

BOOK II • NUREMBERG 1493

The Nuremberg Chronicle

*From the Babylonian Captivity
to Constantine*

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The Nuremberg Chronicle

Book II. From the Babylonian Captivity to Constantine

Hartmann Schedel's history of the world, from the
Nuremberg edition of 1493, in modern English

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printed by Anton Koberger, Nuremberg, 12 July 1493. Translated from the
Latin from images of a hand-coloured copy. Woodcuts from the same copy
(workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff).

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FOREWORD

The history of the world in one book. In the summer of 1493 a book appeared in Nuremberg that set out to tell everything — from the creation of the world to the year of its own printing, and beyond that to the end of the world. In Latin it was called *Liber Chronicarum*, "the Book of Chronicles", but the world came to know it as the Nuremberg Chronicle. It was one of the largest and most splendid books of the early age of printing: a great folio volume of more than six hundred pages in which text and pictures are woven into a single whole.

Who made it. The Chronicle was written by Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514), a Nuremberg physician, humanist and one of the great book collectors of his time. Schedel gathered and reworked everything his age knew about the course of the world — the Bible, the Church Fathers, the ancient authors and the newest Italian chronicles, above all the *Supplement to the Chronicles* of Jacopo Filippo Foresti of Bergamo and the writings of the humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II. The book was printed by Anton Koberger, perhaps the greatest publisher in Europe at the time, and paid for by two wealthy citizens of Nuremberg, Sebald Schreyer and Sebastian Kammermeister. The Latin edition was completed on 12 July 1493, and on 23 December of the same year a German translation by Georg Alt followed.

A book of pictures. The Nuremberg Chronicle is remembered first of all for its pictures. The woodcuts were made in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut and his stepson Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. In those very years the young Albrecht Dürer was an apprentice in Wolgemut's workshop, and it is often thought that his hand may have taken part as well. The book contains 1,809 pictures, yet they were printed from only 645 woodblocks: one portrait of a king or a prophet serves for many different people, and one view of a city sometimes stands for several cities.

Still, many of the great city panoramas — Nuremberg, Vienna, Cologne, Regensburg — are the first views of these cities in print on such a scale and with such life. Some copies were coloured by hand in the fifteenth century at the buyer's wish.

The seven ages of the world. Following medieval tradition, Schedel divided history into seven ages: from the Creation to the Flood; from the Flood to Abraham; from Abraham to David; from David to the Babylonian Captivity; from the Captivity to the birth of Christ; from Christ to the author's own day; and the seventh — the time of Antichrist and the Last Judgement. A description of the lands of Europe was added at the end.

What is in this book. This is the second book of a series of six. It covers the whole of the fifth age of the world — from the Babylonian Captivity to the birth of Christ — and the first three centuries of the sixth age, up to the Emperor Constantine the Great. Here are the Persian kings from Cyrus to Darius, the beginnings of the Roman Republic and its civil wars, the Greek philosophers from Anaximander to Aristotle, Alexander the Great and the division of his empire, the Ptolemies of Egypt, the kings of Syria and the struggle of the Maccabees, Herod and Augustus. Then come the birth and life of Christ, the journeys of the apostles, the first popes, the emperors from Tiberius to Diocletian and the long line of martyrs of the ten persecutions. Among these stories Schedel places great city views and descriptions: Verona, Milan, Pavia, Alexandria, Siena, Mantua, Florence, Lyon, Cologne, Augsburg, Regensburg, Vienna, Nuremberg, Metz, Tibur (Tivoli) and Geneva. For ease of reading we have divided the book into nine parts.

Our translation. We translated from the Latin edition, working from images of the pages of a hand-coloured copy. The translation is complete — sentence by sentence, with nothing left out and nothing retold. Here and there we divided Schedel's long sentences, but we did not change their content. Where a word had faded in the print or an abbreviation was unclear, we restored the sense from the context and from the sources Schedel himself drew on. Where the Chronicle gives

a year in the margin — the year of the world, the year from the founding of Rome or the year after Christ — it is kept at the head of the entry. The book also exists in a Latvian edition.

How to read it. Place names, peoples, lesser-known persons and things no longer familiar today are explained in footnotes on the same page, where they first appear. Schedel writes as a man of the fifteenth century: his numbers and dates often disagree with what we know today, he confuses rulers of similar names, and he tells legends as seriously as history. We have left his mistakes in the text untouched and explained them briefly in the notes. At the end of the book each part has a commentary, *In plain words* and *What history tells us*.

The pictures. The woodcuts in this book are the originals — cut from the pages of the same hand-coloured copy and placed where they stand in the Chronicle. There are 69 of them: the fall of Babylon, the plans of the temple seen by the prophet Ezekiel, the division of Alexander's empire, the family tree of Herod, scenes from the life of Christ, the martyrdoms of the apostles and great city panoramas. Several of the large panoramas fill two facing pages in the Chronicle, so here they are given in two halves. At the beginning of each part there is a colour illustration in the manner of late fifteenth-century manuscript miniatures — this is modern work, not part of the Chronicle.

The Nuremberg Chronicle series.

- I. The Creation and the First Ages of the World
- II. From the Babylonian Captivity to Constantine
- III. From Constantine to the Year One Thousand
- IV. Emperors, Popes and Crusades
- V. The Last Times and the Last Judgement
- VI. The Description of Europe

This is the publication of a historical source. Schedel writes with the faith, knowledge and prejudices of his time. We leave his words untouched; our explanations are only in the footnotes and the commentary.

PART I

THE FIFTH AGE OF THE WORLD: THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY AND THE PERSIAN KINGS



Illustration in the manner of 15th-century manuscript miniatures

The Fifth Age of the World

Here begins the fifth age of the world. It had its beginning with the carrying away of the Jews into Babylon, and it lasts until the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ — 590 years, although some think otherwise in this reckoning. Therefore those who

would rightly count the years of the captivity from the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, as Eusebius¹ does, will end the seventy years of captivity in the second year of Darius. Josephus and Saint Jerome count from the thirteenth year of King Josiah to the third year of King Cyrus. Some count from the last year of King Jehoiachin to the last year of Cyrus. But, judging rightly, those seventy years which end in the third or the last year of Cyrus are properly called the years of the Jewish captivity, while those which end in the second year of Darius are the years of the complete transmigration. And this is held to be the principal and chief era of Holy Scripture: namely, that it took place in the year 4610 from the beginning of the world, 2369 after the Flood, 1427 after the birth of Abraham, in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Tarquinius, king of the Romans, when Astyages reigned among the Medes, Europus among the Macedonians, Alyattes among the Lydians, Vaphres² among the Egyptians, and Nebuchadnezzar the First among the Chaldeans.

Here, then, begins the captivity of the Hebrews, which was the ruin of the people of Jerusalem, and it lasts for seventy years. For since the people of Israel had long served idols and had also gravely defiled themselves with the shedding of innocent blood, God, willing that the generation of this people should perish, decreed that this same people should endure a captivity of seventy years in the kingdom of the Chaldeans. This was so that, when the number of years was fulfilled, a new people, free of those sins, might come to the restoration of Jerusalem.

1. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339) — church historian whose *Chronicle*, in Jerome's Latin translation, was the chief framework of dates for medieval world chronicles.

2. Vaphres (Apries) — pharaoh of Egypt (589–570 BC), called Pharaoh Hophra in the Bible.

*Jerusalem*

High Priests and Leaders after the Return

After the return of the people of Israel from Babylon, two men stood at their head: Joshua the high priest, as it were in place of the kings, and Zerubbabel as leader. This order was kept until Herod, namely that the high priests held the first place, while the leaders were set beneath them. Yet the leaders were always of the tribe of Judah, according to the prophecy of Jacob: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet.” These came to Jerusalem with a countless multitude of Jews to rebuild the temple. Gathering the whole

province, they built an altar in the place where it had stood before and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles³. Joshua also began to renew the temple, but died shortly afterwards.

Shealtiel (in the year of the world 4634) was the son of Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom he begot after the carrying away to Babylon, as the evangelist Matthew says.

Joiakim the priest was the son of the high priest Joshua, whom Josephus calls Jozadak. In his time, with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesying and helping, Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple and the city. When the temple had been built and the Passover celebrated with countless burnt offerings, he set about adorning the city as well.

Zerubbabel (in the year of the world 4659) laid the foundations of the temple at the Lord's command, and for a long time afterwards he was held in the highest esteem among the Jews. King Cyrus appointed him prince of the people. He was the first to begin leading the Jews back from Chaldea to their own land, and with Cyrus's permission he began to rebuild the temple.

Of this Abiud (in the year of the world 4709) and those who followed him down to Joseph nothing is found in the Scriptures, except that Matthew lists them; and therefore their times cannot be known with certainty. Only this is known, that Abiud begot Eliakim, who begot Azor, who begot Zadok, and so on, as Matthew testifies at the beginning of his Gospel.

The Prophet Haggai

The prophet Haggai, the eleventh among the twelve prophets, wrote the book of his prophecy in these times. In it he describes the return of the people and the building of the temple, and he also takes in the restoration of the city and the

3. Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) — the Jewish autumn festival when for seven days people live in booths of branches, recalling the wandering in the wilderness.

order of the priests. When the temple was at last completed, he died soon after and was buried beside the tombs of the priests.

The Prophet Malachi

The prophet Malachi was renowned at this time. He was so called — that is, “angel” — because of his excellent life. They say that the very words he had prophesied with his own mouth were repeated by an angel of the Lord who appeared to him.

The Hellespontine Sibyl

The Hellespontine Sibyl⁴, born in the region of Troy, was an old woman dressed in an old peasant’s garment, her head bound with an old veil wound under her chin down to her shoulders, as if in a humble dress. She speaks thus: “From the lofty dwelling of the heavens He has looked upon His lowly ones, and in the last days He shall be born of a Hebrew virgin, in a cradle of the earth.”

Nebuchadnezzar

This Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar the Great, was the third king of the Chaldeans. In the eighteenth year of the captivity he succeeded his father in the kingdom and reigned ten years. He was a man of most excellent spirit and immense power, who added much to his father’s royal possessions and accomplished many great deeds.

Evil-Merodach

This Evil-Merodach, brother of the aforesaid Nebuchadnezzar, was the fourth king of the Chaldeans, a son of Nebuchadnezzar the Great. In the twenty-eighth year of the captivity, his brother having died without children, he took up the

4. The Sibyls — prophetesses of antiquity; the Middle Ages held that twelve Sibyls had foretold the coming of Christ among the pagans. The Hellespont is today’s Dardanelles strait in Turkey.

kingdom and reigned eighteen years. He released Jehoiachin from prison and honoured him. He had three sons.

Servius Tullius

Servius Tullius, the sixth king of the Romans, took up the kingdom in the ninth year of the Jewish captivity and reigned thirty-four years. Although he was born of a slave woman, his obscure birth did not prevent him from seizing the helm of the city. Tanaquil⁵, the wife of Tarquinius, seeing his outstanding gifts, had generously brought him up, and through her efforts he gained the kingdom. He was the first to institute a census in the city. He added three hills to the city — the Quirinal, the Viminal and the Esquiline — enlarged it, and surrounded it with ditches and a wall. At last he was killed by his son-in-law Tarquinius the Proud, at the urging of his own daughter.

Tarquinius the Proud

Tarquinius, son of King Tarquinius Priscus and son-in-law of Servius Tullius, to whom they gave this surname because of his proud deeds. In the forty-fourth year of the Jewish captivity, his father-in-law being dead, he became king of the Romans and reigned thirty-five years. He preferred to seize his grandfather's kingdom, which Servius held, rather than wait for it. Having taken the throne, he at once had the leading men of the city put to death, whom he believed to have favoured the cause of his father-in-law Servius, together with Tarquinius, his sister's son, and he did most things as a tyrant. The Roman people bore the king's pride for as long as lust was absent; but the insolence of his children they could not endure. When one of them had violated Lucretia, a most honourable woman, the matron atoned for her shame with the sword. Then rule was taken away from the kings; and he himself, driven from the kingdom, was at last slain by

5. Tanaquil — the Etruscan-born wife of King Tarquinius Priscus; in Roman legend a seer and a maker of kings.

Porsenna⁶.

Belshazzar

Belshazzar, son of King Evil-Merodach, began to reign over the Chaldeans after his father and reigned seventeen years. In the first year of his reign the prophet Daniel saw his fourth vision. At last he was taken, and the city, which fought most valiantly, was captured by Cyrus, king of the Persians, and razed to its foundations — so completely that not a trace of so great a city remained. But the one that stands now was founded in another place by Cambyses, son of Cyrus⁷.

Babylon

Babylon the great is taken and her power is taken from her. This first and greatest city of the whole world, which it seemed almost unbelievable could have been built by human means or overthrown by human strength, was destroyed by Darius and Cyrus, the first kings of the Medes and Persians.



The Fall of Babylon

6. Porsenna — king of the Etruscan city of Clusium who, according to legend, made war on Rome to restore the exiled Tarquinius. In fact Tarquinius died in exile at Cumae.

7. Belshazzar was in fact the son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, not of Evil-Merodach. Cyrus took Babylon in 539 BC without a battle and did not destroy it; Cambyses built no new city.

A Hail of Stones

About these times, as Orosius⁸ says, night seemed to stretch over a great part of the day, and a hail of stones — that is, real stones — fell from the clouds.

Here begin the weeks of Daniel⁹ according to Bede's reckoning, about which there is great dispute among the learned.

When the temple of the Lord, built in the manner of a fortress, was completed in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, the high priest Joiakim, with the priests, with trumpets and in solemn array, praised God.

Solomon's Temple Is Completed in the Seventh Year of Darius, King of the Persians

Elizaphat¹⁰, high priest of the Hebrews, succeeded his father Joiakim in the high priesthood, as Eusebius says. He held the office thirty-two years. Being a man worthy of such honour, by his wisdom he obtained from Artaxerxes, king of the Persians, exemption from tolls and taxes for the ministers of the temple, and also the power to remove judges.

Eliakim — in the year of the world 4759.

Joiada, the fourth high priest, in the time of Mordecai, to whom Mordecai sent letters from Susa, the city of the Persians, about keeping the days of Purim. It is known that he was a man of great learning and holiness, yet troubled by many disturbances.

Johanán, son of the high priest Joiada, the fifth high priest of the Hebrews. He had a brother named Joshua who, trusting in his friendship with Bagoses,

8. Orosius (early 5th century) — Spanish priest, pupil of Saint Augustine, author of the *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*.

9. The seventy weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9:24–27) — a prophecy of 490 years until the Messiah; Christian theologians disputed from which event they should be counted.

10. Elizaphat — Schedel's form; in the Book of Nehemiah this high priest is called Eliashib.

governor of the land beyond the river, aspired to the high priesthood. When they quarrelled over this in the temple, Johanan was so inflamed against his brother that he killed him. For this Bagoses plundered all the ornaments of the temple¹¹.

Azor — in the year of the world 4809.

Of this Zadok (in the year of the world 4859) likewise nothing is known except that Matthew places him among the others in the genealogy of Christ.

The Prophet Jeremiah

This Jeremiah prophesied for the last time in Egypt. When he had rebuked the people for their sins, they stoned him at Tāhpanhes. In that same place he was overwhelmed with stones and buried where Pharaoh had once dwelt.

The Prophet Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel, after many glorious deeds, having rebuked certain men, was in their fury dragged by horses over rocky crags, and they dashed out his brains. He was buried in the tomb of Shem, the son of Noah, and of Arphaxad, his son.

The Prophets Zechariah and Haggai

Zechariah and Haggai, in the second year of Darius, rebuked the people for their negligence in building the house of the Lord, and urged Zerubbabel to speak to the king about it. The king consented, and the heart of the people was kindled to build the temple. At last, after many good works, when the temple was completed, he too died and was buried beside the prophet Haggai.

Lucretia

Lucretia, a Roman matron, the most chaste of all Roman women and most renowned for beauty and grace, the wife of Collatinus, having been violated by

11. This story of the murder of a brother in the temple and the Persian governor Bagoses (Bagohi) is told by Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.