

B. Brief Notes on Israel's relationship with the Persian:

1. Israel was not an independent state under the Persian authorities but a favored satrap. Some of this came from the fondness of Cyrus (see Isaiah 44:28 and Josephus: ANTIQUITIES: XI:1,2) for the Jews as well as his own religious orientation.
2. Following Cyrus the plot thickened. The conspirators succeeded in having the temple building stopped on the general charge of sedition. We think this took place in the early days of Cambyses or in the latter part of the time of Cyrus when he was out leading a charge somewhere. That one king would overlook the explicit orders of another is "par for the course" in the Babylonian-Persian settings. All of these plots, incidentally, are reviewed in Ezra 4.
3. Darius I, however, looked with favor on the Hebrews. During the inter-regnum days they were a group who did not revolt. Darius consequently looked favorably on them throughout his reign. It was the constancy of the Jews in this rebellious age that gave them the later freedom to rebuild the temple in the time of Haggai and Zechariah.

C. The Population of Palestine

1. The end of the captivity period found heavy concentrations of Jews in the Babylonian territory and Egypt. Of these we learn that about 42,360 (Ezra 3:64) returned on the early recovery to join those who had remained (uncertain number). They would later --in the days of Nehemiah --receive more than 7,000 returnees.
2. The "hybridized" multitude constituted by the policies of Esar-haddon and other Assyrian kings after 722 BC
3. The Samaritans and Aramaeans...forced into the land by wars and fightings and disoccupation.
4. And a tiny note is given on the continuing Jews in Ezra 2:64-65. The population was by no means totally or predominantly Jewish. The returnees had to fit into an ongoing situation which was ruinous...the rubble of the land had to be cleaned up and almost all towns, villages, etc., needed to be rebuilt.