

Christians' Understanding of Human Rights.

Human Rights from the beginning of time down through the ages.

The right to life.

Human Rights started with the creation of man. Genesis 2:7 states that "Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being". The verse describes God forming a man (Adam) from the dust of the ground. God then breathed into Adam's nostrils the "breath of life," and the man became "a living soul" or "a living being". This act of breathing life into Adam is what brought him to life, making him a living being.

The right to rest.

This is followed by the right to rest from labour which is an aspect of health; Exodus 20:8-11; "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Right to found a family.

Genesis 2:20-25, After Adam names all the animals, the text states that "for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him," signifying the need for a companion of equal standing, leading to the creation of Eve. So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs[a] and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Genesis 1:28 states, "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" This right shall only be between man and a woman (husband and his wife). 0 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Leviticus 20: 10-23 reads: And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lies with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lies with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man takes a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lies with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she

see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovered his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.

Right to be feed.

Genesis 1:29-30; Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. In Genesis 2:16-17, God commands the man (Adam) to freely eat from any tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning that eating from it will result in death. Verse 16:"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat'. God promoted and protected these rights after the mass exodus of the Israelites from Egypt as he fed them with Mana from Heaven and water from the rock: Exodus 16:14-15 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an Omer[a] for each person you have in your tent.'" However, these rights were limited for health purposes as result of interdependence and interrelatedness. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: 3 You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. "There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. The hyrax, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 6 The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 7 And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. 8 You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you. "Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams you may eat any that have fins and scales. 10 But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to regard as unclean. And since you are to regard them as unclean, you must not eat their meat; you must regard their carcasses as unclean. Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be regarded as unclean by you. "These are the birds you are to regard as unclean and not eat because they are unclean: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, 14 the red kite, any kind of black kite, 15 any kind of raven, 16 the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of

heron, the hoopoe and the bat. “All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be regarded as unclean by you. 21 There are, however, some flying insects that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. But all other flying insects that have four legs you are to regard as unclean. “You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. 25 Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening.” ‘Every animal that does not have a divided hoof or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. These animals are unclean for you.’ ‘Of the animals that move along the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, 30 the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. Any food you are allowed to eat that has come into contact with water from any such pot is unclean, and any liquid that is drunk from such a pot is unclean. Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. 36 A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you. “If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass will be unclean till evening. 40 Anyone who eats some of its carcass must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. “Every creature that moves along the ground is to be regarded as unclean; it is not to be eaten. You are not to eat any creature that moves along the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is unclean. Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. 44 I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore, be holy, because I am holy. “These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves about in the water and every creature that moves along the ground. 47 You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.

Access to justice and equality before the law.

Exodus 20:16 states, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbours". The verse prohibits lying, giving false testimony, and speaking unjustly or maliciously about someone. Proverbs 22:2 states, "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all," emphasizing that despite societal differences, everyone is created by God and has equal value. This phrase "The rich and the poor meet together": highlights the fact that regardless of wealth or social standing, all people are part of the same human experience and interact with each

other. "The Lord is the Maker of them all": emphasizes that the Creator is the same for everyone, regardless of their social or economic status. It suggests that everyone is equally valuable in God's eyes and should be treated with respect and dignity. Deuteronomy 1:16-17 "16 And I charged your judges at that time, "Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. 17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it. Deuteronomy 16:20; Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you. Psalm 33:5 states, "He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord" (ESV). This verse highlights God's character, emphasizing that He is not indifferent to right and wrong, but actively Favors justice and fairness. This phrase "the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord" underscores the pervasive nature of God's love and faithfulness, suggesting that His love is not limited or confined, but rather abundant and encompasses the entire world. Jeremiah 22:3 This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

Freedom of conscience and religion.

In Joshua 24:15-16, Joshua challenges the Israelites to choose whom they will serve, and he declares his commitment to serving the Lord, while the people responded by affirming their commitment to the Lord and rejecting other gods. Out of his mouth echoes the statement "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." In essence, Joshua is giving the people a choice: they can choose to serve the Lord or to serve other gods, but he and his household will serve the Lord, and the people affirm that they will not forsake the Lord. Deuteronomy 30:19 states: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today: I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." God is invoking the heavens and earth as witnesses to the choice he is presenting to the Israelites. "...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.": God is stating that he has given the Israelites a choice between following his commandments (leading to life and blessings) or disobeying them (leading to death and curses). God then urges the Israelites to choose the path of life and obedience, emphasizing that their well-being and the well-being of their descendants depend on their choice.

The Right to own Property.

Exodus 20:15, 17 states, 15 "You shall not steal. 17 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat. (Isaiah 65: 21-22). Micah 4:4, often cited as a promise of peace and security, states, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken." The verse speaks of a time when people will live in peace and security, free from fear and oppression, symbolized

by sitting under their own vines and fig trees. The image of sitting under one's own vine and fig tree is a common biblical motif representing a life of abundance, prosperity, and security. Zechariah 3:10 states, "In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree," signifying a time of peace and prosperity where people will live in harmony and safety.

Freedom from enforced disappearance.

Exodus 21:16 states that "Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.

Equality.

2 Corinthians 8:13-15; Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. James 2:1-8 states that My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Galatians 3:28 states: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". This verse emphasizes that in Christ, traditional social and cultural distinctions are rendered irrelevant, and all believers are united as one. Proverbs 22:2 states, "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all," emphasizing that despite societal differences, everyone is created by God and has equal value. This phrase "The rich and the poor meet together": highlights the fact that regardless of wealth or social standing, all people are part of the same human experience and interact with each other. "The Lord is the Maker of them all": emphasizes that the Creator is the same for everyone, regardless of their social or economic status. It suggests that everyone is equally valuable in God's eyes and should be treated with respect and dignity. Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them". This verse signifies that humans are created in a way that reflects God's character and nature, it reinforces the idea that humanity is a special creation, made to bear God's likeness. This also emphasizes the diversity and complementarity of humanity, with both men and women created in God's image.

The Cyrus Cylinder.

The Cyrus Cylinder is a 2,600-year-old clay cylinder inscribed with cuneiform script, considered by some scholars to be the "first bill on human rights," detailing Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon and his policies of restoration and freedom of worship.

A baked-clay cylinder inscribed with cuneiform script, a type of ancient Mesopotamian writing.

It was ordered Persian King Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.E.) after he captured Babylon in 539 B.C.E.

Cyrus cylinder was the second Human rights document after the verbal decree later recorded by Moses in the book of Exodus issued by Pharaoh to release the children of Israel to go to their promised land. The king of Egypt had enslaved the Israelites, an act which threatens Human rights. He also issued a decree ordering the midwives to strangle the baby boys during the delivery process.

Cyrus cylinder was a Human Rights document which would liberate the children of Israel from the Babylonian Captivity and bondage and send them to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's forces in 587 BC. The Book of the Ezra the scribe chapter two says;

Ezra 1: "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem."

Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. All their neighbours assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

This was the inventory:

gold dishes	30
silver dishes	1,000
silver pans ^[b]	29
¹⁰ gold bowls	30
matching silver bowls	410

other articles 1,000

¹¹ In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem”.

It was so unfortunate that when ever God works through his agents/ advocates to promote and protect human Rights, the Devil also sends his agents to threaten Human Rights. In charter four of the book of Ezra, we read of how the Devil used rehum, shinshai the secretary, Tobiah to threaten Human Rights. The book of Ezra charter 4 says;

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Later Opposition Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language.

Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows:

Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, together with the rest of their associates—the judges, officials and administrators over the people from Persia, Uruk and Babylon, the Elamites of Susa, and the other people whom the great and honourable Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates.

(This is a copy of the letter they sent him.)

To King Artaxerxes,

From your servants in Trans-Euphrates:

The king should know that the people who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.

Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and eventually the royal revenues will suffer. Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonoured, we are sending this message to inform the king, so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place with a long history of sedition. That is why this city was destroyed. We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.

The king sent this reply:

To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and elsewhere in Trans-Euphrates:

Greetings.

The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence. I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition. Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them. Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order. Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?

As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

Thus, the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Despite the efforts by Artaxerxes, Rehum and Shimshai the secretary, God still uses one of the pagan kings to reaffirm the decrees of King Cyrus. The book of Ezra chapter 5 and 6 gives us the story of how the cylinder was rediscovered in the royal archive in Babylon. The two chapters record;

Tattenai's Letter to Darius

Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua's son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, "Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?" They also asked, "What are the names of those who are constructing this building?" But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates, the officials of Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius. The report they sent him read as follows:

To King Darius:

Cordial greetings.

The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

We questioned the elders and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?” We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

This is the answer they gave us:

“We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished. But because our ancestors angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon. “However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon. Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, and he told him, ‘Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.’

“So, this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present, it has been under construction but is not yet finished.”

Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

The Decree of Darius

King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon. A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:

Memorandum:

In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem:

Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury. Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of

God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you other officials of that province, stay away from there. Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and olive oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble. May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.

I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence. So, the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy. For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering^[b] for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel. And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

The decree was to make sure that the Israelites have rights to adequate housing, good health, right to life, right to proper feeding, freedom from slavery, freedom of worship, Nationality, freedom from torture, identity and security. We work through the most unlikely of the sinners to accomplish his purpose as he did with Cyrus, Darius, etc.

What it records:

Cyrus's conquest of Babylon.

His restoration of shrines and allowing deported people to return home

It is thought that the Jews returned to Jerusalem to build the Second Temple, as recorded in the Bible, at this time.

It praises Cyrus, sets out his genealogy and portrays him as a king from a line of kings.

It was found in Babylon, in modern-day Iraq, in 1879 during a British Museum excavation.

It is Currently in the possession of the British Museum.

Significance.

This is the "first bill on human rights," with inscriptions appearing to encourage freedom of worship and allow deported people to return to their homelands.

It is a testament to Cyrus's policies of tolerance and respect, which were rare in antiquity.

The cylinder is an important artifact for understanding the Achaemenid Empire and the legacy of Cyrus the Great.

Where it was discovered.

The Assyro-British archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam discovered the Cyrus Cylinder in March 1879 during a lengthy programme of excavations in Mesopotamia carried out for the British Museum. It had been placed as a foundation deposit in the foundations of the Éšagila, the city's main temple. Rassam's expedition followed on from an earlier dig carried out in 1850 by the British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard, who excavated three mounds in the same area but found little of importance. In 1877, Layard became Britain's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Mesopotamia at the time. He helped Rassam, who had been his assistant in the 1850 dig, to obtain a firman (decree) from the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to continue the earlier excavations. The firman was only valid for a year but a second firman, with much more liberal terms, was issued in 1878. It was granted for two years (through to 15 October 1880) with the promise of an extension to 1882 if required. The Sultan's decree authorised Rassam to "pack and dispatch to England any antiquities found ... provided, however, there were no duplicates". A representative of the Sultan was instructed to be present at the dig to examine the objects as they were uncovered.

With permission secured, Rassam initiated a large-scale excavation at Babylon and other sites on behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum. He undertook the excavations in four distinct phases. In between each phase, he returned to England to bring back his finds and raise more funds for further work. The Cyrus Cylinder was found on the second of his four expeditions to Mesopotamia, which began with his departure from London on 8 October 1878. He arrived in his home town of Mosul on 16 November and travelled down the Tigris to Baghdad, which he reached on 30 January 1879. During February and March, he supervised excavations on a number of Babylonian sites, including Babylon itself.

He soon uncovered a number of important buildings including the Éšagila temple, a major shrine to the chief Babylonian god Marduk, although its identity was not fully confirmed until the German archaeologist Robert Koldewey's excavation of 1900. The excavators found a large number of business documents written on clay tablets buried in the temple's foundations where they discovered the Cyrus Cylinder. Rassam gave conflicting accounts of where his discoveries were made. He wrote in his memoirs, Asshur and the land of Nimrod, that the Cylinder had been found in a mound at the southern end of Babylon near the village of Jimjima. However,

in a letter sent on 20 November 1879 to Samuel Birch, the Keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum, he wrote, "The Cylinder of Cyrus was found at Omran [Tell Amran-ibn-Ali] with about six hundred pieces of inscribed terracottas before I left Baghdad." He left Baghdad on 2 April, returning to Mosul and departing from there on 2 May for a journey to London which lasted until 19 June.

The discovery was announced to the public by Sir Henry Rawlinson, the President of the Royal Asiatic Society, at a meeting of the Society on 17 November 1879. He described it as "one of the most interesting historical records in the cuneiform character that has yet been brought to light", though he erroneously described it as coming from the ancient city of Borsippa rather than Babylon. Rawlinson's "Notes on a newly-discovered Clay Cylinder of Cyrus the Great" were published in the society's journal the following year, including the first partial translation of the text.

Description.

The Cyrus Cylinder is a barrel-shaped cylinder of baked clay measuring 22.5 centimetres (8.9 in) by 10 centimetres (3.9 in) at its maximum diameter. It was created in several stages around a cone-shaped core of clay within which there are large grey stone inclusions. It was built up with extra layers of clay to give it a cylindrical shape before a fine surface slip of clay was added to the outer layer, on which the text is inscribed. It was excavated in several fragments, having apparently broken apart in antiquity. Today it exists in two main fragments, known as "A" and "B", which were reunited in 1972.

The main body of the Cylinder, discovered by Rassam in 1879, is fragment "A". It underwent restoration in 1961, when it was re-fired and plaster filling was added. The smaller fragment, "B", is a section measuring 8.6 centimetres (3.4 in) by 5.6 centimetres (2.2 in). The latter fragment was acquired by J.B. Nies of Yale University from an antiquities dealer. Nies published the text in 1920. The fragment was apparently broken off the main body of the Cylinder during the original excavations in 1879 and was either removed from the excavations or was retrieved from one of Rassam's waste dumps. It was not confirmed as part of the Cylinder until Paul-Richard Berger of the University of Münster definitively identified it in 1970. Yale University lent the fragment to the British Museum temporarily (but, in practice, indefinitely) in exchange for "a suitable cuneiform tablet" from the British Museum collection.

Although the Cylinder clearly post-dates Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon in 539 BC, the date of its creation is unclear. It is commonly said to date to the early part of Cyrus's reign over Babylon, some time after 539 BC. The British Museum puts the Cylinder's date of origin at between 539 and 530 BC.

Cyrus cylinder

The surviving inscription on the Cyrus Cylinder consists of 45 lines of text written in Akkadian cuneiform script. The first 35 lines are on fragment "A" and the remainder are on fragment "B". A number of lines at the start and end of the text are too badly damaged for more than a few words to be legible.

The text is written in an extremely formulaic style that can be divided into six distinct parts:

Fifteen horizontal lines of text written in Akkadian cuneiform script.

Extract from the Cyrus Cylinder (lines 15–21), giving the genealogy of Cyrus and an account of his capture of Babylon in 539 BC (E. A. Wallis Budge, 1884).

Lines 1–19: an introduction reviling Nabonidus, the previous king of Babylon, and associating Cyrus with the god Marduk;

Lines 20–22: detailing Cyrus's royal titles and genealogy, and his peaceful entry to Babylon;

Lines 22–34: a commendation of Cyrus's policy of restoring Babylon;

Lines 34–35: a prayer to Marduk on behalf of Cyrus and his son Cambyses;

Lines 36–37: a declaration that Cyrus has enabled the people to live in peace and has increased the offerings made to the gods;

Lines 38–45: details of the building activities ordered by Cyrus in Babylon.

Detail image of text Sample detail image showing cuneiform script.

The beginning of the text is partly broken; the surviving content reprimands the character of the deposed Babylonian king Nabonidus. It lists his alleged crimes, charging him with the desecration of the temples of the gods and the imposition of forced labour upon the populace. According to the proclamation, as a result of these offenses, the god Marduk abandoned Babylon and sought a more righteous king. Marduk called forth Cyrus to enter Babylon and become its new ruler.

In Nabonidus's mind, reverential fear of Marduk, king of the gods, came to an end. He did yet more evil to his city every day; he brought ruin on them all by a yoke without relief ... Marduk inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took the hand of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.

Midway through the text, the writer switches to a first-person narrative in the voice of Cyrus, addressing the reader directly. A list of his titles is given (in a Mesopotamian rather than Persian style): "I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters [of the earth], son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, the perpetual seed of kingship, whose reign Bel Marduk and Nebo love, and with whose kingship, to their joy, they concern themselves." He describes the pious deeds he performed after his conquest: he restored peace to Babylon and the other cities sacred to Marduk, freeing their inhabitants from their "yoke", and he "brought relief to their dilapidated housing (thus) putting an end to their (main) complaints". He repaired the ruined temples in the cities he conquered, restored their cults, and returned their sacred images as well as their former inhabitants which Nabonidus had taken to Babylon. Near the end of the inscription Cyrus highlights his restoration of Babylon's city wall, saying: "I saw within it an inscription of Ashurbanipal, a king who preceded me." The remainder is missing but presumably describes Cyrus's rededication of the gateway mentioned.

A partial transcription by F. H. Weissbach in 1911 was supplanted by a much more complete transcription after the identification of the "B" fragment; this is now available in German and in English. Several editions of the full text of the Cyrus Cylinder are available online, incorporating both "A" and "B" fragments.

A false translation of the text – affirming, among other things, the abolition of slavery and the right to self-determination, a minimum wage and asylum – has been promoted on the Internet and elsewhere. As well as making claims that are not found on the real cylinder, it refers to the Zoroastrian divinity Ahura Mazda rather than the Mesopotamian god Marduk. The false translation has been widely circulated; alluding to its claim that Cyrus supposedly has stated that "Every country shall decide for itself whether or not it wants my leadership." Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi in her acceptance speech described Cyrus as "the very emperor who proclaimed at the pinnacle of power 2,500 years ago that ... he would not reign over the people if they did not wish it".

Associated fragments

The British Museum announced in January 2010 that two inscribed clay fragments, which had been in the museum's collection since 1881, had been identified as part of a cuneiform tablet that was inscribed with the same text as the Cyrus Cylinder. The fragments had come from the small site of Dailem near Babylon and the identification was made by Professor Wilfred Lambert, formerly of the University of Birmingham, and Irving Finkel, curator in charge of the museum's Department of the Middle East.

Mesopotamian and Persian tradition and propaganda

According to the British Museum, the Cyrus Cylinder reflects a long tradition in Mesopotamia where, from as early as the third millennium BC, kings began their reigns with declarations of reforms. Cyrus's declaration stresses his legitimacy as the king, and is a conspicuous statement of his respect for the religious and political traditions of Babylon. The British Museum and scholars of the period describe it as an instrument of ancient Mesopotamian propaganda.

The text is a royal building inscription, a genre which had no equivalent in Old Persian literature. It illustrates how Cyrus co-opted local traditions and symbols to legitimize his conquest and control of Babylon. Many elements of the text were drawn from long-standing Mesopotamian themes of legitimizing rule in Babylonia: the preceding king is reprimanded and he is proclaimed to have been abandoned by the gods for his wickedness; the new king has gained power through the divine will of the gods; the new king rights the wrongs of his predecessor, addressing the welfare of the people; the sanctuaries of the gods are rebuilt or restored, offerings to the gods are made or increased and the blessings of the gods are sought; and repairs are made to the whole city, in the manner of earlier rightful kings.

Both continuity and discontinuity are emphasized in the text of the Cylinder. It asserts the virtue of Cyrus as a god-fearing king of a traditional Mesopotamian type. On the other hand, it constantly discredits Nabonidus, reviling the deposed king's deeds and even his ancestry and portraying him as an impious destroyer of his own people. As Fowler and Hekster note, this "creates a problem for a monarch who chooses to buttress his claim to legitimacy by appropriating the 'symbolic capital' of his predecessors". The Cylinder's reprimand of Nabonidus also discredits Babylonian royal authority by association. It is perhaps for this reason that the Achaemenid rulers made greater use of Assyrian rather than Babylonian royal iconography and tradition in their declarations; the Cylinder refers to the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal as "my predecessor", rather than any native Babylonian ruler.

The Cylinder itself is part of a continuous Mesopotamian tradition of depositing a wide variety of symbolic items, including animal sacrifices, stone tablets, terracotta cones, cylinders and

figures. Newly crowned kings of Babylon would make public declarations of their own righteousness when beginning their reigns, often in the form of declarations that were deposited in the foundations of public buildings. Some contained messages, while others did not, and they had a number of purposes: elaboration of a building's value, commemoration of the ruler or builder and the magical sanctification of the building, through the invocation of divine protection.

The cylinder was not intended to be seen again after its burial, but the text inscribed on it would have been used for public purposes. Archive copies were kept of important inscriptions and the Cylinder's text may likewise have been copied. In January 2010, the British Museum announced that two cuneiform tablets in its collection had been found to be inscribed with the same text as that on the Cyrus Cylinder, which, according to the museum, "show that the text of the Cylinder was probably a proclamation that was widely distributed across the Persian Empire".

Restoration of temples.

The inscription goes on to describe Cyrus returning to their original sanctuaries the statues of the gods that Nabonidus had brought to the city before the Persian invasion. This restored the normal cultic order to the satisfaction of the priesthood. It alludes to temples being restored and deported groups being returned to their homelands but does not imply an empire-wide programme of restoration. Instead, it refers to specific areas in the border region between Babylonia and Persia, including sites that had been devastated by earlier Babylonian military campaigns. The Cylinder indicates that Cyrus sought to acquire the loyalty of the ravaged regions by funding reconstruction, the return of temple properties and the repatriation of the displaced populations. However, it is unclear how much actually changed on the ground; there is no archaeological evidence for any rebuilding or repairing of Mesopotamian temples during Cyrus's reign.

Internal policy.

The Persians' policy towards their subject people, as described by the Cylinder, was traditionally viewed as an expression of tolerance, moderation and generosity "on a scale previously unknown". The policies of Cyrus toward subjugated nations have been contrasted to those of the Assyrians and Babylonians, who had treated subject peoples harshly; he permitted the resettling of those who had been previously deported and sponsored the reconstruction of religious buildings. Cyrus was often depicted positively in Western tradition by sources such as the Old Testament of the Bible and the Greek writers Herodotus and Xenophon. The *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon was particularly influential during the Renaissance when Cyrus was romanticised as an exemplary model of a virtuous and successful ruler.

Modern historians argue that while Cyrus's behaviour was indeed conciliatory, it was driven by the needs of the Persian Empire, and was not an expression of personal tolerance per se. The empire was too large to be centrally directed; Cyrus followed a policy of using existing territorial units to implement a decentralized system of government. The magnanimity shown by Cyrus won him praise and gratitude from those he spared. The policy of toleration described by the Cylinder was thus, as biblical historian Rainer Albertz puts it, "an expression of conservative support for local regions to serve the political interests of the whole empire". Another biblical historian, Alberto Soggin, comments that it was more "a matter of practicality

and economy as it was simpler, and indeed cost less, to obtain the spontaneous collaboration of their subjects at a local level than to have to impose their sovereignty by force".

Differences between the Cyrus Cylinder and previous Babylonian and Assyrian cylinders.

There are scholars who agree that the Cyrus Cylinder demonstrates a break from past traditions, and the ushering in of a new era. A comparison of the Cyrus Cylinder with the inscriptions of previous conquerors of Babylon highlights this sharply. For instance, when Sennacherib, king of Assyria (705-681 BC) captured the city in 690 BC after a 15-month siege, Babylon endured a dreadful destruction and massacre. Sennacherib describes how, having captured the King of Babylon, he had him tied up in the middle of the city like a pig. Then he describes how he destroyed Babylon, and filled the city with corpses, looted its wealth, broke its gods, burned and destroyed its houses down to foundations, demolished its walls and temples and dumped them in the canals. This is in stark contrast to Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder. The past Assyrian, and Babylonian tradition of victor's justice was a common treatment for a defeated people at this time. Sennacherib's tone for instance, reflected his relish of and pride in massacre and destruction, which is totally at odds with the message of the Cyrus Cylinder.

Some scholars believe that no other king ever returned captives to their homes as Cyrus did. Some argue that the Assyrians sometimes gave limited religious freedom to local cults and the people they conquered, interpreting the submission to the "exalted might" of Ashur, the "yoke of Ashur" and the looting and destruction of temples as religious intolerance. Similar actions carried out by Babylonian kings, like the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem as well as the temple in Harran and Nabonidus carrying other gods from their temples to Babylon, were also argued to represent religious intolerance. This is then compared to the Cyrus Cylinder, and argued that it was not a typical declaration that was keeping with the old traditions of the past.

However, Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon can not be taken as the norm, and solely judging from Sennacherib's own inscriptions, the destruction was already bad by Neo-Assyrian standards. The destruction of cult statues has precedence in the Ancient Near East, such as Lugalzagesi claiming to have plundered the shrines and destroyed the cult statues of his enemy state Lagash, but the destruction of cult statues was the more severe and extreme treatment. Nabonidus likely gathered cult statues to Babylon to prepare for an incoming Persian attack, and this tradition has precedence with Merodach-Baladan who also brought the statues to Dur-Yakin to keep them from the Assyrians, and some Babylonian cities also sent their statues to Babylon in 626 BCE in light of Sin-shar-ishkun's advance.

Other scholars disagree with the view that Cyrus had a policy of religious tolerance, which stood in contrast to the Assyrians and Babylonians. This assumes a religious discourse that compelled the ancients to suppress the worship of other gods, but no such discourse existed. Reverence for the gods of Assyria did not prevent the existence of local cults, for example Sargon after his conquest of the Harhar region reconstructed the local temples and returned the statues of the gods. In treaties conducted with vassals, local gods were invoked alongside Assyrian gods in the oath treaties in the curse sections,[98] indicating that the presence of the gods of both parties were required for the oath and the oath treaties never carried a stipulation on the worship of Assyrian gods or the hindrance of worship on local gods. Cogan had concluded that the idea that the cult of Ashur and other Assyrian gods were imposed onto defeated subjects should be rejected, and residents in the annexed provinces were required to provide for the cult of Ashur as they were counted as Assyrian citizens as it was the duty of

Assyrian citizens to do so. Kuhrt pointed out that similar to Achaemenid ideology, in Assyrian ideology the acceptance of the power of the Assyrian king was synonymous with the acceptance of the power of their gods, particularly Ashur, and although worship of the Assyrian gods was not forcibly imposed, recognition of Assyrian power entailed the recognition of the superior strength of their gods.

The return of divine statues and people, commonly seen as a special Achaemenid policy, was also attested in Assyrian sources. Esarhaddon, after repairing the statues of the Arabian gods and engraving an inscription to serve as remembrance of Assyria's power, returned the statues on Hazail's request. Accounts on returning statues are also found in the epithets of Esarhaddon. Adad-nirari III claims to have brought back abducted people, and Esarhaddon brought back Babylonians who had been displaced following Sennacherib's destruction of the city to the reconstructed Babylon. Briant summarizes that this view that Cyrus was exceptional only arises if one only takes into account Jewish sources, and the idea disappears if placed in the context of the Ancient Near East

Biblical interpretations.

Main article: Cyrus the Great in the Bible

The Bible records that some Jews (who were exiled by the Babylonians), returned to their homeland from Babylon, where they had been settled by Nebuchadnezzar, to rebuild the temple following an edict from Cyrus. The Book of Ezra (1–4:5) provides a narrative account of the rebuilding project. Scholars have linked one particular passage from the Cylinder to the Old Testament account:

From to Aššur and [from] Susa, Agade, Ešnunna, Zabban, Me-Turnu, Der, as far as the region of Gutium, the sacred centres on the other side of the Tigris, whose sanctuaries had been abandoned for a long time, I returned the images of the gods, who had resided there [i.e., in Babylon], to their places and I let them dwell in eternal abodes. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned to them their dwellings.

This passage has often been interpreted as a reference to the benign policy instituted by Cyrus of allowing exiled peoples, such as the Jews, to return to their original homelands. The Cylinder's inscription has been linked with the reproduction in the Book of Ezra of two texts that are claimed to be edicts issued by Cyrus concerning the repatriation of the Jews and the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The two edicts (one in Hebrew and one in Aramaic) are substantially different in content and tone, leading some historians to argue that one or both may be a post hoc fabrication. The question of their authenticity remains unresolved, though it is widely believed that they do reflect some sort of Persian royal policy, albeit perhaps not one that was couched in the terms given in the text of the biblical edicts.

The dispute over the authenticity of the biblical edicts has prompted interest in this passage from the Cyrus Cylinder, specifically concerning the question of whether it indicates that Cyrus had a general policy of repatriating subject peoples and restoring their sanctuaries. The text of the Cylinder is very specific, listing places in Mesopotamia and the neighbouring regions. It does not describe any general release or return of exiled communities but focuses on the return of Babylonian deities to their own home cities. It emphasises the re-establishment of local religious norms, reversing the alleged neglect of Nabonidus – a theme that Amélie Kuhrt describes as "a literary device used to underline the piety of Cyrus as opposed to the blasphemy

of Nabonidus". She suggests that Cyrus had simply adopted a policy used by earlier Assyrian rulers of giving privileges to cities in key strategic or politically sensitive regions and that there was no general policy as such. Lester L. Grabbe, a historian of early Judaism, has written that "the religious policy of the Persians was not that different from the basic practice of the Assyrians and Babylonians before them" in tolerating – but not promoting – local cults, other than their own gods.

Cyrus may have seen Jerusalem, situated in a strategic location between Mesopotamia and Egypt, as worth patronising for political reasons. His Achaemenid successors generally supported indigenous cults in subject territories and thereby curried favour with the cults' devotees. Conversely, Persian kings might destroy the shrines of peoples who had rebelled against them, as happened at Miletos in 494 BC following the Ionian Revolt. The Cylinder's text does not describe any general policy of a return of exiles or mention any sanctuary outside Babylonia therein supporting Peter Ross Bedford's argument that the Cylinder is "not a manifesto for a general policy regarding indigenous cults and their worshippers throughout the empire". Amélie Kuhrt notes that "the purely Babylonian context of the Cylinder provides no proof" that Cyrus gave attention to the Jewish exiles or the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and biblical historian Bob Becking concludes that "it has nothing to do with Judeans, Jews or Jerusalem". Becking also points to the lack of reference to the Jews in surviving Achaemenid texts as an indication that they were not considered of any particular importance.

The German scholar Josef Wiesehöfer summarizes the widely held traditional view by noting that "Many scholars have read into a confirmation of the Old Testament passages about the steps taken by Cyrus towards the erection of the Jerusalem temple and the repatriation of the Judeans" and that this interpretation undergirded a belief "that the instructions to this effect were actually provided in these very formulations of the Cyrus Cylinder".

Human rights.

The Cylinder gained new prominence in the late 1960s when the last Shah of Iran called it "the world's first charter of human rights". The cylinder was a key symbol of the Shah's political ideology and is still regarded by some commentators as a charter of human rights, but this has been disputed by specialist scholars on the Persian empire.

Pahlavi Iranian government's view

Cyrus Cylinder at the centre of the official emblem of 2,500-year celebration of the Persian Empire at Pahlavi Iranian imperial era

The Cyrus Cylinder is dubbed the "first declaration of human rights" by the pre-Revolution Iranian government, a reading prominently advanced by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, in a 1967 book, *The White Revolution of Iran*. The Shah identified Cyrus as a key figure in government ideology and associated his government with the Achaemenids. He wrote that "the history of our empire began with the famous declaration of Cyrus, which, for its advocacy of humane principles, justice and liberty, must be considered one of the most remarkable documents in the history of mankind. "The Shah described Cyrus as the first ruler in history to give his subjects "freedom of opinion and other basic rights". In 1968, the Shah opened the first United Nations Conference on Human Rights in Tehran by saying that the Cyrus Cylinder was the precursor to the modern Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In his 1971 Nowruz (New Year) speech, the Shah declared that 1350 AP (1971–1972) would be Cyrus the Great Year, during which a grand commemoration would be held to celebrate 2,500 years of Persian monarchy. It would serve as a showcase for a modern Iran in which the contributions that Iran had made to world civilization would be recognized. The main theme of the commemoration was the centrality of the monarchy within Iran's political system, associating the Shah of Iran with the famous monarchs of Persia's past, and with Cyrus in particular. The Shah looked to the Achaemenid period as "a moment from the national past that could best serve as a model and a slogan for the imperial society he hoped to create".

The Cyrus Cylinder was adopted as the symbol for the commemoration, and Iranian magazines and journals published numerous articles about ancient Persian history. The British Museum loaned the original Cylinder to the Iranian government for the duration of the festivities; it was put on display at the Shahyad Monument (now the Azadi Tower) in Tehran. The 2,500-year celebrations commenced on October 12, 1971, and culminated a week later with a spectacular parade at the tomb of Cyrus in Pasargadae. On October 14, the shah's sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, presented the United Nations Secretary General U Thant with a replica of the Cylinder. The princess asserted that "the heritage of Cyrus was the heritage of human understanding, tolerance, courage, compassion and, above all, human liberty". The Secretary General accepted the gift, linking the Cylinder with the efforts of the United Nations General Assembly to address "the question of Respect for Human Rights in Armed Conflict". Since then, the replica Cylinder has been kept at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City on the second-floor hallway. The United Nations continues to promote the cylinder as "an ancient declaration of human rights".

The Cylinder reads that everyone is entitled to freedom of thought and choice and all individuals should pay respect to one another. The historical charter also underscores the necessity of fighting oppression, defending the oppressed, respecting human dignity, and recognizing human rights. The Cyrus Cylinder bears testimony to the fact that the Iranian nation has always been the flag-bearer of justice, devotion and human values throughout history.

Scholarly views.

The interpretation of the Cylinder as a "charter of human rights" has been described by various historians as "rather anachronistic" and tendentious. It has been dismissed as a "misunderstanding" and characterized as political propaganda devised by the Pahlavi regime. The German historian Josef Wiesehöfer comments that the portrayal of Cyrus as a champion of human rights is as illusory as the image of the "humane and enlightened Shah of Persia". D. Fairchild Ruggles and Helaine Silverman describe the Shah's aim as being to legitimise the Iranian nation and his own regime, and to counter the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalism by creating an alternative narrative rooted in the ancient Persian past.

Writing in the immediate aftermath of the Shah's anniversary commemorations, the British Museum's C.B.F. Walker comments that the "essential character of the Cyrus Cylinder is not a general declaration of human rights or religious toleration but simply a building inscription, in the Babylonian and Assyrian tradition, commemorating Cyrus's restoration of the city of Babylon and the worship of Marduk previously neglected by Nabonidus". Two professors specialising in the history of the ancient Near East, Bill T. Arnold and Piotr Michalowski, comment: "Generically, it belongs with other foundation deposit inscriptions; it is not an edict of any kind, nor does it provide any unusual human rights declaration as is sometimes claimed."

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones of the University of Edinburgh notes that "there is nothing in the text" that suggests the concept of human rights. Neil MacGregor comments:

Comparison by scholars in the British Museum with other similar texts, however, showed that rulers in ancient Iraq had been making comparable declarations upon succeeding to the Babylonian throne for two millennia before Cyrus. It is one of the museum's tasks to resist the narrowing of the object's meaning and its appropriation to one political agenda.

Another notable Human Right were the Edict of King Xerxes which was documented by Mordecai in 474 BC and sealed with signet ring of King Xerxes.

That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman's estate.

Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold sceptre to Esther and she arose and stood before him.

"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favour and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.

The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies. The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa.

When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. ¹⁶ For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honour. In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized the

The edict of the King Xerxes which was written by Mordecai and Sealed by the King's Signet Ring would grant the Israelites the right/freedom to assemble, Security and right to pursue happiness.

The emergency of other rights (the devil's masterminds)

Through out the ages, God keeps on reminding people about the Human rights despite the fact that the devil through his agents had been trying to put it off. The failure of the Devil to put it off arouses the need to tannish it with his own evil acts such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexuals, Transgender, queer (LGBTQ); Prostitution, Abortion, etc. The Devil uses the principle that 'if you can not defeat them, join them'. The battle started in Heaven and will continue until Jesus comes. The book of Ezekiel 28:11-19 states;

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned, So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade, you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So, I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more."

The book of revelation chapter 12 shades more light on Ezekiel 28. Revelation 12:7-9 states. Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

In the book of Mathew chapter 13, Jesus told a parable of the weeds which illustrates the existence of both the evil and good till the end of the world. Both God and the evil will continue to intermingle until Jesus comes.

The parable of weeds

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The evil and good according to the parable, are to live together until the time of judgement which is said to be the time of harvest. Jesus concluded by saying that whoever has ears let them hear. This is a strong warning to the inhabitants of the earth.

Human beings have a strong power of choice. This right was given by God since the beginning of time. A rational being must possess the wisdom to make rational choices. Our choices will determine what we will be during the harvest time. Every state also possesses the power of choice either to accept the Human rights treaty as a whole or partly. Joshua 24:14-20 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 30:15, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to

him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

States should study the treaties carefully before signing and ratifying any international Human Rights treaties and make sure that the chapters and the articles are aligning with the Bible, Quran and the law of nature.