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EZRA 6: 1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the archives, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

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Darius orders search to be made for the edict of Cyrus, Ezr 6:1. It is found at Achmetha, Ezr 6:2. A transcript of this edict, Ezr 6:3-5. Darius confirms it, Ezr 6:6-12. Tatnai encourages the Jews to proceed; and they finish the temple in the sixth year of Darius, Ezr 6:13-15. They dedicate the temple, Ezr 6:16-18; keep the Passover, Ezr 6:19-21, and the feast of unleavened bread, Ezr 6:22.

Verse 1

In the house of the rolls - בית ספריא beith siphraiya, the house of the books, the king's library. This is the first time we hear of a library.

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EZRA 6: 2 There was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll, and therein was thus written for a record:

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Verse 2

At Achmetha - Ecbatana in India, whither it is probable all the records of Cyrus had been carried. This was a sort of summer residence for the kings of Persia.

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EZRA 6: 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree: Concerning God's house at Jerusalem, let the house be built, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let its foundations be strongly laid; its height sixty cubits, and its breadth sixty cubits;

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Verse 3

The height thereof threescore cubits - This was much larger than the temple of Solomon. This was sixty cubits high, and sixty cubits broad; whereas Solomon's was only twenty cubits broad, and thirty cubits high.

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EZRA 6: 4 with three courses of great stones, and a course of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house.

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Verse 4

Three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber - We have noticed this kind of building before, three courses of stones, and then a course of strong balk; and this continued to the square of the building.

And let the expenses be given - Cyrus had ordered wood to be cut at Libanus, and conveyed to Joppa at his expense; but it does not appear that he furnished the other expenses of the building, for we have already seen that the Jews contributed for the defraying of all others. But it appears that he provided at his own expense the sacrifices and offerings for the temple. See Ezr 6:9.

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EZRA 6: 5 Also let the gold and silver vessels of God's house, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought to Babylon, be restored, and brought again to the temple which is at Jerusalem, everyone to its place; and you shall put them in God's house.

EZRA 6: 6 Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and your companions the Apharsachites, who are beyond the River, you must stay far from there.

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Verse 6

Be ye far from thence - Do not interrupt the Jews in their building; but, on the contrary further them all in your power.

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EZRA 6: 7 Leave the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place.

EZRA 6: 8 Moreover I make a decree what you shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence to these men, that they be not hindered.

EZRA 6: 9 That which they have need of, both young bulls, and rams, and lambs, for burnt offerings to the God of heaven; also wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests who are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail;

EZRA 6: 10 that they may offer sacrifices of pleasant aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

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Verse 10

And pray for the life of the king, and of his sons - Even heathens believed that offerings made in their behalf to the God of the Jews would be available. And this principle has had considerable influence in certain states where there was even a form of religion established by the law, to induce them to tolerate other forms, that the state might have the benefit of their prayers.

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EZRA 6: 11 Also I have made a decree, that whoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened on it; and let his house be made a dunghill for this:

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Verse 11

Let timber be pulled down - Whether this refers to the punishment of hanging and gibbeting of whipping at a post, or of empaling, is not quite clear. In China they tie culprits to posts; and the executioner cuts them open while alive, takes out their bowels, etc. Empaling, thrusting a sharp stake through the body till it comes out at the side of the neck, or hanging, seems to be intended here.

Let his house be made a dunghill - Let it be reduced to ruins, and never more used, except for the most sordid and unclean purposes.

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EZRA 6: 12 and the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow all kings and peoples who stretch out their hand to alter the same, to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with all diligence.

EZRA 6: 13 Then Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and their companions, because Darius the king had sent a decree, did accordingly with all diligence.

EZRA 6: 14 The elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

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#### Verse 14

According to the commandment of the God of Israel - He first gave the order, and stirred up the hearts of the following Persian kings to second that order.

Of Cyrus - This sovereign gave his orders for the rebuilding of the temple about A.M. 3468.

And Darius - Darius Hystaspes confirmed the above orders, A. M. 3485.

And Artaxerxes - Artaxerxes Longimanus sent Ezra to Judea with new privileges, A.M. 3547. With the permission of the same king, Nehemiah came to Judea in 3550. The writer recapitulates the different sovereigns who favored the Jews after the Babylonish captivity. See Calmet.

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EZRA 6: 15 This house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

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#### Verse 15

This house was finished - The sixth year of Darius mentioned here was about A.M. 3489, twenty years after the foundation had been laid by Zerubbabel, under the reign of Cyrus.

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EZRA 6: 16 The children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

EZRA 6: 17 They offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

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Verse 17

Twelve he-goats - This was a sin-offering for every tribe.

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EZRA 6: 18 They set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

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Verse 18

And they set the priests - With this verse the Chaldee or Aramitic part of this chapter ends.

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EZRA 6: 19 The children of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

EZRA 6: 20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure: and they killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brothers the priests, and for themselves.

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Verse 20

The Levites were purified together - They were all ready at one time to observe the proper rites and ceremonies, and had no need of having a second passover, which was appointed by the law for those who had been accidentally defiled, or were at a distance from the tabernacle. See 2Chr 30:3.

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EZRA 6: 21 The children of Israel who had come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves to them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek the LORD, the God of Israel, ate,

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Verse 21

And all such as had separated themselves - These were the proselytes who had embraced the Jewish religion by having mingled with the Jews in their captivity. This proves that there the poor captives had so acted according to the principles of their religion, that the heathens saw it, and walked in the light of the Lord with them. A good example is very persuasive; and particularly so when founded on pure principles.

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EZRA 6: 22 and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, to strengthen their hands in the work of God's house, the God of Israel.

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Verse 22

Turned the heart of the king of Assyria - I am of Calmet's mind, that king of Assyria is here put for king of Persia. Cyrus and his successors possessed all the rights and estates of the ancient kings of Assyria, and therefore the same monarch may be styled king of Assyria as well as king of Persia.

Darius had a very high character, as a wise, just, and merciful prince. To strengthen his title to the crown, he married two of the daughters of Cyrus, and, no doubt, to show his affection to this family, he the more cheerfully confirmed the edict which Cyrus had made in favor of the Jews.