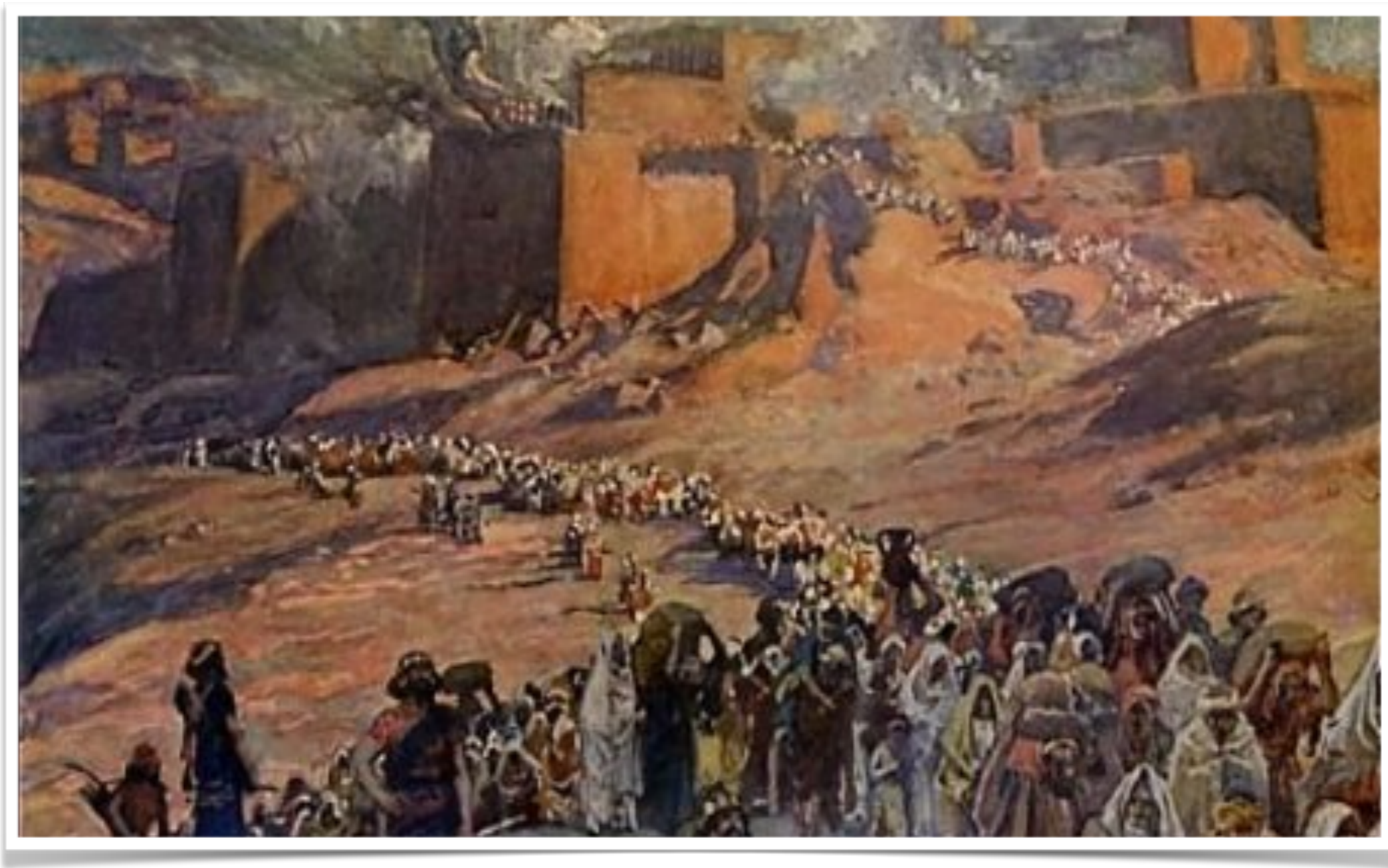


The Return of the Exiles



Class 2: First Return under Zerubbabel

The Long Route Home

The return of the exiles to Judah, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was accomplished in three main stages.

The first and main party returns with Zerubbabel 538 BC. His focus is on rebuilding the temple.

A second party returns with Ezra about 60 years after the temple is rebuilt. Ezra makes spiritual and religious restoration and reform.

A third wave returns with Nehemiah 13 years after Ezra. Nehemiah works to rebuild the city walls and gates.

The First Return

1. God moves the heart of Cyrus who allows the exiles to return to Jerusalem.
2. Zerubbabel leads 42,000 captives back to the ruined city.
3. The people begin rebuilding the temple, but face opposition and stop working.
4. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah motivate the people to complete the work.
5. The Temple is completed 21 years after the reconstruction started and the people celebrate the Passover.

Return under Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel

Ezra 1-6

Returns 70 years after the Fall of the city and works to **rebuild the Temple**

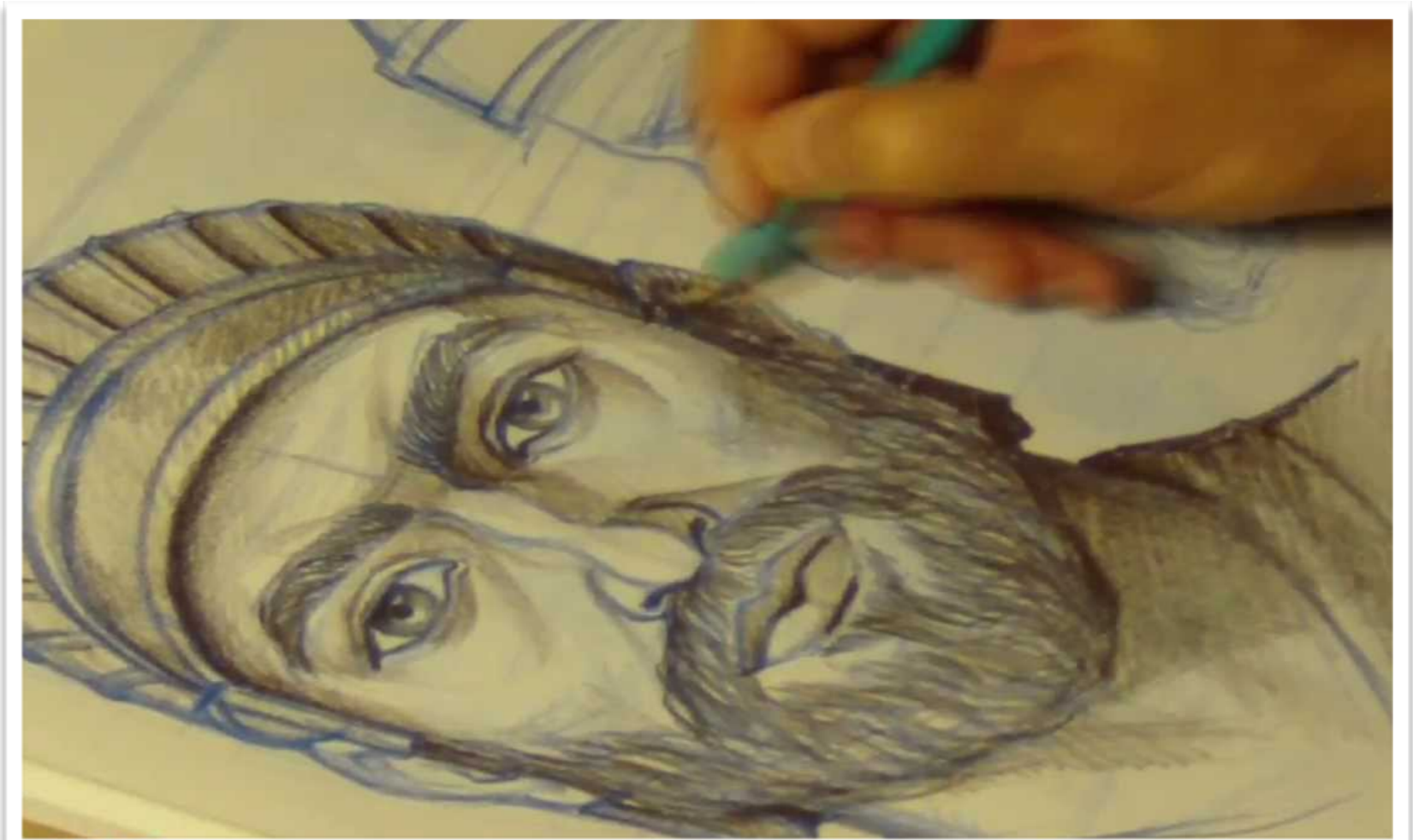
Ezra 1:1-4

1In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

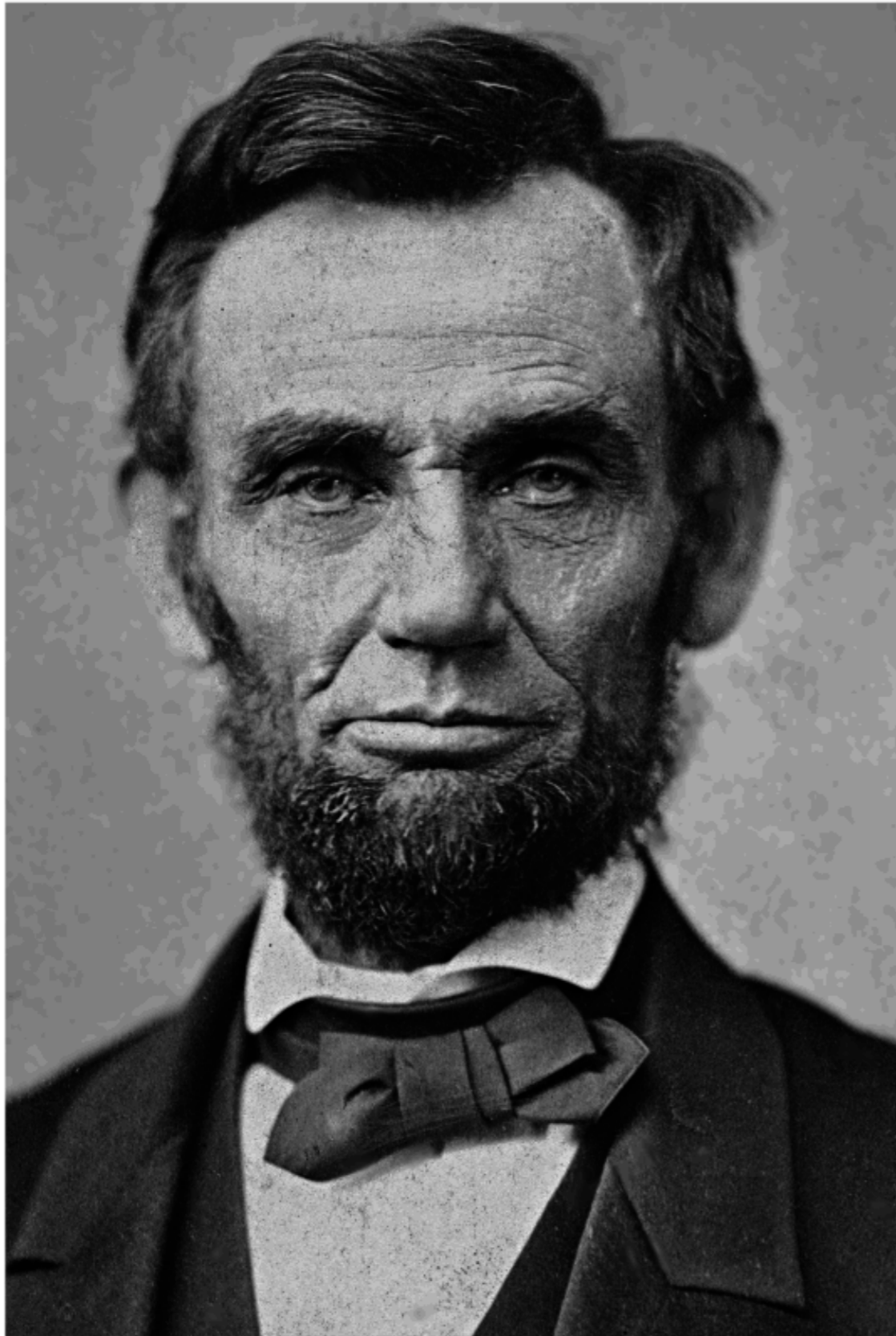
2“*This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’ ”*

Isaiah Names Cyrus

- 150 years before he was born, Cyrus was identified by name as the one who would free the Israelites
- He was also identified as the one who would subdue Babylon -- an idea quite unimaginable since the Assyrian Empire was at the height of its power.



Isaiah 44:26-28; 45:1-4



1860



2009

The Prophecy Unfolds

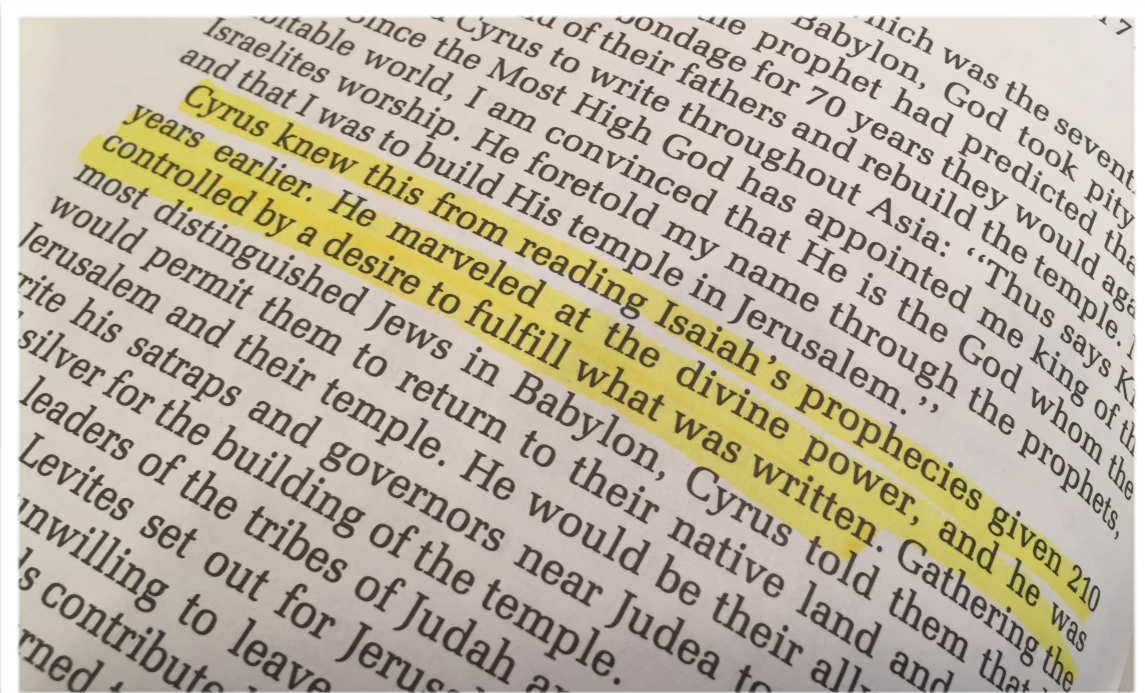
The Great Babylonian Empire Falls,
just as Daniel predicted.

Daniel 5:25-28



Josephus, the renowned historian reports that Cyrus, the new king of Persia is told about Isaiah's prophecies.

Daniel 1:21; 6:28?





This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“ ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you -- may the LORD be with him, and let him go up.’ ”

2 Chronicles 36:23

The Cyrus Cylinder



Discovered by archeologists in the ruins of Babylon in 1879.

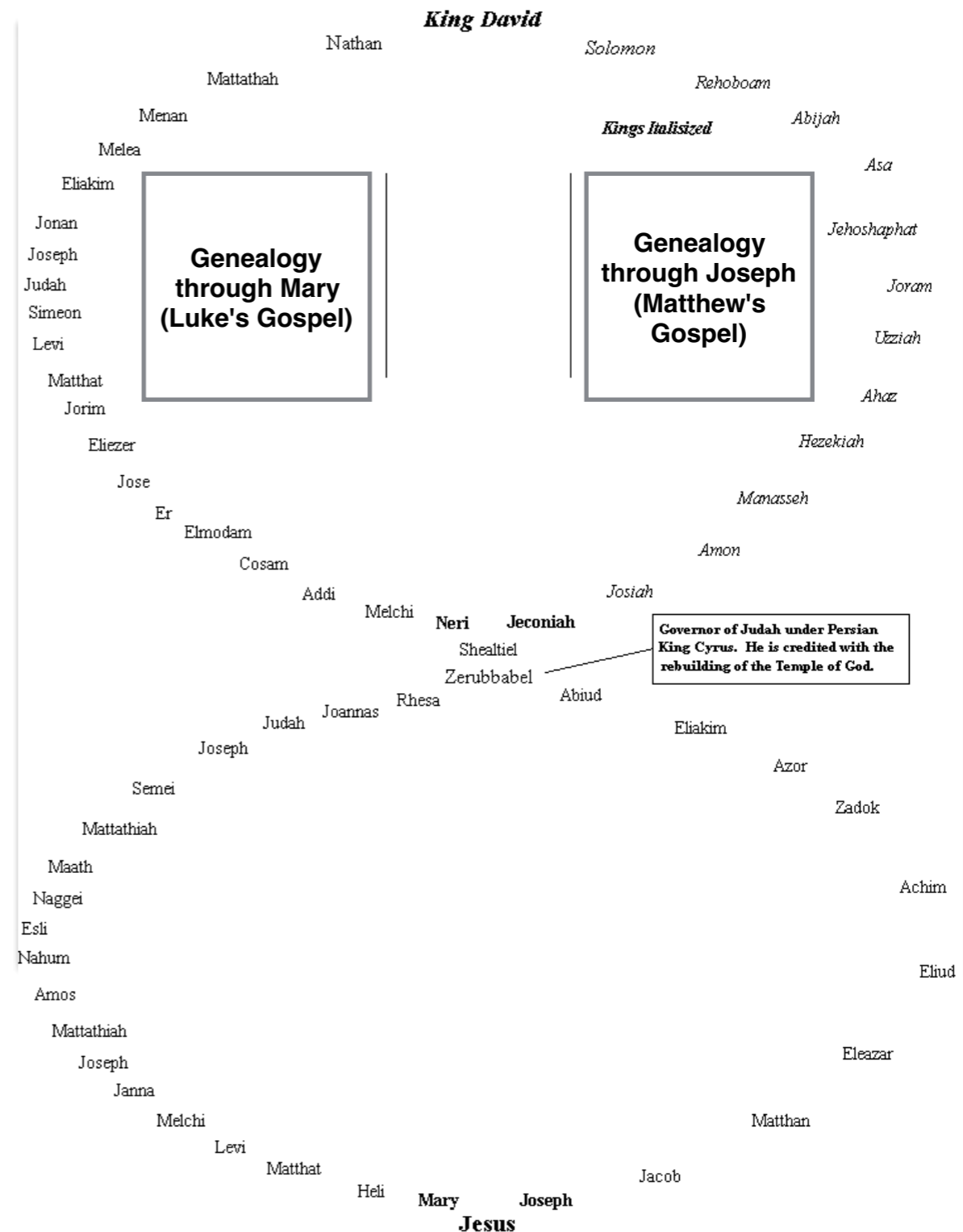
The text states that Cyrus was welcomed by the people of Babylon as their new ruler and entered the city in peace.



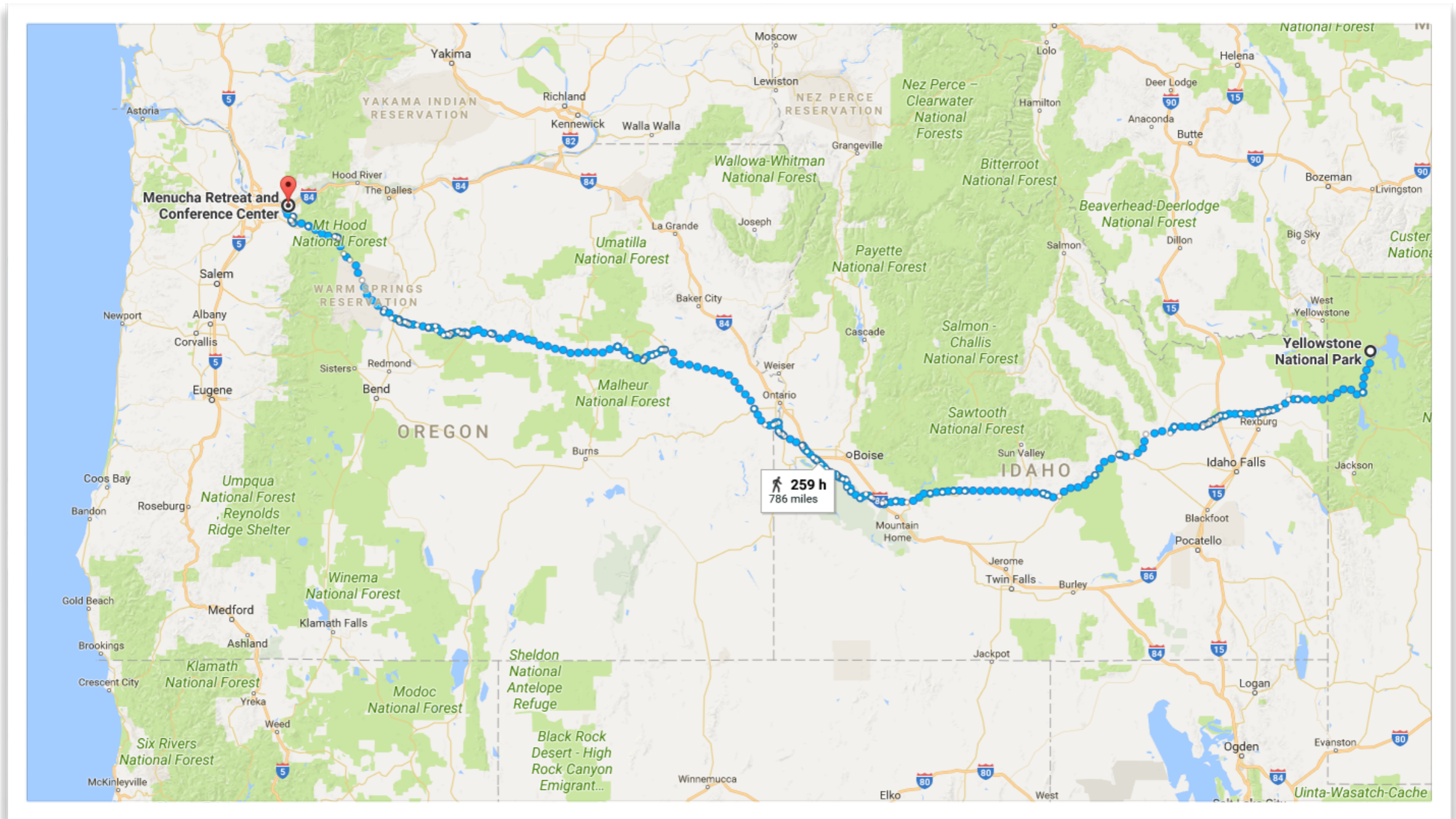
"I returned the images of the gods, who had resided there [i.e., in Babylon], to their places and I let them dwell in eternal abodes. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned to them their dwellings".

Introducing Zerubbabel

- Zerubbabel was from the Royal Line of King David and, had it not been for the Babylonian captivity, he would have been the King of Judah at this point in history.
- Zerubbabel (Hebrew name) and Sheshbazzar (Babylonian name) were likely one and the same person. **Ezra 1:11**
- The Genealogies of Jesus show that Joseph and Mary were distantly related through Zerubbabel.



The Long Route Home



The Long Route Home

Now these are the people **of the province** (of Judah) who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to their own town... Ezra 2:1

Men of Israel	24,144
Priests	4,289
Levites, Singers	341
Temple Servants	392
Unproven Genealogies	652
Totals	29,818

42,360
-- 29,818
12,542

Ezra 2:64-66

"The whole company numbered **42,360**, besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants... They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys."

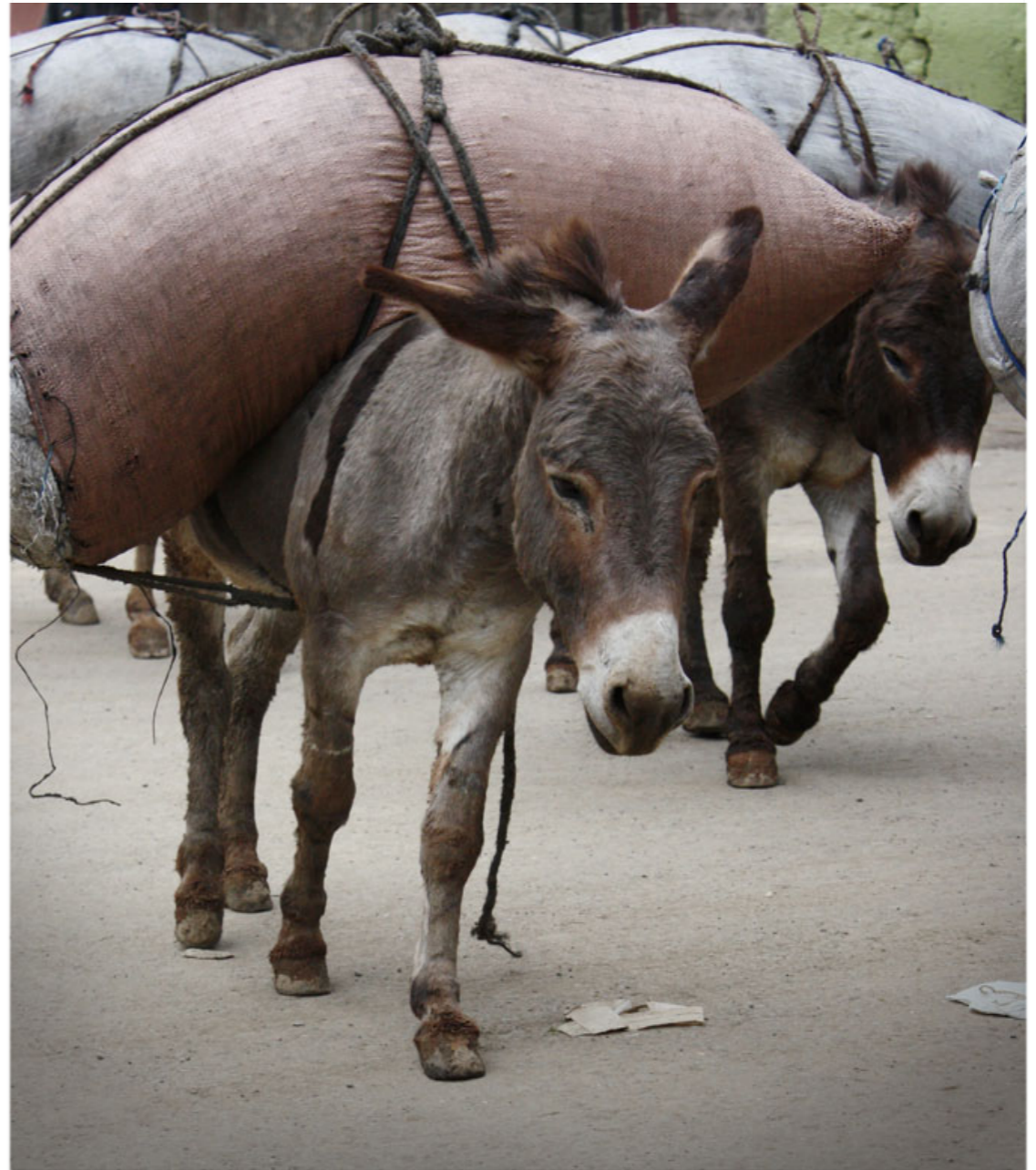
All 12 Tribes Returned

- **Ezra 6:16-17** Sin offering at the dedication of the restored Temple was 12 male goats, ***according to the number of the tribes of Israel.***
- **Luke 2:36** Anna the prophetess who rejoiced at the birth of Jesus was ***from the tribe of Asher*** (one of the northern 10 tribes).



Only a Small Portion Returned

- Of the hundreds of thousands of Jews living in Babylon, only 42,360 returned at first. (Ezra 2:64)
- The returning Exiles had only 8,136 beasts of burden to carry their belongings and the temple furnishings Cyrus returned -- one for every 5 people.



Returning with Anticipation

Psalms 126

When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us;
We are glad.

Restore our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.

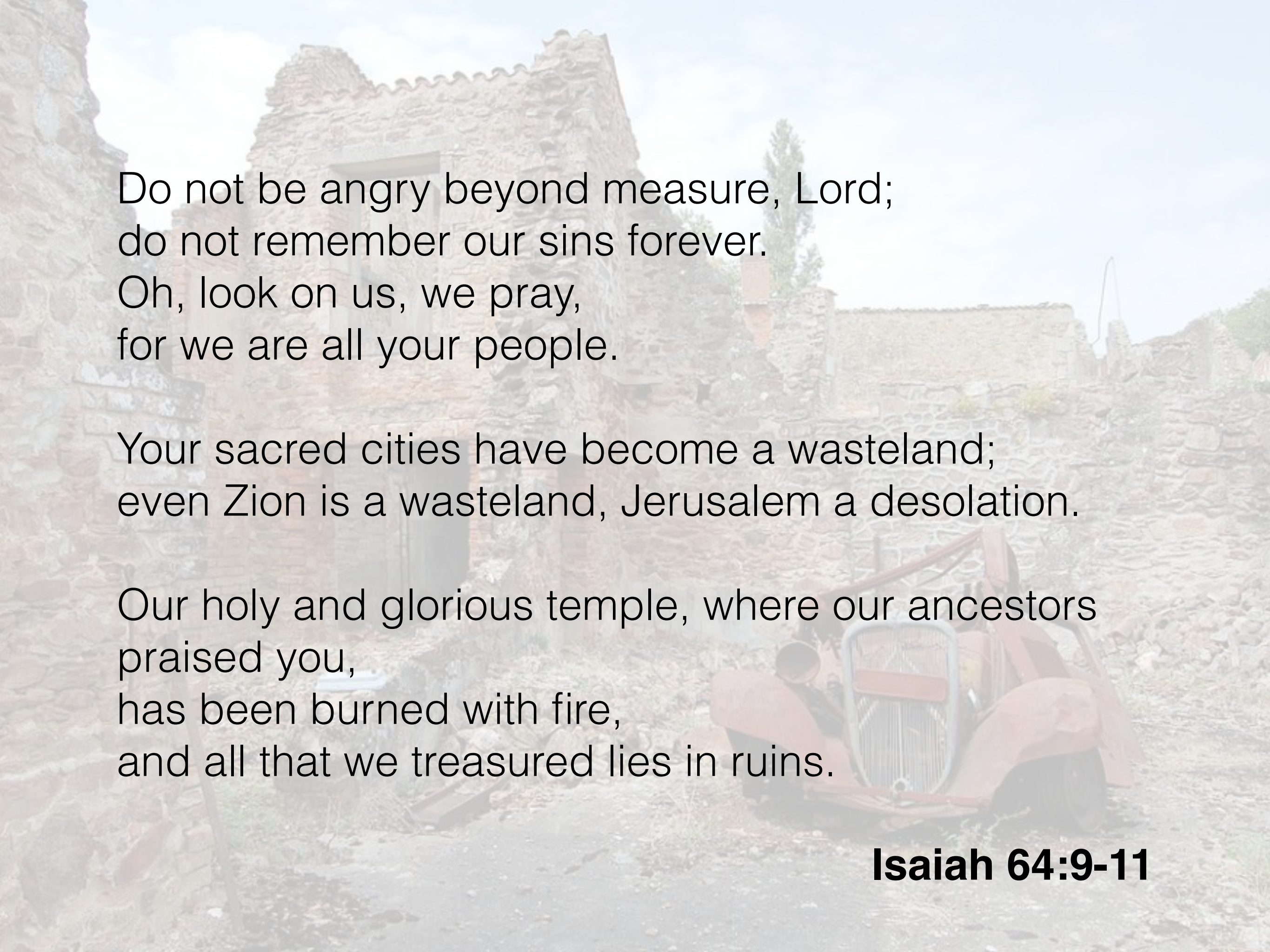
Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying *his* bag of seed,
Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Returning to Desolation



Isaiah 64:9-11

The background image shows a scene of significant destruction. In the foreground, a rusted, vintage-style car is partially visible, its bodywork heavily corroded. Behind it, a large, multi-story stone building has been severely damaged, with its walls crumbling and its roof missing in several places. The sky is overcast and grey, contributing to a somber and desolate atmosphere. The overall scene suggests a place that has been abandoned and left to decay.

Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.

Your sacred cities have become a wasteland;
even Zion is a wasteland, Jerusalem a desolation.

Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors
praised you,
has been burned with fire,
and all that we treasured lies in ruins.

Isaiah 64:9-11

The Rebuilding Begins

Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work...

Ezra 2:68-69



Together Again



"The people assembled as one man in Jerusalem."

Ezra 3:1-2

Prioritizing the Rebuilding

1. The Altar
2. The Temple
3. The Walls



The Foundation



When the builders laid the foundation of the Temple of the LORD... all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Ezra 3:10-11

Shouts of Praise and Weeping

And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy.

Ezra 3:11-12



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Ezra 3:11-12

Do Not **Live** in the Past

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

Ecclesiastes 7:10

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14

Lesson Learned!



Ezra 4:1-3. When approached by the Samaritans to partner with them in the rebuilding efforts, the Jews refused.

Why? Because the Samaritans combined the worship of Yahweh with the worship of Idols, the very thing that had caused the Jews to be carried into exile.

- 2 Kings 17:24-33

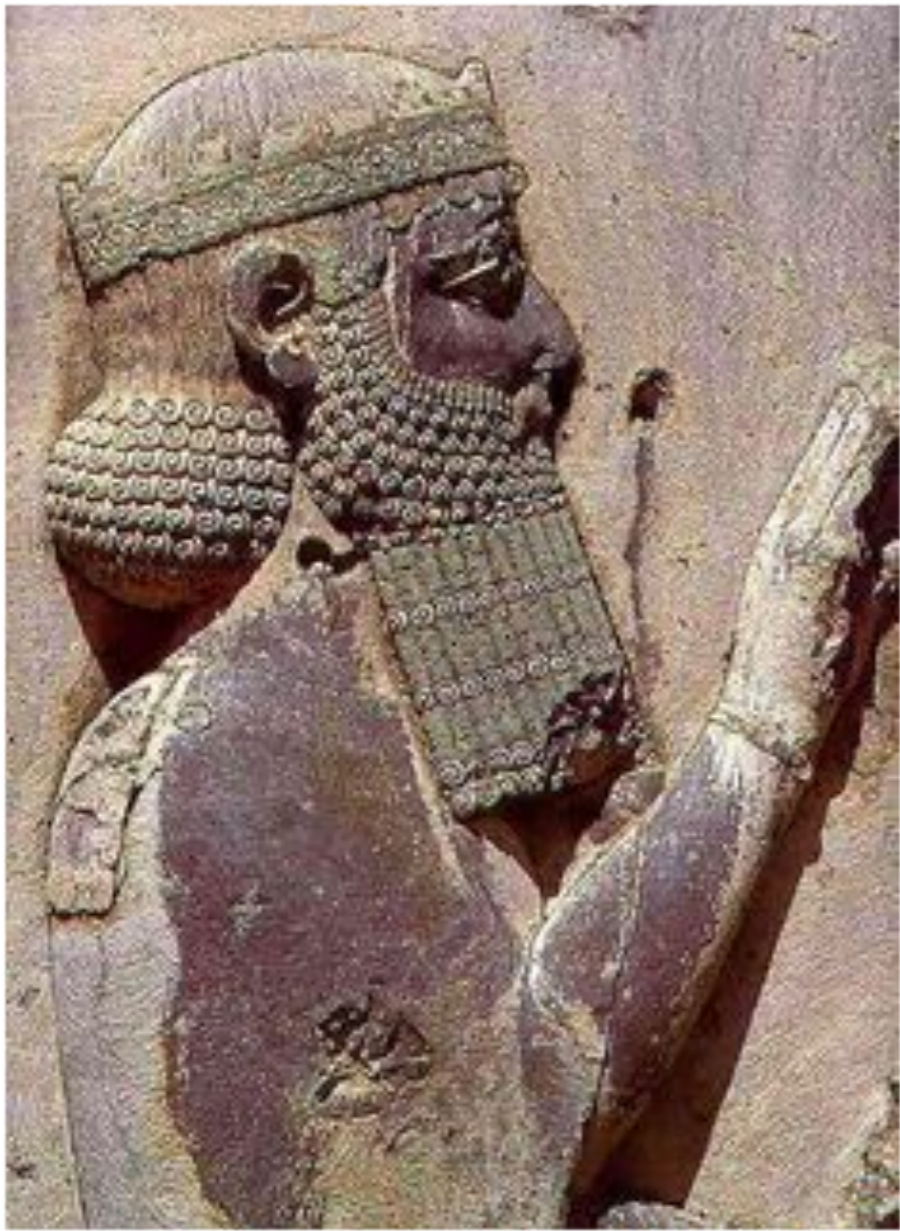
2 Kings 17:24-33

24The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. When they first lived there, they did not worship the Lord ...

27Then the king of Assyria gave this order: “Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.” So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Lord.

29Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. **They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.**

Sustained Opposition!



Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of **Cyrus** king of Persia, even until the reign of **Darius** king of Persia.

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

In the days of **Artaxerxes**, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated. Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem.

Compelled by Force to Stop



They went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

Thus the work on the house of God came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius (19 years!)

Ezra 4:23-24

Words of Exhortation

After years of inactivity, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah rebuke and exhort the people in an effort to motivate them to start building again.

- Ezra 5:1-2



Living in Paneled Houses



Words of Rebuke

- **Haggai 1:1-12** Misused Resources: Cedar for Temple (Ezra 3:7) appears to have found its way into their homes.

Let Your Hands be Strong!

Words of Encouragement

- **Haggai 2:1-9** While the temple may seem like nothing, take heart because the future glory will be greater.
- **Zechariah 8:9-13** Start rebuilding and things will be different with productive crops, and blessings for the people.



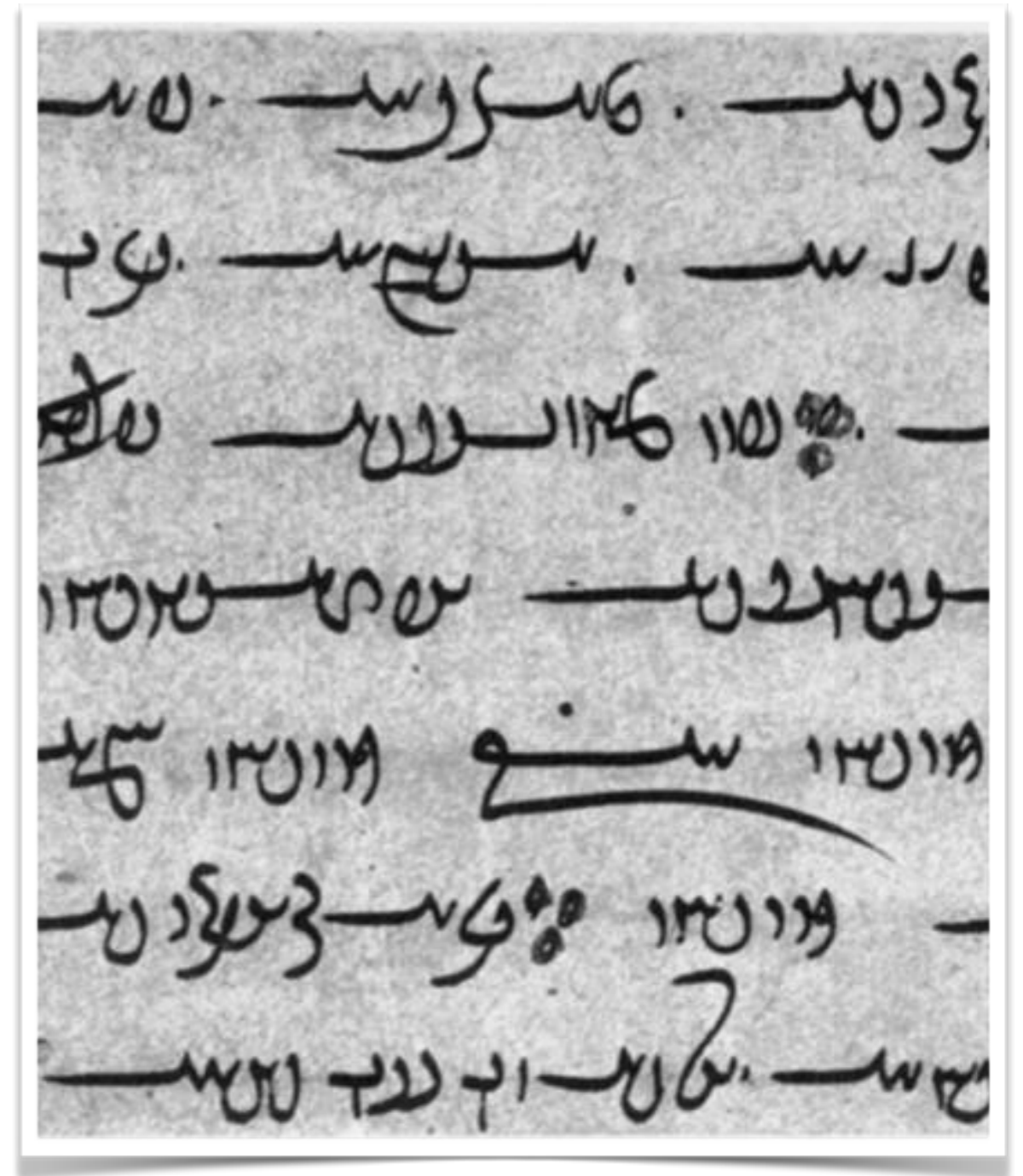
Letters and Memos

Ezra 5:6-18 Letter to King Darius:

- Is this rebuilding really authorized as the Jews report?

Ezra 6:1-12 Darius responds:

- Yes, Cyrus authorized it years ago, and now it has Darius' approval too.



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Ezra 5:9-10, 17

To King Darius: Cordial greetings...

9We questioned the elders and asked them, "Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?" We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

17Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

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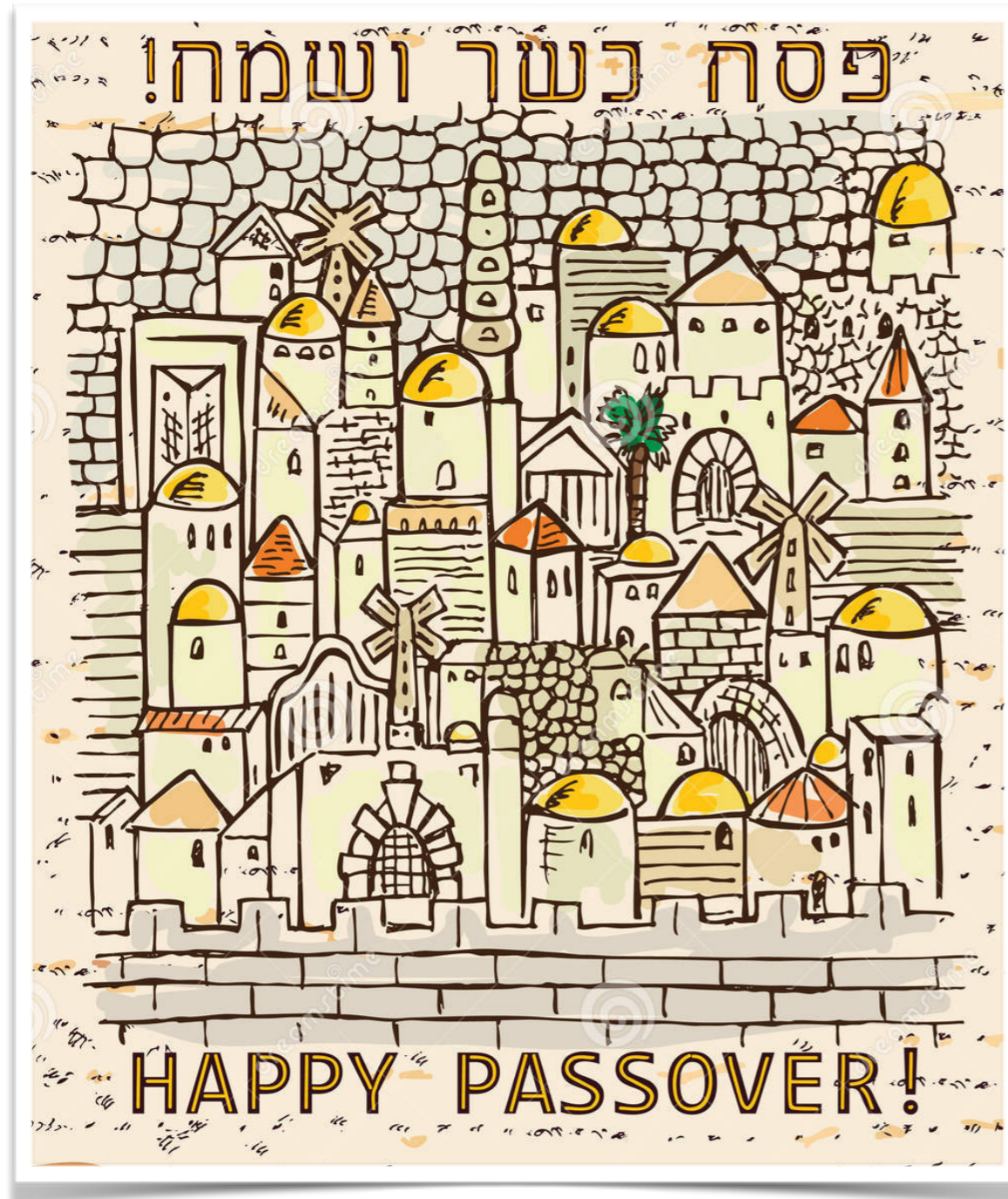
Ezra 6:1-2,6,11-12

1King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon. A scroll was found...

6Now then, you officials of that province, stay away from there. Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God.

11Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble. May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

The Temple is Completed!



21 Years after Cyrus' Decree

"The elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah.

They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius [even] Artaxerxes, kings of Persia."

Ezra 6:14

כִּסְתָה כְּעֵר וְשִׂמְחָה!

Ezra 6:17, 21-22

16 Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—**celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.**

21 So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the Lord, the God of Israel. **For seven days they celebrated with joy the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the Lord had filled them with joy...**