

I

The return to build the temple (Ezra 1–3)

The placement of the decree of Cyrus at the head of the book, except for the one verse introduction (1:1), is the reader's first clue to its importance within the ensuing narrative. It is the decree issued by King Cyrus that initiates the movement of the book and sets out the plan of the first six chapters.¹

Introduction (Ezra 1:1)

1:1. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in fulfilment of the word of the LORD from the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia and he issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom and moreover put it in writing:

This verse marks the beginning of a new book and a new narrative. The fact that it starts with a conjunction (*waw*) (here translated

‘Now’) is not a sufficient argument in favour of the hypothesis that it is part of a larger work, namely, the work of the Chronicler, conceived as incorporating 1, 2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (see the Introduction, especially the section entitled ‘Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles’). The medieval Jewish commentator Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) (*circa* 1160–1235) on Joshua 1:1 states that in biblical style an episode or book beginning with *waw* does not necessarily imply a linkage with what precedes.² The comment is apposite to the question of whether Ezra 1:1 connects to preceding biblical material. Ezra-Nehemiah is best read and interpreted as a stand-alone book.

This introductory verse gives the date and the king’s name and the fact of God’s motivation, all of which are repeated (with variations) at the start of the second half of the Ezra part of the book (7:1–10).³ In both 1:1 and 1:5 God is said to be responsible for rousing the spirits of human beings. The idea and terminology of God rousing or stirring (*hēʿîr*) is used elsewhere in relation to Cyrus and the Medes (see Isa. 41:2,25; 45:13; Jer. 51:1,11), but without any obvious link to temple-building. It is connected specifically with God’s action of ensuring the rebuilding of the temple only in Haggai 1:14 and in the parallel passage to Ezra 1:1 in 2 Chronicles 36:22. According to the wording of the edict, the exclusive purpose of the return was the rebuilding of God’s house (vv. 2b, 3b), and the return was only permitted for the sake of that rebuilding program. The date is given as ‘the first year of Cyrus king of Persia’. Cyrus had in fact been a king for some twenty years, having become king of Anshan in 559 BC. He conquered Babylon in 539 BC, and it is this date that is being referred to in the present verse. When Cyrus took over the reins of the Babylonian empire, he became the king of Mesopotamia, and so it was fittingly called his ‘first year’.

This introductory verse expresses the viewpoint of the narrator, and Cyrus is not allowed to speak until the narrator has prefaced his words with this introduction. The narrator may, if he so chooses, give the reader a God’s-eye view of events, and here he does

just that. The fact that the proclamation was made in the king's 'first year' shows that its contents were important *to God*, but we may wonder whether Cyrus, with so many other matters of state to attend to in his new kingdom, thought it all that important. Whether Cyrus did so or not, we are told that God inspired him to act the way he did. The narrator leaves us to wonder about Cyrus' precise motives, as is typical in biblical narrative.⁴ God was in control of events and he used Cyrus to accomplish his purposes. God did so in 'in fulfilment of' (root *klh*) the word he had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. Though this root does not mean 'to fulfil' elsewhere in the Old Testament,⁵ it must mean this in the present context.

The royal decree was both oral (*qôl*)⁶ and written (*bēmiktāb*). H. G. M. Williamson is mistaken in seeing the words 'and moreover put it in writing' as a 'parenthetical afterthought'.⁷ Rather, in biblical narrative 'and moreover' (*wēgam*) is used with emphasising force (hence our translation). For example, in Ruth 4:10a, Boaz uses the expression 'and also (*wēgam*) Ruth' to show that his concern is not the personal gain of Elimelek's property (4:9) but the securing of Ruth as his wife.⁸ The fact that there was a written record of Cyrus' proclamation will be vital for the resolution of the tension in the plot in chapters 5 and 6, though the official record that will be found in Ezra 6 is a 'memorandum' (6:2), not the decree itself. The decree was orally proclaimed and also written in Aramaic (presumably), the language of diplomacy in the Persian empire. What D. J. A. Clines has written regarding the function of writing in the narrative of Esther is equally true for Ezra-Nehemiah: 'In this narrative, reality—from the Persian point of view—always tends toward inscripturation, and attains its true quality only when it is written down. Only what is written down is valid and permanent.'⁹ The Jews adopt this view of the written word, but it will be God's written word that progressively comes to the fore as we move through Ezra-Nehemiah. In Ezra-Nehemiah 'it is written text which carries weight'.¹⁰ The words

of the king of Persia are here given a place that should rather be occupied by the word of God, but by the end of Ezra–Nehemiah, the written law of God will have supplanted any Persian decree.¹¹

The decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2–4)

1:2. *‘This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he himself has charged me to build for him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.’*

The first verse (1:1) uses expressions that are repeated in the decree that follows, namely, ‘Cyrus king of Persia’ and ‘kingdom(s)’, but the decree is in the words of Cyrus himself. We are invited to compare these juxtaposed viewpoints. Behind the act of Cyrus in issuing the decree we are to detect God’s sovereign stirring up in fulfilment of prophecy (1:1). Cyrus knew and acknowledged that he was carrying out the charge of the LORD (1:2), but we do not know how Cyrus knew this, for he made no mention of the fulfilment of prophecy. The Jewish historian Josephus has Cyrus reading Isaiah’s book of prophecy (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.1.2). According to the commentary on Ezra–Nehemiah ascribed to Rashi, the charge to Cyrus was not given directly but through the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 44:28 and 45:1). On this interpretation, Cyrus has taken over the Davidic messianic mantle of ruler of the nations and builder of the temple. In the present context, behind the proclamation of Cyrus stands the prophetic message of Jeremiah (1:1). The particular prophecy made by Jeremiah is not specified. 2 Chronicles 36:21 points to Jeremiah 29:10–14 or 25:11–14, read in the light of Leviticus 26:34–35. The commentary attributed to Rashi views the book of Ezra as in continuity with the book of Daniel, notably Daniel’s contemplation of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Dan. 9:1–2), with the events of Ezra 1 seen as the fulfilment of that prophecy. It is possible, therefore, to make a number of interesting canonical connections, but we must respect the present text’s silence about

which particular prophetic text is in mind. The royal decree is in the limelight, for its contents *are* recorded.

Though Cyrus apparently knew nothing of Jeremiah's prophecy, it was Cyrus who spoke in prophetic form, using the so-called 'messenger formula': 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia says'.¹² Jeremiah would have said: 'This is what the LORD says', as indeed he does in Jeremiah 22:1,6,11 etc. Cyrus is portrayed as putting himself in the place of God. The honour Cyrus gave to God with one hand (acknowledging that he acted under divine command), he took back with the other. God-like (as God had done in 1:1), Cyrus delegated power to some representative.¹³ The Talmud (*Megillah* 12a) goes as far as to censure Cyrus for his failure to labour personally on the rebuilding project. Already we suspect that there is some tension between the viewpoint of Cyrus, as reflected in the decree, and that of the narrator. The narrator only speaks of 'his [Cyrus'] kingdom' (1:1), but the decree speaks in universalistic terms of 'all the kingdoms of the earth', and the phrase is given special prominence by being placed in first position in the Hebrew sentence. Cyrus was big-noting himself as the universal king. In Ezra 7:12 King Artaxerxes will modestly describe himself as 'king of kings'. The Persian kings had an over-inflated view of themselves that the narrator faithfully records but with which he cannot concur. Given that, it is hard to take seriously Cyrus' acknowledgement of the LORD's commission.¹⁴

The king's words are avowedly religious. He spoke in reverent terms of 'the LORD, the God of heaven'. This verse and the one that follows are the only places in the combined book where a Persian king mentions 'the LORD' by name. The use of the Divine Tetragrammaton (YHWH) and the fact that the decree is recorded in Hebrew (unlike subsequent decrees in Ezra-Nehemiah) does not mean that this is not an authentic record of a Persian royal decree.¹⁵ Reference is usually to 'the God of heaven' (Ezra 6:9,10; 7:21,23; Neh. 1:4,5; 2:4,20), with this diplomatic usage allowing an easy

blurring of the LORD with Ahura Mazda (the Persian deity) in the mind of these kings. The Jews took up this way of speaking, for it was terminology that made sense to their Persian overlords, while at the same time being consistent with their own faith.¹⁶

Cyrus acknowledged that his kingship had been ‘given’ to him by God and that God had ‘charged’ him to build him a house in Jerusalem. Cyrus’ show of piety, however, is not altogether convincing.¹⁷ The use of the redundant Hebrew personal pronoun (‘he *himself* has charged me’) can be understood as a boast on Cyrus’ part about his special favour in God’s eyes. We suspect that religion was being used as a political tool. Did Cyrus serve God, or was God being used as a prop for Cyrus’ regime? We are entering the murky world of politics and diplomacy. Cyrus was a politician. His motives were at best mixed.

1:3–4. *‘Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and let him build the house of the LORD the God of Israel; he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And each survivor from whatever places he sojourns, let the people of his place aid him with silver, gold, goods and beasts, together with a voluntary offering for the house of God in Jerusalem.’*

The decree issued by Cyrus may be divided into three subsections coinciding with the verse divisions on the basis of the repetition of words:

1:2 all (*kōl*)
 |
 house at Jerusalem (*bîrûšālaïm*)

1:3 all (*kōl*)
 |
 house / in Jerusalem (*bîrûšālaïm*)

1:4 each / whatever (*kol*)
 |
 house / in Jerusalem (*bîrûšālāim*)

There is a clear tripartite division of the decree (that is reflected in the Masoretic versification). Verse 2 states the LORD's charge to Cyrus about the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, and verses 3 and 4 contain Cyrus' permission so as to give effect to the divine charge. Cyrus gave permission concerning:

people (1:3)
 four precious goods (1:4a)
 voluntary offerings (1:4b)

The tripartite decree isolates the three main issues of the ensuing narrative: the house (1:2), the people (1:3) and the help given (1:4). Ezra-Nehemiah, as a whole, tells how the people of God built the house of God with the help of the kings of Persia.

The decree contains a blessing ('may his God be with him'), for Cyrus invoked divine assistance for those who responded to the decree. The Jewish exiles were addressed as survivors ('each survivor'). They were those who escaped death when the city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC and its population was deported and resettled according to Babylonian policy. The 'people of his place' may refer to Jews who chose to stay behind in Babylonia but could help with the project by making suitable donations (Fensham). The wording, however, is quite general, so that a levy on the Gentile population could be the intention. On this understanding, the 'people of his place' is another way of referring to those addressed by the words 'among you' in verse 3a.¹⁸ The same applies to the expression 'all who lived round about' in verse 6 below. If there is an implicit exodus typology here, then the latter is the probable meaning (cf. Exod. 3:21-22; 12:35-36). By typology is meant the description

of a new event in terms of an earlier event. The assistance provided by Gentile neighbours is being likened to a new ‘despoiling of the Egyptians’.¹⁹ Also, in Cyrus’ address to the general populace of his empire (1:3), the wording ‘whoever is among you of all his people’ enjoined all Jews to make use of the permission granted to go up and build. It used the cultic language of ‘going up’ (to a sanctuary) (‘let him go up’). The permission and encouragement²⁰ to ‘aid’ those returning to Jerusalem links into a major theme in Ezra–Nehemiah, and the same word is used in Ezra 8:36 (‘and they aided the people and the house of God’). The ‘beasts’ in mind may be animals suitable for the journey to be undertaken, namely, those that can carry loads or may be ridden (cf. Neh. 2:12; 1 Esdras 2:6 reads ‘horses’). One way or another all the gifts listed in verse 4 were for the support of the rebuilding of the house of God. The ‘voluntary offering’ referred to donations by the Jews themselves, with 2:68–69 recording the handing over of these offerings on their arrival at Jerusalem. This can be viewed as another exodus allusion, for it appears to be modelled on the donations made by the people of Israel for the construction of the Tabernacle after they left Egypt (Exod. 25:2; 35:21–29).²¹

The response to the decree (Ezra 1:5–6)

1:5–6. *Then the heads of ancestral houses belonging to Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites, namely,²² everyone whose spirit God had roused, arose to go up to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and all who lived round about aided them²³ with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was given as a voluntary offering.*

The response to the decree has the same arrangement as the decree itself,²⁴ thus stressing that the decree was strictly carried out:

people (1:5 || 1:3)

five precious goods (1:6a || 1:4a)

voluntary offerings (1:6b || 1:4b)

The phrase 'in Jerusalem' is to be noted in 1:5b (compare 1:2b, 3b and 4b above), as well as the use of 'all' to begin 1:6 (as it also begins 1:2a, 3a and 4a). The use of the same division markers in these verses as were used in 1:2–4 serves to strengthen the connection between the decree and the response to the decree.

The voice of the narrator has returned in 1:5, as is seen by the expression: 'whose spirit God had roused', which occurred earlier in 1:1. The response to the decree as much as the issuing of the decree was the result of God's sovereign stirring up. God 'aroused the spirit' of the king of Persia, and then 'every one whose spirit God had roused' responded to the decree. God seemed to have no qualms about using the Persian kings to bring about the fulfilment of his purposes. The God who moved a king to do his bidding also moved his own people to respond to this call to return to Jerusalem to build the house of God.

The narrator specifies the people who availed themselves of the permission given in 1:3, namely 'the heads of ancestral houses' from the three tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi (1:5). These heads are portrayed in Ezra-Nehemiah as taking a leading part in significant events within the book (see Ezra 2:68–69; 3:12; 4:3; 8:1; 10:16; Neh. 8:13; 12:12–26). The book of Ezra-Nehemiah is their story, the story of those who promptly arose to execute the decree of Cyrus and thus the will of God. In Ezra-Nehemiah the people are not minor characters.²⁵ True, few of them stand out as individuals, but, as a body, they are the main character of the book and, by the end of the book, they are a fully-fledged character. The royal commands expressing permission 'let him go up' (*wəya'al*) and 'let him build' (*wəyibən*) in the edict (1:3)²⁶ are reflected in the wording 'to go up to build' (*la'alôṭ ilbnôṭ*) in the response of 1:5. Their neighbours, who were exhorted to help (1:4), rose to the occasion (1:6).

The word 'arose' (root *qûm*) in Hebrew can be used in the sense of 'prepared [to go up]' (*NIV*) and that is the probable meaning here. Among the precious goods transported to Jerusalem, the

temple ‘vessels’ were the most important as far as this narrative is concerned. Note that ‘vessels of’²⁷ is added to ‘silver’ but not to the word ‘gold’. In verse 6 the expression ‘vessels of’, not present in verse 4, has been awkwardly (and so purposely) added there as a link-word to 1:7, and hence to the next section in which Cyrus himself is presented as the chief helper in the project (1:7–11). The Gentile neighbours provided material assistance, ‘besides all that was given as a voluntary offering’ by the Jews themselves.

The twice repeated pattern of people *then* goods (1:3–4, 5–6) is significant, for the rest of chapter 1 and then chapter 2 give the details of the response in the reverse order: goods (1:7–11) and people (chapter 2), producing a chiasm:

- A people arise (1:5)
- B goods given (1:6)
- B¹ movement of goods (1:7–11)
- A¹ movement of people (2:1–70)

Within this literary pattern, 1:11b is transitional, with the vessels which ‘Shesh-bazzar brought ... up’ (*h^ʿlh*) in parallel with the people who ‘were brought up’ (*h^ʿlwh*). The passive voice may imply divine involvement, namely, that the people ‘were brought up [by God]’, or it may anticipate the mention of leaders in 2:2. If it implies divine ordering, it probably means that God motivated the people to go up. The first clause of verse 11b looks backwards to 1:7–11 and the second clause looks forward to chapter 2. The re-use of the same Hebrew root (*ʿlh*) shows that the movement of goods and of people parallel each other. The many uses of this significant root in Ezra 1 serve to make the venture into a new exodus.²⁸

The author sees the movement of goods and people as a single undertaking. The people would be the workforce for the building project and the donations of goods would be used to decorate the

temple and to supply its sacrifices. The three themes of the people, the goods and the house, then, are tightly intertwined.

Movement of the vessels (Ezra 1:7–11)

1:7–8. *Meanwhile*²⁹ King Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his God. Cyrus king of Persia brought them forth in charge of Mithredath the treasurer and he counted them out to Shesh-bazzar the prince of Judah.³⁰

The new section begins with a renewed reference to ‘Cyrus’ (1:7), who is named again here for the first time since 1:2. We will find that 1:7–11 and 2:1–67 are parallel sections:

1:7–11	2:1–67
1:7,8 Nebuchadnezzar	2:1,2a Nebuchadnezzar
Shesh-bazzar (v. 8b)	Jerusalem/Judah
Jerusalem/Judah	
‘counted them’ (<i>wysprm</i>)	
1:9,10 ‘their number’ (<i>msprm</i>)	2:2b–63 ‘number’ (<i>mspr</i>)
Vessels broken down into specified groups	Returnees broken down into specified groups
Other vessels (v. 10c)	Those without descent and so not listed in a named category (vv. 59–63)
1:11 ‘all (<i>kōl</i>) the vessels’	2:64–67 ‘the whole (<i>kol</i>) assembly’
Total given	Total given
Shesh-bazzar (v. 11b)	

The parallelism in 1:7–2:67 shows that this is a unit and hence chapter 2 is not to be separated off from chapter 1. The following parallels should be noted: Cyrus' bringing out (*hwšyʔ*) of the temple vessels (1:7) reversed what Nebuchadnezzar had done in carrying them away (*hwšyʔ* again used). We may question the generosity of Cyrus, seeing that he only gave what was taken from the temple in the first place. In like fashion, the coming up of the people (2:1) reversed what Nebuchadnezzar had done. The total in 2:64 (42,360 people) is much higher than the sum of the preceding numbers, and the situation is comparable to 1:9–11, where the sum of the categories in the Hebrew text (2,499) is far below the total sum of 5,400 vessels. We are to reject the tidy list of 1 Esdras 2:13–14 in which the total is 5,469 and the tally of the itemised figures agrees. Whatever the origin of the discrepancy between the totals and the lists, the fact that the same kind of discrepancy occurs in both the list of vessels and the list of people is what is of interest in a biblical commentary that takes literary matters seriously. Chapters 1 and 2 together form a literary unity, so that the movement of vessels parallels that of people. These movements flowed from the decree of Cyrus (1:2–4) and behind the decree stood the purpose of God to rebuild the temple (1:1).

Whereas in 1:3 all God's people were an undifferentiated unity, by 2:70, after the detailed lists of chapter 2, they can be divided up into categories. The omission of 'the sons of Solomon's servants' in 2:70 may show, as the united total of 2:58 hints, that they were essentially the same as the 'temple servants' (*nēṭnîm*). The characterisation of the people begun at 1:5 is now extended. All these *minor* characters together are the *main* character of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. 'Shesh-bazzar' is designated 'the prince [*nāšîʔ*] of Judah' (1:8b), which need mean no more than tribal leader (the sense of the same word in Num. 1:16). The Hebrew title 'prince' does not necessarily indicate royal status.³¹ He is later called the 'governor' (*peḥâ*, 5:14): that is to say, the Persian-appointed administrator; and his headship

over the tribe of Judah may explain why he was chosen by the Persians as governor. The other possibility, raised by Sara Japhet, is that 'Judah' is used as a politico-geographical term, not a tribal designation, so that 'the prince of [the province of] Judah' is actually equivalent to 'governor of Judah' (5:14).³² Nothing is made of any possible Davidic connection if he is to be identified with Shenazzar, a son of King Jehoiachin and the uncle of Zerubbabel mentioned in 1 Chronicles 3:18. The identification of the names, however, is not at all likely.³³ The failure to provide a patronym ('the son of...') for Shesh-bazzar suggests a studied disinterest in what his family connections may have been. There is a notable lack of messianism in Ezra-Nehemiah.³⁴

1:9–11. *And these were their numbers:*³⁵ *thirty gold basins, a thousand silver basins, twenty-nine knives,*³⁶ *thirty gold bowls, four hundred and ten silver bowls of a second kind,*³⁷ *and a thousand other vessels. All the vessels of gold and silver amounted to five thousand four hundred. Shesh-bazzar brought them all up when the exiles were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.*

The significance of an inventory being made needs to be carefully explored.³⁸ P. R. Ackroyd misunderstands the 'all' (1:11a) when he writes: 'The list here, whatever its origins, is clearly designed to stress *completeness* and also to underline that *care* for the vessels which is elsewhere a concern of the Chronicler' (italics mine).³⁹ The stress can hardly be on 'completeness' when the list is so obviously incomplete: the number of items on the list falls far short of the total recorded! Nor is the issue 'care' (as it will be in Ezra 8), for there is no handing-over ceremony, checking or recording at the end of this journey as there will be in 8:33–34. In Ezra 7–8 the concern is for the care and the preservation of the vessels, and the obvious anxiety over the safety of the people in those chapters reinforces this focus. The way Artaxerxes spoke about the vessels in

his decree (7:19) stresses the same point about the care to be given for their preservation on the journey.

The use of the vessels motif in chapters 1–6 (1:7–11; 5:14–15; 6:5) seems to be different from what it is in chapter 8. The important thing here is that the vessels were the *same* vessels that Nebuchadnezzar carried away from Jerusalem (1:7; cf. 2 Chr. 36:7,10,18; Dan. 1:2). Their return established continuity with the past (another point stressed by Ackroyd). The same point is made about the people who return (chapter 2): they were genuine Israelites and had genealogies to prove it. The continuity with the past could be proved. In Ezra-Nehemiah great emphasis is placed upon the genealogical purity of God's people, and genealogical lists were used to safeguard the purity of the nation. M. D. Johnson notes that such a function is not explicit in other genealogical sections of the Old Testament.⁴⁰ The exile did not mark an irreparable breach. The concern was for legitimacy. The genuineness of the vessels was matched by the purity of the people. This was an important thing when the cult was being re-established.

The commentary ascribed to Rashi explains the discrepancy between the total (5,400) and the numbered items listed (only 2,499) as due to the fact that only the most precious vessels were itemised. There were a great number of less valuable vessels (though still of gold and silver). According to another explanation, only the larger vessels were itemised, not the smaller utensils (cf. 2 Chr. 36:18) (Ibn Ezra). Both these explanations are rendered unlikely in the light of the category marked by the general description 'other vessels' at the end of verse 10, which implies that there were no other categories.⁴¹

Application

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah is the written record of what God did through kings and commoners. God was keeping his promises; and to do so he worked in the heart of the greatest

king on earth, Cyrus, the founder of the vast Persian empire. This is the God of the Bible. He is not just able to move the weak-minded and weak-willed, but can work without effort through kings, presidents and prime ministers, so that what he has promised comes to pass. Irrespective of what Cyrus' personal motives were, God chose to use this king as his instrument. God does not only choose to use angels and believers to effect his purposes. God's hands are never tied for want of instruments. He can use the grubbiest tools while all the time keeping his own hands clean. God used a king and common people. He was happy to use both. God cannot be accused of snobbery, and indeed he gave the ordinary people of God the prominent part in this great venture. The supreme illustration of the character of God's working is recorded in Luke 2:1–5. God made use of a decree by Caesar Augustus, but pride of place in the Christmas story does not go to the Roman emperor but to a poor Jewish couple, Joseph and Mary. Ezra-Nehemiah was written to celebrate the achievements of ordinary people, the Jewish men and women who responded to the decree of Cyrus.

Movement of people (Ezra 2:1–70)

2:1–2. Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken away into exile to Babylonia (and they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town), who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

As stated by Eskenazi,⁴² 'The purpose of the list is to indicate who is truly important in Ezra-Nehemiah.' Ezra 2:2 lists eleven names (the Neh. 7:7 parallel has twelve names), with Shesh-bazzar in 1:11b making up the twelfth.⁴³ This is another hint of the unity of chapters 1 and 2. The 'governor' in 2:63 is probably to be identified