

gifts from Babylon had been deposited in the temple and solemn sacrifices had been offered, the people in a body were summoned to meet in Jerusalem to consider the question of divorce and heathen intermarriage. A commission of enquiry was appointed with the result that the guilty parties were persuaded to put away their wives. For reasons which we need not pause to mention here, however, these reforms were short-lived and time was soon to show that Ezra's mission had been for the most part a failure.

The curtain again drops and the next thirteen years is, comparatively speaking, a blank in the history of the community at Jerusalem. At the end of that time, however, it is evident that serious disasters have overtaken the city. This we learn from the report brought to Nehemiah, cupbearer at the Persian Court, through his brother Hanani. The gates of the city have been burnt and breaches have been made in the walls. Nehemiah, on hearing the deplorable condition of affairs, obtained a leave of absence from the king, and at once set out for Jerusalem. This was in the year 445 B.C., which is the next important date after 458 B.C.

Nehemiah's immediate mission to Jerusalem was to move the people to the task of repairing the city's walls. But during the progress of this work, word was brought to him of the existence of serious evils which had sprung up within recent years, evils to which we shall have to refer in a few moments. In company with Ezra, he at once took up the work of reform. In the year 444 B.C., a great convocation of the people was held, at which the priestly code brought from Babylon by Ezra fourteen years before was introduced for the first time. After it had been read by Ezra, the nation by solemn oath pledged itself to the observance of this law, just as in the days of Josiah it had pledged itself to the newly found law Deuteronomy. Henceforth the law which is to guide the nation is the completed law—what we know to-day as the Pentateuch.

Now let us see what bearing the introduction of the new code has upon the question with which we are at present concerned, or if it has any bearing upon it. Well, in the prophecy