

Ezra 8:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

Analysis

And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river—וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־דַּתֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ (vayyittenu et-datei hamelekh, and they gave the king's decrees) refers to Artaxerxes' official authorization (7:11-26) granting Ezra legal authority, tax exemption for temple personnel, and right to appoint magistrates. The delivery to אַחַשְׁדָּרְפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ (achashdarpnei hamelekh, the king's satraps—Persian provincial governors) and פַּחְוֹת עֵבֶר הַנָּהָר (pachavot ever-hanahar, governors of Beyond-the-River—the Persian province west of Euphrates including Judah, Syria, Phoenicia) formalized Ezra's mission in the imperial administrative system.

And they furthered the people, and the house of God—וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־הָעָם וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה (v'nissu et-ha'am v'et-beit-ha'Elohim, and they supported/lifted up the people and the house of God). The נָשָׂא (to lift, carry, support) indicates active assistance, not mere toleration. Persian officials provided resources and protection for both הָעָם (the people—Jewish community) and בֵּית יְהוָה (the house of God—the temple). This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy that foreign kings would be 'nursing fathers' to restored Israel (Isaiah 49:23) and demonstrates God's sovereignty over pagan empires, turning them to serve His covenant purposes.

Historical Context

Persian imperial policy encouraged subject peoples' religions as strategy for maintaining stability and loyalty (documented in the Cyrus Cylinder). Artaxerxes' decree and the governors' compliance represent calculated statecraft, yet Ezra interprets it as divine providence (cf. 'the good hand of our God' throughout chapters 7-8). The successful delivery of royal authorization meant Ezra could operate with legal protection, preventing local opposition from hindering his teaching ministry and religious reforms (which begin in chapter 9 with confronting mixed marriages).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of pagan imperial authority to support His people demonstrate His sovereignty over all earthly powers?
2. What does the governors' 'furthering' (active support, not mere tolerance) teach about how God can turn secular authorities favorably toward His work?
3. In what ways should believers pray for and expect governmental support (or at least neutrality) for gospel ministry, based on God's sovereignty?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּתְּנוּ	אֶת	דִּתִּי	הֶמָּה לָּךְ	לְאַחֲשֵׁדֶרֶץ	הֶמָּה לָּךְ
And they delivered	H853	commissions	the king's	lieutenants	the king's
H5414		H1881	H4428	H323	H4428
וּפָחוּ	עַל	הַנָּהָר	וַיִּשְׂאוּ	אֶת	הָעָם
and to the governors	on this side	the river	and they furthered	H853	the people
H6346	H5676	H5104	H5375		H5971
וְאֶת	בֵּית	הָאֱלֹהִים:			
H853	and the house	of God			
	H1004	H430			

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