

# Ezra 06 - Decree of Cyrus (Darius); Temple Completed & Dedicated

## I. Restoration of the Temple (Ezra 1:1—6:22)

### (2) Rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 3:1—6:22)

(B) The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encourage the rebuilding of the Temple that had been halted due to opposition from the people of the land (Ezra 4:1—6:22)

(b) Royal support and encouragement for Israel to rebuild resulting in the completion of the Temple (Ezra 5:1—6:22)

#### (iii) Darius' intervention (6:1-12)

(a) He searches the archives (6:1-2)

(b) He finds Cyrus' decree (6:3-5)

(c) He reaffirms Cyrus' decree (6:6-12)

(1) Israel to be left alone (6:6-7)

(2) Israel to be given materials (6:8-10)

(3) Darius' orders not to be contradicted (6:11-12)

#### (iv) The Temple rebuilt (6:13-22)

(a) Completed 516 BC (6:13-15)

(b) Dedicated (6:16-18)

(c) Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (6:19-22)

## Ezra 6

### (iii) Darius' intervention (6:1-12)

(a) He searches the archives (6:1-2)

**1** Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was conducted in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon.

**1** Then King Darius issued a decree, and search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon.

**1** Then King Darius issued an order to search the Hall of Records where the Babylonian archives were stored.

**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.

- Tattenai requested a search of Babylon's archives for any evidence showing that Cyrus issued an initial decree to the returning Jews with permission to rebuild the temple (Cf.

5:17).

2 And in **Ecbatana**, in the fortress which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found; and the following was written in it: "Memorandum—

2 In Ecbatana in the fortress, which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found and there was written in it as follows: "Memorandum—

2 The following was found written on a scroll in Ecbatana at the summer palace of the province of Media:

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:

- "...Ecbatana" - Cyrus stayed in Babylon for awhile following his overthrow of that city in 539 BC. But no records were found there. However someone did discover a memorandum in one of Cyrus' files when they searched his summer capital, Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), 300 miles NE of Babylon (the capital of Media).

— It is a tribute to the efficiency of the Persian administration that records were safely filed in an elaborate network of archives centering in Babylon and reaching to branch libraries as far distant as Ecbatana, capital of the old Median empire. The scroll was in Ecbatana, because that is where Cyrus had spent the summer of 538 BC when he issued the decree.

(b) He finds Cyrus' decree (6:3-5)

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: '*Concerning* the house of God in Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt, and let its foundations be repaired, its **height being sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits**,

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: '*Concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained, its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits;

3 DATE: First year of Cyrus the King FROM: King Cyrus SUBJECT: The Temple of God in Jerusalem Let the Temple be rebuilt where they offered sacrifices. Let the foundations thereof be laid with a height of 60 cubits and a width of 60 cubits,

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;

- This memorandum provides details (dimensions) that Cyrus' original edict (Cf. 1:2-4) did not. What we have in 1:2-4 may be an abbreviated statement of his edict.

- "...height *being* sixty cubits *and* its width sixty cubits" - the rebuilt temple was to be twice as high and three times as wide as Solomon's temple (Cf. 1 Kings 6:2)

- Apparently Cyrus intended to sponsor a temple that was bigger and more majestic than Solomon's temple, thus bringing greater glory to himself
- The fact that after the foundations were completed it appeared less impressive than Solomon's (Cf. 3:12-13) suggests the Jews did not take full advantage of their opportunity and resources. Remember, the Persian government agreed to pay for the construction (v4).

4 *with* three layers of large stones and one layer of timber. And the cost is to be paid from the royal treasury.

4 with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

4 constructed with three layers of foundation stone interlaced with a row of new timber, the expenses for which are to be paid from the king's treasury.

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:

5 Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put *them* in the house of God.'

5 Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put *them* in the house of God.'

5 Furthermore, let the gold and silver utensils from the Temple of God (that Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and carried off to Babylon) be brought back to the Temple at Jerusalem and restored to their respective places in the Temple of God.

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.

This Ecbatana record was an official "minutes" with three details that the verbal and written proclamation (1:2-4) apparently did not contain:

1. The temple was to be 90 feet high and 90 feet wide, with three courses of large stones and one of timbers (Cf. 5:8; 1 Kings 6:36)
2. The project was to be financed by funds from the royal treasury. This shows the earnestness of Cyrus' repatriation program
3. The returned gold and silver articles were to be put in their places in the temple

(c) He reaffirms Cyrus' decree (6:6-12)

(1) Israel to be left alone (6:6-7)

**6** "Now *as for you*, Tattenai, governor of *the province* beyond the *Euphrates* River, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues, the officials of *the provinces* beyond the River, stay away from there.

**6** "Now *therefore*, Tattenai, governor of *the province* beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and your colleagues, the officials of *the provinces* beyond the River, keep away from there.

**6** To: Tattenai, Trans-Euphrates Governor, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues living beyond the Euphrates River. Stay away from there!

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

- King Darius then gave three instructions to Tattenai and his associates (v6,8,12):

1. He told them to leave the Jews alone and not interfere with the building of the temple (v6-7). The words "stay away from there" was a common Aramaic legal statement. This was to be in accord with the edict of the great King Cyrus.

**7** Leave that work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild that house of God on its site.

**7** Leave this work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.

**7** Leave the work on this Temple of God alone! Let the Jewish governor and the Jewish leaders build this Temple of God on its site.

**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.

(2) Israel to be given materials (6:8-10)

**8** Furthermore, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of that house of God: the full cost is to be paid to those people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of *the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River, *and* that without interruption.

**8** Moreover, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of this house of God: the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of *the provinces* beyond the River, and that without delay.

**8** Furthermore, I hereby decree what you are to do for the Jewish leaders who are building this Temple of God: you are to pay the expenses of these men out of the king's assets from taxes collected beyond the River so that they are not hindered.

**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.

2. Tax money was to be used to help finance the entire project.

9 And whatever is needed, bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem order, *it* is to be given to them daily without fail,

9 Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, *it* is to be given to them daily without fail,

9 And be sure that you don't fail to provide their daily needs—including young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of Heaven, along with wheat, salt, wine, and oil, as the priests in Jerusalem tell you—

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:

3. Animals were to be supplied daily so that sacrifices could be made at the altar of the new temple along with food items for the offerings. Flour (from wheat), salt, and oil were to be used in the grain offerings (Lev 2:1-2,7,13), and wine for drink offerings (Lev 23:13) on feast days.

10 so that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the lives of the king and his sons.

10 that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

10 so they may approach the God of Heaven with fragrant sacrifices and pray for the life of this king and his sons.

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.

(3) Darius' orders not to be contradicted (6:11-12)

11 And I issued a decree that any person who violates this decree, a timber shall be pulled out of his house and he shall be impaled on it; and his house shall be turned into a **refuse heap** on account of this.

11 And I issued a decree that any man who violates this edict, a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it and his house shall be made a refuse heap on account of this.

11 I hereby also decree that whoever shall alter the wording of this edict, let his residence be torn down for timber to build a gallows, hang him on it, and turn his home into an outhouse.

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.

- Darius went even further by threatening anyone who violated his decree with impalement by using a timber from his own house.

— Keil cites Herodotus (III. 159) as saying that Darius impaled 3,000 Babylonians after conquering their city. Therefore this was no idle threat!

- "...refuse heap" - means turning it into a public toilet (Cf. 2 Kings 10:27; Dan 2:5; 3:29)

12 May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change *it*, so as to destroy that house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued *this* decree; *it* is to be carried out with all diligence!"

12 May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change *it*, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued *this* decree, let *it* be carried out with all diligence!"

12 And may the God who causes his Name to rest there destroy any king or people who might attempt to destroy this Temple of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree. Let it be carried out quickly.

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 wanted no disturbance in this part of his vast kingdom. The pagan king acknowledged that God had caused His name to dwell at Jerusalem. Darius probably thought of YHWH as a local deity, whereas Ezra, in recording that statement, knew of the covenantal significance in YHWH's name dwelling in Jerusalem. So Tattenai's inquiry backfired. Instead of stopping the temple work, he had to let it proceed and even had to help pay for it out of his tax revenues!

Darius' curse on anyone who would destroy the temple was fulfilled in:

1. Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated it in 167 BC, and died insane three years later;
2. Herod the Great (37-4 BC), who added extensively to the temple to glorify himself, and who had domestic trouble and died of disease; and
3. The Romans, who destroyed the temple in 70 AD, and later had their empire destroyed.

(iv) The Temple rebuilt (6:13-22)

(a) Completed 516 BC (6:13-15)

**13** Then Tattenai, the governor of *the province* beyond the *Euphrates* River, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out *the decree* with all diligence, just as King Darius had ordered.

**13** Then Tattenai, the governor of *the province* beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues carried out *the decree* with all diligence, just as King Darius had sent.

**13** Because of what King Darius had mandated, Tattenai, the Trans-Euphrates Governor, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out his orders quickly.

**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.

- Tattenai, to his credit, carried out the instructions of Darius, and did so with diligence (Cf. 5:8; 6:12; 7:21,23)

14 And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building following the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

14 And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

14 And so the Jewish leaders continued their building, and prospered because of the prophecies of Haggai the prophet and Iddo's son Zechariah. They completed the rebuilding in accordance with the commandment from the God of Israel and the edicts of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

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.

- Several factors resulted in the completion of the temple:

1. The support of Tattenai and his colleagues
2. The exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah
3. The Jews' obedience to God's command to rebuild (through his prophets)
4. The decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

- a. The reference to Artaxerxes does not mean that he had a part in completing the temple. He was the king who later supported the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. That action served to make the temple secure. He also contributed to the temple treasury (7:15-16,21).

15 Now this temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

15 This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

15 The Temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar during the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

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 temple was completed in Adar 3 (late February) of 515 BC—

- 4-1/2 years after Haggai and Zechariah began his prophesying and got the workers moving again (in 520 BC)
- 21 years after the work started by laying the foundation (536 BC)
- 23 years after Cyrus issued his decree allowing the Jews to return (538 BC)
- 70 years after the temple had been destroyed (August 12, 586 BC)
  - Thus, God fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy that the captivity would last 70 years (Cf. Jer 25:11; 29:10).
  - Nebuchadnezzar burned Solomon's temple down in the fifth month of 586 BC (2 Kings 25:8-9). The Jews reopened the temple in the twelfth month of 515 BC.

(b) Dedicated (6:16-18)

16 And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

16 And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

16 The Israelis—the priests, the descendants of Levi, and the other related descendants who had returned from captivity—celebrated with joy at the dedication of the Temple of God.

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,

17 They offered for the dedication of this temple of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, corresponding to **the number of the tribes of Israel**.



17 They offered for the dedication of this temple of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel.

17 At the dedication offering of the Temple of God, they presented 100 bulls, 200 rams, and 400 lambs, along with a sin offering of twelve male goats for the entire nation of Israel according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

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.

- After the temple was finished, it was dedicated but this dedication was very modest compared to the dedication of Solomon's temple

- The comparatively small number of animals sacrificed (100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 male lambs, and 12 male goats) contrasted sharply with the tremendous amount sacrificed by Solomon at the dedication of the first temple (22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats; 1 Kings 8:63).

- This points up the comparative poverty of the post-exilic community

- "...the number of the tribes of Israel" - the 12 goats for the sin offering show that the post-exilic community still envisioned a unified Israel consisting of all 12 tribes even though only 2 had survived with any strength.

- This shows that none of the 12 tribes were "lost" during the Babylonian captivity, as some modern cults claim (Cf. Acts 26:7; James 1:1)

- The people still considered the nation to be a confederation of 12 tribes, and they called it "Israel" (Cf. 2:2,59)

18 Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their sections for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

18 Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

18 Furthermore, they established the priests in their divisions and the descendants of Levi in their positions for the service of God conducted at Jerusalem, as is proscribed in the Book of Moses.

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 leaders of the sacrificial system—the priests and the Levites—were installed according to the Book of Moses, that is, according to that portion of the Law in which the legal system is described—in parts of Leviticus and Numbers (Lev 8; Num 3:5-10; 8:5-14).

- One of the motifs of Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles is that the post-exilic community was under the leadership of godly men who were steeped in the Scriptures and

attempted to do everything according to the Law. This shows that they had learned from the exile that God's people suffer if they do not live up to their covenantal obligations.

(c) Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (6:19-22)

**19** The exiles held the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month.

**19** The exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month.

**19** The former exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month

**19** And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

- Beginning with v19 the text is again in Hebrew (4:8—6:18 are in Aramaic)

- On the 14th day of the first month (April 21, 515 BC) the Passover was celebrated. This was five weeks after the temple dedication.

— The temple had been completed in the 12th month (Adar; v15) and fittingly, in the very next month, the Passover was re-inaugurated. This was the first time in 70 years that the people partook of this feast which commemorated their forefathers' release from Egyptian bondage (Cf. Ex 12:1-14; Lev 23:5).

20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover *lamb* for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

20 because the priests and descendants of Levi had purified themselves together—all of them were pure—and they killed the Passover lamb for every former exile, for their relatives the priests, and for themselves.

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.

21 And the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to *join* them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate *the Passover*.

21 The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to *join* them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate *the Passover*.

21 So the Israelis who had returned from captivity ate the Passover with all who had consecrated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land in order to seek

the LORD God of Israel.

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,

- The Israelite returnees ate the Passover with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors

- This second group might have been either Gentiles living in Judah (Cf. Num 9:14), or more likely, Jews who had remained in the land and had defiled themselves by practices that went against the Law, and then repented of those sins, thereby “separating” themselves.

22 And they held the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, because the LORD had made them happy, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

22 And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

22 Then they observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, because the LORD had made them glad, turning the heart of the king of Assyria toward them and strengthening them for their work on the Temple of God, the God of Israel.

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.

- The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread was on days 15-21 of the first month, immediately after the Passover (Cf. Lev 23:6-8)

- The reference to Darius as the king of Assyria is not an anachronism (though the Assyrian Empire had ended in 609 BC) for the Persian Empire included what was once Assyria.

Perhaps this title was a grim reminder that Assyria’s harsh tactics were now ended. She was the first to deport Israelites from their Land; but now a contingent of Jews was settled back in their Land. This eight-day celebration (the Passover, Ezra 6:19, and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, v22), 900 years after the first Passover, signaled the end of the exile for a remnant of the nation was once again back in fellowship with YHWH. Since the temple worship was restored, it was important for people who wanted to be in fellowship with God and live according to the covenantal obligations to be in the place where the sacrificial system was being practiced.

The people had seen firsthand that God works through history, for He had caused pagan kings to issue decrees which let them return to the land of promise (much as He had

caused Egypt's Pharaoh to release Israel). The original readers of Ezra's book would rejoice in that fact and would be encouraged to participate fully in the temple worship, which had been reestablished at such great cost.