
EZRA-NECHEMIAH CHAPTER 1: CYRUS' PROCLAMATION

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CONGREGATION OR TORAH

פרשת תולדות תשפ"ד

(1) EZRA 1

(1) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfill the word of Hashem by the mouth of Jeremiah, Hashem stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

(2) "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth has Hashem, the God of heaven, given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

(3) Whoever there is among you of all His people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Hashem, the God of Israel, He is God, which is in Jerusalem.

(4) Whoever is left, in any place where he sojourns, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with animals, besides the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem."

(5) Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Hashem which is in Jerusalem.

(6) All those who were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with animals, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

(7) Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Hashem which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods.

(8) And Cyrus king of Persia brought them forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

(9) This is their number: thirty platters of gold, one thousand platters of silver, twenty-nine knives,

(10) thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels one thousand.

(11) All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar brought up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

(א) ובשנת אחת לכורש מלך פרס לכלות דבר י"י מפי ירמיה העיר י"י את רוח פרש מלך פרס ויעבר קול בקל מלכותו וגם במכתב לאמר.

(ב) כה אמר פרש מלך פרס כל ממלכות הארץ נתן לי י"י אלהי השמים והוא פקד עלי לבנות לו בית בירושלם אשר ביהודה.

(ג) מי בכם מכל עמו יהי אלהיו עמו ויעל לירושלם אשר ביהודה ויבן את בית י"י אלהי ישראל הוא האלהים אשר בירושלם.

(ד) וכל הנשאר מכל המקומות אשר הוא גר שם ונשאווהו אנשי מקומו בכסף ובזהב וברכוש ובבהמה עם הנדבה לבית האלהים אשר בירושלם.

(ה) ויקומו ראשי האבות ליהודה ובנימן והפנהים והלויים לכל העיר האלהים את רוחו לעלות לבנות את בית י"י אשר בירושלם.

(ו) וכל סביבתיהם חזקו בידיהם בכלי כסף בזהב ברכוש ובבהמה ובמגדנות לבד על כל התנדב.

(ז) והמלך כורש הוציא את כלי בית י"י אשר הוציא נבוכדנצר מירושלם ויתנם בבית אלהיו.

(ח) ויוציאם כורש מלך פרס על יד מתרדת הגזר ויספרם לששבצר הנשיא ליהודה.

(ט) ואלה מספרם אגרטלי זהב שלשים אגרטלי כסף אלה מחלפים תשעה ועשרים.

(י) כפורי זהב שלשים כפורי כסף משנים ארבע מאות ועשרה פלים אחרים אלה.

(יא) כל פלים לזהב ולכסף חמשת אלהים וארבע מאות הכל העלה ששבצר עם העלות הגולה מבבל לירושלם.

THE ROLE OF KORESH

(2) RASHI EZRA 1:1

העיר י"י את רוח – רצון.

“Hashem inspired the wind” – the desire.

(3) RALBAG EZRA 1:1

העיר י"י את רוח כורש וגו' – ידמה שהראה השם ית' בחלום לכורש זה הענין ובו צוהו לבנות לו בית בירושלים אשר ביהודה וידמה שראה בחלום שאמר לו השם ית' כי הוא נתן לו כל ממלכות הארץ ולזה צוהו לבנות לו בית בירושלים.

“Hashem inspired the wind of Koresh” – It seems that Hashem showed this matter to Koresh in a dream, and in it commanded him to build him a house in Yerushalayim which is in Yehuda. He perceived that he saw in his dream that Hashem told him that He had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and for this reason commanded him to build him a house in Yerushalayim.

(4) YESHAYAHU 45:1-4, 11-13

(א) פה אמר י"י למשיחו לכורש אשר הִתְזַקְתִּי בִּימֵינוּ לְרַד לְפָנָיו גוֹיִם וּמְתָנִי מְלָכִים אֶפְתַּח לְפָנָיו דְּלֹתַיִם וְשַׁעְרִים לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ.
(ב) אֲנִי לְפָנָיו אֶלֶף נְהַדְוִירִים [אֲנִישָׁר] (אושר) דַּלְתוֹת נְחוּשָׁה אֲשֶׁבֶר וּבְרִיחֵי בְרוֹזַל אֲגַדֵּעַ. (ג) וְנִתְּתִי לָהּ אוֹצְרוֹת חֹשֶׁךְ וּמִטְמֵנִי מִסְתָּרִים לְמַעַן תִּדְעַ כִּי אֲנִי י"י הַקּוֹרֵא בְּשֵׁמִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (ד) לְמַעַן עֲבָדֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחִירֵי וְאֶקְרָא לָהּ בְּשֵׁמִי אֲכַנְּהָ וְלֹא יִדְעֵתְנִי... (יא) פה אמר י"י קדוש ישראל ויצרו האתיות שאֲלוֹנִי עַל בְּנֵי וְעַל פְּעַל יְדֵי תִצְנְנִי. (יב) אֲנִכִּי עֲשִׂיתִי אֶרֶץ וְאָדָם עָלֶיהָ בְּרַאתִי אֲנִי יְדֵי נְטוּ שָׁמַיִם וְכָל צְבָאָם צְוִיתִי. (יג) אֲנִכִּי הִעִירְתֵּהוּ בְּצַדֵּק וְכָל דְּרָכָיו אֲנִישָׁר הוּא יִבְנֶה עִירֵי וְגִלּוֹתַי יִשְׁלַח לֹא בְּמַחִיר וְלֹא בְּשֹׁחַד אָמַר י"י צְבָאוֹת.

(1) Thus says Hashem to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him and to loosen the loins of kings; to open the doors before him that the gates may not be shut, (2) "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the doors of brass and sunder the bars of iron. (3) And I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I am Hashem who calls you by your name, even the God of Israel. (4) For the sake of Jacob My servant and Israel My elect, I have called you by your name. I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me... (11) Thus says Hashem, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, "Ask Me of the signs concerning My sons, and command Me concerning the work of My hands. (12) I, even I, have made the earth and created man upon it. I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens and all their host I have commanded. (13) I have roused him up in victory, and I make all his ways straight. He shall build My city, and he shall let My exiles go free, not for price or reward," says Hashem of hosts.

(5) SEFER HA-IKARIM 4:42

וכן פירשו קצת המפרשים שכל נבואותיו של ישעיה נתיימו בבית שני שצוה כורש לבנות הבית... ואומרים גם כן כי בבית שני נתקיים "והביאו את כל אחיכם מכל הגוים מנחה לד'" (ישעיה ס"ו כ'), לפי שצוה כורש מלך פרס "וכל הנשאר מכל המקומות אשר הוא גר שם ינשאוהו אנשי מקומו בכסף ובזהב וגו'" (עזרא א' ד')...

And some of the commentators similarly explained that all of Yeshayah's prophecies were fulfilled in the Second Temple, for He commanded Cyrus to build the Beit haMikdash... And they say that in the Second Temple the prophecy of "And all of your brothers from among the nations will bring a gift to Gd" (Yeshayah 66:20) was fulfilled, for King Cyrus of Persia commanded, "And anyone who remains, in any place in which he lives, his neighbours shall bear him with silver and gold, etc."...

A JEWISH READING OF HISTORY

(6) R' TZVI SINENSKY, "EZRA CHAPTER 1: AUTHORSHIP, INTRODUCTION, AND SUMMARY"

In 1879, the archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam, working in Iraq, unearthed an ancient clay cylinder containing shards written in ancient Akkadian in the name of Cyrus the Great. Dating from the 6th century BCE, the document has been translated and analyzed by scholars, and now lies in the British Museum. The contents of the cylinder have been cited as a confirmation of the Biblical account of Cyrus' generous policy vis-a-vis the Jews, and by some as the first human rights charter known to humankind.

(7) CYRUS CYLINDER (TRANSLATION: *CUNEIFORM PARALLELS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT*, 1912)

20. I am Cyrus, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world, 21. son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, ki[ng of the ci]ty of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, 22. the perpetual seed of kingship, whose reign Bel (Marduk) and Nabu love, and with whose kingship, to their joy, they concern themselves. When I went as harbinger of peace i[nt]o Babylon 23. I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe. 24. My vast troops were marching peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear. 25. I sought the safety of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon [...], w[ho] as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them, 26. I soothed their weariness; I freed them from their bonds(?). Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds, 27. and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, the son [my] issue, [and over] my all my troops, 28. that we might live happily in his presence, in well-being. At his exalted command, all kings who sit on thrones, 29. from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote distric]ts (and) the kings of the land of Amurru who live in tents, all of them, 30. brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my

feet. From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa, 31. Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Gutu - the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, 32. the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements, 33. and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, 34. I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries, 35. every day before Bel and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: “Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son, 36. may they be the provisioners of our shrines until distant (?) days, and the population of Babylon call blessings on my kingship. I have enabled all the lands to live in peace.”

THE VESSELS OF THE MIKDASH

(8) YIRMIYAHU 27:12-22

(יב) וְאֵל צְדָקָהּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה דִּבְרַתִּי כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר הִבִּיאוּ אֶת צְוֹאֲרֵיכֶם בְּעַל מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְעַבְדוּ אֹתוֹ וְעִמּוּ וְחִיו. (יג) לְמַה תָּמוּתוּ אֶתֶּם וְעַמְּךָ בְּחָרֵב בְּרָעַב וּבְדָבָר כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר י"י אֵל הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא יַעֲבֹד אֶת מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל. (יד) וְאֵל תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל דְּבַר הַנְּבִיאִים הָאֲמָרִים אֲלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לֹא תַעֲבֹדוּ אֶת מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל כִּי שֶׁקֶר הֵם נְבִיאִים לָכֵם. (טו) כִּי לֹא שָׁלַחְתִּים נְאֻם י"י וְהֵם נְבִיאִים בְּשֵׁם לְשֶׁקֶר לְמַעַן הַדִּיחִי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶבְדֶתֶם אִתְּם וְהַנְּבִיאִים הַנְּבִיאִים לָכֵם. (טז) וְאֵל הַכֹּהֲנִים וְאֵל כָּל הַעַם הַזֶּה דִּבְרַתִּי לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר י"י אֵל תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל דְּבַרֵי נְבִיאֵיכֶם הַנְּבִיאִים לָכֵם לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה כְּלֵי בַיִת י"י מוֹשְׁבִים מִבְּבֵלָה עִתָּה מִהֲרָה כִּי שֶׁקֶר הֵמָּה נְבִיאִים לָכֵם. (יז) אֵל תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֲלֵיהֶם עַבְדוּ אֶת מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְחִיו לְמַה תִּהְיֶה הָעִיר הַזֹּאת חֲרָבָה. (יח) וְאֵם נְבִיאִים הֵם וְאֵם יֵשׁ דְּבַר י"י אִתְּם יִפְגְּעוּ נָא בִּי"י צְבָאוֹת לְבִלְתִּי בָּאוּ הַכְּלִים הַנוֹתְרִים בְּבַיִת י"י וּבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וּבִירוּשָׁלַם בְּבֵלָה. (יט) כִּי כֹה אָמַר י"י צְבָאוֹת אֵל הַעֲמִידִים וְעַל הַיָּם וְעַל הַמְּכֻנּוֹת וְעַל יְתֵר הַכְּלִים הַנוֹתְרִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת. (כ) אֲשֶׁר לֹא לִקְחֶם נְבוּכַדְנֶאֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל בְּגִלוֹתוֹ אֶת [יְקִנְיָה] (יְכוּנִיָּה) בֶּן יְהוֹיָקִים מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה מִירוּשָׁלַם בְּבֵלָה וְאֵת כָּל חָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּירוּשָׁלַם. (כא) כִּי כֹה אָמַר י"י צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל הַכְּלִים הַנוֹתְרִים בַּיִת י"י וּבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וּירוּשָׁלַם. (כב) בְּבֵלָה יוּבָאוּ וְשָׁמָּה יִהְיוּ עַד יוֹם פְּקֻדֵי אֶתֶם נְאֻם י"י וְהַעֲלִיתִים וְהִשִּׁיבְתִים אֶל הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה.

(12) I spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. (13) Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as Hashem has spoken concerning the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? (14) Don't listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon'; for they prophesy a lie to you. (15) 'For I have not sent them', says Hashem, 'but they prophesy falsely in My name; that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you, and the prophets who prophesy to you.'" (16) Also I spoke to the priests and to this entire people, saying, "Thus says Hashem, 'Don't listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of Hashem's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon'; for they prophesy a lie to you. (17) Don't listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live. Why should this city become a desolation? (18) But if they are prophets, and if the word of Hashem is with them, let them now make intercession to Hashem of Hosts that the vessels which are left in the house of Hashem, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, don't go to Babylon. (19) For thus says Hashem of Hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that are left in this city, (20) which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon didn't take, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of

Judah and Jerusalem; (21) yes, thus says Hashem of Hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of Hashem, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, (22) 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them,' says Hashem; 'then I will bring them up, and restore them to this place.'"

(9) MELAKHIM B 24:10-13

(י) בעת ההיא [עלו] (עלה) עבדיו נבכדנאצר מלך בבל ירושלים ונתבא העיר במצור. (יא) ונתבא נבכדנאצר מלך בבל על העיר ועבדיו צרים עליה. (יב) ויצא יהויכין מלך יהודה על מלך בבל הוא ואמו ועבדיו ושאריו וסריסיו ויקח אתו מלך בבל בשנת שמינה למלכו. (יג) ויצא משם את כל אוצרות בית י"י ואוצרות בית המלך וקצץ את כל כלי הזהב אשר עשה שלמה מלך ישראל בהיכל י"י כאשר דבר י"י.

(10) At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. (11) And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it. (12) And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers. And the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. (13) And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of Hashem and the treasures of the king's house, and he stripped all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of Hashem, as Hashem had said.

(10) DANIEL 1:1-2

(א) בשנת שלוש למלכות יהויקים מלך יהודה בא נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל ירושלים ויצר עליה. (ב) ונתן אדני בידו את יהויקים מלך יהודה ומקצת כלי בית האלהים ונביאם ארץ שניער בית אלהיו ואת הכלים הביא בית אוצר אלהיו.

(1) In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and besieged it. (2) And Adonai gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god.

(11) DANIEL 5:1-4

(א) בלשאצר מלכא עבד לחם רב לרברבנוהי אלה ולקבל אלפא חמרא שתה. (ב) בלשאצר אמר בטעם חמרא להיתנה למאני דהבא וכסףא די הנפק נבוכדנאצר אבוהי מן היכלא די בירושלים וישתון בהון מלכא ורברבנוהי שגלמה ולחנתה. (ג) באדני היתיו מאני דהבא די הנפקו מן היכלא די בית אלהא די בירושלים ואשתיו בהון מלכא ורברבנוהי שגלמה ולחנתה. (ד) אשתיו חמרא ושבחוי לאלהי דהבא וכסףא נחשא פרזלא אעא ואבנא.

(1) Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. (2) Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem that the king and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, might drink from them. (3) Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, drank from them. (4) They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

WHO WAS SHESHBATZAR?

(12) RASHI EZRA 1:8

ואמרו רבותינו הוא ששבצר הוא דניאל ולמה נקרא שמו ששבצר שעמד בשש צרות.

Our sages said that Sheshbatzar is Daniel. Why was he then called “Sheshbatzar”? Because he withstood six troubles.

(13) IBN EZRA DANIEL 6:29

וששבצר הוא זרובבל ולא דניאל בשתים ראיות שאמר על זרובבל פחת יהודה ויהי לו לששבצר שמייה כי פחה שמייה. וראיה אחרת גדולה וחזקה מזאת שאמר זכריה ידי זרובבל יסדו הבית הזה וככה כתוב בספר עזרא ושם כתוב אדין ששבצר דך אתא יהא אשיא די בית אלהא די בירושלם.

And Sheshbatzar is Zerubavel, not Daniel; there are two proofs to this. It calls Zerubavel “the pecha of Yehudah,” and this was Sheshbatzar’s name in Ezra 5:14. Another, greater and stronger proof, is that Zechariah said, “The hands of Zerubavel founded this building,” and so is recorded in the book of Ezra (5:16), where it says, “Then this Sheshbatzar came and laid the foundations of the house of Gd in Jerusalem.”

(14) DA’AT MIKRA EZRA 1:8

It makes sense that Sheshbatzar is the same as Shenatzar, the son of Yehoyachin, king of Yehuda, who is mentioned in Divrei HaYamim A 3:18. According Ezra 5:14, he was appointed to the role of *pecha*, and he laid the foundations for the building of the Mikdash.

גם להלן ו ה. ששבצר - יתכן שהוא שנאצר בן יהויכין מלך יהודה, הנזכר בדה"א ג יח¹⁵. לפי עזרא ה יד נתמנה ששבצר למשרת 'פחה', והוא הגיח את היסודות לבנין המקדש (שם טז). הנשיא ליהודה - סמיכות עם למ"ד, נשיא יהודה. נשיא - תאר ליו"רש כסא דוד (עי' יח' לו כה ופרק מז).

FURTHER READING

(15) MALBIM EZRA 1:1

העיר ה' את רוח כורש מבואר ביוסיפון שעת פתר דניאל לבלשאצר מכתב המלך שיענש בלשאצר על שחלל כלי המקדש, ונהרג בו בלילה ודריוש מדאה קבל מלכותו, נודע זה לדריוש וכורש ונדרו לבנות המקדש, וגם י"ל שנודע לו מנבואת ישעיה שנבא עליו הוא יבנה עירי וגלותי ישלח, ודברי ה' אלה העירו עת רוחו

<https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/ketuvim/sefer-ezra/ezra-chapter-1-authorship-introduction-and-summary>

OUTLINE

Central role of Koresh: mentioned 5 times, unlike Sheshbatar's minimal mention. He is active, all others are passive. He is inspired by Hashem and uses quasi-divine language.

Implications: Weak Jewish leadership, the people follow Koresh much more closely than the prophets of yore, and he is more prominent than Yirmiyahu

We need to explain Koresh, and his Divine inspiration is an explanation. Plus, it highlights the decline of prophecy and the rise of other forms of religious leadership.

Cyrus Cylinder

Identity of Sheshbatar – Rashi/Ibn Ezra/Contemporary Scholarship (Da'at Mikra/Divrei YaYamim?)

Implications – if he is of Davidic lineage, we see the beginnings of a messianic hope. Maybe Malchut Beit David is back!