CHAPTER FIVE

JEWSIH TEMPLES OUTSIDE JERUSALEM

5.1 Babylon

5.1.1 Casiphia

No. T1
Source: Literary. Ezra 8:17
Date: The reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes II (404–359 B.C.E.)

And I sent them to Iddo, the leader in the sanctuary of Casiphia [be Kasisia ha-makom], telling them what to say to Iddo and his colleagues the temple servants in the sanctuary of Casiphia [be Kasisia ha-makom], namely, to send us ministers for the house of our God.¹


Comments: In this intriguing passage, a certain Iddo is asked to provide personnel for a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Several scholars have argued that the verse refers to a Jewish temple in Babylonia where Iddo was a leading priest. It is clear from 8:15 that Ezra needed Levites for the temple in Jerusalem, and Iddo was to provide them. As is well attested, the term makom, which refers to the place where Iddo served, may mean “temple” or “sanctuary” (cf. Binder). The translation of be Kasisia ha-makom given here was first suggested by Browne. As is the case with several other terms, such as proseuchē and hieron, topos (the Greek translation of makom) could also refer to the synagogue (Binder, 135–40). That makom cannot refer to a synagogue in this verse, however, is evident from the fact that this institution specifically employed “temple servants” (netinim), a term used for Levites in the Hebrew Bible.

¹ Translation by the authors.
In rendering judgements on the existence of Jewish temples outside of Jerusalem, an important consideration is the degree of cultic centralisation before and during the exile. If, as has been argued, such centralisation occurred only after the exile (see Runesson, esp. 426–28 for discussion and literature), Ezra 8:17 could be interpreted as one step towards the implementation of this religio-political program. Here, it is instructive to compare this situation with the evidence from Egypt, where multiple Jewish temples existed in different periods up to 74 C.E., when the Leontopolis temple was destroyed.

5.2 Egypt

5.2.1 Elephantine

No. T2
Source: Papyrus. Cowley no. 30/Porten B19.
Date: November 25, 407 B.C.E.