

Sheshbazzar

Ezra 1 – 2

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

Ezra 3:7 – 4:5

Ezra 4:24

by Don Falkos

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King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree. "The Lord God has commanded me to allow the people of Israel to return to Judah so the Temple in the capital city of Jerusalem may be rebuilt." Cyrus appointed Sheshbazzar to lead the expedition.

The leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin along with the priests and Levites prepared to go. Those remaining in exile contributed toward the expenses of the venture by giving silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock to be offered in sacrifice to the Lord.

Cyrus gave back all the sacred vessels plundered from the original Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar. Sheshbazzar brought them along on the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The returnees settled in their own hometowns and then began to purchase and gather the materials needed for building the Temple. King Cyrus had authorized them to buy a large supply of cedar from Lebanon, the best cedar in the world.

There were people living in the region of Samaria, descendants of Israelites who had not been taken into exile and who had intermarried with foreigners relocated there by the Assyrian empire. The returning exiles saw these people as a separate race of undesirable half-breeds. So when these Samaritans came to Sheshbazzar saying, "Let us help you rebuild; we worship the same God," their offer was rejected.

The Samaritans, helped by local Persian officials, created so much interference that after two years of work only the foundations of the Temple had been completed. It wasn't long before construction came to a complete halt for over a decade.