



The Age of the Maccabees

Annesley Streane

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The decree of Cyrus (538 BC) seems to have been acted upon with all speed by a portion of the Jews resident in Babylon. That portion, however, doubtless consisted of the less well-to-do and those who had formed no very close ties, commercial or otherwise, with the locality in which they had grown up. Many had acted to the full upon the advice given them by Jeremiah (29. 5-7), and, to borrow a Jewish phrase which has been applied to the present case, the bran returned, the fine flour was left behind in Babylon.

Thus it came to pass that the returned exiles were the more easily reduced to inactivity by the difficulties which speedily came upon them in their attempts at the renovation of their old home. Mainly through the hostility of the Samaritans on their offer of cooperation being repulsed, but perhaps in some degree owing to the absence of royal favor on the part of Cyrus's two successors, Cambyses and the Pseudo-Smerdis, the work of restoration was for more than nine years (529-520 BC) in abeyance. In the year 520 BC, however, two years after the accession of Darius, the heartening which their prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, sought to give them, and the efforts of Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, evoked renewed energy. Darius's approval was obtained, and four years later the Temple was dedicated to the service of God...

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