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BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

Josephus' Account of Nehemiah

THERE is a well known discrepancy between the Old Testament and Josephus regarding the time it took Nehemiah to repair the wall of Jerusalem. Neh. 6 15 says, "So the wall was finished on the 25th Elul in 52 days." This was in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 1 1; 2 1, 11). Josephus asserts, "And this trouble he underwent for two years and four months; for in this time the wall of Jerusalem was built, in the 28th year of the reign of Xerxes, in the 9th month" (Ant. XI. 5, 8). According to the preceding Nehemiah had returned to Jerusalem in the 20th year of Xerxes (XI. 5, 7). Which of these texts is correct, Nehemiah's or Josephus'?

We must keep in mind that Josephus had no other source for his account of Nehemiah than our Book of Nehemiah and that he used the Greek translation. The presumption therefore is that both Nehemiah and Josephus had originally the same figures. But which text has preserved the original?

The text of Josephus can be explained by scribal corruption of the Greek text. Thus the 25th year of the king—with the question of Xerxes (Josephus) or Artaxerxes (Nehemiah) we are not concerned here—is due to dittography of ϵ , $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}$ $\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ for $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}$ $\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ = 20th year.—Again, the 9th month ($\epsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varphi$) in which the wall was completed according to Josephus was originally the 6th ($\xi\kappa\tau\omicron\varphi$) which corresponds to Elul in Neh. 6 15. Whether this error arose from a confusion of $\epsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varphi$ with $\xi\kappa\tau\omicron\varphi$ or of C = 6 with \ominus = 9 is immaterial, either could happen very easily.—Further, the 28th year of the king in Josephus does not tally with his other dates. If we subtract from the 9th (or 6th) month of the 28th year the time of repair, two years and four months,

we get the 5th (or 2nd) month of the 26th but not the 25th year, in which Nehemiah arrived according to the present text of Josephus. That he should have waited several months before beginning the repair of the wall is contrary to the story in Josephus as in Nehemiah.

The point where the mistake came in is in connection with the two years (*ἐπι ἔτη δύο*). This reading is due to the ditto-graphy of *ἐπι* and the confusion of *ν'* (the numeral 50) with *η'* which resulted in *ἐπι ἔτη β'* for the original *ἐπι νβ'*. Thereupon the text was corrected in accordance with this, *ἡμέρας* was read as *τέσσαρας*, and *καὶ μῆνας* was inserted. Thus the whole now reads: *ἐπι ἔτη δύο καὶ μῆνας τέσσαρας*.

This necessitated a further correction in the following. If the repairs lasted two years and four months, and Nehemiah arrived in the 25th year, the completion of the wall fell into the 28th year according to the calculation of the scribe. So he changed the 20th into the 28th year (*κ'* to *εη'*). Fortunately, he overlooked the tell-tale *ἔτη* (now corrupted to *ἐνάτη*).

If these observations are correct, *there was no discrepancy between the original text of Josephus and of Nehemiah. Both attested that the rebuilding of the wall lasted 52 days.* The original text of Josephus read *ἐπι νβ' ἡμέρας . . . εἰκοστῆ τῆς Ζέρξου βασιλείας ἔτη μνη ἔτη*.

Another question about Josephus' account of Nehemiah is, whence he derived his knowledge that the governor of Syria, Phenicia and Samaria at that time was called Addaios.¹ Josephus says, "Accordingly the king called for him the next day and gave him a letter to be carried to Addaios the governor of Syria and Phenicia and Samaria, wherein he sent (orders) to him about the honor (to be paid) to Nehemiah and about the supply for the building" (XI. 5, 6). "He came to Jerusalem in the 25th year of the reign of Xerxes . . . and when he had shown the letters to God, he gave them to Addaios and the other governors."

Keeping in mind that Josephus had no other source for his story of Nehemiah than the Old Testament we must assume here also a textual error. In Neh. 2 s the official to whom the

¹ A. Bertholet, *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia*. (1902.)

king addressed a letter in order that he might supply Nehemiah with building material is called Asaph. This name to which Josephus affixed the Greek ending, ἈΣΑΦΟΣ, was corrupted to ΚΑΛΕΟΣ, ΚΑΛΛΑΙΟΣ, ΑΔΔΑΙΟΣ. See Niese's edition for these variants. Josephus gave this name to the governor, Nehemiah had given it to the keeper of the royal forest.

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The River Sud in the Book of Baruch

In the introduction to the Book of Baruch (1 4) there occurs for the river, by which the exiles of the year 597 dwelt, the otherwise entirely unknown name SUD (Covδ).

"And Baruch read the words of this book in the hearing of Jechonias king of Judah, and in the hearing of all the people that came to hear the book, and in the hearing of the mighty men, and of the kings' sons, and in the hearing of the elders, and in the hearing of all the people, from the least unto the greatest, even of all them that dwelt in Babylonia by the river SUD."

No ancient writer or modern scholar has been able, as far as I know, to discover this Babylonian river. The latest editor of the Book of Baruch, Professor Whitehouse,³ says about it: "We know nothing of the locality of Sud. Grotius conjectures that it refers to the city Solta. Bochart would emend to *Sur*, i. e. the city Sora. S, in fact, renders 'river of Sûr' which may be founded on the original Sûr , but it is precarious to base a conclusion on the Syr. treatment of proper names. Cheyne's suggestion of Shihor (in *Encycl. Bibl.*) is pure conjecture. L and Ar. follow G in reading Sud; so also characteristically S^{Hex.}."

The solution is found not by archaeology or geography but by textual criticism.

It is certain that the author of the Book of Baruch had no other source for his history of Baruch than the Old Testament.

³ In R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. I (1913), p. 583.