

4 ¹Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, ²they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' household, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for like you, we seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon kin of Assyria, who brought us up here."

³But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build for the LORD God of Israel, just as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us."

⁴Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, ⁵and bribed advisers against them to frustrate their advice all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

⁶Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the text of the letter was written in Aramaic and translated from Aramaic.

⁸Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxeres, as follows-

⁹Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues, the judges the lesser governors, the officials, the secretaries, the men of Erech, the Babylonians, the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites, ¹⁰and the rest of the nations which the great and honorable Osnappar deported and settled in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the region beyond the Euphrates River.

¹¹this is the copy of the letter which they sent to him:

“To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the men of the region beyond the Euphrates River; and now ¹²let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations.

13 Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, they will not pay tribute, custom tax, or toll and it will be detrimental to the revenue of the kings. 14 Now because we are in the service of the palace, and it is not fitting for us to see the king's shame, for this reason we have sent word and informed the king,

¹⁵so that a search may be conducted in the record books of your fathers. And you will discover in the record books and learn that that city is a rebellious city and detrimental to kings and provinces, and that they have revolted within it in the past days; for this reason that city was laid waste.

16 We are informing the king that if that city is rebuilt and the walls finished, then as a result of this you will have no possession in the province beyond the Euphrates River.”

17 Then the king sent a response to Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and the rest of the provinces beyond the Euphrates River: “Peace. And now,

18the document which you sent to us has been translated and read before me. 19And a decree has been issued by me, and a search has been conducted and it has been discovered that that city has risen up against the kings in past days, and that rebellion and revolt have been perpetrated in it,

20 that mighty kings have ruled over Jerusalem, governing all the provinces beyond the Euphrates River, and that tribute, custom tax, and toll were paid to them. 21 Now issue a decree to make those men stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until a decree is issued by me.

22 And beware of being negligent in carrying out this matter; why should there be great damage, to the detriment of the kings?”

23 Then as soon as the copy of King Artaxerxes' decree was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their colleagues, they went in a hurry to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by military force.

24 Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem was discontinued, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Daruis king of Persia.

5 ¹When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, ²then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.