

A Radical Review of the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods

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Until the Assyrian and Babylonian King Lists and Chronicles were discovered, the Bible was our main source and authority for the Assyrian, Babylonian, Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods, this being supplemented by the writings of the Greek and Roman historians. The trouble is that the information provided in these extra-Biblical records is often at variance with what is recorded in the Bible. Instead of questioning and challenging them, however, we have abandoned the Biblical narrative in favour of these 'alternative' accounts.

No one can deny that there are errors in the Bible. It hardly fills us with confidence when, for example, we are told that Hoshea son of Elah began to reign in the 20th year of Jotham king of Judah,¹ when Jotham supposedly only reigned for 16 years,². We are told that Ahaz king of Judah started his rule "in the 17th year of Pekah",³ which means that Pekah, who ruled for 20 years, must have died in the 3rd year of Ahaz, but Hoshea, who is said to have slain Pekah and ruled in his stead,⁴ did not begin his rule until the 12th year of Ahaz, which is **nine years later!** There are plenty of other errors we could choose from.

The Jewish writers, likewise, when transcribing from older records, did not take co-regencies into consideration. Even though it records in the book of Kings that "the LORD smote the king [Azariah], so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, and Jotham the king's son was over the house, judging the people of the land",⁵ the writers have placed Jotham's reign immediately after that of his father's.⁶ From the Assyrian records, we discover that there is no room for Jotham's independent reign if it occurred after that of his father. We also learn from the Assyrian records, that when Hezekiah was "sick unto death", his son Menashe was invested on the throne of Judah, which means that at least the last 15 years of Hezekiah's reign coincided with the first 15 of Menashe's. The Jewish writers were clearly unaware of this 15 year co-regency.

There are a lot of errors like this, but we must bear in mind, that when Jerusalem was taken

¹ 2 Kings 15:30.

² 2 Kings 15:32.

³ 2 Kings 16:1.

⁴ 2 Kings 15:30.

⁵ 2 Kings 15:5.

⁶ 2 Kings 15:7.

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by Nebuchadnezzar, the city was burnt to the ground:

“Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king’s house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great man’s house, burnt he with fire.”⁷

Most of the records at that time most likely would have been destroyed in the fire. The Jews who returned from Babylon and Persia would have had very little information to go on, which is why the book of Chronicles, in many places, is fragmentary.⁸ If, however, we think that our other sources are more reliable, we are in for a shock. We have accepted these alternative records without question or challenge, even though they are full of glaring errors and inconsistencies, which errors and inconsistencies scholars have simply glossed over without tackling them head on. In this article, we shall seek to redress the balance by demonstrating that, in the main, the Bible is far more accurate and reliable than all of the other sources in which we have placed so much unwavering trust.

We shall start by examining what information we have on Nebuchadnezzar II and his family and, using the Bible as a guide, we shall present a slightly different understanding of the Chaldean history from that which is presented in our history books. In the rest of this paper, we shall then do the same with the Achaemenid Period including the early Greek Period up to the time of Seleucus I and proceed to demonstrate how the current chronological framework is in need of revision.

The Chaldean Empire

According to the conventional chronology, Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon for around **forty-three** years. The Bible, however, informs us that he actually ruled for **forty-five** years before his son Amul-Marduk (Evilmerodach) ascended the throne of Babylon:

“And it came to pass in the **thirty seventh** year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon **in the year that he began to reign** did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison”⁹

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem twice: once in the eighth year of his reign, the other in his nineteenth,¹⁰ though a Babylonian chronicle would have us believe that he actually took Jerusalem for the first time in the end of his seventh year.¹¹ We are assured that Jehoiachin (AV Jehoiachin) was taken prisoner in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign after reigning for three months and Zedekiah was put on the throne in his place.¹² If, for the moment, we ignore the Babylonian Chronicle, we can see that Jehoiachin’s first year of

⁷ 2 Kings 25:8-9.

⁸ In 1 Chron. 5:4, for example, Joel is presented as a son of Reuben. He is not mentioned elsewhere, but it is clear from the context that Joel lived a few hundred years after his forefather Reuben. In 1 Chron. 8:6, Ehud likewise appears without lineage. From the book of Judges 3:15, he appears as Ehud ‘son’ of Gera of the tribe of Benjamin. Again, Ehud lived centuries after Gera son of Benjamin.

⁹ 2 Kings 25:27 & Jer. 52:31.

¹⁰ 2 Kings 25:8 & Jer. 52:12.

¹¹ “The seventh year: In the month Kislev the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu. He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) seized (its) king.” *Chronicle Concerning the Early Years of Nebuchadnezzar II*, Chronicle 5 in ABC p.102, §.11-12.

¹² 2 Kings 24:12 & 18. Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year coincided with Zedekiah’s 11th year - 2 Kings 25:8 and Jer. 52:12. Nebuchadnezzar’s first year coincided with the third year of Yohoiakim’s 11 year reign. Dan. 1:1.

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captivity coincided with the eighth to ninth year of Nebuchadnezzar's. You do not have to be a genius at maths to realise that the thirty-seventh year of Yehoiachin's captivity coincided with what would have been Nebuchadnezzar's **forty-fifth** to **forty-sixth** year. This was, however, the **first year** of Evil-Merodach's reign. The Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles are therefore shown to be at variance in assigning a reign of only 43 years for Nebuchadnezzar. (The Babylonian records actually suggest that there was a short co-regency of a few months between Nebuchadnezzar and his successor Evil-Merodach,¹³ but I would suggest that by this time, Nebuchadnezzar would have been unfit to rule.)

Neither Herodotus nor Xenophon, who were the earliest of the Greek writers to record the history of this period, give us any indication of lengths of reign. The first person to supply these is Berosus (3rd century BCE), whose actual works have not survived, but have been quoted by Josephus who, in his book *Against Apion*, gives 43 years for Nebuchadnezzar, 2 years for Amul Marduk, 4 years for Neriglissar, 9 months for Labash-Marduk and 17 years for Nabonidus.¹⁴ These appear to be confirmed by "cuneiform historical texts and upon dated contract tablets of the Neo-Babylonian period".¹⁵ In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, however, Josephus contradicts these figures by accrediting Evil-Merodach (Amul-Marduk) with a ridiculously long reign of 18 years and his successor, Neriglissar, a similarly ridiculously long reign of 40 years.¹⁶

The fourth chapter of the book of Daniel informs us that Nebuchadnezzar went insane for **seven years**, at the end of which the **kingdom was restored to him**. This seven year absence and the restoration of the kingdom is also recorded by Josephus:

"A little after this the king saw in his sleep again another vision; how he should fall from his dominion, and feed among the wild beasts, and that when he had lived in this manner in the desert for seven years, he should recover his dominion again."¹⁷

No one seems to have asked the obvious question, namely, 'who was in charge of the kingdom during his absence?'.

The answer, when you think about it, is obvious:

2 years	Amul-Marduk (Evilmerodach)
4 years	Neriglissar II
9 months	Labash-Marduk II
Total:	7 years (allowing time for the inauguration ceremonies to take place)

(Note that Syncellus, who lived in the eighth century CE, omits Labash-Marduk and ascribes Amul-Marduk with either 3 years or 5 years and Nergilissar with either 5 years or 3 years depending on which of the two methods of calculation he used; whether based on astronomical data or computed from ecclesiastical records.¹⁸)

¹³ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* p.4, Gerard Gertoux.(Undated article which was retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/2421036/Dating_the_reigns_of_Xerxes_and_Artaxerxes on 28 Dec 2014.)

¹⁴ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.20.

¹⁵ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire* p.7, Raymond Philip Dougherty, The Ancient Near East: Classic Studies, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2008 (ISBN: 13: 978-1-55635-956-9.)

¹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.2 (229).

¹⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.10.6.

¹⁸ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* pp.9-10.

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When the kingdom was restored to Nebuchadnezzar, he styled himself:

“Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, the preserver of Êsagila and Êzida, the performer of pious deeds, the son of Nabû-balâṣu-iqbi, the perfect prince, am I.”¹⁹

Phonetically, Nabu-balatsu-ikbi is a variant spelling of Nabu-palatsu[r]-ikbi, better known as Nabopolassar, this being the name of Nebuchadnezzar’s father. The temples known as Esagila and Ezida were Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and joy.

In another inscription, Nabonidus records:

“Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, the faithful lord, who heeds the decrees of the gods, the **humble one**, the **submissive one**, the reverer of the great gods [or ‘great God’?], the wise prince, the one who is mindful of whatever exists, the exalted princely priest, **the renewer of all cities**, the prudent prince, the one who causes temples to be finished...”²⁰

How is it possible that Nabonidus, as a previously unknown entity, can describe himself as “the renewer of all cities”? We are told that Nabonidus spent most of his days in semi-retirement in Tema in Arabia, leaving the affairs of government in the hands of his son Belshazzar.²¹ If, however, Nabonidus was another name for Nebuchadnezzar, then we all know that Nebuchadnezzar was responsible, at least, for completely rebuilding the city of Babylon. He also fortified many cities and built fortresses throughout the land.

Notice from the above inscription that Nabonidus describes himself as a ‘reverer of the great gods’, but, bearing in mind that the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) is written in the plural, we should perhaps read ‘reverer of the great God’. The Assyrian words translated as ‘great gods’ is similarly *ilâni^{meš} rabûti^{meš}*, where *ilâni* is equivalent to the Hebrew *Elohim* and *rabûti* is equivalent to the Hebrew *rabah*, meaning ‘great’. Note also the use of the words ‘humble one’ and ‘submissive one’. When you compare this with what is written in the book of Daniel, these words take on an entirely new meaning; one which would otherwise be lost if it were not for what has been preserved in the Bible.

“And at the end of the days [i.e. after 7 years] I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”²²

To confuse matters, his son Belshazzar was also known as Nabonidus. This is confirmed by Josephus, who called him Naboandelus,²³ as well as Herodotus, who called him Labynetus son of Labynetus.²⁴ Notice that Belshazzar/Nabonidus was the **son** of Nabonidus (i.e. Nebuchadnezzar).

The interchange of the letters *l* and *n* in ancient languages is well attested. The twelfth dynasty pharaoh Amenemhat III, for example, whose prenomen was Nemare, was variably

¹⁹ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* op. cit. p.17.

²⁰ *Ibid.* (emphases mine).

²¹ *Ibid.* Chap. 11.

²² Dan. 4:34-35 (31-32 in the Hebrew).

²³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.2 (Book 10, §.231 in the Loeb Classical Library).

²⁴ Herodotus, *Histories* 1.188. See also 1.74-77.

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called Lachares, Lamares or Labares by the Greek writers.²⁵ Those familiar with the works of Josephus will likewise know that he called Reuben, Rubel (Ρουβήλου).²⁶

The following inscription would appear to belong to Belshazzar:

“As for Nebuchadrezzar and Neriglissar, the kings who preceded me, I am their mighty delegate. *Their troops have been entrusted into my hand...*”²⁷

Notice how this Nabonidus (alias Belshazzar) describes himself as the ‘mighty delegate’ who had been ‘entrusted’ with the troops. This would accord with the fact that Belshazzar was left in complete charge of affairs of government by his father Nabonidus-Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar must have been in his late teens when he first went to war. Berosus merely recorded that Nebuchadnezzar was young.²⁸ He must therefore have been around seventy years of age when, under the name of Nabonidus, he regained control of the kingdom. The portrait of Nabonidus from the Harran Stela shows him as an old man. He must therefore have been around ninety years of age when Babylon was taken by Cyrus.



An aged Nabonidus-Nebuchadnezzar from the Harran Stela.

It should perhaps be mentioned that Raymond Dougherty has identified Nabonidus as a person mentioned in a cuneiform text dated to the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar and who is described as he “who is over the city”.²⁹ By this, we can assume that this person was ruling over the city of Babylon. The name Nabonidus is written Nabû-nâ'id in the Assyrian, and was a common appellation. There was a powerful chief by this name during the time of Ashurbanipal, which means that the Nabû-nâ'id who is mentioned in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign could well be that self-same person who went up against Ashurbanipal and who is called son of Nabû-shum-êresh and brother of Bêl-êtir.³⁰ Alternatively, the person who was ‘over the city’ could well be Nebuchadnezzar himself, especially as he was king of Babylon at that time. (The Nabû-nâ'id of the time of Ashurbanipal might then be Nabopolassar, who, according to Berosus, was also known as

²⁵ “Proceeding up the Nile, close to a canal leading to the lake of Moeris, the modern Fayyûm, they [the Greeks] were shown a great many-chambered building which they were told was built to serve as his tomb by a king Lamares or Labares, now known to us as Ammenemes III of Dyn. XII.” p.2 of *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Sir Alan Gardiner, Oxford University Press, 1961. Also fn.4 of p.439: “Elsewhere the name is given in a number of different forms, Labares coming closest to the hieroglyphic writing.”

²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 2.178.

²⁷ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*. p.73 (emphasis mine).

²⁸ *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* p.25, Donald John Wiseman, The Trustees of the British Museum, London 1956.

²⁹ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* pp.29-30.

³⁰ ARAB Vol. 2, p.300, §.789 & p.335, §.866.

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Nebuchadnezzar.³¹ Father and son, that is, Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, therefore seem to have shared the same names.)

I should perhaps mention that, according to Josephus, who was quoting from an earlier writer by the name of Berosus, Nebuchadnezzar's son Amul-Marduk (the Biblical Evil-Merodach³²) was deposed by Nergilissar "his sister's husband".³³ It has been assumed that this Nergilissar, who is said to have ruled for four years, was the Nergalsharezer who is recorded as being one of the "princes of the king of Babylon" involved in the assault on Jerusalem,³⁴ but, if this is the case, then Nergilissar and Amul-Marduk (Evilmerodach) would either have been brothers, or, if Nergilissar belonged to the previous generation, he would have been Amul-Marduk's uncle! He would certainly have not been regarded as Amul-Marduk's brother-in-law. This would seem to suggest that these two people, Nergalsharezer and Nergilissar, are not the same person.

The Babylonian Chronicles all inform us that Nabonidus was taken by Cyrus king of Persia in the **seventeenth** year of his reign. The Bible tells us that there were **precisely seventy years** from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar until the first year of Cyrus king of Persia.³⁵ This means that the 'resurrected' Nabonidus-Nebuchadnezzar must have ruled for **eighteen years** rather than seventeen.

"The last completely dated tablet of the reign of Nabonidus belongs to the tenth day of the eighth month of his seventeenth year. An incompletely dated tablet belongs to the ninth month of the same year. The earliest tablet dated in the reign of Cyrus belongs to the seventh month of his accession year, the day of the month being illegible. The next Cyrus tablet belongs to the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month of his accession year."³⁶

Dougherty explains this anomaly by arguing that "there may have been a state of considerable political confusion in connection with the fall of Babylon, since there was a period of about two months when there seems to have been a difference of opinion as to who the real ruler was".³⁷ The possibility therefore exists that Cyrus actually became king a year later. Alternatively, due to the way the Babylonians counted the years of reign, the 17th year of Nabonidus may have actually been his 18th year of reign. A further possibility is that the tablet actually refers to the 17th year of the younger Nabonidus, alias Belshazzar, though this is unlikely seeing as how Belshazzar is said to have been placed on the Babylonian throne in his father's 3rd year.³⁸ The 17th year of Belshazzar would then have been the 19th of Nebuchadnezzar. Either way, the Bible requires us to allot a period of 18 years for the final years of Nebuchadnezzar's long reign of 70 years.

That Nabonidus is to be identified as Nebuchadnezzar is confirmed first of all by the book of Daniel, where we are told that, he, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold of the terrifying image he saw in a dream:

³¹ As preserved by Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.1 in Whiston's translation or 10.219 by Ralph Marcus in Loeb Classical Library. Refer fn. b where it says that the MSS has Nabūchodonosoros.

³² 2 Kings 25:27 & Jer. 52:31.

³³ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.20. In *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.2, Josephus accredits Evil-Merodach with a reign of 18 years.

³⁴ Jer. 39:3. For the identification of Nergalsharezer with Nergilisar (var, Neriglissar), see *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* p.60, especially fn.225.

³⁵ Dan. 9:1-2.

³⁶ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* p.171, fn.557.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Les textes du Proche-Orient ancien et l'histoire d'Israel* pp.147-150, Jacques Briand et Marie-Joseph Seux, Paris 1977.

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“And after **thee** shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and beateth down all things; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush”.³⁹

This tells us that Nebuchadnezzar himself, rather than he and his family, comprised the first kingdom.

The apocryphal book of Baruch likewise suggests that Nebuchadnezzar was co-ruler with his son Belshazzar, which is how Dougherty⁴⁰ also interprets the passage:

“and pray for the life of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and for the life of his son Belshazzar, so that their days on earth may be like the days of heaven. The LORD will give us strength, and light to our eyes; we shall live under the protection of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and under the protection of his son Belshazzar, and we shall serve them many days and find favor in their sight.”⁴¹

The identification of Nabonidus as Nebuchadnezzar therefore resolves this age-old mystery.

Harpagus the Mede

The book of Daniel tells us that when Cyrus king of Persia invaded Babylon, he invested Darius, son of Achashverosh (AV Ahasuerus), of the seed of the Medes in control of Babylon.

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”⁴²

These seventy years spoken of here clearly date from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, as we have already demonstrated. That Darius did not live long is confirmed by the fact that chapter 10 of the book of Daniel is dated to “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia”.⁴³ It should be stressed that Darius was co-ruling with Cyrus, Cyrus being the ultimate ruler.

In what is known as the *Nabonidus Chronicle*, Darius the Mede is called Ugbaru:

“On the fourteenth day Sippar was captured without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutu, and the army of Cyrus (II) entered Babylon without a battle. Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon...”

“...On the third day of the month Marcheshvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon...”

“Gubaru, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon. From the month Adar the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought down to Babylon returned to their places. On the night of the eleventh of the month Marcheshvan Ugbaru died.”⁴⁴

This ties in with the statement by Daniel that “Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old”.⁴⁵ We could hardly expect him to have ruled for long at that age.

Who then was this person to whom Cyrus explicitly entrusted control of the affairs of his

³⁹ Dan. 2:38-40.

⁴⁰ *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* op. cit. p.12.

⁴¹ Book of Baruch 1:11-12.

⁴² Dan. 9:1-2.

⁴³ Dan. 10:1.

⁴⁴ ABC pp.109-110, Chronicle 7, lines 14-22. Despite objections from academics, Gubaru is but a variant spelling of Ugbaru. It should be stressed that the Babylonian Chronicles are far from reliable.

⁴⁵ Dan. 5:31, or Dan. 6:1 in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible).

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kingdom? The answer is given by Herodotus, though his name is not so easily recognisable in its Greek form. Herodotus called him Harpagus (or Arpagus Ἀρπαγός),⁴⁶ which is a metathesis of Ugbaru. He was, however, called Oibaras (Οἰβάρας) by Ctesias,⁴⁷ which name is again but a variant spelling of Ugbaru. The interchange of the letters *p* and *b* in ancient languages is well attested,⁴⁸ hence Oibaras and Harpagus are but two phonetic variations (i.e. cognates) on the same name. This is the person the Bible called Darius the Mede, though many scholars have difficulty accepting that kings of the ancient world often had more than the one name. Harpagus was called “*General of Cyrus*” by Strabo⁴⁹ and “*Commander on the sea*” by Diodorus.⁵⁰ He was highly regarded by Cyrus.

According to Herodotus, the Median king Astyages, fearing a vision he had in which his daughter’s son Cyrus would deprive him of his kingdom, committed Cyrus into the hands of one of his trusted servants. This servant, who is said to have been **a relative** of Astyages, was the aforesaid Harpagus aka Darius the Mede. Astyages gave Harpagus strict instructions that the child Cyrus was to be killed.⁵¹ Harpagus, however, disobeyed the king’s commandment:

“The child was handed over to him, dressed for its death, and he set off weeping for home. When he got there he told his wife everything that Astyages had said. ‘And what do you think you’re going to do?’ she asked him. ‘Not what Astyages told me,’ he replied. ‘Even if he gets even more deranged and demented than he is now, I won’t go along with his plan or serve him in this kind of murder. There are plenty of reasons why I won’t kill the child, not the least of which is that **he’s a relative of mine**.’”⁵²

All of this then shows that Harpagus, alias Ugbaru, aka Darius the Mede, although described as a servant, was of royal blood. Note that Cyrus was only a child when Harpagus and his wife took him into their care. This shows that Harpagus was much older than Cyrus, which is borne out by the fact that Darius was sixty-two years old when he was invested as ruler of Babylon. There was no better nor more reliable and trustworthy person Cyrus could have chosen to have become ruler of Babylon than Harpagus (Darius the Mede).

Josephus would have us believe that Darius the Mede was, “the son of Astyages, and had another name among the Greeks”,⁵³ though he does not actually provide us with this alternative name. As for him being a “son of Astyages”, he was clearly wrong. Harpagus was of the same generation as Astyages and appears more correctly to have been a son of Cyaxares, the father of Astyages. It must therefore be Cyaxares who is referred to in the book of Daniel when we are told that the name of Darius’ father was Achashverosh (AV

⁴⁶ Since making this identification, it has subsequently come to my attention that Gerard Gertoux has also come to the same conclusion. He has written two papers, neither of which are dated, i.e. *Ugbaru is Darius the Mede and Queen Esther Wife of Xerxes: Fairy Tale or Real History?* The same information appears to be contained in his *80 old Testament Characters of World History: Chronological, Historical and Archaeological Evidence*. Though it does not really matter who came to this conclusion first, all of these articles seem to have appeared later than my own breakthrough. Needless to say, he has published his completed articles before mine.

⁴⁷ Ctesias, *Persica* Book 7.

⁴⁸ Hence Suppilulume king of Hatti was also known as Subbiluliuma, the Shubaru of the Assyrian records were called Shupre or Shupria, the name Hammurabi was sometimes written Hammurapi, etc.

⁴⁹ Strabo, *Geography* 6.1.1.

⁵⁰ Diodorus, *Library* 9.35.1.

⁵¹ Herodotus, *Histories* 1.108.

⁵² Herodotus, *Histories* 1.109 (emphasis mine). The word οἰκήτιον *oikeion* means ‘belonging to a home, household or family’. Alfred Denis Godley translates as ‘man of his [i.e. Astyages’] household’ (Vol. 1, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & William Heinemann Ltd, London 1920), George Rawlinson as ‘man of his [i.e. Astyages’] own house’ (Vol. 1, J.M. Dent & Sons, London & E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc, New York 1910) and George Campbell Macauley as ‘man who was of kin near him’ (MacMillan & Co. London & New York 1904) and Robin Waterfield translated as ‘relative of his’ (Oxford University Press 1998).

⁵³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.11.4.

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Ahasuerus).⁵⁴ The name Achashverosh is a variant spelling of Xerxes, which means that Cyaxares was also known as Xerxes. The name Cyaxares might even be a metathesis of Xerxes.

The Succession of Persian Kings

The book of Ezra mentions five Persian kings, and these accord with the sequence of Persian kings which we know about from the Greek records and the Babylonian Chronicles. It has not helped that there was a succession of kings with the same name. After the death of Darius the Mede, Cyrus took charge of Babylon and Persia and ruled for 9 years until his son Cambyses took the throne. In the Bible, Cambyses is called Achashverosh (אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ AV Ahaseurus), which is a transliteration of the name Xerxes. After ruling for 7 years and 5 months, he was succeeded by a person who had a number of different names (e.g. Bardiya, Gaumata, Pseudo-Smerdis, Tanyoxarkes etc) but in the Bible he is called Artachshasta (אַרְתַּחשְׁטָא), which is a transliteration of the name Artaxerxes. His reign only lasted for 7 months.

If we are to believe what the Greek writers inform us, there were then a number of successive kings, most of whom bore one or more of the names Darius, Xerxes or Artaxerxes. Darius I (not to be confused with Darius the Mede) succeeded the Artaxerxes known above as Bardiya and it was during the reign of this Darius (known as Darius I son of Hystaspes) when work on the temple in Jerusalem was completed.

The book of Ezra records:

“Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus [i.e. Cambyses], in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes [i.e. Bardiya] wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes [i.e. Bardiya] king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.”⁵⁵

Consequently, work was stopped and was not resumed until the second year of Darius I king of Persia:

“Then ceased the work of the house of GOD which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.”⁵⁶

The second year of Darius mentioned here fell seventy years after the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed:

“In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet...”⁵⁷

“...Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, ‘O LORD of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation **these past seventy years?**’”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Dan. 9:1.

⁵⁵ Ezra 4:4-7.

⁵⁶ Ezra 4:24

⁵⁷ Zech. 1:1.

⁵⁸ Zech. 1:12.

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This was a different seventy year period from that which was calculated from the time Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon up until the time when Cyrus took Babylon.⁵⁹ Josephus was mistaken when he calculated those seventy years from the time Jehoiachin king of Judah was taken captive:

“In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon.”⁶⁰

As already stated, Jehoiachin was taken prisoner in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.⁶¹ The prophecy as recorded by the prophet Jeremiah is as follows:

“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations **shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years**. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.”⁶²

The seventy years spoken of here, when the **nations** “shall serve the king of Babylon”, are dated from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. The seventy years calculated to the second year of Darius I are dated from the time the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which event took place in the nineteenth year of his reign.⁶³

We therefore have the following sequence of kings in the book of Ezra: Cyrus – Achashverosh/Ahasuerus (Cambyses) – Artachshasta/Artaxerxes (Bardiya) – Darius I (Hystaspes). After this there was another Artaxerxes:

“Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia...”⁶⁴

This can only be one of the Artaxerxes who was the successor to Darius I Hystaspes. The question is, which one? It is possible that this Artaxerxes is the Artaxerxes of the book of Nehemiah. Note that the book of Nehemiah mentions people who are not mentioned in the book of Ezra because the book of Ezra is chronologically earlier. Dates of twentieth and thirty-second years of Artaxerxes are recorded in the book of Nehemiah,⁶⁵ and these can **only** refer to Artaxerxes, the successor to Xerxes I. (The reason why I am not calling him Artaxerxes I Longimanus will become apparent shortly.)

As for the reading of the above names, Achashverosh (AV Ahasuerus) was a common appellation used by a number of Persian kings. As already stated, Darius the Mede, who lived during the time of Cyrus king of Persia, was a son of an Achashverosh.⁶⁶ There can therefore be no doubt that the Achashverosh mentioned in the Book of Ezra, who is placed chronologically between Cyrus and Darius I, is Cambyses, which means that Cambyses was also known as Xerxes. It likewise means that Bardiya, who succeeded Cambyses, is to be identified as the first Artaxerxes (Artachshasta) mentioned in the book of Ezra. On this score,

⁵⁹ Dan. 9:2.

⁶⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.1.1.

⁶¹ 2 Kings 24:12.

⁶² Jer. 25:11-12.

⁶³ 2 Kings 25:8 & Jer. 52:12.

⁶⁴ Ezra 7:1.

⁶⁵ Neh. 2:1 & 5:14 for the twentieth year and Neh. 5:14 & 13:6 for the thirty-second year.

⁶⁶ Dan. 9:1.

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it should be noted that Ctesias gives Bardiya's throne name as Tanyoxarkes⁶⁷ whilst Xenophon has Tanaoxares.⁶⁸

Zénaïde Ragozin wrote:

"The Greeks give the name [of Bardiya] as SMERDIS, having probably heard 'Berdis'; some call this prince TANAQXARES or TANYOXARKES, which Eranian scholars take to be a corruption for the Persian 'thauvarakhshathra,' i.e., 'king of the bow'; not unlikely, for we are told that Bardiya had the reputation of being the best archer and marksman among the Persians."⁶⁹

The name Thauvarakhshathra proposed here by Ragozin is not too far removed phonetically from the Artachshasta preserved in the Bible, though Ragozin's proposed etymologies are highly contrived. Note that Bardiya only ruled for 7 months, which means that, when we are told that work on the temple was stopped by Artachshasta-Bardiya, work on the temple was only delayed for a couple of years until the second year of Darius I. (See chart below.)

Up till the reign of Darius I, the sequence of kings is therefore relatively straightforward. It is after this point that things get extremely complicated and confusing. We shall, however, take one step at a time.

Before moving on, it should perhaps be pertinent to quote the words of the prophet Daniel:

KINGS OF CHALDEA & PERSIA UP TILL THE TIME OF XERXES I			
King	No of years		
Nabopolassar	21 years		
Nebuchadnezzar	45 years	70 years	7 years of Nebuchadnezzar's madness
(Temple destroyed in 19 th year)			
Amul-Marduk (Evilmerodach)	2 years		
Nergilissar II (?)	4 years		
Labash-Marduk II (?)	9 months (?)		
Nabonidus (Nebuchadnezzar)	18 years	70 years	
Belshazzar (co-ruled with father)			
Cyrus	29 years		
(but only 9 years over Babylon)			
Cambyses	7 years 5 months		
Bardiya	7 months		
Darius I	36 years		
Temple rebuilt 2 nd year of Darius I			
Xerxes I	21 years (first 10 years co-regency with father)		

There were 70 years from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar till the time Babylon was taken by Cyrus king of Persia in the 8th year of his reign. (Jer. 25:11 & 2 Chron. 36:20-3) There were also 70 years from the time the temple was destroyed in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8 & Jer. 52:12) till the 2nd year of Darius I king of Persia. (Compare Zech. 1:1 & 1:12.)

⁶⁷ Ctesias, *Persica* Book 8

⁶⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7.6.

⁶⁹ *The Story of Media, Babylon and Persia*, fn.* on p.345 Zénaïde A. Ragozin, New York & London 1888.

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“Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia [i.e. Cambyses, Bardiya and Darius I Hystaspes]; and the fourth [Xerxes I] shall be far richer than they all; and when he is waxed strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.”⁷⁰

In the book of Esther, we read about this great wealth:

“In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him; when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even a hundred and fourscore days.”⁷¹

The Bible therefore confirms the sequence of kings and helps us to identify without doubt the king who married Esther.

Xerxes, Esther and Mordechai

It should be stressed that the names Esther and Mordechai are NOT Hebrew – they are Persian. We are even told that Esther had the alternative name of Hadassah, this being her Hebrew name:

“And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.”⁷²

Her father was someone called Avichail (AV Abihail).⁷³ Esther and Moredechai were therefore cousins, though Mordechai must have been a lot older than she. In the penultimate chapter of the book, both Avichail and Mordechai are presented as Esther’s father.⁷⁴

In the book of Esther, Xerxes I is called Achashverosh (אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ – AV Ahasuerus):

“Now it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh (this is that Achashverosh which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty seven provinces)...”⁷⁵

I should explain that India was not the land which we today know as India, but rather that region in the north of the country (now part of Pakistan) around the Indus river. Herodotus records that Darius did not conquer much further south than that.

“These Indians dwell far away from the Persians southwards, and were not subjects of King Darius.”⁷⁶

Herodotus also informs us that this region of India was added to the Persian Empire towards the end of Darius’ reign:

“But as to Asia, most of it was discovered by Darius. There is a river, Indus, second of all rivers in the production of crocodiles. Darius, desiring to know where this Indus empties into the sea, sent ships manned by Scylax, a man of Caryanda, and others whose word he trusted; these set out from the city of Caspatyrus and the Pactyic country, and sailed down the river toward the east and the sunrise until they came to the sea; and voyaging over the sea west, they came in the thirtieth month to that place from which the Egyptian king sent the above-

⁷⁰ Dan. 11:2.

⁷¹ Esth. 1:3-4.

⁷² Esther 2:7.

⁷³ Esther 2:15.

⁷⁴ Esther 9:29.

⁷⁵ Esther 1:1.

⁷⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.101.

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mentioned Phoenicians to sail around Libya. After this circumnavigation, Darius subjugated the Indians and made use of this sea.”⁷⁷

Both Herodotus and the Behistun Inscription, which monument records the achievements of Darius I, confirm that India did not form one of the 23 provinces over which he ruled at the beginning of his reign. Even in the time of Herodotus, India was “the most distant of inhabited lands towards the East”⁷⁸ and “Arabia is the furthest of inhabited lands in the direction of the midday”.⁷⁹

“Asia is inhabited as far as the Indian land; but from this onwards towards the East it becomes desert, nor can anyone say what manner of land it is.”⁸⁰

Any attempt at placing the Achashverosh who married Esther prior to the time of Darius I king of Persia is therefore futile. In fact, the cuneiform name of Xerxes I has been read as Khshayarsha, but is more correctly to be read as Akhashyerosh. This name Akhashyerosh is phonetically identical to the Hebrew Achashverosh.

As the Jewish Encyclopedia records under the entry of Ahasuerus:

“Persian king, identical with Xerxes (486-465 B.C.). The Book of Esther deals only with one period of his reign...

“...Between the events of the first chapter and those of the second some years may be supposed to intervene, during which Ahasuerus is busy with his attempt at enslaving Greece. He fails, and returns to Persia. On his return a second consort is found for him, and in the tenth month of the seventh year of his reign (ii. 16) Esther becomes queen.”⁸¹

Josephus, who would have us believe that Esther married Xerxes’ successor Artaxerxes,⁸² was mistaken, and clearly shows that the Jews of his time had no idea who the kings mentioned in the Bible were.

It is perhaps pertinent to point out that this Achashverosh of the book of Esther was called Artaxerxes in the Septuagint as well as in the Apocryphal book of Esther.⁸³ There is no evidence, however, to show that Xerxes was ever known as Artaxerxes, so there was clearly some confusion amongst the various writers. This confusion might well have been caused because, as we shall proceed to demonstrate, Xerxes I ruled from Persia whilst Artaxerxes ruled from Babylon.

A similar confusion is exhibited in the Greek writings with Ctesias calling Achaemenides, the son of Amytis, Achaemenides purportedly being the brother of Artaxerxes and who was killed by the Egyptian king Inarus.⁸⁴ Herodotus, however, called him Achaemenes, son of Amestris and brother of Xerxes.⁸⁵ It is argued that Amytis, who was the wife of Megabyzus, did not have a son by the name of Achaemenides, though it is interesting to note that in two different manuscripts of Photius’ work, Achaemenides was brother to Xerxes in the one copy

⁷⁷ Herodotus, *Histories* 4.44.

⁷⁸ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.106.

⁷⁹ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.107.

⁸⁰ Herodotus, *Histories* 4.40.

⁸¹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, article titled *Ahasuerus* p.284, Isidore Singer et al, Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York & London 1901.

⁸² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* Book 11, Chap. 6.

⁸³ These are the additional chapters to the book of Esther contained in the Apocrypha.

⁸⁴ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 14 - from Photius, *Library* 72.

⁸⁵ Compare Herodotus, *Histories* 3.12, 7.97 and 7.236. See the discussion in *Ctesias’ Account of the Revolt of Inarus* p.7, J.M. Bigwood, *Phoenix* Vol. 30, No. 1 (1976) Journal of the Classical Association of Canada.

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and brother to Artaxerxes in the other.⁸⁶ This is the same confusion which exists between the Biblical record, Josephus and the Septuagint concerning the names of Xerxes and Artaxerxes, but in the case of Photius, someone has presumably decided to change the name from Xerxes to Artaxerxes.

Under the sub-heading of Critical Review, the Jewish Encyclopedia finishes by saying:

“Despite the fact that both Josephus (‘Ant[iquities of the Jews].’ xi. 6) and the Septuagint refer to Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes, modern scholars, such as Keil (‘Commentary to Esther’), Bertheau, and Ryssel (‘Commentary to Esther’), Wildeboer (‘Kurzer Hand-Kommentar,’ 1898), Sayce (‘Higher Criticism and the Monuments,’ p. 469), and Schrader (‘K. A. T.’ p. 375), are agreed that Xerxes and none other is meant by Ahasuerus, and this for various reasons: (1) Ahasuerus is the attempt of the Hebrew to represent the Persian Khshayarsha, the aleph being prosthetic just as it is in Ahashdarpenim (Esth. iii. 12), where the Persian is Kschatrapawan (Wildeboer, *in loco*). The Greek represents it by Xerxes. (2) The description that Herodotus gives of the character of Xerxes corresponds to the Biblical and, later, the midrashic picture—vain, foolish, fickle, and hot-tempered. (3) The king must be a Persian; for the whole atmosphere is Persian. The court is at Shushan, and the officers are Persian. (4) Between the third and seventh years of his reign Ahasuerus is lost to view in the Biblical account; but that was just the time when Xerxes was engaged in the invasion of Greece.

“There can therefore be no doubt that the monarch whose name passed among the Hebrews as Ahasuerus was the one known as Khshayārshā in the Persian inscriptions and among the Greeks as Xerxes. The Babylonian tablets spell his name Khisiarshu, Akhshiyarshu, etc. An Aramaic inscription (‘C. I. S.’ ii. 1, 122) spells it חשיארש.”⁸⁷

At the hands of Herodotus, the name Esther when transliterated into Greek has become Amestris. The letter *m* in the Assyrian and Persian languages was often pronounced as a *v*, *w* or a *b*. This transposition of characters is also evident in the Celtic, Gaelic and Bretonic languages. It is also not without reason that the Chaldean king Merodach-baladan mentioned in Isaiah 39:1 appears as Berodach-baladan in 2 Kings 20:12.

In the Scythian language, which was closely related to the Persian, there was no specific character to represent the letter *m*:

“If, therefore, we choose to give the same invariable power to the same character, we must call Darius and Media either *Dariyamaus* and *Mata*, or *Tariyavaus* and *Vata*. I have always used the *v* in spelling, except for the terminal consonant, which I render by *m*; but in dividing sentences and making words for reading, I choose the value which sounds best, or is found, for any other reason, most convenient. The same confusion is found in Babylonian; and the Celtic languages exhibit very numerous instances of the convertibility of *m* and *v*.”⁸⁸

Herodotus informs us:

“Now these were the nations that took part in this expedition [against the Greeks]. The Persian, who wore on their heads the soft hat called the tiara, and about their bodies, tunics with sleeves, of divers colours, having iron scales upon them like the scales of a fish. Their legs were protected by trousers; and they bore wicker shields for bucklers; their quivers hanging at their backs, and their arms being a short spear, a bow of uncommon size, and

⁸⁶ Ctesias’ *Account of the Revolt of Inarus* op. cit. p.8.

⁸⁷ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, article titled *Ahasuerus* p.285.

⁸⁸ *Memoir on the Scythic Version of the Behistun Inscription* p.28, E. Norris in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Volume 15, Jan 1855.

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arrows of reed. They had likewise daggers suspended from their girdles along their right thighs. Otanes, the father of Xerxes' wife, Amestris, was their leader."⁸⁹

The name Amestris is clearly a Greek transliteration of the Persian, which will no doubt have been pronounced Avestra, a name which, when transliterated into Hebrew, would become Esther. In Sanskrit, the name *avastr* apparently means 'to strew' or 'to scatter'. It has been suggested that the name Esther might be derived from a 'hypothetical' Median word *astra*, meaning 'myrtle',⁹⁰ hence having the same meaning as Hadassah, her Hebrew name. Whilst this might seem a convincing argument, it should be noted that the connection with a Median word is tentative.

By contrast, Tricia Miller would argue that:

"Esther's name is from the Persian *stri* for 'young woman,' or the Persian *stara* for 'star.' Her name is also related to a Hebrew verb, *str*, which means 'to hide.' Various forms of this verb are used throughout the Hebrew Bible in connection with the hiding of the face of God. This interpretation of Esther's name is completely appropriate in a book in which Esther's identity was hidden and the presence of God was hidden as well."⁹¹

This aptly demonstrates how any etymological consideration of Esther's name is going to produce arbitrary results.

The name Mordechai likewise will probably have been pronounced Vordach, Wortah or similar,⁹² a name which, when transliterated into Greek, would become Ortanes, Otanes or similar. On the strength of what Herodotus tells us, Otanes, the father of Amestris was therefore the Biblical Mordechai.

In the Scythian version of the Behistun Inscription, the name Otanes is written 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠𐎧 [yu-ta-na]. Whilst it is generally accepted that the reading of the first letter 𐎠𐎵𐎲, which is taken to be *yu*, is correct, an alternative reading of *khu* is also proposed.⁹³ This then demonstrates that the reading of Yutana is also tentative. I would suggest a reading of Votana.⁹⁴ This is in the same way that George Smith noted in the texts of Ashurbanipal that Vaiteh, Yahataa and Yahaluu were all variant spellings of the same name.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Herod. 7.61 quoted from Vol. 4 of George Rawlinson's edition of *History of Herodotus* (fourth edition) John Murray, London 1880. For some strange reason, Alfred Denis Godley in his translation (*Herodotus with an English Translation* Vol. 4, William Heinemann, London 1930) makes Otanes the **son** of Amestris, but in this reading he stands alone. All other translators make Otanes the **father** of Amestris.

⁹⁰ "The name is not Hebrew, but its origin is uncertain. It may come from Persian *stara* ('star'), Akkadian *lštār* (the goddess of love), or even a hypothetical Median word *astra* ('myrtle')." *The Oxford Bible Commentary* p.324, John Barton and John Muddiman, Oxford University Press 2001.

⁹¹ *Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church* p.12, Tricia Miller, James Clarke & Co., United Kingdom 2015.

⁹² In the Behistun Inscription, the name is written Utana, but this reading does not invalidate the overall argument. Being what is termed in linguistic speech a labial nasal, the letter 'n' was often added or dropped at will. This is especially noticable in the Celtic languages, though it is not restricted to that group of people. It is significant that the Hebrew name Madai (i.e. Medes) was, in its early form, written Madani, Amadana or similar. Similarly, in the El Amarna Letters, the 18th Dynasty Egyptian king Nebmatre-Amenhotep III is variously addressed as Nimmuria, **Immuria**, Mimmuria etc.

⁹³ *Memoir on the Scythic Version of the Behistun Inscription*, p.45, E. Norris, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 15 (1855)

⁹⁴ Note that Votan was also the name of the one-eyed Trojan warrior who was responsible for relocating many families overseas. He lost his eye in battle during the Trojan Wars, which took place in the 7th century BCE - NOT 1200 BCE as is usually proposed. His followers were affectionately known as One-Eye's people, but the Greeks have corrupted this to One-Eyed people, from which were born the legends of Cyclops - a race of one-eyed ogres with a single eye in the middle of their forehead. The Mayan Indians of South America record in their holy book, the *Popul Vuh*, how Votan transported them across the seas by ship. The name Votan can also be written Odin or Woden, there being no standardisation in ancient records as to how names were spelt. Anyone studying ancient English or ancient Gaelic texts will have experienced this problem.

⁹⁵ *History of Assurbanipal Translated from the Cuneiform Inscriptions* p.298, George Smith, Williams & Norgate, London and Edinburgh 1871.

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Behistun Inscription as Mordechai. We have already encountered a number of instances where names were written a number of different ways.

Mordechai eventually achieved a very high position:

“For Mordechai the Jew was next unto king Achashverosh, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.”¹¹⁰

We learn from Herodotus that Otanes (i.e. Mordechai) was also a high-ranking advisor to Xerxes’ father Darius I:

“Otanes then took aside two Persians of the highest rank whom he thought worthiest of trust, Aspathines and Gobryas, and told them the whole story [of how Bardiya was an imposter]. These, it would seem, had themselves suspected that it was so; and now they readily believed what Otanes revealed to them. They resolved that each should take into his confidence that Persian whom he most trusted; Otanes brought in Intaphrenes, Gobryas brought Megabyzus, and Aspathines Hydarnes. When they were six, Darius, whose father, Hystaspes, was a subordinate governor of the Persians, arrived at Susa. When he came, then, the six Persians resolved to include Darius too. The seven then met and gave each other tokens of good faith and spoke together; and when it was Darius’ turn to declare his mind, he spoke as follows: ‘I thought that I alone knew that it was the Magus who was king and that Smerdis son of Cyrus was dead; and it was for this reason that I made haste to come, that I might effect the Magus’ death; but since it turns out that you know too and not only I, I think that we should act at once and not put it off.’ Otanes replied, ‘son of Hystaspes, you have a good father and seem likely yourself to be in no way inferior to your father; do not hurry this undertaking without thinking, but take it up more prudently; there must be more of us to try it.’”¹¹¹

This is the same Otanes of which Herodotus informs us:

“There was one Otanes, son of Pharnaspes, as well-born and rich a man as any Persian.”¹¹²

Pharnaspes would, on the face of it, appear to be another name for the person Sir Henry Rawlinson called D’huggara, though it is also possible that Herodotus was misinformed and Pharnaspes was not the father of Otanes. The evidence nevertheless shows that Otanes-Mordechai came from a wealthy family. Note that Pharnaspes was called Onaphes by Ctesias.¹¹³ Both names (Pharnaspes and Onaphes) appear to be phonetic cognates of the name Barnabus.

We therefore have written evidence from Herodotus confirming the high position of Mordechai, but because the name is written in a Greek form which is derived from the Persian, thereby undergoing two transformations (i.e. from Hebrew to Persian to Greek), the significance of Herodotus’ comments has gone unnoticed. The description he gives of how Otanes infiltrated the royal household and prevented a usurper (Smerdis-Bardiya) from gaining the throne exhibits the same ingenuity and characteristic traits that we have come to recognise from the actions of Mordechai in preventing Haman the Agagite from succeeding in annihilating the Jewish community. The marriage of his daughter Phaedyne to Bardiya to glean information about the king is very reminiscent of the Esther story where Esther likewise reported the intentions of Xerxes the king to Mordechai.

¹¹⁰ Esther 10:3.

¹¹¹ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.70-1.

¹¹² Herodotus, *Histories* 3.68.

¹¹³ Ctesias, *Persika* 12.24.

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When we compare what we know of Mordechai from what is recorded in the book of Esther with the accounts given of Otanes by Herodotus, it is not difficult to see how important and influential a role Mordechai actually played in the building of the Persian Empire. If it had not been for him, it is possible that Darius I would not have become king of Persia! Had he not become king of Persia, the Persian Empire would not have become as great and as powerful as it actually became.

One of Otanes' daughters, whose name is given as Phaedyne,¹¹⁴ supposedly married Cambyses, was subsequently taken as wife by Bardiya (known to Herodotus as Smerdis),¹¹⁵ and afterwards married Darius I.¹¹⁶ I would suggest, however, that this continual remarrying of the daughter to the successive ruler is pure fiction.¹¹⁷ Otanes himself was a commander of Darius' army¹¹⁸ and is said to have succeeded Darius' general, Megabazus, as Darius' right-hand man.¹¹⁹ His son, whose name is given as Patiramphes, was charioteer to Xerxes I in his war against the Greeks.¹²⁰ Another of his sons, Anaphes (a variant spelling of Onaphes/Pharnaspes), was in command of the Kushites (called Kissians by Herodotus)¹²¹ with yet another of his sons by the name of Smerdomenes, who along with another general by the name of Tritantaechmes, are described as being "sons of Darius' brothers, and thus they were Xerxes' cousins", with Smerdomenes being one of the commanders in overall charge of the army.¹²²

In the Bible, we learn of the evil which Haman intended to do to the Jews in Persia. In the story preserved by Herodotus, the attempts by Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jewish community become corrupted into a tale of how Amestris "wove a wonderful shawl, long and colourful, as a present for Xerxes".¹²³ Xerxes gave the shawl to Masistes' daughter Artaynte, and, using this as an excuse to seek revenge, Amestris, at the royal banquet, arranged for Masistes' wife to be mutilated, as well as the humiliation and death of Masistes himself.¹²⁴

The whole of this story appears to be an extremely garbled, cryptic version of the Biblical story of Esther and Haman. The shawl represents the Jewish people, whilst Masistes' 'wife' signifies Haman's people who desired to rid the land of Jews. Masistes, who is called "son of Darius",¹²⁵ was himself killed along with his sons whilst (according to Herodotus' account) fleeing to Bactria.¹²⁶ Perhaps it was taboo for anyone to suggest to Herodotus the true story of how a Jewess, who was married to a king of Persia, outwitted one of the governors (i.e. Haman) in his attempts to annihilate the Jewish people. Consequently, the story which has

¹¹⁴ A variant spelling of Fatima?

¹¹⁵ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.68.

¹¹⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.88.

¹¹⁷ Note that Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus I (the Great), is also said to have married Cambyses, then Bardiya, then Darius I. (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.88) This suggests that the Persian royal family was close-knit. I very much doubt that the wives were passed down to each successor as suggested here by Herodotus. I would suggest that they simply continued to live in the palace as part of the royal family, the Greeks jumping to the conclusion that they were the king's wives.

¹¹⁸ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.141 & 147.

¹¹⁹ Herodotus, *Histories* 5.26.

¹²⁰ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.40.

¹²¹ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.62.

¹²² Herodotus, *Histories* 7.82.

¹²³ Herodotus, *Histories* 9.109.

¹²⁴ Herodotus, *Histories* 9.109-113.

¹²⁵ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.82 & 9.107.

¹²⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 9.113.

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been related is a deliberate attempt to avoid disclosing that the Persian royal household had Jewish connections.

On the face of it, this explanation seems highly contrived, but what we are about to demonstrate is that the Greek accounts of the Persian history are extremely unreliable, much of that which has been reported being based on hearsay.

The Persian-Greek Transition Period

According to the Babylonian Talmud, the second temple stood for 420 years.¹²⁷ This is broken down as follows:

“Persian rule lasted thirty-four years after the building of the Temple, Greece ruled one hundred eighty years during the existence of the Temple, the Hasmonean rule lasted one hundred three years during temple times, the House of Herod ruled one hundred three years.”¹²⁸

Were the Talmudists right, however, in saying that Persian rule lasted only 34 years after the building of the temple?

The foundation of the temple was completed in the 2nd year after Cyrus king of Persia conquered Babylon and issued the decree to return.¹²⁹ The temple itself, however, was completed in the 6th year of Darius I¹³⁰ who ruled for 36 years. Gerard Gertoux has recently demonstrated that Darius’ son, Xerxes I, became king in the 26th year of his father’s reign,¹³¹ which means that his 21 year reign started from that date, the first 10 years coinciding with those of his father. There are likely to have been further co-regencies among their successors as well, but we have already surpassed the 34 year period of Achaemenid rule suggested by the Talmudic commentators. Basically, the Talmudists have **assumed** that Darius I Hystaspes was the last king of Persia and was the king defeated by Alexander the Great. The 34 years used by the Talmudists is clearly calculated from the second year of Darius through to his 36th and final year, the 70 years prior to that being counted from the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Whilst they are wrong, they were nevertheless not too far off the mark as we shall proceed to demonstrate.

According to the Greek writer Isocrates:

“Noble indeed are these achievements—yea, and appropriate to those who dispute over the hegemony. But of the same breed as those which have been mentioned, and of such a kind as would naturally be expected of men descended from such ancestors, are the deeds of those who fought against Darius and Xerxes. For when that greatest of all wars broke out and a multitude of dangers presented themselves **at one and the same time**, when our enemies regarded themselves as irresistible because of their numbers and our allies thought themselves endowed with a courage which could not be excelled, we outdid them both, surpassing each in the way appropriate to each; and having proved our superiority in meeting all dangers, we were straightway awarded the meed [i.e. reward] of valor, and we obtained,

¹²⁷ *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Yomah 9a and Arachin 12b, Soncino English Translation.

¹²⁸ *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Avodah Zarah 9a, Soncino English Translation.

¹²⁹ Ezra. 3:8.

¹³⁰ Ezra 6:15.

¹³¹ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* p.33, Gerard Gertoux. Michael Jursa read the date of Xerxes’ accession as Year 36, but the original clearly shows Year 26. (*Das Archiv des Bel-Remanni* in Uitgaven Van Het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul vol 86 (1999), pp.138, 206-207, Tafeln VII, XXIV.)

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not long after, the sovereignty of the sea by the willing grant of the Hellenes at large and without protest from those who now seek to wrest it from our hands.”¹³²

Because it is **assumed** that Xerxes started reigning immediately after Darius, this statement by Isocrates which suggests that Darius and Xerxes were fighting together in the same war, is overlooked. It has been **assumed** that the battles of Marathon (490 BCE) and Salamis (480 BCE) are dated ten years apart. Now that we know that Xerxes I was inaugurated as king of Persia in the 26th year of his father, it means that the battles of Marathon and Salamis must have occurred in the very same year. This in turn reveals how unreliable the Greek historical records, which would date the events ten years apart, actually are. They were clearly using the Persian records as a framework for the reconstruction of the Greek history, not appreciating the extent of co-regency which took place between these two kings.

This realisation, that Xerxes I became king whilst his father was still alive, is also confirmed by Herodotus, though he suggests that the co-regency only lasted for a year – two at the most:

“After declaring Xerxes king, Darius was intent on his expedition. But in the year after this and the revolt of Egypt, death came upon him in the midst of his preparations, after a reign of six and thirty years in all, and it was not granted to him to punish either the revolted Egyptians or the Athenians.”¹³³

This record of a revolt by Egypt is also interesting, as this was supposed to have occurred, with the assistance of the Athenians, at the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes I. (We shall discuss this in more detail shortly.)

Xerxes I was succeeded by Artaxerxes, who is understood to have reigned for 41 years. An Elephantine papyrus tells us that Artaxerxes ascended the throne immediately after Xerxes:

“...year 21 (of Xerxes the king), the beginning of the reign when Artaxerxes the king sat on his throne...”¹³⁴

It should here be mentioned that Artaxerxes is not here called son. The relationship between Xerxes I and his successor will also be discussed shortly.

The suggestion by Diodorus that a Hyrcanian by the name of Artaban (variant Artabanus) killed Xerxes I and claimed the throne for himself, is not borne out by the documented evidence from this period which suggests that the transition from Xerxes I to his successor Artaxerxes I was smooth and without incident,¹³⁵ though one inscription from Babylon suggests otherwise:

“In the area of the four rear stars of Sagittarius it was eclipsed. Month VI was intercalary. Month V, the 14?, ‘Xer’xes — his son killed him.”¹³⁶

This tantalising inscription is too fragmentary for us to be able to come to any conclusive interpretation. For one thing, the name Xerxes is only partially preserved. Also, we cannot be

¹³² Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 4.71-2.

¹³³ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.4.

¹³⁴ *The Elephantine Papyri in English, Three Millennia of Cross Cultural Continuity and Change* Papyrus B24 (*Withdrawal of Land*) on p.158, Bezalel Porten et al, (also in *Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui* (DMOA), *Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and Civilisation* Vol. XXII), E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands 1996. (ISBN: 90-04-10197-7)

¹³⁵ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* op. cit. p.49ff.

¹³⁶ BM 32234. See *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* op. cit. p.37.

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sure which Xerxes is being referred to. By its very nature, any interpretation of this short text would have to be speculative.

The evidence suggests, however, that the Greeks have confused Artaban/Artabanus with Bardiya, the successor to Cambyses. As Cambyses is called Achashverosh (AV Ahasuerus) in the book of Ezra,¹³⁷ this being equivalent to the Greek name Xerxes, there seems every likelihood that the Greeks have confused the two periods. Knowing this, the aforesaid inscription might very well refer to the death of Cambyses-Xerxes.

The Greek writers disagree on how Cambyses died. In *The Behistun Inscription*, Darius I informs us that Cambyses died “by his own hand”,¹³⁸ or, using Rawlinson’s translation, “...Cambyses, unable to endure his (misfortunes) died”.¹³⁹ According to Edwin Norris, the Scythian translation of *The Behistun Inscription* has, “...and the Cambyses killing himself(?) was killed”.¹⁴⁰ Ctesias tells us that Cambyses, despondent from the loss of family members, stabbed himself in the thigh while working with a piece of wood. He died eleven days later from the wound.¹⁴¹ Herodotus tells us that, while mounting his horse, the tip of his scabbard broke and his sword pierced his thigh. He then died of gangrene and mortification of the wound.¹⁴²

All of this demonstrates how the Greek writers’ accounts often contradicted each other. Marc Van De Mieroop is even of the opinion that Cambyses was “probably assassinated either by Bardiya or by Darius [Hystaspes], a high military commander who subsequently killed Bardiya”.¹⁴³ This would then reinforce the suggestion that the aforesaid inscription refers to the death of Cambyses rather than to Xerxes I, son of Darius I.

There again, in order to present a balanced view, if Xerxes was born **after** Darius I was inaugurated as king, as argued by Herodotus, then he must have been no older than 25 years of age when he ascended the throne in the 26th year of his father’s reign. As he ruled for 21 years, then he must have been around 46 years of age at death. One therefore wonders what the cause of his premature death could have been. It is possible that Xerxes I was indeed murdered.

The book of Nehemiah mentions year 20 as well as year 32 of Artaxerxes,¹⁴⁴ this undoubtedly being the Artaxerxes who succeeded Xerxes I. Eliashib, the grandson of Joshua (also called Jeshua),¹⁴⁵ is recorded as high priest during the reign of this king.¹⁴⁶ At the beginning of Artaxerxes’ reign, we are told that Tobiah the Ammonite was ruling from Samaria,¹⁴⁷ the city which was once the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Tobiah is twice called “the

¹³⁷ Ezra 4:6.

¹³⁸ *The Sculptures and Inscription of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistûn in Persia* p.9, Leonard William King and Reginald Campbell Thompson, British Museum publication, London 1907

¹³⁹ *The Behistun Inscription* Col. 1, para. 11, in xxviii of the English Translation, H.C. Rawlinson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 10 (1848).

¹⁴⁰ *Memoir on the Scythic Version of the Behistun Inscription* p.100, Edwin Norris, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 15 (1855).

¹⁴¹ As preserved by Photius, *Library* 72.

¹⁴² Herodotus, *Histories* 3.64-66.

¹⁴³ *A History of the Ancient Near East: ca. 3000-323BC* (Second Edition), p.290, Marc Van De Mieroop, Blackwell Publishing, USA 2007. ISBN-10: 1-4051-4911-6 & ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-4911-2

¹⁴⁴ Year 20 in Neh. 2:1. Year 32 in Neh. 5:14.

¹⁴⁵ Neh. 12:10.

¹⁴⁶ Neh. 3:1 & 13:28.

¹⁴⁷ Compare Neh. 2:10 with Neh. 4:1-7 (or 3:34 to 4:1 in the Hebrew Bible).

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servant” (הַעֲבָד) in the book of Nehemiah.¹⁴⁸ He was a Persian satrap. This and the fact that Nehemiah was still a servant to Artaxerxes the king in Persia shows that the land was still at that time under Persian domination.

“But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king”¹⁴⁹

This statement can only be referring to Artaxerxes I or to Artaxerxes II. Note, however, that Artaxerxes is here specifically referred to as king of Babylon.

The Jewish Perspective

As for Eliashib’s successors who were high priests, Josephus could tell us no more than the following:

“When Eliashib the high priest was dead, his son Judas (Joiadda) succeeded in the high priesthood; and when he was dead, his son John (Johanan) took that dignity”¹⁵⁰

The period was so obscure that he could tell us nothing of significance of their priesthood. We do not even know how long they officiated as high priests.

We should bear in mind that the dates preserved in the Talmud are only estimates. It is argued in Rabbinical sources, for example, that Solomon’s temple lasted for 410 years,¹⁵¹ whereas, Josephus argued that it was destroyed “four hundred and seventy years, six months, and ten days after it was built”.¹⁵² Both of these dates are conjectural. Even the 410 years is optimistic. Whilst this figure seems to allow for the 16 years co-regency which took place between Azariah and his son Jotham¹⁵³ (which co-regency, for some strange reason, the Biblical chronology does not take into consideration, as Jotham’s 16 year reign is placed immediately after that of his father’s), it does not take into account all the other co-regencies which took place. When you take all of these into consideration, we are talking more in the region of 350 years, but even this is conjectural because we simply do not have enough information to make accurate calculations.

According to the *Seder Olam Zutta* (סדר עולם זוטא), an anonymous chronicle dating from around 804 CE, it was 400 years from the time Isaac was born until the time Israel came out of Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness, and then 850 years until the time Judah was taken into captivity.¹⁵⁴ As the temple was built in the 4th year of Solomon 480 years after they came out

¹⁴⁸ Neh. 2:10 and 2:19.

¹⁴⁹ Neh. 13:6.

¹⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.7.1.

¹⁵¹ *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Sanhedrin 38a, fn. 21, Soncino English Translation.

¹⁵² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.8.5.

¹⁵³ “And the LORD smote the king [i.e. Azariah], so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king’s son was over the house, judging the people of the land.” (2 Kings 15:5)

¹⁵⁴ *Seder Olam Zutta* Chap. 1, §.1-2 (א-ב)

משנולד יצחק אבינו עד שיצאנו ישראל ממצרים ארבע מאות שנה. היא שנה ב' אלפים תמ"ח ליצירה. וארבעים שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר. היא שנת ב' אלפים תפ"ח ליצירה. ושמונה מאות וחמישים שנה משבאו לארץ ועד שגלו ממנה. היא שנת ג' אלפים של"ח ליצירה. שבעים שנה גלות בבל בין בית ראשון לבנין בית אחרון. היא שנת ג' אלפים ת"ח ליצירה. בנין בית אחרון עמד ד' מאות ועשרים שנה ונחרב. היא שנת ג' אלפים תתכ"ח ליצירה.

Translation (mine): “From the birth of our forefather Isaac until Israel left Egypt was four hundred years. This is year 2,448 from Creation. And for 40 years was Israel in the wilderness. This is year 2,488 from Creation. And there were 850 years from the time Israel entered the [Promised] Land until they were exiled. This is year 3,338 from Creation. There were 70 years of exile in Babylon between the first temple and the construction of the latter [i.e. second] temple. This is year 3,408 from Creation. The latter [second] temple stood for 420 years and was then destroyed. This is year 3,828 of Creation.”

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of the land of Egypt, this means that it was built 440 years after they entered the Promised Land. This means that the Jews calculated a period of 410 years from the time Solomon's temple was built until the time they were taken captive. (i.e. 850 - 440 = 410 years). We are then told that the temple lay desolate for 70 years until the time of Darius I king of Persia. All of this is clearly based on the pivotal dates provided in the Bible, which in turn have to be interpreted correctly before we can make sense of the information recorded therein. As already stated above, the 410 years from the time of King Solomon until the time Judah was taken into captivity does not take into consideration the co-regencies which took place.

It is worth repeating that:

“The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius [III] the Persian.”¹⁵⁵

According to Josephus, who called Joiada Judas and Johanan John,¹⁵⁶ Jaddua was the high priest who lived during the time of Alexander the Great.¹⁵⁷

“Now when John had departed this life, his son Jaddua succeeded in the high priesthood. He had a brother, whose name was Manasseh. Now there was one Sanballat, who was sent by Darius, **the last king [of Persia]**, into Samaria. He was a Cuthean by birth; of which stock were the Samaritans also. This man knew that the city Jerusalem was a famous city, and that their kings had given a great deal of trouble to the Assyrians, and the people of Coele-Syria; so that he willingly gave his daughter, whose name was Nicaso, in marriage to Manasseh, as thinking this alliance by marriage would be a pledge and security that the nation of the Jews should continue their good-will to him.”¹⁵⁸

There appear, however, to be a number of chronological inconsistencies in what Josephus tells us. It should be stressed that Josephus dated Nehemiah to the time of Xerxes I.¹⁵⁹ He also identified Artaxerxes I as the king who married Esther,¹⁶⁰ this presumably because Plutarch informs us that Artaxerxes married Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus the Great.¹⁶¹ He probably interpreted the name Atossa as a transliteration of the name Hadassah, this being Esther's Hebrew name.¹⁶² We have already put forward cogent arguments, however, for claiming that Esther was queen to Xerxes I.

According to the accepted chronological framework, Sanballat was a contemporary of Artaxerxes, the successor to Xerxes I, and was on friendly terms with the high priest Eliashib. Josephus' statement that Menasseh, the brother of Yaddua (Jaddua), married Sanballat's daughter is, on the face of it, in contradiction to the Biblical account which states:

“And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.”¹⁶³

The Bible does not mention the name of the person who married Sanballat's daughter. Josephus gives his name as Menasses (i.e. Menashe), but makes him a brother of Yaddua (Jaddua) – hence grandson of Yoiada (Joiada) – rather than a brother of Yohanan (Johanan)

¹⁵⁵ Neh. 12:22.

¹⁵⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.7.1.

¹⁵⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.7.2 to 11.8.8.

¹⁵⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.7.2. (Emphasis mine.) (11.302 in Loeb.)

¹⁵⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.5.6.

¹⁶⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.6.1-13

¹⁶¹ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 23.

¹⁶² Esth. 2:7.

¹⁶³ Neh. 13:28.

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of the previous generation. Bear in mind that Yaddua was the son of Yohanan who in turn was the son of Yoiada (Joiada) who in turn was the son of Eliashib the high priest. Eliashib appears to have been of the same generation as Sanballat, so the suggestion that Eliashib's great-grandson married Sanballat's daughter is somewhat stretching credibility.

The suggestion that this occurred during the reign of Darius, "the last king" of Persia, is generally rejected because Darius III, who is considered to have been the last king, supposedly lived around 100 years later. Sanballat is recorded as being alive in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes I.¹⁶⁴ This Artaxerxes (usually identified as Artaxerxes I) is said to have ruled for 41 years. Sanballat would by this time have been well-advanced in age. He certainly would not have lived another 100 years into the reign of Darius III. On the face of it, there is nothing in Josephus' report which seems tenable. Or is there?

Although the Jewish sources are not totally reliable, what we are about to demonstrate is that the alternative records in which we are placing so much confidence are even less reliable.

Distortion of History

According to Josephus, it was during the time of Yohanan that Bagoses, one of Artaxerxes' generals, polluted the temple, and imposed tributes on the Jews. The name Bagoses is the Greek form of the name which appears in the Elephantine Papyri as Bagavahya. He is there called 'governor of Judah' and is clearly to be identified as the person Herodotus called Boges (Βόγης) or Bogen (Βόγην).¹⁶⁵ He was a general in the army of the Artaxerxes who succeeded Xerxes I. Yohanan (Johanan) is also recorded at this time as high priest in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁶ This tells us that Yohanan became high priest during the reign of Artaxerxes, who we have assumed to be Artaxerxes I.

"Yohanan, Eliašib's grandson, is dated by the same papyri to 410 and Darius II (423-405). According to Cross, « unless the name of Darius in *Ne[hemiah]* 12:22 is added by a late editor », Yohanan's son, Yaddua [AV Jaddua], was also high priest during the reign of Darius II, at the earliest by 405, the last year of his reign. That is, if Nehemiah was the author of his book, and was governor in 445, he could not have referred to Darius III who became king in 335, over one hundred years later. The Darius named in *Ne* 12:22 would have to be Darius II."¹⁶⁷

According to John Wilson Betlyon, who was in turn quoting Leo Mildenburg, "coinage was [first] struck in Judea, under Persian authority, soon after the year 400 B.C.E.",¹⁶⁸ adding that "Judah's mint operated from the period ca. 370 until the first revolt of the Phoenicians, in which part Judah participated".¹⁶⁹ If we follow our arguments to a logical conclusion, this minting of coins would have started about the time the Jews started to return from Babylon.

¹⁶⁴ Compare Neh. 2:1 and 2:10.

¹⁶⁵ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.107.

¹⁶⁶ *The Elephantine Papyri in English, Three Millennia of Cross Cultural Continuity and Change* Papyrus B19 (*Request for Letter of Recommendation (First Draft)*) on p.158, Bezalel Porten et al, (also in *Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui (DMOA)*, Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and Civilisation Vol. XXII), E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands 1996. (ISBN: 90-04-10197-7)

¹⁶⁷ *A Silver Coin of Yohanan Hakkôhen* p.68, Lisbeth Soss Fried, *Transeuphratène* 26 (2003).

¹⁶⁸ *The Provincial Government of Persian Period Judea and the Yehud Coins* p.636, John Wilson Betlyon, *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 105, No. 4 (Dec. 1986)

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.638.

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What is even more amazing is that Yohanan and his son Yaddua are attested both during the time of Darius II king of Persia **and** during the time of Darius III, both being considered “periods of revolt or subversive activity on the part of Judea against Persian hegemony”.¹⁷⁰

A silver coin bearing the name of Johanan the High Priest has been found and dated to the time of Darius III:

“Because it is unlikely for Yaddua to have been high priest from 405 to 333, scholars conclude that some names must have dropped out of the Biblical text. Based on evidence of the phenomenon of papponymy¹⁷¹ in contemporaneous Samaritan papyri (in which the son is named after the grandfather), Cross suggests that a second Yoḥanan and Yaddua father-son pair were omitted from the Biblical list due to haplography. Most scholars concur, and assume that a second Yoḥanan, high priest in 410 (revealed in the Bible and the Elephantine papyri), and another toward the end of Persian rule (revealed in the coin and Josephus).”¹⁷²

Notice how, rather than challenge the accepted chronology, scholars would rather attack the integrity of the Jewish records. The thought of reconsidering the Persian chronology does not even come into the equation! The argument that the Jews must have been completely unaware of at least two whole generations of high priests is madness. Bear in mind that the Jews ceremoniously buried their dead in tombs. Josephus would have known if there were two pairs of high priests with the same identical names.

It should be noted that the Yohanan coin is of the same type as those of Cilicia bearing the name Pharnabazus, a Persian general of the time of Artaxerxes II.¹⁷³ Another serious consequence of this idea that there were two high priests with the names Yehonatan and Yaddua at this later date is that Bagoses also appears during both of these supposedly separate periods. As Fried aptly puts it:

“Scholars question whether the Jōannēs and Bagōsēs in Josephus refer to the Yoḥanan and Bagavahya of the Elephantine papyri. Williamson suggests they are not the same, even if the same names lie behind both renditions. He argues that Josephus had a reliable source for the incident but misinterpreted it... Williamson argues that another Bagoses, a Persian general of Artaxerxes III, a vicious eunuch (Diodorus XVII: 3), better fits Josephus’ source. Following Cross, he argues for supplementing the Biblical high priest list with another Yoḥanan-Yaddua pair who would have been high priests during the time of Artaxerxes III (358-338).”¹⁷⁴

As we can plainly see, we are now at the point where the number of coincidences starts to ring alarm bells! As I have already said; scholars are quick to criticise the Biblical text, but no one, it seems, is prepared to challenge the Persian chronology!

We have a coin with a portrait of Darius – **assumed** to be Darius II. We also have a representation of Darius III in a floor mosaic, known as the Alexander Mosaic, originally from the House of the Faun in Pompeii, but this is dated to 100 BCE, which is around two centuries after the event, so is unlikely to be an accurate representation. If we look at the coin of Darius, we find that the aquiline profile is clearly emphasised. Rightly or wrongly, an aquiline nose is often regarded as a Jewish trait. It is also interesting to note that the mosaic shows Darius III with a relatively short beard, otherwise it would be flowing out from under his

¹⁷⁰ The Provincial Government of Persian Period Judea and the Yehud Coins op. cit. pp.639-40.

¹⁷¹ A papponymic is a personal name based on the name of one’s grandfather, similar to a patronymic, a name derived from the name of one’s father.

¹⁷² *A Silver Coin of Yohanan Hakkôhen* p.69, Lisbeth Soss Fried, *Transeuphratène* 26 (2003).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* pp.69-70.

¹⁷⁴ *A Silver Coin of Yohanan Hakkôhen* p.84, Lisbeth Soss Fried, *Transeuphratène* 26 (2003).

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Coin of Darius – assumed to be Darius II



Darius III from Alexander Mosaic ca. 100 CE.

helmet. This is in contrast to the long, thick beards which we see in the representations of the Persian kings Artaxerxes I and II.

The pointed beard in the representation on the coin is an unusual feature. The style does not appear to be Persian. A pointed beard was an Israelite practise based on the law of Moses which forbids the cutting of “the corner” (פִּי'וֹת *pei'ot*) of the beard,¹⁷⁵ which in itself supports the Talmudic teaching that Darius III was the son of Esther.

The most important piece of evidence, which is often dismissed too lightly, is a tablet [BRM 2 51] dating to the time of Alexander the Great, which mentions an unknown king of Persia whose name is read as Arsuka. This name causes serious complications for the conventional understanding of history. As T. Boiy writes:

“BRM 2 51 has been known for a long time already and its date formula ‘mu-6-kám ^mar-³-si-*uq-qa* lugal’ has always been linked to the Arsacid period, even though it was clear that the tablet was completely different from the other cuneiform tablets from Hellenistic Uruk. Recently Joannès (2001) published four new texts from Larsa dated to the late Achaemenid and early Hellenistic period from the British Museum together with one text from the Larsa excavations during the eighties. He found several prosopographical links between BRM 2 51 and these texts. According to Joannès the title ‘lugal’ connected with year 6 could only refer to Darius III or Alexander the Great. Because the royal name mentioned in BRM 2 51 can in no way be interpreted as Darius or Alexander, Joannès concludes that this formula refers to someone unknown for the moment, but who must be dated to the transitional period between Achaemenid rule and the rule of Alexander.”¹⁷⁶

Arsuka (Greek Arsaces) was the name by which the Greeks knew Artaxerxes II. We are about to demonstrate that Artaxerxes I Longimanus was the king known as Bardiya and Artaxerxes II was the king who actually succeeded Xerxes I (son of Darius I). The Darius who ‘succeeded’ Artaxerxes II was the king who was defeated by Alexander the Great, this being the person we have called Darius III. Artaxerxes II Arsaces is also the king called Bessus by Arrian. The

¹⁷⁵ Lev. 21:5. The interpretation by Jews that this commandment refers to the curls (*pei'ot*) on the sides of the head is modern and assumes that the Hebrew, which is ‘corner’ in the singular, should be read as ‘corners’ in the plural, which reading is not supported by the Biblical text.

¹⁷⁶ *Between High and Low: A Chronology of the Early Hellenistic Period* p.26, Tom Boiy, Verlag Antike e.K, Frankfurt 2007. (ISBN-13 978-3-938032-20-6)

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name Bessus is **not** Persian!¹⁷⁷ You will not find the name Bessus either in the Persian or the Babylonian records. It is a name the Greeks gave him. This means that many of the Persian kings prior to Alexander the Great have been wrongly identified and wrongly dated!

Add to this the fact that:

“Babylonian texts show a drastic change in volume and distribution. Classicatory surveys of epistolary, legal, and administrative texts list more than 3,300 published items from the reigns of Cyrus II through Darius I, a period of about 50 years; the largest groups come from temple archives at Uruk, in southern Babylonia, and at Sippar, in the north. The same surveys list fewer than nine hundred published texts from the reigns of Xerxes I through Darius III, that is, from the last 150 years of Achaemenid rule.”¹⁷⁸

This itself calls for a radical reconsideration of the chronology of this period.

Cyrus the Younger – the Key to Our Understanding

The various stories concerning the death of Cyrus the Younger are just as convoluted as those of most of the other Persian kings. The story of how he wandered for three years around north Syria, Armenia and Anatolia, purportedly gathering troops to overthrow his brother Artaxerxes II Arsaces, is reported by Xenophon and all writers after him. Yet, according to Plutarch, “as regards the death of Cyrus himself, since Xenophon makes simple and brief mention of it, because he was not present himself when it happened, there is no objection perhaps to my recounting, first what Deinon says about it, and then what Ctesias says”.¹⁷⁹ In other words, the Greek writers themselves disagreed on the circumstances surrounding his death.

Thucydides barely mentions him other than in one phrase where he describes him as “the king’s son, Cyrus, who furnished the funds for the Peloponnesian navy”.¹⁸⁰ Neither the works of Ctesias nor of Deinon have survived, so we do not know how much is the embellishment of later writers. As Plutarch himself noticed, the accounts given by Ctesias and Deinon are at variance with one another, which is why he has given the reader both sides of the story.

The Talmud contains the following tradition:

“It has been taught: ‘Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes were all one. He was called Cyrus because he was a worthy king; Artaxerxes after his realm; while Darius was his own name...’”¹⁸¹

People wrongly assume that this is a reference to Cyrus II the Great, the king who issued the decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. But Cyrus II is not known to have used either of these alternative names. If Cyrus the Younger was Darius III, this places a whole new perspective on our understanding of the history of this period. The three years’ wanderings of Cyrus the Younger will be the three years of the life of Darius III after being

¹⁷⁷ The name Bessus was probably Thracian. See comments by Bruce Manning Metger, *New Testament Tools and Studies* Vol. X, p.135, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1980 – quoting from *L’Etymologie de nom de le tribu Thrace Βησσαίοι Bessi*” *Thracia*, pp.135-8 by Todur Serafov who reckons the word means “interpreter, prophet or sorcerer”.

¹⁷⁸ *Entrepreneurs and Empire, The Murašu Archive, the Murašu Firm, and Persian Rule in Babylonia* p.10, Matthew W. Stolper, Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, R A Leiden, Nederland 1985. (ISBN: 90-6258-054-8.)

¹⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 9.

¹⁸⁰ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 2.65.

¹⁸¹ *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Rosh HaShana 3b, Soncino English Translation.

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conquered by Alexander the Great. That Darius III was known as Artaxerxes is confirmed by the astronomical tablets from Babylon quoted below.

In the one story, Cyrus is killed by Artaxerxes II Arsaces, in the other, Darius III is killed by Artaxerxes V Bessus. The Greeks would have certainly not made the connection between Bessus and Artaxerxes, so the story has become disjointed and disconnected from its true position in history. According to this reconstruction, Artaxerxes II Arsaces is the king who Arrian called Bessus. Remember that Bessus is not a Persian name. Bear in mind also that an inscription which we discussed earlier (BRM 2 51) places Arsaces as a contemporary of Alexander the Great.

The death of Cyrus according to Deinon as reported by Plutarch:

“The king [Artaxerxes] himself hit him [Cyrus] **with a spear**, and he was [also] hit by the attendants of the king. Thus Cyrus fell, as some say, by a wound at the hands of the king, but as sundry others have it, from the blow of a Carian, who was rewarded by the king for this exploit with the privilege of always carrying a golden cock upon his spear in front of the line during an expedition; for the Persians call the Carians themselves cocks, because of the crests with which they adorn their helmets.”¹⁸²

Plutarch, quoting from Ctesias, then proceeds to give an even more convoluted explanation of the death of Cyrus:

“In this group were certain Caunians, low-living paupers who followed the king's army to perform menial tasks, who happened to mingle with Cyrus' men, as if they were friends. With some difficulty, they recognized the crimson tunics and since the royal forces wore white tunics, realized these men were the enemy. One of these men had the audacity to strike Cyrus from behind with his spear without knowing who he was. The blow ruptured the artery in his hamstring causing him to fall, hit his wounded temple on a rock, and die... ..But the turban of Cyrus fell from his head, and a young Persian, Mithridates by name, running to his side, **smote him with his spear in the temple**, near the eye, not knowing who he was.”¹⁸³

All of these explanations are contrived, being based on information received from unreliable sources. Plutarch records:

“But the turban of Cyrus fell from his head, and a young Persian, Mithridates by name, running to his side, **smote him with his spear in the temple**, near the eye, not knowing who he was.”¹⁸⁴

This narrative of the multiple wounding by a number of spears is echoed in the story of the death of Darius III as related by Plutarch, who used the word javelins:

“So, then, all were alike ready and willing; but only sixty, they say, were with Alexander when he burst into the camp of the enemy. There, indeed, they rode over much gold and silver that was thrown away, passed by many waggons full of women and children which were coursing hither and thither without their drivers, and pursued those who were foremost in flight, thinking that Dareius [i.e. Darius III] was among them. But at last they found him lying in a waggon, **his body all full of javelins**, at the point of death.”¹⁸⁵

We are told that, despite being killed by either a Carian or by Mithradites, Artaxerxes claimed the honour of killing Cyrus the Younger himself.¹⁸⁶ The following account of the death of

¹⁸² Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 10 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸³ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 11 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸⁴ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 11 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸⁵ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 43 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸⁶ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 14.

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Cyrus as recorded by Plutarch is extremely enlightening:

“When Cyrus was now dead, Artasyras, the king’s eye, chanced to pass by on horseback, and recognizing the eunuchs as they lamented, he asked the trustiest of them, ‘Who is this man, Pariscas, by whom thou sittest mourning?’ And Pariscas answered: ‘O Artasyras, dost thou not see Cyrus dead?’ Astonished at this, then, Artasyras bade the eunuch be of good courage and guard the dead body, but he himself went in hot haste to Artaxerxes (who had already given up his cause for lost, and besides was physically in a wretched plight from thirst and from his wound), and joyfully told him that with his own eyes he had seen Cyrus dead. At first the king promptly set out to go in person to the place, and ordered Artasyras to conduct him thither; but since there was much talk about the Greeks, **and it was feared that they were pursuing and conquering and making themselves masters everywhere**, he decided to send a larger company to see where Cyrus lay.”¹⁸⁷

Those Greeks who were “conquering and making themselves masters everywhere” were the armies of Alexander the Great! By disassociating Cyrus the Younger from Darius III, we have accepted a corrupted picture of history where the invasion of the Greeks is pushed back by more than a hundred years from its true place in history!

Photius informs us:

“Cyrus having revolted against his brother collected an army composed of both Greeks and barbarians. **Clearchus was in command of the Greeks.**”¹⁸⁸

Arrian informs us that Clearchus was one of Alexander the Great’s generals who was “put in command of the Grecian auxiliaries”!¹⁸⁹ It is also possible that Menon the Thessalian, who accompanied Cyrus,¹⁹⁰ was the person called “Menon son of Cerdimmas” who was appointed viceroy of Coele-Syria by Alexander the Great.¹⁹¹ The statement by Plutarch that Clearchus was ordered to assist Cyrus by the Lacedaemonians¹⁹² must therefore be challenged. Being one of Alexander the Great’s generals, Clearchus must have been commanded by Alexander to guard and protect Cyrus aka Darius.

According to Ctesias, as recorded by Photius, Cyrus the Younger was beheaded on the order of Artaxerxes II.¹⁹³ From this rumour comes the story as preserved by Plutarch that Darius was executed either by Artaxerxes or by some other unnamed executioner.¹⁹⁴ The evidence shows, however, that all of this is contrived. Cyrus, alias Darius III, probably died of his wounds on the battlefield.

This immediately raises a lot of questions. When Darius III was defeated by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus, we hear nothing more about him until his death. If Clearchus was one of Alexander the Great’s generals, then we have to ask ourselves why he was fighting on the side of Darius III. This suggests that, when defeated, Darius joined forces with Alexander the Great. This would then provide a better explanation as to why Alexander was upset when he heard of Darius’ death and gave him a special burial.¹⁹⁵ It would also explain why Darius

¹⁸⁷ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 12 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸⁸ Photius, *Library* 72 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸⁹ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 3.6.

¹⁹⁰ Photius, *Library* 72 & Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 27.

¹⁹¹ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.13.

¹⁹² Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 6.

¹⁹³ Photius, *Library* 72 & Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 16.

¹⁹⁴ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 29.

¹⁹⁵ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 3.22

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had Greek mercenaries in his army.¹⁹⁶ Yet none of the Greek writers record this alliance between Darius III and Alexander the Great!

Having shown that Cyrus the Younger was Darius III:

- we have closed the 100 year gap in history.
- the teaching among academics that there were Greeks in Persia 100 years before the time of Alexander the Great, is now shown to be false.
- the scarcity of Babylonian texts for this period is now understandable.
- the suggestion, that another Yohanan and Yaddua father-son pair has been overlooked by the Jewish priests, can be dismissed.
- we have demonstrated just how contrived our present understanding of the Persian Achaemenid Period actually is. The separate reigns of Darius II, Xerxes II, Artaxerxes III and IV are all now shown to be spurious. As we shall proceed to demonstrate, all of these names have been duplicated!
- the idea that Josephus has confused the Bagoas of the time of Artaxerxes II with a similarly named Bagoas of the time of Alexander the Great can also be dismissed now that we have demonstrated that Artaxerxes II Arsaces and Artaxerxes V Bessus were one and the same person. Josephus was not wrong!

In an ancient document known as *The Voyage of Nearchus*, we are told that Bagoas the Persian (son of Pharnuches) was among the people who accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaign to India.¹⁹⁷ This will undoubtedly have been the very same Bagoas (var Bagoses) who was one of Artaxerxes II's generals and the governor of Judah. It is interesting to note that Bagoas was considered both a eunuch to Artaxerxes II and a eunuch to Alexander the Great! Once again, we find that what has been preserved by the Greeks is highly unreliable.

'Rewriting' the Persian Chronology

Astronomical tablets from Babylon supposedly give the following sequence of kings:

King (assumed)	Name according to astronomical tablets	Greek name (assumed)	Proposed corrections
Xerxes I	Ḫišiaršu	Xerxes	Cambyzes (Ahasuerus)
Artaxerxes I	Artakšatsu	Artoxerxes	Bardiya/Gaumata (Artaxerxes)
Darius II	Umakuš whose name is Darawušu	Ochos	Darius I son of Hystaspes
Artaxerxes II	Aršu, whose name is Artakšatsu	Arsakes (??)	Xerxes IB?

¹⁹⁶ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 3.21.

¹⁹⁷ *The Voyage of Nearchus and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* Indus XVIII, p.26, William Vincent, Oxford University Press, 1809.

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King (assumed)	Name according to astronomical tablets	Greek name (assumed)	Proposed corrections
Artaxerxes III	Umakuš, whose name is Artakšatsu	Ochos	Darius I?
Artaxerxes IV	Aršu, son of Umasu	Arses	Artaxerxes II?
Darius III	Artakšatsu, whose name is Dariyawuš	Darios	Darius II/III

If we can recall, in the book of Ezra, Cambyses was called Achashverosh (Ahasuerus),¹⁹⁸ a name which, when transliterated into Greek, becomes Xerxes. According to this reconstruction, Cambyses would be the king called 𐎧𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 in the above list. For the sake of clarity, we shall henceforth refer to him as Xerxes IA and the similarly named son of Darius I Hystaspes as Xerxes IB. (For the purpose of this exercise, we shall ignore the fact that Cyaxares, the father of Harpagus (i.e. Darius the Mede), was also known as Xerxes.)

Secondly, Bardiya (also known as Gaumata) appears in the book of Ezra as Artachshasta (Artaxerxes).¹⁹⁹ This would then be the king called Artakšatsu above. Again, for the sake of clarity, we shall call him Artaxerxes IA, whilst the similarly named Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes IB, we shall call Artaxerxes IB. By the process of elimination, “Umakuš whose name is Darawuš” is therefore to be identified as Darius I whose throne name is unknown. Whilst Herodotus called him Darius Hystaspes, the name Hystaspes is in reality the name of his father²⁰⁰ and not an alternative throne name. The fact that Ctesias accredits Darius Ochus with 35 years of reign²⁰¹ seems to confirm this identification of Darius I as Ochus. (Note that Darius I is actually understood to have ruled for 36 years, but the Greeks rarely got the lengths of reign correct. Ctesias did well to come close. It is possible that the 36 years is the rounded-up figure. The Babylonians, whose records Ctesias may have utilised, usually rounded these dates down.)

According to Photius, who was quoting from Ctesias:

“Darius [I Hystaspes] then returned to Persia, where, after having offered sacrifice, he died after **an illness of thirty days**, in the seventy-second year of his age and the thirty-first of his reign.”²⁰²

For this exercise, it is immaterial as to whether or not this statement is true. (As stated above, most other writers accredit Darius I with a reign of 36 years.) The fact of the matter is that the Greeks were recording every little snippet of hearsay. The result is a highly fabricated and confusing piece of history.

Herodotus records:

“But while Darius [I Hystaspes] was making preparations against Egypt and Athens, **a great quarrel arose among his sons concerning the chief power in the land**. They held that before his army marched he must declare an heir to the kingship according to Persian law. **Three sons** had been born to Darius before he became king by his first wife, the daughter of

¹⁹⁸ Ezra 4:6.

¹⁹⁹ Ezra 4:7.

²⁰⁰ Herodotus, *Histories* i.183.

²⁰¹ Ctesias, *Persika* Book 19.

²⁰² Photius, *Library* 72 (emphasis mine).

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Gobryas, and four more after he became king by Atossa daughter of Cyrus. Artobazanes was the oldest of the earlier sons, Xerxes of the later; and as sons of different mothers they were rivals. Artobazanes pleaded that he was the oldest of all Darius' offspring and that it was everywhere customary that the eldest should rule; Xerxes argued that he was the son of Cyrus' daughter Atossa and that it was Cyrus who had won the Persians their freedom."²⁰³

Note that the war against Egypt is supposed to have occurred towards the end of his reign. This story that Darius died of an illness repeats itself for Darius II, with Xenophon informing us that:

"Darius [II] and Parysatis had **two sons** born to them, of whom the elder was Artaxerxes and the younger Cyrus. Now when Darius **lay sick and suspected that the end of his life was near**, he wished to have both his sons with him."²⁰⁴

Whilst Herodotus mentions three sons of Darius I, and Xenophon only records two for Darius II, the stories are effectively relating the self-same event. I would point out, however, that Cyrus the Younger was the son of Xerxes I and Amestris (i.e. Esther) – **not** of either Darius I or Darius II.

Parentage of Darius III

Bear in mind that the Greek writers would have us believe that Darius III was not descended from the earlier kings. We are informed by William Smith that Sisygambis, the "mother of Dareius Codomannus, king of Persia, appears to have been a daughter of Ostanes, a younger brother of Artaxerxes Mnemon, though some writers consider her as a daughter of Artaxerxes himself".²⁰⁵ The general consensus nowadays is that Sisygambis was the daughter of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, where Artaxerxes Mnemon is another name for Artaxerxes II Arsaces. The idea that Sisygambis was the name of Darius' mother seems to be traceable to Quintus Curtius Rufus of the first century CE.²⁰⁶ It should here be stressed, however, that Arrian, working from the records "which Ptolemy, son of Lagus, and Aristobulus, son of Aristobulus, agree in making",²⁰⁷ informs us that Darius III was the son of Artaxerxes.²⁰⁸

The following inscription, written on a gold tablet, has been assigned to Darius II, but should more correctly be assigned to Darius III:

"I am Darius the great king, king of kings, king of countries having many kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide, son of Artaxerxes the king, of Artaxerxes (who was) son of Xerxes the king, of Xerxes (who was) son of Darius the king, an Achaemenian."²⁰⁹

Notice how Darius II/III claimed to be descended from Xerxes I, son of Darius I Hystaspes. Even if we ignore the statement by Arrian that Darius III was the son of Artaxerxes, by making the connection that Darius II and Darius III were one and the same person, the suggestion by the Greek writers that Darius III was not of royal blood can therefore be shown to be spurious.

²⁰³ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.2 (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁴ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.1 (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁵ *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* Vol. 3, entry under Sisygambis on p.842, William Smith, Boston 1870.

²⁰⁶ Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 3.3.22.

²⁰⁷ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* Preface

²⁰⁸ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 1.16

²⁰⁹ *An Old Persian Text of Darius II (D2Ha)* p.170, Herbert H. Paper, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Oct - Dec 1952).

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Nevertheless, we should be asking why this tablet was made – especially on a tablet made of gold. Is it perhaps another in a long list of forgeries? Darius III was more correctly a son of Xerxes I and son-in-law of Artaxerxes IB/II. As we shall proceed to demonstrate, there is no way that Artaxerxes I or Artaxerxes II could possibly have been a son of Xerxes I.

If we follow this to its logical conclusion, Parysatis, who was purportedly the illegitimate daughter of Artaxerxes I and wife and half-sister to Darius II, was in fact the wife and half-sister of Darius III who supposedly ended up marrying Alexander the Great. It is **assumed** that this second Parysatis (often referred to as Parysatis II) was the daughter of Artaxerxes III Ochus, but you will not find any evidence in any of the classical writings to support this assumption. It seems to be based on the idea that she was the daughter of the Artaxerxes who preceded Darius III. If so, then we have just identified Darius III's predecessor as Artaxerxes II – **not** Artaxerxes III nor Artaxerxes IV.



Inscription of Darius king of Persia inscribed on a gold tablet - assumed to belong to Darius II. But is it a forgery?

Arrian informs us that:

“The camp of Darius [III] was taken forthwith at the first assault, containing his mother, his wife, – **who was also his sister**, – and his infant son.”²¹⁰

Most Greek writers do not name the mother or wife of Darius III, so it is interesting to note that Stateira, who also married Alexander the Great, is understood to have been the name of another of Darius' wives, though that particular Stateira is said to have died in childbirth and that Alexander the Great actually married Stateira II the daughter of Darius and Stateira I. Yet another Stateira, according to Plutarch, was supposedly the wife of Artaxerxes II,²¹¹ but all of these reports are highly contrived. When you look at the facts objectively, it all smacks

²¹⁰ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.11 (emphasis mine. See also Justin 11.9.)

²¹¹ Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* - numerous references, but see in particular verse 5: “But what gratified the Persians most of all was the sight of his [i.e. Artaxerxes'] wife Stateira's carriage, which always appeared with its curtains up, and thus permitted the women of the people to approach and greet the queen. This made her beloved of the common folk.”

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of invention. If Queen Esther was the mother of Darius III, as stated in the Talmudic records, then Arrian seems to be saying that Esther was accompanying Darius on his campaigns.

So where has it all gone wrong? Why is there so much confusion?

This is what has been interpreted from the Greek records:

Historian:	Herodotus	Ctesias	Manetho	Diodorus	Ptolemy	Clement	Eusebius	Sulpice
Cyrus II	29yrs	30yrs	9yrs		30yrs	9yrs	[30]yrs	31yrs
Cambyses II	7yrs 5m	18yrs	3-6yrs					7yrs
Bardiya	7mths	7mths	7mths					7mths
Darius I	36yrs	31yrs	36yrs		36yrs	46yrs	33yrs	36yrs
Xerxes I	??	??	21yrs	20yrs	21yrs	26yrs	11/20yrs	21yrs
Artaban	[-]	[-]	7mths	[-]			7mths	7mths
Artaxerxes I		42yrs	40/41yrs	40yrs	41yrs	41yrs	40yrs	41yrs
Xerxes II		45days	2mths	2mths			2mths	2mths
Sogdianos		6mths + 15days	7mths	7mths		7mths	7mths	7mths
Darius II		35yrs	19yrs	19yrs	19yrs	8yrs	19yrs	19yrs
Artaxerxes II		62yrs		43yrs	46yrs	42yrs	42yrs	62yrs
Artaxerxes III				23yrs	21yrs	3yrs	21yrs	23yrs
Artaxerxes IV					2yrs			
Darius III					4yrs			

Notice the many variations in the lengths of reign, as well as the omission of some names, which is typical of the Greek writers, though, to be fair, the Babylonian texts are just as bad. The later the writer, the more contrived the stories become, and the number of kings, as well as their relative order, changes. Note from the above list that Bardiya (Gaumata), Artaban and Sogdianos all supposedly ruled for 7 months. These entries all appear to be relating to one and the same king! We should not, however, put too much trust in these names, as it can be demonstrated that they have all been jumbled up by the Greek writers.

It is also interesting to note that the Egyptian 31st Dynasty “is not due to Manetho, but was added later to preserve the continuity, – perhaps with the use of material furnished by Manetho himself”.²¹² This dynasty purportedly consisted of three Persian kings; Ochus in the 20th year of his reign ruled [Egypt] for 2 years, Arses for 3 years and Darius for 4 years. This information is once again completely contrived! (Notice that Darius II Ochus is said to have only ruled for 19 years whilst the enigmatic Artaxerxes III Ochus, for which there is no

²¹² Manetho, p184, fn. 1, W.G. Waddell, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and William Heinemann Ltd, London 1964.

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archaeological evidence for his existence, is likewise understood to have ruled for only 20 years! So which Ochus is this supposedly referring to?)

Of particular interest to this thesis is the fact that Artaxerxes I and II are said, by the Greeks, to have ruled for roughly the same number of years. In Plutarch's work, *The Life of Artaxerxes*, he describes the life of Artaxerxes II Mnemon [Greek Μνήμων 'the mindful'] who "was at first called Arsicas; although Deinon gives the name as Oarses".²¹³ Arsicas is a variant spelling of Arsaces whilst Oarses is a variant spelling of Arsu or Arsames. We already have three different surnames for the one king! Having said that, Arsu appears more correctly to have been an alternative name for Xerxes IB.

Gerard Gertoux has come to the realisation that Plutarch's story of Artaxerxes was actually describing Artaxerxes I, but failed to make the connection that he was called Arsaces.²¹⁴ Plutarch would even have us believe that Ochus and Arsham ruled whilst Artaxerxes Arsaces/Arshu was still alive and were both killed before the aged king Artaxerxes died at the ripe old age of 94, having ruled for 62 years.²¹⁵ (Note that Arsham is a variant spelling of Arshu.) Plutarch informs us that Darius was beheaded for treason, though his sources differed as to whether he was beheaded by an executioner or by his father Artaxerxes. However, we have already demonstrated that both of these stories are false! Darius III was killed on the battlefield after being taken prisoner by Artaxerxes Arsaces/Bessus.

Using the Babylonian records, Gertoux goes on to demonstrate that Artaxerxes, the successor to Xerxes IB, actually reigned for 50 years, his last 9 years co-ruling with someone

year	month	year of reign		
434	1	X	40	Artaxerxes I
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I	41	
	5	II		Artaxerxes I / Darius B
	6	III		
	7	IV	0	
	8	V		
	9	VI		
	10	VII		
	11	VIII		
	12	IX		
433	1	X		(Artaxerxes I) / Darius B
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I	(42)	
	5	II	1	
	6	III		
	7	IV		
	8	V		
	9	VI		

List of dated tablets from Murašu showing that 'Darius B' (i.e. Darius III) started ruling from the 42nd year of Artaxerxes IB (i.e. Artaxerxes II Arsaces/Bessus).

²¹³ Plutarch, *The Life of Artaxerxes* 1.

²¹⁴ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* pp.54-56, Gerard Gertoux.

²¹⁵ Plutarch, *The Life of Artaxerxes* 30.

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Gertoux called Darius B.²¹⁶ As we now know that Darius II, the immediate 'successor' to 'Artaxerxes son of Xerxes IB', was in fact Darius III, who was killed by Artaxerxes [V] Bessus, then this 9 year reign belongs to Cyrus the Younger alias Darius III, the last three years being the time he purportedly spent wandering around Asia drumming up support to overthrow his brother.

It is generally accepted that Arshu (var. Arsames) was an alternative name both for Artaxerxes II as well as Artaxerxes IV, and Ochus an alternative name for Darius II as well as an otherwise enigmatic Artaxerxes III, which raises serious objections to the lengths of reigns left to us by the Greek writers. As Artaxerxes III Arshu supposedly reigned (according to the Greek writers) for 21 or 23 years (even though the latest attested date for this king is his 20th year), it is possible that the Greek writers have confused him with Xerxes IB, who is known to have ruled for 21 years immediately prior to Artaxerxes II. Basically, the whole of the latter part of the Persian chronology has been corrupted by the Greek writers and is a complete mess!

A Babylonian tablet (BM34576), which dates to around 99 BCE and is assumed to be a late copy, is a list of lunar eclipses and gives the sequence of kings shown in the table below. Having demonstrated that Nebuchadnezzar ruled for 45 years followed by 7 years of madness, counting 18 years from Nebuchadnezzar's 38th year of reign would take us to his 56th year. This would equate to the 4th year of Nabonidus alias Nebuchadnezzar as opposed to the 7th year as shown in the chart below (on next page). This alone reveals the contrived

²¹⁶ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* p.57, Gerard Gertoux.

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[38]	[^m d ⁿ à-níg-d] ^r ù ¹ -[uru ₃]	[18]	(567/66 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar II)
[7]	[^m d ⁿ]à-i	[18]	(549/48 B.C., Nabonidus)
[8]	[^m]ku-raš	1 ^r 8 ¹	(531/30 B.C., Cyrus)
[9]	^m da-ra-muš	1 ^r 8 ¹	(513/12 B.C., Darius I)
27	^m da-ra-muš	18	(495/94 B.C.)
9	^m hi-ši-ár-šú	18	(477/76 B.C., Xerxes)
6	^m ár-tak-šat-su	1 ^r 8 ¹	(459/58 B.C., Artaxerxes I)
[24]	[^m ár-tak-šat-s] ^r u ¹	[18]	(441/40 B.C.)
[1]	[^m]da-ra-muš	[18]	(423/22 B.C., Darius II)
19	^m da-ra-muš	1 ^r 8 ¹	(405/4 B.C.)
1 ^r 8 ¹	^m ár-tak-šat-su	1 ^r 8 ¹	(387/86 B.C., Artaxerxes II)
36	^m ár-tak-šat-su	18	(369/68 B.C.)
8	^m ú-ma-su	18	(351/50 B.C., Artaxerxes III)
3	^m da-ra-muš	18	(333/32 B.C., Darius III)
3	^m an-ti-gu	18	(315/14 B.C., Antigonus)
15	^m se	18	(297/96 B.C., Seleucus)
33	^m se	18	(279/78 B.C.)
1 ^r 5 ¹	^m se	18	(261/60 B.C.)
69	^m se	18	(243/42 B.C.)

Babylonian tablet BM34576

nature of this list. The suggestion that it is a copy of a much earlier list is an **assumption** which is unsupported by the facts. It **assumes** a sequence of kings which, by the first century BCE, had become canonical, but which sequence we are showing to be false.

In the production of this list, notice how an 18 year lunar cycle is assumed. Today, we have a 19 year lunar cycle. Whoever constructed the list was clearly unaware of this detail and this oversight was even noticed by Parker and Dubberstein:

“It may have been in the reign of Nabonassar, 747 B.C., that Babylonian astronomers began to recognize, as a result of centuries of observation of the heavens, that 235 lunar months have almost exactly the same number of days as nineteen solar years. This meant that seven lunar months must be inter-calculated over each nineteen-year period.”²¹⁷

The suggestion that it took the Babylonians centuries of observation to realise this ‘mistake’ is simply untenable. This is another example of how academics, instead of challenging the authenticity of what they are reading, try to manipulate the evidence to fit their interpretation.

Xerxes IB

Whilst most writers tell us that Darius II was a son of Artaxerxes [I], Xenophon would have us believe that Darius II was the son of Xerxes,²¹⁸ though, to get around this, it is argued that

²¹⁷ *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. – A.D. 75*, p.1, Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, Brown University Press, USA 1971.

²¹⁸ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.1.8-9.

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this was another Darius. On this score, it is pertinent to point out that Xerxes IB was called Artaxerxes in the Septuagint as well as the Apocryphal book of Ezra.²¹⁹ A similar confusion is exhibited in the Greek writings with Ctesias calling Achaemenides son of Amytis, a person who was supposedly killed by Inaros the Egyptian, a “brother of Artaxerxes”,²²⁰ whilst Herodotus called him Achaemenes, son of Amestris and brother of Xerxes.²²¹ It is argued that Amytis, who was the wife of Megabyzus, did not have a son by the name of Achaemenides, though it is interesting to note that in two different manuscripts of Photius’ work, Achaemenides was brother to Xerxes in the one copy and brother to Artaxerxes in the other.²²² This is the same confusion which exists between the Biblical record, Josephus and the Septuagint concerning the names of Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

“The court intrigues (a major preoccupation of Ctesias) and Amestris’ gruesome revenge (F[ragments] 14.38-39) are significant. They clearly duplicate the circumstances of Ctesias’ own life-time. The queen-mother Parysatis who dupes one son, Artaxerxes II, in order to avenge herself on the murderers of her second son, Cyrus the Younger (Plut. *Art.* 17 ff - F 26; cf. Photius F 16.66), has become here Amestris (the queen-mother) duping Artaxerxes I (her son) to avenge Achaemenides (the luckless second son...) ...Essentially the same bloodthirsty story appears in Ctesias’ account of Cambyses’ reign. Although in this version the queen-mother is unsuccessful, one notes the fatal ‘five years later’ present also in the Inarus episode.

“Other details recur. 6,000 Egyptians were deported to Persia in Cambyses’ reign (cf. the deportation story involving Inarus). **Ctesias’ account has clearly confused the three historical episodes.** (Cambyses’ Egyptian expedition, the revolt of Inarus, and the contemporary period).”²²³

It could be argued that Parysatis was an alternative name for Amestris/Esther and that Achaemenides an alternative name for Cyrus the Younger aka Darius III, but there are further complications with the Greek accounts:

“Achaemenides is clearly the wrong general for the Egyptian campaign. But Photius’ summary records other names. Oriscus, the admiral of the Persian relief expedition (F[ragment] 14.37) conflicts with the Artabazus of Diodorus (11.74.6 ff). Artabazus may not be right. Oriscus is improbable.”²²⁴

This about sums up the reliability of the Greek records. Ctesias was not the only one to confuse the periods of history, and much of what they have recorded is fabrication, yet scholars are quite prepared to manipulate the archaeological evidence to fit this contrived record of history which has been preserved for us by the Greek writers.

The Testimony of Archaeology

As can be seen, what the Greek writers have fed us, is a collection of highly distorted reports of the history of this period. Those of you who have read my article *Ninus and Semiramis – Exploding the Myth* will know that the many stories concerning Semiramis, and the feats for which she was renowned, were all fables. The Greek writers were attributing the works and

²¹⁹ These are the additional chapters to the book of Esther contained in the Apocrypha.

²²⁰ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 14 - from Photius, *Library* 72.

²²¹ Compare Herodotus, *Histories* 3.12, 7.97 and 7.236. See the discussion in *Ctesias’ Account of the Revolt of Inarus* p.7, J.M. Bigwood, *Phoenix* Vol. 30, No. 1 (1976) *Journal of the Classical Association of Canada*.

²²² *Ctesias’ Account of the Revolt of Inarus* op. cit. p.8.

²²³ *Ctesias’ Account of the Revolt of Inarus* op. cit. p.19-20. (Emphasis mine.)

²²⁴ *Ctesias’ Account of the Revolt of Inarus* op. cit. p.9.

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Artaxerxes I Longimanus

accomplishments of Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar to this fictitious queen who supposedly lived around 3,000 BCE. The later the writer, the more fanciful and contrived the stories have become. As far as the Persian Achaemenid Period is concerned, it is not difficult to see how the confusion could have arisen, as the kings all had similar sounding names. Nevertheless, as we shall proceed to demonstrate, the confusion does not end there. The stories of Alexander the Great's conquests have suffered the same treatment.

By proving that Cyrus the Younger was an alternative name for Darius III, we immediately reveal that those kings who are placed between Artaxerxes II Arsaces and Darius III (i.e. Darius II, Artaxerxes III Ochus, Artaxerxes IV Arshu and Artaxerxes V Bessus) are all spurious. The fact that we do not have enough tombs to accommodate this number of kings seems to support this hypothesis. According to a number of Greek writers, among whom we have Xenophon, Ctesias and Plutarch, Cyrus the Younger was the younger brother of Artaxerxes II. Meanwhile, his alter ego, Darius III, was supposedly not of royal blood. Cyrus was a son of Parysatis²²⁵ whilst Darius III was a son of Sisygambis.²²⁶ The truth of the matter is that he was the son of Xerxes IB and Amestris/Esther, with Arrian calling him 'son of Artaxerxes'. These sorts of errors were rife, and yet we have blindly accepted what we have been told without question.

If Darius I was Ochus, then Artaxerxes IA Longimanus who ruled before him must be Bardiya. Note that Artaxerxes IA was called **Darius** Longimanus by Strabo.²²⁷ Of course, the long reign of 40+ years assigned to Artaxerxes IA Longimanus arises from the confusion over these two periods by the Greek writers. Bardiya only ruled for 7 months.

Despite his supposed long reign of 41 years, we possess very little evidence that Artaxerxes I Longimanus ever existed. The Jewish Encyclopedia puts the situation succinctly when it tells us:

"From this period many dated archives are extant, found throughout Babylonia, but particularly in Nippur, by the expedition of the University of Pennsylvania (published by Hilprecht and Clay, 'The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania,' vol. ix., 1898). But **there are no archaeological remains of the reign of Artaxerxes I. with the exception of a single inscription on a building in Susa and an alabaster vase in Paris** which bears his name in Persian, Susian, Babylonian cuneiform, and in hieroglyphs. All information concerning him is derived from the accounts of Greek writers, especially the fragments of Ctesias, and from the statements of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah."²²⁸

²²⁵ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 2.

²²⁶ Diodorus, *Library* 17.37.3 and 17.59.7.

²²⁷ Strabo, *Geography* 15.3.21. Note also that Abraham Fleming, presumably drawing on this statement by Strabo, made reference to the "26 yéere of Darius Artaxerxes Longimanus, the fifth king of the Persians" Raphael Holinshed, Abraham Fleming, *The Historie Of England, From The Time That It Was First Inhabited, Vntill The Time That It Was Last Conquered*, Chapter 1.

²²⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, entry under Artaxerxes I on pp.145-6, Isidore Singer et al, New York and London 1901. (Emphasis mine.)

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Artaxerxes II?

Since this article was written in 1901, the situation has remained unchanged, and to this we must add the testimony of his tomb, as even this is of poor workmanship compared to other Persian tombs of the period. (I would suggest that the tomb is identifiable by the fact that the king's right arm is depicted longer than his left – "because his right hand was longer than his left", Plutarch records.²²⁹) The archaeological evidence hardly suggests a long reign.

Problems are also evident in building works at the Persian city of Persepolis:

"It is interesting to note that in Persepolis, all construction and stone masonry work was stopped after Artaxerxes I, although much of it was as yet unfinished. The whole site became the 'old palace', and as such was also used as the burial ground for the dynasty (the tombs of Artaxerxes II and III are located on the Kuh-i Rahmat slope within the ramparts). It was not until a third phase towards the end of the Achaemenid period that Persepolis grew more populated, and there are traces of renewed building activity at this period (especially under Artaxerxes III)."²³⁰

This is an example of what happens when, instead of challenging the accepted chronology, archaeologists resort to manipulating the archaeological data to fit their

understanding. I would here mention that the tombs of Artaxerxes II and III are only tentatively identified as belonging to these kings. There is nothing to actually help identify the owners of these tombs.

Despite the assuredness with which Erich Schmidt identifies the owners of the tombs,²³¹ the identifications are rather arbitrary. As he himself admits:

"There are seven royal rock tombs in the Persepolis area, four at Naqsh-e Rostam and three near the Persepolis Terrace, but only the tomb of Darius I (No. I) can be identified beyond doubt by means of inscriptions. The other three tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam (Nos. II-IV) have been assigned to his immediate successors, whereas the Persepolis tombs (Nos. V-VII) are presumed to be those of the last three Achaemenid monarchs."²³²

The tomb of Darius III is likewise ascribed to that king based purely on conjectural reasoning:

"We do not hesitate to assign the unfinished tomb to Darius III, whose reign lasted from 335 to 330 B.C., and to ignore the remote possibility that the project was started by Arses (338/37-336/35 B.C.) and continued by Darius III."²³³

The argument that it belonged to Darius III simply because it was unfinished is not a sound scientific conclusion.

²²⁹ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 1.

²³⁰ *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* p.24, Josef Wiesehöfer (translated by Azizeh Azodi), I.B. Tauris Publishers, London & New York 2001 (ISBN: 1 85043 999 0)

²³¹ *Persepolis, The Royal Tombs and Other Monuments*, pp.80-107, Erich F. Schmidt, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1970.

²³² *Ibid.* p.80.

²³³ *Ibid.* p.107.

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Arrian informs us:

“Alexander [the Great] sent the body of Darius into Persis [Persepolis], with orders that it should be buried in the royal sepulchre, in the same way as the other Persian kings before him had been buried.”²³⁴

Diodorus confirms that Alexander himself gave him a royal funeral.²³⁵ Would not Alexander have made due provision for his burial? Would he have left the tomb unfinished? Where then was Darius III buried? If Alexander the Great was responsible for the funeral of Darius III, we would perhaps expect some stylistic differences to be apparent in the construction.

The tomb identified as belonging to Artaxerxes III is the most impressive of all the kings' tombs. But does it actually belong to Artaxerxes III? Having made a case to show that Artaxerxes III Ochus did not actually exist, the tomb could hardly have belonged to him! We should bear in mind that Darius III was also called Artaxerxes. As shown above, in the Babylonian records he is called “Artakšatsu, whose name is Dariyawuš”. Let us assume that Tomb VI at Persepolis, a tomb which is accredited to Artaxerxes III, actually belongs to Darius III:

“Between the reigns of Artaxerxes I (465-423 B.C.) and the destruction of Persepolis (330 B.C.) only Artaxerxes III (359-338/7 B.C.) expressed attachment to the dynastic capital of his ancestors by adding his own residential palace to their structures. Artaxerxes III, further, replaced or completed the western stairway of the Palace of Darius I.

“The location, the form of the façade, and certain details to be pointed out below closely link Tombs V [said to belong to Artaxerxes II] and VI and distinguish them from the tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam. The plan of the crypt of Tomb VI, however, is strikingly different from that of Tomb V.”²³⁶

If this tomb, which has been assigned to Artaxerxes III, actually belongs to Darius III, the difference in plan could be down to the way Alexander the Great arranged it.

If we look at the other kings, “Aršu, whose name is Artakšatsu”, who is mentioned in the Babylonian astronomical tablet, might be Xerxes IB, otherwise we have to assume that he has been omitted. According to a Babylonian inscription in the British Museum (BM71537):

“Month Ulul (*August/September*), Umakuš (went to his) fate; his son Aršu sat on the throne.”²³⁷

Notice how we have **assumed** that Umakush (i.e. Ochus) is Artaxerxes III. If Umakush is Darius I, then it means that Aršu (Arshu) must have been another name for Xerxes IB. I would add, however, that the name Aršu was supposedly used by Artaxerxes IV, the supposed predecessor of Darius III, and we are informed by Plutarch that Deinon gives the name Oarses (Arshu) to Artaxerxes II Arsaces. If nothing else, this exemplifies the confusion which surrounds this obscure period of history. Having demonstrated that Artaxerxes III and IV are spurious, this means that we have to look for an alternative explanation. The confusion between Xerxes IB-Aršu and Artaxerxes II-Arsaces and the fact that these names are muddled up in the above Babylonian list can be explained in part by the fact that Artaxerxes II and Xerxes IB were co-ruling – Xerxes IB ruled from Persia whilst Artaxerxes II initially ruled from

²³⁴ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 3.22.

²³⁵ Diodorus, *Library* 17.73.

²³⁶ *Persepolis III - The Royal Tombs and Other Monuments* p.105, Erich F. Schmidt, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications Vol. 70, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois 1970

²³⁷ *Achaemenid Chronology and the Babylonian Sources* p.22 by Christopher Walker in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism 539-331BC*, J. Curtis (ed.), British Museum publication, London 1997.

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Babylon, but took complete control of the throne of Persia after the death of Xerxes IB. He may even have taken charge of the Persian throne whilst Xerxes IB was with his father in Greece conducting his war campaigns.

According to the revisions being presented here, Artaxerxes II Arsaces (also called Arshu? also called Mnemon?²³⁸) was the king of Persia during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. According to this reconstruction, Artaxerxes IB and Artaxerxes II were one and the same person, the Greeks of later times having erroneously split him into two separate people. It is Artaxerxes IB who, according to Diodorus, “had just recovered the throne” after the murder of his father Xerxes IB, and who led an assault against Egypt.²³⁹ This was the war against Inaros the Libyan, who, according to Herodotus, had killed Darius’ son Achaemenes.²⁴⁰ In Diodorus’ account, the story of the death of Achaemenes is replaced by the death of Xerxes at the hands of a Hyrcanian by the name of Artaban.²⁴¹ He has presumably confused Xerxes IB (Ahasuerus) son of Darius I with Xerxes IA (Cambyses-Ahasuerus) son of Cyrus the Great.

Herodotus records that there were actually two Egyptian kings involved in this war, which most writers accredit to the time of Artaxerxes IB. They were Inaros and Amyrtaeus:

“...for the Persians are inclined to honor kings’ sons; even though kings revolt from them, they give back to their sons the sovereign power. There are many instances showing that it is their custom so to do, and notably the giving back of his father’s sovereign power to Thannyras son of Inaros, and also to Pausiris son of Amyrtaeus; yet none ever did the Persians more harm than Inaros and Amyrtaeus.”²⁴²

It is recognised that Inaros and Amyrtaeus were two kings of Egypt who both ruled at the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes IB. Note that these two powerful rulers of Egypt caused extensive disruption to the Persian Empire, and yet their efforts seem to have generally gone unnoticed by other writers. In the ‘later’ war against Egypt, which is usually dated to sometime late in the reign of Artaxerxes III Ochus, Inaros and Amyrtaeus become Nectanebos²⁴³ and Tachôs respectively.²⁴⁴ In both instances, Egypt called upon the Athenians and the Greek states for assistance.

Note that Artaxerxes IB, who was involved in the first of these wars (against Inaros and Amyrtaeus), is called Artaxerxes Ochus (i.e. Artaxerxes III) by Diodorus, to which Charles L. Sherman, unable to accept that Diodorus meant Artaxerxes IB, commented:

“Possibly Diodorus has Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) in mind (cp. Book 15.90 ff.), for both Demosthenes and Isocrates state that Ochus conducted in person the unsuccessful expedition”.²⁴⁵

If Artaxerxes II was known as Ochus, then there is the strong possibility that he is the “Umakuš whose name is Artakšatsu” mentioned in the Babylonian astronomical tablets as succeeding Artaxerxes-Aršu (Xerxes IB). This would then mean that Artaxerxes II had four alternative names. If, as we are suggesting here, co-regency existed between Artaxerxes II and Darius I, then the entry in the Babylonian astronomical lists might alternatively be

²³⁸ Plutarch called him Memor, *Artaxerxes* 1.

²³⁹ Diodorus, *Library* 11.71.

²⁴⁰ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.12.

²⁴¹ Diodorus, *Library* 11.69.

²⁴² Herodotus, *Histories* 3.15.

²⁴³ Diodorus, *Library* 15.42.

²⁴⁴ Diodorus, *Library* 15.90.

²⁴⁵ Diodorus, *Library* 16.40 (see footnote), Charles L. Sherman, Loeb Classical Library

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referring to Darius I Ochus, son of Hystaspes, following his return from his wars in Greece. (Artaxerxes II seems to have ruled Persia whilst Darius I and his son Xerxes IB were absent fighting the Greeks in their Peloponnesian campaign.)

If we can recall, Herodotus tells us that Egypt rebelled just before the death of Darius I.²⁴⁶ This war against Egypt, which is dated by the Greeks to the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes IB, supposedly repeats itself towards the end of the reign of Artaxerxes III (i.e. Ochus), the only difference being that, in the one account it is Inaros and Amyrtaeus, in the other, supposedly later account, Nectanebo and Tachos. It should be stressed that Tachos could well be an abbreviated form of the name A-Meri-TACHOS, a name which has been transliterated into Greek as Amyrtaeus. Inaros was therefore an alternative name for Nectanebo I. The evidence suggests that this rebellion happened towards the end of the reign of Darius I (Ochus) when Artaxerxes IB/II and Xerxes IB were co-ruling with him.

The contrived nature of Plutarch's story soon becomes evident when he talks about Atossa, the 'daughter' of Artaxerxes:

"The king had several daughters, and promised to give Apama in marriage to Pharnabazus, Rhodogune to Orontes, and Amestris to Teribazus. He kept his promise to the other two, but broke his word to Teribazus and married Amestris himself, betrothing in her stead to Teribazus his youngest daughter, Atossa. But soon he fell enamoured of Atossa also and married her."²⁴⁷

According to Herodotus, Atossa was the wife of Cambyses. When Cambyses died, she married Bardiya (Artaxerxes IA) and when Bardiya was killed, she married Darius I.

"for he [Darius I Hystaspes] married two daughters of Cyrus, Atossa and Artystone, of whom the one, Atossa, had before been the wife of Cambyses her brother and then afterwards of the Magian, while Artystone was a virgin; and besides them he married the daughter of Smerdis the son of Cyrus, whose name was Parmys; and he also took to wife the daughter of Otanes, her who had discovered the Magian;"²⁴⁸

All of this is contrived nonsense! Amestris, who Plutarch would have us believe married Artaxerxes II, was the wife of Xerxes IB. We have identified her as the Biblical Esther. Plutarch has clearly confused two separate periods of history. Diodorus, as well as other writers, have made exactly the same mistakes. What the Greeks have left to us is a complete mess!

Plutarch's suggestion that Artaxerxes II married his own daughters Atossa (which name Josephus may possibly have taken to be a variant spelling of Hadassah) and Amestris clearly follows in this general deception. According to him, Atossa was the mother of the Darius who tried to kill Artaxerxes his father. Atossa was most probably the wife of Darius I and mother of Xerxes IB.

According to Ctesias, Amestris, the wife of Xerxes IB, had a son named Darius.²⁴⁹ This would seem to accord with the Talmudic and Midrashic teaching that Esther had a son by the name of Darius who went on to become the last king of Persia.²⁵⁰ We should also bear in mind that

²⁴⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.4.

²⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 27.

²⁴⁸ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.88.

²⁴⁹ Ctesias, *Persika* 12.24.

²⁵⁰ "אמר רבי יהודה ברבי סימון: דריוש האחרון בנה של אסתר היה טהור מאמו וטמא מאביו"
Translation: "Said R. Judah b. R. Simon. 'The last Darius was Esther's son. He was clean on his mother's side and unclean on his father's side.'" Esther Rabah 8:5 and Vayikra Rabah 13:5.

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Darius III, who Arrian says had an infant child,²⁵¹ must have been relatively young. This means that the Talmudic teaching that Darius III was the son of Esther can be shown to be a distinct possibility.

This shows how confused things have become and helps to demonstrate the contrived nature of the stories as preserved by the Greek writers. Diodorus records that the Persian general Pharnabazus (who is usually identified as Pharnabazus I, son of Artabanus of Hellespontine Phrygia) was a contemporary of Darius II known as Ochus.²⁵² Another general by the name of Pharnabazus (usually called Pharnabazus II) is said by Diodorus to have been a contemporary of Artaxerxes II.²⁵³ It is argued that the later Pharnabazus was the grandson of the first! Yet another Pharnabazus (III), son of Artabanus of Hellespontine Phrygia, was general during the time of Artaxerxes III. To accommodate the corrupted chronology, the first Artabanus is called Artabanus I to distinguish him from the later Artabanus II. Clearly Pharnabazus I and III were one and the same person! Common sense dictates that Pharnabazus II was the general who lived during the time of Artaxerxes II Arsaces and Darius II/III, whilst Pharnabazus I/III would have been a contemporary of Cyrus, Cambyses, Gaumata and Darius I. If we can recall, we are putting forward the argument that Darius I was the king known as Darius Ochus.

Quoting from Ctesias, Photius informs us:

“Satibarzanes accused Orontes of an intrigue with Parysatis.”²⁵⁴

This Satibarzanes, who is dated by Ctesias to the time of Cyrus the Younger, is dated by Diodorus to the time of Artaxerxes V Bessus:

“At this juncture he learned that the satrap of Areia, Satibarzanes, had put to death the soldiers who were left with him, had made common cause with Bessus...”²⁵⁵

Orontes, who, according to Ctesias, was accused by Satibarzanes, was a Bactrian. He was a son of Artasyras who has been identified as the satrap who married Rhodogyne, a daughter of Artaxerxes II,²⁵⁶ though Ctesias informs us that Rhodogyne was in fact the daughter of Xerxes and Amestris.²⁵⁷ Ctesias, who wrongly dates the rebellion of the Egyptian king Amyrtaios to the time of Cambyses,²⁵⁸ would have us believe that Artasyras was at the height of his power during the time of Cambyses.²⁵⁹ In another place, we are told that Artasyras was most powerful during the reign of Darius I (Hystaspes).²⁶⁰ (Bearing in mind that Cambyses is called Xerxes in the Book of Ezra, we can now see that this confusion between the two separate periods of history is perfectly understandable.)

Ctesias also mentions another son of Artasyras by the name of Artapanos who became as powerful as his father during the time of Xerxes. Arnaldo Momigliano believes that this Artapanos, son of Artasyras, is the person Herodotus called Artabanos, one of the sons of

²⁵¹ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.11.

²⁵² Diodorus, *Library* 13.36.

²⁵³ Diodorus, *Library* 15.29.

²⁵⁴ Photius, *Library* 72.

²⁵⁵ Diodorus, *Library* 17.78.

²⁵⁶ *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* Vol. 1, No. 264 (pp.426-430) and Nos. 390-392 (pp.607-9) and notes thereto, Wilhelmus Dittenberger, Lipsiae 1903.

²⁵⁷ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 13.24. (Photius, *Library* 72.)

²⁵⁸ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 13.10. (Photius, *Library* 72.)

²⁵⁹ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 13. (Photius, *Library* 72.)

²⁶⁰ Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 13.20. (Photius, *Library* 72.)

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Hystaspes and thus brother of Darius and uncle of Xerxes, which again shows that the Greek historians have confused the two individuals.²⁶¹ Again, we have just accepted what we have been told without proper scrutiny.

Diodorus gives the impression that there were three kings with the name Artaxerxes, but by his time, the stories had already become highly distorted. Josephus was right when he wrote that Darius II (or at least the immediate successor to Artaxerxes IB) was the king of Persia who was defeated by Alexander the Great, but no one has been prepared to challenge the accepted sequence of Persian kings.

Alexander the Great

The death of Alexander the Great is usually firmly dated to 323 BCE. A period known as the Era of Contracts (מנין שטרות) was in use amongst the Jews of the Second Temple Period for the dating of legal documents. This dating system, which started 380 years before the Destruction of the Second Temple, is understood to date from the time Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals, gained dominion over 'Palestine'. This was after the Battle of Gaza, which event marks the start of what is known as the Seleucid Era, an event which dates the first year of Seleucus' reign to 312/311 BCE which is **supposedly** 11 or 12 years after Alexander the Great died,²⁶² and 20 to 21 years after Alexander is said to have conquered Gaza. (The siege of Gaza is usually dated to 332 BCE). This Seleucid Era was also known as the Alexandrian Era,²⁶³ which designation is considered an anachronism due to the fact that Alexander **supposedly** died 11 years earlier.

What we know of Alexander the Great's campaigns has seemingly only survived in the works of later writers such as Polybius, Diodorus, Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius and Justin. (There is also a badly preserved Babylonian Chronicle, known as the *Diodochi Chronicle* BChP 3, but this does not assist us in our understanding of this period.²⁶⁴) Jonathan Goldstein wrote a scathing essay on the conflicting reports of Josephus, the Talmud and Pseudo-Callisthenes, all of whom relate that Alexander showed reverence to the LORD GOD of Israel, pointing out that:

"Alexander pressed his claims to rule all the peoples who had been subject to the Persian empire. If any population in any way refused to submit to Alexander, the king was quick to react, and the historians could hardly pass over the matter in silence."²⁶⁵

His argument is that, if Alexander did submit to the God of Israel, as argued by Josephus, then the pagan writers would have been quick to mention it. I would argue the opposite. Such was the hatred of the Jews among the inhabitants of the land that they would not have related this important fact to the Greek writers. (NB: Curtius and Justin, who were Roman writers, would have relied heavily on what the Greek writers recorded.)

Goldstein also argues that Alexander himself is not recorded as visiting Jerusalem. All the writers inform us that, after conquering the city of Tyre, he marched on Gaza.

²⁶¹ Tradizione e invenzione in Ctesia, p203, Arnaldo Momigliano, Atene e Roma n.s. XII (1931)

²⁶² *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Avodah Zarah 9a, fn. 4, Soncino English Translation.

²⁶³ Maimonides, Yad, Gerushin 1, 27.

²⁶⁴ See http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-diadochi/diadochi_03.html.

²⁶⁵ *Alexander and the Jews* p.71, Jonathan A. Goldstein in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* Vol. 59 (1993)

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“Alexander came near to Judaea and Samaria during only two stages of his campaigns: first, after his victory at Issos in November, 333 B.C.E., and before his departure from Gaza to invade Egypt in late autumn, 332; and, second, after his departure from Egypt in the late spring of 331 and before he marched northward and eastward from Tyre toward the Euphrates in late July, 331.”²⁶⁶

Goldstein, however, places far too much faith in what the Greek writers have recorded. We have already shown that they were far from reliable.

Before challenging what these writers have said, let us consider the following statement by Diodorus:

“Then he [Alexander] marched on towards Egypt, and as he came into Phoenicia, received the submission of all the other cities, for their inhabitants accepted him willingly.”²⁶⁷

Arrian likewise wrote that all of Palestine had already come over to him except for Gaza.²⁶⁸ We have demonstrated elsewhere that Jerusalem formed part of what some writers deemed to be Phoenicia.²⁶⁹ This statement by Diodorus could be taken to mean that the Jews submitted to Alexander the Great. There is certainly no indication that Alexander had to conquer the city. The fact that the Seleucids and the Ptolemies are recorded by the Jews as having offered sacrifices at Jerusalem²⁷⁰ seems to support the argument that Alexander honoured the God of the Jews.

Josephus claims that he was quoting from an actual epistle from Antiochus the Great when he records:

“Since the Jews, upon our first entrance on their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us, and when we came to their city [Jerusalem], received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate, and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians that were in the citadel, we have thought fit to reward them, and to retrieve the condition of their city, which hath been greatly depopulated by such accidents as have befallen its inhabitants, and to bring those that have been scattered abroad back to the city.”²⁷¹

It is interesting to note from this statement that there was an Egyptian garrison in Jerusalem at that time! One wonders when those Egyptians arrived and what role they played in the running of the city.

He also records:

“The Jews also obtained honors from the kings of Asia when they became their auxiliaries; for Seleucus Nicator made them citizens in those cities which he built in Asia, and in the lower Syria, and in the metropolis itself, Antioch; and gave them privileges equal to those of the Macedonians and Greeks, who were the inhabitants, insomuch that these privileges **continue to this very day**.”²⁷²

This shows that *something* special must have happened for these Greek rulers to have bestowed such beneficence on the Jewish people. That the privileges Josephus refers to

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p.72.

²⁶⁷ Diodorus, *Library* 17.40. See also Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great* 4.5.10 & 13.

²⁶⁸ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.25.4.

²⁶⁹ See my separate work entitled, *The Forgotten Tribe of Naphtali and the Phoenicians*.

²⁷⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.2.11.

²⁷¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.3.3.

²⁷² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.3.1. (Emphasis mine.)

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continued right up to his day is a testament to this fact. Josephus would not have made that up!

After Alexander the Great took the city of Gaza and razed it to the ground, he invaded Egypt. After that, he returned and marched into Syria, supposedly engaged in a second battle with the Persians in which Darius III king of Persia died, proceeded through Babylonia and on into Persia, and then undertook an expedition into India. From the time he invaded Gaza (332 BCE) until the time he died (323 BCE) we are talking of a period of 9 years. We are then expected to believe that a further 11 years elapsed before Seleucus I (Nicator) conquered Gaza (312 BCE), a city which had already been razed to the ground by Alexander the Great. This siege of Gaza by Seleucus I ushered in the Seleucid Era. Shortly before this 'second' siege of the city by Seleucus I, another of Alexander's generals, Antigonus, purportedly laid siege '**once again**' to the city of Tyre.

Let us apply a little common sense here. Alexander the Great conquers the whole of Phoenicia and Egypt, and then we are expected to believe that he abandoned everything for a space of 11 years whilst he continued with his campaigns. This does not make sense either logically or tactically. Who then did he place as governors over these two strategic countries if not Seleucus I (Syria) and Ptolemy I (Egypt)?

Concerning Tyre, Alexander the Great completely destroyed the city. Strabo, however, relates that the people of Tyre recovered and rebuilt the city:

"It sustained great injury when it was taken by siege by Alexander, but it rose above these misfortunes, and recovered itself both by the skill of the people in the art of navigation, in which the Phœnicians in general have always excelled all nations, and by (the export of) purple-dyed manufactures, the Tyrian purple being in the highest estimation."²⁷³

He further adds:

"Next after Tyre is Palæ-tyrus (ancient Tyre), at the distance of 30 stadia."²⁷⁴

This 'old Tyre' will have been the old part of the city which Alexander destroyed. The suggestion that Antigonus later laid siege to the city must therefore be viewed with scepticism.

Strabo also informs us that:

"Next and near Ascalon is the harbour of the Gazæi. The city is situated inland at the distance of seven stadia. It was once famous, but was razed by Alexander, **and remains uninhabited**."²⁷⁵

Gaza was therefore completely razed to the ground by Alexander the Great and did not re-emerge. How is it then that Seleucus I conquered the city around 20 years later?

Polybius informs us:

"... Ecbatana, which stands on the north of Media, in the district of Asia bordering on the Maeotis and Euxine. It was originally the royal city of the Medes, and vastly superior to the other cities in wealth and the splendour of its buildings. It is situated on the skirts of Mount Orontes, and is without walls, though containing an artificially formed citadel fortified to an

²⁷³ Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.23.

²⁷⁴ Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.24.

²⁷⁵ Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.29. (Emphasis mine.)

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astonishing strength. Beneath this stands the palace, which it is in some degree difficult to describe in detail, or to pass over in complete silence. To those authors whose aim is to produce astonishment, and who are accustomed to deal in exaggeration and picturesque writing, this city offers the best possible subject; but to those who, like myself, are cautious when approaching descriptions which go beyond ordinary notions, it presents much difficulty and embarrassment. However, as regards size, the palace covers ground the circuit of which is nearly seven stades; and by the costliness of the structure in its several parts it testifies to the wealth of its original builders: for all its woodwork being cedar or cypress not a single plank was left uncovered; beams and fretwork in the ceilings, and columns in the arcades and peristyle, were overlaid with plates of silver or gold, while all the tiles were of silver. **Most of these had been stripped off during the invasion of Alexander and the Macedonians, and the rest in the reigns of Antigonus and Seleucus Nicator.** However, even at the time of Antiochus's arrival [i.e. Antiochus III], the temple of Aena still had its columns covered with gold, and a considerable number of silver tiles had been piled up in it, and some few gold bricks and a good many silver ones were still remaining. It was from these that the coinage bearing the king's impress was collected and struck, amounting to little less than four thousand talents."²⁷⁶

This suggestion that Antigonus and Seleucus Nicator (here called Nicanor by Polybius) returned twenty years later to repeat the same actions that they had no doubt already accomplished whilst Alexander the Great was still alive, is yet another of these anachronisms which scream for a radical reconsideration of the facts. (We shall consider the conquests of Antiochus III, who is called Antiochus the Great, in a moment.)

After conquering a district, it was common protocol for Alexander the Great to leave governors in charge of affairs of that district whilst he continued his campaigns elsewhere. After conquering Coele-Syria, for example, he "appointed Menon, son of Cerdimmas, viceroy of Coele-Syria".²⁷⁷ The suggestion that he left Phoenicia and Egypt without a governor therefore simply does not make any sense.

Seleucus I was one of Alexander the Great's generals. After conquering Gaza, Alexander left Seleucus I as governor of the land. Dated contracts from Babylon for this period show that Alexander was king up to 305 BCE and was co-ruling with Seleucus I.²⁷⁸ It is **assumed** that this was Alexander IV the son of Alexander the Great. Logic tells us, however, that it was Alexander the Great himself. Bear in mind that the records only state the name Alexander. There is nothing to state which Alexander is intended, but the evidence, when viewed critically, shows that we are actually talking about Alexander the Great.

Likewise, when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, he left Ptolemy I Soter in control of Egypt. He then continued to conduct campaigns in Syria, Babylonia, Persia and India in the knowledge that his kingdom was in good hands. This means that the start of the Seleucid Era is the same as the start of the Alexandrian Period mentioned in the Talmud. The idea that Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE is therefore shown to be false. He was still alive in 312 BCE when the city of Gaza was taken, and according to this revision, he must have died in 305 BCE, this being his last attested date as king of Babylon. This means that the Wars of the Diadochi, the wars which purportedly took place between his generals **after** the death of Alexander, is highly contrived. This does not mean that there were no disputes. It merely means that the generals were already in control of the lands **before** those wars started. Far

²⁷⁶ Polybius, *Histories* 10.27 (emphasis mine).

²⁷⁷ Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander* 2.13.

²⁷⁸ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* p.3, Gerard Gertoux.

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too many assumptions have been made using the corrupted Greek accounts as a basis for a chronology.

Darius III (son of Artaxerxes IB/II) is said by Ptolemy to have ruled for 4 years prior to suffering a decisive blow at the hand of Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus. Cuneiform evidence from Babylon, however, shows that he ruled for at least 5 years before this defeat.²⁷⁹ After the battle, Darius lived for another two to three years. As the Babylonian records attest that he continued up to his 8th year,²⁸⁰ we must assume that he was in fact defeated by Alexander the Great in the 5th year of his reign. That Darius ruled until his 8th year is revealed by the Murashu Archive discovered near Nippur in Babylonia, though no one seems to have made the connection between this Darius, who was called Darius B by Gertoux, and the Darius who was conquered by Alexander the Great. As attested by the Babylonian records, the aged father-in-law, Artaxerxes IB/II Arsaces, was also at that time still alive, though the Greek writers have decided to call him Bessus. This is borne out by tablet BRM 2 51 mentioned above which dates Arsaces king of Persia to the time of Alexander the Great; Arsaces being Artaxerxes II.

Antiochus the Great

Before proceeding any further, I think it is pertinent to point out here that these Hellenistic kings did not have surnames. Seleucus I Nicator, for example, never called himself Nicator. This surname was added posthumously by the Greeks. Most of these rulers merely called themselves “Seleucus, son of Antiochus”, or “Antiochus, son of Antiochus”. We have already demonstrated the confusion which has been wrought by the Greek writers in their handling of the Achaemenid rulers of Persia. When these writers talk about Antiochus the Great, we have to make a judgement, based on the information they provide, as to which of the various kings of this name they are referring. On the face of it, this is not too difficult a task, but in making this judgement, we automatically assume that the writers themselves have not confused the details of two similarly named kings.

Whilst Josephus would have us believe that Yaddua (Jaddua), who was by then high priest, received Alexander with a procession of priests outside the city,²⁸¹ the Talmudists say that this event occurred during the time of Simeon the Just.²⁸² The only problem with this is that Simeon the Just supposedly lived during the time of Antiochus III the Great around 100 years later. Consequently, we have two people called Simeon the Just, both of whom are said to have been sons of Onias the high priest. It is assumed that we are talking about Simeon the Just I, son of Onias I, and Simeon the Just II, son of Onias II, respectively. This confusion has led to all sorts of debates about the dating of Simon the Just.²⁸³

Quoting Jonathan Goldstein:

“Antiochus III proved himself a latter-day Alexander, as he earned the epithet ‘the Great’ by repeating, between 212 and 205, the earlier conqueror’s victorious march from Asia Minor to

²⁷⁹ *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. – 75 A.D.* p.19, Richard A. Parker and Waldo D. Dubberstein, Brown University Press, USA 1971.

²⁸⁰ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* pp.7 & 57, Gerard Gertoux. See also *Parker and Dubberstein op. cit.* p.20.

²⁸¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.8.5.

²⁸² *The Babylonian Talmud Complete*, Yoma 69a, Soncino English Translation.

²⁸³ See, for example, the entry under Simeon the Just in *Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. IX, p.352 Isidore Singer et al, Ktav Publishing, New York 1906.

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India. In 202, he took Tyre, and **after a difficult siege, Gaza.**²⁸⁴

How likely is it that a later king 'repeated' the accomplishments of Alexander the Great? How likely is it that these same two cities, Tyre and Gaza, were the subject of this later king's conquests? Can we honestly believe that these two cities fell at the hands of Alexander the Great, again in succession 11 years later at the hands of his two generals Antigonos and Seleucus and then 100 years later at the hands of Antiochus the Great? In each case, they were conquered in the same sequence and each time within months of each other. If we can recall, Strabo informs us that, after its destruction by Alexander the Great, these two cities, that is Tyre and Gaza, were completely destroyed and remained uninhabited to his day! Why then would Antiochus III want to lay siege to an uninhabited city which by that time would have been nothing more than a pile of stones and rubble? It could hardly have been 'a difficult siege'!

We have also mentioned the fact that Antiochus III ransacked the palace in Ecbatana in Media thereby **repeating** the achievements of Alexander the Great. First Alexander the Great, then his generals Antigonos and Seleucus supposedly some 11 years later and then Antiochus III one hundred years after that! This is stretching credibility to its limit!

Seleucus I (Nicator) was the son of an Antiochus. His mother's name was Laodice. Antiochus III also supposedly had a wife by the name of Laodice!²⁸⁵ This earlier Antiochus, the father of Seleucus I, was a general in the army of Philip II,²⁸⁶ the father of Alexander the Great. There is every likelihood that this Antiochus was also a general in Alexander's army. In fact, Arrian seems to mention this Antiochus when he records that the archers were "under the direction of Antiochus".²⁸⁷ This same Antiochus is said by Arrian to have later died in the Egyptian campaign,²⁸⁸ which means that he must have participated in all of Alexander's campaigns up to the time of his death. If, however, he died in Egypt, then Antiochus could not have accompanied Alexander the Great in his campaign in India. (Antiochus III supposedly conducted a campaign in India after conquering Egypt.) We must bear in mind, however, that the achievements of two kings with the same name, dated 100 years apart, have been confused and combined by these historians.

When Seleucus I gained power, he built a number of cities throughout Asia:

"Seleucis is the best of the above-mentioned portions of Syria. It is called and is a Tetrapolis, and derives its name from the four distinguished cities which it contains; for there are more than four cities, but the four largest are Antioch Epidaphne, Seleuceia in Pieria, Apameia, and Laodiceia. They were called Sisters from the concord which existed between them. They were founded by Seleucus Nicator. The largest bore the name of his father, and the strongest his own. Of the others, Apameia had its name from his wife Apama, and Laodiceia from his mother."²⁸⁹

The city of Antioch in Syria was therefore named after this Antiochus, who must have been a successful general in Alexander's army. In other words, Antiochus the father of Seleucus I

²⁸⁴ *Alexander and the Jews* p.92, Jonathan A. Goldstein, in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 59 (1993). (Emphases mine.)

²⁸⁵ Appian, *Syrian Wars* 1.4.

²⁸⁶ *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* Vol. 3, p.769 for list of Seleucidae and p.770 for Seleucus I, Ed. William Smith, published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1970.

²⁸⁷ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.9.2.

²⁸⁸ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 3.5.6.

²⁸⁹ Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.4.

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Nicator was Antiochus the Great. This means that someone has confused the achievements of this earlier Antiochus with those of the later Antiochus who we have called Antiochus III.

Knowing this, one has to question the reports by Polybius of the war which took place between Antiochus the Great and Arsaces king of Media.²⁹⁰ As Arsaces is attested as king of Persia during the time of Alexander the Great, there is every likelihood that Polybius has likewise confused the two periods of history. I would suggest that the Greek writers may have confused Artaxerxes king of Media with Artaxerxes king of Persia. It is interesting to note that Diodorus informs us that Bessus was made satrap of Bactria by Darius III,²⁹¹ which makes him king of Media. The overwhelming evidence seems to point to Artaxerxes II Arsaces being the king of the Medes spoken of by Polybius. If we can recall, Artaxerxes II Arsaces is known to have continued until his 51st year of reign, this being around two years after the death of Cyrus-Darius III.

It is understood that Seleucus I took Babylon immediately before he became king in 311 BCE.²⁹² This does not ring true, as he is understood to have laid siege to Gaza in that year. This conquest of Gaza would have taken longer than a couple of months. I would suggest that he and his father Antiochus conquered Babylon whilst Alexander the Great took on Darius III at the Battle of Issus. We should bear in mind that the conquest of the cities of Tyre and Gaza occurred the following year. If, as we are told by Polybius, Antiochus, Alexander the Great, Seleucus and Antigonus all stripped the palace at Ecbatana of its gold, then this campaign against Bactria must presumably also have occurred before the campaign against Egypt in which Antiochus is said to have died. This is assuming, of course, that Antiochus actually died in Egypt!

Despite the errors in the Bible, it is still the most comprehensive and most reliable source of history that we possess. The Bible provides us with the key to history. In it, we are given the complete sequence of Persian kings; Cyrus, Ahasuerus (Cambyses), Artaxerxes (Bardiya), Darius (Hystaspes), Ahasuerus (Xerxes the Great), Artaxerxes (Arsaces) and Darius (Codomannus). This sequence of kings is supported by the list of high priests up to and including Yaddua (AV Jaddua), who lived during the time of "Darius the Persian",²⁹³ this last king being identifiable as Darius III. We have, however, rejected this key in favour of alternative sources, whether we are talking about the works of the Greek writers, or of the Babylonian chroniclers. All of these other sources, however, have proved to be far from reliable. By using the key provided in the Bible, we have been able to put together the pieces of the puzzle to produce a coherent picture of the events leading up to the Seleucid period. After that, the rest (hopefully) is just history.

Thucydides

Thucydides is usually regarded as being one of the most reliable of the Greek writers. He has even been dubbed the 'father of scientific history' on account of his strict standards of

²⁹⁰ Polybius, *Histories* 10.26-29.

²⁹¹ Diodorus, *Library* 17.74.1.

²⁹² *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. – 75 A.D.* p.20, Richard A. Parker and Waldo D. Dubberstein, Brown University Press, USA 1971.

²⁹³ Neh. 12:22.

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evidence gathering. It might then come as a surprise to most scholars to learn that the work which has been ascribed to Thucydides was not actually written by him!

Whilst the books of Thucydides may have been based on the diaries of Thucydides, the work itself has clearly been composed by some later writer. This is evidenced by the use of the words:

“Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it.”²⁹⁴

“...in the Peloponnesian War of which Thucydides wrote the history”²⁹⁵

and

“...Thucydides the son of Olorus, who wrote this history”.²⁹⁶

A writer does not usually talk about himself in the third person. This means that someone has taken the original writings of Thucydides, which appear to have been in the form of diaries, and has turned it into a historical work based on their **assumptions** of how the Peloponnesian War fitted in with the Persian Wars. We simply do not know, therefore, how much is the original work of Thucydides and how much has been added by the later writer. We know that it is **based** on the writings of Thucydides because of the following statement:

“The same Thucydides of Athens continued the history, following the order of events, which he reckoned by summers and winters, up to the destruction of the Athenian empire and the taking of Piraeus and the Long Walls by the Lacedaemonians and their allies.”²⁹⁷

It should be noted that the history which was recorded by Thucydides was the history of Greece. Whoever was responsible for this work – at least, that which has been preserved and which is being accredited to Thucydides, – has clearly tried to fit the Greek Peloponnesian Wars into the framework of the Persian history, but in so doing, has relied heavily on the corrupted reports of other Greek writers such as Herodotus and Ctesias. In other words, the chronological sequence as presented in the works of Thucydides is contrived!

According to the works of Thucydides, the Peloponnesian War started “50 years after the retreat of Xerxes”.²⁹⁸ This dates the start of the war to sometime during the reign of Artaxerxes IB/II, the successor to Xerxes IB. I would go so far as to suggest that the Peloponnesian Wars actually started during the time of Darius I Hystaspes:

“For in three generations, that is, in the time of Darius son of Hystaspes and Xerxes son of Darius and Artaxerxes son of Xerxes, more ills happened to Hellas than in twenty generations before Darius; some coming from the Persians, some from the wars for pre-eminence among the chief of the nations themselves.”²⁹⁹

According to Herodotus, the earthquake at Delos occurred sometime during the reign of Darius I.³⁰⁰ The works ascribed to Thucydides, however, date this earthquake to the start of the Peloponnesian War:

²⁹⁴ Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.1.

²⁹⁵ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 4.51, 4.135, 6.7 etc.

²⁹⁶ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 4.104.

²⁹⁷ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 5.26.

²⁹⁸ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 1.118.

²⁹⁹ Herodotus, *Histories* 6.98.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. This passage appears in the middle of his discourse on the history of the wars of Darius I.

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“Quite lately the island of Delos had been shaken by an earthquake *for the first time within the memory of the Hellenes*”.³⁰¹

This event is therefore dated by Thucydides to the time of Artaxerxes IB/II more than 70 years later than the date assigned by Herodotus! So much then for the accuracy of Thucydides!

Further Considerations

A Babylonian astronomical tablet records:

“[year] 21, month IV, (after) 5 month, the 29 [. . .] not observed month VI, Umakuš [Artaxerxes III] went to his fate. Aršu, his son sat on the throne.”³⁰²

It is known that Xerxes IB ruled for 21 years. The **assumption** that Umakuš is here to be identified as a fictitious Artaxerxes III is tentative to say the least. It is worth comparing this statement with the following which we quoted earlier, questioning whether it referred to Cambyses-Xerxes or Xerxes I:

“In the area of the 4 rear stars of Sagittarius it was eclipsed. Month VI was intercalary Month V, the 14th, ‘Xer’xes – his son killed him.”³⁰³

The above two passages might well be referring to the self-same incident, but the one from a Babylonian (rather than Persian) perspective. Note that in each instance the month of the previous king’s death is given as the sixth month. In the one it is described as a “not observed month”, in the other as an “intercalary month”, both possibly referring to the same thing. Without knowing which Xerxes is being referred to, or which king Arshu is being referred to, any attempt at trying to align these texts with what has been preserved by the Greeks is going to be mere conjecture.

As demonstrated earlier, Umakuš appears to be more correctly an alternative name for Darius I, the name Umakuš being a variant spelling of Ochus. It is highly likely that Aršu was an alternative name for Xerxes IB, who, as we have already mentioned, is called Artaxerxes in the Septuagint as well as the extra-Biblical work known as the Apocryphal book of Esther. On this score, it is worth repeating the statement by Plutarch that Ochus and Arshu (Arsames) were still alive during the time of the aged king Artaxerxes II, though he would have us believe that they were sons of Dareius – assumed to be Darius II.³⁰⁴ (As Darius II did not exist, we can read this as meaning ‘sons of Darius I’.) Plutarch clearly did not know that Ochus was an alternative name for Darius I or that Arsha an alternative name for Xerxes IB.

It is very unlikely that Artaxerxes II reigned over Persia for the 41 years which has been assigned to him by the Greek writers. In the book of Nehemiah, Artaxerxes is specifically called “king of Babylon”.³⁰⁵ The reason why he is called king of Babylon rather than king of Persia is enigmatic. Clearly, the Elephantine papyrus tells us that Artaxerxes II succeeded to the throne of Persia immediately after the death of his predecessor Xerxes IB, but this does not preclude him from having been king of Babylon prior to that date. In other words, he will more than likely have been ruling from Babylon whilst Darius I Ochus (son of Hystaspes) and

³⁰¹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 2.8.

³⁰² Tablet BM 71537. See *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* op. cit. p.38.

³⁰³ Tablet BM 32234. See *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* op.cit. p.37.

³⁰⁴ Plutarch, *The Life of Artaxerxes* 30.

³⁰⁵ Neh. 13:6.

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Xerxes IB Arshu were ruling from Persia. The fact that Plutarch records that Ochus and Arsha were still alive during the 'reign' of Artaxerxes II seems to confirm this supposition.

Also, we must consider the possibility that, whilst Darius I and Xerxes IB were absent on their campaigns in Greece, someone must have been guarding the Persian throne and administering affairs back home in Persia. This being so, Artaxerxes II may well have been in overall control of the kingdom whilst still considered ruler of Babylon, this being whilst Darius I and Xerxes IB were both still alive. This would then explain the reappearance of the name Ochus later in the Babylonian astronomical lists mentioned earlier, this being when Darius I Ochus had returned from the Polyponnesian Wars.

It is perhaps significant that, after the death of Cyrus the Younger, Clearchus and the other generals were sent in chains to Artaxerxes in Babylon rather than to Persia.³⁰⁶ This at least shows that Artaxerxes was in control of Babylon. Artaxerxes would therefore have been well within his rights to claim the years he had been ruling over Babylon, previous to his accession to the Persian throne, within his total length of reign.

The fact that Diodorus was of the opinion that Artaxerxes died shortly after the Egyptian rulers Nectanebo and Tachos rebelled against Persia³⁰⁷ strongly suggests that Artaxerxes took full control of the Persian throne towards the end of his reign. The dispute between Cyrus the Younger (Darius III) and his 'brother' Artaxerxes II Arsaces, which supposedly occurred at the **beginning** of their reigns, also suggests that Artaxerxes IB/II only took possession of the Persian throne towards the end of his reign. Bearing in mind that Darius B of Gertoux's revised chronology started reigning from the 42nd year of his 'father's reign', then this effectively confirms the arguments being put forward here that Artaxerxes II only took full control of the throne of Persia after ruling Babylon for 41 years, which is clearly where the Greeks obtained their 41 years from for the length of reign of Artaxerxes IB/II.

This, however, does not come without its complications. If this interpretation is correct, then Artaxerxes IB/II could not possibly have been a son of Xerxes IB as claimed by Herodotus.³⁰⁸ If Artaxerxes II ascended the throne of Persia in the 41st year of his reign, this being immediately after the death of Xerxes IB, then it means that his rule of Babylon must have started around the 6th year of Darius I Hystaspes. This fits the Biblical chronology well, but means that Artaxerxes II Arsaces could not possibly have been a son of Xerxes IB and Darius III likewise could not possibly have been a grandson of Xerxes IB, though he could now well have been his son as argued by the Talmud. It also means that the inscription of Darius king of Persia inscribed on a gold tablet, which was discussed earlier, is either a forgery or we are misreading it.

If we return to the Biblical chronology, we see that Jehozadak, the father of Jeshua, was one of the priests who were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Jehozadak was the son of Seraiah, the "chief priest".³⁰⁹ This is that Seraiah who was taken to Riblah where he was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar.³¹⁰ Jehozadak must at that time have been a young child to have escaped being put to death. By the second year of Darius I king of Persia, Jehozadak's son

³⁰⁶ Photius, *Library* 72 and Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 27.

³⁰⁷ Diodorus, *Library* 15.93.

³⁰⁸ Herodotus, *Histories* 6.98 & 7.106.

³⁰⁹ 2 Kings 25:18. See also 1 Chron. 6:14-15 (1 Chron. 5:40-41 in the Hebrew Bible)

³¹⁰ 2 Kings 25:21.

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Jeshua must have been around fifty years of age, this being the maximum age allowed for ministering in the temple.³¹¹ Jeshua's son Joiakim must therefore have become high priest shortly after that. From the 2nd year of Darius I till the 12th year of Artaxerxes II, when Eliashib is recorded as being high priest, assuming that Artaxerxes II's 41 year reign started immediately after the death of Xerxes IB, we are talking of a period of 57 years according to the conventional chronology, which is just not tenable. Eliashib was still high priest in the 20th year of Artaxerxes. All of this also strongly suggests a co-regency between Artaxerxes II and Xerxes IB. If Artaxerxes started reigning from the 6th year of Darius I, from the 2nd year of Darius I to the 12th year of Artaxerxes, which is when Eliashib is recorded as high priest, we would be talking of a more reasonable 15-16 years, which would then make reasonable allowance for the period of officiation of Jeshua's son Joiakim who preceded Eliashib.

We must return to the statement that Darius III claimed to be "son of Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes, son of Darius".³¹² When *a* tells us that he is son of *b*, son of *c*, son of *d*, we naturally assume that *d* is the great-grandfather of *a*. The truth of the matter is that *c* could just as easily be the father-in-law of *a*. Photius informs us that Darius Ochus married Parysatis, his half-sister.³¹³ Arrian likewise records that Darius III married his 'sister':

"The camp of Darius was taken forthwith at the first assault, containing his mother, his wife, – who was also his sister, – and his infant son."³¹⁴

It seems therefore that Darius married one of the daughters of Artaxerxes II. As to whether he was actually the son of Artaxerxes II is, however, debatable. If he was Cyrus the Younger, then he was considered by the Greek writers to be the **brother** of Artaxerxes II and **son** of Darius I Ochus, but even this is debatable. The aforesaid inscription, in which he claims to be a son of Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes, could be interpreted that he was in fact 'son-in-law' of Artaxerxes and 'son' of Xerxes, but the Greek accounts are so unreliable that we are unable to disentangle the truth in order to make any firm sense of them.

Having demonstrated that Cyrus the Younger was an alternative name for Darius III, we immediately reveal the fragile state of the presently accepted chronology, which chronology has been built on a foundation of false reports. We have also highlighted the difficulties which are inherent in our current understanding of the family relationships of this period, again based to a large extent on the misinformation provided to us by these classical writers.

Lunar Eclipses

Scholars love to try and fit everything to lunar eclipses. Ironically, in this instance, they are all trying to correlate the dates to lunar eclipses which are 100-150 years too early! The first-mentioned lunar eclipse is dated to the 14th day of the third month of the final year of Xerxes' 21 year reign, the other on the 14th day of the eighth month of that same year. It is generally accepted that these fell on the 26 June 475 BCE and 20 December 475 BCE respectively.³¹⁵ We should bear in mind that this spans a total of 177 days. Admittedly, we are told that "Month

³¹¹ Num. 8:25.

³¹² *An Old Persian Text of Darius II (D2Ha)* p.170, Herbert H. Paper, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Oct - Dec 1952).

³¹³ Photius, *Library* 72 and Ctesias, *Persika* Fragment 15.

³¹⁴ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.11.

³¹⁵ *Dating the Reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes* op.cit. p.1.

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VI was intercalary”, nevertheless, it was still called Month VI with Months VII and VIII following it. We are therefore talking of a total of **five** months between the first eclipse (Month III) and the second (Month VIII). With a lunar month of around 29.5 days, this amounts to around 148 days – **not** 177, the latter figure representing a period of **six** months. This alone raises serious objections to a 475 BCE date.

When we apply the amendments being proposed here to the Persian chronology, we are forced to redate the last year of Xerxes’ reign to sometime between 316 to 319 BCE. The only match to the two dates are the two eclipses which are understood to have occurred in 317 BCE, these having fallen on 30 July and 25 December respectively, these according reasonably well with the 3rd month and 8th month of the Babylonian calendar as well as the lengths of reign which follow. The 30 July and 25 December are **precisely** 148 days apart.

A Review of the Facts

The Bible records that Artaxerxes [II] was still king of Babylon in his 32nd year,³¹⁶ so it is possible that he became king of Persia sometime after that. The evidence suggests that he took full control of the Persian throne after 41 years of ruling in Babylon. In the Babylonian texts, when Artaxerxes ascended the throne, he is not called son of Xerxes. We would have expected something along the lines of “his son Artaxerxes ascended the throne”. Instead, we have:

“...year 21 (of Xerxes the king), the beginning of the reign when Artaxerxes **the king** sat on his throne...”³¹⁷

The use of the words ‘the king’ suggests to me that Artaxerxes was already a king **before** Xerxes died. So, despite the statement by Herodotus that Artaxerxes was the son of Xerxes,³¹⁸ a statement which is echoed in the works attributed to Thucydides,³¹⁹ the writer (who was not Thucydides!) possibly drawing on the works of Herodotus for inspiration, when we consider the evidence objectively, it seems that Artaxerxes could not possibly have been his son. I would suggest that this co-regency between Xerxes IB and Artaxerxes IB/II would also explain the confusion between these two kings leading Josephus to claim that Artaxerxes IB/II was the king who married Esther.

Of particular relevance is the statement by Herodotus that Darius I Hystaspes made Xerxes king and the following year Egypt rebelled.³²⁰ This statement is clearly untrue, as we now know that Xerxes was crowned king in the 26th year of Darius’ reign, which means that he did not die a year after Xerxes’ inauguration as recorded by Herodotus. The fact that the Egyptian rebellion is said to have taken place in the last year of Darius’ reign is also a problem, because this revolt is said to have taken place early in the reign of Artaxerxes IB aka Artaxerxes II. This then accords with the chronology which is preserved in the Bible, but is to the detriment of the Greek accounts.

³¹⁶ Neh. 13:6.

³¹⁷ *The Elephantine Papyri in English, Three Millennia of Cross Cultural Continuity and Change* Papyrus B24 (*Withdrawal of Land*) on p.158, Bezalel Porten et al, (also in *Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui (DMOA)*, Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and Civilisation Vol. XXII), E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands 1996. (ISBN: 90-04-10197-7) Emphasis mine.

³¹⁸ Herodotus, *Histories* 6.98 and 7.106.

³¹⁹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 4.50.

³²⁰ Herodotus, *Histories* 7.4.

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Obviously, these corrections being proposed here have to remain in part conjectural until we discover some additional incontrovertible evidence. If, however, we do accept that Artaxerxes II started reigning in Babylon sometime around the 6th year of Darius I, it makes better sense chronologically for the Jeshua – Joiakim – Eliashib progression of high priests as recorded in the Bible. This might also explain why the book of Ezra omits Xerxes IB in its sequence of kings, jumping straight from Darius I to Artaxerxes who, though he is called “king of Persia”,³²¹ was at first only king of Babylon. It will also prove beyond any doubt that Darius III, the last king of Persia, was the son of Esther as recorded in the Talmud. Artaxerxes II will have been too old to have been a son of Xerxes IB, yet we have the obstacle that Darius II/III claimed to be descended from Xerxes IB through Artaxerxes IB/II. Either we are misreading the inscription on the tablet, or the tablet, despite being made of gold, has to be a forgery. (But would forgers use gold?)

I calculate the revised chronological timescale, based on these amendments, to be as follows:

ca. 449 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar becomes king
ca. 431 BCE	Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
ca. 405 BCE	Amul-Marduk (Evilmerodach) becomes king of Babylon
ca. 403 BCE	Neriglissar becomes king of Babylon
ca. 399 BCE	Labash-Marduk becomes king of Babylon
ca. 398 BCE	Kingdom is restored to Nebuchadnezzar who restyles himself Nabonidus. The reinstated king places his son Belshazzar (aka Nabonidus) in control of affairs of state whilst he spends most of his time in semi-retirement in Tema in Arabia.
ca. 380 BCE	Cyrus king of Persia conquers Babylon and places Harpagus (Darius the Mede) in charge.
ca. 371 BCE	Cambyses (Xerxes IA) becomes king of Persia.
ca. 364 BCE	Bardiya/Gaumata (Artaxerxes I Longimanus) becomes king of Persia.
ca. 363 BCE	Darius I (Ochus) son of Hystaspes becomes king of Persia.
ca. 361 BCE	70 year prophecy - Yeshua was high priest.
ca. 357 BCE	Temple completed in 6 th year of Darius I.
ca. 337 BCE	Xerxes IB starts co-ruling with his father.
ca. 327 BCE	Darius I dies leaving the kingdom to Xerxes IB who is now sole ruler.
ca. 317 BCE	Artaxerxes II becomes king of Persia immediately after death of Xerxes IB and having been king of Babylon for 41 years.
317 BCE	Darius III starts co-ruling with his father-in-law.
312 BCE	Darius III is defeated at the Battle of Issos.
311 BCE	Fall of Tyre and Gaza at hands of Alexander the Great. Seleucus I (Nicator) left in charge of Syria and Judaea. Start of Seleucid Era, also known as Alexandrian Era.
310 BCE	Alexander the great conquers Egypt and leaves Ptolemy in charge.
309 BCE	Darius III killed.
308 BCE	Artaxerxes II Arsaces aka Artaxerxes V Bessus is killed.
302 BCE	(or maybe 305 BCE as per the Babylonian records?) Alexander the Great dies.

I would expect that the above estimated dates may need fine tuning as we obtain more data. I have assumed, for example, that Darius I ruled for 36 years, whereas Ctesias would have us

³²¹ Ezra 6:14.

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believe that he ruled for 35 years. The difference could be attributable to the way the Babylonians calculated regnal years in comparison to the Assyrian method of calculation. We simply do not know. Up till now, we have relied heavily on the contrived reports of the Greek writers in conjunction with incorrect interpretations of the Babylonian lists, which themselves are also in part contrived.

It should be noted that the second year of Darius I, when the word of the LORD was given to the prophet Zechariah, occurred 70 years after Solomon's temple was destroyed.³²² This fell, according to my calculations, in 361 BCE. The first year of the Seleucid Period occurred in 311 BCE, this marking the start of a new era. It is interesting to note that the period of time from 361 BCE to 311 BCE amounts to **precisely** 50 years. Could it be a coincidence that 50 years is a jubilee period?

Conclusion

It has to be admitted that, even with these radical amendments being proposed here, this period is still shrouded in obscurity. Some things, however, have now become clearer. Of particular interest is the fact that Ctesias, who is **assumed** to have been a physician in the employment of Artaxerxes II (even though we do not know this for a fact), must more correctly have been a physician in Alexander the Great's army. Xenophon informs us that he was made a physician to Cyrus the Younger,³²³ which means that he must have been assigned as such by Alexander himself. This places a completely different perspective on our understanding of who Ctesias was. His first-hand knowledge of Persian history is said to have come from Parysatis, the daughter of Artaxerxes II. This reconstruction makes Parysatis the person who 'married' Alexander the Great, which means that she must have been placed in Ctesias' charge by Alexander himself. The suggestion that Darius III alias Cyrus the Younger was operating with the assistance of Clearchus, who was one of Alexander the Great's generals, demonstrates that some form of alliance existed between the two kings, and yet the Greek writers make no mention of any such alliance.

Concerning Darius III, Diodorus records:

"After this Alexander left Dareius's mother, his daughters, and his son in Susa, providing them with persons **to teach them the Greek language**."³²⁴

If the Greeks had already arrived in Persia, and Greek physicians were already being used by the Persian royal household prior to the time of Alexander, there would not have been the need for teachers to teach them the Greek language. This itself 'rewrites' our understanding of the events of that period. From what we are told about the Persian royal family, they kept very much to themselves, so any information the Greek writers will have acquired will have been third-hand from unreliable sources.

The archaeological evidence calls for a radical reduction in the chronology of the Achaemenid Period, but we have ignored the archaeological record in favour of the contrived writings of the Greek historians. This paper shows how that reduction can be achieved. What we are

³²² Zech 1:7 & 12.

³²³ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.8.26.

³²⁴ Diodorus, *Library* 17.67 (emphasis mine).

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revealing here also has a considerable impact on the Greek history which likewise is currently overinflated. Consider, for example, that Herodotus must have lived in the **fourth** century BCE rather than the **fifth**. As he was still alive to record that Artaxerxes II succeeded Xerxes IB, then he must have finished his book around 320 BCE.

Livy informs us that the Celts crossed the Alps during the time of Tarquinius Priscus king of Rome,³²⁵ who is usually dated to around 390 BCE, but with the amendment to the dating of Alexander the Great, I would suggest that this more correctly occurred around 350 BCE. When Herodotus tells us that the Celts “are the most westerly dwellers in Europe, except for the Cynetes”,³²⁶ his comment is now shown to be made **after** this event described by Livy, which means that a 500 BCE date for the arrival of the Celts now needs to be refined to fall around 350 BCE. Herodotus is heavily criticised for his failure to describe the inhabitants of the central and northern regions of France and of Germany, but the simple truth of the matter is that these regions were, in his day, uninhabited by man. The Celtic and Germanic peoples had not at that time migrated into these regions. (Due to the magnitude of the task, a discussion of the migration of the Celtic tribes is dealt with in a separate article.) This is the sort of mess which has been created by over-reliance on the overinflated Achaemenid chronology!

Consider also what the knock-on effect this has on the dates for the foundation and expansion of the Greek colonies including the assumed dates for the foundation of Rome. Everything now needs to be moved forward by more than a century. It means that the destruction of Solomon’s temple, which is usually dated to around 586 BCE, must have been destroyed around 431 BCE, some 150 years later than is commonly assumed!

The Talmudists may have got their calculations wrong, but they were not too far off the mark. Instead of the 34 years for which they argued (i.e. from the time the Second Temple was built to the beginning of Greek rule), we are talking more correctly of around 50 years. This is still a substantial reduction in the accepted dates for a period which is supposed to be well-documented! The trouble is that no one has been prepared to question or challenge anything even when it is known that much of what the Greek writers have written is simply wrong. We would much rather challenge what the Jews have recorded, even to the extent of suggesting that complete generations have been omitted in the genealogical records of the Jewish line of priests!

³²⁵ Livy, *The History of Rome* 5.34.1-5.

³²⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 4.49.