

Ezra Lesson 06

Ezra Chapter 6

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Introduction: In this next chapter, Darius confirms the decree of Cyrus, the work upon the Temple therefore continued to completion whereupon the Passover was conducted at the newly rebuilt Temple.

I. The Decree of Darius

Ezr 6:1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

Ezr 6:2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:

At Achmetha, which was the capitol of Media and the summer palace of the kings of Persia, a roll (scroll) was found. In it was recorded the information which was sought. It should be noted how humanly, it could have been very easy for such a document to be missed. Nevertheless, God undoubtedly providentially intervened and made sure the needed documentation was found.

Ezr 6:3 In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

Ezr 6:4 With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

Ezr 6:5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

Ezr 6:6 Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

Ezr 6:7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

It is noteworthy how specific details of Cyrus' original decree not mentioned earlier are here brought to light. Cyrus in fact dictated architectural details noting even the dimensions of the building. It was to be of significant height—sixty cubits (approximately ninety feet) which was a major building in ancient architecture.

The “three rows of great stones” noted in verse 4 may be reference to three rows of columns fronting the edifice. Some have speculated if the “row of new timber” refers to interior paneling or wainscoting of interior walls. That is possible. However, more likely, Cyrus specified how fresh structural timbers which the Aramaic word (ea aw) implies.

Though stones could conceivably be reused, fresh structural timber bespoke proper and the best type of reconstruction. Seemingly, Cyrus wanted the job done right. Moreover, the sacred gold and silver vessels and utensils which Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from the Temple were to be returned.

Darius therefore straightly ordered Tatnai, Shetharboznai, and anyone under their jurisdiction to stand clear and allow the Jews to proceed with their work. God providentially moved Darius to write, “Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.”

Ezr 6:8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

Ezr 6:9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:

Ezr 6:10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

Darius went even further. He ordered appropriations be made to the Jews from government resources so the work be not hindered. Moreover, he ordered sufficient animals and other supplies be provided so that adequate resources for sacrifices be available when worship began thereat.

He then added how that the Jews might therefore make sweet savor offerings on his behalf and pray for him and his sons. How scriptural that was according to the Law of Moses is in doubt. However, the king's desire to be prayed for had the right motive.

Ezr 6:11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

Ezr 6:12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

Darius ordered if any altered or obstructed his order that he should be hanged from timbers pulled from his own house and his house be destroyed. Moreover, he invoked God to destroy any other king or nation which would bring harm to the Temple at Jerusalem.

II. The Temple Finished and Dedicated

Ezr 6:13 Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

Ezr 6:14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

The Persian official in the region, Tatnai and associates, had no alternative but to comply. Ezra notes how they did so “speedily.” Therefore the work prospered “through the prophesying” (i.e., preaching) “of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah.”

The work was completed. The Temple was finished. Of interest is the endnote how that the completion was in accordance with not only the several Persian kings who showed favor, but also “according to the commandment of the God of Israel.” That commandment evidently was through Haggai and Zechariah. See Haggai and Zechariah 1 respectively.

Ezr 6:15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

The restoration project was completed approximately four years after it had recommenced. Cross reference Ezra 4:24. The month Adar corresponds roughly to modern March, the last month of the Jewish year.

Ezr 4:24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezr 6:16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

Ezr 6:17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

Ezr 6:18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

The remnant of Jews in the land rejoiced. Reference to the children of Israel implies the entire twelve tribes of which there were evidently representatives of all. It is quite possible the large number of animals sacrificed were provided in part by the decree of Darius. Also reference is made to the twelve tribes through the "twelve he goats" offered as a sin offering. (There never were ten lost tribes as alleged by some.)

The priests and Levites were once again organized in their respective courses and divisions to maintain Temple service as prescribed in Numbers 3:6, 8:11, 14-15. See also I Chronicles 24:1.

1Ch 24:1 Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The term dedication is translated from the Aramaic word (hknx) han- ukka which in the Maccabean era became the basis for the modern Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

III. Passover Celebrated

Ezr 6:19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

Ezr 6:20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

Ezr 6:21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,

Ezr 6:22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

As the first month of the Jewish calendar came to pass, Israel for the first time in many years was able to observe the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread at the Temple. All the priests and Levites were ceremonially clean.

The entire restored nation of Jews rejoiced in how God had blessed them and turned the heart of the king to help and assist them in the work of the house of God. The king of Assyria is another title for the king of Persia. The Persians had assimilated the Babylonians who in turn had assimilated the Assyrians.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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