Chapter 8: The Seventh Vision: The Ephah (Zech. 5:5–11)

“Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their appearance in all the land (and behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead); and this is the woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. And he said unto me, This is wickedness; and he cast her down into the midst of the ephah: and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes and saw, and, behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. Then said to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build her a house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place.”

We now come to the second of the two visions contained in the 5th chapter, which, together, set forth the full and final removal, not only of the guilt of sin, but of sin itself (especially in its final and yet future form of “wickedness” or lawlessness)—and that by means of judgment—from off the “holy land,” and from the very presence of His redeemed and purified people.

What the Prophet Saw

After instructing the prophet as to the meaning of the preceding vision, the Interpreting Angel had again withdrawn for awhile, and the prophet was left to himself to meditate on the solemn significance of the Flying Roll. Then the angel “went forth” (probably from the choirs of angels among whom he had retired in the interval, as Pusey suggests), and telling the prophet once more to lift up his eyes, he beholds another object, which the Angel tells him is “the ephah which goeth forth,” and adds the enigmatical words: “This is their resemblance (lit., ‘their eye’) in all the land.”

As the prophet looks, the cover, consisting of a circular mass, or “talent,” of lead, was lifted up, and he beheld a woman (lit., “one woman”) sitting in the midst of the ephah, of whom the angel said, pointing to her: “This is the Wickedness.” As there is evidently an attempt on the part of the woman to get out, or escape, the angel casts her down into the midst of the ephah: “And he cast the weight (lit., ‘stone’) of lead upon the mouth thereof.”

Then the prophet saw two women with wings like the wings of a stork “coming forth” from the invisible, and the wind was in their wings, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. On his inquiring of the angel: “Whither do these bear the ephah?” the answer was: “To build her an house in the land of Shinar: and when (or ‘if’) it be prepared (or ‘established’) it shall be set there upon her own base.”

The Significance of the Symbolism

Let me now try very simply to explain the various items in this vision in the order in which they occur in the text.
(a) The ephah, the same as bath, was the largest measure for dry goods in use among the Jews\(^1\), though there is still some difference of opinion as to its exact size and capacity. The most general interpretation of this symbol—the one which I myself have previously held—is that it signified the (full) measure of Israel’s sins, beyond which there is to be no more forgiveness, but a carrying away, or banishing from the land, or (as some interpreters will have it) from “the earth.” Thus, already one of the Church Fathers, quoting the solemn words of our Lord, “Fill ye up the measure of your fathers,” says: “The measure, then, which the prophet saw pointed to the filling-up of the measure of the transgression against Himself”\(^2\); and another says: “The angel bids him behold the sins of the people Israel heaped together in a perfect measure, and the transgression of all fulfilled, that the sins which escaped notice one by one, might, when collected together, be laid open to the eyes of all, and Israel might go forth from its place, and it might be shown to all what she was in her own land.”\(^3\)

A somewhat similar interpretation is given by Kliefoth (who is followed by Keil and others), who says: “Just as in a bushel the separate grains are all collected together, so will the individual sinners over the whole earth be brought into a heap when the curse of the end (contained in the Flying Roll) goes forth over the whole earth.”\(^4\)

But, though it is a solemn truth that God allows evil fully to develop itself, and iniquity to fill up its full measure of guilt before He finally interposes in judgment, the usual interpretations quoted above overlook the fact that the ephah instead of being represented as the measure into which the people pile up their iniquities, is spoken of as itself “going forth” (iyor, the same expression as is used of the Flying Roll in ver. 3) to pervade the people with its influence, and to stamp upon it, so to say, its own characteristic features, so that “this shall be their appearance (‘their aspect,’ or ‘resemblance’) in all the land.”\(^5\)

If we ask ourselves what was this new power, or principle, which exercised such a mighty formative influence over the Jewish people ever since the Babylonian Captivity, and which is gradually also bringing all the other nations of the earth under its sway, the answer is trade or commerce, of which the ephah is the natural emblem.

With their banishment to Babylon and subsequent dispersion and peculiar position among the nations, there not only began an altogether new period of Jewish history, but there commenced also the processes by which the bulk of the nation became gradually transformed from an agricultural and pastoral people

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1 The ‘omer, which contained ten ephahs, appears, as Keil points out, to have had only an ideal existence, namely, for the purpose of calculation.

2 Cyril.

3 Jerome.

4 So also Bredenkamp, in his Prophet Sacharja, in almost exactly the same words: “Wie in einem Scheffel die einzelnen Körner gesammelt werden, so werden alle Gottlose in diesem epha gesammelt, so dass sie ein Weib ausmachen.”

5 The LXX have either had another MS reading, namely, ἀποκαταστάσεως (avonam), “their iniquity,” instead of the present Hebrew text of עינם (‘ēnam), “eye,” or appearance, or have simply blundered in their translation, for they render the sentence, “this is their iniquity in all the earth,” a reading which has been adopted by several of the German commentators. But there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the Masoretic text.
into a nation of merchantmen, and the new occupations into which they were forced by the altered circumstances tended in a peculiar sense to develop the two transgressions (namely, theft and perjury) which are specified in the preceding vision of the Flying Roll, with which this vision of the Ephah stands very closely related. Idolatry, into which they were so liable to fall, was for ever left behind in Babylon; but a godless commercialism, with its temptations “to make the ephah small and the shekel great, and to deal falsely with balances of deceit” (Amos viii. 5), eventually becomes not less hateful to God—not only because it has too often been supported by theft and perjury, which, as we have seen, are transgressions of the central commands of both tables of the Law, but because it was destined to develop a new system in which all iniquity would finally be summed up.

(b) In conjunction with the ephah we have the ככר, kikar, which the English Version renders “talent.” The Hebrew word literally means “a circle,” and thus kikar lehem, “a circle of bread,” is used to denote a round loaf. The word, as Dr. Wright points out, is not elsewhere found in the signification of a cover, though that is a possible sense. “It is constantly used of a fixed weight, by which gold, silver, and other things are weighed and measured, and is naturally spoken of in such a meaning here in connection with the Ephah, as the latter was the usual measure of capacity. The talent was the largest measure of quantity, and the weight was made of lead as the most common heavy metal, and was used in all commercial transactions for weighing out money.”

That a “talent,” the other chief emblem and instrument of trade, should have been seen by the prophet as forming the cover of the ephah, is of solemn significance, as will be shown further on.

6 This is the explanation given in the Targum and by Rashi. Kimchi, who quite unjustifiably applies this vision to the Ten Tribes, gives the following farfetched interpretation: “He showed him an ephah, which is a measure, to signify that God had measured out to them measure for measure; for, according as they had done by continuing many days in their wickedness, from the day that the kingdom was divided until the day that they were led away captive; and as they had not had one out of all their kings who turned them to good, but, on the contrary, they all walked in an evil way: according, I say, as they had continued long in evil, so they shall be many days in captivity—this is measure for measure; therefore the prophet saw an ephah which is a measure.”

Among German commentators, Pressel, in his Commentar zu Haggai, Sacharja, and Maleachi, is the only one who, as far as I know, has caught what, on mature consideration, seems to me the true significance of the ephah, and he is followed by Dr. C. H. H. Wright.

Lange, in his Bibelwerk, refers somewhat contemptuously to Pressel’s view, his great objection being expressed in the words: “Wie wenn etwa von einem heutigen judenviertel die Rede wäre, und nicht von der Geheiligten Colonie zu Jerusalem” (“as if the subject dealt with was a modern Jewish quarter instead of the sanctified colony in Jerusalem”). But the answer to this objection is that the present state of the Jewish people as seen “im heutigen judenviertel” cannot be dissociated from Israel’s past or future. That the beginning of the new power of commercialism as associated with the Jewish people can be traced back to the dispersion, and began already to assert itself in Zechariah’s time, is a matter of history. Beside this, these two visions in chap. v. do not set forth the “sanctified colony in Jerusalem,” but rather show how transgressors shall be “cut off” (or “cleansed away”), and how the evil which is the very embodiment of “wickedness,” or “lawlessness,” shall finally be banished from the “holy land,” so that those who remain after the purifying judgment shall “be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem” (Isa. iv. 3).

7 Ex. xxix. 23; 1 Sam. ii. 36.
(c) The “talent,” or circular mass of lead, being lifted\(^8\), the prophet beheld a woman\(^9\) sitting in the midst of the ephah.

“And he said” (i.e., the Angel, as if to call anew the prophet’s special attention), “this is the Wickedness”—the very embodiment of iniquity, rendered in the Septuagint ανομία, lawlessness.

The woman is usually taken by commentators to symbolise the Jewish people, which, when the measure of sin shall have become full, would be carried away into captivity. But the seventy years’ captivity in Babylon was now at an end, and the idea of a retrospective significance of the symbolism of this vision, which Jerome and Rosenmuller adopt, seems to me untenable. All the other visions of Zechariah relate to the future—as Hengstenberg well observes, why should this be the sole exception? In the judgment of the Flying Roll a coming judgment is foretold. Why should this one of the Ephah be referred to the past?

Neither can it be properly referred to the subsequent captivity, as Hengstenberg and others attempt to do. There was, indeed, another dispersion of the Jewish people after the restoration from Babylon, but that could not well be represented in any special sense as a carrying away “into the land of Shinar.” Besides, as I have tried to show in the introductory remarks to the exposition of the preceding vision of the Flying Roll, the scope and purport of the two visions in chap. v. are not the punishment of the nation, but the cleansing of the restored people and land, and the stamping out and banishment from their midst not only of the guilt of sin, but of iniquity or “wickedness” itself.

We regard, therefore, the woman in this vision, not as a personification of the Jewish people, nor as a collective representation of individual sinners who are finally gathered into one heap in the ephah, but as delineating the (then as yet hidden) moral system of which the ephah is the emblem.

And it is not inappropriate that the system engendered by the ephah, which in its essence is the worship of Mammon, should be represented by a woman, “because of the power it displays as a temptress, whereby it exercises such an enticing and dangerous influence over the souls of men.” Or, as Grotius observed: This form of wickedness is here described as a woman “because she is the mother of thefts and perjuries, and of all crimes.” But though this vision, like all the rest, has primary reference to the land and the people—and the purport of its message is that the system which is characterised as the Wickedness (and is altogether alien and opposed to the principles of the redeemed and sanctified community in the land in

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\(^8\) According to Pressel and Dr. Wright the woman was sitting (as it were, enthroned) in the ephah carrying the kikar, or talent of lead (the emblem of the means by which her traffic is carried on), in her lap. They render the 7th verse thus: “And behold a talent of lead was being lifted (i.e. carried), and I saw, and this was one woman sitting (or ‘as she sat’) in the middle of the ephah.” But, though this is a possible though somewhat forced rendering of the verb נושאת (which is the Niphal participle fem. of נשא), it seems to me clear from the 8th verse that the “talent” formed the cover. The impression left on the mind by reading the narrative of the vision in the original is certainly that there is an attempted escape on the part of the woman from the ephah, and that the Angel casts the talent on the mouth of the ephah with a view to secure her, that she may be safely carried to the land of Shinar. It is for this reason, I suppose, that it may serve as a cover, or circular lid—apart from its emblematic significance as the instrument of trade—that a talent of lead, consisting of a large, circular, undefined mass, is seen in the vision, instead of one of gold, or of silver, which in size would be very much smaller.

\(^9\) Ishab achath—literally, “one woman.” The words, “and this is one woman,” are those of the Interpreting Angel, who proceeds in the next verse to describe her character.
which the King of Righteousness shall have His seat) shall be banished to the place, or sphere, to which it originally belongs—it is a solemn truth that this same evil power of the ephah, with its all-pervading controlling influence, is “going forth” also in the whole world; so that of all the civilised nations in particular it must be said: “This is their aspect, or resemblance, in all the earth.”

It is a striking and noteworthy fact, which no intelligent man can fail to observe, that commerce is more and more bringing the nations under its sway.

It now sets up the governments and dictates the policies of the nations. It is for it that the mighty armaments are being built and that wars are being made.

In all the earth and among all nations that which is symbolised by the ephah is becoming the great controlling centre of society. “The producing power of manufacture, the distributing skill of the merchant, the controlling power of those who trade in money and command the circulating medium of commerce—these and similar interests, when combined, are able to speak with a voice which no government can refuse to hear. Their will is potent. Legislation and government accommodate themselves to their demands.”

That, for instance, “which is most distinctive in the present condition of England is her commercial system. Commerce, or the wealth and influence thence arising, has become the mainspring of England’s energies—the chief bulwark of her social institutions, the pillar of her government. When ecclesiastical power fell, and the feudal aristocracy became gradually enfeebled, and when the steady advance of the people seemed to make democracy (perhaps revolutionary democracy) the sure end of the social movement, there was gradually being formed in this country a new aristocracy, more potent than any, whether ecclesiastical or hereditary, that had preceded—the aristocracy of wealth. The expressions ‘commercial interest,’ ‘manufacturing interest,’ ‘moneyed interest,’ ‘Indian interest,’ and the like, suggest sufficiently intelligible ideas to English minds. The ramifications of these interests are so various and so extended that the mass of society is effectually reached and controlled by their influence; and thus a power has been consolidated the like to which has never before existed. In England this power is learning to work in harmony with the State. Indeed, the State has virtually become its organ. Plutocracy is a comprehensive, not an exclusive system. Its elasticity is great. It can adapt itself to the changing circumstances of the hour, and receiving within its circle both the aristocrat and the democrat, it provides a place of honour and influence for both.

“In its relations to ancient systems, it seeks, not to annihilate, but rather to modify, adapt, harmonise, and employ. It possesses, therefore, not only its own intrinsic weight, but is acquiring also all the weight which governmental authority can give. No other interest, whether royal or ecclesiastic, aristocratic or popular, is allowed to throw any effectual impediment in its course. Virtually, its will is paramount. The appropriate device of England would not be either the crown or the mitre, the coronet or the sword, but some emblem of commerce. An ‘ephah’ should be emblazoned on her banners. Our Government is a commercial Government, not because England happens to be a mercantile country, but because manufacturing and trading interests supremely sway her councils, and all other interests are being made

10 וּרְץ, eretz—as already explained—means both “land” and “earth,” though its primary use in this vision is of the “land.”
subordinate. Such are the features which characteristically mark the period during which the powers of civilisation have been renovated in this Western corner of the Roman world.

“The abasement of ecclesiastical *supremacy*, the establishment of constitutional monarchy, and the rise of commerce into sovereign influence, may be regarded as accomplished facts. They distinctively characterise England; and finally they will equally characterise every other kingdom that falls within the Roman world. The success of England naturally causes her to be imitated. Her influence, which is great, is exerted, as might be expected, for the propagation of her principles, and the circumstances of the hour favour these principles. We cannot marvel at this, for the Scriptures plainly declare that such shall be the principles of the closing period of our dispensation. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the particular city indicated in the 18th of the Revelation, this at least is evident, that that chapter describes a closing scene in the world’s present history, and speaks of ‘merchants being the great men of the earth,’ and of a commercial city being ‘queen of the nations.’

“But it may be asked, Why should this be regretted? Is an ephah the symbol of evil? In other words, Is commerce *necessarily* sinful? We reply, No; commerce is not *necessarily* sinful. Commerce may be the mere exchange on just and righteous principles of the productions of various regions, or of various labourers. The effecting such exchange may involve no course of conduct that militates against the principles of God, or sacrifices His truth. But it may be otherwise. If commerce comes into such supremacy as to make her merchants the great men of the earth, the influences that governmentally order the nations would in that case fall into her hand. The world—educationally, politically, religiously, socially—would be virtually under her control. How blessed if her principles were the principles of God! But if the arrangements which are to characterise the nations as the latter day draws nigh are as evil as the Scriptures declare them to be, then they who by means of their commercial greatness control or sustain these arrangements must be the very pillars of the last great system of evil, and the commercial period of the world’s history becomes the period of its systematised transgression.”

It is most probably, then, because of the part this system is to play in connection with the final apostasy, that it is characterised by the Angel with such emphasis as הַרְשָׁעָה—“the wickedness,” or “the lawlessness.”

But to return to the Scriptures immediately before us.

The Angel’s action in throwing the woman back into the ephah, and casting the circular mass of lead “upon the mouth thereof,” is meant, I believe, to set forth, not only the fact that the instruments of sin become the instruments of her punishment, but the still more solemn truth that men and nations who sell themselves to sin are, after a time, kept down and tied to that particular sin; or, to use the language of Prov. v. 22: “His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.” Not only in relation to the future eternal destiny of the individual (of which the words are primarily used), but already also in the earthly history of men and nations, there comes a time when the solemn judicial sentence goes forth from the mouth of God: “He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still” (Rev. xxii. 11, R.V.).

11 *Babylon and Egypt*, by B. W. Newton.
Thus, when the woman attempts to escape, she is thrown back into the ephah, which becomes, so to say, the chariot in which she is carried away as something which is defiled and defiling, from the land in which God shall dwell; and the talent with which she carries on her unrighteous trade becomes the heavy weight by which she is held down till she is landed safely “in her own place,” where, after a season of lawless liberty in which she will allure men to their own destruction by her seductive attractiveness and luxury, she will be judged and destroyed, together with him who is preeminently styled “The Wicked One,” by the brightness of the Lord’s parousia (2 Thess. ii. 8).

(d) We come now to the last act in the drama of this vision, which, as already said, is primarily intended to set forth the removal of “wickedness” from the holy land without occupying itself with its final destiny in the land to which, by the aid of evil powers, it was for a time to be transplanted.

That every item in the description of the actors in the 9th verse is of symbolical significance (as is the case with all the details in the other visions), and not merely picturesque figures of speech with a view “to give distinctness to the picture” (as Keil, Hengstenberg, Bredenkamp, and others assert), there can be no doubt; but it is impossible to speak with absolute positiveness as to what each particular is intended to signify.  

In a general way I agree on this point with those writers who regard these women as typifying instruments or systems of evil, who for a time deliver the woman in the ephah from the vengeance which was about to destroy her. “By reason of the curse described (in the previous vision) as overtaking all who followed in her wicked ways,” observes Dr. Wright, “no place is left for her any longer in the land of righteousness, among a people whose transgressions are forgiven and who are sanctified to bring forth fruit unto holiness. The winged women, therefore, bear off the evil one to the land of Shinar, there to build for her a home and a house.”  

And if we are asked what two evil systems, helped and impelled by evil spirits (as may be gathered from the fact that they had the wings of a stork, which is an unclean bird, and that “the wind,” or “spirit,”

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12 Keil, whose remarks are repeated almost verbally by Bredenkamp and others, easily passes over this verse with the following remarks: “Women carry it because there is a woman inside; and two women because two persons are required to carry so large and heavy a burden, that they may lay hold of it on both sides. These women have wings because it passes through the air; and a stork's wings because these birds have broad pinions,” etc.

13 It may be remarked that the final cleansing of the land and people of Israel does not, in point of time, take place until after the full development of “Wickedness,” and the manifestation of the “Wicked One,” who shall be destroyed by the “brightness” (or “shining forth”) of Christ at His coming (2 Thess. ii. 8). Not until the King of Righteousness reigns over Mount Zion, will Palestine be “the land of righteousness,” and the nation of Israel “a people whose transgressions are forgiven, and who are sanctified to bring forth fruits unto holiness.”

But we are not to expect in these visions, or indeed in Old Testament prophecy generally, a clear setting forth of eschatological events in their true chronological order.

The fact is clearly, though symbolically, set forth, that among a people, and in a land whence “iniquity has been removed” (chap. iii. 9), and which should thenceforth be known as the “holy land” (chap. ii. 12), and the holy people, the system of “wickedness” outwardly symbolised by the ephah, can have no place.

Incidentally, it also sets forth the fact that for a time this system will find a place in the land and sphere to which it, so to say, belongs.
certainly not of God, “was in their wings”), would thus eventually unite in finding a home for the ephah and the woman, which for a season would be permitted to dominate the nations through its power, we can only suggest that it may be apostate Christianity united in the last days to apostate Judaism, and both given over to the worship of Mammon, on which the power of the ephah is based; or, as in these series of visions, the civil and ecclesiastical powers, as represented by Zerubbabel and Joshua, are frequently brought before us; and in the fifth vision (chap. iv. 14.) are probably “the two” who are represented “as standing before the Lord.” The two women here may, perhaps, be meant to signify civil government broken loose, even outwardly, from every acknowledgment of God (and, therefore, an instrument in the hand of lawlessness), and a corrupt anti-Christian and anti-theistic priesthood—both Jewish and Gentile—ready to unite as sponsors and protectors to a system which, though as yet not so regarded, even by the elect, is characterised by God as “the Wickedness.”

(e) There is yet one more point that we must briefly touch on before taking our leave of this vision—namely, what are we to understand by “the land of Shinar,” which, according to the words of the Interpreting Angel, is to be the destination to which the two women bear the ephah, there for a time to establish it on its own base? According to the commentators, the name “Shinar” is not to be taken geographically here, as an epithet applied to Mesopotamia, but “is a national, or real, definition, which affirms that the ungodliness carried away out of the sphere of the people of God will have its permanent settlement in the sphere of the imperial power that is hostile to God.” Or, as another explains it: “The name Shinar, though strictly Babylonia, carries us back to an older power than the world-empire of Babylon, which now was destroyed. In the land of Shinar was the first attempt made, ere mankind was yet dispersed, to array a world-empire against God. And so it is the apter symbol of the anti-theistic or anti-Christian world, which, by violence, and falsehood, and sophistry, wars against the truth.”

But while there is truth in the words of yet another writer that Shinar was the land of unholiness, and stands here contrasted with Palestine, which shall be “the holy land “(chap. ii. 12), and that the chief point in the vision is the renewal of the special form of “wickedness “which is symbolised by the ephah from the land of Israel to find its resting-place “in the land of world-power which is antagonistic to God,” we cannot altogether agree that “the picture is an ideal one,” and that “the land of Shinar is an ideal land contrasted with the land of Israel.”

Without any spirit of dogmatism, and without entering at this place into the question of the identity and significance of the Babylon in the Revelation—whether mystical or actual—we would express our conviction that there are Scriptures which cannot, according to our judgment, be satisfactorily explained except on the supposition of a revival and yet future judgment of literal Babylon, which for a time will be the centre and embodiment of all the elements of our godless Western “civilisation,” and which especially will become the chief entrepôt of commerce in the world, in which will be gathered “merchandise of gold,

14 Pusey.

15 Dr. C. H. H. Wright. According to Hengstenberg, who, as I believe erroneously, regards the woman in the ephah as symbolising the Jewish people, who, when the measure of their sin became full, was to be banished again from the land and carried away into captivity, Shinar stands for the lands of their present dispersion: that is, “the future dwelling-place of the Jews, who were to be banished from their country, is called by the name of the land in which they were captives before.” And he finds in it a “striking example of the custom which the prophets adopted of representing future events by images drawn from the past, and at the same time transferring to the former the names which belong to the latter.”
and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and bodies; and souls of men,” until it shall finally and for ever be overturned by one terrible act of judgment from God. 

To this conviction we are led chiefly by the fact that there are prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the literal Babylon which have never in the past been exhaustively fulfilled, and that Scripture usually connects the final overthrow of Babylon with the yet future restoration and blessing of Israel.

And it is very striking to the close observer of the signs of the times how things at the present day are rapidly developing on the very lines which are forecast in the prophetic Scriptures. “The fears and hopes of the world—political, commercial, and religious,” writes one in a monthly journal which lies before me, “are at the present day being increasingly centred upon the home of the human race—Mesopotamia.

. . . As the country from which the father of the Jewish nation emigrated to the land of promise, it is also occupying the thoughts and aspirations of the Jews.”

Whatever may be the outcome of the negotiations which have been carried on recently with the Turkish Government by the Jewish Territorialists “for the establishment of a Jewish autonomous State” in this very region, in which many Zionists and other Jews were ready to join, there is so much truth in the words of another writer that when once a considerable number of such a commercial people as the Jews are re-established in Palestine, “the Euphrates would be to them as necessary as the Thames to London or the Rhine to Germany. It would be Israel’s great channel of communication with the Indian seas, not to speak of the commerce which would flow towards the Tigris and Euphrates from the central and northern districts of Asia! It would be strange, therefore, if no city should arise on its banks of which it might be said that her merchants were the great men of the earth.”

“Noteworthy in this connection,” observes another writer, “is the watchful eye of the German Imperial Government upon the railway in course of construction from Konia (the biblical Iconium) to Bagdad. Some six hundred miles of the Anatolian, or Euphratean, line have already been opened to traffic.” In short, there is a general impression that this region, the highway between Asia and Europe, and contiguous to Africa, is about to become a great “commercial centre of gravity.” The new Turkish Government (in contrast to the old regime) is very keen on the development of the resources of that ancient and naturally fertile region, and alive to the very important aid which Jewish capital and energy could render in that direction. Very recently, therefore, they engaged the services of a distinguished English hydraulic engineer, Sir William Willcocks, K.C.M.G., to survey the district and report on the establishment and development of irrigation works. He returned full of enthusiasm, declaring that his “future hopes, ambitions, and work are bound up with the re-creation of Chaldea.”

16 Rev. xviii. 12, 13.

17 All this was written in 1910.
A very interesting paper which he read at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society last November is published in *The Geographical Journal* for January 1910. The following are his concluding remarks: “In her long history of many thousands of years, Babylonia has again and again been submerged, but she has always risen with an energy and thoroughness rivalling the very completeness and suddenness of her fall. She has never failed to respond to those who have striven to raise her. Again, it seems that the time has come for this land, long wasted with misery, to rise from the very dust and take her place by the side of her ancient rival, the land of Egypt.

“The works we are proposing are drawn on sure and truthful lines, and the day they are carried out the two great rivers will hasten to respond, and Babylon will yet once again see her waste places becoming inhabited, and the desert blossoming as the rose.”