**Ezra 1-4**- May 4th

Cyrus Helps the Exiles to Return

**1**In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

**2**“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and HE has appointed me to build a temple for HIM at Jerusalem in Judah. **3**Any of HIS people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. **4**And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’”

**5**Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites - everyone whose heart God had moved - prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. **6**All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

**7**Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. **8**Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

**9**This was the inventory:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| gold dishes | 30 |
| silver dishes | 1,000 |
| silver pans | 29 |
| **10**gold bowls | 30 |
| matching silver bowls | 410 |
| other articles | 1,000 |

**11**In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The List of the Exiles Who Returned

**2**Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to their own town, **2**in company with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah):

The list of the men of the people of Israel:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3**the descendants of Parosh | 2,172 |
| **4**of Shephatiah | 372 |
| **5**of Arah | 775 |
| **6**of Pahath-Moab (through the line of Jeshua & Joab) | 2,812 |
| **7**of Elam | 1,254 |
| **8**of Zattu | 945 |
| **9**of Zakkai | 760 |
| **10**of Bani | 642 |
| **11**of Bebai | 623 |
| **12**of Azgad | 1,222 |
| **13**of Adonikam | 666 |
| **14**of Bigvai | 2,056 |
| **15**of Adin | 454 |
| **16**of Ater (through Hezekiah) | 98 |
| **17**of Bezai | 323 |
| **18**of Jorah | 112 |
| **19**of Hashum | 223 |
| **20**of Gibbar | 95 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **21**the men of Bethlehem | 123 |
| **22**of Netophah | 56 |
| **23**of Anathoth | 128 |
| **24**of Azmaveth | 42 |
| **25**of Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth | 743 |
| **26**of Ramah and Geba | 621 |
| **27**of Mikmash | 122 |
| **28**of Bethel and Ai | 223 |
| **29**of Nebo | 52 |
| **30**of Magbish | 156 |
| **31**of the other Elam | 1,254 |
| **32**of Harim | 320 |
| **33**of Lod, Hadid and Ono | 725 |
| **34**of Jericho | 345 |
| **35**of Senaah | 3,630 |

**36**The priests:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| the descendants of Jedaiah (through the family of Jeshua) | 973 |
| **37**of Immer | 1,052 |
| **38**of Pashhur | 1,247 |
| **39**of Harim | 1,017 |

**40**The Levites:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel (of the line of Hodaviah) | 74 |

**41**The musicians:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| the descendants of Asaph | 128 |

**42**The gatekeepers of the temple:

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| --- |
| the descendants of |
| Shallum, Ater, Talmon, |
| Akkub, Hatita and Shobai | 139 |

**43**The temple servants:

|  |
| --- |
| the descendants of |
| Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, |
| **44**Keros, Siaha, Padon, |
| **45**Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, |
| **46**Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan, |
| **47**Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, |
| **48**Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, |
| **49**Uzza, Paseah, Besai, |
| **50**Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, |
| **51**Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, |
| **52**Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, |
| **53**Barkos, Sisera, Temah, |
| **54**Neziah and Hatipha |
| **55**The descendants of the servants of Solomon: the descendants of |
| Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, |
| **56**Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, |
| **57**Shephatiah, Hattil, |
| Pokereth-Hazzebaim and Ami |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **58**The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon | | 392 |
| **59**The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel: **60**The descendants of |
| Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda | 652 |
| **61**And from among the priests: The descendants of | | |
| Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). | | |

**62**These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. **63**The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim.

**64**The whole company numbered 42,360, **65**besides their 7,337 male and female slaves; and they also had 200 male and female singers.**66**They had 736 horses, 245 mules, **67**435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

**68**When they arrived at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. **69**According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 darics *(a high-purity****gold****piece of 8.4 grams based on an ancient weight standard, the Babylonian shekel.*) of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

**70**The priests, the Levites, the musicians, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

Rebuilding the Altar

**3**When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem. **2**Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. **3**Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening sacrifices.**4**Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. **5**After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred festivals of the Lord, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the Lord.

**6**On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, though the foundation of the Lord’s temple had not yet been laid.

Rebuilding the Temple

**7**Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and olive oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

**8**In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years old and older to supervise the building of the house of the Lord. **9**Joshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers - all Levites - joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

**10**When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. **11**With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: “He is good; His love toward Israel endures forever.”

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. **12**But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. **13**No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Opposition to the Rebuilding

**4**When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, **2**they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to Him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.” **3**But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

**4**Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. **5**They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Later Opposition Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

**6**At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. **7**And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language. **8**Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows: **9**Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, together with the rest of their associates - the judges, officials and administrators over the people from Persia, Uruk and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa, **10**and the other people whom the great and honorable Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates.

**11**(This is a copy of the letter they sent him.)

To King Artaxerxes,

From your servants in Trans-Euphrates:

**12**The king should know that the people who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.

**13**Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and eventually the royal revenues will suffer. **14**Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonored, we are sending this message to inform the king, **15**so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place with a long history of sedition. That is why this city was destroyed. **16**We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.

**17**The king sent this reply:

To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates:

Greetings.

**18**The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence.**19**I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition. **20**Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them. **21**Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order. **22**Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?

**23**As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

**24**Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.