

I OFTEN WONDER, AS I LISTEN TO, OR TAKE PART IN, THE CEMEMONY OF EXALTATION TO THE 'ROYAL ARCH' HOW THE STORY TOLD IN IT CAME TO BE PUT TOGETHER: AND HOW, OTHER THAN THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE RITUAL, HOW MANY OF OUR COMPANIONS COULD TELL US MUCH ABOUT THE LEADING FIGURES IN THE STORY AND WHY THEY WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER IN THE WAY THEY ARE IN THE COMPLETION OF THE MASTER MASON'S DEGREE. CERTAINLY THE BRINGING TOGETHER OF Z.H.J.E. AND N. IS NOT ACCURATE HISTORICALLY. INDEED, THROUGH ALL WERE CONCERNED IN THE RE-BUILDING OF JERUSALEM AFTER THE CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON, THE TEMPLE WAS ALREADY RE-BUILT WHEN WE RETURNED TO JERUSALEM.

Z.H.J.E. AND N. WERE NOT MERELY CHARACTORS IN A STORY. THEY WERE REAL PEOPLE AND IF WE WISH, WE CAN READ ABOUT THEM IN THE "OLD TESTAMENT" THE BOOK OF KINGS, CHRONICLES, HAGGAI AND EZIA IN THE 'APOERYPHA, AND THE HISTORY OF THE JEVS WRITTEN BY JOSEPH AS IN MANY OTHER ACCOUNTS. AMONGST THEM THEY COVER THE BEST PART OF 100 YEARS AND IT IS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT, THOUGH WE BRING THEM ALL TOGETHER IN OUR STORY, ZERUBABOL, JOSHUA AND HAGGAI EVER MET EZRA AND NEHEMIAH. WHY THEN WERE THEY BROUGHT TOGETHER IN OUR RITUAL?? A LOOK AT THE PART EACH PLAYED IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEVS MIGHT GIVE US SOME IADEA.

IN 587 B.C. NEBUCADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON AFTER A SIEGE LASTING FOR TWO YEARS WHICH CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF HARDSHIP OVERCAME JERUSALEM. THE JEVS WERE QUITE LITERABLY 'STARVED OUT'. THEN WE ARE TOLD "THE CITY WAS BROKEN UP, AND ALL THE MEN OF WAR FLED BY NIGHT." MANY OF THEM AMONGST WHOM WAS THE KING. ZEAEKIAH, WERE CAUGHT. WE ARE TOLD THAT HE WAS BOUND WITH FETTERS OF BRASS. HIS SONS WERE KILLED BEFORE HIM. HE WAS BLINDED, AND CARRIED AWAY WITH MANY OF HIS PEOPLE, AS PRISONERS TO BABYLON. THE SACKING OF JERUSALEM WAS COMPLETED BY NEBUZARA AN, THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD, AND THE ONE CALLED IN OUR RITUAL 'THE BABYLONISH GENERAL' WHO BURNT DOWN THE TEMPLE, AND BROKE DOWN THE CITY WALLS, SO LEAVING IT COMPLETELY DEFENCELESS, AND DESTROYING IT'S INSPIRATION. HE TOOK BACK TO BABYLON AS MUCH TREASURE AS HE COULD

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FIND, AND MANY OF THE ⁶ PEOPLE, AS CAPTIVES, LEAVING BEHIND ONLY THE POOREST, TO TEND THE VINES AND THE CROPS.

JERUSALEM WAS NOW IN RIENS, IT'S PEOPLE WERE CAPTIVE IN BABYLON EXCEPT FOR THESE WHO HASTILY FLED, AND THOSE LEFT BEHIND FOR THE PURPOSE OF FILLING THE LAND, AND WE ARE TOLD ' BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON, THEY SAT DOWN AND WEPT'

JEREMIAH HAD FORETOLD THAT THE CAPIVITY WOULD LAST FOR 70 YEARS, AND THOUGH IT WAS EXACTLY 70 YEARS FROM THE FALL OF JERUSALEM TO THE DEDICATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE, THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM BEGAN JUST 20 YEARS BEFORE THAT TIME. SOME 50 YEARS AFTER NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD ATTACKED AND TAKEN JERUSALEM, THE PERSIAN EMPIRE OVERCAME BABYLON CYRUS, KING OF PERSIA WAS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM NEBACHADNEZZAR. HE BELIEVED THAT THE BEST WAY TO RULE WAS BY TOLERATION AND TRUST. NEBUCHADNEZZAR RULED BY FORCE AND BY FEAR. CYRUS BELIEVED THAT FOR A CAPTIVE PEOPLE TO LIVE CONTENTEDLY THEY MUST BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH THEIR OWN RELIGION AND THEIR OWN LAWS, AND SO HE AGREED THAT THE JEWS COULD RETURN, A FEW AT A TIME, TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM. HE ENCOURAGED THEM IN EVERY WAY, AND EVEN RETURNED TO THEM THE TREASURES WHICH NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD LOOTED.

THE LEADERS OF THE BANDO RETURNED EXILES WAS THE LEGAL CLAIMANT TO THE THRONE OF JUDAH, HE WAS A YOUND MAN WHO HAD BEEN BORN DURING THE CAPTIVITY, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO IN THE V.S.L. BY HIS PERISIAN NAME OF 'SHESHAZZAR, BUT KNOWN BY US BY HIS HEBREW NAME WHICH IS ZERUBABEL, MEANING "BEGOTTEN IN BABYLON". HE TOOK WITH HIM TO JERUSALEM THE SACRED VESSELS, BUILDING MATERIALS INCLUDING CEDARS FROM LEBANON AND SKILLED WORKMEN SUCH AS MASONS AND CARPENTERS.

ZERUBABEL IS VERY WELL DOCUMENTED. HE APPEARS IN 5 DIFFERENT BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTEMENT. HE IS FOUND IN THE GENSALOGIES OF THE NEW TESTIMENT AND THERE IS ALONG ACCOUNT OF HIM IN THE APOERYPHAL BOOK OF ESDRAS.

HE ALSO TOOK PRIESTS IN HIS PARTY, THEIR LEADER BEING JOSHUA, WHO WAS ALSO PROBABLE BORN IN CAPIVITY, HIS FATHER, JOSADECH HAVING BEEN

TAKEN WHEN FAIRLY YOUNG. JOSHUA WAS ONE OF A LONG LINE OF PRIESTS, BEING DESCENDED FROM THOSE OF ^W SOLOMON'S TIME, AND HIMSELF AN ANCESTOR OF 14 FUTURE HIGH PRIESTS.

ON ARRIVING AT JERUSALEM, JOSHUA'S FIRST CARE WAS TO SEE THAT THE ALTAR WAS REBUILT, HAVING DONE WHICH HE RESTORED THE DAILY SACRIFICE.

WITHIN TWO YEARS OF THE RETURN, THE GROUND WAS CLEARED AND THE FOUNDATIONS DUG AND LAID FOR THE 2ND TEMPLE.

THEN OPPOSITION WAS MET. "THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND" WE ARE TOLD (PROBABLY SOME OF THOSE WHO LASTLY FLED, AND SOME OF THOSE LEFT BEHIND TO FILL THE LAND ~~AND~~ ^{with} THEIRS SONS) CLAIMED A SHARE IN THE WORK. THEY WERE ANSWERED BY ZERUBBABEL AND JOSHUA. EZRA 4, 1 "YE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH US TO BUILD A HOUSE FOR OUR GOD, BUT WE OURSELVES WILL BUILD UNTO THE LORD GOD OF ISREAL, AS CYRUS, KING OF PERSIA, HATH COMMANDED US."

THEY THEN TURNED AGAINST THOSE WHO HAD RETURNED, HINDERING THE WORK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WRITING COMPLIANTS TO CYRUS, AND EVEN WARNING HIM THAT JERUSALEM HAD A REPUTATION AS A REBELLIOUS CITY, AND IF IT WERE REBUILT IT WOULD PROBABLY NOT PAY IT'S TRIBUTE, AND COULD BECOME A HAZARD DANGER TO THE PERSIAN EMPIRE. THE RESULT WAS THAT WORK ON THE TEMPLE CEASED FOR ABOUT 14 YEARS.

MEANWHILE CYRUS WAS SUCCEEDED AS KING BY DARIUS. DURING THE TIME WHEN WORK ON THE TEMPLE WAS SUSPENDED, WORK ON RE-BUILDING THE CITY CONTINUED FOR IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF KING DARIUS, - in 520 B.C. WE FIND THE PROPHET HAGGAI APPEARING, AND BERATING THE PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM SAYING

"(HAGGAI 1. :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... IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO DWELL IN YOUR PANELLED HOUSES, AND THIS HOUSE LIE WASTE? AND THEN... " NEW BE STRONG O ZERRUBABEL, AND BE STRONG O JOSHUA, AND BE STRONG, ALL YE PEOPLE OF THE LAND, SAITH THE LORD AND WORK."

WORK THEY DID. THEY WENT BACK TO WORK ON THE TEMPLE AND IN 4 YEARS IT WAS COMPLETED AND ZERRUBABEL WHO HAD LAID THE FOUNDATION STONE SAW

THE COMPLETEION.

THE APOCRYPHAL BOOK OF ESDIAS, AND THE HISTORY OF JOSEPHUS BOTH GIVE A DIFFERENT ACCOUNT OF THE RISE OF ZERRUBBABEL. HERE, HE FIRST APPEARED AS ONE OF 3 MEN WHO WERE THE BODYGUARD OF KING DARIUS. ONE NIGHT, UNABLE TO SLEEP, THE KING, TO AMUSE HIMSELF ASKED THE 3 TO WRITE DOWN THE STRONGEST THING IN THE WORLD, PROMISING TO REWARD THE BEST ANSWER.

1. "WINE IS THE STRONGEST
2. "THE KING IS THE STRONGEST.

ZERRUBBABEL - "WOMEN ARE THE STRONGEST, BUT ABOVE ALL TRUTH BEAREST AWAY THE VICTORY. NEXT DAY EACH WAS ASKED TO EXPLAIN HIS CHOICE.

ZERRUBBABEL GAVE AN AMUSING ACCOUNT OF THE POWER OF WOMEN OVER MEN. THEN WITH A QUICK CHANGE TO THE SERIOUS HE SAID, WINE CAN BE WICKED, THE KING CAN BE WICKED, WOMEN CAN BE WICKED, AND THERE IS NO TRUTH IN THEM. ~~TRUTH~~ . TRUTH ENDURETH AND IS ALWAYS STRONG... BLESSED BE THE GOD OF TRUTH.

HIS WAS CONSIDERED THE BEST ANSWER. FOR HIS REWARD HE ASKED PERMISSION TO GO TO JERUSALEM AND BUILD THE TEMPLE, WHICH WAS GRANTED.

WE KNOW LITTLE ABOUT HAGGAI EXCEPT FOR HIS BOOK IN THE O.T. A VERY SHORT BOOK OF 18 VERSES ONLY, CONSISTING OF VARIOUS SAYINGS MADE IN THE SAME 3 MONTHS OF 520 B.C. 'WHO IS THERE AMONG YOU THAT SAW THIS HOUSE IN HER FIRST GLORY? AND HOW DO YE SEE IT NOW? IT IS NOT IN YOUR EYES IN COMPARISON AS NOTHING? THIS CERTAINLY SOUNDS AS THOUGH HAGGAI WAS ONE OF THE FEW LEFT WHO HAD SEEN THE FORMER TEMPLE. IS SO, HE WROTE HIS BOOK WHEN HE WAS A VERY OLD MAN. IN THE LIVES OF THE PROPHETS, WHICH WAS WRITTEN MANY YEARS LATER, WE ARE ~~1012~~ ^{TOLD} THAT HAGGAI WAS THE FIRST MAN EVER TO CHANT HALLELUJAH... THE HYMN OF HAGGAI, ACCORDING TO THIS BOOK. A LITERAL TRANSLATION IS " PRAISE YE JAH"

MOVING ON TO 457 B.C. WE FIND ATAXERXES ON THE PERSIAN THRONE: AND WE READ IN EZRA ~~9:6~~ "EZRA WENT UP FROM BABYLON: AND HE WAS A READY SCRIBE IN THE LAW OF MOSES WHICH THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL HAD GIVEN: AND THE KING GRANTED HIM ALL HIS REQUESTS.

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EZRA WAS DESCRIBED AS BOTH SCRIBE AND PREIST AND HIS COMING TO JERUSALEM MARKED A NEW PERIOD IN IT'S HISTORY ^{of} THE RULE OF LAW. HE RETURNED WITH A LARGE COMPANY OF EXILES AND AUTHORITY TO APPOINT MAGISTRATES AND JUDGES. HIS OBJECT WAS TO BRING BACK THE LAW OF MOSES WHICH ^a SOLEMNLY READ TO THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM. THE BOOK OF EZRA TELLS US THAT HE INSTITUTED RULE BY THE SANNEEDRIN (COUNCIL OF 72 OF THE OLDERS) HE INTRODUCED SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP HE ESTABLISHED AN OFFICAL LIST OF BOOKS FOR THE SYNAGOGUE, AND DIVIDED THE BIBLE INTO CHAPTERS AND VERSES TO PRESERVE THE PURITY OF THE HEBREW RACE, HE ^{also} MADE STRICT RULES AGAINST MIXED MARRIAGES.

JERUSALEM WAS NOW WELL ON THE WAY TO COMPLETE RESTORATION, BUT IT WAS STILL WIDE OPEN TO ATTACK BY IT'S ENEMIES (THE INSIDIOUS AS THEY ARE CALLED IN OUR CEREMONY) THE CITY WAS IN SOBER NEED OF WALLS AND GATES FOR IT'S DEFENCE, AND WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR NEHEMIAH FOR THOSE DEFE . ALTHOUGH IN OUR CEREMONY WE CALL NE A SCRIBE, NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE ARE WE TOLD THAT HIS TITTLE IS TIREHATHA OR GOVESNOR. HIS ACHIEVEMENTS WERE IN NO WAY SECRETARIAL, RATHER THEY WERE MILITARY OR ARCHITECTURAL. PERHAPS WE CALL HIM SCRIBE BECAUSE HE WROTE A BOOK.

HIS FIRST OFFICE WAS AS STEWARD. HE WAS ^B BEARER TO ^R ATAXERXES, THE SAME KING WHO 12 YEARS BEFORE HAD GIVEN EZRA PERMISSION TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM. IN 445 BC NEHEMIAH'S COUSIN, HANANI, CAME BACK FROM JERUSALEM TO PERSIA AND TOLD NEHEMIAH OF THE DEPLORABLE CONDITION OF JERUSALEM, THE WALLS BROKEN DOWN, THE GATES BURST AND THE PEOPLE IN FEAR OF THEIR LIVES.

NEHEMIAH ^{was} SO AFFECTED BY THIS THAT AS HE WAS ATTENDING THE KING, HIS FACE WAS SO SAD THAT THE KING ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HIM, YOU ARE NOT ILL SO IT MUST BE THAT YOU ARE UNHAPPY? NEHEMIAH TOLD HIM WHAT HE HAD HEARD OF THE STATE OF JERUSALEM, SO THE KING APPOINTED HIM GOVENOR OF THAT CITY, AND GAVE HIM MATERIALS AND PERMISSION TO GO TO REBUILD THE DEFENCES.

NEHEMIAH

NEHEMIAH SPENT THREE DAYS INSPECTING THE CITY, AND FOUND THINGS TO BE WORSE THAN HE HAD IMAGINED. NOT ONE WALL OR WAS INTACT. THE PEOPLE OF THE SURROUNDING LANDS LED BY SANBALLOT, THE HORONITE AND TOBIAH, THE AMMONITE WERE LAYING IN WAIT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND ATTACKING THE CITY AS AND WHEN THEY PLEASED. SO, NEHEMIAH CALLED ON EVERYONE TO HELP TO TO BUILD UP THE WALLS.

AT FIRST SANBALLOT AND TOBIAH RIDICUALTED THEIR EFFORTS, BUT AS THEY SAW THE PROGRESS BEING MADE THEY BECAME VERY ANGRY, AND WHEN THE WALLS WERE COMPLETE ACCUSED NEHEMIAH OF TREASON, THUS INDUCING ARTAXERXES TO ORDER THE WORK TO STOP. NEHEMIAH RETURNED TO PERSIA, REGAINING THE KINGS FAVOUR, AND THEN RETURNED TO UP THE GATES AND REPAIRS THE DEMAGED HOUSES.

SO COMPANIONS, THE TEMPLE WAS REBUILT BY THE EFFORTS OF ZERRUBBABEL HAGGAI AND JOSHUA THE LAW WAS RE-INSTATED BY EZRA AND THE SECURITY BY NEHEMIAH. ALL LEFT THE EAST AND CAME TO THE WEST TO RESTORE THAT WHICH HAD BEEN LOST. BY THEIR OWN INDUSTRY AND EXAMPLES THEY RESTORED THE TEMPLE, THE ALTAR, THE LAW, THE WORD, AND SECURITY FROM ENVY AND MALICE. MAY THE EXAMPLE OF THESE OUR PREDECESSORS TEACH US SO TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN THIS LIFE THAT WE MAY OBTAIN OUR TRUE HOME IN THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, AND THEIR JOIN ONE , BOTH ILLUSTRIOUS AND ANONYMOUS WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR US TO BE CALLED TO THE GRAND CHAPTER ABOVE.

COMPANIONS, I HAVE TRIED TO GIVE YOU SOME ACCOUNTS OF THOSE GREAT ORIGINALS WHO APPEAR IN OUR RITUALS. I HOPE THAT THIS MAY HAVE GIVEN YOU A NEW INTEREST IN OUR RITUAL, AND IN THE SCRIPTURES ON WHICH IT IS BASED.