

## Introduction to Chapters 5-6

### 1. Outline

- 5:1-2 A renewed charge to build
- 5:3-17 The governor's challenge and letter to King Darius
- 6:1-5 The Persian archives yield their evidence
- 6:6-12 Darius orders that construction go forward
- 6:13-18 Temple built and dedicated
- 6:19-22 Pesach is celebrated

### 2. Prof. Mordechai Zer Kavod, Daat Mikra to Ezra pg. 17

מתוך הרשימות הנמצאים בספר עזרא יוצא שליהודה היתה אבטונומיה דתית ומשפטית רחבה. מימי כורש ועד השנים הראשונות לדריוש משלו בה נשיאים מזרע דוד – ששבצר וזרובבל – ועמהם זקני יהודה. עם ביטול שלטון צאצאי בתי המלכים ששלטו בארצותיהם מטעם מלכות פרס, בימי דריוש, ניטל השלטון גם מבית דוד ונמסר לפחה...

From the documents found in Ezra it emerges that Judea had broad religious and legal autonomy. From the days of Cyrus until the first years of Darius, princes from the seed of David ruled there – Sheshbatar and Zerubavel – and the elders of Judea [ruled] with them. With the end of the reign of the descendants of the royal houses who had reigned over their lands with Persian authorization, in the days of Darius, control was taken from the house of David and given to the *pecha*...

### 3. Midrash, Shir haShirim Rabbah 5:7

מצאוני השומרים הסובבים בעיר, זה (עזרא ה') תתני פחת עבר נהרא וחבריו...

"The guards who patrol the city found me" – This is Tatnai, *pecha* of the other side of the river, and his allies...

### 5:1-2 A renewed charge to build

#### 4. Malbim to Ezra 1:1

נבואת ירמיה היתה מפורשת שתהיה הפקודה בעת חורבן בבל, שזה אחר שבעים שנה למלכות בבל כמבואר שם [כ"ה י"ב, כ"ט י']. אמנם לפי העונש שנענשו להיות בגלות שבעים שנה בעבור ביטול השמטות, היה צריך להתחיל החשבון מגלות צדקיהו שהיה י"ח שנה אחר התחלת מלכות נ"ג, שמאז היתה הארץ שממה... ושניהם נתקיימו, שלמלאת דבר ד' בפי ירמיה העיר ד' את רוח כורש בשנת אחת למלכו ונתן פקודה שישובו לירושלים ויבנו המקדש והי' רק פקודה למלאת מ"ש ירמיה שבמלאת שבעים שנה של בבל... ולא יעד שם שיבנה המקדש אז שזה לא היה זמנו עתה, רק י"ח שנה אח"ז למלאת שבעים שנה לחורבת ירושלים שאז יגמר מכפרה בעון השמטות, רק שאם לא היה נותן רשיון לבנות המקדש לא היו שבים מן הגולה, העיר ד' את רוחו שיתן רשיון לבנות המקדש...

Jeremiah's prophecy was explicit that the "recalling" would be at the time of the destruction of Babylon, which would be after 70 years of the Babylonian Empire, as explained in Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10. But regarding the punishment of being in exile for 70 years because of their failure to observe *shemithah*, the count should have begun from the exile of Tzidkiyahu, which was 18 years after the start of Nevuchadnezzar's reign, at which point the land was desolate ...

Both were fulfilled. In fulfilling the word of Gd via Jeremiah, Gd awakened the spirit of Cyrus in the first year of his reign and he ordered that they return to Jerusalem and build the Temple. This command was only to fulfill Jeremiah's 70 Babylonian years (29:10)... And he did not promise that the Temple would be built then, for that was not its time. This was only 18 years later, at the completion of 70 years since the destruction of Jerusalem, when atonement of the sin of *shemithah* was complete. However, had [Cyrus] not licensed them to build the Temple, they would not have returned from exile, and so Gd awakened his spirit to license them to build the Temple.

### 5:3-17 The governor's challenge and letter to King Darius

#### 5. Rashi to Ezra 5:4

אמרו להם לישראל אותן צרי יהודה ובנימין:

Those foes of Judea and Benjamin said to Israel...

#### 6. Malbim to Ezra 5:3

זה היה בהשגחת ד' שלא באו עליהם צריהם, שהם היו מפריעים אותם ביד חזקה כמו בפעם הראשון וכמו שרצו אח"כ להלחם אתם על בנין החומה, רק שבא תתני פחת עבר הנהר והוא לא היה צורר היהודים, רק ששאל מי נתן להם רשות לבנות הבית הזה, כי רשות כורש נשכח בעת ההיא:

It was with Divine supervision that their enemies did not attack them, for they would have disrupted them with a mighty hand, like the first time and as they wished to fight later during the construction of the walls. This was only that Tatnai, *pecha* of Transjordan, who was not an enemy of the Jews, came and asked who had licensed them to build this Temple. The permission of Cyrus had been forgotten by then.

#### 7. Lines 18-21 of the King/Thompson translation of the Behistun Inscription

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full\\_translation\\_of\\_the\\_Behistun\\_Inscription](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_translation_of_the_Behistun_Inscription))

(18) King Darius says: Then I marched against that Nidintu-Bêl, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar. The army of Nidintu-Bêl held the Tigris; there it took its stand, and on account of the waters (the river) was unfordable. Thereupon I supported my army on (inflated) skins, others I made dromedary-borne, for the rest I brought horses. Ahuramazda brought me help; by the grace of Ahuramazda we crossed the Tigris. Then did I utterly overthrow that host of Nidintu-Bêl. On the twenty-sixth day of the month Âçiyâdiya (13 December 522 BC[E]) we joined battle.

(19) King Darius says: After that I marched against Babylon. But before I reached Babylon, that Nidintu-Bêl, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar, came with a host and offered battle at a city called Zâzâna, on the Euphrates. Then we joined battle. Ahuramazda brought me help; by the grace of Ahuramazda did I utterly overthrow the host of Nidintu-Bêl. The enemy fled into the water; the water carried them away. On the second day of the month Anâmaka (18 December 522 BC[E]) we joined battle.

(20) King Darius says: Then did Nidintu-Bêl flee with a few horsemen into Babylon. Thereupon I marched to Babylon. By the grace of Ahuramazda I took Babylon, and captured Nidintu-Bêl. Then I slew that Nidintu-Bêl in Babylon.

(21) King Darius says: While I was in Babylon, these provinces revolted from me: Persia, Elam, Media, Assyria, Egypt, Parthia, Margiana [Marguš], Sattagydia [Thataguš], and Scythia [Saka].

#### 8. Malbim to Ezra 5:8

הנה בזה דרשו טובתם שהודיעו שאינם בונים מבצר משגב, כי משימים עץ בהכתלים שבקל ישרף באש ואינו למשגב [שמטעם זה צוה כורש שיבנו כל שורה הרביעית של עץ, לקמן ו' ד']. ומלאכה זאת נעשית מהרה ומצלחת בידיהם, וגם בזה המליצו לאמר שהעמים אשר סביבותם אין משביתים המלאכה כי אין בה שום חשש מרד או דבר רע או מזיק למלך או להעמים:

With this they sought to benefit, informing that [the Jews] were not building a mighty fortress. They were placing wood in the walls, which would easily be burned in fire and would not be mighty [and for this reason Cyrus commanded that every fourth layer be of wood in 6:4]. And this work was done quickly and was successful in their hands – and with this [Tatnai] lobbied, saying that the nations around them were not halting the work, for there was no concern regarding rebellion or bad conduct, or harm to the king or to other nations.

#### 9. Malbim to Ezra 5:10

וגם זה לטובה לדעת כי בראשם עומד הפחה והוא לא יעשה דבר בלא רשות, ובודאי האמת כדבריהם שיש להם רשות מפורש:

And this was also for the best, to know that at their head stood the *pecha* who would not act without license. Certainly, they must be speaking truthfully, that they had explicit permission.

#### 10. Malbim to Ezra 5:12-13

חורבנו היה בסבת העונות וכבר נתכפרו עונותיהם ע"י הגלות

Its destruction was due to sins, and those sins had already been atoned for via exile.

#### 11. Malbim to Ezra 5:14

וזאת שני ראיות מוכיחות כדבריהם ממה שהכלים בידם, וממה שששבצר הוא פחה קבוע מן המלך ואליו צוה לבנות והוא הבונה, והפחה שהוא שר המלך לא יעשה כזאת בלא רשות

And these were two clear proofs to their words – their possession of the vessels, and the fact that Sheshbatar was *pecha* as set by the king, such that the king had commanded him to build and he had built. The *pecha* is an officer of the king, and he would not have done this without permission.