

Ezra 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:

Analysis

The formal letter introduction identifies the senders and recipient with precise bureaucratic terminology. Tatnai (Tattenai in Aramaic) served as governor (pechah) of the Trans-Euphrates satrapy—the vast region "on this side the river" encompassing Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. Shethar-boznai likely served as his secretary or deputy. The "Apharsachites" (Apharsekaye) were Persian officials or inspectors stationed throughout the satrapy.

The careful documentation of official titles and geographic jurisdiction reflects authentic Persian chancellery style. Archaeological discoveries of Persian-period correspondence confirm this precise administrative language. The letter's preservation in the biblical text demonstrates God's providential arrangement of historical documentation—what began as a challenge became evidence of divine faithfulness.

Historical Context

The Trans-Euphrates satrapy (Abar Nahara) was one of the Persian Empire's most important provinces, encompassing territory from the Euphrates to Egypt. Tatnai's position placed him over a vast administrative region with significant strategic importance as the corridor between Mesopotamia and Egypt. His investigation of

Jerusalem was part of standard provincial oversight, particularly important during the unstable early years of Darius's reign.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God use even hostile or neutral authorities to document and preserve evidence of His work in history?
2. What does the formal, respectful tone of Persian administration teach about engaging with secular authorities while serving God?

Interlinear Text

בְּעֵבֶר	ר	פַּחַת	ת	תַּתַּנַּי	יֵן	שָׁלַח	ח	דִּי	אֶ	גִּרְתָּא	פֶּרֶשׁ	גִּן
						sent				of the letter	The copy	
						H7972				H104	H6573	
דִּי	אֶפְרַסְכֵּי	א	וְכָנְיָהּ	וְ	ה	בּוֹזְנַי		וְשֵׁת	ר	נָהָר	ה	
						and Shetharboznai				the river		
						H3675				H5103		
מֶלֶכָּא	:	דָּרָי	וְשֵׁ	עַל	נָהָר	ה	בְּעֵבֶר	ר				
		the king		unto	the river		on this side					
		H4430		H5922	H5103		H5675					

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 4:9 (Parallel theme): Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites,

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