

Chapter Two

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. Why do you suppose this list of names and numbers was regarded as important enough to be included in the Bible?
2. Does this list give you any mental image of the kinds of people that made the trip?
3. Do you suppose they all remained, after they arrived?
4. What can you figure out about their financial status?
5. How does their number compare with those who came originally from Egypt into the Promised Land under Moses and Joshua?

OUTLINE

- B. This is a list of the leaders and groups among the returnees.
 1. Their leaders (vss. 1, 2a).
 2. Men of the people (vss. 2b-20).
 3. Men of certain towns (vss. 21-35).
 4. Men of certain classes: Priests, Levites, Temple servants (vss. 36-58).
 5. Some whose ancestral records were lost (vss. 59-63).
 6. Totals (vss. 64, 65).
 7. Number of their livestock (vss. 66, 67).
 8. Their offering for restoring the Temple (vss. 68, 69).
 9. Their location in the land (vs. 70).

TEXT AND VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENT

B. This is a list of the leaders and groups among the returnees

1. The introduction of the list gives the names of their leaders.

TEXT, 2:1-2a

- 1 Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king

of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city.

2a These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

COMMENT

Verse 1 "Now, these are the people," refers to the total list, to verse 63. The phrase, "people of the province," reminds us that the returnees were not free, nor were they returning to a free land. The Judah to which they returned was still a province of Persia, and the people still subjects of the Persian king. Judah was one subdivision of the Fifth Persian Satrapy.¹

The significance of this migration contrasted sharply with the Israelites' original coming into the land of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. "The first exodus witnessed the birth of a nation: the second saw only a migration within the boundaries of an empire, sanctioned by the ruler because it did not include the deliverance of the subject people from servitude."²

Yet the Prophets had emphasized it as something that would surpass even their coming up out of bondage in Egypt (Isa. 43:18-21, for example)! But it is still a remarkable story; how many other examples can be given of a people so completely subjugated, who became a significant nation again?

No account is given of the people who had been left in the land, and who may or may not have been on hand to greet those now returning. The ones who had come through the experience of the Captivity preferred to ignore those who had remained in Judah, and to treat them as inferiors.

Their return "to Jerusalem, and Judah, each to his city," would indicate that Jerusalem was the end of the expedition: the first center at which they arrived, and which they restored to habitable condition.

The phrase, "each to his own city," need not be taken absolutely literally. It may indicate the pattern which they followed

1. See *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 576.

2. W. F. Adeney, *Expositor's Bible*: "Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther," p. 37.

next, of proceeding as far as possible to restore and settle in many of the individual towns of their ancestry. Or it may indicate that they had been assigned to repopulate certain areas before they left Babylon.

Many of the ancient settlements were not reoccupied at this time, judging from archaeological remains. Even if every returnee actually sought out his ancestral town and settled there, it would be unlikely that every ancient town would have enough representatives among the returnees to receive a significant settlement. They were a pitifully small number compared with the population when the land had been conquered and its people carried off by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 2. Here we plunge into a long list of names and statistics. We are tempted to ask, "Why are such lists frequently included in the Bible? Didn't the authors realize how boring these tend to become? This doesn't make for easy reading, or especially rewarding either, from the standpoint of Spiritual enrichment."

Three things could be cited to justify this list, and all such lists in general, in the Bible.

1) Names and events are a part of the fabric of history, and their inclusion is a reminder that the events were historical: that one generation at least could have verified or questioned their authenticity. Judaism and Christianity share the distinction of being historical religions; there is a finality and decisiveness to historical events. Books of pretended history may also contain such lists, but they would have little value if the books did not exist during or shortly after the lifetime of the persons involved in the making of the events and statistics which they record.

2) Archaeologists, philologists, and other technicians in the study of history find these to be amazingly informative; the fact, for example, that few of the names resemble those from the earlier parts of the Bible may indicate the completeness of the break with the past which the Hebrew people underwent in the Captivity. The philologist will note that many of the names actually contain foreign words; this speaks eloquently of the foreign surroundings in which the previous generation

had grown up. Many of the names are more Babylonian than Hebrew.³

3) If your name and the names of your intimate friends or relatives were on this list, you would find it quite interesting. We tend to minimize the importance of church rolls, but the Holy Spirit of God may value them quite highly. Judging from these Biblical examples, He obviously feels that such memorials have their place, possibly to teach respect for the significant makers of history in the past, and to remind us of His concern for the individual.

Having noted this, however, we will not call further attention to most of the names, but will only point out some patterns that occur.

Verse 2. These are the names of their leaders. The omission of two names may be as significant as the eleven which are included. First, we had heard of Sheshbazzar (1:8); though he was referred to previously as the prince of Judah to whom the holy articles were committed by the Persian treasury, his name is not included here. Has he died in the interim? Or is he simply called by another name, i.e., Zerubbabel? We will hear Sheshbazzar mentioned again in Ezra 5:16; his omission in the verse before us now strengthens the likelihood that the one person was known by either name.

Secondly, an almost identical list of names appears in Neh. 7:7. One difference is that Nehemiah includes a twelfth character, Nahamani. Why is he omitted here? The verse before us ends with a reference to "the people of Israel" (not merely Judah). Twelve names, reminders of the twelve original tribes, would be so appropriate here. Was this one man's name dropped because of some action which he took later on? Then what was the thing which he did, which caused Ezra to drop his name? Did he fail to complete the trip, or forsake the returnees soon after the return to Babylon? Or are we being reminded that it is an incomplete list, and there may be many reasons why some individuals are not mentioned?

3. A detailed treatment of this list, with the foreign components of some of the names, is available in Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on The Old Testament*, on this chapter of Ezra.

The first explanation for the omission that would come to mind is a copyist's error; at some time in antiquity when all copies were produced by hand, someone left out this name inadvertently. Of course this is a possibility; almost no one would say all these copyists were inspired against error; except that we feel this explanation is made use of much too often, where no evidence for it exists, either to avoid some difficulty in the text or to get rid of something that doesn't fit the commentator's theories. Other explanations, where they can reasonably be made, are certainly preferable.

The most natural explanation, or guess, is that he died or was incapacitated before completing his full round of duties.

Whatever the reason, he was one of the leaders and Nehemiah gives us adequate justification for including him. An omission of a name is not necessarily an error or discrepancy; such omissions occur even in genealogical lists.⁴ It apparently was not regarded as important to include every detail in every instance.

Further comment on the significance of the twelve names to the twelve tribes of Israel, and on the difference in these names in Ezra and Nehemiah will be reserved till we arrive at Nehemiah seven. For the present, each difference can be accounted for as a normal variation in spelling.

Another question that arises about verse two is its punctuation, and therefore the relationship between these names. The King James Version (KJV) has a semicolon after Zerubbabel, thus indicating his primacy in leadership. Many of the more recent translations have a comma, suggesting the equal share which all of this group had in leadership, though Zerubbabel's name still heads the list. It is a subtle distinction, but it does say something. (The Hebrew text can be translated either way, with equal accuracy.)

For example, is this a list of contemporaries, or does it include leaders of later expeditions? Some note the names of Nehemiah and Mordecai, which would fit a later period. Also,

4. Amaziah's name is omitted by Matthew in the genealogy of Jesus; cf. Matt. 1:8, II Chron. 25:25; 26:23.

Ezra's name may be hidden in a longer form, Seraiah; and Bigvai is the name of a governor of Judah under Darius II.⁵ However, it is more likely that the persons in verse two are other men of the same name, and not the persons better known to us from later times. The flow of the narrative itself, eventuating in the observance of a religious festival in Ezra 3:1ff., suggests that we have here a description of one historic event, at one point in time, and that these were the leaders who shared in that one event.

2. The list really begins with "laymen," simply
"men of the people of Israel."

TEXT, 2:2b-20

- 2b The number of the men of the people of Israel:
 3 the sons of Parosh, 2,172;
 4 the sons of Shephatiah, 372;
 5 the sons of Arah, 775;
 6 the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab,
 2,812;
 7 the sons of Elam, 1,254;
 8 the sons of Zattu, 945;
 9 the sons of Zaccai, 760;
 10 the sons of Bani, 642;
 11 the sons of Bebai, 623;
 12 the sons of Azgad, 1,222;
 13 the sons of Adonikam, 666;
 14 the sons of Bigvai, 2,056;
 15 the sons of Adin, 454;
 16 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, 98;
 17 the sons of Bezai, 323;
 18 the sons of Jorah, 112;

5. *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 577.

19 the sons of Hashum, 223;

20 the sons of Gibbar, 95;

COMMENT

Just one comment on this section: the term, "sons of," could also be translated "descendants of." Emphasis here, as usual in the O.T., is on the social unit, the family, rather than the individual.

3. Next it includes people identified
mainly by their towns.

TEXT, 2:21-35

21 the men of Bethlehem, 123;

22 the men of Netophah, 56;

23 the men of Anathoth, 128;

24 the sons of Azmaveth, 42;

25 the sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743;

26 the sons of Ramah and Geba, 621;

27 the men of Michmas, 122;

28 the men of Bethel and Ai, 223;

29 the sons of Nebo, 52;

30 the sons of Magbish, 156;

31 the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;

32 the sons of Harim, 320;

33 the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725;

34 the men of Jericho, 345;

35 the sons of Senaah, 3,630.

COMMENT

Note that the phrases, "the men of," and "the sons of," are used interchangeably. The proper names are all, or nearly all, the names of communities, though Elam in verse 31 presents a puzzle. The same name, with the same number of persons, is mentioned in verse seven, among the individuals. This may be

only a remarkable coincidence, though some regard it as a repetition; the Bible writer himself indicates that he is aware of the similarity of the name at least, for he uses the phrase, "the other Elam," in verse 31.

We are particularly interested in the mention of some of the towns in this list. Here is Bethlehem (*verse 21*), never very large, but memorable as the ancestral home of David and his royal descendants.

And Anathoth (*verse 23*), once the home of Jeremiah. Here the prophet had bought a piece of property at God's direction (Jer. 32), in the face of his own predictions of the destruction and captivity of his nation. This was his way of showing his faith, and God's assurance, that the land would be valuable again. So he had invested in the future for his nephews and nieces; now his faith and his obedience is being vindicated!

Here is Ramah (*verse 26*); Samuel had judged his people at Ramah (I Sam. 7:17).

And Geba (*verse 26*). At least once this is another spelling of Gibeah,⁶ just a few miles from Ramah. At Gibeah Saul had set up the kingdom of Israel. Most likely Geba and Ramah are grouped together because they were close to each other, as were Bethel and Ai in verse 28.

Bethel (*verse 28*) would recall the lives of Abraham and Jacob; both of them had built altars there (Gen. 12:7; 35:1).

Nebo (*verse 29*), across the Jordan, afforded Moses his only view of the Promised Land before he died (Deut. 34:1). Here, however, it probably denotes a small town in Judah.

The walls of Jericho (*verse 34*) had echoed the march of Joshua and all Israel shortly after (Joshua 6).

So the people who returned would have remembered many other hallowed events from their past, as they took up residence once more in the land of their ancestors.

6. Judges 20:10 in Hebrews; also 20:33, where Maareh-geba may be translated "field (or plain) of Geba." Note that the surrounding verses all deal with Gibeah.

4. Also important enough to be mentioned were certain people connected with the Temple and religious worship.

TEXT, 2:36-58

- 36 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973;
 37 the sons of Immer, 1,052;
 38 the sons of Pashhur, 1,247;
 39 the sons of Harim, 1,017.
 40 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.
 41 The singers: the sons of Asaph, 128.
 42 The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, in all 139.
 43 The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth,
 44 the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon,
 45 the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub,
 46 the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shalmal, the sons of Hanan,
 47 the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah,
 48 the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam,
 49 the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai,
 50 the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephisim,
 51 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur,
 52 the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha,
 53 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah,
 54 the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha.
 55 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Hassophereth, the sons of Peruda,
 56 the sons of Jaalah, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,
 57 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Ami.
 58 All the temple servants, and the sons of Solomon's servants, were 392.

COMMENT

The priests (*verses 36-39*) are the first in rank among those connected with the Temple. Of the four clans or households which follow, three are identifiable as being among the twenty-four courses appointed in David's time to serve in rotation at the altar: I Chron. 24:7, 8, 14 mention Jedaiah, Immer, and Harim. (Pashur may have been a replacement for one of the other groups, or an alternative name of one of them; it is identified with the priesthood elsewhere.)

This gives a clue to the source of the names in this list; it is possible that many are the names of clans, or "family names," going back to the time of David and the organization of the Kingdom of Israel. We may wish for names more easily identified, which can be traced to specific tribes; but that may not be necessary since all the priests would be of the tribe of Levi, and since we have been told previously (Ezra 1:5) that the other returnees were of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, at this time.

Jeshua, the high priest, is identified with the clan of Jedaiah (verse 36). More extensive mention of him is made by Haggai (1:1) and by Zechariah (3:1): both spell his name "Joshua." He was the priest whose leadership, along with the governor Zerubbabel's, brought about the reconstruction of the Temple.

Verse 40. Of the Levites in addition to the priests, only seventy-four are mentioned. The "Jeshua" in this verse is apparently a second man by that name, rather than the priest mentioned previously. It is likely that the Levites, not being as directly involved in religious duties as the priests, were not as a group as excited about returning. It is also possible that, since Ezekiel 44:9-16 predicts the demotion of the Levites from some of their responsibilities because of their previous sins, this reduction of their size is a consequence. It is further possible that, since their functions were primarily teaching instead of ministry through ritual, many of them would remain in Persia to furnish needed instruction to the majority of their brethren who remained there.

Singers (*verse 41*) are mentioned next. These would be important to ancient worship, as attested by Egyptian plaques found

at Megiddo in Israel.⁷ The name of Asaph in this list also goes back to the organization of the worship in David's time (I Chron. 15:17, 19). The name, either of the individual or his descendants, is identified with the authorship of twelve of the Psalms (50, 73-83).

The sons of the gatekeepers (*verse 42*) may not have had a lofty calling, but they had their significance. A holy man once expressed his preference to "stand at the threshold of my God, Than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa. 84:10).

The temple servants (*verses 43-54*) would have even a humbler task. Perhaps these would include descendants of people whom Israel had subjected either by war or by treaty; two examples are given in Num. 31 (Midianites) and Joshua 9 (Gibeonites); note especially Josh. 9:27.

Solomon's servants (*verses 55-57*) were apparently a similar group added later to the temple servants, with whom they are classed (*verse 58*). Solomon's activities (I Kings 9:20, 21) reduced some of Canaan's former tribesmen to servitude. If the pattern set in Num. 31 was followed, then a percentage of these also, along with other war captives added from time to time, ended up in the service of the Temple, and their descendants would be included among the voluntary returnees from captivity.

Does this seem ironic, that many free citizens of Israel now choose to stay in the land of their captivity, while some who had been enslaved by Israel are now freely choosing to return to the land which had enslaved them? This speaks well of the treatment they had received from Israel, and of the Spiritual appeal of service in the Temple, that they still want to maintain their identity with them though it began as forced servitude. There are surely parallels today among children compelled to attend religious services against their will, or of young lovers enduring religious obligations to be near the object of their affections, and then finding something in the services which calls them to full voluntary dedication to the things of God.

7. J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 263.

5. There follows a list of those whose ancestral records had been lost.

TEXT, 2:59-63

- 59 Now these are those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, but they were not able to give evidence of their fathers' households, and their descendants, whether they were of Israel:
- 60 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 652.
- 61 And of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and he was called by their name.
- 62 These searched among their ancestral registration, but they could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and were excluded from the priesthood.
- 63 And the governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.

COMMENT

In *verse 59* the settlements in Babylon from which they came are mentioned; then the names of their families, first of the common people in *verse 60*, and of those who claimed to be of the priesthood in *verse 61*. Dr. Ironside compares these priests with "some now, who cannot trace their genealogy but nevertheless insist on the Christian place as rightfully theirs." He cautions against presumptuously denying that they are born of God, yet says "we cannot own them as such till they can give clear evidence of being indeed of the priestly company and partakers of the divine nature."⁸

Should these be censured for having lost the important records

8. H. A. Ironside, *Notes on The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*, p. 22.

of their ancestry, thus their birthright and identity as God's children and servants? Or should they be praised for the religious fervor that set them apart from those content to stay in Babylon, in spite of their lack of documents which would guarantee them the worldly benefits which their companions could claim? Enough that they were going back to scenes and circumstances reminiscent of their forefathers' close walk with their God!

Those particularly who claimed priestly backgrounds had a special problem: they would be presiding over Israel's religion as well as deriving their support from it, so great care must be taken to insure the correctness of their religious backgrounds. Priests, prophets, and kings were all "messiahs": that is, they were anointed of God as His representatives to the people. No person who came from a foreign land could become a prophet of Israel; he must be "from your own countrymen" (Deut. 18:15, 18). The king also must be a native (Deut. 17:15); the wisdom of this requirement is recognized even in the American Constitution, which specifies that no one can become president of the United States who is not a citizen by birth.

The priest must meet an additional requirement: he must be not only an Israelite by birth, but he must be taken from the descendants of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi (Ex. 28:1ff). No one must take this office on himself (Heb. 5:4). It had been one of the Levites above any of the other tribes who had demonstrated loyalty to Israel's God against heathen gods and customs during the Wilderness Wanderings, at Baal-Peor (Num. 25:5-13); therefore they were chosen above the firstborn of all Israelites to serve in the house of the Lord and to protect the purity of the worship. It was essential then that priests be able to trace their descent from this tribe.

Verse 63. But for those of the priestly line who had lost evidence of their descent, there was a door left slightly open. They were not simply disfellowshipped. God had spoken through His priests in time past by means of Urim and Thummin, objects in the custody of the priests (Ex. 28:30, I Sam. 28:6). If God wished the services of any of these men, He would

restore the Urim and Thummim which seem to have been lost in the Captivity, that He might be consulted about each of these individuals. There is no record of the priests' possession of these after the return from Captivity, therefore many authorities, though not all,⁹ suppose that these men were never granted a full status as priests.

6. Verses 64, 65 give the totals of the returnees.

TEXT, 2:64, 65

64 The whole assembly numbered 42,360,
65 besides their male and female servants, who numbered
7,337; and they had 200 singing men and women.

COMMENT

This grand total of 49,897 may be contrasted with the 601,730 plus the 23,000 Levites (Num. 26:51, 62) who paused on the edge of the Promised Land under Moses and Joshua, and with the 1,570,000 plus the tribes of Levi and Benjamin in David's time (I Chron. 21:5). It was indeed only a remnant, a few survivors, that returned: as Isaiah had prophesied (Isa. 1:9; 10:20f).

In *verse 65*, the singers are other than those for the Temple, in *verse 41*.

The actual lists given previously add up to only 29,818; this is a reminder that the lists are only partial.

9. G. Coleman Luck, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 22.

7. Next is a listing of their livestock.

TEXT, 2:66, 67

- 66 Their horses were 736; their mules, 245;
 67 their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720.

COMMENT

This is not a very large number of animals for the amount of people. All of the animals are beasts of burden, and at best there is but one for every six persons.

8. Their offerings for restoring the Temple are recorded.

TEXT, 2:68, 69

- 68 And some of the heads of fathers' households, when they arrived at the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation.
 69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas, and 5,000 silver minas, and 100 priestly garments.

COMMENT

It is interesting that the drachma in particular is a Persian coin (another subtle reminder of their contact with Persia):¹⁰ the mina is a unit of weight used in Israel, Babylon, and Persia. We may see a hint that coins are beginning to be used to simplify monetary exchange, but their use has not become universal.

10. An example is portrayed in G. A. Barton's *Archaeology and The Bible*, Plate 63, Figure 189.

According to the *Living Bible* on this passage, the 61,000 drachmas would be \$300,000, and the 5,000 minas, \$170,000. This would average out to almost \$10 each; *verse 68* tells us however that this amount came from only some of the leaders, and *verse 69* says that they gave according to their ability. Perhaps the others would have given equally if they had been able; the trip must have been a severe financial drain on many of them. Or perhaps those who wished to give were not discouraged by the failure of others to share in the contributions.

It is impossible to make any accurate judgments of the actual value of these sums; we are only comparing amounts of metal in the coins or measures. We know how rapidly money can change its value, even within one lifetime, and especially in a country undergoing great social change. It could be helpful, however, to think of their average as a generous half a month's wages.

In contrast, the travelers accompanying Moses had contributed \$1,250,000, by some estimates, for the building of the Tabernacle, and had to be restrained from giving more (Ex. 35:21-29; 38:24-31). That would average out to \$2! But then, those who left Egypt were going out from a house of bondage; these were leaving established businesses and had gained a significant measure of wealth and freedom.

9. Their location in the land is stated.

TEXT, 2:70

70 Now the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

COMMENT

Their dwelling within (walled) cities was probably required by the need for mutual defense, assistance, and encouragement. Note that they think of themselves as "all Israel," and not a remnant of a few tribes.

WORD STUDIES

ZERUBBABEL: “a seed of Babylon”: a reminder that God preserved a seed of His people through the Babylonian Captivity, from which His nation would once again spring to life.

TEMPLE SERVANTS (verse 43); literally, the Nethinim: “those given.” The word is a plural form; it comes from the word “Nathan.” These were the persons “given” to the priests to assist with the menial tasks of preparing for sacrifice and worship.

JESHUA, or its variant, **JOSHUA:** “Jehovah is Salvation,” or “Salvation from Jehovah.” This is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name, “Jesus.”

MINA: the basic meaning is to divide out, or measure out, or number. Money originally had to be measured, or weighed, at each transaction. This is the word “Mene” in the handwriting on the wall, in Dan. 5:25f. Note that the consonants are the same as those in our word “money,” and in reverse order, the first two consonants in “number.” Can you find the two letters hidden in the “denomination” of a bill? In “numismatics”? Now you are looking at the building blocks of language!

SUMMARY

There you see the brave band of marchers: small in number, of meagre resources, threatened by many dangers on the trip and even after they arrived; yet there is no denying that they made the trip. They will be joined by others who will come in small groups as time goes on; but even when the N.T. opens, they are still a pitifully small nation. A disproportionate number of them, about one in ten, are priests, and we can understand why priests would be more likely to treasure hopes of returning to the service of God in the temple at Jerusalem. But for now, they must all unite in the physical work of rebuilding.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Is Ezra named among the returnees?
2. Who is the one most prominent person mentioned?
3. What groups of people were mentioned?
4. How would you have changed the order of these groups, if you had been writing the story?
5. What reminder is in the list, of a prophecy of Jeremiah? of Isaiah?