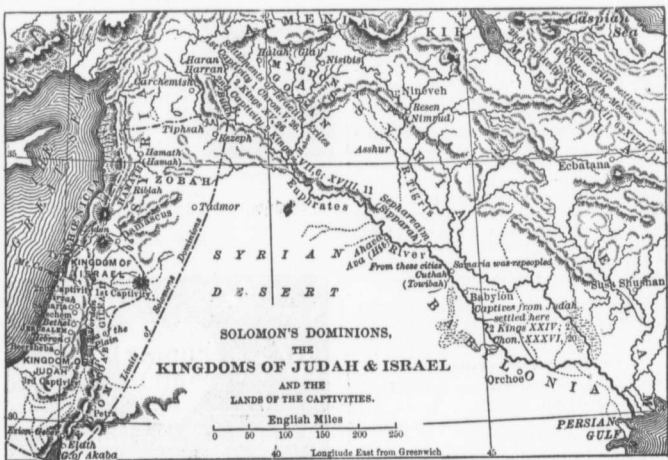


before the water-gate! There is Ezra, an older man by thirteen years than when he came to Jerusalem's broken walls, but the same upright, reverent, godly leader. You can see him over in that "pulpit of wood," facing the multitude, while on either side are grouped men honored in Israel. Ezra is opening the precious book of the law of Moses. He has turned back the sacred scroll, and the people are rising. What a solemn invocation of the great Jehovah! And all over the assembly, what a deep, impressive response, "Amen, Amen," the people raising their hands to

heaven! And now, with faces prostrated in humility, they worship God. Such a serious, heart-searching hour, a heart-searching even for hour after hour, Ezra's assistants lighting up the meaning of the Word, the people solemnly listening. They begin to weep. All over the assembly there is a breaking into sobs. No, no, this day is for joy. Joy is holy. And dismissed with this assurance, we watch the people breaking up and separating to their homes, there to remember the poor, and there to celebrate God's goodness in great and even holy joy.



B. C. 474.]

LESSON XI. ESTHER'S PETITION.

[March 14.]

Esther 4. 10-17, and 5. 1-3.

[Commit to memory verses 1-3.]



the king shall hold out the golden scepter, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mor'de-cai Es'ther's words.

13 Then Mor'de-cai commanded to answer Es'ther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 Then Es'ther bade them return Mor'de-cai this answer.

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shu'shan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise: and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mor'de-cai went his way, and did according to all that Es'ther had commanded him.

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Es'ther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Es'ther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Es'ther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Es'ther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Es'ther? and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

General Statement.

In chronological order this lesson belongs to a period about thirty years earlier than the last, and to the reign of the Persian king Xerxes, the predecessor of Artaxerxes. Xerxes, called in the Bible Ahasuerus, after his disastrous war with the Greeks, gave himself up to the pleasures of his palace. A nobleman named Haman gained great influence over him, and secured an edict ordering the utter destruction of the Jews in the capital and throughout the kingdom. The reason given

for this cruel decree was the hate of Haman toward one Jew, Mordecai, who had refused to show him honor. But we can well believe that in the Jewish traits of that time were the same elements which have in every age and in every land made the Jews objects of persecution, so that Haman was not alone in his enmity. It was a dark day for the chosen people, and sounds of wailing arose around the palace walls. There were two facts, however, of which Haman was ignorant. One was that

in the presence of Esther the high heavens were opened to play and cannot they be so? and the first of only concerned people. But was proud.

Verses 11 of Jewish restoration, "my name was not of only lovely in of life. O as one of was called that was in retained h Mordecai, name of Es'ther, an cate with the part of him com answer to the go to the h Mordecai father of s connected became pr a certain the later y

11. The People of tion of the speaks wa various se mitted to o of Persia. book Ahas five millio many thou show, but utterly self lar history into the sepolis, wh order with ground-pla in the rear for the tran his. Rev. who enter kings of Is sible to in sia were k tery, as if nobles even this seclus the son of before the f In all the as holdi represent g height. T the king ha to see her presence ear toward

12, 13. message who trusted to s The griefar was not f regarded as covenant, kept her n to escape I minded her and some destruction. 14. For faith, saw desired her