

Ezra 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Analysis

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa. This verse deliberately echoes Solomon's temple construction (1 Kings 5:6-11), establishing typological continuity between first and second temples. The Hebrew *ḥārāšîm* (חָרָשִׁים, craftsmen/masons) and *kēseph* (כֶּסֶף, silver/money) indicate organized labor requiring substantial resources from the returned community.

The provision of 'meat, drink, and oil' (*ma'ākāl ū-mishteh wā-shemen*) to Phoenician workers mirrors Solomon's arrangements, showing that covenant faithfulness includes honoring contracts and just compensation. Sidon and Tyre maintained their reputation for maritime commerce and cedar expertise spanning four centuries from Solomon to Zerubbabel. The reference to Cyrus's 'grant' (*reshût*, רְשׁוּת, permission/authorization) demonstrates that divine sovereignty works through legal-political channels, not magical interventions.

The route 'from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa' specified the same Mediterranean port Solomon used, emphasizing geographic and typological restoration. Yet the modest scale reveals post-exilic Israel's diminished status—this was temple rebuilding, not kingdom expansion.

Historical Context

The Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon had maintained their commercial dominance since Solomon's era (950s BC), demonstrating remarkable continuity in ancient Near Eastern trade networks. Cedar of Lebanon remained the premier building material, prized for durability, fragrance, and resistance to insects. Archaeological evidence shows extensive deforestation of Lebanon's forests by the Persian period, making cedar increasingly expensive.

Joppa (modern Jaffa/Tel Aviv) served as Judah's primary Mediterranean port throughout biblical history. The journey from Phoenicia to Joppa, then overland to Jerusalem (35 miles), required sophisticated logistics. The returned exiles, numbering around 50,000, had to marshal significant resources despite their poverty.

The reference to Cyrus's authorization demonstrates Persian imperial administration. Local governors had authority to facilitate approved projects, and Cyrus's decree gave legal protection against interference. This explains why later opposition (Ezra 4) had to appeal to subsequent Persian kings.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the deliberate echo of Solomon's temple construction inform our understanding of God's faithfulness across generations of covenant history?
2. What does the community's costly investment in temple materials teach about worship priorities when resources are limited?
3. How should believers balance humble circumstances with faithful obedience to God's calling?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּתְּנוּ They gave H5414	כֶּסֶף money H3701	לְחֹצֵב יָם also unto the masons H2672	וּלְחֹכֶשׂ יָם and to the carpenters H2796	וּמֵאֶכָּ לֶ and meat H3978
וּמִשְׁתֵּהּ הָ and drink H4960	וְשֵׁן מִן and oil H8081	לְצִדְוֹנִים unto them of Zidon H6722	וּלְצֹר יָם and to them of Tyre H6876	לְהָבִיא to bring H935
עֵצֵי יָ trees H6086				
אֶרֶז יָם cedar H730	מִן H4480	הַלְבָּנוֹן from Lebanon H3844	אֶל H413	יָם to the sea H3220
			יָפּ וְאֶ of Joppa H3305	כְּרָשֵׁי וֶן according to the grant H7558
כִּי וְרֶשׁ that they had of Cyrus H3566	מֶלֶךְ king H4428	פֶּרְסִיָּה of Persia H6539	עָלֵיהֶם: H5921	

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 5:6 (Parallel theme): Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

Acts 12:20 (Kingdom): And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

Acts 9:36 (Parallel theme): Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.