

J. Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah

The Lord commanded the Jews through Haggai, the prophet, to resume the work on the temple (Hag. 1:8). The Jews obeyed the Lord and resumed the work on the temple on the 24th day of the month Elul (part of August and September) in the second year of the reign of Darius I, i.e. on Sept. 21, 520 B.C. (Hag. 1:15). The Lord helped the Jews continue the work on the temple by encouraging them through the prophecies of both Haggai and Zechariah (5:2b cf. Zech. 4:8,9).

K. Visit of Tatnai, the governor of the territory West of the Euphrates River to the Jews.

Tatnai, the governor of the territory on the western side of the Euphrates River (Syria, and Cilicia), and his companions visited the Jews. They asked the Jews to tell them who commanded them to build the temple and the wall and to give them the names of their leaders. Tatnai, the governor, then wrote a letter to Darius I about this matter and waited for his reply. God showed His favor to the Jews at this time in that Tatnai did not immediately stop the work on the temple and wall, but let it go on until he learned of his king's wishes (5:3-5).

L. Letter from Tatnai, the Governor and His companions to Darius I, King of Persia.

In this letter Tatnai the Governor and his companions told Darius I, King of Persia that they had gone to the province of Judah where the temple and the walls were being built and that the work on the temple and the walls was progressing rapidly (5:8). They said that they had asked the Jews to tell them who commanded them to build the temple and the walls and to give them the names of their leaders so they could inform him of them (5:9,10). They said the Jews told them that Cyrus had commanded them to build the temple and that he delivered the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem to Babylon to Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) and told him to take them back to Jerusalem and put them in the temple (5:11-15). They said that Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) came to Jerusalem, laid the foundation of the temple, and that the temple is still not finished (5:16). They then requested Darius I to search the archives in his treasure house in Babylon to determine whether or not Cyrus had commanded the Jews to build the temple in Jerusalem, and to send them a letter informing them of his decision in this matter (5:17).

M. Decree of Darius I

Darius I issued a decree that a search be made of the archives in his treasure house in Babylon for the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (6:17)

N. Discovery of the Decree of Cyrus and its Terms

The decree of Cyrus was discovered on a roll in the King's palace in Ecbatana which is the capital of Media (6:20). It may be that this decree was among valuable records that Pseudo-Smerdis transferred from Babylon to Ecbatana because he wanted to destroy the edicts of his predecessors. But whatever the cause may have been, notice of the transfer of this decree was duly recorded so that when the searchers inquired