Ezra/Nechemiah 11: Ezra Chapter 4: Trouble Begins

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Introduction to Chapter Four (continued)

1. "The enemies of Yehudah and Binyamin" Kings II 17:1-6, 24-41

2. Mishnah Kiddushin 4:3 (74a)

כל האסורין לבא בקהל מותרים לבא זה בזה. רבי יהודה אוסר. רבי אליעזר אומר ודאן בודאן מותר [לבוא זה בזה], ודאן בספיקן, וספיקן בודאן, וספיקן בספיקן, אסור. ואלו הן הספיקות: שתוקי אסופי וכותי.

All who are prohibited from marrying into the community are permitted to marry each other. Rabbi Yehudah prohibits. Rabbi Eliezer said: Those who are definitely [prohibited to marry in] are permitted to marry those who are definitely [prohibited to marry in]; definites may not marry possibles; and possibles may not marry possibles. And these are the possibles: Shetuki, Asufi, and Kuti.

3. Talmud. Kiddushin 75a-b

ר' ישמעאל סבר כותים גירי אריות הן וכהנים שנטמעו בהם כהנים פסולים היו, שנאמר "ויעשו להם מקצותם כהני במות (מלכים ב יז:לב)," ואמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן מן הקוצים שבעם, ומשום הכי פסלינהו.

ורבי עקיבא סבר כותים גירי אמת הן וכהנים שנטמעו בהן כהנים כשרים היו, שנאמר "ויעשו להם מקצותם כהני במות," ואמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן מן הבחירים שבעם. ואלא מפני מה אסרום? מפני...

Rabbi Yishmael thought that the Kutim converted due to fear of lions, and the kohanim who married among them were disqualified, as Kings II 17:32 says, "And they made *miketzotam* [some of them] into kohanim of high places," on which Rabbah bar bar Chanah cited Rabbi Yochanan to explain, "min hakotzim sheba'am - from the thorns among them," and therefore they were disqualified.

And Rabbi Akiva thought that the Kutim were true converts, and the kohanim who married among them were kosher kohanim, as Kings II 17:32 says, "And they made *miketzotam* [some of them] into kohanim of high places," on which Rabbah bar bar Chanah cited Rabbi Yochanan to explain, "min habechirim sheba'am – from the choicest among them." Then why were they prohibited [to marry in]? Because ...

4. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Issurei Biah 13:17

גר שלא בדקו אחריו או שלא הודיעוהו המצות ועונשן ומל וטבל בפני ג' הדיוטות ה"ז גר, אפילו נודע שבשביל דבר הוא מתגייר... ואפילו

If they did not examine a convert's intentions, or they did not inform him of the commandments and their punishments, and he was circumcised and he immersed before three ordinary Jews, he is a convert, even if we then find out that he converted for a particular gain... And even should he revert to idolatry...

4:1-3 Approach and Rebuff

5. Rashi to Ezra 4:2

ויאמרו נבנה עמכם - היו אומרי' כך למען תתבטל מלאכת הבית על ידיהם שלא לבנות עוד:

"And they said: Let us build with you" – They said this to halt work on the House, to keep it from being built further.

6. Malbim to Ezra 4:2

הכותים היו עובדים בשיתוף, כמ"ש "את ק' היו יראים ואת אלהיהם [חול] הם עובדים", וחשבו שגם ישראל יעבדו באופן זה... The Kutim served multiple gods, as in, "They revered Gd and served their gods." They thought Israel would also serve thus...

7. Talmud, Erchin 5b

עובד כוכבים: רבי מאיר אומר נערך אבל לא מעריך. רבי יהודה אומר מעריך אבל לא נערך...

משום רפיון ידים הוא, דכתיב "ויהי עם הארץ מרפין ידי עם יהודה ומבהלים אותם לבנות"

"דכתיב "לא לכם ולנו לבנות בית אלקינו"

Mishnah: An idolater – Rabbi Meir said his *erech* may be vowed, but he cannot vow and *erech*. Rabbi Yehudah said he may vow an *erech*, but his *erech* may not be vowed.

Explaining Rabbi Yehudah: Because of weakening the hands, as it is written, "And the nation of the land weakened the hands of Judea, and frightened them from building."

Explaining Rabbi Meir: For it says, "It is not for you and for us to build a house for our Gd."

8. Rashi to Erchin 5b

שהיו עובדי כוכבים מתנדבין ורוצין לסייען בבנין בית שני, ואמר להם נחמיה בן חכליה "לא לכם ולנו לבנות" כי אם לנו לבדנו.

The idolaters pledged and wished to help build construction of the Second Temple, and Nechemiah ben Chakaliah told them, "It is not for you and for us to build," but for us alone.

4:4-6 Harassment

9. Metzudat David to Ezra 4:4-5

מרפים - הביאו מורך בלבבם למען ירפו ידיהם מן הבנין: ומבהלים - היו מפחידים אותם מלבנות: וסוכרים - היו שוכרים יועצים בעבורם לייעץ את המלך אחר דעתם ולהפר עצת היהודים:

"Weakening" – Softening their hearts, so that their hands would be weak in building. "And frightening" – Frightening them from building.

"And hired" – They hired advisors for themselves, to counsel the king in line with their view, and to ruin the Jews' plan.

10. Achashverosh? Cambyses II (Rashi); Artachshasta (Ibn Ezra); Xerxes (Encyclopedia Mikrait)

How does 4:4 - 6:22 work?

11. Outline	
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4:4-5 Opposition from the enemy from the time of Cyrus to the time of Darius

4:6 Opposition in the time of Achashverosh 4:7-23 Opposition in the time of Artachshasta

4:24 Opposition lasts until the second year of <u>Darius</u>

5:1-6:13 Jews start building; opposition appeals to Darius, but he checks the records and approves the building

6:14 Construction is permitted by authority of <u>Darius</u>, <u>Cyrus and Artachshasta</u>

6:15-22 Beit haMikdash is completed in the sixth year of Darius

Chapter 7 <u>Artachshasta</u> sends Ezra

12. Persian kings of this period, with their secular chronology

• Cyrus (Koresh) 559 BCE – 530 BCE (reigned over Babylon from 539 BCE)

Cambyses II
 Darius I (Daryavesh?)
 Xerxes (Achashverosh?)
 Artaxerxes I (Artachshasta?)
 Darius II
 Artaxerxes II
 Artaxerxes II
 Artaxerxes III
 Artaxerxes III

13. Solutions

- Artachshasta is a title, Darius is his name, Koresh is an adjective (Rosh HaShanah 3b, Seder Olam)
- Artachshasta is a title, 4:7-23 is Cyrus-as-Artachshasta, Chap. 7 is a later Artachshasta (Metz. David, Malbim)
- Cyrus, Artachshasta (4:7-23), Darius and Artachshasta (Chap. 7) are four different kings (Baal haMaor)
- 4:7-23 is brought from later in history, in discussing harassment (Daat Mikra, Encyclopedia Mikrait)