



LESSON IX.—AUGUST 27.

**Returning From Captivity.**

Ezra i., 1-11. Memory verses, 2-4. Read Ezra ii., 64-70.

**Golden Text.**

'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.'—Psa. cxxvi., 3.

**Home Readings.**

M. Ezra i. Returning from Captivity.  
T. Ezra ii., 1 and 64-70. Returning captives.  
W. Jer. xxix., 10-14. The word of Jeremiah.  
T. Isa. xli., 21-28. Prophecy of return.  
F. Isa. lxi. Proclamation of liberty.  
S. Isa. li., 9-16. Joy of redemption.  
S. Psalm cvii., 1-15. Praise for deliverance.

**Lesson Text.**

Supt.—1. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

School.—2. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Je-ru-sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah.

3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru-sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah, and build the house of the Lord God of Is-ra-el, (he is the God,) which is in Je-ru-sa-lem.

4. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Je-ru-sa-lem.

5. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Ju-dah and Ben-ja-min, and the priests, and the Le-vites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Je-ru-sa-lem.

6. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

7. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house, of the Lord, which Neb-u-chadnez-zar had brought forth out of Je-ru-sa-lem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8. Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mith-re-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz-zar, the prince of Ju'dah.

9. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives.

10. Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz-zar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Baby-lon unto Je-ru-sa-lem.

**Suggestions.**

The prophecies which we have been studying, the promises of the return of the exiles to their own land, began to be fulfilled in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia. About this time Daniel, in studying the prophecies of Jeremiah understood that the seventy years of captivity (Jer. xxv., 12), were almost at an end (Dan. x., 2).

So Daniel prayed and fasted before God, confessing the sins of his people and pleading because of God's great mercy, the fulfillment of the prophecies. Probably Daniel also shewed to Cyrus the word spoken of him by Isaiah some two hundred years before (Isa. xli., 28; xiv., 1-7, 13). Cyrus declared plainly that the Lord God had spoken to him bidding him build a temple at Jerusalem for the worship and glory of Jehovah. For this reason he made a proclamation through all his domains bidding the true-hearted men of Israel return to their own country and build at Jerusalem the house of their God. Also bidding the people among whom they had dwelt to assist in every way the return of the exiles to their homes.

Then the chief of the fathers of Judah

and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites and all the choicest men from among the captives gladly rose at the call of the Lord through Cyrus and set out for their own land with hope and praise. About fifty thousand returned at this time, forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty freemen, and over seven hundred servants. The people of the land helped them with money, horses, mules and camels and precious things. With them went the Tirshatha or governor, Jerubbabel, who seems to have been the same as Sheshbazar.

The sacred vessels belonging to the Temple which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem at the time of the second captivity had been preserved through the long years, and were now given to the governor to carry back to the temple.

It has been pointed out that the captivity and exile of the Jews in Chaldea was the means of sifting and refining the nation as nothing else could have done. God allowed them to be taken captive because of their disobedience to him, but he made the punishment a blessing to them. The Chaldean culture and learning was an education to the Jews who had lived so exclusively in their own land. Their sympathies were broadened by the contact with men of other thoughts. The captivity gave to the Jews a longing for their own God and his worship, it taught them the need of praying and studying the Scriptures as they would not have learned it had they remained unpunished by God in their own land. Some of the most noble and beautiful books of prophecy and praise were written in this period.

'Ezra was a Jewish scribe, a Levite, and descendant of Aaron.' He was born about B.C. 495, and lived seventy or eighty years. He brought another band of the exiles home about eighty years later than the return described in the first chapter of his book.

**Lesson Hymn.**

On the mountain's top appearing,

Lo, the sacred herald stands,

Welcome news to Zion bearing,

Zion, long in hostile lands,

Mourning captive!

God himself shall loose thy bands.

Has thy night been long and mournful?

Have thy friends unfaithful proved?

Have thy foes been proud and scornful,

By thy sighs and tears unmoved?

Cease thy mourning,

Zion still is well beloved.

Peace and joy shall now attend thee:

All thy warfare now is past;

God thy Saviour will defend thee;

Victory is thine at last:

All thy conflicts

End in everlasting rest.

—T. Kelly.

**The Bible Class.**

'The captivity of sin.'—Rom. vi., 16, 20; vii., 23-25; viii., 20-22. John viii., 32-36.

**C. E. Topic.**

Aug. 27.—Green pastures; the Christian's pleasures.—Ps. xxxiii., 1-6.

**Junior C. E.**

Aug. 27.—God sees us: how should we live? Prov. xv., 3, 8, 9, 18, 26, 29.

She was a discouraged Sunday-school teacher. Her class did not flourish to her satisfaction. The fault was not due to lack of preparation, for she spent hours each week over the lesson. To be sure she received respectful attention, but somehow the truths she tried to interpret and enforce did not seem to be getting a grip on the hearts and consciences of her pupils. The other Sunday she came home quite in despair, and though a woman of large intellectual resources and of warm spiritual life she was ready to conclude that she was not designed for a Sunday-school teacher. That very evening one of the men in the class, quite independent in his thinking and never particularly responsive before to her appeals, came to her and said that he and his wife were intending to join the church at the next communion. This turned the tide. Here at least was fruit from months of patient effort. To have led one soul to take a step that marked definite progress in the spiritual life filled her with high hope and new enthusiasm. Toil on, faithful teachers everywhere. You know not how soon you may reach the goal.—'Occident.'

**Tobacco Catechism.**

(By Dr. R. H. McDonald, of San Francisco.)

**CHAPTER XII.—MISCELLANEOUS EFFECTS.**

1. Q.—What does Dr. Richardson say of the disturbances caused by using tobacco?

A.—That smoking disturbs the blood, the stomach, the mucous membrane of the mouth, the heart, the organs of sense, the brain, and the nerves.

2. Q.—What did a celebrated medical Professor say of the above?

A.—That this did not leave very much of a man but his hair and bones.

3. Q.—What does Dr. Gibbons say of tobacco and alcohol as medicinal agents?

A.—First: both tobacco and alcohol being active medicinal agents must be injurious to the healthy body.

Second: 'Neither of them can be useful as a medicine to persons accustomed to them in health. For the abstainer, and for him alone have they any healing virtue in sickness.'

4. Q.—Give an example of excessive smoking.

A.—Lorenzo and Sirò-Delmonico, the famous New York caterers, are among those who have died from the use of tobacco. Dr. Wood says of the latter, 'I have known him to smoke one hundred cigars a day.'

5. Q.—How has life repeatedly been destroyed?

A.—By drinking a tea of from twenty to thirty grains of tobacco for relieving spasms.

6. Q.—What celebrated French poet came to his death through tobacco?

A.—Santeuil. He died from drinking a glass of wine in which some snuff had been mixed.

7. Q.—How can you prove that the use of tobacco does not aid digestion?

A.—After laying aside the habitual use of tobacco, most people experience an increase of appetite and of digestive energy, and gain flesh.

8. Q.—How can you prove that tobacco using does not prevent infectious and epidemic diseases?

A.—In Havana, in 1833, one-eight of the population, which was one hundred and twenty thousand, was killed by cholera in a few weeks.

Dr. Moore, of Yucatan, Mexico, states that the city of Campeachy lost the fourth of its inhabitants in thirty days. The people of both these places are inveterate users of tobacco.

9. Q.—Are the worst effects of tobacco using seen immediately?

A.—To one using tobacco they are not. Like small-pox and hydrophobia, tobacco mingles with the blood, and circulates with it for some time, before the effects are perceived or developed.

10. Q.—How does the habit affect a man's sense of propriety?

A.—He is cautious at first, but gradually loses that nice sense of propriety which marks the true gentleman in all the relations of life.

11. Q.—What effect does tobacco have on the energy of the user?

A.—It weakens the energy, causes a love for indolence, and deadens the voice of conscience.

12. Q.—What effect does its use have upon the disposition?

A.—It makes a man selfish, so that he does not care whether he annoys others or not. He will often rudely puff tobacco smoke in the face of ladies with entire indifference.

13. Q.—Would people be likely to use tobacco as they do if they could see how and where it is manufactured?

A.—If people could see the loathsome places in which much of the tobacco they use is manufactured, they would recoil, ere befouling themselves with matter thus prepared by filthy hands, in filthier dens, by a most filthy process.

14. Q.—What mode of using tobacco is said to be purely an American custom?

A.—That of chewing, and foreigners are quick to notice this filthy habit. Among