

Ezra 4:1-24 **Rebuilding the Temple stopped by opposition**

Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building Haykel Yahweh Elohey Yisrael (the temple of the Lord God of Israel),

2 they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek Eloheykem (your God) as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "You may do nothing with us to build a Beit Lee-Eloheynu (house for our God); but we alone will build to Yahweh Elohey Yisrael (the Lord God of Israel), as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."

4 Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,

5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Rebuilding of Jerusalem Opposed

6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.

8 Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion:

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions — representatives of the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the people of Persia and Erech and Babylon and Shushan, the Dehavites, the Elamites,

10 and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnapper took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and the remainder beyond the River — and so forth.

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

To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth:

12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.

13 Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.

14 Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king,

15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.

16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.

Response from Artaxerxes

17 The king sent an answer:

To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River:

Peace, and so forth.

18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me.

19 And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it.

20 There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them.

21 Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.

22 Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings?

23 Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.

24 Thus the work of Beit Elahaa (the house of God) which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

NKJV

Facts Revealed:

Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple

- ✧ Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building Haykel Yahweh Elohey Yisrael (the temple of the Lord God of Israel), they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, **"Let us build with you, for we seek Eloheykem (your God) as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."** [Ezra 4:1-2]
- ✧ The people living in the land of Israel were not Jews, but they were the people that were brought in to replace the Israelites who the Assyrians carried off to the eastern regions of the kingdom of Assyria. [2 Kings 17:5-23, 17:24-41, 18:9-12]
- ✧ When they were first brought to Samaria, they faced attacks by the lions so the king of Assyria sent back a priest from among the captive Israelites to teach them of the God of the land of Israel. **So they feared Yahweh and served their own carved images.** [2 Kings 17:24-41]
- ✧ It was of this group that wanted to work with the Jews in rebuilding Beit Yahweh. [Ezra 4:1-2]
- ✧ The returning Jews did not want their help because they were not of Israeli descent and their worship of Yahweh was combined with their own idolatry so they rejected their offer of help. [Ezra 4:3]
- ✧ The rejection infuriated the people of the land who then became adversaries and did all they could to discourage the builders all the days of **Cyrus** king of Persia (30 years). [Ezra 4:4-5]
- ✧ In the beginning of the reign of **Ahasuerus** they wrote a letter of accusation against the Jews inhabiting Judah and working to restore Beit Yahweh in Jerusalem. [Ezra 4:6]

- ✧ In the beginning of the reign of **Artaxerxes** king of Persia, representatives of the people from foreign nations the Assyrians had captured and settled in the towns of Samaria and were receiving support from the king, wrote a letter warning against the danger of Jerusalem being rebuilt and becoming a rebellious city endangering the revenue and diminishing the king's treasuries. [\[Ezra 4:7-13\]](#)
- ✧ They advised the king to search the historical records of his fathers and find that Jerusalem in times past was a powerful and rebellious city harmful to kings and provinces for which reason it had been destroyed. If this city is rebuilt you will have no dominion beyond the River. [\[Ezra 4:14-16\]](#)

Response from Artaxerxes

- ✧ Artaxerxes responded by informing the commanders of the people of Samaria that the letter they had sent had been read, and checking the historical records they found that it was true, the city of Jerusalem had rebelled against foreign kings, and in fact there had been mighty kings in Jerusalem who ruled over all the region west of the Euphrates River and received tax, tribute, and custom from all the lands. [\[Ezra 4:17-20\]](#)
- ✧ Artaxerxes commanded them to stop the work of rebuilding the city until he commands otherwise. [\[Ezra 4:21-22\]](#)
- ✧ When the adversaries received the letter from Artaxerxes they hastened to stop the Jews by force of arms. [\[Ezra 4:23\]](#)
- ✧ Work on Beit Elahaa was stopped until the second year of Darius king of Persia. [\[Ezra 4:24\]](#)