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King Darius Endorses the Rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem Ezra 6: 1-12

King Darius endorses the rebuilding of the Temple DIG: Compare this Aramaic memo of Cyrus' decree with the Hebrew version in 1:2-4. What additional details do you see here? Why would they have been added? How does Darius' decree (6:6-12) expand on his earlier memo? What is his "punch line." Why might this rub Tattenai the wrong way?

REFLECT: When have you invoked God's authority as your own? Where do you draw the line and dare someone to cross over or defy your authority? What defiance (by your kids, partners, or subordinates) would "trip your trigger" and bring them into conflict with you? What "sacrifices" and prayers are you offering on behalf of those in authority over you (Ezra 6:10, also see First Timothy 2:1ff)? Persian kings made a policy of restoring the religious institutions of native people (6:1-12). What does this show about God's role in secular or pagan governments? How does that give you hope as you consider current events?

**520 BC During the ministry of Zerubbabel (to see link click [Ag](#) - The First Return).
Compiled by the Chronicler from the Ezra memoirs
(see [Ac](#) - Ezra-Nehemiah from a Jewish Perspective: **The Ezra Memoirs**).**

Ezra 4:8 to 6:18 is written in Aramaic, the language the Persians used in official documents (much like the Roman Empire used Greek).



Darius the Mede succeeded **Cyrus the Persian** (to see link click [Ai](#) - **Cyrus Decrees: Rebuild the Temple**). **Darius**, as viceroy to **Cyrus**, captured **Babylon** and ruled over the province of **Babylon**, while **Cyrus** ruled over the entire Medo-Persian Empire. Eventually, **Darius** became king (**Dani'el 9:1-2**); he is called a king (**Dani'el 6:8**), and exercised the authority of a king (**Dani'el 6:9**). In fact, he is called king twenty-eight times in **Dani'el Chapter 6** alone. **Cyrus** started the rebuilding of **Jerusalem**, and **Darius** finished it. **Dani'el** prospered during the reigns of both **Cyrus** and **Darius** (see [Ag](#) - **Cyrus and Darius**).¹⁰⁹

Almost incidentally, the sequel to **Tattenai's** request for an authoritative word concerning the **Jerusalem Temple** permits us a glimpse of the flurry of activity in the Empire's corridors of power. Then **King Darius** took notice of **Tattenai's** letter and issued an order and a search was made in the archives stored in the treasury at **Babylon (6:1)**. No doubt the rebellious, especially in the west, during his first years made **Darius** sensitive to these details. Also, like **Cyrus**, **Darius** was concerned that his subject peoples be content.¹¹⁰

A scroll was found in the citadel of **Ecbatana** where **Darius** made his summer home in the province of **Media (Ezra 6:2)**. It was written in Aramaic to the royal treasurer regarding covering the expenses for finishing the Temple in **Jerusalem**. The use of a scroll for the recording of the edict is no surprise once it is recognized that it was written in Aramaic rather than the Old Persian for which tablets of clay would have been used.¹¹¹ The discovery of this scroll had just as much effect on the future of the Jews as would the record of the reign of **King Ahasuerus** found late one night about forty-five years later (see the commentary on [Esther Be](#) - **That Night the King Could Not Sleep**).

The private memorandum read: **In the first year of Cyrus the king , he issued a decree concerning the House of God and Jerusalem. Let the House be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are offered. Let its foundations be laid. Its height is to be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits with three layers of large stones and one layer of timber following the model of Solomon's Temple (First Kings 6:36). Let the expenses be paid from the king's royal treasury (Ezra 6:3-4).** This Temple, sometimes called **the Second Temple**, was built on the site of the first. **The layers of large stones** refer to **three stories** of chambers, and on these was placed an additional **story of wood**. During the reign of Herod the Great (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Av - The Visit of the Magi](#)), **the Second Temple** was completely refurbished, and the original structure was totally overhauled into the large and glorious edifices and facades that were more recognizable during the time of **Yeshua**.¹¹²

Also, let the gold and silver vessels of the House of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought to the Temple and Jerusalem; you shall deposit them in the House of God (Ezra 6:5). The release of **the Temple vessels** was recorded in **1:7-11**. **Jeremiah had prophesied that these vessels would be taken to Babylon and later returned to Jerusalem** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Ee - Judah to Serve Nebuchadnezzar: Jeremiah's Sixth Symbolic Action](#)).

Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, his scribe Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues, officials of Trans-Euphrates, all of you stay away from there. This sounds rather harsh, but is actually the translation of a legal term that means *the accusation was rejected*. **Leave the work of this House of God alone! Let Zerubbabel, the governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews rebuild this House of God in its original place (Ezra 6:6-7).** One significant difference, however, between Solomon's Temple and **the Second Temple** was that there would be no Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place symbolizing the presence of **YHWH**. It would be waiting, in a sense, for **the Lord of the Temple, the messianic messenger** of the covenant (**Malachi 3:1**), to rule and reign for a thousand years (see the commentary on [Isaiah Db - The Nine Missing Articles from Messiah's Coming Temple](#)).

Moreover, I hereby issue a decree as to what you are to do for these elders of the Jews to rebuild this House of God. The complete costs are to be paid to these men from the royal treasury, from the tribute from Trans-Euphrates so that they are not hindered (Ezra 6:8).

Darius was concerned that the Levitical worship be practiced correctly, so **he** provided the sacrificial animals. From this accurate list of items we can only conclude that **Jewish** advice was sought in drafting **the decree**. **Whatever is needed - young bulls, rams or lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven or wheat**, fine flower used in the grain-offerings (**Leviticus 2:1, 13**) and drink-offerings (**Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13**), **salt, wine and oil, as requested by the kohanim in Jerusalem - must be given to them daily without neglect, so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven**. **Salt** was added, especially to **the grain offerings**. **The salt of the covenant** is a phrase that appears several times (**Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; Second Chronicles 13:5; Mark 9:49**), **salt** being the symbol of covenant relationship. **Wine** was used in the drink offerings (**Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13**), which accompanied other offerings. **Oil** was used in the continual burnt offering, in the grain offering (**Leviticus 2:4 and 15**), and in anointing the priest (**Exodus 29:21**).¹¹³ **Darius** took religious matter seriously. **He** wanted all **his** subjects to **pray** to their gods on behalf of **him and his sons** (**Ezra 6:9-10**).

Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled out from his house, destroying it, **and let him be lifted up and impaled on it** (see the commentary on **Esther Bf - So They Impaled Haman on the Pole He Had Set Up for Mordecai**), **and because of this, his house be made a pile of refuse**. There was poetic justice intended in making a man's **house** **his** instrument of execution for tampering with **God's House**.¹¹⁴ **May God, who makes His name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts his hand to cause such change to destroy this House of God and Jerusalem**. **I Darius have issued a decree; let it be carried out with diligence** (**Ezra 6:11-12**). **Darius' curse** on anyone who would **destroy the Temple** was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated **it** in 167 BC and died insane three years later; Herod the Great, who added extensively to **the Temple** to glorify himself, and who had murdered his wives and sons to stay in power, died of gangrene; and the Romans, who destroyed **the Temple** in 70 AD, lost their Empire to the Barbarians.¹¹⁵

The king's reply then put **Zerubbabel** and the rest of **the exiles** in a *far* stronger position than before. It gave **him** all the benefits of state money and protection without any interference.

From the time of **Cyrus' decree** in 538 BC, to that of **Artakh'shasta**, whose reign began in 465 BC, there was official Persian support for the construction projects in **Jerusalem** - something that will become apparent in the next chapter (see **Bi - King Artakh'shasta's Letter to Ezra**). **Ezra** is writing to an audience in the days of **Artakh'shasta**, saying that this kind of support had been seen for more than seventy years.

In one sense, this is so typical of **ADONAI**! In the days of Egyptian bondage, **Isra'el** knew another similar divine intervention that shook up everything. Following Pharaoh's decree to kill all the newborn Hebrew boys (see the commentary on **Exodus [Ak](#) - A Man of the House of Levi Married a Levite Woman**), Moshe's mother, Jochebed, not only received her son back from the Nile River but also managed to do so with an allowance from the Egyptian government to help her raise him! **God is able to do far beyond all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)**. It is a truth that we tend to forget, especially when it comes to governing authorities. The truth is **there is no authority except from God (Romans 13:1)**! **YHVH** may bring good from the most surprising places.¹¹⁶