

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Introduction

These two books, that originally were only one, tell about the history of the people after their return from the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus, the Persian king, has conquered Babylon and has granted permission to the Jews to return to their land and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. The priest Ezra and the governor Nehemiah guide the people during this time of reconstruction and in the reorganization of the country. They did that of course based on the Covenant, pillar of the new protection of Yahweh.

The books were probably written towards the year 400 B.C.

EZRA

The return from the desert

1 ¹In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, Yahweh willed to fulfill the word he had said through the prophet Jeremiah, so he moved the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue the following command and send it out in writing to be read aloud everywhere in his kingdom, ²“Thus speaks Cyrus, king of Persia: Yahweh, the God of heavens, who has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. ³To everyone belonging to his people, may his God be with him! Let them go up to Jerusalem with the help of their God and there build the House of Yahweh, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴In every place where the rest of the people of Yahweh live, let the people of those places help them for their journey with silver, gold and all kinds of goods and livestock. Let them also give them voluntary offerings for the House of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem.”

⁵Then they rose up—the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, the priests and the Levites, and all those whose spirit God had stirred up—and they decided to go and build the House of Yahweh. ⁶And all their neighbors gave them all kinds of help: gold, silver, livestock and precious objects in great quantity, besides every kind of voluntary offering.

⁷King Cyrus also brought out the vessels of the House of Yahweh which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. ⁸Cyrus, the king, gave them into the hands of Mithredath, the treasurer, who counted them and turned them over to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

⁹This is the list: golden cups for the offering, 30; silver cups for offering, 1000; knives, 29; ¹⁰other cups of gold, 30; of silver, 410; other vessels, 1000.

¹¹Total number of golden and silver vessels: 5400. All this was brought out by Sheshbazzar when the exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem from Babylon.