

The Hebrew Corner

The book of 2 Chronicles begins with David turning over the united kingdom of Israel, then at its zenith, to his son Solomon. David had been able to unite Judah and Israel after the death of Saul's son Ishbosheth, but the union was tenuous, and we see that after Solomon's reign, Judah and Israel once again split into two separate nations. Then throughout this book, we are told, from the perspective of Judah, and 1 and 2 Kings, of the general decline of the descendants of Jacob into idolatry, which resulted in the nations coming into judgment. First the northern kingdom of Israel (also known as Samaria) was conquered by Assyria, and over a hundred years later, the nation of Judah was conquered by Babylon. The book of 2 Chronicles ends with a proclamation by Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian empire that conquered Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:22-23):

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.”

The Hebrew word translated as stirred up in the passage is the verb *ohr* (עור), which also can mean to arouse or wake up. The question

of how Cyrus may have been stirred up, will be presented in the following discussion.

We know from the pages of the book of Daniel, that the prophet Daniel was an influential man in Babylon, having been brought to this kingdom from Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim. He was promoted to be a ruler in Babylon, after he had prayed to God regarding King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. God gave him the dream, and the interpretation of it, and after Daniel had related this to the king, he was promoted to a high position in Babylon. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian empire was conquered, (after a dishonorable act against God by then King Belshazzar) by the empire of the Medes and Persians, and Darius the Mede was made king, as described in the following passage (Daniel 5:1-31):

“Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his

knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the

interpretation of the thing: And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the

interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.”

Peres apparently is the singular of upharsin in the language of Babylon at the time, and meant divided. Many historians (due to an inscription on an artifact known as the Nabunaid-Cyrus Chronicle), have identified Darius the Mede as Gubaru, a general of the Medo-Persian army that conquered Babylon. The reader should not confuse this Darius with others in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah who were later kings of Persia. We see in Chapter 9 of Daniel that this Darius was made king over Babylon, which also agrees with the above inscription that stated that Gubaru was made king by Cyrus and given the power to appoint governors. Daniel was an immediate favorite of Darius, likely due to his prophecy concerning the handwriting on the wall, the news of which would surely have been spreading at the time Darius took his reign over Babylon. So Daniel was the first of three main governors appointed by Darius, as we see in the following passage (Daniel 6:1-3):

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set

him over the whole realm.”

Daniel soon gave Darius another demonstration of the prophetic power given him by God. Daniel was the victim of a conspiracy by the other officials appointed by Darius, who convinced Darius to make a decree that prohibited anyone from petitioning anyone except Darius for thirty days. Anyone violating this decree was to be thrown into a den of lions. Daniel continued to openly pray to God during this time, and so the officials informed Darius of this, who had no choice but to throw him into the lion's den. The next morning, having seen that Daniel had survived, and that the lions had not attacked him, he made the following decree (Daniel 6:25-28):

“Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

So certainly this demonstration of God working through the prophet Daniel, and the decree of Darius Gubaru, was well known to Cyrus when he took over the reign of Babylon. This must have been fresh in his mind when he made the proclamation in 2 Chronicles to allow the Jews to return to their homeland, in which he invoked the covenant name of God (יהוה) four times.

There was a prophet who preceded Daniel who was aware that all of this would transpire (Isaiah 44:24-28):

“Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”

Astonishing it is that the proclamation of Cyrus was prophesied by Isaiah about 150 years before it was made, with the prophet giving the exact name of the king that would make the proclamation. The proclamation of Cyrus was clearly important in future events to come. The presence of Jews in Judea and Jerusalem in the time of the Herodian kings and the Roman Empire made possible Jesus to be born in the town of Bethlehem as a Jew, and to fulfill many other prophecies of Jesus our Yeshua. So we see that God orchestrated the events in that region to carry out his overall plan of salvation for mankind. It follows that we can trust him to likewise orchestrate the plans that he has for our own lives. May you have a great month, and God bless all.

