### Ezra

## Chapter 4

1Well, when the people who opposed Judah and BenJamin heard that those who had returned were building a Temple to Jehovah the God of IsraEl, 2they approached ZerubBabel and the family heads and said to them:  
  
 ‘You should allow us to build the Temple with you, so we can also ask [for things] from your God...  
  
 ‘For we’ve been offering sacrifices to Him since the time of EsarHaddon the king of Assyria, who brought us here.’  
  
3But ZerubBabel, JoShua, and the rest of the family heads of IsraEl replied:  
  
 ‘It isn’t up to us to decide whether you can help us to build a Temple to Jehovah the God of IsraEl, for we were told to do this by Cyrus, the king of Persia.’  
  
4But thereafter, the people of the land did whatever they could to weaken the people of Judah and to impede the construction project. 5They even hired advisors to strongly oppose their plans during all the days of King Cyrus of Persia, right up until the kingdom of Darius of Persia.  
  
  
6Then, at the beginning of the reign of AhaSuerus, they wrote a letter against the people who were living in Judah and JeruSalem. 7And in the days of ArthaSastha, MithraDates, TabeEl, and his fellow servants wrote to ArthaSastha (the king of Persia) about them.  
  
And because they wrote it in Syrian, [the king’s] tax collector had to translate it for him.  
  
8It was Lord Rehum that wrote the letter against JeruSalem to King ArthaSastha through his scribe ShimShai, which said:  
  
 9‘This is what our lord, Judge Rehum, as well as the scribe ShimShai, the rest of our fellow servants, the Dinaites, ApharSathchites, Tarpelites, Apharsites, Archevites, Babylonians, Sousanchites, Dehavites, Elamites, 10and all the other nations that were resettled in the cities of Samaria and across the river by the great and esteemed Asnapper [AshurBanipal] have to say’…  
  
11This is what they wrote to King ArthaSastha:  
  
 ‘From your servants on the other side of the river;  
  
 12‘We wish to inform the king that the Judeans whom you sent among us have come to JeruSalem (an apostate and wicked city), where they’ve raised a foundation and they’re getting ready to rebuild its walls.  
  
 13‘So, we want the king to know that if the city should be rebuilt and its walls re-erected, they’ll stop paying their tolls and taxes, and they’ll treat the king wickedly!  
  
 14‘It’s because we don’t wish to see such indecent treatment of the king that we’re sending [this letter], and we want to let the king know what’s really happening.  
  
 15‘If you’ll examine the records of your ancestors, you’ll see that [JeruSalem] is an apostate city that treats their kings badly, and that they’ve been escaping and rebelling throughout the ages…  
  
 ‘This is why their city was destroyed!  
  
 16‘Therefore, we’re informing the king that the city should not be rebuilt and that they should not be preparing its walls.  
  
 17‘From us on the other side of the river, to the king.  
  
 ‘From Lord Rehum, ShimShai the scribe, and from the rest of their fellow servants that live in Samaria and across the river.  
  
 ‘We wish you Peace.’  
  
  
18[Then the king replied]:  
  
 ‘I just called the tax collector before me whom you sent, 19and as a result, I’ve issued a decree.  
  
 ‘For after examining [the records], this is what I found:  
  
 ‘That city has for a fact rebelled against the kings throughout the ages, and all sorts of uprisings and defections have happened there... 20For they once had [their own] mighty kings who ruled from JeruSalem all the way to the other side of the river, and that used to collect their own taxes and tolls.  
  
 21‘So now, [I have] passed a decree that those men should stop their work and that their city must never be rebuilt again!  
  
 22‘I appreciate the ways that you’ve followed my decrees, and for your concern that the power of the king may never be lost to evil deeds.’  
  
23[Then upon his return], King ArthaSastha’s tax collector read [the letter] in the presence of Lord Rehum and the scribe ShimShai and their fellow servants, and they quickly traveled to JeruSalem [and throughout] Judah with their army and cavalry to force them to stop doing their work.  
  
24As a result, construction on the Temple of God in JeruSalem came to a halt, and it remained on hold until the 2nd year of the reign of Darius, the king of Persia.