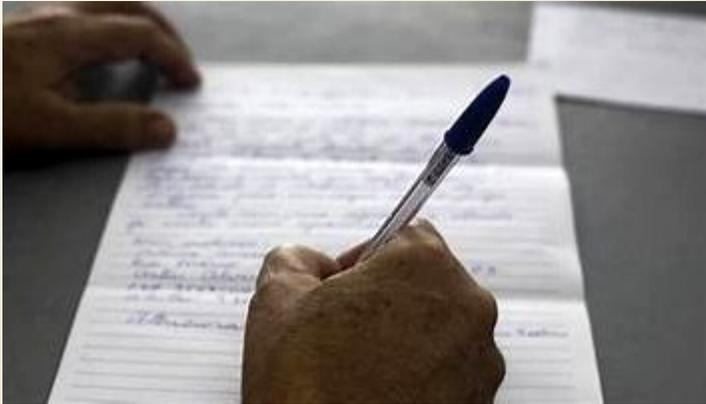


Watchman's Monthly Teaching Letter Number 8



**Clifton A.
Emahiser**

Watchman's Teaching Letter Number 8 (Including Patriarch Judah Part 8)

Clifton A. Emahiser

THIS IS THE EIGHTH IN A SERIES OF TEACHING LETTERS. If you have not received any of my previous teaching letters, please send \$2.00 for each back issue you would like to have. These teaching letters are not just the average run-of-the-mill type of letter. If you really want to learn the Scripture's deepest hidden truths, you will not want to miss any of these back issues. Because of the nature of these teaching letters, they will not go out of date, so you will want to keep them in a safe place where they won't get lost. Again, I want to thank all of you who are helping to keep this teaching ministry going financially. All of your donations and purchases are deeply appreciated! As I no longer have an income and now depend on Social Security, you can imagine how precious each donation is (however small it may be).

Now Continuing the Topic: JUST WHO IS THIS PATRIARCH JUDAH? (Part 8)

In the last issue, we traced Judah's third son, Shelah, through the Bible. We traced the descendants of Shelah as far as Nehemiah 11:5. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah concerns themselves (many consider it one book) with race-mixing on a grand scale and we can be sure that Shelah was right in there taking part in it and promoting the idea. Shelah didn't have anything to lose by this as he was a bastard from his beginning.

With this lesson, we are going to continue from where lesson number seven ended. We left off with a person by the name of Maaseiah, who was a descendant of Shelah who was counted among the ruling families in Jerusalem at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. This name Maaseiah may be important because there was a Maaseiah (a high priest) who took a strange wife and rather than get rid of her, he went to Mount Gerizim to

officialiate there among the Samaritians. Whether this is the same Maaseiah, I am not sure. But I am getting ahead of the story, so I will go back to the beginning and start over.

AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORY BEHIND EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

In his first year Cyrus, king of Persia, 538 B.C., issued a royal decree to the effect that the exiled Judeans were free to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of Yahweh (Ezra 1:1-4). It was a long and dusty trip which included 42,360 males besides slaves and professional singers carrying with them the temple treasures. They arrived at Jerusalem in time to celebrate the Feast of Booths in the seventh month, 537 B.C. The Persian appointed governor, Zerubbabel, of the house of David, soon organized the Temple rebuilding and ran into serious interference from local people, but it was completed 515 B.C. A second wave of exiles returned with the priest-scribe Ezra in the spring of 458 B.C., bringing additional items to decorate the temple at the authorization of King Artaxerxes (Longimanus), Ezra 7:27. These treasures were valued at about \$43,000,000 (Ezra 8:25-27).

Because of the walls not having been repaired since the time of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest, Nehemiah obtained permission from Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem to remedy the problem (Nehemiah 2:1-8). Nehemiah soon organized work groups and completed the rebuilding of the walls in 52 days. With the temple and walls rebuilt, there were not many people to occupy the city, so Nehemiah organized a plan to repopulate Jerusalem. It might appear that all is going well, but it is not! Before we go much further into this story, let's consider the time frame into which it fits. We are getting into a period of time that nobody wants to talk about today, and this is the so-called inter-testament period. We are talking about a period of about 500 years, and some people want to flush it down the toilet as if it never existed.

I contend that if you don't know what happened during these 500 years, you really can't understand the New Testament! This is equivalent to erasing all the history in our history books from Christopher Columbus until our present day, which amounts to a lot of history! There are a lot of

people who are spouting a lot of opinions about the New Testament, who haven't the slightest idea about this period of time! It's like building a house without a foundation! If one so much as even brings up the subject of this period, they will very quickly respond, "Oh! that is all uninspired." I contend this is one of the most important periods of time to understand in all of history. Five hundred years is a long time, it cannot simply be swept under the rug. Let's take an overview of Jerusalem during this time.

- (a) The end of Judah as a nation.
- (b) The 70 year exile in Babylon.
- (c) The return to Jerusalem under Persian rule.
- (d) Reconstruction and reform under Persian rule.
- (e) A second temple built by the Samaritans at Mount Gerizim.
- (f) Jerusalem under the rule of Alexander the Great.
- (g) Jerusalem under the rule of the Ptolemies.
- (h) Jerusalem under the rule of the Seleucids, and the fight of the Maccabees against Greek paganism.
- (i) The Maccabees fight the Seleucids for freedom.
- (j) The Hasmonean period.
- (k) Jerusalem under Rome.

I found a short history of this period in "Insight OnThe Scripture", volume 2, page 44-45:

Hellenic and Maccabean Control. The changeover from Medo-Persian to Greek control came in 332 B.C. when Alexander the Great marched

through Judea. The Greek historians make no mention of Alexander's entry into Jerusalem. Yet the city did come under Greek domination, and it is reasonable to assume that it was not completely bypassed by Alexander. Josephus, in the first century A.D., records the Judean tradition that, upon approaching Jerusalem, Alexander was met by a Judean high priest and was shown the divinely inspired prophecies recorded by Daniel foretelling the lightning conquest by Greece (Jewish Antiquities, XI, 326-338 [viii, 4, 5]; Dan. 8:5-7, 20, 21). Whatever the case, Jerusalem seems to have survived the change in control free of any damage.

Following Alexander's death, Jerusalem and Judea came under the control of the Ptolemies, who ruled out of Egypt. In 198 B.C. Antiochus the Great, ruling in Syria, after taking the fortified city of Sidon, captured Jerusalem and Judah became a dominion of the Seleucid Empire (Compare Dan. 11:16). Jerusalem lay under Seleucid rule for 30 years. Then, in the year 168 B.C., Syrian King Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), in his attempt to completely Hellenize the Judeans, dedicated Jerusalem's temple to Zeus (Jupiter) and profaned the altar by an unclean sacrifice (1 Maccabees 1:57, 62; 2 Maccabees 6:1, 2, 5). This led to the Maccabean (or Hasmonaean) revolt. After a three-year struggle, Judas Maccabaeus gained control of the city and temple and rededicated Yahweh's altar to true worship on the anniversary of its profanation, Chislev 25, 165 B.C. — 1 Maccabees 4:52-54; 2 Maccabees 10:5; compare John 10:22.

The war against the Seleucid rulers had not ended. The Judeans appealed to Rome for help and thus a new power came on the Jerusalem scene in about 160 B.C. (1 Maccabees 8:17, 18). Now Jerusalem began to come under the influence of the expanding Roman Empire. About 142 B.C., Simon Maccabaeus was able to make Jerusalem the capital of a religion ostensibly free from subservience to or taxation by non-Judean nations. Aristobulus 1, Jerusalem's high priest, even assumed the title of king in 104 B.C. He was not, however, of the Davidic line.

Jerusalem was no 'city of peace' during this period. Internal quarrels, fired and selfish ambitions and worsened by rival religious factions — Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and others — gravely weakened the city. A violent quarrel between Aristobulus II and his brother Hyrcanus resulted

in Rome's being called on to arbitrate the dispute. Under General Pompey, Roman forces besieged Jerusalem in 63 B.C. for three months in order to enter the city and settle the dispute. Twelve thousand Judeans reportedly died, many at the hands of fellow Judeans. It is in Josephus' account of Pompey's conquest that the archway across the Tyropoeon Valley is first mentioned. It served as a link between the eastern and western halves of the city and gave those on the western half direct access to the temple area.

The Idumean Antipater (II) was now installed as Roman governor of Judea, a Maccabean being left as high priest and local ethnarch in Jerusalem. Later, Antipater's son Herod (the Great) was appointed by Rome as "king" over Judea. He did not get control of Jerusalem until 37 or 36 B.C., from which date his rule effectively began.

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS JUDEA AND JERUSALEM HAD NO RIGHTFUL KING

This is interesting because Yahweh promised David that he would always have a descendant on the throne (Jeremiah 33:17). Did Yahweh lie? Let's read this scripture because there are some that teach that Yahweh broke His promise.

For thus saith Yahweh; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.

Maybe these people teaching this got it from the Polyglot Bible published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, of London. I am next going to quote from the book, "Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright", by J. H. Allen, pages 177-181 which will be quite lengthily:

Indeed, it was so well done (Jeremiah's prophecy), that the heretofore accepted authorities in theological, historic and ethnologic matters have taught that the sceptre, throne and kingdom of David were wiped out of existence, together with the house of David, excepting only another branch of the family of Josiah, who were carried away into the Babylonish captivity, of whom came Christ, the son of David, who according to the Scripture, must yet sit upon the throne of his father David. We will give

but one example of that class of sophistical reasoning which has led the mind of the Christian world into this gross error.

Take, for instance, the well-known and much-used Polyglot Bible, published by Samuel Bragster & Sons, of London. The compilers of this work (whoever they are we know not) give what is called 'A summary view of the principal events of the period from the close of the sacred canon of the Old Testament until the times of the New Testament.' According to the system of chronology which this work adopts, the overthrow of Zedekiah occurred in the year 589 B.C. This proposed summary begins after the return of the Judean people from the Babylonish captivity, but while they were yet under the dominion of the Kingdom of Persia; and when Artaxerxes Longimanus was the reigning king, who in his twentieth year commissioned Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, an event which happened according to the chronology used in 446 B.C.

Then follows a brief record of the death and succession of kings, the rise and fall of dynasties, and the overthrow of kingdoms, powers, dominions and empires. But it is always shown conclusively that these ruling powers, whatever might be their nationality, were dominating the Judean people.

The summary shows that Alexander the Great marched into Judea to punish the people for certain grievances which, in his mind, they had practiced against him as commander of the Grecian forces, and that God thwarted him in that purpose. It shows that when Alexander died the Grecian empire was divided among his four generals; that Palestine was given to Loamedon, one of those generals, and that it was soon taken away from him by Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, and they 'rejoiced to submit to this new master', and what the consequences were.

It shows that they suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes, especially after a false rumour had been spread concerning his death, which they believed and rejoiced in and that in consequence of this rejoicing 'he slew 40,000 persons, sold as many more for slaves, plundered the temple of gold and furniture to the amount of 80 talents of gold, entered the Holy of Holies, and sacrificed a sow upon the altar of burnt offerings, and caused the broth

of it to be sprinkled all over the temple.' No greater indignity than this could have been put upon that people. The summary contains a truthful record of suffering after suffering, trouble after trouble, and indignity after indignity, heaped upon the conquered people, who during all those centuries were reigned over by their enemies the non-Israel nations; but not once does the record show — no not for even one generation — that they were ruled by a prince of their own royal house.

Finally, the summary ends as follows: 'At length Antipater, a noble but crafty Idumæan, by favour of Julius Caesar, was made procurator of Judea, and Hyrcanus continued in the priesthood. After Antipater's death, his son, Herod the Great, by the assistance of Antony, the Roman triumvir, and through much barbarity and bloodshed assumed the regal dignity; which authority was at length confirmed by Augustus Caesar. He maintained his dignity with great ability, but with the utmost cruelty, in his own family as well as among others, till the birth of Christ. In the interval he built many cities, and to ingratiate himself with the Jews, almost rebuilt the temple.

His cruel attempt to murder the infant Savior is recorded by the evangelist; and soon afterward he died most miserably. After some years, during which the dominions of Herod were governed by his sons, Judea became a Roman province, and the sceptre departed from Judah for Shiloh was come (the italics are their own); and after having been under the government of Roman procurators for some years, the whole Jewish state was at length subverted by Titus, the son of Vespasian.'

The sophistry in the use of those italicised words as employed by the compilers of that summary, is that they destroy the evident meaning of that prophecy to which they refer, the substitution of various sceptres — held by various kings, of various non-Israel nations, that have consecutively held dominion over the Judean people — for one particular Sceptre, which Yahweh promised should be held, only by some member of Judah's family line, and which should not cease to be held by those of his posterity until Shiloh should come.

(1) A sceptre did not depart from over the Jews when Christ came. Forty years after Christ had come and gone finds them

still under the power of Rome. Shortly afterward they were dispersed and have since been scattered among all nations, where they remain unto this day, and are still being ruled over.

(2) If the first coming of Christ was his Shiloh-coming, then Shiloh failed; for the people did not gather unto him.

(3) Yahweh declares: 'Judah is my law giver.' According to this summary and other accepted evidence, Judah as Lawgiver departed from the Judeans 588 years before Shiloh came. Hence that unbridged chasm of nearly six hundred years stands like a gaping wound in the side of the Church of Jesus Christ, whenever she is compelled to show herself in naked honesty. The entire trend of this summary with its subtle reference to the prophecy in question seems to be that so long as the Judean nation was ruled over, no matter by whom, and held together as a province or state, this prophecy was vindicated; whereas such vindication conception, or use of those words, is only an attempt to hold together, by daubing with untempered mortar, an edifice which is tottering and tumbling.

The most charitable construction which can be put upon such accommodating mollifying, weak and abortive efforts to vindicate the truth of Yahweh, is that the persons are ignorant of just some such vital point as the fact that Jeremiah was called and commissioned of Yahweh to build and plant anew the plucked-up kingdom of David.

All who claim that Christ has come as Shiloh are compelled to resort to just such distortions of the Divine Word as the one under consideration, in order to fill up that gaping hiatus of 588 years, from the overthrow of Zedekiah until Christ. Furthermore, after they have plastered over that gap to their own (questionable) satisfaction, they are still confronted with the fact that the Lord God did not give unto Christ the throne of his father David, nor cause him to reign over the house of Jacob — no, not even spiritually!

We can safely sum up, then, that there was not a single king which was a descendant of David who ruled over Jerusalem or Judea for this space of

time. As a matter of fact, Jerusalem and its outlying areas were ruled over by foreign nations during this period. Furthermore, Yahshua was never made a king during His lifetime and has not been made a king as of this writing. Yes, He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but He was riding an ass, not a white horse. Yes, they crowned Him with thorns, but that was in mockery. Yes, He was born eventually to become king of all Israel, but that is still in the future. We can crown Him king in our heart — and that is good — but His final coronation is yet to come. Yes, Yahweh was true to His word, and He did keep the throne of David in perpetuity, but I will get into that in another lesson.

Now we will get back to our story of the happenings during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The best history of this, I have found is in the series of books, “History Of The Jews”, by Heinrich Greatz, volume 1, starting with page 355. I know that this is the history according to the Jewish viewpoint, but I believe you will have to agree with me, they did quite well on this era of history. I am going to quote excerpts from several pages. If it seems like I am changing the subject quite often, it is because I am skipping large portions of the text. I will be picking out the important parts and it will start to make sense after I have quoted some of the main portions. Again, this will be a lengthy quote.

Cyrus sent an escort of a thousand mounted soldiers to defend the Judæans from the attacks of predatory tribes upon the way, and also to ensure their being able to take possession of Judæa. —A great part of the country was inhabited by strangers; in the north were the Samaritans, or Cuthæans, in the south, the Idumæans. But these races were soon obliged to give place to the descendants of Judah, who with the tribe of Benjamin, returned to their ancient dwelling-places. —From many countries to the east, west, south, and north, from Egypt, Phœnicia, and even from the Greek coast and islands, whither they had gone of their own free will or had been sold as slaves, Judæan exiles streaming back to crowd like children around their resurrected mother, Jerusalem.

These new Judæan arrivals were accompanied by large numbers of strangers, both ‘great and small’, illustrious and obscure, who collected round them. They were received with rejoicing, for they all acknowledged

the God of Israel, and were ready to follow His laws. These new proselytes not only added strength to the young community, but also inspired the settlers with greater self-reliance, who, with their own eyes, saw the words of the prophets fulfilled.

At the approach of the seventh month, in which, according to law and custom, various festivals occur, the elders of the families among all classes in Jerusalem assembled, and marching under the command of their two leaders, the governor Zerubbabel and the high-priest Joshua, they proceeded to perform the first act of reconstruction — they erected an altar of stone. ...and, as in the days of King Solomon, cedar trees were procured from Lebanon; stone was brought from the mountains. —Close to the boundaries of Judæa lived the mixed tribe of Samaritans or Cuthæans. These people had in part accepted the doctrines taught them by an Israelitish priest at Bethel, but they had also retained many of their own idolatrous practices.

Quite unexpectedly, some of the Samaritan chiefs came to Jerusalem, with the request that they might be allowed to help in re-building the Temple, and also that they be received into the Judæan community. This seemed so important a matter to the Judæans, that a council was convoked to discuss the subject. The decision was against the Samaritans. Zerubbabel informed the Samaritan chiefs that their people neither would nor could be permitted to join in the re-building of the Temple. ... From that day the Samaritans began to develop a hostile spirit against the Judæans, which seemed to show that they had been less anxious to take part in the temple-service than to injure the community and to obstruct the re-building of the Temple. On the one hand, they tried to make those Judæans with whom they came in contact lukewarm toward the project of building the Temple, and, on the other, they persuaded Persian officials to interfere with its execution, so that the work ceased for fully fifteen years.

As I said before, this is from a Jewish standpoint, and you can be sure the Samaritans indeed wanted to be part of the Judean community and help rebuild the Temple. Don't let anyone ever tell you they didn't want to be part of the rebuilding as they had been practicing the Hebrew religion for almost 200 years by this time. If Stephen E. Jones or James Bruggeman

would have been there with their universalistic ideas, they would have welcomed the Samaritans to come right in and mix with the crowd. Now let's get back to quoting excerpts from this book:

It required the fiery enthusiasm of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to set the work in motion. ... At last they roused the people to recommence their work. In four years (519-516 B.C.) the building was finished, and the Sanctuary was consecrated, amid great rejoicing, just before the Feast of Passover. ... The people had two leaders: Zerubbabel, of the royal house of David, and Joshua, the high-priest, of Aaronide descent. —A circumstance in Zerubbabel's favour was the people's allegiance to the royal house of David.— The prophet Haggai had called him the chosen favourite of God, His precious Signet-ring. But this in itself was an obstacle.

It gave the enemies of the Judæans the opportunity to charge the community with the purpose of proclaiming him as the successor of David to the throne. On the other hand, the prophet Zechariah had proclaimed that the high-priest Joshua should wear the crown, ascend the throne, and effect the realisation of Messianic hopes. — Peace could only be restored by the withdrawal of one of the two leaders: their joint rule could not fail to be the occasion of excitement and irritation. A choice had to be made between the two, and Zerubbabel was obliged to give way, the high-priest being more necessary than the king's son. It is probable that Zerubbabel left Jerusalem and returned to Babylon, and thus the house of David retreated into the background.

After Zerubbabel's withdrawal, the leadership of the community was put into the hands of the high-priest Joshua, and after his death into those of his son Jehoiakim. — The supreme command over the people does not seem to have been given to the high-priest, but to have been vested in a governor or administrator (Peckah), appointed over Judea either by the Persian kings or by the satraps of Syria and Phœnicia. This official does not appear to have lived in Jerusalem, but to have visited the city from time to time, where, seated on a throne, he heard and decided disputes.— For, as some Judæans nourished the hope, held out by the prophets, that Judah might yet become a mighty power, to whom kings and nations

would bow, the suspicion that the people were plotting a defection from Persia was not removed with the retirement of Zerubbabel. ... The enemies of the Judæans, particularly the Samaritans, did not fail to draw the governors attention to the disloyalty of the Judæans, and thus caused unfavourable decrees to be issued against them at court. ...

In order to free themselves, on the one side at least, from these constant troubles, the most distinguished Judæan families took a step that led in the end to mischievous complications. They approached the neighbouring peoples, or received the advances of the latter, in a friendly spirit, and as a proof of the sincerity of their feelings, they began to form connections by marriage. As in the days when the Israelites first occupied the land of Canaan, in the time of the Judges, the necessity for friendly intercourse with neighbouring tribes led to mixed marriages, so during the second occupation of Palestine by the Israelites, similar relations led to similar results.

But the circumstances differed, inasmuch as the Canaanites, Hittites, and other original dwellers in the land practiced abominable idolatry, and infected the Israelites with their various customs, while the new neighbours of the Judæan commonwealth, particularly the Samaritans, had given up idolatry, and were longing earnestly and sincerely to take part in the divine service at Jerusalem.

They were, in fact, proselytes to the religion of Judæa; and were they always to be sternly repulsed? The principal families determined to admit the foreigners into the community, and the high-priest, of that time, either Jehoiakim or his son Eliashib, was ready to carry these wishes into effect. Marriages were therefore contracted with the Samaritans and other neighbouring people, and even some members of the family of the high-priest formed such connections.

The leader of the Samaritans at that time was Sanballat, a man of undaunted strength of will and energy of action, clever, cunning, audacious and persevering. He was an honest proselyte who believed in the God of Israel, and desired to worship in His Temple; but he determined, as it were, to take by storm the kingdom of Heaven. If he were not allowed a part in it voluntarily, he would seize it by force or by cunning.

But not only the Samaritans, also the Moabites and Ammonites were among the people anxious to maintain friendly relations with the Judæans. Tobiah, the leader of the Ammonites, was doubly allied to the Judean families. He had married a daughter of a noble family of Arach, and a distinguished man, Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, had given his daughter in marriage to Tobiah's son. But mixed marriages with Ammonites and Moabites were specifically prohibited by the Law, until the tenth generation after conversion. (No, the original text says to the tenth generation or forever!)

The leaders of the Judæan community, the high-priest and others, who were not quite prepared to violate the law, doubtless eased their consciences by some mild interpretation of the text. ... A small number of the noblest families had kept themselves pure from mixed marriages, which they deplored as an infraction of the law and as a cause of deterioration of the Judæan race. More especially the singers, who were the cultivators and preservers of the Hebrew language and of its ancient, venerated literature, kept themselves clear of mixed marriages, ... but, as they were in the minority, their voices were not heeded. But when a leading authority appeared in Jerusalem from the land of exile, the minority cried out loudly against what had taken place, and a complete reaction followed, from which disagreeable complications necessarily ensued. ...

In general the people who live during an important historical crisis are not aware of the changes occurring in themselves, in their opinions, their customs, and even in their language. Such a change imperceptible at first, but complete and effectual, took place in the Judæans during the first half of the fifth century.

The transformation did not proceed from the community of Judæa, but from those who remained in the land of exile; it soon, however, penetrated to the mother-country, and impressed its stamp upon her. ... They kept themselves apart from all their neighbours, married only members of their own nation and were guided by the inherited Law as their rule of life. Their absence from the mother-country served but to make them obey the more strictly the behests of the Law, which thus formed a bond of union that bound them together as members of one community. —

(Then speaking of Ezra), for he was a descendant of [the] high-priest. It was his ancestor Hilkiah who had found the book of Deuteronomy in the Temple, and by giving it to King Josiah, brought about great changes. He was also the great-grandson of that high-priest, Seraiah, who was slain by command of Nebuchadnezzar, and whose sons carried the Book of the Law to Babylon. Ezra had, therefore, the opportunity of occupying himself with the study of this book. But he gave it more attention than either his ancestors or his relatives had done. — He began by applying it to himself, carefully obeying the laws regarding dress, diet, and particularly those bearing upon the festivals. .

As soon as he had determined upon the journey, he invited those members of his faith who might be willing to join him. The number that responded was a considerable one, including over 1,600 men, together with women and children, of distinguished families who had remained in the land of captivity. Amongst them was a great-grandson of Zerubbabel, a descendant of the house of David. Those who could not take part in the emigration gave Ezra rich gifts of gold, silver, and precious vessels for the Temple.

It is an astonishing circumstance that King Artaxerxes (Longimanus) also sent presents for the sanctuary in Jerusalem, and that many Persian nobles followed his example. — Not only did Artaxerxes grant Ezra permission to journey with his brethren to Jerusalem, but he also gave him letters to the satraps of the countries through which he passed, and to the authorities of Palestine. — The arrival of Ezra with his numerous companions must have caused much surprise in Jerusalem (459-458 B.C.). They came provided with letters from the king, laden with gifts, and imbued with enthusiastic feelings.

No sooner had he assumed the ecclesiastical function, than the men of strong convictions who condemned intermarriages with surrounding peoples brought their complaints before him. Ezra was dismayed when he heard of these occurrences. The representatives of the people and of the Temple had, in contempt of the Law, connected themselves with the heathen. Ezra held this to be a terrible sin. For the Judæan or Israelitish race was in his eyes a holy one, and suffered desecration by mingling with

the foreign tribes, even though they had abjured idolatry. According to Ezra's reading of the Law, heathens who had accepted the Law might enter into the community; they were, however, not to be put upon the footing of equality with Israelites by birth, but were to live as a group apart. The Gibeonites, in former days the slaves of the Temple, who had accepted the Israelitish doctrines more than a thousand years before, were still kept distinct, and were not permitted to intermarry with the Israelites; and in Ezra's opinion, the new proselytes from the heathen nations were to be treated in a similar manner. The connection with them ought not to be of an intimate character. ...

The fear seized upon his whole soul; he rent his clothes, plucked the hair from his head and beard, and refusing all nourishment, sat until the afternoon, sorrowing and desolate because of this danger which threatened the life of the nation. —One of those present, Shechaniah, touched by sympathy, uttered a weighty suggestion: 'Let us make a covenant to put away all the strange wives, and such as are born of them.' Ezra seized upon the idea at once; he rose and demanded that the heads of the families, who were present on that occasion, swear before the Sanctuary, and by their God, that they would repudiate their foreign wives and their children. That moment was to decide the fate of the Judæan people. Ezra, and those who thought as he did, raised a wall of separation between the Judæans and the rest of the world. ...

Such members of the community as, in a moment of enthusiasm, had taken this vow, were now obliged to keep it. With bleeding hearts they separated themselves from their wives, the daughters of neighbouring tribes, and repudiated their own children. The sons and relations of the high-priest were forced to set an example to the rest. Those of the elders of the people who were the most ardent disciples of the Law formed a kind of senate.

They issued a proclamation throughout Judah, commanding all who had been guilty of contracting mixed marriages, to appear within three days in Jerusalem, on pain of excommunication. A special court of enquiry was instituted for this one question. Ezra himself selected the members who were to make the needful researches to discover whether the Judæans had really repudiated their wives. So thoroughly was the work of this court of

enquiry carried on, that all those who were living in the towns of Judæa separated themselves from their wives and children, as the inhabitants of Jerusalem had done. Still there were some, who influenced by family feelings, made some show of resistance.

The severity with which this separation from all neighbouring tribes, Samaritans and others, had been effected led naturally to grave results. The raising of the wall of separation by Ezra and his party against those who were truly anxious to belong to the community caused much bitterness. They were to be separated for ever from the Deity they had chosen, and excluded from the Sanctuary in Jerusalem to which they had belonged. The decree of separation sent to them changed their friendly relations toward the Judæans to enmity. Hatred which arises from despised affection is always most bitter.

The grief of the wives deserted by their husbands, and the sight of the children disowned by their fathers could not fail to awaken and to increase the animosity of those who were closely related to them. Unfortunately for the Judæans, Sanballat and Tobiah, two forceful and able men, were at the head of the party excluded from the community. Tobiah, the Ammonite, was related to several Judæan families. They had both accepted the Judæan teaching, and now they were both repulsed. Henceforth they assumed a hostile position towards Judæa; they were determined, by force and by intrigues to maintain their right of worshipping in the Temple and sharing in the faith of Israel.

At first they probably took steps to restore their peaceful intercourse with the Judæans, and urged them to revoke their cruel decision. In Jerusalem, as well as in the provinces, there was a party which strongly disapproved of Ezra's stern action. The well-informed among these differed with Ezra on the illegality of marriages with women who had, at all events outwardly, accepted the Law.

Was Ezra's severity justifiable? Did not the historical records contain many instances of Israelites having married foreign wives? (This last question is a Jewish question. They then bring up the question about Ruth! Same thing as many are doing today! But Ruth was an Israelite!) Let's continue:

But none of these representations (arguments) were of avail. Ezra and the reigning senate in Jerusalem insisted sternly upon the exclusion from the community of all people who could not claim Judaic descent, and who were therefore, not of 'the holy seed.' —

Ezra was, unfortunately, not a man of action; he could only pray and arouse the feelings of others, but he could not prevent many Judæan families from secretly abetting his opponents. On the other hand, Sanballet and his followers were men of decided character, full of virulent hatred towards their adversaries, and they took every opportunity of harassing their enemies. At last they even attacked Jerusalem. —But no matter what it was that induced Sanballet and his followers to take warlike steps against Jerusalem, they were entirely successful.—

The result was that Sanballet and his followers made breaches in the walls of the city, burned the wooden gates, and destroyed many of the buildings, so that Jerusalem again resembled a heap of ruins. They, however, spared the Temple, for it was sacred in their eyes also; but it was nevertheless abandoned, and most of the inhabitants, having lost the protection of the city walls, left Jerusalem, and established themselves in other places, wherever they could find shelter. The Aaronides and Levites deprived of their income from gifts and tithes, left the Temple and sought other means of subsistence. ... Many noble families made peace with their neighbours, took back their repudiated wives, and contracted new connections with the stranger. (When you understand this last statement, you are beginning to understand what the Jews are made out of!!!!)

We are led to believe by our Bibles today that all of the people who had contracted foreign spouses during Ezra's and Nehemiah's time divorced them and repudiated the children they had by them, but this seems to be only part of the story, for they took back these divorced spouses and repudiated half-breed children and contracted more foreign mates. All we have to do is look around us today at multi-culturism, and it isn't hard to imagine what was going on during this period in history. To understand better the mixture that was developing during this period, which we call Jews today, it might be well to further study the words Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, Sepharvaim, Jebusites, Gergashites, Canaanites, Amorites,

Rephaims, Perrizzites, Hittites, Hivites Kadmonites, Kenizzites, Moabites, Ammonites, Egyptians, Zidonians (Sidonians (Canaanite merchants)), and the Kenites who were and are the descendants of Cain. All these peoples represent a composite from which the Jews originated. Check out the following passages: 2 Kings 17:24; Deuteronomy 7:1; Acts 7:45; Joshua 12:7,8; 24:11,12; Nehemiah 9:8, 24; 13:1; Ezra 13:1; Psalm 78:55; Genesis 15:19-21; Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5: 23:23; Judges 3:5,6; 1 Kings 11:1; 2 Chronicles 8:7-10; Genesis 12:6.

I had hoped to get into the subject of the second temple which was built at Mount Gerizim and some more activities that were going on during this time period, but it will have to wait until the next teaching letter.

Clifton A. Emahiser

1012 N. Vine Street, Fostoria, Ohio 44830; Ph. (419)435-2836

Fax (419)-435-757 1; E-mail caemahiser@sbcglobal.net

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