

1. Ezra Halevi, *Iran Plans on Destroying Tomb of King Cyrus, Friend of the Jews*, Israel National News Jan. 8 '13
Iran is planning on submerging the tomb of King Cyrus (Coresh), the Persian King known for authorizing the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Holy Temple... The Iranian ayatollahs are planning on destroying the tomb as part of a general campaign to sever the Persian people from their non-Islamic heritage; Cyrus was thought to be a Zoroastrian and was one of the first rulers to enforce a policy of religious tolerance on his huge kingdom. Journalist Ran Porat quoted a young Iranian who said that the measures being taken by the Islamic Republic's regime include the destruction of archaeological sites significant to this heritage.

The story: Ezra 1

2. Ezra 1:1-4, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows: "Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord G-d of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all His people—may his G-d be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord G-d of Israel, the G-d that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of G-d that is in Jerusalem."

3. Ibn Ezra to Ezra 1:2

He did not say, "Gd of the earth," for He had already given it to humanity, as he said, "Gd has given me all of the dominions of the earth."

4. Ezra 6:3-5, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued an order concerning the House of G-d in Jerusalem: 'Let the house be rebuilt, a place for offering sacrifices, with a base built up high. Let it be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with a course of unused timber for each three courses of hewn stone. The expenses shall be paid by the palace. And the gold and silver vessels of the House of G-d which Nevuchadnezzar had taken away from the temple in Jerusalem and transported to Babylon shall be returned, and let each go back to the temple in Jerusalem where it belongs; you shall deposit it in the House of G-d.'

5. Ezra 1:5-6, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

So the chiefs of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, all whose spirit had been roused by G-d, got ready to go up to build the House of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

All their neighbors supported them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with livestock, and with precious objects, besides what had been given as a freewill offering.

6. Midrash, Seder Olam Rabbah 29

When enumerated, they are only 30,360; where are the other 12,000? Rather, they ascended from the other tribes.

7. Ezra 1:7-11, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

King Cyrus of Persia released the vessels of the Lord's house which Nevuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his god. These King Cyrus of Persia released through the office of Mithredath the treasurer, who gave an inventory of them to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This is the inventory: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 knives, 30 gold bowls, 410 silver double bowls, 1,000 other vessels; in all, 5,400 gold and silver vessels. Sheshbazzar brought all these back when the exiles came back from Babylon to Jerusalem.

8. The return of the Temple vessels

<http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/873680/>

Three views on this story

9. Elias Bickerman, *The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1*, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65:3 (1946)

Since there was a return from the Captivity under Cyrus, the king must have issued a proclamation summoning the Exiles to go back to Jerusalem. But it is another question whether the text of the proclamation is trustworthy as given by the Chronicler or has been more or less altered from its original form by the hagiographer.

10. Jeremiah 25:8-12, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

Assuredly, thus said the Lord of Hosts: Because you would not listen to My words, I am going to send for all the peoples of the north—declares the Lord—and for My servant, King Nevuchadrezzar of Babylon, and bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all those nations roundabout. I will exterminate them and make them a desolation, an object of hissing—ruins for all time. And I will banish from them the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of bridegroom and bride, and the sound of the mill and the light of the lamp. This whole land shall be a desolate ruin. And those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. When the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation and the land of the Chaldeans for their sins—declares the Lord—and I will make it a desolation for all time.

11. Isaiah 44:24-45:3, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

Thus said the Lord, your Redeemer, Who formed you in the womb: It is I, the Lord, who made everything, Who alone stretched out the heavens And unaided spread out the earth; Who annul the omens of diviners, And make fools of the augurs; Who turn sages back And make nonsense of their knowledge; But confirm the word of My servant And fulfill the prediction of My messengers. It is I who say of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited," And of the towns of Judah, "They shall be rebuilt; And I will restore their ruined places." [I,] who said to the deep, "Be dry; I will dry up your floods," Am the same who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd; He shall fulfill all My purposes! He shall say of Jerusalem, 'She shall be rebuilt,' And to the Temple: 'You shall be founded again.'"

Thus said the Lord to Cyrus, His anointed one— Whose right hand He has grasped, Treading down nations before him, Ungirding the loins of kings, Opening doors before him And letting no gate stay shut: I will march before you And level the hills that loom up; I will shatter doors of bronze And cut down iron bars. I will give you treasures concealed in the dark And secret hoards— So that you may know that it is I the Lord, The G-d of Israel, who call you by name...

12. An introduction to Isaiah <http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/891725/>

13. Isaiah 11:15-16, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

The Lord will dry up the tongue of the Egyptian sea.—He will raise His hand over the Euphrates with the might of His wind and break it into seven wadis, so that it can be trodden dry-shod. Thus there shall be a highway for the other part of His people out of Assyria, such as there was for Israel when it left the land of Egypt.

14. Exodus 12:35-36

And the Children of Israel did as Moshe had said, and they "asked" of Egypt silver and gold vessels, and clothing. And G-d put the nation's favour in the eyes of Egypt, and they "lent to them," and they emptied Egypt.

The Cyrus Cylinder, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



15. Professor Lucas Schulte, *Good Public Relations: What Persian Propaganda Tells Us About the 'Nehemiah Memoir'*
<http://asorblog.org/2016/11/02/what-persian-propaganda-tells-us/>

Inscriptions ranging from the first Persian king, Cyrus, through Artaxerxes in the book of Nehemiah, reveal elements in common in both Babylonian and Egyptian texts. The Cyrus Cylinder describes a Babylonian god, Marduk, choosing Cyrus to rule kindly over the Babylonians as "King of Babylon." This inscription demonstrates important Persian propaganda innovation: they used the language (in this case, Babylonian cuneiform), inscription style (foundational cylinders that had been used for centuries), local gods (Marduk and Nabu), and the local royal title ("King of Babylon") of their subject peoples. No previous kings in the ancient Near East had used this combination of methods! Chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah depict a similar image of Cyrus in a Judean religious context: [G-d] gives Cyrus authority over Judah and the nations, and Cyrus is even given the royal title of "messiah."

16. Jeremiah 27:6-8, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

I herewith deliver all these lands to My servant, King Nevuchadnezzar of Babylon; I even give him the wild beasts to serve him. All nations shall serve him, his son and his grandson—until the turn of his own land comes, when many nations and great kings shall subjugate him. The nation or kingdom that does not serve him—King Nevuchadnezzar of Babylon—and does not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will visit—declares the Lord—with sword, famine, and pestilence, until I have destroyed it by his hands.

17. Isaiah 45:4, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

For the sake of My servant Jacob, Israel My chosen one, I call you by name, I hail you by title, though you have not known Me.

18. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 12th century Egypt), *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:45

The first prophetic level is for Divine aid to accompany a person, moving and energizing him to a great positive deed, like saving an important group from evildoers, or saving a great, important person, or benefiting a large number of people. He will find something moving him to action; this is called "the spirit of Gd." Regarding one who is accompanied by this, the text will say, "the spirit of Gd was powerful upon him," or "the spirit of Gd clothed him," or "the spirit of Gd rested upon him," or "Gd was with him," and similar expressions. This was the level of all of the Jewish judges, regarding whom the Torah said in general that Gd established judges for them, and Gd was with the judge and He rescued them. This is also the level of all of the distinguished counselors of Israel... None of these [examples of those who experienced *ruach hakodesh*] was moved to state anything. The purpose of this force is to awaken the strengthened person to a specific action. And it is not for any action that might be at hand, but to help the oppressed, a great person or a community, or to prevent an event that would lead to that [oppression].

19. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), *Commentary to Exodus* 25:39

Regarding the king of Assyria, Kings II 19:7 says, "I will place a spirit in him... and he will return to his land." Regarding Cyrus, "G-d awakened the spirit of Cyrus" to allow Israel to ascend to Jerusalem... In all of these verses, the spirit is not the intellectual foundation, but the force moving the will to a deed that is ethically good or bad.