

Ezra 5:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.

Analysis

Tatnai's report provides remarkable testimony to the temple reconstruction's progress. The phrase "the house of the great God" (beth elaha rabba) acknowledges Yahweh's significance—even this Persian official recognized Israel's God as "great." The construction details—"great stones" and "timber laid in the walls"—describe substantial, permanent construction rather than temporary structures.

Most significantly, the report states "this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands." The Aramaic matzlach (prospereth) indicates thriving success. Despite years of opposition, prophetic encouragement through Haggai and Zechariah had revitalized the project. God transformed what opponents intended as a damaging report into documentation of His blessing. The officials inadvertently testified that God was prospering His people's work.

Historical Context

The "great stones" (eben gelal) refer to large hewn blocks characteristic of monumental construction. Archaeological evidence from Persian-period Jerusalem confirms significant building activity during this era. The combination of stone and timber construction follows the pattern of Solomon's original temple (1 Kings 6:36)

and appears in Cyrus's original decree (Ezra 6:4). The construction technique of alternating stone courses with timber beams provided earthquake resistance common in ancient Near Eastern architecture.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How remarkable is it that a Persian official called Yahweh "the great God"?
What does this recognition suggest about God's witness even among unbelievers?
2. When God causes our work to "prosper," how should we respond to those who investigate or question our activities?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|
| לְהִיא וְאַתְּ לְנָא דְּיָהִיא לְמֶלֶךְ אֵלִים יְהִי עַל | H3046 | Be it known | unto the king | H1768 | that we went | of Judea |
| | H1934 | | H4430 | | H236 | H3061 |
| מִתְבָּנָא יְהִי וְאַתְּ לְבִתְּאַלְפָא מִדִּינְתָּא | | | | | | |
| into the province | H4083 | to the house | H1005 | God | of the great | H1932 |
| | | | | H426 | H7229 | which is builded |
| | | | | | | H1124 |
| אַתְּ לְעַבְדָּא יְדָפָא וְאַתְּ בְּנָא | | | | | | |
| stones | H69 | with great | H1560 | and timber | H636 | is laid |
| | | | | | | H7761 |
| מִתְעַבְדָּא וְמִצְלָחָא בְּכַתְלָיָא מִתְשָׁמָמָא | | | | | | H3797 |
| | | | | | | |
| בְּיָדָקָם אָסָפָה רְנָא | | | | | | |
| fast | H629 | goeth | H5648 | on and prospereth | H6744 | in their hands |
| | | | | | | H3028 |

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