

and tell that this captivity was caused by sin. Sin leads us away from God, and binds our hands and hearts to keep us away from him. Now there was a new king in the country to which the Jews had been taken. Tell about Cyrus, his wisdom and kindness, and the good laws he made for his people. Tell that it was God who put it into his heart to let the Jews go back to their own land. Teach that every good, kind thought comes from God, and when we do not do as it bids we are turning away from God. Tell that Cyrus heard God's voice and obeyed. Read the proclamation, and help children to imagine the joy of the captives. They knew that God was calling them to come home!

2. Teach that when God calls his children he always gives them something to do for him. Recall the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the command to build a new one. Tell how all the gold and silver vessels belonging to the old temple were given back to the Jews by Cyrus, and how much gold and silver to help in building a new one were given them. Teach

that God wants each child to build a heart temple in which he may live. He will give all the help needed. His Book is full of the gold and silver of wisdom and truth. Will we take it? He gives his Spirit to teach us how to build. We do not know how, but he will teach us. When shall we begin?



3. Tell how the altar was first raised for worship. If we are to build for the Lord, we must begin at the place of prayer. Describe the joy of the people when the day came upon which the foundation was laid. Tell why they were so glad. They knew that God would live in his own house. Teach that this same great God will live in the little temples we build for him. Tell the child's reply when asked, "How great is God?" "So great that he fills the universe, and so small that he lives in my heart."

## B. C. 445.]

## LESSON IX. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

[Feb. 28.]

Neh. 1. 1-11. [Commit to memory verses 8, 9.]



1 The words of Ne-he-mi'ah the son of Hach'a-li'ah. And it came to pass in the month Chis'leu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'shan the palace,  
2 That Han'a-ni, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Ju'dah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Je-ru'sa-lem.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Je-ru'sa-lem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire.  
4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which

I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Is-ra-el thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Is-ra-el, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them: though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.

## General Statement.

This lesson belongs to a period almost a century later than the last. It represents a state of affairs in Judea very different from the early hope and joy of the returned exiles. The generation of which Zerubbabel and Jeshua were the leaders and Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets had passed away, and no great men had risen in their places. The temple had been rebuilt, though with none of its ancient splendor, and the daily sacrifice was maintained. But the Jews of Palestine were in a humiliated condition. Jerusalem was a mere unvalued village, open to attack from its enemies, and almost abandoned by its inhabitants. The Jews of Palestine were in deep poverty; and were without ambition to rise out of their wretchedness. They were neglecting the precepts and institutions of their law, were freely mingling in marriage with the Gentile and idol-worshipping peoples around, and were raising up children who could not speak their own sacred language. The Sabbath was neglected, and becoming a day of trade in the market. There was imminent danger

lest the holy seed would become extinct and the glorious hope of Israel would pass away. In that hour of need two leaders were raised up, one to bring the people back to their law, the other to inspire them with self-respect and restore their fortunes. These two men were Ezra and Nehemiah; both of whom belonged to the Jews of the dispersion, and voluntarily left their homes in the far East to aid their needy brethren. Ezra was a religious teacher, who came to reform the people in Judea and restore the law of Moses to more than its ancient authority. Nehemiah was a nobleman in high position at the court of Persia, in "Shushan the palace," who left his office to dwell among his lowly people. He journeyed twelve hundred miles to Jerusalem, undertook the control of Judea, aided the inhabitants of Jerusalem to rebuild their walls, and thus made Jerusalem again the leading city of the land. To these two earnest men the renewed prosperity of the Jewish people was due, and from these two men, the last heroes of Old Testament history, a new epoch began.

## Explanatory and Practical Notes.

**Verse 1.** Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. He was a Jew who occupied the important position of "cup-bearer" in the court of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia. He voluntarily left the palace in order to help his people in their own land. "Patriotism, piety, prudence, perseverance, probity, and courage," says Dr. Crosby. "equally marked his administration of affairs." Read his story as written by himself, and see how noble is the character shining through it. **The month Chisleu.** The ninth month of the Jewish sacred year, corresponding nearly with our December.

**The twentieth year.** Of the reign of Artaxerxes. This fixes the date at B. C. 445, or ninety-one years after the return from captivity. **Shushan the palace.** The capital of the Persian Empire, called by the Greeks Susa, situated east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf in the Zagros Mountains. The ruins of the palace referred to here, and in Lesson XI, have recently been discovered.

**2. Hanani, one of my brethren.** He was afterward appointed by Nehemiah the ruler over a part of Jerusa-