

The Kingdom of Persia and Media in the Second Temple Period and Before –

A Renewed Study by Dr. Chaim Chefetz

A. Introduction. From the Conquest of Nineveh until Alexander the Great:

The history of the ancient world from its early days until the establishment of the Chaldean kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar the Great and his father Nabopolassar, lies in a kind of twilight, due to the lack of ancient historical sources with literary continuity that have reached our time, except for the Book of Books of the Jewish people, which is the Chaldean empire, called by historians "the Neo-Babylonian." However, from the time of that monarchy until the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great the Macedonian, and even a little before it, ancient history entered, as it were, into great light.

Regarding this period, there is an abundance of sources, both literary and many diverse archaeological findings, and this grants historians and researchers of our day the feeling that historical knowledge about this period is confirmed and solid. Among this abundance of sources are found the famous history books of the Greeks, namely the books of Herodotus, Thucydides (or Thukydidēs in his form), Xenophon, Ctesias, and Diodorus, as well as the Greek literature from the Roman Empire period, including the books of Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, and Plutarch, and of course, Josephus, as well as the Holy Scriptures of the people of Israel, which are the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Haggai,

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Zechariah, and Malachi, the end of the Book of Kings and the Book of Chronicles, and above all, Daniel. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

From the field of archaeology have emerged the Chronicles inscriptions of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar the Great; the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and especially of Nabonidus; the inscriptions of Cyrus, Darius, and Ahasuerus; and foremost among them the great and famous biographical inscription of Darius son of Hystaspes on the Behistun Rock, which was the key to deciphering cuneiform writing; and last but not least—the camels from the military Jewish settlement of Deir el-Bahri in Upper Egypt, and the tablets that contained letters of the Persian prince Arsham to various officials in Egypt during the days of King Darius.

However, one who looks with open eyes and without prejudice at this historical treasury will soon realize that before him is a dazzling light and not a clear light—like a treasure kept for its owner to his detriment. This is because all the enumerated sources are not sources that fit together by themselves like links in a chain; they contradict each other greatly and conspicuously, and this is not only in marginal matters but also in very significant issues.

Based on this abundance of sources, it is not possible to create a plausible historical sequence of important historical events according to an agreed chronological order, without sophisticated and deep interpretation, and often by preferring one source over another when it is impossible to bridge the contradiction; and this is attested to by the many fundamental disagreements among modern historians. In this unclear and unstable situation, the worldview and inclination of every historian and researcher play a decisive role in their historical perspective, even beneath their level of awareness.

Moreover, every new interpretive insight in old sources and every discovery of new sources can easily lead to the undermining of accepted foundations and to a change in the accepted historical face of the period beyond recognition.

The hardest and most serious contradiction exists between the Jewish sources, as interpreted and completed by the Jewish historical tradition, and the Greek sources, as interpreted and completed in the modern historical research. The contradiction focuses sharply and clearly on two main centers: the beginning of the Persian Empire period with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, and the duration of this period, which ends with the conquest of Persia by Alexander.

According to what is told in the Book of Daniel, and according to what is interpreted and completed by the Sages, Babylon was conquered by a military coalition of Media and Persia, led by Darius son of Ahasuerus king of Media and Cyrus king of Persia, who had between them a kinship of father-in-law and son-in-law. Darius the Mede was the elder of the two, and only after his death, in the first year of the conquest, did Cyrus reign over the kingdom of Persia and Media. At the beginning of his reign he issued his famous declaration concerning the return of Israel to its land and the building of Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Despite many attempts and efforts, modern researchers have failed to find Darius the Mede in the Greek sources, for reasons that will be explained later in this article, and some have even counted and concluded that this king never was but rather a fable, a product of the Jewish literature's imagination.

The second focus of contradiction is the determination of the duration of Persian rule before the Temple—that is, from the second year of Darius the Persian until the conquests of Alexander. The opinion of the Sages that the

Persian rule before the Temple lasted only thirty-four years seems to historians ridiculous and refuted on its face, as they are certain beyond any doubt, based on the reconstruction of the Greek sources, that the length of the period is close to two hundred years.

Even the most Bible-honoring, truth-seeking scholars dismiss it out of hand, leaving it a concern only for the contemplative thinkers and devout faithful of Israel—whose reverence for the Sages’ tradition makes them unwilling to challenge it and forces them into silent endurance.

However, there exists a third important focus of contradiction between the sources of Judaism and the sources of Greece. But except for the banned researcher, Dr. Velikovsky, most other researchers did not grant it the proper attention, and perhaps they did not notice the contradiction at all. According to what is told in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt and destroyed it at the end of the days of Pharaoh Hophra—who is Apries of Herodotus—for forty years. When Egypt recovered from its destruction and regained its independence, it was doomed to become a lowly kingdom, that is, a dependent kingdom within an imperial kingdom ruled by foreigners, exactly like the status of Judah in the days of Zedekiah under the Babylonian kingdom, or like the status of Judah under the Persian Empire.

This description stands in stark contradiction to the depiction by Herodotus of the state of the kingdom of Egypt during forty-four years after the killing of Pharaoh Hophra. Indeed, the conquest and destruction of Egypt on the scale described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel were also described at length by Herodotus, but he placed and fixed them in the days of Cambyses son of Cyrus king of Persia.

Attempts at partial harmonization by Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers—Bible-honoring and defenders of Israel’s tradition alike—between the accounts in the Jewish sources and those in the Greek sources have

generally come to nothing, save for a handful of exceptions. In my view, these attempts are doomed to fail from the outset for the simple reason that they all move in but one direction: the effort to insert the Jewish historical tradition, or portions thereof, into a historical framework reconstructed solely from the Greek sources.

The moment historical events and their chronology are fixed by historians according only to the Greek literary sources—by a sophisticated reconciliation of their internal contradictions and with a complete disregard for the Jewish literary sources—the very possibilities for reasonable interpretation needed to resolve contradictions originating outside that reconstructed framework are foreclosed.

For an integration between different sources to succeed, it must be done before the creation of a rigid reconstructed framework and not afterward, and this is possible only if all sources are treated with equal regard. This regard has not yet been granted to the sources of the Jewish tradition by scholars and historians of our time.

As far as my knowledge reaches and as far as my investigations have shown, no historian has ever attempted to proceed in the opposite direction—that is, to integrate what is told in the Greek literature (or parts of what is told in it) within the historical and chronological framework arising from the sources of the Jewish tradition. Neither modern historians nor ancient historians, except for Joseph son of Matthias, known as Josephus, have done this. Even Josephus achieved only partial success and left many gaps unresolved.

The aim of this article is to illuminate this neglected direction of historical research, a direction which contains, as will be proven below, the possibility to place the Jewish historical tradition at least on an equal scientific-historical footing with that of the Greek historical literature.

Beyond that, there is no possibility—and also no need—to achieve more from a scientific standpoint.

To succeed in the task we have undertaken, we must briefly deal with three primary topics necessary for laying the foundations. First, we will present the Jewish tradition about the Jewish history relating to the period in question, separately and disconnected from the Greek-Hellenistic historical literature that contradicts it. Then we will explain the method and character of the Greek-Hellenistic historical literature as expressed by its authors and by its later heirs and continuators. Next, we will say something about the nature of archaeology in general and about the content of the archaeological findings relating to the period in question in particular. And finally, we will proceed to the task of coordination and integration among these three systems, at length and in the detail required for each matter separately.

B. The Chain of Events from Nebuchadnezzar the Great the Chaldean to Alexander the Great the Macedonian According to the Jewish Historical Tradition

The Jewish historical tradition is composed of three main sources: A. What is explicitly told in the Holy Scriptures and in their explanation. B. The interpretation of the Scriptures according to the Sages and the commentators who followed them. C. Historical traditions that were transmitted orally from generation to generation and have no hint in the Scriptures.

According to the Jewish historical tradition, based on its three components, the following picture emerges about the period beginning with the rise of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean to power in Babylon and ending at the end of the days of Darius the Persian, with the conquest of Persia by the army of Alexander the Macedonian:

A. The number of years of the turbulent period, during which two world empires rose and fell—the Babylonian-Chaldean Empire and the Persian-Median Empire—is a total of one hundred and twenty-two years; seventy of these were the years of the Babylonian-Chaldean Empire and fifty-two were the years of the Persian-Median Empire. During the reign of the Babylonian-Chaldean Empire, the kings of Persia and Media were allies and vassals of the Babylonian king. The latter ruled as supreme, and his title was "King of Kings."

After the conquest of Babylon by the joint armies of Persia and Media during the days of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, the Persian-Median Empire came into being. The kings of Media and Persia, who were bound together by a rule and kinship alliance, became, according to the agreed order between them, the "Kings of Kings," replacing the descendants of the house of Nebuchadnezzar, who were uprooted from the world. The kings of Persia and Media also called themselves kings of Babylon and Assyria, and the official administrative language—the *lingua franca*—of those days was Aramaic, as it had been during the Babylonian-Chaldean Empire.

It appears that the kingdom of Persia and Media was tied at its core to Babylonian-Assyrian culture, both during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian kingdom and after it made itself the legitimate heir following the conquest of Babylon.

B. Nebuchadnezzar the Great conquered Nineveh and destroyed it in his first year of reign, together with his ally and vassal in the political hierarchy, Ahasuerus (Ahiqar) king of Media. This ended the dynasty of Sennacherib and the entire Assyrian kingdom. The center of the Assyrian-Babylonian kingdom was transferred to Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt in

greater splendor to become the new Nineveh. Thus, the Neo-Babylonian Empire came into being.

At the end of that same year, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, together with the armies of his allies, struck down the armies of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt at Carchemish near the Euphrates River. All the lands of the Egyptian "empire," called by Ezekiel "the sons of the land of the alliance" (Ezekiel 30:5), including the kingdom of Judah, fell to Nebuchadnezzar, except for Egypt itself and what lay beyond it to the south and west.

C. In the eighth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar exiled King Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with many Jews, among them the prophet Ezekiel. He appointed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as king in Judah, changed his name to Zedekiah, and forced him to swear allegiance to the kingdom of Babylon. The officers of Zedekiah tended toward an alliance with Egypt and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, his armies rose against Jerusalem and destroyed it. Solomon's Temple was burned and the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon.

D. In the twenty-seventh year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt and destroyed it. Pharaoh Hophra was killed by those seeking his life. Egypt remained captive and desolate under Babylonian rule for forty years. Only at the beginning of the reign of Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, did Egypt recover and establish a lowly independent kingdom.

E. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years. After him, his son Evil-Merodach reigned twenty-three years. In the first year of his reign, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison and treated him well. After Evil-Merodach's death, Belshazzar his son reigned for three broken years

and was killed on a night of feast and revelry. That same night Babylon was conquered by the joint armies of Persia and Media.

F. Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede was sixty-two years old at the time of the conquest of Babylon and died in his first year of reign in Babylon. Cyrus king of Persia, his son-in-law, rose to the rank of "King of Kings" in the Persian-Median kingdom. At the beginning of his reign, he issued his famous declaration permitting the people of Israel to return to their land and to rebuild Jerusalem and the house of God within it. Cyrus was king under the title "King of Kings" only three years after the conquest of Babylon. After him rose to the throne of "King of Kings" Ahasuerus son of Darius the Mede, who is the Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther.

At the beginning of his reign, the enemies of Judah wrote a slanderous letter by the hand of the scribe Shimshai son of Haman son of Hammedatha—that is, the Aramaic letter to Artaxerxes king of Persia brought in the Book of Ezra. Under the influence of his wife Vashti, daughter of Belshazzar the Babylonian, Artaxerxes (i.e., Ahasuerus) ordered the cessation of the building of the city and the Temple. Ahasuerus reigned fourteen years and his days were shortened (Esther 1:1), that is, he was murdered, and in his place reigned Darius the Persian (Seder Olam Rabbah 26), who in his second year resumed the building of the Temple (Haggai 1), and it was completed in his sixth year. In the seventh year of the reign of Darius, also called Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes was a general title in the kingdom and was the title of all kings of Persia and Media, like the name Pharaoh in Egypt—R.H., 3b), Ezra the priest and scribe went up (Ezra 7:10). In the twentieth year of Darius-Artaxerxes the Persian, Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judah, and he went up to the land and built the wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2 and following).

G. Darius-Artaxerxes the Persian reigned a total of thirty-six years and was defeated in the battlefield by Alexander the Great. In that same year, the fifty-second year from the beginning of the Median-Persian empire, Elam was conquered, and the kingdom of Persia and Media as an empire passed from the world (Seder Olam, *ibid.*). After the conquest of Elam, Alexander reigned six more years until his death, and the Greek-Hellenistic Macedonian kingdom split into four kingdoms that together embraced the arms of the world, but were in conflict with one another.

To conclude the review, we note that there is no way to extract from the Scriptures the total number of years of Persian rule, and this is an oral tradition. Because the last year of King Darius-Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah is the thirty-second year. And since the Temple began to be built in the second year of Darius (Haggai 1:15), there are thirty years of Persian rule before the Temple until the last year mentioned explicitly in Nehemiah. One may add one year, assuming that a small time at the beginning or end of the count is considered a full year, and even so we reach at most thirty-one years. But without the oral tradition it is impossible to reach the thirty-four years counted in Seder Olam, according to which Darius the Persian reigned thirty-six years. This fact is important to our matter, as will be shown below.

We further note that the historical and chronological picture emerging from the House of Study of the Jewish historical tradition is whole and consistent in all its parts and contains no internal contradictions or disagreements, except for marginal matters for which there was no clear tradition, such as the question of whether Darius the Persian was the son of Ahasuerus and Esther. Such details, originating in interpretation and not tradition, do not alter the historical sequence or the chronological order of events, even if they are disputed. Were it not for the contradictions coming

from outside, which originate in the Greek historical literature, the Jewish historical tradition could stand on its own. This is not true regarding the historical system that emerges from the Greek historical literature, as will be explained later.

C. Greek Historical Literature: Its Nature and Content

Josephus has already elaborated at length in his book *Against Apion* on the general nature of Greek historical literature and on the reliability of its greatest authors, and after him (and even before him) modern historians and researchers as well as the ancient Greek authors themselves have testified one to another. Here we will clarify that Greek writers should not be regarded as deliberate liars in matters where they had no personal involvement (such as directed hatred of Israel and so forth). In matters lacking personal involvement, one should treat them as naïve narrators according to their generation and its values. It is possible to penetrate through the layers of errors, mistakes, and contradictions to the fundamental cores of truth embedded within them. I believe that in this matter the geographer Strabo established the correct approach, and these are his words:

"However, even the historians did not give an accurate and truthful description of the nations [the Scythians], nor is much trust given to the ancient history of the Persians or Medes or Syrians, due to the childish naivety of the historians and their fondness for myths. Since they saw that those who openly wrote myths enjoyed fame, they thought that they too would succeed in making their compositions accepted if they told, under the guise of history, things they never saw or even heard—at least not from people who knew the facts—solely for the purpose of telling stories that gave their listeners enjoyment and

astonishment. It is easier to believe Hesiod and Homer in their tales about famous heroic figures, or the tragic poets, than to believe Ctesias, Herodotus, Hellanicus, and other such authors."

When one sets out to draw history and chronological sequence from the historical books of the classical Greek writers, it is important to be aware of the following verified facts:

A. Almost nothing is known about the lives and times of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Ctesias, let alone the other authors before and after them, whose writings have survived only in tiny fragments. The accuracy of the little that can be gleaned from their writings depends on the correct determination of the times of the events they describe in their books, which itself depends to a large extent on a clear knowledge of their lives and times. Thus, every such determination is essentially a hypothesis.

B. It is not clearly known when the books of the historians mentioned above were composed and published, and above all: it is not known whether later editors and authors altered them. It is known, for example, without doubt, that Thucydides' book was not published in his lifetime, and that the missing last section of his book about the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta is actually the first section of Xenophon's book called *Hellenica*. Furthermore, Xenophon explicitly states in his *Hellenica* that he continues the narrative exactly where Thucydides left off. Moreover, Xenophon says that the story of the ten thousand Greek mercenaries who participated with Cyrus in his war against his brother Artaxerxes was written by a man named Themistogenes of Syracuse.

This surprising statement by Xenophon, who is known as the author of the book about the ten thousand soldiers—*Anabasis*—which is in our hands and in which he allegedly participated as the main protagonist in their

adventures, raised great astonishment among modern scholars, who have explained it with various strained excuses.

C. Chronology is the weak point of all the Greek writers. There is no dispute about this among all modern researchers. Even Thucydides, who rebuked his predecessors for this flaw and was aware of the importance of chronology for achieving an accurate historical picture, was also afflicted by this flaw and did not emerge unscathed from the critiques of our learned contemporaries. The Greek writers primarily focused on storytelling, not on the order of their times. Such a general approach is a proven recipe for confusion and many errors.

D. There are contradictions between Herodotus and Ctesias (the latter often calls the former a liar), especially regarding the kingdom of Assyria and the conquest of Nineveh by the Medes, regarding the foundation of the Median kingdom and the names of its kings from generation to generation, and also regarding many important events in the Persian kingdom. These contradictions are essential and have a significant impact on the accurate historical picture of the period in question. Modern researchers have not found a way to reconcile them reasonably and have been left only to prefer one version and completely ignore the other, or to prefer one version sometimes and the other version at other times, or in certain matters to regard the contradictions as marginal and present both versions without deciding between them.

E. Berossus, the Chaldean priest who lived in the days of Ptolemy I Soter king of Egypt, harshly criticized Herodotus for attributing the building of Babylon to Queen Semiramis, since it was actually built by the great king Nebuchadnezzar. It should be noted that the name Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon does not appear at all in Herodotus, although he greatly expands on Babylon. Herodotus mentions two kings, father and son, with the same

name Labynetus, and two famous queens, Semiramis and Nitocris.

According to him, Nitocris is the mother of Labynetus the younger, the last king of Babylon who was conquered by Cyrus the Persian. Modern scholars are greatly confused when trying to identify these two Labynetus kings—and even Semiramis and Nitocris pose a source of perplexity for them.

Even the famous English scholar Rawlinson, who trusted Herodotus greatly and tended to reject the words of his rival Ctesias, and whose four thick volumes on Herodotus contain much important information on the ancient world, clearly states that regarding the two Labynetus kings, Herodotus either misunderstood what was told to him or was deliberately misled by his guides-informants. It should be noted here that the story of Semiramis is told at length by Diodorus Siculus, who lived around the time of Josephus, and its source is Ctesias and not Herodotus.

Regarding the nature and content of the Greek historical literature relating to the period in question, it should be noted further that we do not have today even a single complete book written in the days of Alexander the Great or close to his time (before or after him), whose subject is the history of Persia or Greece and which surveys the period continuously from the beginning of the reign of Cyrus the Great until the time of Alexander the Great. The only book that includes a continuous historical account of the Persian period and discusses extensively the relations of the Persian and Median kingdoms with the cities of Greece is that of Diodorus Siculus, who presents himself as writing a universal history from the beginning of the world until his own days. We have a parallel historical reconstruction from that period—the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus son of Matthias.

D. The Relationship Between Archaeology and History

It is a verified fact that archaeology is merely an auxiliary tool for written and transmitted historical literature, and it has no independent standing in the field of history. A conclusive proof of this is the archaeological wealth of the great ancient cultures in the continent of South America, which lies like a stone that cannot be turned over and contributes virtually nothing to the knowledge of the history of the nations with those cultures, solely because historians and researchers do not possess written or orally transmitted historical literature clearly relating to those cultures.

In other words: without ancient historical literature written in ancient languages, there is no way to decipher the ancient archaeological inscriptions or to extract any meaning from them, even after succeeding in deciphering them. And even then—with significant doubts and disagreements among researchers. The deciphering and meaning of archaeological inscriptions belonging to a specific period thus depend entirely on the historical beliefs of the historians and archaeologists working on that period, who rely upon each other.

It is a fact that archaeological findings related to our period generally include the same generic names of Persian kings appearing in the historical literature of both Jews and Greeks, namely: Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes. The question that always confronts researchers of all kinds is: who is intended? Is it Darius Nothus II or Darius Hystaspes I? Is it Cyrus the Great or Cyrus the Younger? And regarding Artaxerxes, there are three with that name in Greek literature. The determinations are always made according to the accepted historical reconstruction, done exclusively based on the Greek historical literary sources.

There are many difficulties and disagreements among scholars, but it has never occurred to any historian or researcher that many of these

difficulties could be easily solved if they relied on the Jewish historical tradition.

Indeed, most of the archaeological findings fit well with the Jewish historical tradition, if not more than that, as we will try to demonstrate below.

E. Integration of the Stories of Greek Historical Literature and Archaeological Findings Within the Framework of the Jewish Historical Tradition

We will now proceed to integrate the data from Greek literature and the data from archaeological findings known to us from the Jewish tradition, and we will do so according to a sequence of topics that we will specify. Before that, we will make two brief remarks regarding the names of people appearing in Greek literature and Jewish literature in general, and regarding the names of Persian and Median kings in particular. These remarks are necessary for understanding the methodology we consistently adopted in explaining what follows.

A. It is important to distinguish between determining a person's name and determining his historical identity. Sometimes a particular name can be clearly identified, but there are difficulties in uncovering the historical personality behind the name. Sometimes the situation is the opposite: the historical identity of the person is clear, but the names by which they are called are hard to identify.

B. The identification of the following four names of kings of Media and Persia will remain fixed throughout the article:

1. Xerxes = Ahasuerus = Ahashuerosh;
2. Artaxerxes = Artaxerxes = Artachshashta

The identification of the names Cyrus and Darius is clear in all languages.

The topics to be discussed in this article are as follows:

1. Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede in Greek literature
2. Cyrus son of Cambyses son of Cyrus—the grandson and grandfather
3. Astyages the Mede
4. Nebuchadnezzar, Semiramis, and Nabonidus father of Belshazzar
5. Cambyses son of Cyrus son of Cambyses—the grandson and grandfather
6. Ahasuerus son of Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede—the grandson and grandfather
7. Darius the Great the Persian son of Hystaspes
8. Artaxerxes the Great King
9. Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, his sons and followers; the struggle and fusion between the Persian religion and the Magian religion
10. The Great Median Revolt in the days of King Darius
11. Sanballat the governor of Samaria
12. Simon the Just and Alexander the Great

1. Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede in Greek Literature

As already mentioned, according to the Jewish historical tradition, Babylon was conquered by the united armies of Media and Persia, led by King Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, who were closely related by blood and marriage. Modern historians and researchers have struggled to identify this Darius the Mede in the historical and archaeological sources available to them.

Surprisingly, the Median king—uncle and father-in-law of Cyrus the Persian—is found in shining letters in the story of Xenophon about the conquest of Babylon in his famous book on “The Education of Cyrus” — the *Cyropaedia* — but he hides there under another name: Cyaxares son of Astyages the Mede. According to Xenophon’s account, King Cyaxares the Mede and Cyrus participated together in all the wars against Babylon and its allies until the fall of the great kingdom, and in all of them, Cyrus was under the command of Cyaxares. After the conquest, Cyrus prepared a palace in Babylon for his uncle to dwell in—that is, Cyaxares was crowned king over Babylon, exactly as told in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 9:1).

Even more surprising is the fact that almost all the details of Xenophon’s story match remarkably the facts according to the Jewish tradition. Even the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar is hinted at clearly, leaving no doubt in the heart of any biblical scholar. Indeed, Josephus saw in Xenophon’s story the Greek source confirming the existence of the king called in the Book of Daniel “Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede,” since in his recounting of the story of Daniel and the conquest of Babylon, he simply states that Darius son of Astyages the Mede conquered Babylon together with his relative Cyrus, but the Greeks call him by another name.

Josephus closed the matter without explaining what name the Greeks use for Darius. But there is no doubt that Josephus meant Cyaxares son of Astyages the Mede mentioned in Xenophon’s book. It is therefore proven beyond any doubt that the historical personality behind the name Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede is found in the Greek historical literary sources.

Before we proceed further and prove that even the name Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede appears in Greek historical literature, we will discuss the question of why researchers chose to completely ignore Xenophon’s

story, even though all his other historical books are accepted as authoritative and the historical events are fixed chronologically by them. The reason is that almost all researchers unanimously decided that Xenophon's book about Cyrus is a fictional story from beginning to end, like a historical romance written by the respected Greek historian and author for the purpose of presenting an educational figure to the people of his generation.

The arguments presented to support this claim, when presented, are weak. Their strength may apply at best to the description of Cyrus's personality in the story, but in no way do they explain the invention of an imaginary personality as the son of Astyages the Mede named Cyaxares and many other details. Moreover, these arguments have equal force against Herodotus's stories about Cyrus.

These weak arguments against Xenophon's story do not constitute a reason to reject it. The real overt reason for the overwhelming majority of researchers to ignore Xenophon's story about Cyrus is their total reliance on Herodotus's account, which contains no mention of a Mede king son of Astyages holding political authority above Cyrus, and even Ctesias does not contradict Herodotus on this matter. But if this is the overt true reason—the hidden reason working below the level of awareness will be clarified below—then the surprise is even greater. For Herodotus himself naïvely admits that he heard four different stories about Cyrus the Great, and he chose the one that seemed to him the most reasonable.

Meanwhile, Ctesias contradicts Herodotus in his own story about Cyrus on very important details, as we will see below. Therefore, it must be clearly assumed that Xenophon also heard at least one of these four stories, two of which are embedded in the books of Herodotus and Ctesias, and there is no reason to accuse him specifically of fabrication. Moreover, Ctesias accuses

Herodotus of error and fantasy, and Xenophon's story is supported by the Jewish historical tradition and by Josephus.

However, matters are more complex and complicated. The name Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede appears in the lists of kings of Egypt by the Egyptian priest Manetho, in Xenophon's *Hellenica*, and in the books of Diodorus Siculus, and all refer to King Ochus (or Ahas) who changed his name to Darius and is called by the Greeks Darius Nothus, meaning "the bastard." They tell extensively about Darius Nothus. This Darius, called by researchers Darius II, is the father of Artaxerxes and Cyrus the Younger, who fought each other for the throne after Darius died in Babylon, and in the famous battle near Cunaxa close to Babylon in the third year of Artaxerxes, Cyrus the Younger was killed. The adventures of the ten thousand Greek mercenaries who came to his aid (including Xenophon) are commemorated in Greek historical literature and constitute one of the most fascinating stories in that literature.

In our opinion, Darius son of Ahasuerus, Ochus-Nothus, called by Ctesias Darius son of Artaxerxes brother of Ahasuerus son of Artaxerxes, is the same as Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede of the Jewish historical tradition and mentioned in Daniel 9:1. Full and convincing proof depends and will be woven in the other topics before us, and we shall therefore return and discuss the interesting figure behind the names Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede and Cyaxares son of Astyages the Mede (see below, section 2 [Cyrus], and section 6 [Ahasuerus]).

To conclude this stage of the topic, we simply say this: it is now understood why researchers could not identify the historical personality Darius the Mede of the Jewish historical tradition in Greek historical literature, although he and his name were known to researchers. This required a genuine revolution in the historical and chronological perception

of the Persian period, and this is not possible as long as the sources of the Jewish historical tradition are not granted equal status in the eyes of researchers.

2. Cyrus son of Cambyses son of Cyrus — the grandson and grandfather

Now we will sequentially examine the conflicting versions of the three main speakers in Greek historical literature regarding the lineage and famous deeds of Cyrus the Great, and see if it is possible to reconcile them without difficulty.

A. According to Herodotus, Cyrus was the son of Cambyses the Persian and Mandane, daughter of Astyages the Mede, king of the Median empire which ruled over the Persians. The marriage between the daughter of the great king and the Persian prince was arranged following a terrifying dream that Astyages had about his daughter Mandane. The magi who interpreted his dreams explained that Mandane was destined to give birth to a son who would inherit the Median throne and whose dominion would extend over the whole world.

When Cyrus was a fetus in his mother's womb, Astyages had another dream, which the magi also interpreted similarly, meaning that the child to be born would rule Media and the entire world. When Cyrus was born, Astyages the grandfather tried secretly to kill Cyrus, but Harpagus, the Median official charged with the task, gave the baby to a poor shepherd, who, together with his wife, raised him as their son. Eventually, the boy Cyrus grew up, and with the help of the Persians and with the assistance of Harpagus who betrayed his lord, he rebelled against Astyages the Mede and defeated him. Thus was born the Persian Empire, which inherited the Median Empire.

B. But according to Ctesias, Herodotus erred gravely. In his version, Cyrus who defeated Astyages the Mede was not his grandson or relative at all, but rather a Persian of an unremarkable family. After the victory, Cyrus treated Astyages with the respect due a father, and Amitis, daughter of Astyages, was treated with the respect due a mother. Later, Cyrus married Amitis daughter of Astyages.

C. According to Xenophon, indeed Cyrus was the grandson of Astyages, son of his daughter Mandane, who was married to Cambyses king of the Persians. Cyrus and his grandfather Astyages loved each other, and upon the death of Astyages, Cyaxares his son inherited the throne of Media. Cyaxares and young Cyrus his nephew jointly conducted the wars against the kings of Babylon, defeated them, and finally conquered Babylon. At that time, Cambyses, the father of Cyrus, was still alive.

As mentioned, Herodotus himself testified that he heard four different stories about Cyrus the Great. It can be seen that Herodotus heard Ctesias's story that Cyrus was from an unremarkable and unrelated family in Persia, completely alien to the family of Astyages the Median king, and he resolved the contradiction based on the story of the dreams and the transfer of Cyrus at birth to a shepherd family that raised him. Moreover, both Herodotus and Ctesias speak only of daughters that Astyages had, and even Xenophon does not deny the existence of daughters. But it is also clear from Herodotus's story that Astyages had sons, at least one son. Otherwise, why would Astyages have been frightened by the magi's interpretation of his dreams, which told him that his daughter's son would inherit his kingdom? Only through his daughters could the continuity of his royal house continue. This would not be the case if he had sons, because then the meaning of the dreams would be that the kingdom would pass out of his house afterward. And this was what Astyages wanted to prevent.

Yet, the fundamental contradiction remains between Ctesias, who decisively claims that Cyrus the Persian who defeated Astyages was not from his family at all, and Xenophon, who agrees with Herodotus that Cyrus was the grandson of Astyages but insists, contrary to Herodotus, that Cyrus never fought against his grandfather Astyages.

Surprisingly, it is very easy to reconcile this contradiction. The solution was proposed by an English scholar of the nineteenth century. In one Babylonian inscription, Cyrus the conqueror of Babylon declares these things about his greatness and lineage: "I am Cyrus, king of all, the great king, the heroic king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four winds, son of the son of Cyrus the great king, king of the city of Anshan..." Therefore, it turns out that there were two great Cyrus's: Cyrus the grandson who conquered Babylon and Cyrus the grandfather.

From this, the conclusion naturally arises to reconcile the contradiction between the three historians who speak and tell, each according to what they heard from different sources. The great Cyrus who fought against Astyages and defeated him is Cyrus the grandfather, king of Anshan. He is probably the Cyrus mentioned in one of the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal king of Assyria, the son of the son of Sennacherib, who was the elder contemporary of Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean.

In other words: the great Cyrus described by the Greek historians is a composite figure of two famous persons in the ancient world bearing the same name, Cyrus the grandfather and Cyrus the grandson. The mixing between the two is very strong in Herodotus, who collected many stories on his travels and did his best to satisfy everyone. Ctesias speaks about Cyrus the grandfather, while Xenophon tells only about Cyrus the young grandson.

Researchers have already established that Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia* is based on the figure of young Cyrus, son of Darius Nothus-Ochus II, the leader of the rebellion against his brother Artaxerxes. This is indeed correct, as any reader will find confirmed by Xenophon's description of young Cyrus in the *Anabasis*, the book that describes the famous revolt and the exploits of the ten thousand Greek mercenaries.

Furthermore, even from Xenophon's brief writings and his *Hellenica*, it is clear that young Cyrus was king in every respect and behaved accordingly, and even archaeologists who find inscriptions of Cyrus, mainly in Asia Minor, are not sure whether they belong to the elder Cyrus or to young Cyrus. In my opinion, the logical conclusion is that the young Cyrus mentioned is Cyrus the grandson, son-in-law and nephew of Darius the Mede, and together with him conquered Babylon, and it was he who issued his proclamation during his reign allowing the people of Israel to return to their land and rebuild the Temple, as explained. Note that "son" means (besides the usual meaning of blood relation) also son by marriage—that is, son-in-law, also ally and disciple. Young Cyrus was the son by marriage of Darius Ochus son of Ahasuerus the Mede, and brother by marriage, that is, brother-in-law of Artaxerxes.

This fact alone explains the great war over the throne between the two brothers. We will return to this issue when we discuss the identity of Artaxerxes, the one against whom young Cyrus fought.

One interesting detail to conclude this topic of elder Cyrus and young Cyrus: the famous tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae was attributed by some scholars to young Cyrus. However, this opinion is dismissed lightly and without arguments in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. In my opinion, the original debate was in vain, just like doubts about other inscriptions of King

Cyrus the Persian. Young Cyrus is the same as Cyrus the Great, and therefore all sides in the debate are correct, just like the Greek historians generally are.

3. Astyages the Mede

Astyages the Mede is not mentioned, at least not by this name, in the sources of the Jewish historical tradition. However, it is beyond any doubt that this historical figure did exist, since all the sources of Greek historical literature, and even the archaeological sources, attest to his existence in reality. This knowledge is of great importance in understanding the creation of the kingdom of Media and Persia, which was a federative alliance between two nations, whose royal and noble classes were connected through marital ties.

Now we will list one after another the conflicting lineage descriptions of the ancient historians regarding Astyages, and see how they can be reconciled without difficulty.

A. According to Herodotus, King Astyages the Mede reigned for thirty-five years until he was defeated by Cyrus the Persian. He was the son of Cyaxares, who reigned for forty years. This Cyaxares is the one who conquered and destroyed Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian kingdom. Cyaxares's father was Phraortes, who reigned for twenty-two years and was killed in an earlier attempt to conquer Nineveh.

B. In contrast, according to Ctesias, there is no mention of Cyaxares, Phraortes, or Deioces, the founder of the Median kingdom according to Herodotus. The conqueror of Nineveh according to Ctesias was Arbaces the Mede, who was aided by Belesis the Babylonian, and he reigned for twenty-eight years. After him appears a long list of kings ending with the last three:

Artinis – 22 years; Astibarus – 40 years; and Aspandanes, whom the Greeks call Astyages.

C. Meanwhile, in Xenophon we find Cyaxares son of Astyages, who, as mentioned, was identified by Josephus and by us as Darius son of Ahasuerus, but there is no mention of Astyages's ancestors. Also, it has already been noted that in Xenophon's book there is no mention of Cyrus's war against Astyages.

D. Regarding inscriptions: there is an inscription on a tablet in the name of Nabonidus king of Babylon, father of Belshazzar, in which he complains before the god Marduk of his inability to build a temple in Haran, because the region of Haran was occupied by Ishtumega, king of the Uman-Manda. Marduk promises him that soon Ishtumega will be defeated in war by Cyrus king of Anshan, and that Nabonidus will be able to build his temple.

Now, everywhere in the Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions where the Uman-Manda are mentioned, researchers translate the term as referring to the Scythians, that is, the nomadic peoples of the north. But in this place, researchers decided that the term refers to the Medes. It is clear why the researchers deviated from the usual translation. They are convinced that Ishtumega is Astyages of Herodotus and other Greek historians, who always called him king of the Medes, and who was defeated by Cyrus according to Herodotus, as mentioned above.

E. From other inscriptions, researchers have inferred that after the conquest of Nineveh by the joint armies of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, and Cyaxares (or Uvakhshatra) the Mede, Nebuchadnezzar married Amitis, daughter of Astyages son of Cyaxares. This conclusion contradicts Ctesias's version, according to which Cyrus the Persian married Amitis daughter of Astyages.

Another marriage alliance is mentioned by Herodotus and is probably connected to and related to the other marriage stories: Labynetus king of Babylon, whom researchers identify with Nebuchadnezzar, mediated between Cyaxares and Alyattes of Lydia who ruled Sardis (Sardis) during the war between the Medes and the Lydians. Then Aryenis, sister of Croesus, heir to the Lydian throne, married Astyages son of Cyaxares, thus making the famous Croesus—who ruled Lydia after the death of his father, descendant of Gyges (Gog)—and Astyages the Mede brothers-in-law.

From all that has been presented here, we see that Astyages appears under several names and somewhat contradictory contexts. According to Ctesias, he is called Aspandates (Aspandas, Aspandata) son of Astibarus; in an inscription of Nabonidus he is called Ishtumega king of the Uman-Manda (Scythians); Herodotus sees him as the son of Cyaxares (Ahasuerus); whereas Xenophon speaks of Cyaxares son of Astyages without any hint that Astyages's father's name was Cyaxares.

As for the meaning and origin of the name Astyages, scholars are divided. Rawlinson sees in it the name Azdegas or Az-dehak, which is the name of a famous monster in Babylonian myth. On the other hand, Olmstead believes the Median pronunciation of the name is Arshtuveiga, which is very close to the name Astibarus of Ctesias, who is the father of Aspandates-Astyages (especially if the pronunciation of the 'g' is like the 'ch'). This yields Arshtuvera, which to me resembles the name Ahasuerus (Uvakhshatra, Cyaxares).

Apparently, we have reached a dead end. However, here we are helped by another story of Herodotus about Cyaxares, which will bring us from darkness into light. Herodotus tells (Book 1, chapters 106, 103) that while Cyaxares was fighting for Nineveh, the Scythians suddenly burst into the

Middle East in their pursuit of the Cimmerians, conquered the Median empire, and ruled it for twenty-eight years. Afterwards, Cyaxares succeeded by cunning to kill the kings of the Scythians and their princes during a feast he prepared for them. The Median empire was restored, and then Cyaxares completed what he had begun—the conquest of Nineveh.

Cyaxares's forty years of reign include, according to Herodotus, the twenty-eight years of Scythian rule. Therefore, Cyaxares (Ahasuerus) ruled, like Astibarus of Ctesias, for 40 years: part before the Scythian king and part after, mostly overlapping with the Scythian king.

The conclusion I draw from all the above is that Astyages of the Greek historians is a composite of Ishtumega-Azdehak king of the Scythians, the barbaric monster who cast his terror upon the peoples of Babylon, Media, and Persia, and Ahasuerus-Arshtuveiga-Astiparous-Cyaxares king of the Medes. Ahasuerus-Cyaxares could not overcome the Scythians by himself. To his aid came Cyrus king of Anshan, who defeated them and thus freed Persia, Media, and Elam from the fear of the Scythians.

Following this victory, Ahasuerus the Mede and Cyrus the grandfather king of Anshan were united by marriage ties. The daughter of Ahasuerus married Cambyses son of Cyrus, and from this union was born the young great Cyrus, who together with his maternal uncle Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede later conquered Babylon in the days of Belshazzar son of Nabonidus the Babylonian.

At that time, additional marriage ties presumably formed between the kings of the nations, and some of the Scythians, subjects of Ishtumega-Azdehak, intermingled and assimilated among the Medes. It should be noted that the tribe of the Magi, one of the Median tribes, is considered by researchers to be of Scythian origin, a fact of great importance, as will be shown later.

In summary, the historical figure called Astyages is a key to the special federative alliance between the Medes and Persians embodied in the kingdom of Persia and Media or the kingdom of Media and Persia. The orders of governance therein were determined according to the constitution of the alliance, which was a religious Persian-Median constitution.

This constitution will explain to us the motives for the war of the young Cyrus against his brother-in-law Artaxerxes son of Darius the Mede, as we will see below when we come to the subject of the great Ahasuerus from the Book of Esther.

4. Nebuchadnezzar, Semiramis, and Nabonidus Father of Belshazzar

Now we will divert a little from the affairs of the kings of Media and Persia and discuss the Chaldean kings of Babylon, especially the last three: Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus, and Belshazzar. Two of them, the first and the last, are very famous in the Jewish tradition, and the middle one is known mainly from archaeological inscriptions and the story of Berossus, the Chaldean priest from the Ptolemaic era in Egypt, as recorded by Josephus.

The conquest of Babylon by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian brought into being the full extent of the Median-Persian Empire. According to Jewish historical tradition, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian were the gatekeepers of King Belshazzar before the conquest of Babylon. This seems to be a figurative expression, meaning that they were allied kings subordinate to the Babylonian "King of Kings" and guarded the borders of the Babylonian kingdom against external enemies. This alliance dates back to the days of Nebuchadnezzar and his father Nabopolassar, when Ahasuerus the Mede helped the Chaldean kings Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar to conquer and destroy Nineveh.

The histories of the two kingdoms, Babylonian and Persian-Median, are interwoven and interconnected, and there is abundant material about them in the Jewish historical tradition, Greek literature, and archaeological findings.

The most surprising fact—and for some reason scholars have not deemed it proper to discuss it at length and seriously—is that in Herodotus and other Greek historical books, although they deal extensively with the kingdom of Babylon, the name of Nebuchadnezzar the Great is not mentioned. The name Belshazzar does indeed appear among them but in a form that scholars have not identified. The name Nabonidus apparently appears in Herodotus as Labynetus, but here scholars are surprised because Herodotus reports that this Labynetus, who was defeated by Cyrus, had a son named Tissaphernes who made peace between the Medes and the Lydians during the days of Cyaxares and Alyattes, the father of Croesus. Thus, there were two Labynetuses, father and son.

Rawlinson believed that the first Labynetus referred to Nebuchadnezzar and that Herodotus was mistaken or did not understand what he was told about Babylon. Doherty, however, painstakingly established his opinion that Labynetus the father was indeed Nabonidus, and Labynetus the son was Belshazzar his son.

However, aside from the mention of their names, Herodotus knows nothing to tell about the two kings named Labynetus. In contrast, he often tells about the famous women who ruled Babylon. About the mother of Labynetus the son, Nitocris, and her predecessor Semiramis (“Sammuramat”), both of whom built the city of Babylon. Herodotus’s assertion that Semiramis built Babylon was mockingly rejected by Berossus the Chaldean priest, who even considered Herodotus a liar for that, because,

he claimed, every Babylonian knew that Nebuchadnezzar the Great built the glorious Babylon.

Here we have a golden opportunity to demonstrate the importance and necessity of the Jewish historical tradition for the study of ancient history. In this case, scholars could not in any way justify Herodotus against the testimony of Berossus. They preferred Berossus not because of the full Biblical texts in Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, which reflect the greatness and fearfulness of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, but because many scholars overvalue the fragment of an obscure inscription more than the Biblical texts.

Scholars rejected Herodotus's claim because on thousands of bricks from Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon and from the temple of Marduk (Esagila), his name is inscribed, and tablets were found in which he boasts of his deeds and buildings. As for Semiramis, her name is barely preserved in inscriptions linked to ancient Assyrian kings. Thus, scholars decided that Semiramis, the great queen of Babylon, is mostly a myth, a product of the imagination of eastern peoples who fed Herodotus and his colleague Ctesias with fictitious stories.

However, a clear and explicit Jewish legendary tradition in the Midrash states that one of the four women who ruled the world was Semiramis, wife of Nebuchadnezzar. We thus learn that both Herodotus and Berossus the Chaldean were correct. Both Nebuchadnezzar and his famous wife, Queen Semiramis, built the glorious Babylon.

These matters are deep and go to the core of ancient history. The full story about Semiramis is found in Diodorus Siculus (Book Two), whose sources were actually the writings of Ctesias and not Herodotus. From there it emerges that Semiramis was married to the great king, conqueror of all lands in ancient times, named Ninus. This king conquered both Egypt and

Persia and Media and founded the great Assyrian Empire, and even built on the Euphrates River the great city called the city of Ninus.

Here the learned editor remarks that the city Ninus, which is undoubtedly (by its name) Nineveh, was located on the Tigris and not the Euphrates. But Diodorus does not waver and everywhere mentions the Euphrates as the river on which Ninus's city was built. Furthermore, among other things it is told there that after Ninus's death, Semiramis supported the crowning of their son Ninyas, although he rebelled against her. This Ninyas was a man of peace and did not engage in wars. Semiramis lived many long years and died at a great old age. Some even say that Semiramis put her husband Ninus in prison before his death.

Finally, the author skips all the kings who reigned after Ninyas because no significant historical event happened during their time, and reaches Sardana-palus, against whom Belesis the Chaldean together with Arbaces the Mede allied and after fierce battles conquered and destroyed Ninus's city.

It is clear that these stories fit remarkably well with what is told in the Jewish tradition about Nebuchadnezzar and his son Evil-Merodach who ruled after him. In Diodorus's stories there is some mixing and merging between Nineveh and Babylon, but this is understandable given that Nebuchadnezzar, after the destruction of Nineveh, built his city Babylon the Great to be the new Nineveh. Even the name Belshazzar is mentioned in these stories in the form Belsis. The names are similar to each other both phonetically and in substance, but again there is a mixing between Nabopolassar father of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar his grandson.

But above all, to our surprise, it becomes clear that Herodotus's rumors about two kings of Babylon, Labynetos the father and Labynetos the son, are correct. For King Ninus and his son King Ninyas have names with

similar or even identical phonetic sounds. In my opinion, it should be inferred from this that both Evil-Merodach and Nebuchadnezzar called themselves Nabonidus, and that this name—which contains the prefix Nabu-, the Babylonian deity, like the name Nebuchadnezzar—is like the name Pharaoh in Egypt and the name Artaxerxes in the Persian kingdom.

Several scholars have already pointed out that the inscriptions of Nabonidus mention matters attributed in the Book of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, and as usual they concluded that the author of the Book of Daniel did not know what he was writing. In my opinion, all the inscriptions connected with the name Nabonidus should be carefully reexamined, as well as the inscriptions in which the name Semiramis appears, which are also connected with the deity Nabu in their content. With the help of Jewish tradition sources and the sources of Greek historical literature together, one should try to distinguish between those belonging to Nebuchadnezzar and those belonging to Evil-Merodach his son, and thus try to clarify the obscure history of the Babylonian-Assyrian-Chaldean empire.

We will now present a clear example for reexamination of one inscription of Nabonidus, and with this we will conclude this chapter. I wish again to praise the illuminating research of Doherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, a study that opened my eyes to many matters in this issue. In Doherty's analysis of the inscription of Nabonidus speaking of his old mother, the goddess-priestess Nin is Ishtar, he concludes that her name is Shamua-Demka, meaning "My name is important" (or "My name is exalted," "is Gracious"). The name Semiramis also means "My name is exalted" (i.e., important or exalted). Therefore, this inscription belongs to Nabonidus the son, that is, Evil-Merodach.

5. Cambyes son of Cyrus son of Cambyes — the grandson and grandfather

All the Greek historians agreed that there really were two kings named Cambyes, grandfather and grandson. The first was the son of Cyrus and the second was the father of Cyrus. The inscriptions also attest to this. And since there really were two kings named Cyrus, grandson and grandfather, it follows that Cambyes the grandfather was the son of Cyrus the grandfather, and Cambyes the grandson was the son of Cyrus the grandson. In other words, there were two kings named Cambyes son of Cyrus.

This fact will help us reconcile contradictions concerning Cambyes son of Cyrus, which are found in the books of the Greek historians, and primarily will resolve the great contradiction between what is told in Herodotus and what is told in the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Indeed, neither of the two kings named Cambyes son of Cyrus appears in the sources of the Jewish tradition, for reasons that will be clarified below, but Cambyes is mentioned in the famous Goma of the Jewish community in the days of Darius king of Persia, as well as in the famous inscription of Darius the Great Persian son of Hystaspes on the Behistun rock, and even in the inscriptions of Cyrus. Therefore, we will be forced to base our solution on the analysis of what is told in Greek historical literature alone.

Herodotus tells at length and in colorful detail about the conquest and destruction of Egypt by Cambyes son of Cyrus. According to his story, this campaign took place at the beginning of the reign of Psamtik son of Amasis king of Egypt. This Amasis was a commander in the army of Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) king of Egypt from the house of Psamtik the Great, grandfather of Pharaoh Necos (Necho), who rebelled against his lord and was handed over to the enraged Egyptian soldiers for execution. After his

death, Amasis reigned for forty-four years; he was a great and famous king and built enormous buildings of grand dimensions.

Alongside the story of the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, Herodotus recounts in two places (to emphasize certain ideas) the story of the great revolt of the Egyptians against Persia at a later period. The revolt was led by Inaros (Teneros) son of Psamtik the Lydian and Amortis the Egyptian who dwelled in the marshes of the Nile Delta in Lower Egypt.

In this revolt, Achaemenes, brother of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) the famous initiator of the great invasion against the Greek cities in continental Europe, was killed. After some time, this revolt was suppressed, and the Persians generously installed the sons of Inaros and Amortis in place of their fathers.

It is important to note that King Amortis is listed among the kings of the Egyptian priest Manetho as a sole king of the 28th dynasty in Egypt after Darius son of Ahasuerus, the last of the 27th dynasty, which was the Persian dynasty. It turns out that Amortis was king during the days of Artaxerxes son of Darius (who, as we recall, is Darius II Ochus-Nothus, according to the historical reconstruction based solely on Greek sources). Manetho writes that Amortius reigned for six years, and indeed in one of the Gomaïm in Upper Egypt there is a deed dated to the fifth year of Amortis.

This determination of the time of Amortis by Manetho created confusion among scholars, as it starkly contradicted the lengthy account of Thucydides regarding the suppression of the revolt of Inaros and Amortis after six years of success by the commander of King Artaxerxes son of Xerxes, who according to scholars is Artaxerxes I, grandfather of Artaxerxes II. Rawlinson analyzes the problem and proposes as a solution that Manetho, or whoever conveyed his words, confused the order of generations and placed Amortis after Darius II, whereas in reality he was before him.

Olmstead solves the problem with a passing remark that probably Manetho's Amortis of Sais was the grandson of the first Amortis, who was also from the same city.

But to our great surprise, Ctesias reports that Cambyses son of Cyrus was the one who suppressed the revolt of Amortis through the eunuch Bagaptis (Abgata), who was aided by an Egyptian official named Shamukombepis, who betrayed his lord. Elsewhere, Ctesias tells of the suppression of the revolt of Inaros the Lydian during the days of Artaxerxes son of Xerxes, and about the crucifixion of Inaros by Amastres, the mother of Artaxerxes, as revenge for the killing of her son Achaemenes. Elsewhere, we learn from Ctesias that Artaxerxes II son of Darius Ochus-Nothus had a powerful eunuch named Bagaptis "Abgata."

In view of the obvious contradictions between Ctesias and Thucydides on this matter, Rawlinson harshly criticized Ctesias, accusing him of deliberate falsehoods. But with all due respect to Rawlinson—who truly deserves all honor and esteem as a profound scholar with immense achievements and a sympathetic attitude toward the Bible—it is hard to understand Ctesias's psychological motive to lie deliberately about a matter that does not concern him personally at all.

In light of the genealogical order of the Jewish historical tradition, everything falls into place simply and peacefully. The Cambyses son of Cyrus described in the books of the Greek historians is a composite figure of Cambyses the grandfather son of Cyrus the grandfather and Cambyses the grandson son of Cyrus the grandson. Cambyses the grandfather lived in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and was an allied king subordinate to the Babylonian king of kings, just like Cyaxares (Ahasuerus) and his son Darius the Mede, whose sister Cambyses married, and from whom was born Cyrus the great grandson.

It seems that Cambyses the grandfather participated in the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Pharaoh Hophra, the last Egyptian king from the house of Psamtik the Great. The figure of King Amasis who reigned in Egypt after Hophra is also a composite between Amasis the Persian general who was under the command of the satrap appointed by Cambyses to govern Egypt and Ramses II the Great son of Seti, who was Necos son of Psamtik the Great. It is remembered again that in the story of Semiramis and Ninus it is clearly stated that Ninus the Great (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) conquered Egypt.

As for the revolt of Inaros son of Psamtik the Lydian (probably a descendant of Pharaoh Necos son of Psamtik the Great) and Amortis of Sais, this revolt occurred during the days of Cambyses the grandson son of Cyrus the grandson, who lived together with Artaxerxes son of Darius the Mede as king of Persia and subordinate to him according to the rules of governance of the federative union constitution of Media and Persia. He went down to Egypt to suppress the revolt, and it is possible that he went down after the suppression of the revolt by Bagaptis (Abgata), the eunuch of Artaxerxes II, who is the Cambyses mentioned in the Gomaa of Upper Egypt. We will discuss him again in connection with the inscription on the Behistun rock of Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes.

We will conclude this chapter with a brief explanatory note on the absence of Cambyses son of Cyrus in the sources of the Jewish historical tradition. These sources mention the names of the kings of the nations only when they had a special interaction with the people of Israel or if they were famous kings of kings in the world. In the days of Cambyses the grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar the Great was king of kings. And in the days of Cambyses the grandson, Ahasuerus-Artaxerxes, that is, Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, was king of kings, as will be clarified in the next chapter.

Both kings Cambyses, grandson and grandfather, were mainly involved with Egypt and not with the land of Judah or with the Jewish exile in Babylonia.

6. Ahasuerus son of Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede — the grandson and grandfather

The existence in reality of two kings named Ahasuerus, grandson and grandfather, is confirmed in the Jewish tradition. Ahasuerus the Mede, father of Darius the Mede, is mentioned in the Book of Daniel (9:1), whereas the Ahasuerus mentioned in the Book of Ezra after Cyrus, son of Darius the Mede, and identical with the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther — this is mentioned as a legendary tradition in the Talmud and Midrash.

Even Ctesias mentions two Ahasueruses (Xerxes), grandson and grandfather, with the connecting link between them being Artaxerxes I called Longimanus (Long Hand). There is support for the theory that the personal name of Artaxerxes II son of Darius II — who according to Ctesias was called Arshakhes and according to Dinon was called Orosishes, as explained by Plutarch — was Ahasuerus. Phonetically, Ahasuerus is a combination of the two names disputed among respected historians. Thus, we have Ahasuerus son of Darius son of Ahasuerus, exactly as stated in the Jewish tradition.

Furthermore, we must note that the name Cyaxares is also Ahasuerus. Last but not least, the name Ochus (Ahas), whose nature scholars struggled to ascertain, is the shortened (first) part of the name Uvakhshatra (Ahasuerus), the name of Cyaxares. Moreover, if we combine "Ahas" with "worsh" (from the shortened Greek ending of the name Orosishes), we get the name Ahasuerus exactly.

In any case, there is no shortage in Greek historical literature of the name Ahasuerus, whether the relationship of grandfather and grandson is explicitly mentioned or not. We will also note, regarding the king's name Ochus (Ahas), that according to Greek writers, two kings by this name changed their names upon accession to the throne, one to Darius and the other to Artaxerxes, and the rise of both was accompanied by the murder of all their brothers.

Here we reach the crucial point of the problem of identifying the historical persons hidden behind the name Ahasuerus in Greek historical literature, and especially the problem of identifying the famous Xerxes of Herodotus, who was defeated by the Greeks in Europe at the naval battle of Salamis. In my opinion, the great Xerxes of the Greeks is a composite of Ahasuerus the Mede grandfather and Ahasuerus the Great of Esther.

But this composite is more complicated than that of Cyrus grandfather and Cyrus grandson, or of Cambyses grandfather and Cambyses grandson. While the latter composites are relatively easy to break down into components and allocate deeds and events between them, the composite connected to the name Ahasuerus can only be broken down conceptually and not materially.

On the one hand, the name Ahasuerus (Xerxes) is attributed entirely only to Ahasuerus the grandfather who invaded Greece in Europe, whose historical identity is Cyaxares (Ahiyaqar) the Mede, who helped Nebuchadnezzar and his father conquer and destroy Assyrian Nineveh. His invasion of the Greek cities was part of his lord Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns against the Sea Peoples. The name of Ahasuerus the Mede's father was not Darius, as we saw above.

On the other hand, all descriptions of deeds, military preparations, commanders, most persons around Ahasuerus, and the king's arrogance and

glory in the stories of Herodotus and Ctesias—all come from the era of Ahasuerus son of Darius the Mede, who ruled from India to Cush, that is Ahasuerus the grandson, husband of Vashti and Esther, who was known mainly by the Greek writers as Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes). This is also one of the main reasons for the confusion in the chronology of the Persian-Median monarchy, confusion resulting from the historical reconstruction based solely on Greek historical literature.

I will now present, with emphasis and at length, two clear and conclusive proofs, in my opinion, for this far-reaching assertion, in addition to the accumulating evidence from previous chapters and even more to be added below.

Herodotus's main purpose in his book was to tell the story of the war of Persia and Media against the states of Greece, the cities of Athens and Sparta and their allies, a war that took place during the days of Ahasuerus and a little during the days of his father Darius.

He expands his words on various aspects of the war from his pagan perspective, and among other things, he tells (towards the end of his book) about some of the disgraceful deeds of Ahasuerus with the wife of his son Darius, the daughter of Masistes his brother. These deeds aroused the jealousy of Amastres, wife of Ahasuerus, who cruelly took revenge on Masistes and his wife. The book ends with a certain event from the days of Cyrus the Persian.

And behold, to our great surprise, we find in Ctesias a fascinating story about the end of the king Xerxes-Ahasuerus. A commander named Artabanus (possibly referring to Artabanus the uncle of Xerxes, whom Herodotus mentions extensively earlier) murders Ahasuerus (by poison, and according to another version by sword) and reigns in his place for about seven months.

During this time, Artabanus seduces the young Artaxerxes, son of Ahasuerus, to kill his older brother Darius son of Ahasuerus on the pretext that he murdered their father. Afterwards, Artabanus tries to kill Artaxerxes as well, but he overcomes Artabanus and kills him. He also executes his sons, ascends the Persian throne, and reigns for over forty years.

This story about the murder of the famous Xerxes-Ahasuerus together with his firstborn son Darius by Artabanus was also known to Aristotle, and he recounts it in his book *Politics* with one difference. According to him, first Darius was killed by his father Ahasuerus on the instigation of Artabanus on the charge that Darius conspired against his father, and only afterwards, out of fear that Ahasuerus would execute him for the instigation, Artabanus preemptively killed Ahasuerus as well.

We return to the words of Herodotus, the author of the main book about Xerxes-Ahasuerus. He very strongly emphasizes in his book the jealousy of the gods and their punishment of the great and arrogant rulers, and he provides many examples regarding kings and officials. How is it possible that he does not mention at all the bitter end of Ahasuerus as retribution for his evil deeds in the end of his days, an ending that fits so well with his worldview and the purpose of his book? It is surprising that scholars have not found reason to discuss this question. Although I searched extensively, I found no discussion of this in any book, article, or encyclopedia entry.

In my opinion, the solution to this mystery is that Herodotus (whose dating we will discuss below) knew that the story of the murder of Ahasuerus and his son by poison and sword by Artabanus, with the help of palace eunuchs, refers to events that happened to Artaxerxes II (called Mnemon or Memnon) son of Darius II, as told by Plutarch in his biography of Artaxerxes, and they are identical to the stories about the poisoning of Artaxerxes-Ochus and his son Arsices by the eunuch Guas, brought by

Diodorus Siculus and originating from Ctesias, or Dinon who lived in the days of Alexander the Great. In other words: the Ahasuerus who was murdered with his son is Ahasuerus the grandson with his young son Darius.

I searched Jewish legendary tradition about the manner of death of Ahasuerus from the Book of Esther and found only a vague statement, which is both tradition and interpretation, that Ahasuerus's days were shortened. The simple meaning is shortening of days by a murderous hand. But in a Ptolemaic Egyptian inscription from the days of Ptolemy I, there is mention of a king in the Persian period named Kebswa, whom scholars find difficult to identify and place among the kings of Egypt, and in this inscription, Kebswa supposedly tells about the killing of the wicked Ahasuerus and his son.

The learned scholar Olmstead corrects Kebswa and says that certainly he meant not Xerxes but Artaxerxes-Ochus and his son. This also fits with our view, that the various stories about Artaxerxes II son of Darius the Mede and about Ochus-Artaxerxes, supposedly the son of Artaxerxes II, all belong to Ahasuerus the great grandson, son of Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede.

Another proof that Herodotus's stories about Ahasuerus the grandfather are taken from events and persons of the days of Ahasuerus the grandson is found in his story about Artemisia the queen, wife of King Caria Mausolus, who ruled in the city of Halicarnassus, Herodotus's hometown, after her husband's death. Artemisia was important in Herodotus's eyes, and he elaborates on her wise counsel to Xerxes and her honorable participation in the naval battle near Salamis. But in Diodorus and archaeological findings, it appears that a famous queen named Artemisia, who ruled in Halicarnassus after the death of her husband Mausolus and built a large and splendid tomb

on his grave, lived during the days of Artaxerxes-Ochus III. The names of her sons who reigned after her are found in a period very close to the days of Alexander the Great, and very similar matters are told about them in both sources.

Moreover, it seems that the events described in the Behistun inscription and by Herodotus himself about Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes are understood well only according to the chronological order of the Jewish historical tradition, which places Darius the Great Persian after the death or assassination of Ahasuerus the Great from the books of Esther and Ezra. Therefore, it appears that the main disruption in the chronology of the Persian-Median reign is here, in the days of Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Cush, and who was called by the Greeks by many nicknames including Artaxerxes Mnemon and Artaxerxes Ochus.

Another matter to complete the picture: As mentioned, Ctesias tells that the younger Cyrus fought in his third year against his brother Artaxerxes. The cause of Cyrus's rebellion against his brother was his claim and that of their mother Parysatis who supported him, that although Artaxerxes was the firstborn son of Darius and Cyrus was the younger son, Cyrus was born after Darius had already begun to reign while Artaxerxes was born before his father's kingship.

The legal logic in this case required that the one born after the kingship would reign, not the firstborn by birth. Herodotus tells a very similar story about Xerxes's rise to the throne after his father Darius, except that there the results were reversed. According to Herodotus, Xerxes was the son of Darius and Atossa daughter of Cyrus and was younger than Darius's firstborn by another woman, but he maintained his claim that he was born after Darius was already king.

What is the truth in these stories and what is the connection between them? Here again, Jewish tradition will help us.

According to the Midrash, Ahasuerus was not worthy to reign. Furthermore, provinces rebelled against him. Only in his third year did he strengthen his throne in Susa, and then held the great and famous feast lasting one hundred and eighty days and the additional week, during which the incident with Queen Vashti occurred. Indeed, Hoshendorf rightly saw in his book *On the Book of Esther in the Light of History* that Ahasuerus is Artaxerxes Mnemon and that the feast and what followed were the results of Ahasuerus's success in overcoming the rebellion of the younger Cyrus his brother in his third year. This is indeed the case, except that Hoshendorf, whose opinion has meanwhile been accepted over Olmstead's, did not imagine that the younger Cyrus was the great Cyrus who was the brother-in-law and half-brother of Ahasuerus, as we proved above.

In light of these new identifications, the war of the great Cyrus against Ahasuerus son of Darius the Mede, his brother-in-law, in the third year of their reign after the conquest of Babylon is now understandable. According to the constitution of the federative union between Persia and Media, the arrangement of governmental ranking between the Persian branch and the Median branch was established.

Upon the death of the old Darius the Mede in the first year of the conquest of Babylon, his son-in-law Cyrus the Persian, who was Persian on his father's side and Median on his mother's, rose to the rank of king of kings of the Persian-Median empire. Ahasuerus son of Darius the Mede, who became king of the Medes in his father's place, apparently claimed that the title of king of kings was due to him because he was the firstborn as opposed to the younger Cyrus. However, Cyrus claimed against Ahasuerus that Ahasuerus's primogeniture came into being before the creation of the

Median-Persian empire with the conquest of Babylon, and therefore his right to inherit the place of Darius the Mede his father-in-law as king of kings was superior.

In the third year, Cyrus decided to settle the dispute by force, and thus came the great satrap revolt against Artaxerxes about which Diodorus told. Ahasuerus won, Cyrus was killed in the war, and the fourteen years of the reign of Ahasuerus the Great began, during which occurred the events of the Book of Esther and the edict against the building of the Temple mentioned in the Book of Ezra.

7. Darius the Great Persian son of Hystaspes

According to the Jewish historical tradition, only two kings named Darius actually reigned during the period in question: Darius the Mede and Darius the Persian. Darius the Persian is also called Artaxerxes, like all the kings of Media and Persia, and he permitted the continuation of the building of the Temple, as explained in the Book of Ezra and the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah.

This was after the construction was halted at the beginning of Ahasuerus's reign. He also permitted the arrival of Ezra the scribe and his entourage, and he appointed Nehemiah as governor in Judah in the twentieth year of his reign. According to legend or interpretation of a verse in the Book of Daniel (11:1-4), he is the one defeated by Alexander the Great, and with him the Persian-Median empire disappeared from the world.

In contrast, Greek historical literature mentions three kings actually named Darius, besides two princes named Darius who never ascended the throne. The most famous Darius is Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes, father of Xerxes, about whom Herodotus extensively speaks. He is the

Darius who started the war against the Greek cities whose armies were repelled at the Battle of Marathon by the soldiers of Athens. Herodotus also mentions (in Book 9, p. 108) Darius son of Xerxes, grandson of Darius Hystaspes, but as mentioned, Ctesias says he was murdered in a plot by Artabanus.

The second Darius is mentioned by Thucydides (Book 8, 37.5) as Darius son of Artaxerxes, whose satraps and governors were involved in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta and their allies. The first Darius is also mentioned by Thucydides but without the attribution “son of Hystaspes,” rather as the Darius who came after Cambyses. This notation is very important because according to chronology based on Jewish tradition, the two kings named Darius came after Cambyses: Darius the Mede after Cambyses the grandfather, and Darius the Persian after Cambyses the grandson, and we shall return to this point.

The Darius mentioned in the works of Ctesias is according to accepted historical view Darius II of Thucydides. Plutarch tells of a prince son of Artaxerxes Mnemon who was killed by his father on accusation of conspiracy. Finally, there is the third king Darius called Codomannus, mentioned by Diodorus and Arrian, who reigned a few years and was defeated by Alexander.

As for archaeological finds, the inscriptions that explicitly mention Darius as son of Hystaspes speak for themselves. The inscriptions mentioning just “Darius” are divided among the three kings named Darius after analysis and debate among scholars, and of course disagreements remain.

Also, even a superficial reading of Herodotus and the numerous inscriptions, especially the great biographical inscription on the Behistun rock, makes clear that Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes is the great and

glorious Darius of all. A brief examination of the Jewish historical tradition, which speaks of Darius as the great and glorious of all the kings of Media and Persia, even surpassing Ahasuerus and Cyrus, confirms this. The apparently obvious conclusion is to identify the Persian Darius of Jewish tradition with Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes of Herodotus and the Behistun inscription. We will now prove with conclusive archaeological evidence that this conclusion is the true one. Afterwards, it will be shown that there are many proofs for this surprising identification.

In the Behistun inscription, Darius son of Hystaspes recounts many fascinating events, wars, and rebellions against him after his ascent to power, and how with the help of the god Ahura Mazda he overcame all the rebels and the hardships that befell him. One of the rebels extensively mentioned in the inscription was a Babylonian named Nidin-Bel who called himself Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus and declared himself king of Babylon and even ruled practically for about a year. Scholars attribute several steles bearing the name of King Nebuchadnezzar to this Nidin-Bel.

Now, in the book *Ancient Eastern Texts* by Petraschard, many literary and archaeological finds are brought, among them a list from the days of the Seleucid dynasty, recorded generation after generation, starting from Kandalan from the days of Ashurbanipal through Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, to Alexander the Great and onward to Seleucus II, all the kings of Uruk (Erēkh), i.e., the land of Babylon. In this list, a succession of kings appears as follows: "...whose second name is Nidin-Bel; Darius; Alexander, Philip, Antigonos, Seleucus, etc."

Here is conclusive proof that the king of Babylon after Nidin-Bel was Darius, after whom came Alexander. Darius Codomannus is therefore Darius Hystaspes, and he is the Persian Darius of Jewish historical tradition.

And now we open the floodgate of comparisons and proofs, to strengthen this important conclusion and to draw conclusions from it.

a. Darius Hystaspes mentioned by Herodotus, like all other Persian kings dealt with in the book, is a composite personality of Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes and Darius the Mede son of Ahasuerus. All the events attributed to him, which also appear in the Behistun inscription—his rise to power after defeating Gomata the Magi with the help of six conspirators who joined him for this purpose, the conquest and destruction of rebellious Babylon, and suppression of the great Median revolt—refer all to Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes.

In my opinion, Herodotus collected these stories about Darius from the Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of the military settlement of Deyev in Egypt, when he visited it, as extensively described in his book. A complete copy of the Behistun inscription in Aramaic was found in one of the tablets of the Jewish military settlement Deyev. The story of the invasion of the lands of the Scythians in the north to avenge the Scythian conquest of the land of Media in the days of Cyaxares-Ahasuerus belongs and fits Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede, whose father lived under the Scythian conquerors. Also, the fact that Darius was the father of Xerxes-Ahasuerus indicates that he is indeed Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede.

Certainly, it cannot be ruled out that Darius the Persian son of Hystaspes, who had many sons, had one son named Xerxes-Ahasuerus, but the fact is that Darius Codomannus in Greek literature, whom we identify as Darius son of Ahasuerus the Persian, had a son named Ochus (Ahas). And lastly, it is possible that in the composite that Herodotus calls “Darius,” there is also a component belonging to Nebuchadnezzar the Great, whom Darius the Persian tried to imitate, and this concerns the invasion of Greece in Europe and the famous Battle of Marathon in Greek history.

b. Darius Hystaspes mentioned by Herodotus boasts many deeds, erects many monuments to himself, and boasts of his achievements, including his beauty. All the archaeological finds that glorify the name of Darius on constructions or on large-scale visionary projects, such as the digging of the canal connecting the Nile with the Mediterranean Sea, which Pharaoh Necho began but did not complete, or the compilation of the comprehensive law code—all these and the like are attributed to Darius the Persian, even if his father Hystaspes-Wasthispa is not mentioned in them.

It should be noted that Plutarch describes in his *Life of Alexander* Darius Codomannus as the most handsome man in the world. Strabo also says about Darius Codomannus that he was handsome in appearance except his hands, which were very long and reached his knees. Therefore, this Darius was also called Longimanus (“long-handed”). This name was also applied to Artaxerxes I. Hence there are additional grounds to identify Codomannus with the Artaxerxes mentioned after Ahasuerus by Herodotus and Ctesias, and also with Darius Hystaspes, all together with Darius-Artaxerxes the Persian of Jewish historical tradition.

c. Darius son of Artaxerxes in Thucydides is, in my opinion, Darius Hystaspes the Persian and not Darius Ochus who, as explained above, is the Medean Darius who preceded him. The fact is that Thucydides does not call the first Darius of Marathon “son of Hystaspes,” but rather “Darius who came after Cambyses,” and this description also fits Darius the Mede. However, the main reasons for this proposed identification are:

1. The agreement with Sparta made by Darius’s satraps during the Peloponnesian War in the name of the king and his sons, whose wording and language resemble those of the royal decrees given to Ezra and Nehemiah, which also emphasize the king’s sons, as Olmstead showed in a brilliant article;

2. The great plague described vividly by Thucydides, from which the great Athenian Pericles died, occurred (according to Cassius named Pliny; brought in *Tzemach David*, Part Two, p. 101) in the days of Darius Hystaspes;
3. According to Thucydides, from the end of the Greco-Persian wars in the days of Xerxes until the start of the Peloponnesian War, fifty years passed. If we accept this claim as correct and integrate it within the chronology of the Jewish tradition, the Greco-Persian war would fall in the thirtieth year of Nebuchadnezzar, that is, three years after the conquest of Egypt in the twenty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar. And here Herodotus tells that when Ahasuerus-Xerxes ascended the throne in place of his father Darius, he had to deal with the brutal suppression of a rebellion in Egypt, and only in his fourth year, i.e., three years after the year of suppression, did Xerxes devote himself to his great war in Athens in Greece. The great Median revolt mentioned in that part of *Cyropaedia* by Xenophon, which is a completion of Thucydides' book, is identical to what is said on the same subject by Herodotus, and we will discuss this extensively below in a separate chapter.

d. Darius who appears in all the other places in Xenophon's books, or in the incidental notes added by Thucydides, is Darius the Mede, the father by marriage (that is, the father-in-law) of the young great Cyrus. It is understood that these identifications, which sound harsh to ears accustomed to the accepted modern tones of history and chronology, have great significance regarding the dating of Herodotus and regarding famous events in Greek history before the reign of Philip, father of Alexander the Great.

And this will be further discussed below in the chapter on the Great Median Revolt.

e. According to Herodotus, King Darius Hystaspes reigned for thirty-six years. Also, Darius the Persian reigned for thirty-six years according to the sources of the Jewish historical tradition. However, according to Ctesias, Darius Hystaspes reigned only thirty-one years, but on the other hand, he claims that Darius Nothus reigned thirty-nine years, while scholars recognize only nineteen or twenty years from his reign.

And to conclude this chapter, a few words about Hystaspes, the father of Darius the Persian. In the sources of the religious tradition in Persia, founded by Zoroaster, a prominent place is reserved for the Persian prince Washtasa who, under the influence of his wife Atusa (Hadassah), was the first to accept the wandering and ostracized Zoroaster under his protection. He also became his devoted and faithful student and did much to promote the nature and doctrine of his master in the world.

Scholars are divided in their opinions, for reasons related to the time associated with Zoroaster, whether Washtasa, his student-disciple, was the father of King Darius or not. The one who supports the theory identifying the two “Washtasas” as the same person is Olmstead, and I join his opinion, though not his chronology.

We note again in this context that the term “son” also includes a student and an adopted son. So if, for example, Darius the Mede received the religion of Zoroaster from Washtasa the Persian, the biological father of Darius the Persian, then he also could call himself the son of Washtasa. Especially if his original name was different, and he called himself Darius after receiving the new Persian religion. If indeed this was so, here is

another reason for the combination of the two figures into one character in Herodotus.

In any case, the fact is that Darius Hystaspes the Persian was a devotee of the Persian religion, just like Cyrus the Persian, and this fact helps explain well their favorable attitude toward the people of Israel and the Temple of God in Jerusalem, as nearly all modern historians and researchers have wisely recognized. And the topic will be expanded in upcoming chapters.

8. Artaxerxes the Great King

According to the Jewish historical tradition, Artaxerxes is a royal name of the kings of Persia and Media, like Pharaoh the king of Egypt and Abimelech the king of Philistines. In particular, three kings in the Jewish tradition were called by the name Artaxerxes: Cyrus, Ahasuerus son of Darius the Mede, and Darius the Persian.

Even the sources of the Greek historians call three Persian kings by the name Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes), two of whom had another name before they reigned, and this shows that even the Greek historians were somewhat aware of the generality of the name Artaxerxes. The first was called simply Artaxerxes, as if this was his personal name, with the addition of the nickname Longimanus (Long Hand). The first two kings named Artaxerxes are attributed in the books of Ctesias, Diodorus, and Plutarch (with mutual contradictions among them) with long reigns, over eighty years combined for the two kings.

Adding the years attributed to the third, the days of rule of the bearers of the name Artaxerxes extend over a hundred years in historical time. The length of the rule of the three bearers of the name Artaxerxes is one of the main reasons for the great chronological gap separating the Jewish

historical tradition from the historical reconstruction based on Greek historical literature.

It is very surprising that although the bearers of the name Artaxerxes were great kings who reigned during the splendor and glory of the Persian Empire, they left almost no archaeological remains, and the little that was found explicitly mentioning their name is a source of dispute among archaeologists and scholars about how to divide it among the three and to whom to attribute it. Meanwhile, all the great and important archaeological finds from all the countries relating to the Persian kingship bear the names Ahasuerus, Darius, and Cyrus. This is the matter!

Moreover, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon do not explicitly state when they speak of Artaxerxes whether they mean the first, the second, or the third; only according to Ctesias, Diodorus, and Plutarch can this be clearly determined. Even among them, there is not always a clear version as needed. If one relies on the Jewish tradition, one can suppose that the Artaxerxes mentioned by Herodotus is a composite of Ahasuerus the Great and Darius the Great. Whereas Artaxerxes in Thucydides and Xenophon is Ahasuerus the Great.

As for Artaxerxes Mnemon (the Rememberer) and Artaxerxes Ochus, as they are called by Diodorus and Plutarch based on Ctesias, the first is a composite of Cyrus and Ahasuerus, and the second is a composite of Ahasuerus and Darius the Persian. Regarding Longimanus, due to the similarity with Codomanus and relying on Strabo, as mentioned above, he should be seen as Darius the Persian alone.

To conclude, I believe that the expression “the Great King” which appears frequently in Greek historical literature is a literal translation of the name Artaxerxes.

9. Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, his sons and his friends, the struggle and the merging between the Persian religion and the Magian religion

The episode of Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite and his plot to destroy the Jewish people *by royal decree of King Ahasuerus*, and what he saw in this, was illuminated in splendid light in the book of Hushander. But due to his adherence to the accepted chronology, Hushander was unable to exhaust the subject to its end, and was caught in errors that the method and the timing caused.

Clearly, this does not detract from the value of his research in itself. He correctly identified Ahasuerus son of Darius as the same Artaxerxes against whom Cyrus the Younger rebelled and fought, and accordingly beautifully described the circumstances of the great feast in the third year of his reign — which is the feast at the beginning of the Book of Esther. He identified, in my opinion, correctly Vashti as the beautiful Satire about whom Plutarch tells at length, and also Hadassah—Esther the queen. In the treasury tablets, archaeological findings discovered at Persepolis, one can, in my opinion, identify Mordecai the Jew.

Hushander hit the mark, in my opinion, also in connecting the tax on the land and the islands of the sea that Ahasuerus imposed (Esther 10:1), with the peace of the king or the Peace of Antalcidas, known in Greek historical literature. And he even found, in their proper context, the names Haman and Hammedatha his father in the book of the geographer Strabo. But the historical personality of Haman himself — or at least the members of his large camp: his sons, his friends, and his sages — as well as the memory of the festival of Purim, Hushander could not find due to the chronological limitations he was subject to. This deficiency we now attempt to fill.

Rawlinson had already pointed out that the rebellion of Gaumata the Magus, which occurred when Cambyses son of Cyrus went down to Egypt (as described in the Behistun inscription), was religious in nature primarily, and not purely national in character, as might be implied from the words of Herodotus.

Two religions competed for primacy in the kingdom of Persia and Media at that time. On one side stood the Median–Magian religion, which originated among the various Scythian tribes in the north. It was a coarse material idolatrous religion, steeped in serpent worship and sexual immorality. Its distinct symbol was the goddess Anahita (a form of Ashtoreth), wife of the god Mithra (the sun, a form of Baal).

Opposed to it, and in conscious competition with it, arose and developed the Persian religion founded by Zoroaster, whose conception of divinity was spiritually subtle and profoundly based, although some idolatrous elements had attached themselves to it. This new religion found its way into the hearts of the Persian kings and princes through the fervent activity of Prince Vishtaspa, father of Darius, Zoroaster's chief disciple. These two religions, so different in character, coexisted side by side in tense peace.

The Persian royal house and its nobles, as well as part of the Median royal house and its nobles after the unification of the two kingdoms (and perhaps even somewhat before), were adherents of the religion of Zoroaster, while the masses of the people mostly clung to the traditions of their ancestors and to the idol worship of the Magian religion which they loved.

In light of the above, it is no wonder that the kings of Persia and Media, who were devout in the spiritual Persian religion, inclined an attentive ear and a heart full of sympathy and favor toward the Jewish religion and Israel, of which they heard through contact with the great among Israel and their

sages in the splendid kingdom of Babylon. And when Babylon was conquered by Darius the Mede and his kinsman Cyrus the Persian, Darius brought Daniel close to him and exalted him above the three chief satraps who looked upon the king's face (Daniel 6).

There is ground to Josephus's account that Darius, before his death, swore his son-in-law Cyrus to show favor to the captive remnant of Israel in Babylon, to permit them to return to their land and to rebuild Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, and His temple.

But after Darius's death, his son Ahasuerus-Artaxerxes ascended the throne—the fickle ruler subject to the influences of his wives and eunuchs, addicted to excessive drinking and carnal desires—and then the wheel turned against the remnant of the exile who had returned to Judah and Jerusalem.

In response to the slanderous letter sent by the enemies of Judah, with the support of the king's secretary Shimshai son of Haman, and under the influence of the king's wife (herself of Babylonian royal lineage), Ahasuerus halted the work of rebuilding the temple and the wall of Jerusalem. Cyrus the Persian did not seek to restrain this, because in the meantime he had been weakened by the influence of the Greeks, enemies of Israel. Cyrus came into close contact with them in the capital city Sardis (in Lydia) at the palace of Croesus, where he made his residence.

After Cyrus's death in battle and the removal of Vashti from her position as queen and her execution at the behest of Artaxerxes's domineering mother—and after his marriage to Esther-Hadassah at his mother's urging—and once he felt himself secure against all his surrounding foes, Ahasuerus succumbed to the influence of Haman, the staunch Magian priest, and restored to its former glory the crown of the Magian religion throughout his realm.

At the gates of the king's palace in the capital Susa, Ahasuerus elevated his teacher and master, Haman son of Hammedatha the Magian-Agagite, above all his other satraps, and by royal decree all were obliged to render honor and greatness to Haman, priest of the official Magian faith. It is needless to recount further the familiar and enthralling story, so skillfully and knowledgeably told in the Scroll of Esther.

We continue to weave the tale of the Scroll. About two years after Haman's downfall and Mordecai's rise— in the year in which the Peace of Antalcidas was achieved, adding honor and prestige to King Ahasuerus throughout his realm—the king and his son were murdered by Artabanus of the royal line, also known as Artaphernes in Aeschylus's drama and as Artemis in Herodotus. Artabanus reigned in Ahasuerus's stead for seven months. During this time, Cambyses king of Persia, who had slain his brother Bardiya before marching to quell the revolt in Egypt, died; the Persian throne was thus vacant, while the Median throne was still held by Artaphernes, whose position remained insecure.

A Magian priest named Gaumata (Humatis = Humnis = Haman)—from the retinue of Haman the Great, who had been slain and hanged in Ahasuerus's days (and perhaps even one of his sons; there is reason to suppose he adopted this name, as did other rebels mentioned in the Behistun Inscription)—seized the opportunity to re-establish the Magian religion throughout Media and Persia and to crush the Persian faith once and for all. Gaumata chose to proclaim his rebellion on the fourteenth of Adar, and on the ninth of Av (!) crowned himself "King of Kings of the kingdoms of Media and Persia." He ruled with the support of the masses until the tenth of Nisan—just over seven months—in which time he abolished the sacred sites dedicated to Ahura Mazda across the kingdoms of Persia and Media.

After the deaths of Cambyses, Bardiya, and Ahasuerus, Darius son of Vishtaspa the Persian—Zoroaster’s chief disciple, the last scion of the Persian royal house, and the final hope for the salvation of Zoroaster’s religion—mustered his forces.

He forged a close alliance with seven Persian and Median nobles who were appalled by Gaumata’s deeds, including Artaphernes the Median king, and on the tenth of Nisan these seven overtook Gaumata in his palace and slew him. Thereafter an uncleanness occurred between Darius and Artaphernes—Artaphernes was executed along with most of his sons, in accordance with the practice of those days—and Darius remained alone as Artaxerxes “the Great King, King of Kings of Media and Persia.”

In the second year of his reign, after Darius had suppressed the great revolt of Nidintu-Bel, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus, and Babylon was captured and destroyed—as the word of the Lord spoken by the Prophet Isaiah had foretold—the spirit of Haggai and Zechariah His prophets stirred the city of the Lord, and Zerubbabel, Joshua the high priest, all the elders of Judah, and all the people of Judah were roused to rebuild the house of the Lord, whose construction had been halted at the beginning of Artaxerxes-Ahasuerus’s reign. Crossing the river by means of Tattenai the governor and Shethar-Bozenai—who did not impede the work—an explicit royal decree was obtained from Darius, who discovered a preserved copy of Cyrus the Persian’s decree. Darius agreed to its validity, and the temple’s construction continued until its completion in the sixth year of King Darius. Then, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes-Ahasuerus—when Darius had by then become firmly established on his throne—Ezra and his retinue came up by royal decree to administer the Law of Israel.

A final word to close this chapter: both Herodotus and Ctesias mention a festival called “Magophonia,” meaning “the slaughter of the Magi,” though it does not appear in the Behistun Inscription from Darius himself. This festival was celebrated year after year in the kingdoms of Persia and Media as a commemoration of the day when Darius and his companions triumphed over the Magian priest (Herodotus III, 79). It was a day of banquet and joy, and the Magi refrained from leaving their homes for fear of their lives.

Rawlinson marvels that this festival persisted for so many years in Persia and Media according to the accepted chronology, since the Magi were among the foremost and most honored priests of the later fused Persian-Magian religion, which continued to exist in Persia for many generations through the Hellenistic period and beyond. What reason would there be to perpetuate a festival celebrating the slaughter of the Magian priests? The answer, in my opinion, is simple and clear: no such Persian festival ever existed; it is none other than the festival of Purim in all its glory. The correct reading of the festival’s name is “Magophuria,” and linguistic scholars have shown that “puria” in Babylonian-Assyrian means “lot for slaughter.”

The confusion of the Greek historians regarding the festival’s origin arose because, as noted, the name Gaumata essentially coincides with the name Haman, and because Purim was not officially instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly until after the second dispatch of the scroll by Mordecai and Esther to Jerusalem—which is the scroll we now possess—and that dispatch occurred only after Darius the Persian had consolidated his rule between his second and sixth years. It may also have followed Ezra’s arrival, when he brought with him the scroll-decree of Mordecai and Esther to Jerusalem.

In any event, Herodotus and Ctesias—who did not know the people of Israel and their religion well (and very possibly many Persians at first celebrated Purim, from which the Name of the Lord was deliberately omitted)—identified the festival as a Persian one, just as Herodotus believed its name to derive from Egypt, though he knew it was practiced especially among the Jews, whom he calls “Syrians-Palestinians.”

By the way, this furnishes us with yet another strong proof identifying Darius son of Vishtaspa with Darius the Persian. In the habitual phrase that was on Olmsted’s lips at the close of his lectures, we too shall employ to conclude this chapter: it all fits beautifully.

10. The Great Median Revolt in the Reign of King Darius

a. In Herodotus we read, in brief, of the Great Median Revolt that took place in the days of Darius son of Hystaspes and was successfully crushed by him.

b. In almost identical style Xenophon, in his *Hellenica*—completing the narrative of Thucydides—tells how, in a certain year of the Peloponnesian War, the Great Median Revolt occurred and was suppressed by the great Persian king. Since modern historians identify the Darius of Thucydides as Darius II Ochus-Nothus, who lived nearly a century after Darius I son of Hystaspes, one would seemingly infer that there must have been a second great Median revolt in the Persian Empire. Yet the style of the two accounts is so similar, and it is so unlikely that two such famous, massive uprisings actually occurred, that we must ask: how can we reconcile these two respected historians without concluding that one of them is off by nearly a century?

c. With the discovery of the Behistun Inscription, at least Herodotus is vindicated. In that inscription Darius son of Vishtaspa describes in detail the

Great Median Revolt led by a man called Phravartish (Prauartish), who styled himself “Khashratrista son of Ahasuerus.” After several battles he was captured in the Median city of Raga and brought before Darius at Ahvamata, the Median capital. There his limbs were severed with the customary cruelty, and he was crucified on a tree, in accordance with Persian–Median custom.

d. Scholars have also noted the astonishing resemblance between this account and the opening of the Book of Judith, which tells of a Great Median Revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria at Nineveh, led by Arphaxad, king of Media, also based at Ahvamata. That revolt so alarmed Nebuchadnezzar that he sought allies among the surrounding nations; finding none, he advanced alone, and in a swift campaign defeated Arphaxad near Raga, took him captive, and hanged him on a tree in Ahvamata. According to Judith, this occurred in the seventeenth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign—several years after the Temple’s reconstruction—upon the return of Israel’s remnant from Babylon in the days of Joiakim the high priest.

In his comprehensive study of Judith, J. Grintz demonstrates from many passages (apart from the mention of Joiakim son of Joshua, whom he correctly equates with the high priest of Zechariah’s time) that the book reflects events of the Persian–Median period. Yet Grintz and Huschander alike were constrained by the accepted modern chronology and did not fully resolve these historical puzzles. It is our task now to fill that gap, guided by Jewish historical tradition.

Without question, of the four sources dealing with the Great Median Revolt, the most peculiar and problematic is the Book of Judith. On one hand, it mentions the cities of Raga and Ahvamata—names also found in the Behistun Inscription. On the other hand, it is most perplexing to read of

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, seated in Nineveh, rather than Darius—especially since the great Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon, whose capital was Babylon itself.

Yet, as with many oddities of this era, what appears strange in the Greek literary sources becomes clear—and even illuminating—from the standpoint of Jewish historical tradition. If we note that in the Book of Ezra Darius is called “king of Assyria,” and add two more accounts concerning the Median king—one from Herodotus and one from Ctesias as preserved by Diodorus—together with archaeological findings related to Darius Hystaspes, the whole matter resolves itself surprisingly simply.

Herodotus, as we recall, tells of Phravartish, father of the Median Ahasuerus, who was killed in the war for Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. The existence of this Phravartish is denied in Ctesias’s list, and Rawlinson already remarked on the resemblance between Herodotus’s account and that of the Book of Judith. Meanwhile, Ctesias (via Diodorus) reports that Ninus conquered Media and killed its king, named Pharnus.

In light of our demonstration that Ninus—husband of Semiramis—is in fact the great Nebuchadnezzar, we have before us Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria at Nineveh, who slew Pharnus, king of Media. This narrative matches in essence, if not in every strange detail, the story told in Judith.

Now let us bring forward some facts from the archaeological record, and everything will fall into place. It is well known that Darius Hystaspes, after conquering Babylon and suppressing the revolt of Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus (also called Nidintu-Bel), took up residence in the palace of the great Nebuchadnezzar until his own palace was completed. Archaeologists have confirmed this by unearthing at that very palace a tablet of Darius Hystaspes bearing an Akkadian copy of the Behistun Inscription.

Moreover, the architectural style of Darius's buildings in Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis bears a striking resemblance to the building style of the great Nebuchadnezzar. And if we add that the Behistun Inscription clearly shows how all rebel kings called themselves by the names of great monarchs and heroes of an earlier age—since they saw themselves as spiritual incarnations of those illustrious figures—then it becomes evident that Darius Hystaspes also styled himself “Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus, king of Babylon–Assyria,” after he had crushed the revolt of Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus and laid waste to Babylon.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar the Great called himself “king of Assyria” after he destroyed Nineveh and began to rebuild Babylon as a new Nineveh, so too did Darius Hystaspes begin to construct his city of Persepolis as the new Babylon–Nineveh. The Median Revolt occurred later—as the Behistun Inscription shows—by which time Darius was already enthroned at Persepolis (Persis), his own new Nineveh.

With the synchronization of the accounts of the revolt of Phravartish–Arphaxad from Herodotus, Ctesias, and the Book of Judith with the Behistun Inscription of Darius Hystaspes–Vishtaspa, one must ask whether the passage in Xenophon's *Hellenica* likewise refers to this very same event. In my view, unless there is a copyist's error or a misreport in Xenophon, the most reasonable conclusion is that this “great Median revolt” too is the one famous uprising against Darius son of Vishtaspa. The astonishing result is that the Darius mentioned in Thucydides (Book 8, p. 472)—in the days of the Peloponnesian War—is none other than Darius Hystaspes of Herodotus. This furnishes yet another proof linking the Persian Darius of Jewish historical tradition with the figure already identified above.

This identification of Darius in Thucydides carries profound implications for Greek history and its chronology—affecting our understanding of Athens, Sparta, and Thebes. Although these apparent difficulties do not undermine the core reconstruction of the Persian–Median period presented here, I will briefly indicate how one might resolve the specific chronological puzzles of Greek history for this era.

The first book of Xenophon’s *Hellenica*—completing Thucydides’ account up to the end of the Peloponnesian War—does indeed treat Darius son of Vishtaspa. But from the second book onward, which describes Cyrus the Younger’s revolt against his brother Artaxerxes (and even mentions Cyrus and Darius earlier), the narrative returns to the reign of the Median king and Cyrus the Great, then to Artaxerxes–Ahasuerus and the Peace of Antalcidas, and finally to the conclusion of the Battle of Mantinea—the greatest of the Greek internecine conflicts, according to Diodorus. There are grounds to suppose that this same Battle of Mantinea, in which Diodorus says King Agesilaus of Sparta took part, is identical with the Mantinea clash recorded by Thucydides (in which the great Theban hero Epaminondas fell) and likewise dated to the seventh or eighth year of Darius’s reign.

We should see equivalence between the “King’s Peace” or “Peace of Antalcidas”—negotiated between the Spartan admiral and King Artaxerxes—and the so-called Peace of Callias, negotiated between the Spartan admiral and King Darius and his sons, which in both cases effectively acknowledged Persian hegemony over the Greek cities of Asia. Numerous additional correspondences can be adduced to confirm these identities.

My own inclination to equate the two great Battles of Mantinea is founded principally on fixing the date of the Great Median Revolt and on the other proofs that the Darius of Thucydides is indeed Darius Vishtaspa of

Herodotus. It is further reinforced by this intriguing chronological coincidence: according to Jewish tradition, from the eighth or seventh year of Darius the Persian until his fall to Alexander in Darius's thirty-sixth year spans twenty-eight to thirty years.

Meanwhile, in the accepted classical chronology, the interval from the Battle of Mantinea (362/361 BCE)—where Epaminondas died—to Alexander's decisive battles against Darius Codomannus (332/331 BCE) is likewise twenty-nine to thirty years. Identifying the two Battles of Mantinea thus would bring the Greek and Jewish chronologies of this period into remarkably close alignment.

I will close this chapter with a few words about Herodotus himself—of whom, as noted, almost nothing definite is known. From all that I have proposed—coordinating Jewish historical tradition with the narratives of Herodotus and other Greek historians—it emerges, almost inevitably, that Herodotus (or at least the latest layer of Herodotus's Persica that survives to us) lived in the Macedonian era. He must have been born during the reign of Artaxerxes—Ahasuerus or at the very end of the days of Ahasuerus the Great and lived into the time of Alexander the Great and even into the reign of Ptolemy I Soter. There is a wealth of evidence to support this revolutionary conclusion—evidence I shall mention in outline here without attempting to exhaust it.

a. It is a fact that Thucydides does not mention Herodotus by name, even though he does name Hellanicus in connection with the Persian War against Greece and its aftermath.

b. The notion of the Peloponnesian War as one continuous twenty-seven-year conflict was not, according to scholars, the Greeks' own view until the Macedonian era—except in Thucydides. Other authors treated it as two distinct wars between Athens and Sparta, separated by the Peace of

Nicias, while Plato even speaks of three different Hellenic wars. Yet Herodotus repeatedly refers to the Peloponnesian War, by its explicit name, as a single great and protracted struggle between Athens and Sparta.

c. Prior to the Macedonian period, the Caspian Sea was called the Hyrcanian Sea. In Herodotus, however, it is invariably termed the Caspian Sea. Moreover, Herodotus apparently anticipated later Greek understanding by recognizing that the Caspian is a landlocked sea—a view not widely accepted among the Greeks until the reign of Ptolemy I Soter.

d. Artemisia, wife of Mausolus, queen of Halicarnassus—renowned in her own right—lived, on the archaeological evidence, in the time of Artaxerxes III Ochus, which is very close to Alexander the Great’s era. Yet, according to Herodotus, she belonged to the court of Xerxes-Ahasuerus.

e. Herodotus’s descriptions and emphases regarding Alexander—ancestor of Alexander the Great—who fought on the Persian side in the Greco-Persian Wars, give the reader the clear impression that the author had Alexander the Great himself in mind. Indeed, one learned commentator has even asserted that certain passages can only refer to Alexander the Great.

f. Ctesias of Miletus, the historian of Egypt whom Herodotus invokes several times, appears to be identical with Ctesias of Abdera—another writer on Egypt, known for his favorable remarks about the Jews—who, according to Josephus and all other testimony, lived during Alexander the Great’s reign and into the rule of Ptolemy Soter. The variation in their city-of-origin epithets is inconsequential, just as no one supposes that “Herodotus of Halicarnassus” is different from “Herodotus of Thurii.”

g. Some have even ventured the conjecture that “Herodotus” is really “Hermodotus,” an obscure poet of the Antigonid period—after Alexander—who flattered Antigonus by deifying him. Indeed, Herodotus’s work is shot through with quotations of all sorts of poetry.

We will now turn to two final topics, both drawn entirely from Jewish historical tradition, whose chronology spans the interval between the end of the Great Median Revolt in the seventeenth year of Darius the Persian and the revolutionary appearance of Alexander the Macedonian on history's stage.

11. Sanballat the Horonite, Governor of Samaria

Sanballat, governor of Samaria and one of Nehemiah's chief adversaries and leaders of the remnant in the land of Judah, lived—according to all authorities—during Nehemiah's tenure from the twentieth through at least the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, as recorded in the Book of Nehemiah. One of the sons of Joiada the high priest was his son-in-law.

Learned scholars, however, were thrown into confusion by Josephus's account of Manasseh, brother of Jadda the high priest, who married Nicaso, Sanballat's daughter, in the days of Darius Codomannus, who had been defeated by Alexander the Great. Josephus also describes the Samaritan delegation, with the aged Sanballat at its head, appearing before Alexander to plead for the temple on Mount Gerizim. These narratives, which seem at first to fit neatly into the chronology of Jewish tradition, forced scholars to choose between rejecting Josephus's testimony or postulating two different Sanballats—grandfather and grandson—separated by roughly a century.

Everything changed with the discovery of the famous ostraca from the Jewish military colony at Elephantine in Egypt. One of these letters, addressed to Bagoas, governor of Judah, in the seventeenth year of King Darius, mentions together Johanan-Jonathan the high priest, son of Joiada, and the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria, and refers to Sanballat as still living.

Here again scholars were perplexed, because Josephus offers a different account of Bagoas the Persian eunuch, who—according to him—intervened in Judean affairs in the days of Artaxerxes, following the alleged murder of Jeshua by his brother Johanan the high priest within the temple. Yet Diodorus tells us that the minister Bagoas poisoned Artaxerxes Ochus and his son Arses, kings of Persia, installed Darius Codomannus on the throne of Persia, and was in turn outwitted and poisoned by Darius. Taken at face value, the Elephantine ostrakon and Josephus's story of Bagoas together confirm the Jewish historical tradition concerning Darius–Artaxerxes the Persian.

The case grows stronger when one brings in Bagoas son of Artunetis in the days of Darius son of Hystaspes—mentioned by Herodotus—along with several papyrus letters sent by Arshama in the days of Darius (also referenced in the Elephantine letters) to Prince Artunet, who is almost certainly the father of the Bagoas of Herodotus. But modern scholars remain wedded to their view: they identify the Darius of the Elephantine ostraca and the papyri with Darius Nothus–Ochus II, and they dismiss Josephus's account as unreliable.

Recently a new ostrakon was unearthed at Wadi Daliyeh which, to everyone's astonishment, once again bears the name "Sanballat, governor of Samaria," alongside one of his sons. This ostrakon has been dated to the era of Darius Codomannus and Alexander. With this discovery, Josephus is cleared of any charge of falsehood or confusion, and the hesitations and puzzles of modern scholars are swept away. Whereas at first they struggled to accommodate two Sanballats, today their scientific consensus is comfortably settled: they posit three Sanballats—each less "governor of Samaria" than the last:

- The elder Sanballat of Nehemiah's time;
- His grandson "the elder" Sanballat of the Elephantine letters and Darius Nothus;
- And the great-grandson Sanballat of Darius Codomannus and Alexander.

This is a classic example of how archaeological and other evidence, which powerfully vindicates the Jewish chronological tradition, is too often turned into a creative exercise for inventing new historical personages—grandfathers and grandsons—simply because Greek literary sources alone enjoy unquestioned authority among today's historians and researchers.

And if the questioner rightly asks, "In what way does the scientific method differ with respect to Sanballat from the 'grandfathers and grandsons' solution regarding Cyrus, Cambyses, and Ahasuerus—which served in this article as a tool of assistance and investigation to support the Jewish chronological tradition?"—there are two answers to that effect. One accepts the questioner's assumption of equality, and one rejects it outright.

Suppose that indeed the two methods are similar in their fundamentals; then our solutions and interpretations for the establishment of the Jewish historical tradition stand on an equal scientific footing with the solutions and interpretations based on the assumptions arising from the historical reconstruction created by exclusive use of the Greek historical-literary sources. If so, it is only right that the traditional Jewish chronology receive serious consideration in today's scholarly circles.

However, in truth, the two methods are not equal at all. The "grandfathers and grandsons" of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Ahasuerus are not the fruit of imagination or of plausible logical analysis. They are all explicitly mentioned in the Greek literary sources or in archaeological inscriptions. Both "Cambyses the grandfather" and "Cambyses the

grandson” are explicitly cited by Herodotus (Book 1, p. 61; Book 2, p. 116), although he has no narrative concerning “Cambyses the grandfather.” Both “Cyrus the grandfather” and “Cyrus the grandson” are clearly named in the inscription of “Cyrus the grandson.”

Likewise, both “Ahasuerus the grandfather” and “Ahasuerus the grandson” appear in succession in Ctesias—though his accounts are somewhat confused. The name “Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede” is explicitly mentioned by Herodotus (Book 9, section 108, p. 708), and the existence of the Median king—uncle and father-in-law of the great Cyrus, who fought with him against the kings of Babylon and conquered them—is clearly and unambiguously attested in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*.

The case of Sanballat, governor of Samaria, is otherwise. In not a single source in which his name and office appear is there the slightest hint or trace of the existence of any others named Sanballat. Only the compulsion to reconcile difficulties within the framework of the accepted chronology demanded the assumption of their existence—assumptions which, according to the foundations of the Jewish chronological tradition, are superfluous.

If there is any place to speak of a science of history, it cannot be a science of historical possibilities. It must be a science of historical reality—to ascertain fully what happened in the one-time past, a reality that cannot be reenacted anew by scientific experiments in a laboratory. For this purpose, one cannot systematically and arbitrarily ignore the numerous literary sources of the Jewish historical tradition.

In summary, Darius who appears in the ostraca of Elephantine and in the letters of Arshama is the Persian Darius. At Gohi there was a governor of Judah three years before Nehemiah’s appointment. In the style of

Descartes's dictum we assert: Sanballat, governor of Samaria, is found; a sign that the Jewish historical tradition knows the reality.

13. Simon the Righteous and Alexander of Macedon

In Josephus it is told that Alexander, after he conquered Tyre, sent to Jerusalem a demand that the land of Judah rebel against Darius and accept the yoke of Alexander. But the high priest Jadda and the elders of Judah answered him that they had sworn to remain faithful to Darius and could not break their oath. Then Alexander prepared to march against Jerusalem in war.

When the dreadful news reached Jerusalem, Jadda the high priest clothed himself in white garments, and with him a hundred priestly elders and the leading men of Jerusalem dressed in white, and toward evening they went out with torches in their hands to meet Alexander and his army. Upon seeing the dignified delegation standing before him, Alexander descended from his chariot and greatly honored the high priest. When the commanders of his army saw this and asked him to explain his behavior, he replied that the figure of the high priest clothed in white had appeared to him in his dreams before every great battle in which he had achieved his victories.

And behold, this very story, with small changes, is told in the Talmud about Simeon the Just the High Priest, one of the remnants of the Men of the Great Assembly. And the conclusion that emerges of itself is, if one does not wish to create needless contradictions, that Simeon the Just son of Johanan (Chunyo) and "Jadda" son of Johanan in the Book of Nehemiah are one and the same.

This conclusion is strengthened in light of the Aggadic tradition that his additional name was Iddo, and in light of the shared meanings of the names Simeon and Jadda.

The fact that, according to Josephus, Simeon the Just was the son of Chunyo and the grandson of Joiada does not contradict the conclusion above. This is because in Josephus's *Antiquities* both Joiada, the grandfather of Johanan, and Johanan himself are rendered in Greek as "Iados," so that one may without strain designate "Jehoiada I" for the elder and "Jehoiada II" for Johanan's grandson. And since, in the matter of Manasseh, Sanballat's son-in-law, Josephus calls him a brother of Joiada—whereas in the Book of Nehemiah it is stated explicitly that Sanballat's son-in-law was one of the sons of Joiada—it appears that Josephus either made an error or that later hands, working on his texts, introduced the confusion.

Above we have deduced that Simeon the Just, the last of the Men of the Great Assembly, is one and the same as "Jadua the last High Priest" mentioned in Nehemiah, who lived at the end of the days of Darius the Persian and was appointed High Priest shortly before the beginning of Alexander's reign. And it follows that the Men of the Great Assembly were a special institution that operated only in the Persian period—in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah—and for one generation only. The names of the Men of the Great Assembly are all explicitly mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and in the other sacred books of that period.

To conclude this lengthy discussion of the period in question I will say a few words about the Greek era counting—the Seleucid era, the "count of the eponyms" or the Alexandrian count, by all its names. The Jewish calendar and the calendar of the nations are equalized, and the gap between them is nullified, with the beginning of the eponym count. In the Jewish calendar, the start of this count is the year 3448 of the Creation count, which is the year 312 BCE of the Christian era count.

Now, although the calendars coincide, the reason for choosing 312 as the start of the Greek era is disputed between modern historians and the

Jewish historical tradition. According to the historians, 312 is the year commemorating Seleucus's victory and that of Alexander's other successors at the battle near Gaza against Antigonus, as told by Josephus—a victory that took place eleven years after Alexander's death in 323 BCE—even though the new era was not adopted by Seleucus until after the decisive battle of Ipsus against Antigonus in 301 BCE, the battle in which Antigonus fell and Alexander's inheritance was officially divided among the four kings who united against Antigonus and his son Demetrius.

Conversely, according to the Jewish historical tradition, the start of the eponym count is the year of Alexander the Macedonian's death. The simple way to reconcile the discrepancy is to assume that Alexander's death and the battle of Gaza occurred in the same year. This determination contradicts Josephus's account, but it carries great historical logic in itself.

And a final remark on the matter: in the Talmud it is said that the period of Greek rule in the land of Israel is one hundred and eighty years until the beginning of the Hasmonean rule, of which six years they ruled first in the world. This means that from the year of the conquest of Susa and the other cities of Persia and Media by Alexander in his first year until his death six years elapsed, and if thus to Alexander are counted seven years—if one counts his first and last year as two full years. According to this, the first year of the eponym count (3448 since Creation) falls exactly forty years after the beginning of the building of the Temple in the second year of Darius, which is the year 3408.

This determination is confirmed by the list of the kings of Erak, which we mentioned above, published by Frithjered, according to which Alexander reigned about seven years, and between his death and the accession of Seleucus I eleven years passed. If one counts the first year of Seleucus's reign in Babylon from the battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE—as is

warranted in my view by the logic—then counting eleven years back, the year 312, which is the year of the battle of Gaza, corresponds in the Erak king-list to the year of Alexander's death. It follows that the Jewish tradition is correct: the year marking the start of the Greek eponym count is the year of Alexander's death, not the eleventh year after his death.

E. A Summary of Ancient History from the Conquest of Assyrian Nineveh to the Death of Alexander.

In order to set before our eyes and preserve in our memory the full historical significance of the reconstruction proposed in this article of the Neo-Babylonian empire and its successor, the Persian-Median empire, let us arrange the principal events and dates of ancient history from the year of the conquest of Assyrian Nineveh to the year of Alexander the Great's death in Babylon.

1. The conquest of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian kingdom, by Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, together with his ally Ahasuerus (Axiarches) the Mede, occurred in the year 440 BCE (= 3320 ,ג'ש"ג in the Israelite count). As a result of the destruction of Nineveh the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) empire was born, seeing itself as heir and continuation of the Assyrian realm, and Nebuchadnezzar began to build Babylon, his capital, as the New Nineveh.
2. In the eighteenth year of his reign, by the count of Nineveh's conquest—that is, the year 422 BCE (= 3338 ,ג'של"ח from Creation)—Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, destroyed the city and the Temple, and exiled Judah to Babylon.

3. In the twenty-seventh year of his reign—that is, the year 413 BCE (= 3347 ,ר"מ"ג from Creation)—Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt and laid it waste, by means of his ally Cambyses the Persian, who acted in his name. This Cambyses was the son of Cyrus, king of Anshan, and was married to the daughter of Ahasuerus (Axiarches) the Mede.
4. Nebuchadnezzar's wife, Queen Semiramis, was co-ruler alongside him and was very famous in her time.
5. The marriage alliance between the Persian royal house and the Median royal house—which brought about the formation of the Median-Persian union—followed Cyrus, king of Anshan, who, in concert with Ahasuerus (Axiarches) the Mede, defeated in a rebellion Astyages the Scythian (Magog-Azdag), who had ruled for nearly thirty years over Media, Persia, and Aram at the close of the Assyrian kingdom.
6. In the thirtieth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign—that is, the year 410 BCE (= 3350 ,ר"מ"ג from Creation)—Ahasuerus the Mede, at the head of a great army and a large Phoenician fleet sent by his lord Nebuchadnezzar, invaded the European continent of Greece. After sacking Athens and winning other victories on the battlefield, the tide was turned against him and most of the Phoenician fleet was sunk by the Greek navy at the Battle of Salamis. Later the army of Mardonius son of Gobrias (= Marduk-Gubur), the Babylonian, was also repulsed at the Battle of Plataea.
7. In the year 395 BCE (= 3365 ,ר"מ"ג from Creation), the forty-fifth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar died, and his son Evil-Merodach by Semiramis sat upon his father's throne. In that same year Evil-Merodach released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from prison, where he

had been confined for thirty-seven years, and exalted him above all the kings with him. Evil-Merodach had known Jehoiachin when he himself was cast into prison by his father Nebuchadnezzar, after Nebuchadnezzar recovered from his illness of bestial delusion.

8. Both Nebuchadnezzar and his son Evil-Merodach called themselves “Nabonidus.” Evil-Merodach’s son, who reigned with him and after him, was named Belshazzar, after Nebuchadnezzar’s father, Evil-Merodach’s grandfather.
9. From the marriage of Ahasuerus the Mede’s daughter to Cambyses son of Cyrus the Persian was born Cyrus the Great. In the year 370 BCE (= 3390 ,ג'ש"ג from Creation), Darius son of Ahasuerus the Mede and Cyrus the Great, his brother-in-law and son-in-law, captured Babylon on the night of a pagan feast, and Belshazzar son of Nebuchadnezzar was killed in his palace. As a result of that conquest, the Median-Persian empire was born, seeing itself as heir and continuation of the Babylonian realm.
10. In that same year Darius the Mede died at the age of sixty-two, and Cyrus the Great became King of Kings over Persia and Media. In that year—or at the beginning of the following year—Cyrus issued throughout his realm a decree permitting the people of Judah to return to the land of Judah and Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple. A copy of that decree was set in Ahvameda, the Median capital, where the Persian Darius found it eighteen years later.
11. In the third year of Cyrus’s reign, by the count of Babylon’s conquest—that is, the year 367 BCE (= 3393 ,ג'צ"ג from Creation)—Cyrus the Great went to war against Ahasuerus son of Darius, his brother-in-law, over a dispute concerning Persian-Median religious rites relevant to the royal succession. In the field of

Cunachisa near Babylon Cyrus was killed, and Ahasuerus sat upon the throne of Persia and Media as Artaxerxes, the Great King, in place of Cyrus. At the beginning of his reign, Artaxerxes-Ahasuerus ordered the suspension of the rebuilding of the city and Temple in Jerusalem.

12. In the fourteenth year of his reign, by the count of his victory over Cyrus—that is, the year 353 BCE (= 3407 ,ר"תל from Creation)—Artaxerxes-Ahasuerus and his son were murdered by Artaphernes. In that year Cambyses son of Cyrus the Great died or lost his reason after he had slain his brother Bardiya-Barzi and gone to Egypt to suppress the revolt of Amirtis (Amurtios) and Inaros son of Psamtik the Libyan. The Persian throne, left without heir, was seized by Gaumata the Magus—one of the sons or sages of Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite (the Magus), who had been hanged by Artaxerxes-Ahasuerus.
13. In that same year, out of zeal for the Persian religion founded by Zoroaster and zeal for the Persian monarchy founded by Achaemenes, Darius son of Vishtaspa the Persian rose up, and with the aid of six Persian and Median nobles he slew Gaumata the Magus and abolished his machinations in favor of the Magian faith. In that same period Babylon revolted against Persia under Nidintu-Bel, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabonidus. Darius the Persian reconquered and destroyed Babylon in a swift campaign. In that same period Darius also slew his co-conspirator Artaphernes, who sat upon the Median throne, and so Darius the Persian became Artaxerxes, King of Kings of Persia and Media. Thereafter Darius began to build the city of Persa (Persepolis), his capital, as the new Babylon–Nineveh.

14. In the year 352 BCE (= 3408 ,ג'ת"ח from Creation), Darius-Artaxerxes permitted the continuation of the Temple's rebuilding in Jerusalem, and in the year 348 BCE (= 3412 ,ג'ת"ב from Creation) the Temple was completed. A year later, the year 347 BCE (= ,ג'ת"ג 3413 from Creation), Ezra and his retinue went up by Darius-Artaxerxes's decree; and in the year 334 BCE (= 3426 ,ג'תכ"ו from Creation) Nehemiah was appointed by him governor of Judah.
15. In the year 340 BCE (= 3420 ,ג'ת"ך from Creation) revolts broke out in Egypt and riots against the Jews of Elephantine destroyed the Temple at Elephantine. In the seventeenth year of Darius the Persian—that is, the year 337 BCE (= 3423 ,ג'תכ"ג from Creation)—the Jews of Elephantine sent a request to Bagoas, who had been governor of Judah before Nehemiah, to permit them to rebuild their Temple.
16. In that same year, 337 BCE, Darius the Persian succeeded in suppressing also the Great Median Revolt of Phravartish–Arphaxad, who called himself Khashtrista son of Ahasuerus. In those years of turmoil and war Jerusalem also suffered from the riots of Judah's enemies acting under the satrap's patronage, and its wall was completely destroyed. Around the twentieth year of Darius the Persian, Bagoas was found guilty of rebellion and put to death, thus clearing the way for Nehemiah's appointment as governor in the twentieth year of Darius-Artaxerxes.
17. Nehemiah was summoned to the king's presence in the thirty-second year of Darius-Artaxerxes—that is, the year 322 BCE (= ,ג'תל"ב 3438 from Creation)—apparently to consult regarding Alexander's preparations to wage war against the kingdoms of Persia and Media. He returned to Jerusalem that same year and expelled Manasseh son

of Joiada, Sanballat's son-in-law, from his priestly office in the Temple.

18. In the thirty-sixth year of Darius-Artaxerxes, after Nehemiah's death—that is, the year 318 BCE (= 3442 ,ג'תמ"ב from Creation)—Darius's forces were defeated on the battlefield of Gaugamela near Arbela by Alexander and his army. The Persian-Median empire came to its end. Darius fled the field of battle and was killed by his own satraps, who believed they would find favor with Alexander. Persia was conquered and its capital Persa (Persepolis), the “Nineveh” of the Persian-Median realm, was destroyed by Alexander the Great.
19. In that same year, before the final engagement at Gaugamela, Alexander marched on Jerusalem, and Simeon—“Jadua” the Just the High Priest went out to meet him at the head of a great retinue, all clad in white. Alexander descended from his chariot, showed honors to Simeon the Just, and accepted Jerusalem's submission, leaving the city and the Temple intact and without harming the Jewish people. From that year until his death, Simeon the Just served as High Priest for forty years.
20. In the year 312 BCE (= 3448 ,ג'תמ"ח from Creation), Alexander died in Babylon, and his realm was divided temporarily among his satraps after the Battle of Gaza. But that partition held only precariously for eleven years, until the year 301 BCE (= 3459 ,ג'תמ"ט from Creation). In that year, at the Battle of Ipsus in Asia Minor, Antigonus—who had attempted for years to dominate the united Macedonian empire—was defeated and slain. The Macedonian-Hellenistic empire was finally divided among four kingdoms. The kingdom of Babylonia and Syria fell altogether to Seleucus I, who

transferred his capital to Antioch (the biblical Hamat), and instituted the new Macedonian era count for the Greeks, beginning in 312 BCE, the year of Alexander's death. Some scriptures in Israel placed that start six years earlier, at 318 BCE, the year of Persia's conquest by Alexander.

21. The total span of time from the conquest of Nineveh, capital of Assyria, until the death of Alexander the Great is 128 years, composed of seventy years of the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) empire founded by Nebuchadnezzar the Great, fifty-two years of the Persian-Median empire founded by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great, and six years of the united Macedonian-Hellenistic empire under its founder Alexander the Great.