

Ezra 5:1-17 and 6:1-12

Artaxerxes Decree in 464 BC to Stop Building the City and the Walls

Ezra 4:23-24 – “Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

1. This refers back to Ezra 4:4-5 where it said:
“Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.”
2. This section in Ezra 4 was meant to record examples of Samaritan opposition and not a chronological record since it is out of sequence.
3. The chronological sequence from 4:4-5 resumes in 5:1

Events of 520 BC that led to Resuming the Re-building of the Temple

Ezra 5:1-17 -

5:1 – “Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.

5:2 – “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

1. Darius I Hystaspes (522-486 BC)
 - a. Darius was an officer in the army of Cambyses
 - b. Darius was with Cambyses in Egypt putting down the revolt
 - c. When Cambyses died near Mt Carmel/Syria Gaumata usurped the throne back in Persia (known as Pseudo-Smerdes)
 - d. Darius moved quickly to Persia and conquered the Persian throne and killed Pseudo-Smerdes.
 - e. Due to these crazy, unstable events the Persian empire was full of revolts. Leadership and power were uncertain
 - f. Darius put down the rebellions and masterfully restored order. Eventually building the empire to greater heights
2. These verses are during the early time of Darius' being on the throne
 - a. This was the right time to try to build the temple because the Persians were consumed with bigger issues than a Jewish temple
 - b. Haggai arose to rebuke the people
 - c. Zechariah arose and spoke of the coming Messiah and would have stirred up messianic fervor intentionally or unintentionally
 - d. Zerubbabel the Persian appointed governor of Judah disappears before the Temple is completed. Speculation is that he got caught up in a revolt maybe against his wish and maybe by mere accusation. This is speculation

521	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darius Hystaspes executes Gaumata and takes the throne of the Persian empire • Darius Hystaspes searches the royal archives in Babylon and finds that Cyrus had ordered the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Opposition stops. • Within two years Darius Hystaspes stabilizes the empire. 	Darius Hystaspes
520	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, minister in Jerusalem. • August 29, the word of the Lord comes to Haggai and the book of Haggai begins. • October 17, Haggai 2:1-9 the word of the Lord is a message for Zerrubabel, the governor, Joshua, the high priest, and the remnant of people • Oct/Nov Zechariah records his first message from the Lord in Zechariah 1:1-6 • Darius Hystaspes searches the royal archives in Babylon and finds that Cyrus had ordered the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Opposition stops. • Rebuilding of the temple resumes after opposition had stopped it 16 years earlier. (Ezra 5-6) • December 18, 520, Haggai prophecies blessings on the remnant (Hag. 2:10-23) 	Haggai Zechariah Haggai 1:1-15 Haggai 2:1-9 Zechariah 1:1-6 Ezra 5-6 Haggai 2:10-23
519	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 15, in one night Zechariah is given a series of eight night visions in one night: 	Zechariah 1:7-6:8
518	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 7, Zechariah receives the word of the Lord in the fourth year of Darius Hystaspes (Zech. 7) 	Zechariah 7
516	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The temple is completed by Zerubbabel. It has been 70 years since the temple was destroyed in 586. 	Ezra 6:13-18 Temple Rebuilt 70 Years After It Was Destroyed

Opposition to the Re-building of the Temple in 520 BC

35:3 – **“At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: “Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?”**

5:4 – **“They also asked them this: “What are the names of the men who are building this building?”**

5:5 – **“But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.**

1. Tattenai pronounced /TAT-ten-i/
 - a. Tattenai was later appointed as satrap according to an ancient Babylonian document.
 - b. At this time Ushtani was the satrap of Trans-Euphrates.
 - c. Tattenai was here and latter appointed by the Persian leadership and was responsible to the King
2. Two things are asked and recorded by the governor of Trans-Euphrates:
 - a. Who gave the Jews permission to begin this building project
 - b. The names of those responsible for the rebuilding of the Temple were recorded.
3. “Report” is *tama* which means full detail of what is happening was recorded and sent to Persia.

Letter Sent from Governor Tattenai to Darius Reporting the Rebuilding Activity of the Jews

5:6 – “This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king.

6:7 – “They sent him a report, in which was written as follows:

Copy of Tattenai’s Letter to Darius in 520 BC

“To Darius the king, all peace.

5:8 – “Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands.

5:9 – “Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus: ‘Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?’

5:10 – “We also asked them their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders.

5:11 – “And this was their reply to us: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.

5:12 – “But because our fathers had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia.

5:13 - “However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt.

5:14 – “And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor;

5:15 – “and he said to him, “Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site.”

5:16 – “Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been in building, and it is not yet finished.’

5:17 – “Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter.”

Ezra 6:1-12 –

The Search in Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana

6:1 – “Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia, in the house of the archives where the documents were stored.

6:2 – “And in Ecbatana, the citadel that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written:

The Recovered Record from 538 BC from the Archive

“A record.

6:3 – “In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits,

6:4 – “with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

6:5 – “And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God.”

1. Cyrus declares the height of the temple to be 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits.
 - a. In 1 Kings 6:2 Solomon’s temple was 60 long x 20 wide x 30 cubits high
2. The three layers of large stones
3. The one layer of timber could be the wood paneling over the stones or the ceiling beams.
4. Rebuilding cost would come from the taxation of the province Beyond the River (or, Trans-Euphrates)

Darius’ Reply in 520 BC

6:6 – “Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away.

1. “Keep away” or “withdraw from there” is *rahiqin hawo min-tamma* which is a technical legal term meaning “the accusation is rejected”
 - a. This legal principle is also found in the Elephantine papyri
 - b. These Persian officials were required to:
 - i. Stay away from the temple
 - ii. Stay off the Jewish property
 - iii. DO not interfere with the activities of the Jews.

6:7 – “Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.

1. The Governor would have been Zerubbabel
 - a. Originally appointed by Cyrus
 - b. Now confirmed by Darius

2. The temple is to be built on its original site

6:8 – “Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River.

1. Governor Tatteni /TAT-ten-i/ is to use money from his tax base

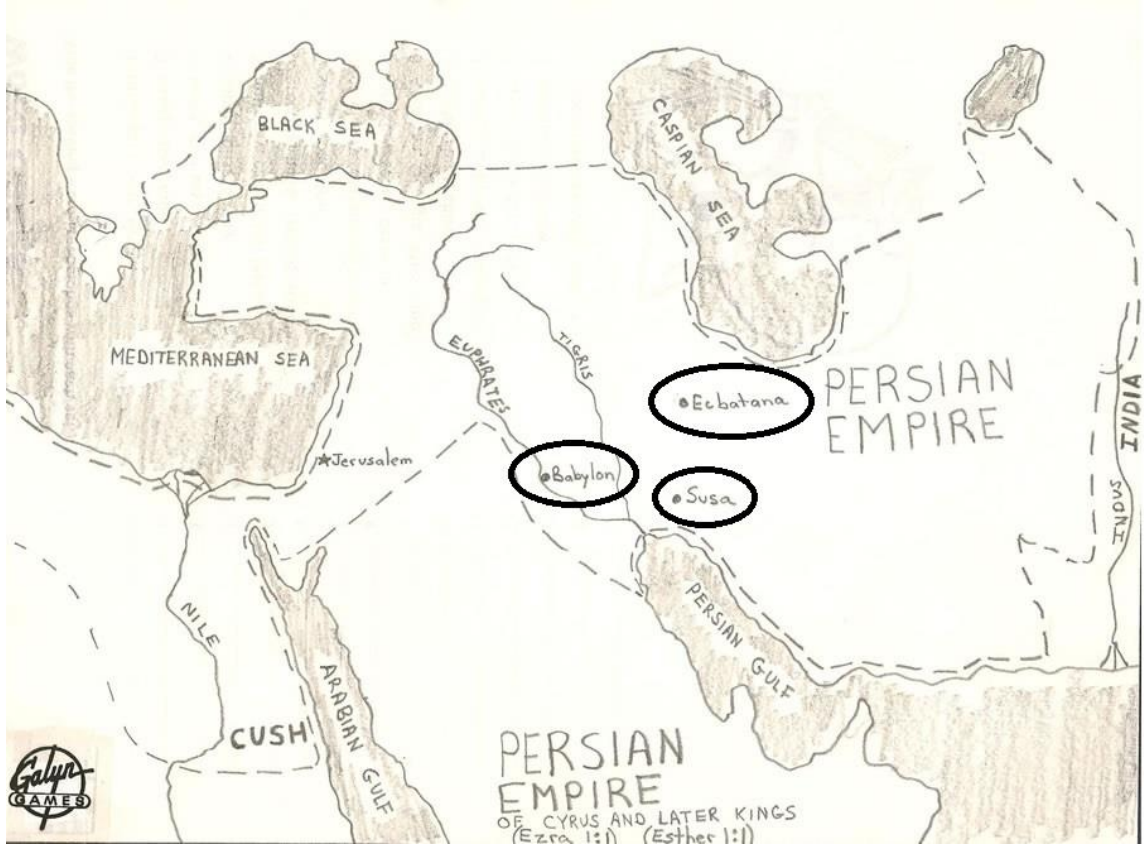
6:9 – “And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail,

6:10 – “that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

1. This generosity is typical of other documents concerning Darius
2. Darius was concerned with rebuilding temples, shrines, cults, etc. that had been destroyed.
3. The belief was that each territory had its own god(s) and to rule over an empire peacefully these gods would need to be appeased.

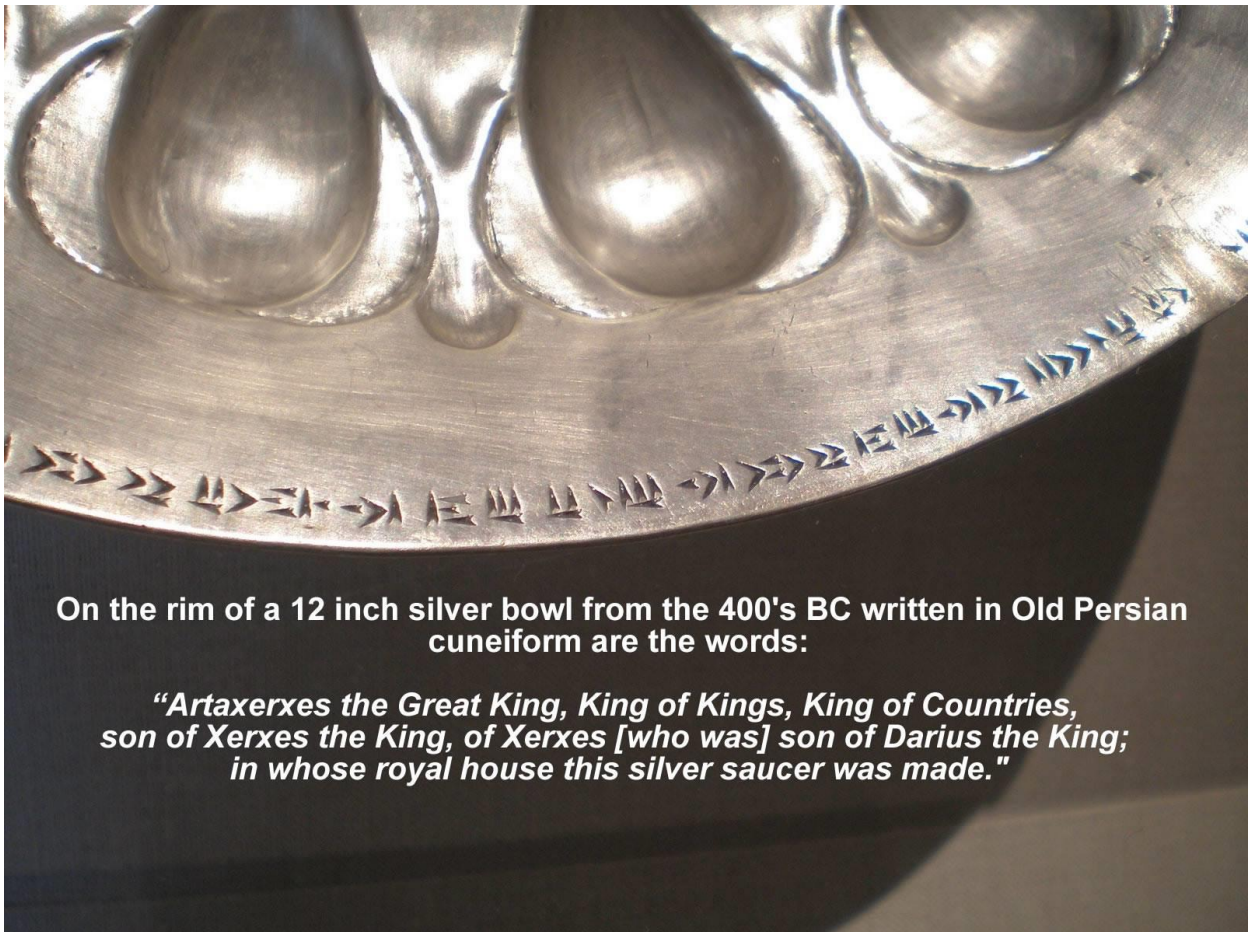
6:11 – “Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill.

6:12 – “May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.”





1900 BC
Babylonian Cuneiform Clay Tablet
cuneiform text on both sides
with administrative details
in Sumerian cuneiform



On the rim of a 12 inch silver bowl from the 400's BC written in Old Persian cuneiform are the words:

*"Artaxerxes the Great King, King of Kings, King of Countries,
son of Xerxes the King, of Xerxes [who was] son of Darius the King;
in whose royal house this silver saucer was made."*