At the opening of the book of Nehemiah we read that some Jews came to Susa bringing sad news of Jerusalem and the Palestinian community. This news soon reached the ears of Nehemiah, who was the king’s cup-bearer, and caused him such intense grief that one day, four months later—doubtless on a carefully selected occasion—he displayed it in the king’s presence. When asked the cause of his sadness he not merely revealed it to the king, but asked for authority to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. Finding favour with the king he had his request granted, and was furnished with letters of authority, and soon set out for Jerusalem to carry out his mission. The


2 Neh. i. 2.

3 Neh. i. 3.

4 On the position of the cupbearer, cf. Hastings’s D.B. i (1898), 533b.


6 Neh. ii. 2-8.
news which had caused Nehemiah this grief was that the Jews were in trouble and shame, and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates destroyed by fire.¹

The name of the king, whose cupbearer Nehemiah was, is given as Artaxerxes, and the incident is located in his twentieth year.² Three Persian kings bore the name Artaxerxes. Of these the first reigned from 464 to 424 B.C. His twentieth year would thus be 444 B.C. That Jerusalem had been cruelly destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar in 686 B.C. is, of course, securely known, but this could scarcely be the event to which the report which saddened Nehemiah refers; for it would seem to be a little belated to be overcome with grief on hearing about this a hundred and twenty years later, and it can hardly be supposed that Nehemiah had not heard of it before. Clearly we should look for some incident nearer to his own time. If—as some have held—the Artaxerxes whom Nehemiah served were one of the later kings of that name,³ the need to look for some more recent incident would be even more imperative.

In the book of Ezra we read that in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Ezra was sent on a royal mission to Jerusalem, armed with a Book of the Law, and authorized to regulate the worship of the Temple and to offer sacrifices at the royal charges.⁴ If this was the same Artaxerxes, then Ezra had preceded Nehemiah by some years, and it would seem reasonable to look for some disaster to Jerusalem during this period to account for Nehemiah's grief. No record of any such disaster is given in the account of Ezra and his work, but it is curious to find that Ezra is represented as reading the Book of the Law in the twentieth year of the king's reign,⁵ and in Nehemiah's presence.⁶ His delay in executing his mission stands in marked contrast to the vigour and speed with which Nehemiah addressed himself to his when he reached Jerusalem. Some have supposed that Ezra neglected his proper mission and meddled with other things disastrously, and so brought about the misfortunes which distressed Nehemiah. For this supposition there is no evidence in the Bible, and it by

¹ Neh. i. 3. ² Neh. ii. 1. ³ On this see below. ⁴ Ezra vii. 1 ff. ⁵ Neh. vii. 73. ⁶ Neh. viii. 9.
no means disposes of all the difficulties of the question. But to this we shall return.

In Ezra iv we have a curious story which adds to our problems. It begins by telling us of Zerubbabel and the exiles who returned with him in the time of Cyrus. They restored the altar in Jerusalem and laid the foundations of the Temple, according to the authority given to them by Cyrus, when they ran into opposition from "the people of the land", so that they were unable to continue their work until the days of Darius. If this means Darius I, who reigned from 522 to 486 B.C., we are carried down to the time of Haggai and Zechariah. The next verse tells us that the adversaries of the Jews wrote an accusation against them to Ahasuerus in the beginning of his reign. Ahasuerus is to be equated with Xerxes, who followed Darius I, and who reigned from 485 to 465 B.C. Then, the story proceeds, in the reign of Artaxerxes—I presumably Artaxerxes I, who followed Xerxes—a complaint was sent to the king that the Jews who had come up from the east were engaged in rebuilding the walls of the city, and that this might be dangerous to the state in view of the past history of Jerusalem. The king made inquiry concerning this history, as the result of which he ordered the cessation of the work until his further pleasure should be made known. The account closes with the surprising statement that the work on the house of God ceased until the second year of Darius.

If the reference here is to Darius II, who reigned from 423 to 404 B.C.—the short reign of Xerxes II having followed that of Artaxerxes I—we are brought up against the fact that it was in the second year of Darius I that the successful rebuilding of the Temple was begun, and indeed the account in Ezra is continued in the story of that rebuilding under the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah. If the reference is to Darius I, then we appear to be in Topsy-Turvy Land, where the work is brought to a

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1 Ezra iv. 1-5.
2 This phrase appears in this context to mean the Samaritans, though this is not its normal meaning.
3 Ezra iv. 6.
4 Ezra iv. 7-23.
5 Ezra iv. 24.
6 Cf. Hag. i.
7 Ezra v f.
standstill from the time of Artaxerxes to the days of one of his predecessors. Two other curious features of this chapter need to be noted. The first is that it begins in Hebrew, and then continues in Aramaic; the second is that whereas the complaint to the king is of the rebuilding of the walls, the result is said to be that the rebuilding of the Temple was brought to a standstill.  

Here we have a tangle of inter-related problems that has been long discussed without yielding any final solution, and to which final answers cannot be given. Like so many Biblical problems the evidence is insufficient for any demonstration, and nothing more than probability can be claimed for any solution adopted. The first step towards finding a solution lies in realizing the intricate character of the problem, and it is usually found that a study of the solutions offered will best bring this out.

The first question is of the origin and reliability of the Aramaic sections of the book of Ezra. These sections are found in Ezra iv. 8—vi. 18; vii. 12-26. They consist mostly, but not entirely, of what purport to be official documents, but there are connecting narrative links. On the whole, it seems to be agreed that the author of the book of Ezra—whom we will call the Chronicler—extracted these sections from some older Aramaic source, but perhaps with slight additions from his own pen. As against this some have held chapter iv or chapter vii to be wholly the creation of the Chronicler. Chapter vii does not directly concern us here, but so far as chapter iv is concerned, it is hard to suppose that it is the free creation of the Chronicler, since it fits so ill into its context. Granted, however, that the Chronicler took over the materials of the Aramaic sections from an older source or sources, the question of the

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1 Verses 1-7 are in Hebrew and the rest in Aramaic. 2 Ezra iv. 24. 3 So W. H. Kosters, Het Herstel van Israël (1893), pp. 72 ff. (German trans. by A. Basedow (1895), pp. 61 ff.). 4 So C. C. Torrey, A.J.S.L. xxiv (1907-8), 209 ff. = Ezra Studies (1910), pp. 140 ff. 5 Cf. A. Kuenen, R.H.R. xiii (1886), 340 (German trans. by K. Budde in Gesammelte Abhandlungen (1894), p. 375, where it is held that Ezra vii is the composition of the Chronicler, who embellished his source with great freedom.
authenticity and historical value of these sections remains to be considered.

Here there have been some scholars who have disputed that authenticity and historical value, in the case of some or all of the letters,\(^1\) while others, though denying their authenticity, have allowed that they contain some historical kernel.\(^2\) Others, following E. Meyer,\(^3\) have held the letters to be authentic,\(^4\) or at least reliable in substance.\(^5\) The Jewish tone of the royal letters and decrees, which used to be regarded as inconsistent with their authenticity,\(^6\) has ceased to be valid evidence against


\(^3\) Cf. Die Entstehung des Judentums (1896), pp. 8 ff., 70.


\(^6\) So B. Stade, Geschichte des Volkes Israel, ii (1888), 122 n., 159 n.
them since the publication of the Elephantine Papyri from Upper Egypt, which became known in the early years of the present century. For amongst these papyri one document was an order to the Jewish community in Elephantine, issued in the name of the Persian governor, commanding them to observe a feast which is almost certainly the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It has often been suggested that Ezra himself may have been entrusted with the drafting of the document in chapter vii. In this document he is represented as armed with royal authority to regulate all questions affecting the Jewish faith. He carries the Book of the Law, whose provisions he is instructed to carry out. Schaeder has suggested that the title “Scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven”, which he bears, indicates an official appointment, carrying responsibility for all questions affecting

1 Cf. AP 21 (A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923), pp. 60 ff.). This is frequently referred to as the Passover Papyrus, though in its present broken state the word Passover does not occur in it. It is an order to keep a festival in the month of Nisan from the fifteenth day to the twenty-first, and there is a reference to leaven. In Cowley’s reconstruction of the text it is an order to keep the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, but this is a purely conjectural reconstruction. E. G. Kraeling (*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (1953), p. 95) thinks it an unlikely reconstruction, and offers reasons for doubting if there was any reference to the Passover. On the other side, however, cf. J. Morgenstern, *H.U.C.A.* x (1935), 114 ff., A. Vincent, *La Religion des Judéo-Araméens d’Éléphantine* (1937), pp. 234 ff., and A. Dupont-Sommer, *R.E.J.* (n.s., vii, cvi (1946-7), 39 ff. The latter argues that there is other evidence, preserved on ostraca from Elephantine, to show that Passover was observed in the colony much earlier than this, and holds that the purpose of the papyrus was to fix the date of Passover rather than to enjoin its observance. For our present purpose it seems wiser not to go beyond the surviving evidence of the papyrus, and to consider it simply as an order concerning the feast of Unleavened Bread. So earlier W. R. Arnold, *J.B.L.* xxxi (1912), 9 and J. A. Montgomery, *J.Q.R.* , n.s., xxiv (1933-4), 153. It is none the less significant to find such an order sent from the king. Cowley observes (op. cit. p. 62) : "What has hitherto seemed incredible is that they (i.e. the Persian kings) should have concerned themselves with details of ceremonial, as in the letter of Artaxerxes in *Ezra* 7, but the present papyrus (and the style of other letters in this collection) removes all reason for doubting the genuineness of the Persian letters in *Ezra."


4 *Ezra* vii. 12, 21.
the Jewish faith.¹ Whether this is so or not,² he is clearly represented as having been officially appointed for certain tasks, and apparently as not responsible to the Persian provincial officials for the performance of these tasks. As against this Torrey has doubted whether Ezra ever existed at all, and has maintained that he is a fictitious character created by the Chronicler.³ At the other extreme Albright holds that Ezra was himself the Chronicler.⁴ I find both of these views hard to accept, and think it more likely that Ezra was a real character,


⁴ Cf. *J.B.L.* xl (1921), 119 f., and *B.A.* ix (1946), 15. Against this, cf. the argument of Kapelrud, loc. cit. It is rejected also by R. de Vaux, in Robert's *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, iv (1949), 764. I find it difficult to assign the Chronicler to so early a time as that of Ezra, and still more difficult to understand how Ezra could have been so confused about the events in which he had played a part. For on Albright's view (see below) Ezra is to be put later than Nehemiah, whereas the Chronicler places him before. It would be possible to suppose that a later hand brought confusion into the text, but it is hard to see what is then gained. For the compiler of the present work would then be later than Ezra, and it is no more satisfying to suppose that he introduced chaos into a hypothetical work than to suppose that he here worked with sources, as he is known to have done in the earlier part of his book. It is true that Albright sees no necessity to suppose that the work has been rearranged, but is satisfied to suggest that Ezra attached Nehemiah's memoirs to his work, though he knew that Nehemiah preceded him, since it would have deranged his work to put them in their true place (J.B.L., loc. cit. p. 123). But this will hardly explain why Ezra should have represented himself as reading the Law in 444 B.C., if he knew that he had not reached Jerusalem until some years later. Whatever may have been the true relation of the work of Ezra to that of Nehemiah, it is hard to doubt that the compiler of the work thought they were contemporaries, but that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem some years earlier than Nehemiah.
who was given royal authority for his mission, and who lived earlier than the compiler of the Aramaic source,\(^1\) while the Chronicler lived later than this compiler, and did not always understand the materials he used. That he did not simply take over the Aramaic sections as they stood, however, will become apparent as we proceed. For there are connecting links which appear quite certainly to be from his hand.

That we have not authentic documents in their original form is clear from many considerations. These documents purport to come from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Yet the Aramaic is demonstrably later than that of the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine of the fifth century B.C.\(^2\) Even the spelling of the name of Artaxerxes is different from the contemporary spelling.\(^3\) In the book of Ezra we find two different spellings,\(^4\) and it has been suggested that this variation in spelling is an indication

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\(^1\) Torrey held that the Aramaic source containing Ezra iv. 8-vi. 18 was written by a contemporary of the Chronicler in the third century B.C. (cf. *A.J.S.L.* xxiv (1907-8), 232 = *Ezra Studies*, p. 161), while Nöldeke (cf. *Die alttestamentliche Literatur* (1868), pp. 63 f.) thought it could not be earlier than the Greek period. It is more probable that it belongs to the Persian age. For in Ezra iv. 8 we find simply “the king”, as compared with “the king of Persia” in the preceding verse and elsewhere in the work of the Chronicler. This is doubtless an indication that the Chronicler is using an older source here, and the source would seem to belong to a date under the Persian empire. This is a further argument against identifying Ezra with the Chronicler. That iv. 8 does not come from the same document as iv. 7 will be maintained below.


\(^3\) This we learn from the contemporary documents of the Elephantine papyri, and elsewhere (cf. my *Darius the Mede* (1935), pp. 49 f.). In dated papyri from the reign of Artaxerxes I we find the spelling שֶׁׁׁשׁוֹתָרָא (cf. AP 6:2, 7:1, 8:1, etc., and Brooklyn 1:1, 3:1, etc.), and once, probably by scribal error, שֶׁׁׁשׁוֹתָרָא (Brooklyn 2:1). The spelling שֶׁׁׁשׁוֹתָרָא is also found on another text from Egypt, which is ascribed to the same reign (so M. de Vogüé, *C.R.A.I.* (1903), pp. 273, 275, and M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris*, ii (1908), 221) and on a bilingual from Sardis first published by Littmann (*Sardis*, vi. i (1916), 23 ff.), which is dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I by Torrey (cf. *A.J.S.L.* xxxiv (1917-18), 192), but in that of Artaxerxes II or Artaxerxes III by S. A. Cook (*J.H.S.* xxxvii (1917), 81).

\(^4\) The spelling שֶׁׁׁשׁוֹתָרָא is found in Ezra iv. 7 f., 11, 23; vi. 14, while שֶׁׁׁשׁוֹתָרָא stands in Ezra vii. 1, 11 f., 21; viii. 1, and in Neh. ii. 1; v. 14; xiii. 6.
that two different kings are referred to.\(^1\) This is very improb­
able on all grounds,\(^2\) and it may now be added that the evidence
of new texts from Elephantine, purchased nearly sixty years ago,
before the collections of papyri published earlier were known,
but now first published by Professor E. G. Kraeling towards the
end of 1953,\(^3\) bring evidence that the contemporary spelling of
the name of the second Artaxerxes was still the same as that of
the first, and different from either of the forms found in the
book of Ezra.\(^4\) Similarly the spelling of the name of Xerxes in
the book of Ezra\(^5\) differs from that found in contemporary
texts.\(^6\) Even more important are the grammatical and ortho­
graphical differences between the Aramaic of the Papyri and that
of the book of Ezra.\(^7\) It is quite certain that we do not have
here the original form of any sixth or fifth century Aramaic
documents.

It has been suggested that the language has been revised and
brought up to date. Torrey rejects this view, on the ground
that an archaic flavour would not be fatal to the intelligibility of
such documents, and would so much better suit the character of
cited documents that there would be little point in eliminating
it.\(^8\) De Vaux, however, offers reasons against Torrey.\(^9\) By the

\(^1\) So first J. Imbert, *Museon*, vii (1888), 223, and more recently Torrey,
*A.J.S.L.* xxiv (1907-8), 242 = *Ezra Studies*, p. 170, and W. O. E. Oesterley,
*History of Israel*, ii (1932), 96 n.

\(^2\) Cf. my *Darius the Mede*, pp. 49 f., and *The Servant of the Lord* (1951),
pp. 150 f. The view has been rejected by H. M. Wiener, *J.P.O.S.* vii (1927),

\(^3\) *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*.

\(^4\) Kraeling offers evidence that Brooklyn 12 comes from the time of *Artaxerxes*
II. In lines 1 and 10 we find אָּרַת הַמֵּיתָּר.

\(^5\) It is spelt שֶׁרֶם הַמֵּיתָּר in Ezra iv. 6; so also in Dan. ix. 1, and many times
in the book of Esther.

\(^6\) In AP 2 : 1 it is spelt שֶׁרֶם הַמֵּיתָּר, and in AP 5 : 1, 64, no. 20 שָׁרֵם הַמֵּיתָּר. It is
not found in any of the Brooklyn texts. In a tablet from Memphis (G. A. Cooke,
*North Semitic Inscriptions*, 71 : 3 (p. 200)) it is spelt שֶׁרֶם הַמֵּיתָּר. The agreement of
the spelling of the name of Darius with that found in the papyri from the time
of Darius I and disagreement with the spelling found in those from the time of
Darius II is discussed in my *Darius the Mede*, pp. 47 ff.

\(^7\) Cf. my *Aramaic of the Old Testament*, passim.


\(^9\) Cf. *R.B.* xlvi (1937), 46 f.
careful comparison of passages cited from the books of Samuel and Kings in the work of the Chronicler we find that the Chronicler made free to modify what he took over, and it may be presumed that he did the same with what he took over from his Aramaic source. The compiler of the Aramaic source may have felt similarly free to modify what he recorded, so that inaccuracy of detail does not necessarily mean that we are dealing with historically worthless traditions. For instance, Ezra v. 16 states that the foundations of the Second Temple had been laid in the reign of Cyrus and that the work had gone on continuously since then until the reign of Darius I, whereas the utterances of Haggai give the impression that the foundations were laid in the second year of Darius, and the prophet’s reproaches would have been grossly unwarranted if the work had been going on continuously since the time of Cyrus, or if it had been begun then but thwarted by the adversaries of the Jews, as Ezra iv. 4 f. states.

Granting, then, that the Chronicler did not invent these narratives and documents, and that there is historical substance in them, even though their details cannot be pressed with security, what are we to make of the chronological jumble of chapter iv? We begin with Cyrus and Darius in verse 5, and then pass through Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes to Darius in verse 24, and this second mention of Darius must, as has been already said, be Darius I. There have not been wanting writers, both ancient and modern, who have supposed that it was Darius II. But this seems quite impossible. For Zech. i. 12 shows that Zechariah prophesied some seventy years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and that he was contemporary with the rebuilding of

1 Cf. Ezra iii. 10, iv. 1 ff.  
2 Cf. Browne, Early Judaism, pp. 44 ff.  
4 Cf. G. A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, rev. edn., ii (1928), 193 ff.; also Van Hoonacker, Muséon, x (1891), 77 ff.
the Temple is clear from both the book of Ezra and the proph­ecies of Zechariah. Moreover, Hag. ii. 3 declares that at the
time of rebuilding of the Temple there were still men surviving
who had seen the first Temple. Again, Ezra ii. 2; iii. 2; iv. 1
mention Zerubbabel and Jeshua as the leaders of the returned
community in the time of Cyrus, while v. 2 declares that they
were still the leaders in the time of this Darius, under whom the
work of rebuilding the Temple was resumed. It is therefore
quite impossible to suppose that more than a century had been
traversed since the time of Cyrus.¹

Some older commentators supposed that Cambyses, the son
and successor of Cyrus, is meant by Ahasuerus, and pseudo-Smerdis, who usurped the throne on the death of Cambyses, is
meant by Artaxerxes.² Ewald wished to alter the text to accord
with this view, and believed that in pronunciation the name had
been confused with one better known.³ It is difficult to accept
this view. For pseudo-Smerdis occupied the throne for but
seven months of confusion, during which it is very improbable
that these events can be placed, and it is not likely that the writ
of pseudo-Smerdis ran in Jerusalem. To avoid this difficulty
Winckler supposed that Cambyses was both the Ahasuerus and
the Artaxerxes of this chapter.⁴ But there is no confirmation
of any of these identifications of names. Nor would all the
difficulties of the chapter be resolved if it were proved to be
chronologically continuous. For, as has been said, the beginning

¹ So Cornelius a Lapide, Commentarius in Esdram, etc., 1740 edn., p. 13.
² So A. Calmet, Commentaire littéral, iii (1724), 296. On this view cf. F. W.
Schulz, Ezra, English trans. by C. A. Briggs (in Lange’s Commentary), vii (1876),
47 f.; A. Kuenen, Verslagen en Mededelingen der Kon. Akademie van Wetenschappen,
Afd. Letterkunde, 3rd R., vii (1891), 288 f. (German trans. by K.
Budde in Gesammelte Abhandlungen (1894), pp. 224 f.); H. E. Ryle, Ezra and
Nehemiah, pp. 65 f.
by J. E. Carpenter, v (1880), 106 n.). Howorth, loc. cit., says “it is
not history, but mere child’s play, to identify him (i.e. Artaxerxes) with the
pseudo-Smerdis, as Ewald and others have done”.
⁴ Cf. Allorientalische Forschungen, 2 Reihe (1898-1900), pp. 217 f. So earlier
Cornelius a Lapide, loc. cit. De Saulcy held Cambyses to be the king who
interrupted the work of building. Cf. Étude chronologique des livres d’Esdras et
de Néhémie (1868), p. 27 and Table.
NEHEMIAH'S MISSION

and end of the chapter deal with the building of the Temple, whereas the intervening verses deal with the building of the walls. There is an inner inconcinnity of subject, as well as of chronology, in the chapter. It is true that in 1 Esdras ii. 18-20 the Temple is mentioned, but this would seem to be a harmonizing touch to try to make the passage relate in some way to its context.¹ Even there the main reference of the passage is to the city walls, and the Temple is incidental and not essential, whereas in the concluding verse which indicates the effect of the intervention it is only the Temple which is mentioned, and in the verses which precede and follow the pericope iv. 6-23 in Ezra the Temple is exclusively concerned. Theis argued that in Ezra iv. 7-23 the original text dealt with the rebuilding of the Temple and emended the text to accord with this view.² He further argued that verse 6, in which Ahasuerus is mentioned,

¹ On the many problems which surround 1 Esdras and its relation to the Hebrew Ezra-Nehemiah, cf. Torrey, A.J.S.L. xxiii (1906-7), 116 ff. = Ezra Studies, pp. 11 ff., and The Apocryphal Literature (1945), pp. 43 ff.; E. Schürer, Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes, 4th edn., iii (1909), 444 ff.; H. Guthe, in E. Kautzsch, Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments, i (1900), i ff.; E. Bayer, Das dritte Buch Esdras und sein Verhältnis zu den Büchern Esra-Nehemia (1911); S. A. Cook, in R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, i (1913), 1 ff.; B. Walde, Die Esdrasbücher der Septuaginta (1913); S. Mowinckel, Statholderen Nehemia (1916), pp. 1 ff.; W. O. E. Oesterley, Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha (1935), pp. 133 ff.; R. H. Pfeiffer, History of the New Testament Times (1949), pp. 233 ff. Oesterley, loc. cit. p. 140, thinks it is not dependent on the canonical books, but is an older translation of a Hebrew-Aramaic original. Torrey, on the other hand, declares that it is “an unchanged extract from the old (‘Septuagint’) version of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah” (Apoc. Literature, p. 45), and holds that it “does not represent the original form of this portion of the Chronicler's history, but a popular revision consisting partly of interpolation and partly of rearrangement” (ibid. p. 48). R. de Vaux, R.B., xlvi (1937), 51 n., says: “Dans cette discussion (i.e. of the decrees of Cyrus and Darius) nous n’utiliserons guère le pseudo-Esdras, qui jouit auprès des critiques récents d’une faveur imméritée. Il n’a pas—au moins pour les passages qui nous concernent—d’autre antécédent que le texte massoretique et il est de peu de secours pour son intelligence.” It may be noted that the chronological problem is worse in 1 Esdras than in the canonical Ezra, since there the parallel to Ezra iv. 7-24 precedes the first return from the exile. For a careful study of the text of 1 Esdras in relation to the Massoretic text, cf. Johannesen, Studier over Estras og Nehemjas Historie (1946), pp. 23 ff.

² Geschichtliche und literarkritische Fragen in Esra 1-6 (1910), pp. 41 ff.
is a later gloss and that the Artaxerxes of the following verses is really Cyrus. The chapter is thus made to be chronologically continuous. The basis of his argument is that Josephus states that Artaxerxes I was also called Cyrus. Theis therefore argues that the name Cyrus could have been altered into Artaxerxes in error. This seems highly improbable since in this very narrative Ezra iv. 7-vi. 18, which Theis holds to be a single narrative by one author, Cyrus is elsewhere called Cyrus. It is hard to see why anyone should have made the erroneous assumption that in the beginning of a continuous narrative Cyrus was really Artaxerxes and in the sequel the earlier Cyrus. Moreover, new difficulties would be created. For if Cyrus had first authorized the rebuilding of the Temple and had later ordered its suspension, it would be incredible that the search in the royal archives in the time of Darius would have brought the authorization to light and not the suspension, and surprising for the provincial authorities that made enquiries of the throne not to know of the suspension and to mention it. Even if the whole account were merely fiction, composed freely by the author, he could hardly have failed to notice this weakness of his story. So far as our particular problem today is concerned, it may be added that it would be left untouched by any of these hypotheses. For a cessation of the rebuilding of the walls of the city associated with incidents that preceded the rebuilding of the Temple in the reign of Darius I could hardly cause such grief to Nehemiah, when he heard of it some eighty years later.

A third way of dealing with the passage has been to suppose that the compiler purposely inserted this anticipatory account of further Samaritan hostility, to follow that in Ezra iv. 1-5, before resuming the story of the Temple. Writers who have adopted this view have either identified Ahasuerus with Xerxes I and Artaxerxes with Artaxerxes I, or have found the Artaxerxes of

1 Geschichtliche und literarkritische Fragen in Esra 1-6 (1910), pp. 49 ff.
2 Antiq., xi. vi. 1 (xi. 184).
Ezra iv 7 to be Artaxerxes I and the king of iv. 8 ff. to be Artaxerxes II.\(^1\) All of these writers therefore regard the present order as original. It is hard to see why the Chronicler should interrupt his account of the Temple to insert a long subsequent incident. Torrey, who has a poorer opinion of the compiler’s historical knowledge,\(^2\) thinks the present order is original, and suggests that the Chronicler’s interest was in the unfolding of a dramatic story, in which the villain first triumphs and then is undone through his own lack of caution.\(^3\) When he introduced the city walls and the question of state security the enemy was successful, but when he mentioned only the Temple he failed.\(^4\) But this presupposes that the Chronicler thought that Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes reigned between Cyrus and Darius. For since in iv. 5 he had said that the work of the rebuilding of the Temple ceased “all the days of Cyrus, even until the reign of Darius”, and in chapters v f. records how the building was resumed in the reign of Darius, he must mean the same Darius in both cases. That he could not have supposed this to be Darius II has already been indicated. For he represents the work of rebuilding in the time of Darius to have been undertaken by the


\(^2\) Cf. *Composition*, p. 8: “There is no reason to suppose that Jewish historians and story-tellers of the Greek period were accurately informed as to the order and chronology of the Persian kings.” While this is doubtless true, it does not account for the present order quite as Torrey supposes. For the Chronicler knows that Artaxerxes reigned at least thirty-two years (Neh. xiii. 6). He can scarcely be credited with supposing that Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who were leaders in the time of Cyrus (Ezra ii. 2), were still leaders in the reign of a Darius, after the reign of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, and this long reign of Artaxerxes had intervened. If he is judged, not by accurate chronology, but by the knowledge which he reveals, it is difficult to suppose that he imagined himself to be giving a chronological sequence in Ezra iv.


\(^4\) Torrey has more recently made the ingenious suggestion that the introduction of the walls of the city was a lying trick of the enemies of the Jews, according to the Chronicler’s story. These enemies were incensed by the building of the Temple, but falsely represented to the king that it was the city walls which were going up (*J.A.O.S.* lxvi (1946), 1 f.). It is probable that if the Chronicler had composed the story with such a purpose, he would have made clear the falsity of the charge. For Torrey believes that the story was the free creation of the Chronicler (ibid. p. 14).
leaders who were already at the head of the community in the time of Cyrus. Though his knowledge of history was not without confusion, it is unlikely that he supposed the work of Zerubbabel to span at least four reigns.

A further way of dealing with the passage has been proposed by Klostermann and Schaeder. Before we examine this solution we must note some curious features of verses 7-9 of our chapter. Verse 7 reads in the Revised Version: “And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia.” Verse 8 continues: “Rehum the Chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort.” It will be observed that the writers of verse 7 are replaced by others in verse 8, and no letter of Bishlam, Mithredath and Tabeel appears to be given. Verse 9 opens with yet a third introduction, though the principal writers are here the same as in verse 8: “Then wrote Rehum the Chancellor and Shimshai the scribe.” Many years ago Klostermann suggested that Bishlam is not a proper name. In the Septuagint it is rendered ἐν εἰρήνῃ, and this is a perfectly legitimate rendering of the Hebrew consonants. Klostermann more plausibly rendered by “with the approval of” and took Mithredath, or Mithridates, to have been the Persian governor and not one of the signatories of the letter. This again is a perfectly legitimate rendering, and the verse then states that Tabeel and his associates wrote with the approval of Mithridates. Schaeder adopts this view and like Klostermann argues that the purpose of Tabeel’s letter to Artaxerxes was not to attack the Jews, but to defend...
them. He thinks that Tabeel's letter began by quoting the earlier charges against the Jews by Rehum and Shimshai and the royal rescript supporting them against the Jews, but then went on to cite the earlier documents which stand in chapters v f., and which belong to the same letter of Tabeel's, showing how Darius had much earlier adopted a favourable attitude towards the Jews. The purpose of Tabeel's letter Schaeder thinks to have been achieved in the royal permission to rebuild the walls.1

This view cleverly accounts for the unchronological order of the chapters, but fails to explain why the Chronicler omitted to mention either the purpose or the effect of Tabeel's letter,2 if it was so favourable to the Jews, or why Nehemiah, who actually built the walls, obtained permission to do so quite independently of Tabeel's supposed successful appeal, and without any reference whatever to it.3 De Vaux points out that if Schaeder's argument could be accepted it would carry with it the authenticity of the documents quoted in these chapters, since no one would write to the king, with the approval of the local governor, citing false documents, whose falsity would be immediately discovered.4 Damaging, however, to Schaeder's view is the consideration that the appeal to Darius's permission to build the Temple could scarcely be brought forward as a reason why the king should revise his decision against the rebuilding of the walls.5 In the one case no security reasons were involved; in the other they were.

Yet another way of treating the section is to suppose that it is displaced, and that it has no connection with its context, having been wrongly introduced to separate verses 5 and 24,6 either by

1 J. Hempel, Althebräische Literatur (1930), p. 156, appears to follow this view, and so R. Kittel, Geschichte, iii, part 2, 602 f., and E. Johannesen, op. cit. pp. 164 ff.
3 Cf. R. de Vaux, R.B. xlvi (1937), 45, who points out that the reasons Schaeder offers (Iranische Beiträge I, pp. 19 f.) to account for Nehemiah's failure to mention Tabeel's letter are not convincing.
4 Ibid.
5 So de Vaux, ibid.
6 So already E. W. Hengstenberg, Die Christologie des Alten Testaments, 2nd edn., iii. i (1856), 143, 209 n. (English trans. by J. Martin, iii (1858), 203, 265 n.).
the Chronicler ¹ or by a later hand.² Eissfeldt thinks ⁴ the 
Chronicler found iv. 6-23 after iv. 24-vi. 18 in his Aramaic 
source, but deliberately reversed the order, while Sellin believed ⁴ 
that the Chronicler only excerpted v. 3-vi. 15 from his source, 
and composed iv. 5, 24, v. 1 f., and that a second Chronicler 
later excerpted iv. 7-23 from the Aramaic source, and found no 
better place to insert it than the present one. Kosters dealt 
more radically ⁵ with the section, and treated it as the pure 
fabrication of the Chronicler. This is highly improbable. For 
had it been composed by him for this context, it would scarcely 
have been so inappropriate to the context in substance, as well 
as so remarkable in its chronological sequence.

That the present position of the passage is due to a mis-
understanding of its content is the most probable view, and I 
find little reason to doubt that the Chronicler, and not a later 
hand, gave it that position. Most who hold this view think 
that verse 24 was either composed by the Chronicler to connect 
iv. 6-23 with v. 1 ff., or that it was the original sequel of iv. 5. 
Whether iv. 5 and iv. 24 ever stood in juxtaposition may be 
doubted, and that view could only raise problems of the change 
of language at this point. The change of language at iv. 8 can 
be explained quite simply as due to the quoting of what pur-
ported to be an official document from an existing source, but if 
iv. 5 and 24 belonged originally together, the difference of lan-
guage would be unaccounted for. Torrey, who formerly held 
iv. 24 to be the composition of the Chronicler,⁶ later withdrew 
this,⁷ while Batten also renounced this view ⁸ in favour of the 
suggestion that "then ceased the work" belongs to the pre-

¹ So Ryle, op. cit. pp. 64 ff.; C. Cornill, Einleitung in das Alte Testament 
5th edn. (1905), p. 155 (English trans. by G. H. Box (1907), p. 250); S. R. 
open whether the insertion was due to the Chronicler or a later hand.
² So L. W. Batten, op. cit. pp. 160 ff.; T. Witton Davies, Ezra, Nehemiah 
and Esther (Cent. B.), p. 84; L. E. Browne, op. cit. pp. 33 ff.; Oesterley, 
History of Israel, ii. 80.
³ Cf. Einleitung, p. 595.
⁴ Cf. ibid., 7th edn., p. 156.
⁵ Cf. Het Herstel, pp. 72 ff. = German trans., pp. 61 ff.
⁶ Cf. Composition, pp. 7 ff.
ceding narrative, and really refers to the work on the walls, while the words "in the second year of the reign of Darius the king of Persia" belong to the following narrative and should stand in v. 1,¹ the remaining words in iv. 24 having been mistakenly added when the two narratives were combined. It seems probable to me that the whole verse is from the hand of the Chronicler,² and that it was written both to pick up the story at the point to which he had carried it in iv. 5, and to link the story in the intervening verses with the narrative in chapters v if. Three originally distinct narratives are thus connected by this verse, to none of which singly can it belong.³ I think it unlikely that the Chronicler found the passage about the walls after vi. 18 in his source, since it is hard to see why in that case he should have transferred it. It seems more likely that it stood before v. 1-vi. 18 in his source, though it is impossible to speculate with any profit why it stood there, since we no longer have the source available. It has been said that iv. 24 probably did not stand in the source. Something which is now lost may have stood there between the account of the stopping of the building of the walls of the city and the story of the rebuilding of the Temple, and if we had the full source we might be in a better position to judge why a later incident was recorded before an earlier. It was perhaps the Chronicler's supposition that what stood first in his source must be placed before what stood after it which made him insert it here. He had reached in iv. 5 the reign of Darius and the point where the

¹ That a time note has fallen out of v. 1, perhaps through similarity with the closing words of iv. 24, is probable.

² The Chronicler's hand is most likely to be seen in "the king of Persia".

³ I am unable to share the common view that iv. 6-23 belong together. I can find no reason to connect verses 6 f. with the following verses, with the exception of the words "In the days of Artaxerxes", which should probably be transferred from the beginning of verse 7 to verse 8 (so J. A. Bewer, Der Text des Buches Ezra (1922), p. 50), or even for supposing that they were extracted from the same source as the following verses. The text of these two verses is in some disorder, and it is likely that the names of the writers in verse 7 belonged originally to verse 6 (so Bewer, ibid.). They bear no relation to the writers of the reign of Artaxerxes mentioned in verse 8, and much more probably they were the writers of the despatch to Xerxes, whose contents are unrecorded.
account of the rebuilding of the Temple was appropriate, and then wished to include an incident which stood in his source before the account of the rebuilding of the Temple, and not knowing how to relate it correctly to his story, retained it where it was, feeling that it was better to retain so interesting an incident, and one which fitted so well with his anti-Samaritan feeling, than to jettison it because he could not understand its chronological relations. It may indeed be that he was fully aware that it was out of place, but did not know its correct place in his story.

While we can never know with certainty what led the Chronicler to incorporate this incident here, we may be very grateful that he has preserved this passage. If we treat it as displaced, and as recording an incident which happened in the reign of Artaxerxes, we may go on to ask what is its probable historical relation to other events recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and how far it can throw any light on the background of Nehemiah’s mission. This immediately raises the vexed question of the chronological relation of Ezra’s mission to Nehemiah’s, and of the identification of the kings under whom they lived. With this question I have dealt elsewhere at greater length than I can here, and I must content myself with a brief summary of the problem and of the solutions which have been offered.

From the present arrangement of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah it would appear that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, and that they both lived in the reign of the same king. This king has been commonly identified with Artaxerxes I, and this identi-


2 This is supported by Ezra vi. 14 f., where he states that the rebuilding of the Temple was completed in the reign of Darius by the authority of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes. It may be noted that Theis (op. cit., pp. 37 f.) here conjectures that the text originally read “and unto the sixth year of Darius” instead of “Darius and Artaxerxes” (כִּי לְדַעַרְיָה—רֹאשׁ שְׁתֵּא for דַּעַרְיָה שְׁתֵּא לְרֹאשׁ).

NEHEMIAH’S MISSION 547

ification is still favoured by a number of scholars of emi-

That Nehemiah lived in the reign of Artaxerxes I is now almost

certain, as will be shown below, and therefore if Ezra preceded

him in the same reign, this view must almost certainly be

accepted. We may therefore pass lightly over some older

views which located them both in some other reign, such as

Winckler’s proposal to carry them back to the reign of Darius I,

and to equate that king with Artaxerxes, or a proposal which

won several followers in earlier times, and which carried both

Ezra and Nehemiah down to the reign of Artaxerxes II. The

former rests on an arbitrary and ungrounded identification which

can claim no shadow of probability, while the latter is now

virtually excluded by the evidence of the Elephantine papyri, to

which we shall have to return briefly."
All of these views maintained the relative order of Ezra and Nehemiah. In recent years, however, a growing number of scholars have believed that Nehemiah really preceded Ezra. This view, again, has taken various forms. Some have held that while both belonged to the reign of Artaxerxes I, the year of the reign assigned to Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem is wrong, and that he belongs to a later period in this reign. In that case, it has been thought that both may have been in Jerusalem together on Nehemiah’s second visit.

Vernes, who held that Ezra succeeded Nehemiah, threw out in the form of a query the suggestion that while Nehemiah


2 S. Jellicoe (*E.T. lix* (1947-8), 54), has suggested that the Chronicler might have deliberately reversed the dates of Ezra and Nehemiah, so that Nehemiah’s first visit was in 457 B.C. and his second visit in 445 B.C., twelve years later, while Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 444 B.C. This fails to explain how the two men could independently exercise authority on the same matters at the same time, which is one of the greatest difficulties also of the traditional view.
belonged to the reign of Artaxerxes I. Ezra belonged to that of Artaxerxes II. ¹ A few years later Van Hoonacker presented this view in a more carefully worked out study. ² To it he returned in more than one publication, ³ and while some of the details of his view are not accepted by more recent scholars, ⁴ it has found a large number of adherents in more recent years. ⁵

¹ Cf. Précis d’histoire juive (1889), p. 582 n.
² Cf. Le Musée, ix (1890), 151 ff., 317 ff., 389 ff. (published separately as Néhémie et Esdras, une nouvelle hypothèse sur la chronologie de l’époque de la restauration, 1890).
⁴ Van Hoonacker supposed that Ezra was in Jerusalem on Nehemiah’s second visit, after which he went to Babylonia, returning in 397 B.C. with the book of the Law. Most who follow the general view of Van Hoonacker hold that Ezra’s first appearance in Jerusalem was in 397 B.C. Cf. Albright, J.B.L. xl (1921), 120: “The Belgian scholar made one mistake which seriously weakened his position, suggesting that Ezra was in fact an associate of Nehemiah, but later went back to Babylonia, only returning decades later . . . , an almost inconceivable hypothesis.” More recently, however, Albright is less sure on this point, and contents himself with saying: “It is not clear whether Nehemiah was in Jerusalem at the time (i.e. of Ezra’s mission); he is not specifically mentioned in the Ezra Memoirs proper, and the evidence is conflicting” (in Finkelstein, The Jews (1950), p. 53). Some of the scholars who place Ezra after Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes I find Ezra to be in Jerusalem on Nehemiah’s second visit.
⁵ In The Servant of the Lord, pp. 133 f., I give a list of twenty-six scholars who have adopted this view, and need not repeat them here. They include Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars of widely different schools. In one point I may correct an error. The reference for T. H. Robinson should be Companion to the Bible (ed. by T. W. Manson) (1939), pp. 257 ff., while W. L. Wardle’s name should be added to the list as the author of Record and Revelation (ed. by H. W. Robinson) (1938), p. 127 (which was wrongly attributed to T. H. Robinson). To my list may now be added W. K. Lowther Clarke, Concise Bible Commentary, pp. 452 f., H. Cazelles, V.T. iv (1954), 113 ff.
Lagrange, while following Van Hoonacker in general, held that Nehemiah belonged to the reign of Artaxerxes II and Ezra to that of Artaxerxes III, but later abandoned this for a closer agreement with Van Hoonacker. It has been already said that it is now practically certain that Nehemiah belonged to the reign of Artaxerxes I, and since Lagrange himself abandoned his earlier view, there is little need for us to linger over it. Of the other two views that which assigns Nehemiah to the reign of Artaxerxes I and Ezra to that of Artaxerxes II seems most probable, though it must be emphasized that nothing more than probability can be claimed for it. It rests on the following considerations, amongst others:

(1) Nehemiah and Ezra never appear together in the sources used by the Chronicler. It is true that there are one or two verses in our present text in which they are mentioned as contemporaries. But while these may yield valid proof that the Chronicler believed Ezra and Nehemiah to be contemporaries, they do not prove that his sources presented that view. Thus Neh. xii. 26 does not require the view that they were contemporary, while in Neh. x. 1 (Heb. 2), xii. 36 there are probably...


1 Cf. *R.B.* iii (1894), 583 ff., iv (1895), 193 ff.

2 Cf. *R.B.*, n.s., v (1908), 343 ff., xi (1914), 302.

3 I must refer the reader to my already mentioned essay for a full examination of this question. In that essay I do not consciously burke any issue in this complex question, and I avoid claiming greater certainty than the evidence warrants. On both sides greater confidence is sometimes expressed than the evidence warrants. Cf. the wise words of M. Noth (*Geschichte Israels*, 277): "Es muss aber ausdrücklich betont werden, dass eine sichere Entscheidung nicht mehr zu fallen ist, weil es an verlässlichen und eindeutigen Argumenten fehlt, und dass höchstens eine begrenzte Wahrscheinlichkeit vorliegt." A. Bentzen (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd edn., ii (1952), 207 f.), does not commit himself on this question.

4 Appeal is often made to this verse to support the view of the priority of Nehemiah. So Van Hoonacker, *R.B.* x (1901), 197; Batten, op. cit. p. 278; Browne, op. cit. p. 179; Albright, *J B L.* xl (1921), 121. I would attach little weight to this (cf. *The Servant of the Lord*, p. 144), but think it probable that the words "and of Ezra the priest the scribe", which are syntactically irregular, were not found in the Chronicler's source, but were added by him in accordance with his supposition that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries.
importations into the original sources. The crucial case, however, is Neh. viii. 9. This is the account of Ezra's reading of the Law in Jerusalem. It is placed after Nehemiah's arrival in the west in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes by the sudden and casual introduction of Nehemiah in the midst of the narrative, which otherwise consistently ignores him. This is doubly curious. In the first place it is curious that the man who came from the king armed with royal authority to enforce obedience to the book of the Law and to regulate religious practice in Judaea should wait thirteen years before reading the Law, and in the second place it is curious that Nehemiah, who had lately come from the king with high authority should figure so slightly and so casually on so important an occasion. He is a mere passenger in the story, and his name could be omitted without the slightest loss to the story. It is therefore possible that his name was included here simply because the Chronicler believed the two men to have been contemporaries, and we may be grateful to his honesty that he has so slightly touched up the story. It may be added that throughout their work Ezra and Nehemiah act quite independently of one another, and apart from these slight touches each is consistently ignored in the account of the other's work. It is sometimes supposed that the one was armed with civil authority and the other with religious, and it is therefore not surprising that they seldom figured together. This is a view which will not survive the careful examination of the account given of their work; for we find that they


act independently on the same questions, and neither accepted the limitation to a religious or a civil mission that this theory would impose on them.

(2) The High Priest who was contemporary with Nehemiah was Eliashib.\(^1\) In Ezra x. 6, on the other hand, we read that, after a solemn gathering in the Temple when Ezra had reproached the people and when the priests and Scribes and all Israel had taken a solemn oath, Ezra entered the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib. Johanan was in reality the grandson of Eliashib, as we learn from Neh. xii. 11.\(^2\) It is not said that Johanan was the High Priest, but since it is known that the grandson of Eliashib did become High Priest it is probable that this incident fell during his High Priesthood. For it is on every ground more likely that Ezra, who was acting at the time as the leader of the nation and carrying out a commission given to him by the king, should on such a public occasion repair to the High Priest's room than that he should go to that of a mere youth.

(3) That Nehemiah belongs to the time of Artaxerxes I is rendered almost certain by the evidence of the Elephantine papyri. For in 408 B.C. the Elephantine Jews appealed for influence to be exercised on their behalf on the governing authorities to authorize the rebuilding of their Temple, which had been destroyed by their enemies.\(^3\) They addressed their appeal to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judaea,\(^4\) whom they informed that they had also written to Johanan the High Priest,\(^5\) and to the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria.\(^6\) It is clear, then, that Sanballat was still governor, but since the appeal was addressed to his sons, whereas the highest authorities were approached in Jerusalem, it would appear that the actual administration in Samaria was in the hands of Sanballat's sons, and that their father was probably advanced in years. The

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\(^1\) Cf. Neh. iii. 1.

\(^2\) Here Jonathan stands for Johanan. Cf. Neh. xii. 22 f. The names are not, of course, to be equated but יוחנן could easily be confused with יוחנן by a scribal slip.

\(^3\) Cf. AP 30 (in Cowley's Aramaic Papyri, pp. 108 ff.).

\(^4\) AP 30:1.

\(^5\) AP 30:18.

\(^6\) AP 30:29.
period of his active opposition to Nehemiah would therefore fall some years before this, and hence Nehemiah belongs almost certainly to the reign of Artaxerxes I. This is the evidence to which reference has been made, which renders it virtually certain that wherever Ezra belongs Nehemiah should be assigned to the middle of the fifth century B.C., and therefore to the reign of Artaxerxes I.¹

(4) If, then, Ezra’s work belongs to the period of the High Priesthood of the grandson of Nehemiah’s contemporary, it would seem probable that it belongs to the reign of Artaxerxes II, and since we learn from the above-mentioned papyrus that Johanan was High Priest in 408 B.C., four years before the accession of Artaxerxes II, we have supporting evidence of the probability that his High Priesthood lasted into the reign of Artaxerxes II.²

¹ Josephus tells of a Sanballat who lived in the fourth century B.C., at the time of Alexander’s conquest, and of the part he played in the Samaritan schism and the establishment of the temple on Mount Gerizim (Antiquities, xi. viii. 1 ff. (xi. 304 ff.)). Kennett thinks Josephus was a century out in his chronology, and transfers Josephus’s Sanballat to the fifth century B.C. (The Church of Israel, pp. 64 ff.; cf. Cambridge Biblical Essays, pp. 126 ff.). Torrey, on the other hand, holds that there were two Sanballats, the one being the grandson of the other, and makes Nehemiah contemporary with the latter (J.B.L. xlvii (1928), 380 ff.). But Jaddua, who is the only High Priest of whom we have knowledge after Johanan down to the time of Alexander, appears to have succeeded Johanan directly (cf. Neh. xii. 22), and this would leave no room for the Eliashib who was the High Priest contemporary with Nehemiah (cf. Neh. iii. 1). The grandfather of Johanan, who was High Priest in 411 B.C., would have been High Priest in the middle of the fifth century B.C., and the contemporary of the Sanballat of the papyri, and since Nehemiah was the contemporary of Sanballat and Eliashib, there seems no alternative but to locate him in the fifth century. Torrey himself notes that Jaddua is represented by Josephus as an old man at the time of Alexander and rejects the suggestion of any other High Priest between Johanan and Jaddua (J.B.L. xlviij (1928), 383; cf. Ezra Studies, p. 320, where he had favoured the possibility that more than one High Priest might have held office between Johanan and Jaddua), without explaining how a Nehemiah who was in Jerusalem with the grandfather of Johanan could first have come to the city long after that grandfather was dead.

² H. Cazelles (V.T. iv (1954), 132) has cleverly suggested that it was the loss of Egypt which provided the political motive behind the Persian king’s sending of Ezra on his mission, and used the evidence of E. G. Kraeling’s Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri to show that the loss of Egypt did not occur until 399 B.C. (ibid. p. 114).
Returning now to the question of the relation of the events recorded in Ezra iv to the work of Ezra and Nehemiah, we find that some who make Ezra precede Nehemiah find here the account of the check that Ezra received soon after his arrival in Jerusalem.¹ For this view there is no Biblical evidence whatever. The incident of Ezra iv. 8-23 is not connected in any way with Ezra, and it is wholly gratuitous to assume that Ezra came armed with authority from the king, but exercised it in such a way that his enemies successfully appealed to the king against him. Such a course would inevitably have led to his recall, the more so since, according to this hypothesis, Ezra had not yet begun to put into effect the provisions of the book of the Law he was authorized to carry out, but instead was engaging in unauthorized action of which the king disapproved. That there was some unofficial attempt to rebuild the walls in the reign of Artaxerxes I may well be the case; but to attribute this to Ezra is to besmirch his character without warrant or justification.

It is far more likely that the incident referred to in Ezra iv. 8-23 is something that happened immediately prior to the mission of Nehemiah. This is the view of many who hold that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, as well as of many who reverse the order of these leaders.² It seems to me hard to suppose that it can refer to anything that happened while Ezra was in Jerusalem.


For his authority went beyond the ordering of the cultus, and was very similar to that exercised by Nehemiah in its range.\(^1\) If the community of which he was the leader had indulged in activity of which the king disapproved, whether he were directly responsible for the activity or not, it is likely that attention would be paid to him, and his failure to begin the work that had been entrusted to him would have brought him into trouble. If, however, this activity took place before the mission of Nehemiah, while Ezra is to be placed long subsequently, the position is very different. The depression of Nehemiah on hearing that the walls, which had begun to go up, had been torn down again by the enemies of the Jews, would be understandable. It is true that in Ezra iv we are only told that the work of rebuilding was forcibly interrupted and not that the part that had been rebuilt was torn down, whereas the news that distressed Nehemiah was that the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down. It is not unlikely, however, that enemies who were authorized to interrupt the rebuilding by force interpreted their authority to cover the breaking down of what had been done.\(^2\) On the other hand, the king had ordered the suspension of the work until such time as he should give permission for it to be resumed. When the favourite butler persuaded his master to entrust him with the rebuilding of the walls, when the loyalty of the servant could be relied on,\(^3\) there was no violation of the alleged inviolability of

\(^1\) Cf. what I have written in *The Servant of the Lord*, p. 153: "Had Ezra addressed himself exclusively to the religious side of the people's life, with which he was charged, and Nehemiah addressed himself exclusively to civil tasks, we might still have expected to find them in closer association than we do. But we find Nehemiah regulating the priesthood (Neh. vii. 64 ff., x. 32 ff.), and later regulating tithes and appointing Temple treasurers (Neh. xiii. 10 ff.), and concerning himself with the observance of the sabbath (Neh. xiii. 15 ff.). Moreover, both take action in the matter of mixed marriages... The fields of their interest and activity so much overlapped, therefore, that they can hardly have exercised authority simultaneously."

\(^2\) Cf. L. E. Browne, op. cit. p. 139; W. Rudolph, *Esra and Nehemia*, p. 44.

\(^3\) Kennett (Cambridge Biblical Essays, p. 118) developed a suggestion of Cheyne's to explain the king's change of policy. This is that the Samaritans were involved in a Syrian revolt in 448 B.C., while the Jews remained loyal. This is thought to have led to the replacement of Rehum and Shimshai by Sanballat and Tobiah and the reversal of the king's distrust of the Jews. The theory assumes that the king either failed to inform Sanballat of this reversal, or
the Persian decrees, of which we read in more than one passage of the Bible,¹ and of which Diodorus Siculus also bears witness.²

This view seems to me to fit the case better than any other. It certainly seems preferable to Stanley Cook’s suggestion that the incident of Ezra iv. 7-23 stood later in the reign of Artaxerxes I, after Nehemiah’s return to the court.³ This view would leave quite unexplained the gloom of Nehemiah preceding his first mission, on hearing the news from Jerusalem. Moreover, if Nehemiah saw the completion of the building of the walls,⁴ it is hard to see how there could be a partial rebuilding so few years later, unless there had first been another unrecorded destruction of them. If there had been such a destruction, followed by another incomplete rebuilding, we are also left without any indication when the walls were completely rebuilt after Nehemiah’s time.

Julian Morgenstern, who places Ezra before Nehemiah and both in the reign of Artaxerxes I,⁵ has more than once indicated his view that Jerusalem suffered a major disaster early in the reign of Xerxes, about 485 B.C. This view was first adumbrated many years ago,⁶ and a full development of it promised in a work then in preparation. This work has not yet been published, and that he made a poor choice in Sanballat. In the assumed situation Sanballat would scarcely have run so directly counter to the monarch’s will. It is clear that Sanballat regarded Nehemiah’s mission as resting only on his personal favour with the king, and not on grounds of high policy, so that if Nehemiah were removed the mission would collapse, and a convincing story could easily justify a fait accompli.

¹ Cf. Dan. vi. 9 (Heb. 10) ; Est. i. 19 ; viii. 8. L. B. Paton, Esther (I.C.C.) (1908), p. 157, says it is extremely improbable that such a custom existed.
² Cf. Diodorus Siculus, xviii. 30 : ἀλλ’ οὐ γὰρ ἵν δυνατὸν τὸ γεγονός διὰ τῆς βασιλικῆς ἔξουσίας ἀγένητον κατασκευάσαι.
⁶ In 1935 Dr. Morgenstern read a paper on this subject to the American Oriental Society. Cf. J.A.O.S. lv (1935), 364. The title of his paper, which has not, so far as I am aware, been published, was “What happened to Jerusalem about 485 B.C.” Since then he has frequently referred to his view. Cf. A.J.S.L. lv (1938), 56 ; H.U.C.A. xvi (1941), 25 n., 48 n. ; xix (1945-6), 494 ; xxi (1948), 458 ; xxii (1949), 380, 399 ; xxiii, part i (1950-1), 198 f. ; xxiv (1952-3), 63 n. ; Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, loc. cit. Cf. also S. H. Blank, H.U.C.A. xi (1936), 172, 174, 182.
I believe it is not to be expected for some years. The evidence on which it rests, therefore, is not yet available. In one of his published indications of this view he says that the Jews, or the extreme nationalists among them, made a desperate, but unsuccessful, attempt to regain political independence and to set a descendant of David on the throne. "This revolution was planned and inaugurated at the moment of the death of Darius I and the accession of Xerxes to the Persian throne in 485 B.C.E. In a few short months the revolution was completely crushed by a coalition of the little neighbouring states, with Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites in the van, and encouraged and supported by the Persians themselves. The land was overrun and the people massacred; Jerusalem was besieged and captured; its walls were destroyed and its gates burned; the Temple was sacked and burned in part; countless thousands of the people, and especially its youth, who had escaped the general massacre, were taken captive and sold as slaves in the slave markets of the Mediterranean world." 

Here we are faced with the question who had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem after their destruction by Nebuchadrezzar for them to be broken down at this time. For the answer to this we must await the fuller treatment which Dr. Morgenstern has promised. Meanwhile he has interpreted a number of passages of the Bible in terms of this situation early in the reign of Xerxes. The disaster postulated by this view is held to have

1 Dr. Morgenstern, in a private letter in 1953, says that the manuscript of this work, which was partly prepared some years ago, had to be set aside for other tasks, and he has not been able to return to it. Cf. H.U.C.A. xxiii, part 1 (1950-1) (published in 1952), 198 n.

2 Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, loc. cit.

3 Kennett (Cambridge Biblical Essays, pp. 116 f.; The Church of Israel, p. 60) thinks the building of the walls was begun by Zerubbabel, and that it was resumed in 485 B.C. He builds this conjecture on Ezra iv. 6. and thinks the letter to Xerxes had reference to this. Cf. Morgenstern, J.N.E.S. ii (1943), 129.

4 So Isa. xli. 21; xliii. 15; xliv. 6; Mic. ii. 13; iv. 7; Zeph. iii. 15; Judges viii. 22 f.; 1 Sam. viii.; xii (H.U.C.A. xvi (1941), 42 n.); Isa. lx. B (H.U.C.A. xxii (1949), 399); Isa. lxiii. 7-14 and Psa. cvi (H.U.C.A. xxiii, part 1 (1950-1), 199); Psa. lxivii B (H.U.C.A. xvi (1941), 5 f.); Psa. lxiv (H.U.C.A. xix (1945-6), 494, xxiv (1952-3), 63 n.); Psa. lxxix. 1-4 (H.U.C.A. xxiv (1952-3), 63 n.); Ezek. xxvii A, xxvii (H.U.C.A. xvi (1941), 18 n.). Cf. also S. H. Blank, loc. cit. pp. 159 ff., where a number of other passages are ascribed to this date.
been comparable to that suffered in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135,\(^1\) and to have called forth the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah,\(^2\) which are usually attributed to a prophet of the period of the Exile.

A disaster so resounding as this would inevitably have been known to the Jews who were living in the east much earlier than the time of Ezra's mission, which Morgenstern places in 458 B.C., or the mission of Nehemiah, in 444 B.C., some forty years after it occurred. It could scarcely account for the depression of Nehemiah, therefore. Moreover, it leaves Ezra iv. 8-23 without explanation, unless there was a further attempt at rebuilding in the reign of Artaxerxes I before the mission of Nehemiah. If there were, we should have to conclude that the Jews rapidly recovered from this major disaster, and we should also be surprised that the enemies of the Jews, when they wrote to Artaxerxes, must curiously have forgotten such recent events, since they referred the king to the ancient records about Jerusalem. Nor would one have supposed that the king would need to have ancient records searched to establish the turbulent nature of Jerusalem, if there had been major trouble there in the preceding reign.

For these reasons, pending the fuller treatment which Morgenstern has promised, I prefer the view which so many scholars hold, and to which I have already referred. Had there been an abortive attempt to rebuild the walls in the reign of Artaxerxes, only a very short time before Nehemiah's mission, the depression of Nehemiah on hearing of the condition of the city would be understood.\(^3\) But the probability that Ezra's work should be transferred to the reign of Artaxerxes II would be increased. Such an abortive attempt could scarcely be placed in the reign of Artaxerxes I prior to Ezra's mission, and if it had and had yet been followed by the evidence of the king's favour in Ezra's mission, Nehemiah would not have felt so much apprehension in seeking the king's further favour. On the other hand, it is very difficult to suppose that this abortive

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\(^1\) Cf. Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, loc. cit.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Kennett (Cambridge Biblical Essays, loc. cit.; The Church of Israel, loc. cit.) thinks the abortive effort to rebuild the walls in the time of Xerxes was followed by another attempt c. 460-455 B.C., and refers Ezra iv. 8 ff. to this.
attempt to rebuild the walls had taken place after Ezra's arrival in the city, save on the already mentioned theory that Ezra had made a complete mess of things. It is curious that some of those who were most zealous to defend the chronological order of Ezra and Nehemiah as it appears in the Bible are willing to do so at the cost of jettisoning the Biblical representation of the character of Ezra, and the reduction of him to the stature of an incompetent who had to be rescued by Nehemiah after his failure.¹

Preferable to this seems the view that the work of the two men should be completely disentangled. It is improbable that the Chronicler wilfully confused the record, since the confusion does not seem to spring out of any of his preconceived ideas. It is more likely that he had but vague knowledge of the history of the Persian period, and that he wrongly identified the two kings of the same name mentioned in the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, and then did the best he could with what he found.

On this view an abortive attempt to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was made shortly before Nehemiah's mission, and it was therefore quite clearly known to him that he would encounter opposition to his task. The people who had successfully brought the work to an end once would certainly be watching for any mistake he might make which would give them an opportunity to make a fresh charge. This situation sufficiently explains the secrecy of Nehemiah's plans for the rebuilding,² and the speed with which the work was carried through.³ He wished to lay his plans without any possibility of leakage to the enemy before their execution began, and then to let the execution be so swift that the work would be finished before they could successfully appeal to the king against it once more. They were therefore reduced to personal plots against Nehemiah, which did

¹ It is frequently supposed, by those who take this view, to whom reference has been made above, that it was Ezra's harshness and excess of his mandate which led to his undoing. Schaeder, on the contrary, attributes to him an extreme mildness and ineffectiveness of character, and presupposes a situation which Welch (Post-exilic Judaism, p. 257) characterizes as Gilbertian.
² Cf. Neh. ii. 12 ff.
not wait on the cumbrous machinery of an appeal to the throne.¹

All this taxed the resource of Nehemiah to the utmost. Speed was essential to the successful carrying out of his task; on the other hand, any sort of delaying tactics were essential to his enemies. When they failed by other means they assembled an army to march against Jerusalem to intimidate Nehemiah by the threat of an attack,² and to ensure that at any rate his people should be forced to look to their own defence and therefore to neglect the work of building. But Nehemiah was equal to this situation, and combined adequate defence measures and ceaseless vigilance with unflagging diligence in building.³ His next peril was of a different kind. His builders were having to neglect their ordinary occupations, whereby they lived. Moreover, those who lived in the country had to leave their homes and farms at the mercy of the enemy, with the result that there was a double strain to provide supplies for their maintenance.⁴ This led to inner tensions within the community. The rich began to exploit their power over those who were in want, and to get into their own hands the lands or the families of those who were forced to seek loans from them.⁵ Here once more Nehemiah proved equal to the situation, and by mingled rebuke and appeal restored healthier relations within the community.⁶

With his return to the court and subsequent second visit to Jerusalem I cannot deal here. His anger on finding that during his absence his enemies had secured a footing in Jerusalem ⁷ can be easily understood. His enemy Tobiah was installed in rooms in the Temple itself,⁸ and the grandson of the High

¹ Cf. Neh. vi. 2 ff. Cheyne (Jewish Religious Life after the Exile (1898), p. 48) thinks Nehemiah was over-suspicious of Sanballat, who may have been prepared to be genuinely friendly. We are too far from the events to be able to judge of this with confidence, in the absence of any evidence from Sanballat's side. It should, however, be remembered that an unwarranted trust in Sanballat might have been fatal to Nehemiah and his mission, and that caution was less hazardous.
² Cf. Neh. iv. 11 (Heb. 5).
³ Cf. Neh. iv. 13 ff. (Heb. 7 ff.).
⁴ Cf. Batten, in Hastings's D.B. iii (1900), 508.
⁵ Neh. v. 1 ff.
⁶ Neh. v. 6 ff.
⁷ Neh. xiii. 8, 25, 28.
⁸ Neh. xiii. 4 ff.
Priest, Eliashib, had actually married a daughter of the Sanballat who had so bitterly opposed Nehemiah.\(^1\) With characteristic vigour Nehemiah dealt with this situation, and not only drove out his foes but took steps to prevent further mixed marriages.\(^2\) After successfully resisting the perils from without he was not prepared to turn them into perils from within. It is easier to condemn him for narrowness and intolerance than to enter into his position and to understand the situation in which he had been placed by the opposition he had faced, when so little might have turned the scale and given him failure instead of success. That he could be fiery and quick-tempered is scarcely to be denied; but had he not been a man of such a character he would never have carried through his task. His vigour and energy were essential, and he proved the man for the hour precisely because he was that kind of man.\(^3\) And it is when we see his task in the setting of that background of a recent abortive attempt to build the walls, ending in miserable and humiliating failure, that we can see the measure of his task and can appreciate the stature of the man who carried it through.

\(^1\) Neh. xiii. 28. 
\(^2\) Neh. xiii. 25. 
\(^3\) Cf. T. K. Cheyne, *Jewish Religious Life*, pp. 44 f.: "That he was impatient and masterful, is but a way of saying that he was extremely able and knew his own ability. The times demanded such a man, and any other living Jew would probably have failed."