1:10-12 The field is ruined, The land mourns, For the grain is ruined, The new wine dries up, Fresh oil fails. Be ashamed, O farmers, Wail, O vinedressers, For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the field is destroyed. The vine dries up, And the fig tree fails; The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, All the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up From the sons of men.

Amo 4:7-9 “And furthermore, I withheld the rain from you While there were still three months until harvest. Then I would send rain on one city And on another city I would not send rain; One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up. “So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD. “I smote
you with scorching \textit{wind} and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

\textbf{Mic 6:14-15} “You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, And your vileness will be in your midst. You will try to remove for safekeeping, But you will not preserve anything, And what you do preserve I will give to the sword. “You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.

\textbf{Mal 2:2} “If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart.

\textbf{Lev 26:26} ‘When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied.

\textbf{1Ki 17:12} But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.”

\textbf{Eze 4:16-17} Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by
measure and in horror, because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity.

7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

The world is upside down today—we blame everything from ecology to theology. We blame everybody for everything but never blame ourselves. We spend more money on cars, clothes, cosmetics, TV, vacations, boats, golfing and pleasure than it would take to build a new church house. People will pay a dollar to see almost anything and then give a dime to the Lord.

8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

The prophet encourages the people to cut the timber in the forest of Lebanon and float it down to the sea port of Joppa, then transport it overland to the place of construction. Then God would have pleasure in it and be glorified.

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

2Ch 2:8-10 “Send me also cedar, cypress and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants know how to cut timber of Lebanon; and indeed, my servants will work with your servants, to prepare timber in abundance for
me, for the house which I am about to build will be great and wonderful. “Now behold, I will give to your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, 20,000 kors of crushed wheat, and 20,000 kors of barley, and 20,000 baths of wine, and 20,000 baths of oil.”

**Ezr 3:7** Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

**Ezr 6:4** with three layers of huge stones, and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

**Zec 11:1-2** Open your doors, O Lebanon, That a fire may feed on your cedars. Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, Because the glorious trees have been destroyed; Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the impenetrable forest has come down.

**1Ki 9:3** And the LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

**Psa 132:13-14** For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it

9 Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home,
I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

What they had brought home was wasted, as if the Lord had “blown upon it” and driven it away! And the reason was, they neglected the temple and left it in ruins while they were busy in building and decorating their own houses; therefore, they were visited by drought and famine, and by various diseases.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Isa 17:10-11** For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god. In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; But the harvest will be a heap In a day of sickliness and incurable pain.

**Isa 40:7** The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass.

**Jos 7:11-13** “Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. “Therefore the
sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. “Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.”

1Co 11:30-32 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Rev 2:22 ‘Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

Consider your ways. Man goes to church when convenient, and it takes very little to make it inconvenient. Too hot, too cold, too wet. Friends, reunions, outing, too tired, not feeling well, etc. Haggai was a prophet (holy man) who lived at the same time as Zechariah when some people from Israel returned from Babylon. They rebuilt their own houses in Jerusalem, but they became poor. Haggai explained why
they were poor. He said that God was not blessing them because they had neglected His house.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Lev 26:19** ‘And I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze.

**Deu 28:23-24** “And the heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. “The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

**1Ki 8:35** “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee, and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them,

**Jer 14:1-6** That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah in regard to the drought: “Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They sit on the ground in mourning, And the cry of Jerusalem has ascended. “And their nobles have sent their servants for water; They have come to the cisterns and found no water. They have returned with their vessels empty; They have been put to shame and humiliated, And they cover their heads. “Because the ground is cracked, For there has been no rain on the land; The farmers have been put to shame, They have covered their heads “For even the doe in the
field has given birth only to abandon her young, Because there is no grass. “And the wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; They pant for air like jackals, Their eyes fail For there is no vegetation.

Joe 1:18-20 How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle wander aimlessly Because there is no pasture for them; Even the flocks of sheep suffer. To Thee, O LORD, I cry; For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for Thee; For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

National adversity is due to national disobedience. The people had worked hard, but what had it earned them? Their crops were unsuccessful. Their money disappeared as soon as they earned it. Why? Haggai asked. Because they had mistaken their priorities and needed to put God first. They needed to rebuild his temple. Would rebuilding the temple change Israel’s financial situation? Haggai’s first words promised nothing. He simply said, “Give careful thought to your ways,” and pointed out that Israel’s lack of prosperity was God’s doing. They
had worked hard, but God had withheld the rain that their crops needed a month later (2:1-9). Haggai said that God had glorious plans for Israel, plans that would shake the whole earth. But he let Israel know that in order for them to expect God to guide their feet they would have to recalibrate their thinking.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Deu 28:22** “The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish.

**2Ki 8:1** Now Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, “Arise and go with your household, and sojourn wherever you can sojourn; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it shall even come on the land for seven years.”

**Amo 5:8** He who made the Pleiades and Orion And changes deep darkness into morning, Who also darkens day *into* night, Who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the surface of the earth, The LORD is His name.

**12** Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had
sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

Sometimes, at crucial moments, a single voice can stir a directionless mass of people to action. Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s inspiring oratory may have saved Britain in World War II. Consider the words of Haggai and you will see similar action. “Consider your ways”: today, more money is spent on alcohol than on education. More on pleasure than of food, more on foreign aid than social reform, more is spent on cat food, boats, TV and cosmetics than on missions. The Jews had lost the desire to appropriate and appreciate spiritual things. We also need a season of conviction in the lives of God’s people. We need another Watergate revival like the one in Nehemiah 9 and 10. Pray that God will send us another Haggai and “stir up” our spirits to obey His word.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Ezr 5:2** then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them.

**Isa 55:10-11** “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth, And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall My word
be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

**Psa 112:1** Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments.

**Pro 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Isa 50:10** Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

**Heb 12:28** Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

**13 Then spake Haggai the LORD’s messenger in the LORD’s message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.**

Haggai was the messenger of the LORD and spoke the message of the LORD. Haggai told the people, “The LORD says, ‘I am with you.’”

One of my favorite stories in history is the building of the Panama Canal. The world said, “It can’t be done.” America
had purchased the Isthmus. President Theodore Roosevelt appointed George W. Goethals to build the canal. He had the reputation of never quitting. The world flippantly said, “Let George do it.” Colonel Goethals “put to the full test the fearless courage that was the measure of the man,” and the canal was completed. “George did it.” But George didn’t do it without the help of another fearless man. William C. Gorgas, an American Army doctor was selected to fight malaria and yellow fever. He scanned the record of twenty thousand people who had died from these pestilential diseases. One report showed that five hundred young engineers came from France to Panama and “not one lived to draw his first month’s pay.” Then began Dr. Gorgas’ most amazing campaign. He was ridiculed. Called a mosquito chaser; but Gorgas “concentrated his sleepless energies upon one single aim—the destruction of the infesting mosquitoes, and he won what was unquestionably the greatest triumph in preventive medicine. A campaign waged for less than six months wiped out a scourge that had afflicted this region for at least four hundred years.” Had he allowed ridicule and opposition to overcome his courage, the Panama Canal might not have been built. (quotes from, I Dare You, by William H. Danforth, p.106, 107)
SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Isa 44:26 Confirming the word of His servant,
And performing the purpose of His messengers.
It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be
inhabited!’ And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall
be built.’ And I will raise up her ruins again.

2Ch 15:2 and he went out to meet Asa and said
to him, “Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and
Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are
with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you
find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake
you.

2Ch 20:17 ‘You need not fight in this battle;
station yourselves, stand and see the salvation
of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and
Jerusalem.’ Do not fear or be dismayed;
tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is
with you.”

Isa 8:10 “Devise a plan but it will be thwarted;
State a proposal, but it will not stand, For God is
with us.”

Isa 41:10 ‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not
anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I
will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’

Isa 43:2 “When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you; And through the rivers, they
will not overflow you. When you walk through
the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the
flame burn you.
**Jer 15:20** “Then I will make you to this people A fortified wall of bronze; And though they fight against you, They will not prevail over you; For I am with you to save you And deliver you,” declares the LORD.

**Mat 28:20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

- The Lord of everything stirred up Zerubbabel!
- The Lord of everything stirred up Joshua!
- The Lord of everything stirred up the remnant!

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**1Ch 5:26** So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and to the river of Gozan, to this day.
2Ch 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

**Ezr 1:5** Then the heads of fathers’ *households* of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

**Ezr 7:27-28** Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, and has extended loving kindness to me before the king and his counselors and before all the king’s mighty princes. Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

**15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.**

By October 24th, the people had responded to Haggai. Prophets before him, such as Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, had spoken for decades without seeing such a heartfelt reaction. Haggai’s messages span a mere four months, but he accomplished everything the Lord set him out to do. In four years the temple was complete. What made the temple so important? After all, the proper sacrifices and rituals could be carried out on a makeshift altar. But
God’s reputation was at stake. He could not be properly honored so long as the house he called home lay in ruins. The temple symbolized God’s presence, and Israel’s priorities. In addition to all this, the prophets had prophesied that the temple would “be rebuilt . . . in troublous times.” See Daniel 9 and my comments in my book, Daniel and the Revelation.
1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.
9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.
18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider it.

19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.
Both Haggai and Zechariah throw light on the year 520BC and after, when the rebuilding of the Temple was commenced. Haggai was shocked to find that nearly twenty years after Cyrus had allowed the exiles to return, the Temple was still in a ruined state. His description of the poverty of the community (1:6) suggests that the people were too occupied in scraping a bare living to be concerned about it. They used the foundations for sacrifice anyway and were used to seeing them in their burned-out and damaged state. Haggai, however, felt that if they made the effort to rebuild the Temple, God would reward them with the fruits of the earth and the book of Malachi records such blessings in vivid description, as if God had opened the windows of heaven. God told Haggai that it would be greater than the old temple. For a detailed description of the Temple read Ezekiel 41-48.

EXPOSITION TO HAGGAI CHAPTER

1. In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high
priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

On the 17th of October the LORD spoke to Haggai the prophet, saying, “speak now to:

• Zerubbabel, he is the leader of Judah and son of Shealtiel.
• Joshua; he is the High Priest and the son of Jehozadak.
• The remnant of the people also.

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2Pe 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Neh 8:9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.

3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Four years later when the Temple Ezekiel spoke about is finally built, it was greater than the Temple that Solomon built.
SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Ezr 3:12 Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy;

Zec 4:9-10 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. “For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

Mat 24:1-2 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Only on the last day accounted for in this brief book did Haggai get back to the subject of harvests. He said that God wanted his people again to “give careful
thought”—this time to the dramatic difference they would see in their harvests now that they had put God first. “From this day on I will bless you,” God said through Haggai (2:18-19).

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Jos 1:6 “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Zec 8:9 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.

5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

God says, This is what we agreed upon when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Exo 29:45, 46 “And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought
them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.”

**Exo 33:14** And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.”

**Exo 34:10** Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth, nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

**Isa 63:11-14** Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, Who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; As the cattle which go down into the valley, The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So didst Thou lead Thy people, To make for Thyself a glorious name.

**Zec 8:15** so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!

**6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;**
In the construction industry, scaffolding is built around a building and when the building is completed the scaffolding is removed. Likewise, when nations have served their purposes they are dismantled. In Amos you will note the destruction of many nations that were ripe for destruction.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Hag 2:21** “Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. ‘And I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.’

**Heb 12:26** And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.” And this *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

**Isa 34:4** And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as *one* withers from the fig tree.
Jer 51:33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor At the time it is stamped firm; Yet in a little while the time of harvest will come for her.”

Joe 2:30-32 “And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. “The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

Mat 24:29,30 “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

God can and does shake all nations by changing their leaders and by changing their form of government; often this is done by wars. In my commentary of Amos you
will see that nation after nation suffered wars, and some were exterminated.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Eze 21:27** ‘A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I shall make it. This also will be no more, until He comes whose right it is; and I shall give it to Him.’

**Dan 2:44** “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

**Dan 7:20-26** and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates. “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three king ‘And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down
the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

**Joe 3:9-16** Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! Beat your plowshares into swords, And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, “I am a mighty man.” Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Thy mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness. And the LORD roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

**1Ki 8:11** so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.
Probably the people were wondering where the gold would come from since it would take tons to restore the temple.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

1Ki 6:20-34 And the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar. So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold. And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary; and he overlaid it with gold. And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold. Also in the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing were ten cubits. And the other cherub was ten cubits; both the cherubim were of the same measure and the same form. The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was the other cherub. And he placed the cherubim in the midst of the inner house, and the wings of the cherubim were spread out, so that the wing of the one was touching the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall. So their wings were touching each other in the center of the house. He also overlaid the cherubim with gold. Then he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner
and outer sanctuaries. And he overlaid the floor of the house with gold, inner and outer sanctuaries. And for the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood, the lintel and five-sided doorposts. So he made two doors of olive wood, and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots. And he carved on it cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.

1Ch 29:16 “O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided to build Thee a house for Thy holy name, it is from Thy hand, and all is Thine.

Psa 50:10-12 “For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. “I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

Isa 60:13 “The glory of Lebanon will come to you, The juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together, To beautify the place of My sanctuary; And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.

Isa 60:17 “Instead of bronze I will bring gold, And instead of iron I will bring silver, And instead of wood, bronze, And instead of stones,
iron. And I will make peace your administrators, And righteousness your overseers.

9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

While Ezekiel was in exile he wrote about the new Temple that was to be built by the returning exiles. The complete description is detailed in Ezekiel chapters 41-48

10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Haggai said that God had glorious plans for Israel, plans that would shake the whole earth. But he referred to God’s presence with them and how all nations would come to this temple.

11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

It was the business of the priests to know what the law said. People were not to ask what the priests’ opinions were, but rather what the law said.

12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.
The answer was no. This means a good person cannot make another person good. Only God can make someone good. But a bad person can make another person bad! (“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” 1 Cor 15:33) This is what verse 13 means. God says that some Jews are bad. They make the other Jews bad by their association. Holiness is not infectious. “One bad apple spoils the barrel,” the saying goes; but one good apple doesn’t clean up the rotten ones. In a similar vein, Haggai asked, “Which is contagious, good or evil?” In the Old Testament law, he found that consecrated meat, set aside to be used in sacrificial worship, did not “spread” its holiness. But a person who became “unclean” did spread his or her defilement. Under the Old Testament law, evil spread, but goodness did not. The Israelites’ failure to rebuild the temple had defiled everything they touched, even their good deeds.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Exo 29:37** “For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, and whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

**Lev 6:27** ‘Anyone who touches its flesh shall become consecrated; and when any of its blood splashes on a garment, in a holy place you shall wash what was splashed on.
Lev 6:29  ‘Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy.

Eze 44:19  “And when they go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other garments that they may not transmit holiness to the people with their garments.

Mat 23:19  “You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

To understand this, think about water. If you put dirty water into clean water, it will all be dirty. If you put clean water into dirty water, it will still all be dirty.

14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:
The people are asked to ponder the past and lay it to their hearts so that their course in the future would be different.

16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

God says, Now, think again about this. Think, before you build one stone on another in the temple of the LORD. When you came for 20 bushels of corn there were only 10. And when you came for 50 wineskins of wine there were only 20.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Zec 8:10-12** ‘For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. ‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things.

**Mal 2:2** “If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and
indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart.

17 *I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me,* saith the LORD.

This is what the LORD says: I hit you with blight, mildew and hail. I did this to all your work, but you did not turn to me.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Deu 28:22** “The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish.

**Amo 4:9** “I smote you with scorching *wind* and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider it.

**Deu 32:29** “Would that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would discern their future!
Luke 15:17-20 “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ‘I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; “I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’” And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.

Zec 8:9-12 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built. ‘For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. ‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things.

Ezr 6:14 And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.
19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Hab 3:17-18 Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

Gen 26:12 Now Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,

Lev 26:3-13 ‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. ‘Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. ‘I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. ‘But you will chase your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword; five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and
your enemies will fall before you by the sword. ‘So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you. ‘And you will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new. ‘Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ‘I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you should not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

Deu 28:2-4 “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the LORD your God. “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. “Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

Psa 128:1-6 A Song of Ascents. How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel!

Zec 8:11-13 ‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘For there will be
peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. ‘And it will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.’

20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth.

This tells us that God is king of history! History is the story of the world in which God decides what will happen. And he decides what will not happen.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Psa 46:6** The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted.

**Eze 26:15** Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre, “Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall when the wounded groan, when the slaughter occurs in your midst?

22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the
heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

God says: I will knock down the kings of the earth. I will destroy the strong kingdoms of the world. I will destroy the arms and those that use them. Their soldiers will fall from their horses. They will fight each other.

SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Isa 60:12 “For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, And the nations will be utterly ruined.

Dan 2:34-35 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Dan 7:25-27 ‘And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half
a time. ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. ‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

**Mic 5:15** “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath On the nations which have not obeyed.”

**Zep 3:8** “Therefore, wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

**Zec 14:3** Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

**Psa 46:9** He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire.

**Psa 76:6** At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

**2Ch 20:22** And when they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.

**Isa 19:2** “So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his
brother, and each against his neighbor, City against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

Some 78 years before, King Jehoiachin had been captured and taken to Babylon. God had rejected him: “Even if you, Jehoiachin, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off” (Jeremiah 22:24). But now his grandson, Zerubbabel, had come back to Jerusalem, chosen as the Lord’s “signet ring.” Such a ring was used in place of a signature, to impress the king’s seal on important documents. God had again accepted men from the royal line of David as his chosen leaders. The complete fulfillment of this prophecy would have to wait for Zerubbabel’s descendant, Jesus, a son of David, who fully imprinted God’s image on humanity.

**SUPPORTING CROSS-REFERENCE SCRIPTURES**

**Jer 22:24** “As I live,” declares the LORD, “even though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off;

**Isa 49:1-3** Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD
called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me, And He has also made Me a select arrow; He has hidden Me in His quiver. And He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.”
A COMMENTARY ON
NEHEMIAH

By:
Lewis P. Hussell
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

From cupbearer to governor, Nehemiah is an unforgettable character. He will lead the third party of exiles to Jerusalem. Then, he will rebuild the wall surrounding the city—a seemingly impossible task; but God enabled him to accomplish this enormous undertaking in just fifty two days.

As a cupbearer of Artaxerxes 1, he was in the right place at the right time to ask the king for permission to take time off from his job and build the wall around Jerusalem. Just one generation prior to Nehemiah, a Jewish girl by the name of Esther became the queen of Persia (she is the stepmother of Artaxerxes 1). There is little doubt that this noble queen introduced a number of the Jews to the king’s court.

Embodied in this great man are courage, compassion, integrity, godliness and selflessness. He left the palace because his priorities were right. He was a man of prayer and always gave God the glory. Pray that God will raise up a man like Nehemiah in our generation.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEHEMIAH

Let me walk you through an arrow of prayer—past power opponents, lasting credit, and the Wailing Wall—to praise the Lord and fight. We’ll see vineyards and farms, a governor without greed opposed to greedy politicians, ongoing psychological warfare, remembrances of the past, walking bibles, the joy of the lord, the sealed ones—freedom at last—city fright, a victory party, and a never-ending task. Don’t fall off your chair, and I will be your guide on this tour.
KEYS TO OPEN NEHEMIAH

Help is on the way to Jerusalem! God will send Nehemiah who will leave Persia in BC 445 and not return till BC 433. It is noteworthy to remember that Malachi is a prophet during this period of time.

The decree of Artaxerxes 1 marks the beginning point of the 69 prophetic weeks in Daniel’s prophecy that determine when the Messiah will come in.

Dan 9:25-27 “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two sevens. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

In exactly 69 weeks of years (483 years) Jesus was anointed as the messiah. See my book, Daniel and the Revelation, for an expanded view of this subject. Nehemiah had political and religious training that enabled him to set in place efficient civil authority and to work with Ezra to establish spiritual and moral authority in the lives of the exiles.
One verse jumps off the page, and I want to share it with you at this point.

**Nehemiah 8:8** “They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.”

The most important thing in the lives of God’s people is their loyalty to the covenant.

**SURVEY OF THE BOOK**

This is a great partnership—Nehemiah the Governor and Ezra the Priest—who together form an effective team for construction and reform. Working closely with them are three prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Nehemiah arrives 13 years after the return of Ezra and 94 years after the return of Zerubbabel.

On the third day after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah, under the light of a full moon, inspects the walls of Jerusalem. As fast as the shades of nightfall disappear, Nehemiah has a plan. Work begins immediately, and progress was faster than the flight of a rumor.

As soon as the neighboring nations hear of Nehemiah’s plan to rebuild, opposition appears: first in the form of mockery and then in the form of conspiracy. Construction progressed with half the people on guard duty and half working on the wall.

Internal problems, however, plague the progress. Wealthy Jews were overcharging interest rates, bankruptcy was rampant, foreclosures imminent. Children were sold into slavery—girls sold as sex
slaves. Farms were taken by large, rich land owners. It looked like the greed and corruption of the CEO’s of Wall Street. As Solomon said, “nothing new under the sun.”

Nehemiah attacks the problem with a two-pronged attack: prayer and action. He also sacrifices his entire salary to helping the people rebuild the walls of Jerusalem—and his example leads others to join his noble efforts. This man of God knew how to meet deceit, slander and treachery head-on and accomplish the task ahead of him. Soon his enemies recognize that God is the real source of power behind Nehemiah.

**Neh. 6:16** “When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.”

**INSPIRATIONAL INTRODUCTION**

Ezra stands on a special wooden podium for a marathon reading of the laws of God beginning early in the morning and lasting until midday. This reading continued for seven days. God’s Word was translated for the people from Hebrew into Aramaic, and they responded to the law by confessing, weeping, rejoicing and obeying. The covenant is renewed—signed and ratified. Deliverance and loyalty followed; the people repent and foreign marriages are dissolved.

Then, lots are drawn to see who will live in Jerusalem as Nehemiah requires 1/10th of the people to live in Jerusalem and 9/10ths in other cities. So, the land is resettled, homes are built, children are born—a new day has arrived. The wall, restored from rubble, is
dedicated with vocal music and with bands playing—it was a joyful ceremony.

MEMORANDUM

Nehemiah travels back to Persia and then returns later to Jerusalem and finds things in disarray. He will cleanse the temple, enforce the Sabbath laws, and pull his hair out because of the moral rot of the people. The exposition section will provide more insight.
Nehemiah’s Prayer

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,

2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

5 Then I said:
   “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,

6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you.
7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,

9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

10 “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.

11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

I was cupbearer to the king.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

After interceding for the people of Israel with God, Nehemiah will intercede for them with Artaxerxes. Nehemiah sets out to build a wall and ends up leaving an enduring legacy of leadership. He was an organizer and a pragmatic leader who had a top position of trust in the grandest empire of world history. He put his career on hold and took on a job that was as improbable as operating on a gnat.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

Nehemiah’s Prayer

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,

This is the memoir of Nehemiah. He probably kept a diary of his activities and thus recorded them in this book that bears his name. The narrative begins in December, BC 444, which was the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. The king’s step mother was Queen Esther, so we can easily conclude that there were favors shown to the Jews in the Persian court. Nehemiah tells us that he was in the Palace at Susa. This city, sometimes called Shushan, was a
major city of Elam (now Iran). It had been the location of the summer palace of the Babylonian kings, but now it was the capital of the Persian empire.

2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

Nehemiah had visitors, including his brother, from Judea; and he inquires about the welfare of those who had escaped captivity and were now living in Jerusalem. This brother, Hanani, will receive a political appointment from Governor Nehemiah in the 7th chapter of his memoirs.

3 They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

Nehemiah’s brother makes a full disclosure of conditions back in Judea. The conversation centers on the broken down walls and lack of gates around the city. Without a wall, the people are defenseless against their enemies. The Great Wall of China was built to protect the Chinese from the hordes of the Barbarians. The wall of Hadrian, built in AD 122-127 in Britain, was for protection from the unconquered Caledonians. The wall built by Russia after World War II separated the
two Germanys. The eternal city has walls made of precious stones. Walls are a major part of history, especially around cities.

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

When horrible events or a catastrophe occurred, it was a common practice to mourn and dress in old burlap with smudges of dirt on one’s face. Nehemiah was deeply disturbed. There was a typhoon of agitation in Nehemiah’s brain: a thousand miles away in Jerusalem, the temple and all its treasures lay bare to the invaders. Nehemiah is trying to put it all in perspective and wonders what he can do to help.

5 Then I said:

“O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,

Nehemiah approaches the bench of the Judge of all the earth with an argument that God was great and awesome and keeps his covenant of love with them who obey his commands. Like Moses, he appeals to God for a favorable decision.

6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for
your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you.

Nehemiah knows that God’s eyes are open and his ears are attentive to those who are truly penitent. He includes himself along with his fellow Jews as being sinful and undeserving of the grace of God. He makes no claim before heaven’s court but prays day and night for favor from God.

7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

In this prayer, he admits that the nation had in fact acted wickedly and treated God like dirt, that they had set aside the laws of God as recorded in the Law of Moses.

8 “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,

Nehemiah did not complain about God scattering the Israelites among the nations. He tells God that the dispersion was the consequence of their own doing.

9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them
to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

The basis for his argument in this prayer for grace is that God’s covenant said: “I will scatter you among the nations . . .” and finally “bring them [home]”. Nehemiah is familiar with the contract—he had memorized it word for word and is now praying scripture. He believes that God has kept his end of the bargain and is now asking God to be gracious and fulfill the bottom line of the contract. God was not obligated to do this since they were the ones who had violated the contract.

10 “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.

Admitting that they were the ones in violation, Nehemiah reminds God that he had redeemed them by his mighty hand.

11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

I was cupbearer to the king.

May we too delight in revering the name of our God. Nehemiah asks God to be attentive to his prayer and touch the heart of the king so that Artaxerxes will grant favors to him. Nehemiah tells us
that his position in the government was a cupbearer to the king. This job entailed tasting food and drink to see if it had been poisoned. If for any reason this food taster found that the food or wine was not “fit for a king”, it would be sent back to the kitchen. Poisoning kings was a favorite way of assassination. My book on Daniel tells how a queen poisoned her husband in order to secure the throne for her son. In 1847 a man named Wilkinson poisoned an entire wedding party and killed many in attendance by lacing the wedding cake with arsenic. In Jonestown, Ghana, in 1978, the followers of Jim Jones drank a fruit flavored punch laced with cyanide and 913 people died. Arsenic was the favorite poison used to kill kings. The Roman emperor Augustus, fearing being poisoned by Livia, took only figs that he plucked from the villa-garden but Livia then had the figs on the trees coated with poison and, thus, the aged Augustus met his death. The wife of Claudius Caesar served him a plate of mushrooms, having poisoned the largest mushroom on the top, and Claudius died. A cupbearer to the king was a guarantee that drinks and food were safe for human consumption. The position of cupbearer was a trusted position, and the cupbearer also knew private secrets and personal affairs of the entire kingdom. Nehemiah was the most trustworthy man in the entire kingdom.
Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

1 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before;

2 so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was very much afraid,

3 but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

4 The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

Then I prayed to the God of heaven,

5 and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

7 I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so
that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?

8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

Nehemiah Inspects Jerusalem’s Walls

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days

12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through;
15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate.

16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”

18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?”

20 I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 2

This chapter presents Nehemiah’s plea to God and king, his arrival in Jerusalem, inspection of the walls, exhortation of the Jews, and response to his enemies.

In early spring BC 444, Nehemiah packs and leaves for Judea. He had probably never seen Jerusalem before. 100 years have passed since the first exiles returned. The temple had been rebuilt, but the city was barely occupied since most of the people lived in outlying villages. The Jews were mixing with foreigners and were in danger of losing their identity.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 2

Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

1 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before;

It has been 4 months since Nehemiah received the news of his homeland from his brother Hanani. As he served wine to the king he looked as sad as a centipede with foot trouble.

2 so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not
ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was very much afraid,

The king was as sensitive to the despondent look on Nehemiah’s face as an allergic reaction. The king’s attendants were not expected to be gloomy—just to be near the king was supposed to make a person happy; but on this occasion Nehemiah had a bad case of the blues.

3 but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

He tells the king of the desecration of the cemetery, the tombs where his ancestors were buried. Perhaps at this point he doesn’t want to use the word “Jerusalem” lest it arouse controversy.

4 The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

Then I prayed to the God of heaven,

When the king asked what Nehemiah wanted to do, Nehemiah shot a quick, silent prayer like an arrow to the king of kings. Nehemiah also spontaneously inserted prayers as he wrote his memoirs. Here are some examples 1:5-11; 4:4,5; 5:19; 6:9,14; 13:14, 22, 31.
5 and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

It is easy to conjure up all the things that the king might have done. He could have had Nehemiah executed, or he could have laughed out loud. The prayer of Nehemiah, however, had already been answered. The king is asking for details—how long will you be gone? At this point in time, Nehemiah never imagined in his wildest dreams that this enormous job could be accomplished in so short a time and that he would be appointed Governor for the next twelve years. What a God we serve!

7 I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?

Next, Nehemiah needs a passport with the king’s signature and an official seal to get him past the border guards of the foreign nations that he must pass through.

8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so he will
give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

As quick as a cat’s reaction, Nehemiah lays before the king a list as long as the king’s highway of the things he will need for this project. Among the requests is a requisition for Asaph (who was over the federally owned forest) to supply all the timber required to complete the job.

**9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.**

The Persian king was over all the Trans-Euphrates governors. Nehemiah delivers the orders before the trip is made in order for the materials to be prepared and ready for delivery when the project goes forward. With the accompaniment of army officers and a cavalry, no governor dare blink an eye or question these orders from Artaxerxes.

**10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.**

Both Sanballat and Tobiah were influential local politicians. Sanballat’s family
governed Samaria and had managed to marry into the Jewish high priest’s family (see comments on 13:28). Tobiah, an official in Ammon, a small country east of Judah, had family ties and influence among the top Jewish families (see 6:17-19; 13:4, 5). These two governors feel threatened with the expansion of this new project. If Nehemiah becomes the governor of this area, then the regional governors would lose their control over Judea.

Nehemiah Inspects Jerusalem’s Walls

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days

The long trip of around 1,000 miles left Nehemiah tired and exhausted, but after three days’ rest he is charged up and ready for work. Cf. Ezra 8:32.

12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

Nehemiah does not want anyone to know of his plans yet for fear of opposition before he can have a town hall meeting and lay out the plan. Then the people will have full knowledge of the task and the backing of Artaxerxes and the materials from the forest.

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and
the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

Nehemiah inspects the Southern and Eastern walls that were littered with rubbish. He had entered Jerusalem from the North and had probably seen the walls on the way into Jerusalem, and perhaps he could see the missing sections of the walls from where he stayed during the first 3 days.

14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through;

As he continues his inspection towards the fountain gate and the king’s pool, his mule was not able to pass or walk around the piles of stones left by the army of Babylon when they had demolished Jerusalem about 150 years earlier. This heap of rubble was from old foundations of businesses, homes, synagogues and fortifications.

15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate.

At this point he tethers his mule and continues the wall inspection on foot so that when he meets with city officials, he
can speak with authority and first-hand knowledge of the project.

16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

The secret night ride was known only by the few who went with him. However, they did not know what Nehemiah had in mind.

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”

Nehemiah calls for a public meeting with priest, nobles, and appointed officials, and he lays the whole story before them. He was as convincing as a sign from God. Nehemiah did an academy award performance, and they are convinced of his reliability.

18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

Nehemiah begins with “the hand of God was upon me” and ends with and “the king had said to me.” He secures cooperation like a quarterback and a football center.
He convinces them to do something they were scared to death to do. Nehemiah presented himself as polished as a Harvard professor.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?”

Nehemiah provokes a governor’s conference and these snobs are as scornful as a skeptic confronted with facts.

20 I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”

Nehemiah’s answer was God! God! God! These shady characters will not daunt the zeal of Nehemiah. His enemies are a ticking time bomb and a spy in the oval office; but if Nehemiah’s answer has any validity, he will succeed.
NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 3

Builders of the Wall

1 Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel.

2 The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.

3 The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

4 Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs.

5 The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

6 The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

7 Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates.
8 Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

9 Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section.

10 Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him.

11 Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens.

12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

13 The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

14 The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

15 The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King’s Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David.
16 Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.

17 Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district.

18 Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah.

19 Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle.

20 Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

21 Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib’s house to the end of it.

22 The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region.

23 Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house.

24 Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah’s house to the angle and the corner,
25 and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh

26 and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower.

27 Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.

28 Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.

29 Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs.

30 Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.

31 Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner;

32 and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repair.
This chapter presents a record of the builders and their achievements. To many modern readers, it may seem unimportant that these men are busy building a wall. But think of it this way—what if there were no wall on the border between Mexico and the state of Texas? Soon there would be no distinction between the two. It was because there was no wall that the Jews were facing assimilation into the culture of their pagan neighbors. Also, in those days, a city without a wall was easy pickings for any robber band. Jews who were concerned for security had scattered among other nationalities in small villages outside Jerusalem. There they were intermarrying and gradually losing their own language, culture, and, most important, their own religion. A wall would give them a chance to make Jerusalem a truly Jewish city, keeping it safe and controlling who came and went.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 3

Builders of the Wall

1 Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel.
It is fitting that Eliashib, the high priest, and his co-workers build the sheep gate. This gate was used primarily for the sacrifices to come through and was appropriately called the sheep gate. No one knows the exact location of many of the gates and the distance from tower to tower. The Jews dedicated the gates, wall and towers as they were finished and then had a formal dedication later when the entire project was completed.

Psa. 127:1 “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

2 The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.

This section of the wall was built by men from Jericho. This meant travelling about 12 miles which, on foot, would take 8 to 10 hours. They probably set up camp and stayed in Jerusalem till the project was finished. The adjoining section of the wall was finished by Zaccur, son of Imri. Each section was manned by a large crew of workers with only the general foreman’s name mentioned. There were thousands of people working on the walls.

3 The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.
The fish gate was a place where foreign people brought their dried fish and wares and sold them. It was a mini flea market.

Nehemiah 13:16 “Men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.”

This gate is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 33:14 and Zeph. 1:10.

4 Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs.

Meremoth, Meshullam, Zadok—this section was still intact and only needed repairs so each one assumed the responsibility of making the necessary repairs.

5 The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

The adjoining section of the wall needed repairs so a crew of men from Tekoa did the work. The city of Tekoa was 12 miles from Jerusalem. So, the travel time to commute was impracticable. The workers set up camp and stayed till the end of their contract to fix the wall was completed.
6 The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

Joiada and Meshullam were the supervisors in charge of the Jeshanah gate. Building an entrance was a large project. Large beams were hoisted into place above the doors, stone work was needed on the columns and across the area above the gates, and a roof was built over the doorway. Wood for the doors was supplied from the king’s forest under the authority of Artaxerxes and expedited by Asaph, the keeper of the forest. Large hinges had to be forged and all bolts, custom-made, and hardware for the bars. There was an extensive amount of carpentry work building the doors.

7 Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates.

Next the repairs are made by a crew under the supervision of Melatiah and Jadon. They came from Gibeon which was six miles N.W. of Jerusalem and from Mizpah, four miles west of Jerusalem. This territory was under the authority of the regional governors of Trans-Euphrates.

8 Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next
section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

The next supervisors are Uzziel and Hananiah, who make repairs up to the Broad Wall. Archeological excavations confirm that the wall was wider at this point. In 2 Ch. 32:5, we are told that Hezekiah built another wall outside the regular wall in order to reinforce the supporting terraces. Perhaps there was a slip at this point, and this was used as a retaining wall.

9 Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section.

Rephiah was mayor of a section of Jerusalem known as the half-section. Under his leadership the next section of the wall was repaired.

10 Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him.

Two neighbors by the name of Jedaiah and Hattush repaired the wall in front of their respective homes.

11 Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens.
Malkijah and Hasshub join together and, with their crew, repair the wall and the tower of the ovens. Jeremiah speaks of the street of the bakers in Jer. 37:21. This tower and wall was located in front of the bakery.

12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

Shallum, Mayor of the other half-district of Jerusalem, and his daughter repair the next section of the wall.

13 The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

This gate led out to the Hinnom valley. Hanum was in charge, and the residents of Zanoah rebuilt it. They laid stones, erected columns, built doors, and hung them on hinges forged from bronze. Wood for the gates came from the king’s forest (probably located in Lebanon). Probably many of the gates and doors were pre-fabricated by the nations that were supplying the materials.

14 The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.
The dung gate was used to take the manure and street sweepings out to be spread on the land and gardens surrounding Jerusalem. This gate was built and installed under the leadership of Malkijah.

15 The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David.

This gate probably faced the En-Rogel spring; a fountain was located nearby, thus giving it the name of Fountain Gate. Shallum was the ruler over Mizpah, about five miles from Jerusalem. He made all necessary repairs on the main wall and then took on the project of repairing the wall at the pool of Siloam and some steps going down from the city of David.

16 Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.

Nehemiah, son of Azkub (not the author of this book), was the mayor of Beth Zur, a town north of Hebron on the Jerusalem road. He and his crew made all the repairs on the wall in front of the cemetery and to an artificial pool that stood in front of
the “hall of fame”—a museum that held the memorabilia of the famous warriors of David.

17 Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district.

Rehum, a Levite, and Hashabiah, a mayor from half-district of Keliah, repair this section the wall.

18 Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah.

Others from Keliah under the supervision of Bennai (ruler of the other half-district of Keliah) make the repairs for their assigned section of the wall.

19 Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle.

Next, we have Ezer, mayor of Mizpah, a town located about five miles from Jerusalem. He and his crew build the wall in front of the Armory. This was a building that had been built in David’s day to store their war equipment.

20 Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from
the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

The next section of the wall is repaired by Baruch, a very zealous man who repairs all the way to the entrance of the high priest’s residence.

21 Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib’s house to the end of it.

All along the front of the house of the high priest repairs were made by Meremoth and his crew.

22 The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region.

The following section of the wall was repaired by the priests.

23 Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house.

The following section of the wall was repaired by Benjamin and Hasshub in front of their house and Azariah repaired the wall beside his house.

24 Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah’s house to the angle and the corner,
Bennui and his crew repair the wall to the corner.

25 and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh

Palal takes on the project in front of the old residence of David where there was a guard tower located on top of the wall projecting from the palace. Next to him, Pedaiah and his crew are busy building the wall.

26 and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower.

Temple servants who lived on the hill in a dorm with easy access to the temple join in on this building project.

27 Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.

Men of Tekoa are repairing a section of the wall from the projecting tower to the wall of Ophel, which must be one of many retaining walls located inside Jerusalem and near to or intersecting the wall around Jerusalem.
28 Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.

The horse gate was where the livery stable was located. When the Calvary rode to town, they would keep their horses at the barns located outside this gate. Queen Athaliah was killed here at the horse barn.

II Ch. 23:15 “So they seized her as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.”

From this gate led a road to the Kidron Valley. The priests are making the repairs to this section of the wall.

29 Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs.

Zadok and Shemaiah are in charge of this section of the wall. The East gate is known today as the Golden Gate, and Shemaiah was one of its guards.

30 Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.
Hananiah, Hannun and Meshullam are making repairs to the designated point of “across from the residence of Meshullam.”

31 Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner;

Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, and his crew make repairs past the inspection gate to a room above the corner. The inspection gate (also called Miphkad) was a gate where the animals for sacrifice were checked for blemishes or lameness which would make them unacceptable for sacrifice.

32 and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repair.

This brings us back to the point of beginning.
Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”

3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!”

4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. 9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.
10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”

11 Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”

12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.

16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and
spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. 22 At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day.” 23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.
Opposition—opposition—opposition. What had kept the Jews from doing anything about the broken-down wall for nearly 100 years? One obstacle was local resistance: powerful politicians were determined to keep the Jews down. Perhaps another reason was the lack of a leader like Nehemiah. In his memoirs, which fill most of this book, Nehemiah shows remarkable qualities of leadership: impassioned speech, prayer, organization, resolve, trust in God, quick and determined response to problems, unselfishness. Perhaps his years in the Persian court had been preparing him. Organizing a difficult building project and handling fierce opposition seemed to come easily to him. But Nehemiah was more than a good business manager: he was a man of God. He did not act without prayer, and he did not pray without acting. His prayers punctuate the book. He recognized God’s role in all that happened and never forgot to give him credit. He was not looking for earthly status—if he had been, he never would have left Persia.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 4

Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,
Sanballet was as arrogant as a bull dog on a short chain guarding a fenced in junk yard.

2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”

Sanballet was as prissy as a pussy cat. He was a real fuss budget.

3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!”

Tobiah sees the building of the walls as futile as a rain dance in Death Valley.

4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.

The Jews were as despised as a hymn to Hitler.

Ps 123:3, 4; “Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant.”
Psalm 79:12 “Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at you, O Lord.”

5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

The insults were as inflamed as strep throat.

6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

It would appear from this verse that the walls were only half the original height. To reach the full height will require more scaffolding and more laborers and a crane built to hoist up the stones.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry.

Sanballat and Tobiah carry their insults one step further. They are now threatening to attack.

8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.

The God-haters were plotting and conspiring to do the Jews in.
Ps. 83:3 “With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.

9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

They prayed, and prepared and guarded the work day and night.

10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”

Discouragement—they were as discouraged as a tax payer who receives a letter from the IRS for an audit. Discouragement was spreading among the workers; laborers were complaining that they were tired, and there was so much rubbish in the way that workers couldn’t work.

11 Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.” 12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

War plans were being formulated by Sanballet and Tobiah. Meanwhile the workers have repeated ten times that they were no match against their enemies. They were on the verge of throwing in the towel.
Sanballet and Tobiah, with their network of discouragement, are bringing about despondency in the working ranks. The workers are as discouraged as a baseball player who can’t get to first base.

13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.

Nehemiah has a plan which calls for arming every worker and their families.

14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

Nehemiah saw the fear on the faces of the people. The enemy has rendered the Jews as feeble as a coward’s courage. Nehemiah tells them to not be afraid and to fight for their brothers. It was this kind of militia that won our independence.

15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.

The plans of Sanballet and Tobiah are boomeranging on them. They see that their strategy is not working.
16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah.

Half the people are working and half are on guard duty. Nevertheless, the progress on the wall continues.

17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other,

The laborers looked like a one-armed paper hanger—carrying stones and carrying a weapon in the other hand. If you don’t believe in self-defense, explain this verse.

18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

With a sword strapped to their sides and a trumpeter ready to call to arms the militia that had been organized, the work force was ready to fight.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall.

This called for planning in event of an attack.
20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

Nehemiah felt no difficulty in combining faith and prayer and action. “We prayed to our God and posted a guard”. Teddy Roosevelt said, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

Ex. 14:14 “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Gen. 15:1 “After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

Ex 20:20 “Moses said to the people, Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out.

Half were holding spears till the stars came out—the other half on the next shift.

22 At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day.”

They stayed at Jerusalem 24/7 and labored during the day and probably had
guard duty for four-hour shifts during the night.

23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

They worked, ate, and slept in their clothes and kept their weapons with them even when they went to get a drink.
Nehemiah Helps the Poor

1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers.

2 Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”

3 Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”

4 Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards.

5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”

6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry.

7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them.
8 and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

9 So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?

10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop!

11 Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them—the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil.”

12 “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. So may such a man be shaken out and emptied!”

At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

14 Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his
thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor.

15 But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.

16 Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.

17 Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations.

18 Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.

19 Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 5

Protest—protest—protest. This great protest by people, including women, was against fellow Jews because of high interest rates, foreclosures, lack of food to survive. They had sold everything, including their daughters. Nehemiah was as angry as a shopper arriving too late for the bargains. He called them on the carpet and put the fear of God in them. He made them promise to stop their price-gouging and give back the homes and farms. Details follow in the exposition.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 5

Nehemiah Helps the Poor

1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers.

The protest grew larger as entire families faced food shortages. Nehemiah faced the daunting tasks of dealing with the real issues of famine and interest while at the same time completing the building of the wall. Nehemiah knew the Scriptures, so there is little doubt that he read to the following to the people:

Lev. 25:35 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you
would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you.”

De. 15:7 “If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother.”

2 Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”

The litany of protest continues. The people said they had large families, that the grain had been harvested and stored in the storehouse, but they didn’t have any of it. “We must get grain” probably means, “let us get grain from the storehouse.”

3 Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”

The next complaint is that they are borrowing money and putting up their homes and vineyards as collateral just to get enough food to live.

4 Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards.

Others are complaining that they are borrowing money to pay their taxes on mortgaged homes. The leaders were as
un-sympathizing as a synthetic breakfast drink.

5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”

All the wealth was consecrated into the hands of a few rich and powerful leaders who were taking advantage of the situation. The poor people were selling their children in order to pay the debt and losing their property to these greedy, money-grabbing leaders. Nehemiah could have profited in this situation. Instead, he sets an example of self-sacrifice that made a profound impression upon the wealthy land grabbers, and he remedied the situation.

6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry.

Nehemiah was as angry as Moses was after the tenth plague in Egypt.

Ex.11:8 “All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.”
Nehemiah was as angry as a seething volcano.

7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them.

After thinking the situation over, Nehemiah decided to face the nobles and leaders head on. He lit into them like a lynch mob on the loose. Nehemiah takes on the power brokers by accusing them of violating the covenant. He laid the scripture on them and they withered like cut grass before the scorching rays of the sun.

Ex. 22:25 “If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest.”

Lev. 25:35-37 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit.”

8 and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who
were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

The tone of Nehemiah’s rebuke was stronger than a lawyer’s threatening letter. He was like a hothouse in a heat wave. These men were as guilty as a dozen dens of iniquity.

Heb. 4:12-13 “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

The word of God is stronger than a thousand arguments. These leaders were stunned—what could they say?

9 So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?

Nehemiah continued with his filibuster—chiding them for not walking in the fear of God and pointing out, in addition to this, that the nations around them would reproach them for their greed.
10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop!

Nehemiah (who was from a well-to-do family) tells them that he and his brothers were lending money without interest. He uses himself as an example—he was a class act. His actions were as exemplary as the courage of a Medal of Honor winner.

11 Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them—the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil.”

Nehemiah calls on the nobles and officials to compensate the interest they had charged, transfer the deeds to the farms, return their new wine, give back their oil, and relinquish all claims to the people’s houses.

12 “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”

Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

They were as guilty as a man with his hand in the collection basket. They all with one voice agreed to give-it-all-back. However, in order to keep someone from weaseling out of the commitment,
Nehemiah requires them to take an oath. He takes a sworn statement that they will carry out their agreement. They had been as hard-core as a drop-out with a drug habit.

13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. So may such a man be shaken out and emptied!”

At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

In a symbolic gesture, Nehemiah shakes out his garment and tells them that if they renege on the oath, God will shake them out and empty them. The meeting came to a close with praise-a-thon. As a post script to this meeting, “the people lived up to their bargain.”

14 Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor.

Nehemiah is appointed by Artaxerxes to be their governor, and he will serve for the next 12 years. Nehemiah remembers their greed and excesses and sets a sterling
example before the people by not taking any food allowance.

15 But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.

Nehemiah is a class act in the world history of great leaders. He brought a new-found hope to the people. He was a dynamo of great proportions.

16 Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.

He was not afraid of work. This man of God was as large as life and twice the size. He was like a kiss from a guardian angel.

17 Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations.

This man feeds 150 people each day—he was a man who could afford the expenses. Thousands of years have passed and we are still talking about the example of his unselfishness and generosity. God left this instance on record as a prototype for all ages.
18 Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.

He was not serving them bread and water—his was a table of meat and vegetables and wine. Officials came from surrounding nations and Nehemiah entertained the guests at his table. He could have taken a percentage of the food from the citizens, but he declined because they were having it hard enough as it was.

19 Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people

Remember me, O my God . . . This statement is found again in 13:14, 22, 31. No doubt Nehemiah has the championship belt—he holds the prize ticket to the lottery—he is a blue ribbon candidate—a super-bowl champion—a man who has won the applause of angels.
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates-

2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me;

3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”

4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

5 Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter

6 in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king
7 and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together.”

8 I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

9 They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

10 One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”

11 But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!”

12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me.
The Completion of the Wall

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

16 When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

17 Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them.

18 For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah.

19 Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.
More opposition—more opposition—more opposition. Nehemiah’s enemies are filled with opposition, schemes and secrecy. They were engaged in a letter writing campaign; next they try to intimidate Nehemiah by threatening assassination, but Nehemiah could see through these so-called prophets like looking through water in a gold fish bowl.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 6

Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—

This project was moving at a fast pace—all the breaches in the wall had been closed. Anchor bolts for door hinges; building of the doors and bars was ahead of schedule but they had not yet been installed.

2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me;
Sanballat and his gang are as wily as a fox in the henhouse. With a new scheme up their sleeve they are contriving an artful plan to do physical harm to Nehemiah.

3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”

Nehemiah was not about to fall for the hellish plan of these weasels and was not deceived by them—so he sends back a message that he is too busy to meet with them. Nehemiah was as wary as a wildcat.

4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

Four times—four failures by his enemies. Their messages were futile. Nehemiah was as prudent as spotting a row number in a shopping mall parking lot. He was as discreet as a diplomat.

5 Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter

Five times—and five failures—now Sanballat writes a letter on parchment and rolls it up but does not seal it: he wants this to be read by others so they can sow the seed of discord among the workers.
6 in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king

They plan on worrying Nehemiah by circulating a story that an insurrection is planned by the Jews against the Persian king, Artaxerxes. Nehemiah remains indifferent to their call for a meeting.

7 and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together.”

Sanballat is as crafty as a crow in the cornfield—he is playing the Devil’s advocate. He is threatening Nehemiah with a “wanted poster.”

8 I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

Nehemiah shoots back a brilliant reply—you made it all up. Nehemiah lets them know that they are acting like a berserk bedbug.

9 They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too
weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

Sanballat was using psychological warfare—the artful strategy of planting fear in the mind of Nehemiah. He is trying to frighten Nehemiah into the depths of despair.

10 One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”

Nehemiah’s pretended friend Shemaiah concocts a new plan—hiding in the temple. Nehemiah could smell a rat and knew that Shemaiah’s plan was as loco as a loon.

11 But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!”

Nehemiah was as brave as David when he met Goliath. He was as courageous as Daniel at the Lion’s den.

12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.
It didn’t take long for the “wisdom of Solomon” to germinate in the head of Nehemiah. He could see through their plan, and he knew that Shemaiah was getting paid to say these things.

13 He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

What a lying hypocrite—dirty politics at its worst, and bankrupt morals. Shemaiah had just bought a ticket to Hell.

14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me.

Remember Tobiah, Sanballet, Noadiah the prophetess, and the rest of the prophets. Nehemiah had to deal with these cut-throats throughout the entire building project. But they ended up like Watergate. This bunch of cornered rats will get what’s coming to them.

The Completion of the Wall

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

This event was as breathless as a sudden-death overtime win. For this wall
to be built in 52 days was like a hundred year old man winning a marathon race.

16 When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

The work progressed—the wall was built—everyone knew that this super-human effort was none other than an act of God.

17 Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them.

A letter writing campaign followed. These letters concealed the secrets of their campaign to halt the work of Nehemiah.

18 For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah.

Wow! Remember Shemaiah of verse 10 . . . He was the son-in-law of Tobiah. There was more to the story—peer pressure from the family. This was like a gas leak in a sealed room.

19 Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him
what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

The spy network is now discovered—the source of the leaks to Tobiah was coming from his in-laws. All the while Nehemiah was careful and discreet with his words as a statement from the state department.
1 After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed.

2 I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do.

3 I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses.”

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.

5 So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there:

6 These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town,
7 in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah):

The list of the men of Israel:

8 the descendants of Parosh 2,172
9 of Shephatiah 372
10 of Arah 652
11 of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,818
12 of Elam 1,254
13 of Zattu 845
14 of Zaccai 760
15 of Binnui 648
16 of Bebai 628
17 of Azgad 2,322
18 of Adonikam 667
19 of Bigvai 2,067
20 of Adin 655
21 of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
22 of Hashum 328
23 of Bezai 324
24 of Hariph 112
25 of Gibeon 95
26 the men of Bethlehem and Netophah 188
27 of Anathoth 128
28 of Beth Azmaveth 42
29 of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth 743
30 of Ramah and Geba 621
31 of Micmash 122
32 of Bethel and Ai 123
33 of the other Nebo 52
34 of the other Elam 1,254
35 of Harim 320
36 of Jericho 345
37 of Lod, Hadid and Ono 721
38 of Senaah 3,930
39 The priests:
   the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973
40 of Immer 1,052
41 of Pashhur 1,247
42 of Harim 1,017

43 The Levites:
the descendants of Jeshua (through Kadmiel through the line of Hodaviah) 74

44 The singers:
the descendants of Asaph 148

45 The gatekeepers:
the descendants of
Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 138

46 The temple servants:
the descendants of
Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

47 Keros, Sia, Padon,

48 Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmai,

49 Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,

50 Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,

51 Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,

52 Besai, Meunim, Nephussim,

53 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

54 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

55 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

56 Neziah and Hatipha
57 The descendants of the servants of Solomon:
   the descendants of
   Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,

58 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,

59 Shephatiah, Hattil,
   Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Amon

60 The temple servants and the descendants of the
   servants of Solomon

392

61 The following came up from the towns of Tel
   Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer,
   but they could not show that their families were
   descended from Israel:

62 the descendants of
   Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda

642

63 And from among the priests:
   the descendants of
   Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had
   married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and
   was called by that name).

64 These searched for their family records, but they
   could not find them and so were excluded from the
   priesthood as unclean.

65 The governor, therefore, ordered them not to eat
   any of the most sacred food until there should be a
   priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

66 The whole company numbered 42,360,
67 besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 245 men and women singers.

68 There were 736 horses, 245 mules,

69 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

70 Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 drachmas of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests.

71 Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 drachmas of gold and 2,200 minas of silver.

72 The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 drachmas of gold, 2,000 minas of silver and 67 garments for priests.

73 The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns. When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

Ezra Reads the Law

When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 7

Organization—a good plan—capable leaders. Unless you are an advanced student of Bible study, these lists of names may be uninteresting. However, they play an important role in history of Judaism. This chapter deals with guard detail, singers, the appointing of Levites and Nehemiah’s brother as captain of the citadel, Nehemiah’s orders regarding the opening and closing of the gates, and the fate of those who couldn’t find their family records. All this and more awaits you in the exposition.

EXPOSITION TO NEHEMIAH 7

1 After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed.

After completing the wall and gates, it’s time for organization. It was the responsibility of the governor to make these appointments. First and foremost were the gate keepers, or as we would call them, the security guards. Singers were appointed who would daily perform the singing of the psalms. The Levites assisted the priests primarily with the sacrifices.

2 I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because
he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do.

Nehemiah’s brother and Hananiah were two army officers who were in charge of the citadel or fortress. Their responsibilities were the security of the entire city.

3 I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses.”

All gates were closed and bolted. Bolting the doors meant that a large, squared piece of timber running horizontal with the door was dropped into a bracket on each door and could be removed only from the inside. The guards were to lock all doors by this means and not open them till the sun came up. The guards were citizens of Jerusalem and they were stationed at the gates in a small cubicle that we call the gate house, while others were stationed at various places in the residential area. The security was as tight as an international airport.

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.
Placing guards at different areas was a wise decision since the city was not fully occupied at this time.

\[5\] So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there:

The book of genealogies contained a record of the families living and deceased. From this register, Governor Nehemiah and the Nobles and officials will be able to further organize the responsibilities of the citizens. Ezra, the scribe, had written down the names of the exiles returning in the log book.

\[6\] These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town).

The following verses will tell us the names of the clan leaders and the number of people over which he had rule.

\[7\] in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah):
The list of the men of Israel:

These men assisted Zerubbabel in the first expedition back to Jerusalem.

8 the descendants of Parosh 2,172

Comments on v. 8-38

These men assisted Zerubbabel in the first expedition back to Jerusalem.

9 of Shephatiah 372

10 of Arah 652

11 of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua and Joab) 2,818

12 of Elam 1,254

13 of Zattu 845

14 of Zaccai 760

15 of Binnui 648

16 of Bebai 628

17 of Azgad 2,322

18 of Adonikam 667

19 of Bigvai 2,067

20 of Adin 655

21 of Ater (through Hezekiah) 98
22 of Hashum 328
23 of Bezai 324
24 of Hariph 112
25 of Gibeon 95
26 the men of Bethlehem and Netophah 188
27 of Anathoth 128
28 of Beth Azmaveth 42
29 of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth 743
30 of Ramah and Geba 621
31 of Micmash 122
32 of Bethel and Ai 123
33 of the other Nebo 52
34 of the other Elam 1,254
35 of Harim 320
36 of Jericho 345
37 of Lod, Hadid and Ono 721
38 of Senaah 3,930
39 The priests:
   the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) 973
Comments on v. 39-42

This is a list of the priests who returned with Zerubbabel.

40 of Immer 1,052

41 of Pashhur 1,247

42 of Harim 1,017

43 The Levites:
   the descendants of Jeshua (through Kadmiel through the line of Hodaviah) 74

43-45: These verses name the Levites, singers and gatekeepers who returned with Zerubbabel.

44 The singers:
   the descendants of Asaph 148

45 The gatekeepers:
   the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita and Shobai 138

46 The temple servants:
   the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

Comments on v. 46-60: These verses names the temple support staff and Solomon’s servants.

47 Keros, Sia, Padon,

48 Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmai,
49 Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,

50 Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,

51 Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,

52 Besai, Meunim, Nephussim,

53 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

54 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

55 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

56 Neziah and Hatipha

57 The descendants of the servants of Solomon:
   the descendants of
   Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,

58 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel,

59 Shephatiah, Hattil,
   Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Amon

60 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392

61 The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addison and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel:

Comments on v.61-62: These two verses contain 642 people whose names were not in the register.
62 the descendants of
   Delaiah, Tobi•ah and Nekoda 642

63 And from among the priests:
   the descendants of
   Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man
   who had married a daughter of Barzillai
   the Gileadite and was called by that
   name).

Comments on v.63-65

These three verses contain the names of
those who claimed to be priests but there
was no record of their registration. Note:
You may apply for a job or disability or
social security and you will be asked for a
birth certificate. If you don’t have one, you
have a real problem.

64 These searched for their family
records, but they could not find
them and so were excluded from the
priesthood as unclean.

65 The governor, therefore, ordered
them not to eat any of the most
sacred food until there should be a
priest ministering with the Urim and
Thummim.

66 The whole company numbered
42,360,

The total number that returned under
Zerubbabel was 42,360.
67 Besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 245 men and women singers.

The list contained 7,337 servants and 245 singers. These singers are in addition to the 148 who were of the Asaph clan mentioned in verse 45.

68 There were 736 horses, 245 mules,

Horses and mules—for a comment on this verse see Ezra 2:66.

69 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

Camels and donkeys—See comments in Ezra 2:67

70 Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 drachmas of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests.

Comments on v. 70-72

This new city needed to be financially solvent, so the governor makes a large donation, followed by the heads of families (clan leaders) who were generous; and from among the people a large contribution was collected.

71 Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 drachmas of gold and 2,200 minas of silver.
72 The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 drachmas of gold, 2,000 minas of silver and 67 garments for priests.

73 The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns. When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, [sentence continued in chapter 8:1]

The priests, Levites, security guards, singers, and temple support staff found a place to live in the cities formerly occupied by their ancestors before the dispersion.
When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

1 all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.

2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.

3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up.
6 Ezra praised the L ORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the L ORD with their faces to the ground.

7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there.

8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is sacred to the L ORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

10 Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the L ORD is your strength.”

11 The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve.”

12 Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

13 On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites,
gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law.

14 They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in booths during the feast of the seventh month.

15 and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: “Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths”—as it is written.

16 So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim.

17 The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.

18 Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 8

Reading—celebration—commitment. Ezra and Nehemiah worked in tandem like a four wheel drive truck with a positive lock rear-end—but, each had a different style. Nehemiah was an activist and Ezra was a student; Nehemiah was outspoken, Ezra was more withdrawn. Together they were an unbeatable team.

EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 8

1 all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.

Many of these people did not know how to read and there were few copies of the Scriptures available. The copy that Ezra had was written in Hebrew and needed to be translated into their language of Aramic. The people crowded into the town square and requested Ezra to read the book of the law to them.

2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.

Ezra stood in front of the water gate facing the town square and read from early
morning till noon. Everyone kept quiet while Ezra read—they were all ears.

3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra brings the Law of Moses out into the town square and, standing on a wooden podium, he read and translated and explained the law to a mixed assembly of men and women and all who could understand the law.

In 1963 Emmett McLoughlin, a former Catholic Priest, visited my home in Dayton, Ohio. He is the author of Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church, People’s Padre, American Culture and Catholic Schools, An inquiry into the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and other books. During our discussion of my book, Daniel and the Revelation, he said that he had never read the Bible. He was thoroughly trained in the Roman Breviary and catechism—he had a degree in theology—but the book that Ezra was reading from was not familiar to him.

It was so in Martin Luther’s time. He had never even seen a Bible until age twenty. His scriptural training as a Roman Catholic monk and priest did not center on the Bible, but primarily on what he heard in the Latin liturgy. Yet when Martin
found a copy of the Bible and read it, he was changed forever. When you read the Bible, you too will be changed forever. It is a life-giving, life-changing book through the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

Of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt wrote: “He built up his entire reading upon his early study of the Bible. He mastered only one or two other books. But mastered it so that he became a man of the book, who knew that book and instinctively put into practice what he had been taught therein.”

When I read the Gettysburg Address I knew that Lincoln was a reader of the Bible. He spoke of “that government [under God] of the people, by the people, for the people”—words first written by John Wycliffe in 1382. In Wycliffe’s introduction to his translation of the Bible, he wrote:

“This Bible is for the government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

Lincoln knew it to be true.

Today, it is illegal to read the Bible in public schools, but the law requires states to provide a copy in all prisons for every convict! Don’t worry, kids, if you can’t read the Bible in school, you’ll be able to when you get in prison.

John Greenleaf Whittier, at the age of 7, knew whole chapters of the Bible so well that his father, in his pride of his son,
invited visitors to begin chapters in the middle and let the boy finish them. In 285 of his poems you will find 816 direct or indirect references to the scriptural passages he loved so much.

John Quincy Adams said “The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible.”

Woodrow Wilson said “A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of knowledge of the Bible.”

In 1948 the Gideon Bible Society came to our high school and I was given a copy of the New Testament and was told that it would change my life forever. But, nothing happened till 4 years later when I had read it 21 times. The seed was planted and watered. This life-changing book spread through my being like spring water to a parched soul. My hunger and thirst was forever satisfied. The Spirit of God makes his word come alive. His words are Spirit and life, undiscerned by anyone who is untouched by Him. James tells us that if any desires wisdom that he is to ask and it shall be generously given him. James 1:5

After 55 years in the pulpit, it is my opinion that very few preachers have really read the book with any insight and understanding.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

My God, send us an Ezra who not only can read but explain the meaning of God’s Word to us.

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

As Ezra stood on the platform built for this occasion he was flanked with seven men on his left and six on his right.

5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up.

The book was a scroll rolled up on 2 spindles and stored in a wooden box. It required two competent men to carefully unroll the scroll as Ezra read from it. This scroll was made from papyrus which was a type of reed that grew in Egypt. The reed grew to a height of 10 to 15 feet tall, and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are on papyrus. The inner part of the plant was cut into strips 12 to 15 inches long. The strips were then laid on a board in one direction and then a second layer was placed over them in the opposite direction.
A damp cloth was placed over the strips and pounded with a wooden mallet for an hour or more. They were then placed under heavy weights to dry, thus bonding the two layers together. The resulting creamy white sheets were attached together with a paste made of flower and water. After writing on the single sheets, the sheets were pasted end to end and rolled up into a scroll and stored in an elongated box.

6 Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Praise and worship were the central part of their gatherings. They did homage to the God of the universe whom they esteemed worthy of veneration. Our churches are too well mannered and refined to spend a portion of our worship service praising God. Ezra lifted his hands and bowed low with his face to the ground. Paul wrote to Timothy about lifting up our hands. 1 Tim. 2:8 “lifting up holy hands . . .”

7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there.

It would appear that these men were scattered throughout the assembly and explained the meaning of the text.
8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

The book of the Law was in Hebrew and needed to be translated into Aramaic which the people had spoken while in Babylon. As the teachers elaborated, paraphrased, and explained the text, the people were enlightened as to the full meaning of the law. It was explained in simple terms so that the common person could understand it.

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites see that the people are weeping—God’s word had convicted them of their sins and the sins of their fathers. Under such conviction as this a revival is about to break out.

10 Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Nehemiah sees this as a time to celebrate. So, he urges them to go home—invite
people over for a meal—do not be grieved over hearing the law; rather, be joyful, for therein is your strength.

11 The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve.”

The Levites join in urging the people not to grieve and telling them that this day was a holy day.

12 Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

The assembly was dismissed and the people go home to celebrate and send portions of food to the poor to eat. The text informs us that when the people heard the law, read and explained, they understood it.

13 On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law.

The following day family heads, priests, and Levites all gathered to Ezra for a deeper understanding of the law.

14 They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in
booths during the feast of the seventh month

They had been reading Lev. 23:40-43 about how the children of Israel lived in booths during the 40 years of camping in the wilderness. They further discovered that God required them to re-enact this kind of living for one week during the seventh month of the year.

15 and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: “Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths”—as it is written.

All the clan leaders and Levites return to their homes and post on the town bulletin board instructions on bringing palm fronds, olive branches, myrtle branches and other leafy trees to build the booths that they were to live in during the week-long celebration. From willow trees which bend easily for the oval look, they would cut long poles about one to one and a half inches in diameter and bend them in an arch, continuing in both directions—crossing and intersecting each other at given points. This made the frame work with an opening for the entry. Now the palm fronds were woven in a thatched pattern beginning at the bottom and capping the top. This portable structure served the Israelites for 40 years during the wilderness wandering. As they
travelled across the waste land of the wilderness with Moses they would find an abundant supply of Palm fronds and could easily re-roof the structure. The American Indian lived in a similar type of dwelling (not to be confused with the tepee).

16 So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim.

The size of the booth was determined by the number of people in the family. This structure, which was light and portable, was placed on the flat roof section of their house or in their court yards or down by the water gate at the town plaza.

17 The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.

As they dig deep into the law, the people realize that they must keep this practice each year as specified. The Feast of Tabernacles was practiced by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple.

2 Ch.7:8-10 “So Solomon observed the festival at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath
to the Wadi of Egypt. On the eighth day they held an assembly, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days more. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel.” Ezra 3:4 “Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.”

What verse 17 apparently means is that ever since Joshua’s time, the celebration had not been experienced with such joy.

2 Ch.30:26 “There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.”

2 Ch.35:18 “The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem.”

It is apparent from the above text that these exiles are for the first time in their lives experiencing the joy of building booths and living in them, honoring the
word of God this was not a camping trip but a God-ordained and God-blessed time. It had made a deep impression on them.

18 Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

They had seven more days of reading the Law of Moses, and on the eighth day, they convened a solemn assembly. A solemn assembly was not a joyful, hand clapping, foot stomping assembly but a serious gathering where an awe-inspiring message would be given and everyone was reverent and devout.
The Israelites Confess Their Sins

1 On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads.

2 Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers.

3 They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God.

4 Standing on the stairs were the Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Kenani—who called with loud voices to the LORD their God.

5 And the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah—said: “Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

   “Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise.

6 You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.
7 “You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

8 You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

9 “You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea.

10 You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day.

11 You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters.

12 By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

13 “You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good.

14 You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses.
15 In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

16 “But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands.

17 They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,

18 even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, ‘This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ or when they committed awful blasphemies.

19 “Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.

20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.

21 For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

22 “You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took
over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan.

23 You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess.

24 Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you handed the Canaanites over to them, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased.

25 They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness.

26 “But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets, who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies.

27 So you handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

28 “But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to
you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

29 “You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stiff-necked they turned their backs on you, became stubbornly and refused to listen.

30 For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples.

31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

32 “Now therefore, O our God, the great, mighty and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes—the hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings and leaders, upon our priests and prophets, upon our fathers and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.

33 In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.

34 Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers did not follow your law; they did not pay attention to your commands or the warnings you gave them.

35 Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and
fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

36 “But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our forefathers so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces.

37 Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress.

The Agreement of the People

38 “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.”
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 9

Spiritual preparation—God’s deliverance. During this spiritual retreat, the people are wearing burlap and smudges of dirt on their faces. They stood and confessed their sins and read from the book three hours a day. Everyone engaged in a long, long praise marathon. Then they drew up a binding agreement, each person signed it, and the document was sealed.

EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 9

The Israelites Confess Their Sins

1 On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads.

On the 30th of October BC 444, the Israelites gather together dressed in burlap and dirt smeared on their faces. It was a time of total abstinence from food. To the Israelites it was a sign of a religious duty and a token of grief. While they were starving their physical bodies, they were showing by the burlap and dirt on their faces that they were dirty inside and were grieving over their sinful condition.

2 Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places
and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers.

No foreigner was allowed in this assembly—It was a time of deep inner searching of the soul a full inspection of one’s life and a total confession of their sins. This confession went beyond their own personal wrong doing, it looked at the source of their national plight. Each man, woman, and child was on their knees—praying—sobbing—with broken heart—personally seeking forgiveness and begging for the grace of God. It was a national day of repentance and prayer.

3 They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God.

They spent the first three hours listening to the law as it was read and explained. The next three hours was spent in a prayer session for forgiveness. Pray that God will send us a revival like this one.

4 Standing on the stairs were the Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Kenani—who called with loud voices to the LORD their God.

A number of Levites (assistants to the priest) stood on the stairs that led up to the platform on which Ezra stood and raised their voices so they could be heard
above the praying of the crowd. It was a vociferous calling out to everyone to seek the Lord with all their heart.

5 And the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah—said: “Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

“Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise.

Joined now by more Levites who were standing and shouting at the top of their voices for everyone to rise to their feet and hold their hands high in the air and praise God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. This long period of praise begins with praising the Name of God.

6 You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

With the entire multitude standing with uplifted hands, their voices in unison merge together in an harmonious praise. First they praise God—there is no other God. He made the highest heavens, the entire universe, the starry host, and earth and sea. He gave life to all things and the multitudes of heaven worship Him.
7 “You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

The chant of praise is directed to God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur (Turkey) and gave him a new name (Abraham).

8 You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

The extolling of God continues with Abraham being faithful and the covenant and promise of land God gave him.

9 “You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea.

The praise session continues to laud our God for hearing the cries of his people in Egypt.

10 You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day.
The people glorify God for his miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh and how God made a name for himself.

11 You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters.

They are applauding God for the dividing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army.

12 By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

The eulogy continues by praising God for his divine providence in caring for them on their forty-year camping journey to the promised land. There are two things that are necessary in the desert: protection from the awful heat in the day and protection from the extreme temperature change at night.

13 “You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good.

Now they glorify God because he didn’t just send the Law down but personally delivered it and wrote it himself on the stone tablets.
14 You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses.

The litany of praise continues because God had given them a day of rest.

15 In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

They hail his name because he fed them—they were on his welfare program for forty years.

16 “But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands.

The anthem of praise changes with the word, “but”. Our ancestors were bullheaded and arrogant.

17 They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,
The admiration through prayer continues insomuch as God was slow to anger, gracious and compassionate even when the Hebrews were about to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt.

18 even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, ‘This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ or when they committed awful blasphemies.

They continue to admire and praise God who did not abandon them when they made an idol of gold.

19 “Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.

This intercession of praise continues with the people thanking God for the pillar of fire at night and a cloud in the day. A pillar of fire in the sky at night kept them warm and a cloud in the day protected them from the rays of the sun.

20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.

They spent a lot of time at the camp and God not only provided food and water, but He also provided instruction by his Holy
Spirit and fed them with manna and water from a flinty rock.

21 For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

Their exultations in prayer were for the fact that even their clothes did not show any signs of wear and their feet were not swollen.

22 “You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan.

Their admiration of God continues by saying that he had given them two countries—Heshbon and Bashan.

23 You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess.

In this revival they praise God for the abundant offspring of children and the land given them that had formerly been promised to their fathers.

24 Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you handed the Canaanites over to them, along with their kings
and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased.

They continue to adore the God of heaven for handing over the land of the Canaanites and its peoples and kings to them.

25 They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness.

They continue to adore the God of heaven for handing over houses, water wells, gardens, orchards and they rejoiced in the goodness of God.

26 “But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets, who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies.

They continue to praise God and form an estimation of the mutiny of their ancestors who threw out the law, went from bad to worse, killed the prophets and committed blasphemies.

27 So you handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to
you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

They are still in a state of adoration even though God has thrown their ancestors out-cleaned their clock—swept their house—and given their ancestors a 70 year sentence.

28 “But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

In their glorification of praise to God they remember that God had let them out of their troubles and put them on probation; but now they have violated their probation and God has them back in his court room.

29 “You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen.

In this invocation of praise they acknowledge that God had issued a warning and an ultimatum. But this
stubborn, stiff-necked people would not listen.

30 For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples.

In this “caught up in the spirit” praise cession, they confess to God that their fathers were haughty, arrogant, stiff-necked, defiant people who flouted the law and that God had put up with it year after year.

31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

The antiphony of praise continues as they laud the God who was great in mercy and didn’t completely destroy them or walk out on them for good.

32 “Now therefore, O our God, the great, mighty and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes—the hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings and leaders, upon our priests and prophets, upon our fathers and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.

33 In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.
These heavenly minded people in this praise session beg the covenant-keeping God not to treat lightly the trouble and suffering that they had gone through. They acknowledge that it was entirely their fault and assume all responsibility. They tell God that he had acted honorably in all circumstances.

34 Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers did not follow your law; they did not pay attention to your commands or the warnings you gave them.

The chant continues—four classes are named, from the top rung of the ladder to the bottom—all had dismissed warnings and ignored commands.

35 Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

They continue to marvel at the goodness of God even though this pleasure-loving, worldly minded group of ancestors had taken the wrong turn in life.

36 “But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our forefathers so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces.

This praise-worthy group who are praising God now directs their request to God and
asks him for his help at the present time. Note: Moses won every case with God except one (not going into Canaan). Moses knew how to pray and always closed with a precedent. These people, under the leadership of Ezra, have now prayed and close with a precedent (a decision that had already been made): they are asking God to decide in their favor and on the aforementioned precedent. In legal cases an attorney will point out the court that similar cases were decided based upon a preceding decision.

37 Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress.

The session is about to close—a document will be prepared in which a binding pledge will be enforceable, and signatures of priests, Levites, and clan leaders will be affixed.

The Agreement of the People

38 “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.”

With all the signatures on the document, it will now be recorded for future reference.
1 Those who sealed it were:
   Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah.
   Zedekiah,

2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,

4 Hattush, Shebania, Malluch,

5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

8 Maaziah, Bilgai and Shemaiah. These were the priests.

9 The Levites:
   Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of
   Henadad, Kadmiel,

10 and their associates: Shebania, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebania,

13 Hodiah, Bani and Beninu.

14 The leaders of the people:
   Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,
15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,
18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,
19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,
22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,
25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
26 Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,
27 Malluch, Harim and Baanah.

28 “The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand—

29 all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord.
30 “We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.

31 “When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

32 “We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God:

33 for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moon festivals and appointed feasts; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

34 “We—the priests, the Levites and the people—have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

35 “We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the LORD each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

36 “As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.
37 “Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work.

38 A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury.

39 The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and oil to the storerooms where the articles for the sanctuary are kept and where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the singers stay.

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”
Ratifiers of the covenant—stipulations of the covenant. The document is now ratified and signed. This covenant was a binding oath to keep and carry out all the commandments of God. All of its regulations and stipulations will be discussed in detail in the exposition.

**EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 10**

1 Those who sealed it were:
   Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah.
   Zedekiah,
2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,
4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
8 Maaziah, Bilgai and Shemaiah.

These were the priests.

Comments on verses 1-8:
Eighty four names appear on the legal document endorsed and ratified by these men. It would not be uncommon for the governor to affix his name at the top of the list. Three other familiar names appear on the document viz. Daniel, Jeremiah, Obadiah. (All of these men were deceased—the ones with that name on this document were name-sakes.) From verses one through eight are the Priests that sign the document.

9 The Levites:
   Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,

10 and their associates: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

13 Hodiah, Bani and Beninu.

14 The leaders of the people:
   Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

Comments on verses 9-13

These are the Levites. All priests are Levites but not all Levites were priests. Both had to be descended from the tribe of Levi, while the priests had to come from specifically from Aaron’s lineage. The Levites were assistants to the priest.

15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,

22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

26 Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

27 Malluch, Harim and Baanah.

Comments on verses 14-27:

This group of leaders is what I refer to as “clan leaders”.

28 “The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand-
The rest of the people who sign the document are priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, and temple servants. It is evident that not all the priests and Levites are in the first list which was probably the most outstanding and responsible persons of the group. However, this group will affix their names and seal to the document. There are many reasons that we could speculate on as to why they were not in the first signing.

29 all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord.

The entire group is all put under oath and they bind themselves with a curse if they do not fully carry out their intentions. They have now committed themselves to obey all that the Law of God that Moses has commanded, including regulations and decrees.

30 “We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.

Nehemiah lists the main abuses on the document so that everyone will have a clear understanding of what they have sworn to. The first abuse was marrying the very people that God had forbidden them
to marry (Deut 7:1-4). They now swear that this will never happen again. They further swear that none of their daughters will be allowed to marry any foreign men.

31 “When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

Ex. 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

De. 5:12-15 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is
in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Jer. 17:19-27 “This is what the LORD said to me: “Go and stand at the gate of the people, through which the kings of Judah go in and out; stand also at all the other gates of Jerusalem. Say to them, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and all people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem who come through these gates. This is what the LORD says: Be careful not to carry a load on the Sabbath day or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem. Do not bring a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers. Yet they did not listen or pay attention; they were stiff-necked and would not listen or respond to discipline. But if you are careful to obey me, declares the LORD, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy by not doing any work on it, then kings who sit on David’s throne will come through the gates of this city with their officials. They and their officials will come riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by the men of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. People will come from the towns of Judah and the villages around Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin and the western
foothills, from the hill country and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings, incense and thank offerings to the house of the LORD. But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.”

Amos 8:5 “saying, When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,”

(Land Idle) Ex 23:10,11 “For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.”

Lev 25:4 “But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.”

(Cancel all debts) De. 15:-1-3 “At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be
done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the LORD’s time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your brother owes you.”

32 “We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God:

Ex 30:12-14 “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty shekels. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the LORD.”

The following extract from the book of Josephus will serve to illustrate how this money was collected and the purpose of use.

Josephus Ant. 3.8.2 “Now Moses commanded them to make use of all the utensils which were more than were necessary to the structure of the
tabernacle, for covering the tabernacle itself, the candlestick, and altar of incense, and the other vessels, that they might not be at all hurt when they journeyed, either by the rain, or by the rising of the dust. And when he had gathered the multitude together again, he ordained that they should offer half a shekel for every man, as an oblation to God; which shekel is a piece among the Hebrews, and is equal to four Athenian drachmae. Whereupon they readily obeyed what Moses had commanded; and the number of the offerers was six hundred and five thousand five hundred and fifty. Now this money that was brought by the men that were free, was given by such as were about twenty years old, but under fifty; and what was collected was spent in the uses of the tabernacle.”

33 for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moon festivals and appointed feasts; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

They took an oath that the showbread, consisting of 12 loaves, would be baked and set on the table in the new temple. They further assume the responsibility of the grain and burn offerings (2 lambs daily).
Ex. 29:38-42 “This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you;”

They will continue the offerings on the Sabbaths which was double of the daily offerings.

Num. 28:9 “On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil.”

They will observe the New Moon, which was on the first day of the Month.

Num. 10:10 “Also at your times of rejoicing—your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals—you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a
memorial for you before your God. I am the LORD your God.”

The appointed feasts are the 3 annual feasts described in Lev. 23. They pledge themselves to be responsible for all the duties of the house of God.

34 “We—the priests, the Levites and the people—have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

They further pledge to provide the wood and make sure that there was always an ample supply. The responsibilities were divided by lot.

35 “We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the LORD each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

Their responsibilities also included bringing the first fruit of their crops, orchards and vineyards.

36 “As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.

Ex. 13:2,13 “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month
of your year.” Verse 13 “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

God claimed every firstborn son in Israel. He later exchanged them for the entire tribe of Levi.

Num. 3:12 “I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine,”

After that the Lord required 5 shekels of silver for their redemption.

Num. 18:14-16 “Everything in Israel that is devoted to the LORD is yours. The first offspring of every womb, both man and animal, that is offered to the LORD is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.”

They were required to offer the firstborn of an ox, a sheep or goat, and these animals were sacrificed.
37 “Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work.

These offerings were placed in storerooms in the towns occupied by the priests and Levites and also in the Temple storerooms. This supply of food was available for the priests and Levites and was distributed to the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers. It was a type of God’s welfare system administrated by the priests, Levites and their staff.

38 A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury.

Accompanied by a priest of the tribe of Aaron, the tithes were collected and kept in the cities where the priests and Levites lived. Then, a tenth of the tithe was to be deposited at the temple and placed in the treasury there. This money was used to support the priests and Levites (according to God’s law) since they had no income from the land.
39 The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and oil to the storerooms where the articles for the sanctuary are kept and where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the singers stay.

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”

Storerooms were in the Temple complex, and in these rooms was an abundant supply of grain, new wine and oil, which were used for sacrifice. The excess was then distributed under the supervision of the Priests.

We will not neglect the house of God.
The New Residents of Jerusalem

1 Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns.

2 The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

3 These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem (now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon’s servants lived in the towns of Judah, each on his own property in the various towns,

4 while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem):

   From the descendants of Judah:
   Athaiah son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez;

   5 and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, a descendant of Shelah.

   6 The descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem totaled 468 able men.

   7 From the descendants of Benjamin:
Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son
of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah,
the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah,

8 and his followers, Gabbai and Sallai—928 men.

9 Joel son of Zicri was their chief officer, and Judah
son of Hassenuah was over the Second District of
the city.

10 From the priests:
   Jedaijah; the son of Joiarib; Jakin;

11 Seraiah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam,
   the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of
   Ahitub, supervisor in the house of God,

12 and their associates, who carried on work for the
temple—822 men; Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son
of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah,
the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah,

13 and his associates, who were heads of
families—242 men; Amasbsai son of Azarel, the
son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of
Immer,

14 and his associates, who were able men—128.
Their chief officer was Zabdiel son of Hagedolim.

15 From the Levites:
   Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam,
   the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

16 Shabbethai and Jozabad, two of the heads of the
Levites, who had charge of the outside work of the
house of God;
17 Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the director who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

18 The Levites in the holy city totaled 284.

19 The gatekeepers:
Akkub, Talmon and their associates, who kept watch at the gates—172 men.

20 The rest of the Israelites, with the priests and Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, each on his ancestral property.

21 The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

22 The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica. Uzzi was one of Asaph’s descendants, who were the singers responsible for the service of the house of God.

23 The singers were under the king’s orders, which regulated their daily activity.

24 Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, one of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was the king’s agent in all affairs relating to the people.

25 As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its surrounding settlements, in Dibon and its settlements, in Jekabzeel and its villages,

26 in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet,
27 in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and its settlements,

28 in Ziklag, in Meconah and its settlements,

29 in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth,

30 Zanoah, Adullam and their villages, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its settlements. So they were living all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

31 The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba lived in Micmash, Aija, Bethel and its settlements,

32 in Anathoth, Nob and Ananiah,

33 in Hazor, Ramah and Gittaim,

34 in Hadid, Zeboim and Neballat,

35 in Lod and Ono, and in the Valley of the Craftsmen.

36 Some of the divisions of the Levites of Judah settled in Benjamin.
InTRodUCTIon To neHemIaH 11

Re-settlement plan—A lottery was used to determine who would live in Jerusalem. In 1990 the U.S. census revealed that for the first time a majority of Americans lived in cities having more than a million in population. Worldwide, people are flocking to mega-cities. Not so in Nehemiah’s day. The Israelites had learned that big cities like Jerusalem made prime targets for invading armies. In order to repopulate the city, leaders had to resort to a lottery system.

EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 11

The New Residents of Jerusalem

1 Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns.

Ten percent of the people living in towns other than Jerusalem were required to move to Jerusalem. They cast lots to determine who was to move into the Holy City.

2 The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.
The volunteers were applauded for their willingness to move to the Holy City.

3 These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem (now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon’s servants lived in the towns of Judah, each on his own property in the various towns,)

The following verses will give us the names that were on the roster of those who moved to Jerusalem.

4 while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem):

   From the descendants of Judah:

5 and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, a descendant of Shelah.

6 The descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem totaled 468 able men.

7 From the descendants of Benjamin:

   Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah,

8 and his followers, Gabbai and Sallai—928 men.
9 Joel son of Zicri was their chief officer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was over the Second District of the city.

10 From the priests:

   Jedaijah; the son of Joiarib; Jakin;

11 Seraiah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, supervisor in the house of God,

12 and their associates, who carried on work for the temple—822 men; Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah,

13 and his associates, who were heads of families—242 men; Amashsai son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

14 and his associates, who were able men—128. Their chief officer was Zabdiel son of Haggedolim.

15 From the Levites:

   Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

16 Shabbethai and Jozabad, two of the heads of the Levites, who had charge of the outside work of the house of God;
17 Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the director who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

18 The Levites in the holy city totaled 284.

19 The gatekeepers:

    Akkub, Talmon and their associates, who kept watch at the gates—172 men.

Athaiyah son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez;

Comments on verses 4-19:

Judah and Benjamin possessed the territory that included Jerusalem prior to the dispersion. Now the population of Jerusalem will be more diverse. These verses gives us insight into the genealogy of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who had formerly controlled Jerusalem before the captivity, and their appointments at this time puts them back in control of the governing of Jerusalem.

20 The rest of the Israelites, with the priests and Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, each on his ancestral property.

As each family came back from captivity they inherited the property formerly owned
by their relatives. The following verses of Scripture will give us an understanding of property rights.

Gen 31:14 “Then Rachel and Leah replied, “Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father’s estate?”

Num. 18:21 “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.”

Num.27:7 “What Zelophehad’s daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father’s relatives and turn their father’s inheritance over to them.”

Num.34:2 “Command the Israelites and say to them: When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance will have these boundaries:”

Num.36:3 “Now suppose they marry men from other Israelite tribes; then their inheritance will be taken from our ancestral inheritance and added to that of the tribe they marry into. And so part of the inheritance allotted to us will be taken away.”

I Ki. 21:-1-4 “Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to
the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.” But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.”

21 The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

This verse tells us the location in Jerusalem where these people resided.

22 The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica. Uzzi was one of Asaph’s descendants, who were the singers responsible for the service of the house of God.

In the days of David, a group under the direction of Asaph was designated as the singers. I suppose they sang at all the services at the temple compound and probably sang at all town meetings. They could have been on tour at times throughout the country singing the Psalms
The singers were under the king’s orders, which regulated their daily activity.

This verse shows that the Levite choir was under the king’s orders, which stipulated their activities. I suppose that this refers to the time when King David had created the singing group and designated their responsibilities. Their daily schedule was probably posted on the bulletin board. If it refers to King Artaxerxes, he would have delegated the responsibility to Nehemiah because Artaxerxes was a thousand miles from Jerusalem.

Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, one of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was the king’s agent in all affairs relating to the people.

Any concerns that the people had were relayed to the king by the people’s representative.

As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its surrounding settlements, in Dibon and its settlements, in Jekabzeel and its villages,

in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet,

in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and its settlements,
28 in Ziklag, in Meconah and its settlements,

29 in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth,

30 Zanoah, Adullam and their villages, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its settlements. So they were living all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

31 The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba lived in Micmash, Aija, Bethel and its settlements,

32 in Anathoth, Nob and Ananiah,

33 in Hazor, Ramah and Gittaim,

34 in Hadid, Zeboim and Neballat,

35 in Lod and Ono, and in the Valley of the Craftsmen.

Comments on verses 25-35:

I have grouped these verses together as the subject matter is the same. These are villages and towns scattered throughout the territory where the new settlers are re-establishing their families.

36 Some of the divisions of the Levites of Judah settled in Benjamin.

The Levites did not receive any inheritance but were to live among the other tribes. In this verse, only Judah is mentioned.
Priests and Levites

1 These were the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua:

   Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

4 Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,

5 Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah,

6 Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah and Jedaiah.

   These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Jeshua.

8 The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who, together with his associates, was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving.

9 Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood opposite them in the services.

10 Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada,
11 Joia the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

12 In the days of Joiakim, these were the heads of the priestly families:
   of Seraiah’s family, Meraiah;
   of Jeremiah’s, Hananiah;

13 of Ezra’s, Meshullam;
   of Amariah’s, Jehohanan;

14 of Malluch’s, Jonathan;
   of Shecaniah’s, Joseph;

15 of Harim’s, Adna;
   of Meremoth’s, Helkai;

16 of Iddo’s, Zechariah;
   of Ginnethon’s, Meshullam;

17 of Abijah’s, Zicri;
   of Miniamin’s and of Moadiah’s, Piltai;

18 of Bilgah’s, Shammua;
   of Shemaiah’s, Jehonathan;

19 of Joiarib’s, Mattenai;
   of Jedaiia’s, Uzzi;

20 of Sallu’s, Kallai;
   of Amok’s, Eber;

21 of Hilkiah’s, Hashabiah;
   of Jedaiia’s, Nethanel.

22 The family heads of the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, as well as
those of the priests, were recorded in the reign of Darius the Persian.

23 The family heads among the descendants of Levi up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the book of the annals.

24 And the leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their associates, who stood opposite them to give praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.

25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the storerooms at the gates.

26 They served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem

27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.

28 The singers also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites,

29 from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem.
30 When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

31 I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.

32 Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them,

33 along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,

35 as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph,

36 and his associates—Shemaiah, Azrel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani—with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the scribe led the procession.

37 At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

38 The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people—past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall,

39 over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower
of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped.

40 The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials,

41 as well as the priests—Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets-

42 and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah.

43 And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

44 At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites.

45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.

46 For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.
47 So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 12

Register of priests and Levites and the dedication of the wall. Two large choirs marched on the wall around Jerusalem. One proceeded towards the Dung gate while the other went to the left. They marched the entire wall and finally took their place in the Temple of God. Under the direction of Jezrahiah, they made the rafters ring. It was a time of great jubilation.

EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 12

Priests and Levites

1 These were the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua:

   Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

4 Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,

5 Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah,

6 Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedahiah,

Comments on verses 1-6:
Zerubbabel had led a group back from Babylon in BC 538. The names of the leaders are given in these verses. Keep in mind that this chapter will name people all the way from Zerubbabel to Ezra to Nehemiah.

7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah and Jedaiah. These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Jeshua.

There were twenty four divisions of the priest, so a priest served during his rotation on duty.

8 The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who, together with his associates, was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving.

This group of Levites were in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. Now look at verse 27 where it mentions the Levites . . . and then these words—songs of thanksgiving. I suppose they wrote and rehearsed these songs for the dedication of the wall.

9 Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood opposite them in the services.

This is to be understood quite easily by reading verse 24. Mattaniah was in charge of songs of praise so his group stood opposite the other group, and they sang antiphonally.
10 Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, 11 Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

12 In the days of Joiakim, these were the heads of the priestly families:
   of Seraiah’s family, Meraiah;
   of Jeremiah’s, Hananiah;

13 of Ezra’s, Meshullam;
   of Amariah’s, Jehohanan;

14 of Malluch’s, Jonathan;
   of Shecaniah’s, Joseph;

15 of Harim’s, Adna;
   of Meremoth’s, Helkai;

16 of Iddo’s, Zechariah;
   of Ginnethon’s, Meshullam;

17 of Abijah’s, Zicri;
   of Miniamin’s and of Moadiah’s, Piltai;

18 of Bilgah’s, Shammua;
   of Shemaiah’s, Jehonathan;

19 of Joiarib’s, Mattenai;
   of Jedediah’s, Uzzi;

20 of Sallu’s, Kallai;
   of Amok’s, Eber;

21 of Hilkiah’s, Hashabiah;
   of Jedediah’s, Nethanel.
Comments on verses 10-21

A long list names the priests, and in verse 30 they will perform their duties, namely purifying the people and the gates and the wall.

22 The family heads of the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, as well as those of the priests, were recorded in the reign of Darius the Persian.

23 The family heads among the descendants of Levi up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the book of the annals.

24 And the leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their associates, who stood opposite them to give praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.

Comments on verses 22-24:

This group of Levites is among the singers who will take part in the dedication by antiphonal singing and praising the Lord.

25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the storerooms at the gates.
These men are named as security guards; while some guarded the gates, others were guarding the storerooms. The storerooms were located in the annex and contained gold, silver, and a supply of food.

26 They served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

These men and their descendants served under three administrations.

Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem

27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.

The wall had been completed and gates hung, and each group of workmen dedicated their section as it was finished. Now it’s time for a formal dedication of the entire wall with everyone present. So, the Levites were tracked down and brought to Jerusalem for this special dedication of the entire wall.

28 The singers also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites,
The singers’ assignment for the dedication consisted of songs and orchestra music. All of this would entail musical compositions, practice, and rehearsal.

29 from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem.

More singers are requested to be available for this super day of praise and wall dedication.

30 When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

Lev. 23:28 “Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God.”

They were to make sure that everything was ceremonially clean; no priest or Levite could be on duty who had touched a dead body or failed to take a bath, etc.

Ex. 19:10 “And the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes”

Lev. 11:43, 44 “Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them.
I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground.”

If they had eaten or touched an unclean animal or come looking like a beatnik, the priest would have called them unclean.

31 I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.

A delegation of leaders from the tribe of Judah with a large choir is on top of the wall. They will proceed toward the Dung Gate.

32 Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them,

33 along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,

Comments on verses 32-34:

Important officials of Judah were a part of the group on top of the wall.

35 as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son
of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph,

36 and his associates—Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani—with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the scribe led the procession.

Comments on verses 35-36:

Another group in the “top of the wall parade” is that of priests with trumpets. They are joined with Asaph’s son and his associates with musical instruments. Ezra is the Grand Marshall of the parade.

37 At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

The Fountain Gate, the steps of the city of David, the House of David, and the Water Gate are all points of interest along the parade route.

38 The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people—past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall,

39 over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the
Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped.

Comments on verses 38-39:

The second choir went the opposite direction on top of the wall while Nehemiah brought up the rear. They passed the following points of interest along the parade route: the Tower of the Ovens (Bakery), the Broad Wall, passing over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, the Sheep Gate, stopping at the Guard Gate.

40 The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials,

41 as well as the priests—Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets-

42 and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah.

Comments on verses 40-42:

The two choirs now give thanks and proceed to the Temple. With everyone in his place, the orchestra beginx and the singers, under the direction of Jezrahiah, make the rafters ring.
43 And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

Following the parade and the singing of the choir, they offered sacrifices—it was a day to be remembered, a day of joy. Women and children raised their happy voices—the jubilation could be heard echoing from hill to hill.

44 At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites.

Men are now appointed to administer the contributions, first fruits, tithes, produce, etc., that was brought to the storerooms. From these rooms people who needed help could get food. Everyone was pleased with the priest who was handling the job.

45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.
This verse has reference to the priests who are administering the food program as well as ministering the word of God.

46 For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Having a choir and director of music in addition to an orchestra could be traced back to David.

47 So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

From Zerubbabel to Nehemiah, Israel had set aside a portion of their income to provide for the singers and gatekeepers, Levites and priests.
Nehemiah’s Final Reforms

1 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God,

2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.)

3 When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

4 Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah,

5 and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, singers and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.

6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission

7 and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God.
8 I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah’s household goods out of the room.

9 I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.

10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.

11 So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.

12 All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and oil into the storerooms.

13 I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because these men were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their brothers.

14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.

15 In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day.
16 Men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.

17 I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day?

18 Didn’t your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.”

19 When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day.

20 Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem.

21 But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath.

22 Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this also, O my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.

23 Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab.
24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah.

25 I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves.

26 Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women.

27 Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”

28 One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.

30 So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task.

31 I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me with favor, O my God.
INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 13

After the people heard the law of Moses read, in obedience they excluded all foreigners from Israel. But when Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem from Persia, he discovered that the priest Eliashib had given a room in the temple to Tobiah. Nehemiah was as angry as a lynch mob on the loose. He threw all of Tobias’s clothing and furniture out in the street. Nehemiah also found out that the Levites hadn’t been given their allotments and had moved back to their farms. Nehemiah called all the leaders on the carpet and read to them a long laundry list of their transgressions. No more of this he declared! The exposition will illumine and critique the text.

EXPOSITION OF NEHEMIAH 13

Nehemiah’s Final Reforms

1 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God,

They were reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

Deut. 23:3-8. “No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down
to the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live. Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.”

2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.)

They were now reading from the book of Numbers.

Num.22:4-7 “The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field. So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to
me. 6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed. The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.”

3 When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

They had signed the contract and sworn to uphold the Law of Moses. So, now they are reading the Law in detail regarding the foreign people that were among them, and the time had come for them to take action.

4 Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah,

Eliashib, the High Priest, whose name occurs in chapter 12:10 and who had assisted in the rebuilding of the walls was now in charge of the assistance program that was stored in the temple annex building. He was a close friend to Tobiah, the Ammonite, who was an arch enemy of Israel.

5 and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the
grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, singers and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.

Eliashib had taken the storage room that was used for the safe keeping of grain offerings, incense, wine and oil and had turned it into an apartment for a Ammonite antagonist who was a known opponent of Israel.

6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission

This did not happen on Nehemiah’s watch. Nehemiah was in Persia consulting with Artaxerxes the king and requests permission to return to Jerusalem. When Nehemiah returns and finds out about the ties between the High Priest and Israel’s adversary living in the Temple annex, he is furious. This incident ruffled his feathers, and he is about to go into a rage.

7 and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God.

Nehemiah learns that Tobiah was living “in the courts of the house of God” and is incredulous that the High Priest could run
amuck and do this horrible thing—shades of Jezebel.

8 I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah’s household goods out of the room.

Nehemiah exploded. He is fuming and picks up Tobias’s stuff and throws it out into the street. This reminds me of the money changers in the temple that Jesus threw out.

Mt. 21:12, 13 “Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written, he said to them, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.”

9 I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.

Nehemiah called for the cleaning crew to scrub out the room and purify it. He orders that all the temple equipment and food allotments be placed back in the room.

10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites
and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.

Nehemiah learns more disturbing news. The prophet Malachi would have plenty of material for his sermons. (Read Malachi 2, 3.) The temple services had degenerated, the Levites and singers had left as their funds had become bankrupt, and ruin was written all over the place. Nehemiah will fly off the handle again.

11 So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.

Nehemiah calls a meeting with the officials and demands an explanation. He is still raving mad and takes full charge of the situation—he is determined to clean up the mess, so he summons the Levites and singers to return.

12 All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and oil into the storerooms.

Nehemiah completes more reforms, restoring jobs, respect, and responsibility. The tide is turning—proper administration of the Law is being redressed, and the tithe and storerooms are replenished.

13 I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because
these men were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their brothers.

Personnel changes—the new appointments for treasurers were as follows: one was a priest, one was a Levite, one was a scribe, and one was a layman—all four were noted for honesty. Eliashib is no longer in charge of the storerooms. He could still be the High Priest since that was a lifetime appointment, but the governor took his other responsibilities from him and gave them to four honest men.

14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.

This bold reform work was remembered by God, and centuries later we are still remembering it.

15 In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day.

The very people who had sworn to uphold the Law are now caught violating the Law. Nehemiah’s fuming is not over yet—he finds them violating the Sabbath day as
greed has once again controlled their behavior.

16 Men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.

Exporters were gathering at the gate and spreading out their wares, conducting business on the Sabbath day.

17 I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day?

Nehemiah calls another town meeting—this time he reprehends the nobles for allowing this Sabbath violation to take place under their noses. Nehemiah expresses his resentment for their toleration of these abuses of the Law of God. He upbraids them and accuses them of their wicked practice.

18 Didn’t your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.”

Nehemiah further indicts the nobles and holds them responsible for all that is happening. He cites the case of their ancestors violating the Sabbath, thus
bringing the captivity upon the entire nation—and he tells them that they are doing likewise.

19 When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day.

Nehemiah takes charge—he orders the gates closed and locked till the Sabbath day is over. The vendors will have to wait till the Sabbath is over to sell their goods.

20 Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem.

Once or twice the foreign traders camped near the doors, but this didn’t last long. They soon realized that “business as usual” was over since the Sabbath law was now being enforced.

21 But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah met with the traders and, in no uncertain terms, told them that they couldn’t hang around on the Sabbath day.
22 Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this also, O my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.

“Remember me... O my God”. This is a key phrase and runs throughout the book like a colorful thread in a tapestry.

23 Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab.

This same problem of intermarriage had been dealt with 25 years earlier by Ezra. Now it raises its ugly head one more time.

24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah.

These children had grown up and couldn’t even speak Hebrew. This multicultural mix of different languages, different dialects, different gods was leading down the same dangerous path that their fathers had pursued before the captivity.

25 I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said:
“You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves.

In Ezra 9:3, Ezra pulled out his hair—but in this verse Nehemiah pulls out the hair of some of the violators. Nehemiah has lost his temper and flew into a towering rage. Nehemiah is raging mad and slaps some of them around. Then he made the Israelite’s take an oath that they would not marry the foreign women or give any of their daughters to them for marriage. Ezra had dissolved the intermarriages, Nehemiah made them take an oath to prevent future unions.

26 Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women.

The wisest man who ever lived was Solomon, but he let his foreign wives lead him into idolatry.

1 ki. 3:1-13 “Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem. The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places,
because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the LORD. Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, Ask for whatever you want me to give you. Solomon answered, You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for
discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.”

2 Ch 1:12 “therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.”

1 Ki. 11:1-6 “King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD
completely, as David his father had done.”

27 Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”

Solomon married women outside of the country of Israel—the King James calls them outlandish—what a play on words . . . out of the land women. All of the foreign wives of Solomon were of royal birth; they led him into the worshiping of foreign gods.

28 One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.

We met Eliashib back in verse 4 and 7. Now we are told that his grandson is married to a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Shades of Jezebel—how could this happen? Lev. 21:14 tells us that a High Priest was not allowed to marry a foreigner. Nehemiah drives this grandson out so that he cannot become the next High Priest. God, give us a Nehemiah who can straighten things out! A similar thing happened a century later and is described in Josephus.

Josephus’s Ant. 11.7.2 Josephus 11.7.2 “Now when John had departed this life, his son Jaddua succeeded in the high priesthood. He had a brother,
whose name was Manasseh. Now there was one Sanballat, who was sent by Darius, the last king [of Persia], into Samaria. He was a Cutheam by birth; of which stock were the Samaritans also. This man knew that the city Jerusalem was a famous city, and that their kings had given a great deal of trouble to the Assyrians, and the people of Celesyria; so that he willingly gave his daughter, whose name was Nicaso, in marriage to Manasseh, as thinking this alliance by marriage would be a pledge and security that the nation of the Jews should continue their good-will to him.”

29 Remember them, O my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.

The grief of Nehemiah over this desecration of the priestly office prompted him to pray that God would not forget how these men had defiled the priesthood.

30 So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task.

In addition to all the other episodes that we have commented on, Nehemiah still has some unfinished business to attend to. He purifies the priests and Levites for their sacerdotal duties.
31 I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me with favor, O my God.

Nehemiah arranges for a regular supply of wood for the burnt offerings and for the collecting and distribution of the first fruits of the harvest.

Lastly, he asks God to remember him for all the good he has done.