

fervor in prayer, through the restraint laid upon physical appetite; (c) as the testimony that 'man lives not by bread alone.' " (Cambridge Bible.) *At the river of Ahava*; unknown, though in all probability one of the many canals in the vicinity of Babylon. Here Ezra, aided by the "chief men" among the Jews, had gathered the company of returning exiles in readiness for the start. *That we might humble ourselves* (Rev. Ver.). Their important mission is not to be undertaken lightly or thoughtlessly, but with deepest heart-searching and trust in God. *A straight way* (Rev. Ver.); that is, a direct road, so that they would not have to turn aside because of attacks and dangers from enemies, also a level road without obstacles (compare Isa. 40 : 3). *Our little ones*. The Hebrew word includes both children and women. *Substance*. They had much goods with them, as the sequel shows.

Vs. 22, 23. *I was ashamed*, etc. To ask a guard from the king would have been to unsay what he had already said about God's protection (compare 2 Chron. 16 : 9) and thus bring dishonor on Him. God thus appealed to is sure to grant the protection sought; for His own honor is at stake in the matter. *Help . . . against the enemy*; robbers and Bedouins of the desert, who lived by plunder. *The hand of our God*, etc.; His merciful favor kept for those who seek Him, as His wrath for those who forsake Him. *Besought . . . God . . . he was intreated*. God answered Ezra's confidence by leading him safely to Jerusalem. Of this safeguarding Ezra now feels sure.

II. Guarding the Offerings, 24-30.

V. 24. *Twelve of the chiefs of the priests, besides Sherebiah, Hashabiah, etc.* (Rev. Ver., Margin). Sherebiah and Hashabiah being Levites (v. 18), the meaning likely is that Ezra selected twelve priests and twelve Levites, of whom Sherebiah and Hashabiah were two.

Vs. 25-27. *Weighed unto them*. The treasures included: (1) silver and gold in bars or ingots, not coined money; (2) vessels of gold and "fine copper," a metal so rare as to be "precious as gold." The Cambridge Bible reckons a talent of silver as worth \$1,875

and of gold, \$33,750. A dram is equivalent to \$5.00. (In *THE HOME STUDY QUARTERLY*, \$6,250 should read \$33,750, that is, £6,750, which multiplied by five gives the amount in dollars. The total specified values thus amount to \$4,786,250.)

Vs. 28-30. *Ye are holy . . . the vessels are holy*. Both the treasure and the persons who guarded it were holy: that is, they belonged to God and were set apart for His service. A double responsibility, therefore, rested on these men. *A freewill offering*; among the Jews, an offering not commanded, but presented out of pure love to God. *Unto the Lord God of your fathers*. This appeal to the past would awaken memories of the covenant made long ago by Jehovah with His people, Ex. 19 : 5, 6. *Watch ye*; a word denoting vigilance and wakefulness. They were not only to keep a sharp lookout while on the march, but some of them were constantly to be awake to guard the treasure whilst the others slept. (Compare Matt. 24 : 46; Luke 12 : 36.) *Until ye weigh them . . . at Jerusalem*. There must be faithfulness all the way. They will be asked for a public, solemn account in God's city, in God's own house. Therefore must they exercise the utmost care. *Chambers of the house*; the rooms on either side of the main building (1 Kgs. 6 : 5), used partly as chambers for the priests and partly as storerooms, Neh. 13 : 5. *So took the priests and the Levites*; twelve of each (see on v. 24). The responsibilities connected with the trust had been impressed upon them, but they did not plead inability or say that too much was expected of them, as so many do when asked to consecrate themselves to the Lord.

III. Making the Journey, 31, 32.

Vs. 31, 32. *Departed . . . twelfth day*; after setting out for Babylon, ch. 7 : 9. Three days had been spent at "the river of Ahava" (v. 15), and therefore it had taken nine days to reach this point. *Of the first month*. "The caravan set out on the twelfth day of the first month (April, 458), and arrived in Jerusalem three and a half months (110 days) later. The distance travelled was from 800 to 1,000 miles" (A. B. Davidson), a long detour being made to avoid the desert.