

# **KINGS AND KINGDOMS**

The following document is a compilation of articles gleaned from our internet sources that will help you put the Kings and Kingdoms into a biblical perspective.

# KINGS AND KINGDOMS

Here are some of the significant players on God's stage. These rulers played important roles in the lives of biblical heroes such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

- **Sennacherib,**
- **Nebuchadnezzar**
- **Belshazzar**
- **Cyrus**
- **Darius the Mede,**
- **Xerxes (Xerxes wife)**
- **Artaxerxes**
  
- **Alexander the Great**
- **Hannibal**
- **Antiochus Epiphanes IV**
- **Judas Maccabeus**

# Sennacherib vs Hezekiah

The biblical account, 2 Kings 18:13-15, 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:2-5, Isa. 14:24-27 tell the story of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/assyria-to-iberia/blog/posts/sennacherib-and-jerusalem>

Hezekiah became king of Judah in ca. 727 B.C. We learn from the Bible that he purified and repaired the Temple, purged its idols, reformed the priesthood, and witnessed the land prosper. But events in far-off Assyria were to have a fateful effect upon his kingdom. When Sargon II, the king of Assyria, died in battle in 705 B.C., states, including Judah, that were subject to Assyrian hegemony saw the opportunity for revolt (2 Kings 18:7).

In 703 B.C. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor, began a series of major campaigns to quash opposition to Assyrian rule. Turning first to Babylon in 703, he defeated Marduk-apla-iddina II (biblical Merodach-baladan, Isa. 39:1), the anti-Assyrian king of Babylon, and placed a puppet ruler on the throne. In the next year Sennacherib marched eastward into the Zagros Mountains, defeated enemy forces, and took tribute from distant lands and peoples.

In 701 B.C. the king turned toward rebellions in the west. With Phoenicia attacked first, Sidon fell and its king fled across the sea. Soon other cities and kingdoms submitted. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and others offered gifts and kissed the feet of the Assyrian monarch. When the Philistine city of Ashkelon succumbed, Sennacherib removed the king, his wife, sons, daughters, brothers, and kin, and exiled them back to Assyria. Turning to the east, Sennacherib overwhelmed Philistine Ekron and suspended the bodies of its rebellious leaders on stakes throughout the city. Sennacherib's annals also record that the former king Padi, a pro-Assyrian vassal who had been expelled by his own people and held captive by Hezekiah, was returned to his throne in exchange for payment in recognition of Sennacherib's overlordship.

Hezekiah was now caught in a quandary. The threat of Jerusalem's destruction before the relentless march of the Assyrian army was real, but the Egyptians had offered help. According to the biblical account Hezekiah relied on the advice of the prophet Isaiah (38:5-7), who urged the king to believe in the power of divine protection. He rebelled, trusting in the Egyptian offer of support, but when the Egyptian army with its Nubian chariotry was defeated in battle, Hezekiah faced certain doom. Knowing that Jerusalem would eventually be subject to siege, he had been preparing for war for some time by fortifying the walls of Jerusalem, building towers, and constructing a tunnel to bring fresh water to the city from a spring outside its walls.

(Isa. 22:11; 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:2-5).

Sennacherib, now unhampered by any major opposing army, began his march against Judah and Jerusalem (as recorded in his own royal annals and in the Bible [2 Kings 18:13–15; Isa. 36:1]).

The Assyrian advance had been predicted by Isaiah (1:1), who blamed the impending disaster on a lack of trust in God. "Again the Lord spoke to me, thus: 'Because that people has spurned the gently flowing waters of 'Siloam' (a reference to the God of Zion)— Assuredly, My Lord will bring up against them the mighty, massive waters of the Euphrates, The king of Assyria and all his multitude. It shall rise above all its channels, and flow over all its beds, and swirl through Judah like a flash flood reaching up to the neck'"

(Isa. 8:5–8).

In an Assyrian royal inscription included in the *Assyria to Iberia* exhibition (fig. 1), Sennacherib confirmed the prophet's prediction, boasting that he "surrounded (and) conquered forty-six of his (i.e., Hezekiah's) fortified cities, fortresses, and small(er) settlements in their environs, which were without number, by having ramps trodden down and battering rams brought up, the assault of foot soldiers, sapping, breaching, and siege engines. I brought out of them 200,150 people, young (and) old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep and goats, which were without number, and I counted (them) as booty."

This Assyrian account recorded by Sennacherib's scribes in 694 B.C., ten years after his Judean campaign, may also be reflected in the lament of the prophet Micah's description (1:9–16) of the disaster that befell towns of Judah.

At this point Hezekiah, knowing that the Assyrian king had reached Lachish (2 Chr. 32:9), the largest fortified citadel in Judah after Jerusalem, and knowing that the Assyrians preferred to accept an annual payment of tribute rather than destroy a city and enjoy a one-time infusion of wealth, sent a message of appeasement to Sennacherib.

"I have done wrong; withdraw from me; and I shall bear whatever you impose on me." So the king of Assyria imposed upon King Hezekiah of Judah a payment of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was on hand in the House of the Lord and in the treasuries of the palace. At that time Hezekiah cut down the doors and the doorposts of the Temple of the Lord, which King Hezekiah had overlaid [with gold], and gave them to the king of Assyria  
(2 Kings 18:14–16).

It is not known why Hezekiah's tribute did not succeed in preventing further attacks. The Assyrians bore down on Lachish, battered down its walls, slaughtered thousands of its inhabitants, and impaled the bodies of its leaders on stakes outside of the city walls.

Jerusalem lay only 30 miles away. In advance of his forces, Sennacherib dispatched a delegation of high-level military and administrative officials to negotiate terms of surrender and remind Hezekiah that Egypt had been defeated and Judah's god would be

of no help against the might of the "Great King of Assyria." Undoubtedly the negotiations broke down possibly in part as a result of Hezekiah's reliance on the words of Isaiah, who assured the king once again that God would protect Jerusalem and crush the Assyrian army

(2 Kings 19; Isa. 14:24–27).

The Assyrian army then advanced, surrounding the city. "As for him (Hezekiah), I confined him inside the city Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I set up blockades against him and made him dread exiting his city gate." Jerusalem would surely fall and Sennacherib claimed that he made Hezekiah "submit at my feet," but, according to the Bible, during the night "an angel of the Lord went out and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp, and the following morning they were all dead corpses.

So King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and retreated"

(2 Kings 19:35–36; Isa 37:33–35).

What actually happened that night is not clear. The Assyrian account reveals that Babylonian rebellion had broken out anew (the account of the following year is primarily concerned with campaigning in Babylonia, and with the continued pursuit of Marduk-apla-iddina, the same rebellious king whom Sennacherib had defeated in his first campaign), which may have caused Sennacherib to lift his siege prematurely, but not before the king exacted an enormous and humiliating annual payment of tribute:

"As for him, Hezekiah, fear of my lordly brilliance overwhelmed him and, after my (departure), he had the auxiliary forces (and) his elite troops whom he had brought inside to strengthen the city Jerusalem, his royal city, and who had provided support, (along with) 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of . . . ivory beds, armchairs of ivory, elephant hide(s), elephant ivory, ebony, boxwood, garments with multi-colored trim, linen garments, blue-purple wool, red-purple wool, utensils of bronze, iron, copper, tin (and) iron, chariots, shields, lances, armor, iron belt-daggers, bows and ussu-arrows, equipment, (and) implements of war, (all of which were without number, together with his daughters, his palace women, male singers, (and) female singers brought into Nineveh, my capital city, and he sent a mounted messenger of his to me to deliver (this) payment and to do obeisance."

Jerusalem survived and Sennacherib never returned to fight again in the west. In 681 B.C., according to several Mesopotamian documents, the king was assassinated by his son Arda-Mulishshi (cf. 2 Kings 19:37; 2 Chr. 32:21, where the murder is also recorded).

---

I wanted to just interject a piece of historical intrigue: according to the Biblical account, God sent an angel and killed 185,000 of Sennacherib's men and this is what led him to return home prematurely.

You won't find any record of this in Sennacherib's account, but other historians of that time corroborate the Bible's account to an extent. One such person is the Babylonian historian Berossus, quoted also by historian Josephus, who reports that God sent a plague and killed 185,000 of Sennacherib's men in a single night. Very interesting!

Sennacherib had his problems with natural disasters, which the people of those times related as punishment from the gods. There is also the historical record of Sennacherib's battle with the Egyptian army at which the gods sent a plague of mice against their army which chewed up all their leather goods and equipment making them unable to fight. Of course, Sennacherib doesn't mention this either.

# Nebuchadnezzar II

Nebuchadnezzar is best known as **the Babylonian king who destroyed Jerusalem in 526 BC** and led away many Hebrews into captivity in Babylon. According to Josephus' Antiquities, Nebuchadnezzar later returned to besiege Jerusalem again in 586 BC.

Born: c.630 BCE Died: c.561 BCE

Nebuchadnezzar II (Nebuchadnezzar, meaning "Nabu, watch over my heir"; also spelled Nebuchadrezzar II, was the second king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, ruling from the death of his father Nabopolassar in 605 BC to his own death in 562 BC. Historically known as Nebuchadnezzar the Great, he is typically regarded as the empire's greatest king.

Nebuchadnezzar remains famous for his military campaigns in the Levant, for his construction projects in his capital, Babylon, and for the important part he played in Jewish history. Ruling for 43 years, Nebuchadnezzar was the longest-reigning king of the Chaldean dynasty. At the time of his death, Nebuchadnezzar was among the most powerful rulers in the world.

Nebuchadrezzar II, (born c. 630—died c. 561 bce), second and greatest king of the Chaldean dynasty of Babylonia (reigned c. 605–c. 561 bce). He was known for his military might, the splendour of his capital, Babylon, and his important part in Jewish history.

Nebuchadnezzar II was the eldest son and successor of Nabopolassar, founder of the Chaldean empire. He is known from cuneiform inscriptions, the Bible and later Jewish sources, and classical authors. His name, from the Akkadian Nabu-kudurri-ušur, means “O Nabu, watch over my heir.”

In 607/606, as crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar commanded an army with his father in the mountains north of Assyria, subsequently leading independent operations after Nabopolassar's return to Babylon. After a Babylonian reverse at the hands of Egypt in 606/605, he served as commander in chief in his father's place and by brilliant generalship shattered the Egyptian army at Carchemish and Hamath, thereby securing control of all Syria. After his father's death on August 16, 605, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon and ascended the throne within three weeks. This rapid consolidation of his accession and the fact that he could return to Syria shortly afterward reflected his strong grip on the empire.

On expeditions in Syria and Palestine from June to December of 604, Nebuchadnezzar received the submission of local states, including Judah, and captured the city of Ashkelon. With Greek mercenaries in his armies, further campaigns to extend Babylonian control in Palestine followed in the three succeeding years. On the last occasion (601/600), Nebuchadnezzar clashed with an Egyptian army, with heavy losses; this reverse was followed by the defection of certain vassal states, Judah among them. This brought an intermission in the series of annual campaigns in 600/599, while Nebuchadnezzar remained in Babylonia repairing his losses of chariots. Measures to

regain control were resumed at the end of 599/598 (December to March). Nebuchadnezzar's strategic planning appeared in his attack on the Arab tribes of northwestern Arabia, in preparation for the occupation of Judah.

He attacked Judah a year later and captured Jerusalem on March 16, 597, deporting King Jehoiachin to Babylon. After a further brief Syrian campaign in 596/595, Nebuchadnezzar had to act in eastern Babylonia to repel a threatened invasion, probably from Elam (modern southwestern Iran). Tensions in Babylonia were revealed by a rebellion late in 595/594 involving elements of the army, but he was able to put this down decisively enough to undertake two further campaigns in Syria during 594.

Nebuchadnezzar's further military activities are known not from extant chronicles but from other sources, particularly the Bible, which records another attack on Jerusalem and a siege of Tyre (lasting 13 years, according to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus) and hints at an invasion of Egypt. The siege of Jerusalem ended in its capture in 587/586 and in the deportation of prominent citizens, with a further deportation in 582. In this respect he followed the methods of his Assyrian predecessors.

Much influenced by the Assyrian imperial tradition, Nebuchadnezzar consciously pursued a policy of expansion, claiming the grant of universal kingship by Marduk and praying to have "no opponent from horizon to sky." From cuneiform fragments he is known to have attempted the invasion of Egypt, the culmination of his expansionist policy, in 568/567.

In addition to being a brilliant tactician and strategist, Nebuchadnezzar was prominent in international diplomacy, as shown in his sending an ambassador (probably Nabonidus, a successor) to mediate between the Medes and Lydians in Asia Minor.

He died about 561 and was succeeded by his son Awil-Marduk (Evil-Merodach of **2 Kings**).

Nebuchadnezzar's main activity, other than as military commander, was the rebuilding of Babylon. He completed and extended fortifications begun by his father, built a great moat and a new outer defense wall, paved the ceremonial Processional Way with limestone, rebuilt and embellished the principal temples, and cut canals. This he did not only for his own glorification but also in honor of the gods. He claimed to be "the one who set in the mouth of the people reverence for the great gods" and disparaged predecessors who had built palaces elsewhere than at Babylon and had only journeyed there for the New Year Feast.

Little is known of his family life beyond the tradition that he married a Median princess, whose yearning for her native terrain he sought to ease by creating gardens simulating hills. A structure representing these hanging gardens cannot be positively identified in either the cuneiform texts or the archaeological remains.



Despite the fateful part he played in Judah's history, Nebuchadnezzar is seen in Jewish tradition in a predominantly favorable light. It was claimed that he gave orders for the protection of Jeremiah, who regarded him as God's appointed instrument whom it was impiety to disobey, and the prophet Ezekiel expressed a similar view at the attack on Tyre.

A corresponding attitude to Nebuchadnezzar, as God's instrument against wrongdoers, occurs in the Apocrypha in 1 Esdras and, as protector to be prayed for, in Baruch. In Daniel (Old Testament) and in Bel and the Dragon (Apocrypha), Nebuchadnezzar appears as a man, initially deceived by bad advisers, who welcomes the situation in which truth is triumphant and God is vindicated.

There is no independent support for the tradition in Daniel of Nebuchadnezzar's seven years' madness, and the story probably arose from a fanciful later interpretation of texts concerned with events under Nabonidus, who showed apparent eccentricity in deserting Babylon for a decade to live in Arabia.

# Belshazzar, king of Babylonia

Alternate titles: Baltasar, Balthasar, Bel-shar-usur

Died: c.539 BCE

Belshazzar, Neo-Babylonian Bel-shar-usur, Greek Baltasar, or Balthasar, (died c. 539 BC), coregent of Babylon who was killed at the capture of the city by the Persians.

Belshazzar had been known only from the biblical Book of Daniel (chapters 5, 7–8) and from \*Xenophon's Cyropaedia until 1854, when references to him were found in Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions.

Though he is referred to in the Book of Daniel as the son of Nebuchadrezzar, the Babylonian inscriptions indicate that he was in fact the eldest son of Nabonidus, who was king of Babylon from 555 to 539, and of Nitocris, who was perhaps a daughter of Nebuchadrezzar.

When Nabonidus went into exile (550), he entrusted Belshazzar with the throne and the major part of his army.

During his coregency Belshazzar administered the government, his own estates, and those of his father, though, according to the Book of Daniel, famine and economic setbacks occurred late in his rule.

According to the accounts in the Bible and Xenophon, Belshazzar held a last great feast at which he saw a hand writing on a wall the following words in Aramaic: "mene, mene, tekel, upharsin."

The prophet Daniel, interpreting the handwriting on the wall as God's judgment on the king, foretold the imminent destruction of the city. Belshazzar died after Babylon fell to the Persian general Gobyras without resistance on Oct. 12, 539, and probably before the Persian king Cyrus II entered the city 17 days later.

By The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica  
Fast Facts <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Belshazzar>

\* **The Cyropaedia**, sometimes spelled Cyropedia, is a partly fictional biography of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, the first Persian Empire. It was written around 370 BC by Xenophon, the Athenian-born soldier, historian, and student of Socrates.

# Cyrus the Great King of Persia

## National Geographic -- Who was Cyrus the Great?

Cyrus went down in history as one of the most benevolent conquerors of all time, allowing his subjects to live—and worship—as they pleased.

Like many ancient rulers, the Persian conqueror Cyrus the Great (ca 590– ca 529 B.C.), also known as Cyrus II, was born of royalty. On the death of his father, Cambyses I, Cyrus ruled the Achaemenid dynasty and expanded his ancestral realm into a mighty empire. He triumphed not just through conquest, but also by showing singular tolerance and mercy to those he defeated.

A brilliant military strategist, Cyrus vanquished the king of the Medes, then integrated all the Iranian tribes, whose skill at fighting on horseback gave his army great mobility. His triumph over Lydia, in Asia Minor near the Aegean Sea, filled his treasury with that country's tremendous wealth.

## Ancient Mesopotamia 101

Ancient Mesopotamia proved that fertile land and the knowledge to cultivate it was a fortuitous recipe for wealth and civilization. Learn how this "land between two rivers" became the birthplace of the world's first cities, advancements in math and science, and the...

After conquering lands surrounding Mesopotamia, Cyrus closed in on Babylon. Disgruntled over imposed forced labor and the demotion of their city's patron deity, Marduk, Babylonians turned against their king and saw no reason to oppose Cyrus, who was known to spare those who yielded to him. In 539 B.C. they opened their gates to the Persians, who entered the city "in peace, amidst joy and jubilation," according to an inscription touting Cyrus's triumph.

He honored his subjects and cared for them as if they were his own children and they, on their part, revered Cyrus as a father. -- Xenophon author of Cyropaedia

## A man of mercy

The benevolent nature of Cyrus's reign took many forms. He placated the formerly powerful Medes by involving them in government. He adopted habits of dress and ornamentation from the Elamites. Across his conquered lands, he returned images of gods that had been seized in battle and hoarded in Babylon. And in Babylon itself, he publicly worshipped the city's revered Marduk.

Cyrus's most renowned act of mercy was to free the captive Jews, whom Nebuchadnezzar II had forced into exile in Babylon. Cyrus allowed them to return to their promised land. The Jews praised the Persian emperor in scripture as a savior to whom God gave power over other kingdoms so that he would restore them to Jerusalem and allow them to rebuild their Temple.

Cyrus the Great died around 529 B.C., while campaigning against defiant nomadic tribes around the Caspian Sea. One measure of his greatness was the esteem in which he was held in later years by the Greeks, despite the bitter wars they waged against his Persian successors. More than 150 years after Cyrus's death, the Greek author Xenophon memorialized the ruler in his work *Cyropaedia*.

“He honored his subjects and cared for them as if they were his own children,” Xenophon wrote, “and they, on their part, revered Cyrus as a father.”

Those words served as inspiration for at least one of America's Founding Fathers: Thomas Jefferson owned not one but two copies of *Cyropaedia*.

Equally high praise for Cyrus's legacy is found in modern times, at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. There on display is a replica of what's called the Cyrus Cylinder. Written in Babylonian cuneiform around the time of Cyrus's conquest of the city—and unearthed in its ruins by British archaeologists in 1879—the cylinder chronicles Cyrus's numerous acts of mercy. It describes his willingness to let conquered subjects retain their traditions, a practice unheard of in a time when rulers “owned” not only the conquered lands but also the people living in them. The cylinder is generally regarded as “the first bill of human rights,” and Cyrus's reign exemplary for ruling with pluralism and tolerance.

### **Judaism, saved by Cyrus**

Judaism is the oldest surviving monotheistic religion, with roots dating to the second millennium B.C. Nothing was more important to the Jews than their faith, which was founded on the concept of a covenant between themselves and God. They described the history of this relationship in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

According to the Torah, God promised the lands of Canaan to his Chosen People, the Israelites, a Semitic tribe whose origins traced back to the patriarch Abraham. They founded the kingdom of Judah, and established Jerusalem as its capital sometime around 1000 B.C. The great Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II around 587–586 B.C. After Cyrus freed the Jews from exile in Babylon in 538 B.C., they returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and spiritual homeland.

King Croesus of Lydia

One of Cyrus's many conquests was the kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor. Among ancient rulers, few were as rich as Croesus. His realm contained large deposits of electrum, an alloy of gold and silver, which he used to produce coins—a practice that had originated in Lydia and Greece a century or so before Croesus took power around 560 B.C. His wealth made him the subject of legend.

According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Croesus met the wise Athenian ruler Solon and asked if wealth did not ensure happiness. Solon replied, “He who possesses great stores of riches is no nearer happiness than he who has what suffices for his daily needs.”

Herodotus viewed Cyrus's defeat of Croesus as proof that wealth does not guarantee fulfillment.

Copyright © 1996-2015 National Geographic Society Copyright © 2015-2021 National Geographic Partners, LLC. All rights reserved

## **Cyrus the Great in the Bible**

[From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

Cyrus the Great was the founder of the Achaemenid Empire and king of Persia from 559-530 BC. He is venerated in the Hebrew Bible for conquering Babylon and liberating the Jews from captivity. He is mentioned 23 times by name and alluded to several times more.[1]

According to the Bible, Cyrus the Great, king of the Achaemenid Empire, was the monarch who ended the Babylonian captivity. In the first year of his reign he was prompted by God to decree that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and that such Jews as cared to might return to their land for this purpose. Moreover, he showed his interest in the project by sending back with them the sacred vessels which had been taken from the First Temple and a considerable sum of money with which to buy building materials. The existence of the decree has been challenged.

Cyrus the Great is unconditionally praised in the Jewish sources. It is likely that, after the Persian conquest of Babylon, Cyrus had commenced his relationship with the Jewish leaders in exile, and the Book of Isaiah says that he was anointed by God.

The Hebrew Bible states that Cyrus issued the decree of liberation to the Jews. Cyrus's edict for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem marked a great epoch in the history of the Jewish people. According to Ezra 4:1–6 "the enemies of Judah and Benjamin" asked to help build the temple, and when this was denied hired counselors to frustrate the people of Judah from completing the rebuilding throughout the **reign of Cyrus, Xerxes ('Ahasuerus'), and Artaxerxes, until the reign of Darius II**. The work recommenced under the exhortations of the prophets, and when the authorities asked the Jews what right they had to build a temple, they referred to the decree of Cyrus. Darius II, who was then reigning, caused a search for this alleged decree to be made, and it was found in the archives at Ecbatana, whereupon Darius reaffirmed the decree and the work proceeded to its triumphant close.

A chronicle drawn up just after the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus gives the history of the reign of Nabonidus ('Nabuna'id'), the last king of Babylon, and of the fall of the Babylonian empire. In 538 BC, there was a revolt in Southern Babylonia, while the army of Cyrus entered the country from the north. In June the Babylonian army was completely defeated at Opis, and immediately afterwards Sippara opened its gates to the conqueror. Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Media, was then sent to Babylon, which

surrendered "without fighting," and the daily services in the temples continued without a break.

In October, Cyrus himself arrived, and proclaimed a general amnesty, which was communicated by Gobryas to "all the province of Babylon," of which he had been made governor. Meanwhile, Nabonidus, who had concealed himself, was captured, but treated honourably; and when his wife died, Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus, conducted the funeral. Cyrus now assumed the title of "king of Babylon," claimed to be the descendant of the ancient kings, and made rich offerings to the temples. At the same time he allowed the foreign populations who had been deported to Babylonia to return to their old homes, carrying with them the images of their gods. Among these populations were the Jews, who, as they had no images, took with them the sacred vessels of the temple.

Speculation abounds as to the reasoning for Cyrus' release of the Jews from Babylon. One argument is that Cyrus was a follower of Zoroaster, the monotheistic prophet: Zoroastrianism played a dominant religious role in Persia throughout its history until the Islamic conquest. As such, he would have felt a kindred spirit with the monotheistic Jews. Another possibility is the magnanimous respect he is ascribed to have evinced for the diverse beliefs and customs of the peoples within his extended kingdom. As one example, upon the conquest of Babylon itself, it is recorded that he paid homage at the temple of the Babylonian god Marduk – thereby gaining the support of the Babylonian people and minimizing further bloodshed. While Jewish tradition, as described previously in Ezra 1:1–8, indicates "the Lord inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation", in the Cyrus Cylinder he pays homage to Marduk. This Babylonian document has been interpreted as referring to the return to their homelands of several displaced cultural groups, one of which could have been the Jews:

From [Babylon] to Aššur and (from) Susa, Agade, Ešnunna, Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der, as far as the region of Gutium, the sacred centers on the other side of the Tigris, whose sanctuaries had been abandoned for a long time, I returned the images of the gods, who had resided there, to their places and I let them dwell in eternal abodes. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned to them their dwellings. In addition, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I settled in their habitations, in pleasing abodes, the gods of Sumer and Akkad, whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of the gods, had brought into Babylon. (lines 30–33)

However, it has been argued that it must be referring to people associated to the image's cult instead of deportees. Diana Edelman has pointed at the serious chronological difficulties that arise when we accept that the Jews returned during the reign of Cyrus.

Who roused from the east him that victory hails at every step? Who presents him with nations, subdues kings to him? His sword makes dust of them and his bow scatters them like straw. He pursues them and advances unhindered, his feet scarcely touching the road. Who is the author of this deed if not he who calls the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, who am the first and shall be with the last.

— Isaiah 41:2–4

Then the alliance between Cyrus and God is made explicit:

*Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom he has taken by his right hand to subdue nations before him and strip the loins of kings, to force gateways before him that their gates be closed no more: I will go before you levelling the heights. I will shatter the bronze gateways, smash the iron bars. I will give you the hidden treasures, the secret hoards, that you may know that I am the Lord.*

— Isaiah 45:1–3

Among the classical Jewish sources, besides the Bible, Josephus (1st century AD) mentions that Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity and helped rebuild the temple. He also wrote to the rulers and governors that they should contribute to the rebuilding of the temple and assisted them in rebuilding the temple. A letter from Cyrus to the Jews is described by Josephus:

I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before. I have also sent my treasurer Mithridates, and Zorobabel, the governor of the Jews, that they may lay the foundations of the temple, and may build it sixty cubits high, and of the same latitude, making three edifices of polished stones, and one of the wood of the country, and the same order extends to the altar whereon they offer sacrifices to God. I require also that the expenses for these things may be given out of my revenues. Moreover, I have also sent the vessels which king Nebuchadnezzar pillaged out of the temple, and have given them to Mithridates the treasurer, and to Zorobabel the governor of the Jews, that they may have them carried to Jerusalem, and may restore them to the temple of God. Now their number is as follows: Fifty chargers of gold, and five hundred of silver; forty Thericlean cups of gold, and five hundred of silver; fifty basons of gold, and five hundred of silver; thirty vessels for pouring [the drink-offerings], and three hundred of silver; thirty vials of gold, and two thousand four hundred of silver; with a thousand other large vessels. (3) I permit them to have the same honor which they were used to have from their forefathers, as also for their small cattle, and for wine and oil, two hundred and five thousand and five hundred drachme; and for wheat flour, twenty thousand and five hundred artabae; and I give order that these expenses shall be given them out of the tributes due from Samaria. The priests shall also offer these sacrifices according to the laws of Moses in Jerusalem; and when they offer them, they shall pray to God for the preservation of the king and of his family, that the kingdom of Persia may continue. But my will is, that those who disobey these injunctions, and make them void, shall be hung upon a cross, and their substance brought into the king's treasury."

The historical nature of this decree has been challenged. Professor Lester L. Grabbe has argued that there was no decree but that there was a policy that allowed exiles to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples. He also argues that the archaeology suggests that the return was a "trickle" taking place over perhaps decades, resulting in a maximum population of perhaps 30,000.

## Biblical References to Cyrus, King of Persia

2Ch 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD [spoken] by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying,

2Ch 36:23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah. Who [is there] among you of all his people? The LORD his God [be] with him, and let him go up.

Ezr 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying,

Ezr 1:2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah.

Ezr 1:7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

Ezr 1:8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

Ezr 3:7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Ezr 4:3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

Ezr 4:5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezr 5:13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon [the same] king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

Ezr 5:14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that [was] in Jerusalem, and brought

Ezr 5:17 Now therefore, if [it seem] good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which [is] there at Babylon, whether it be [so], that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

Ezr 6:3 In the first year of Cyrus the king [the same] Cyrus the king made a decree [concerning] the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, [and] the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

Ezr 6:14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished [it], according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Isa 44:28 That saith of Cyrus, [He is] my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Isa 45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

Da 1:21 And Daniel continued [even] unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Da 6:28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Da 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing [was] true, but the time appointed [was] long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.



# Darius of Daniel

**There are three references to rulers named Darius in the Bible.**

1) The first, chronologically, occurs in the book of Daniel, where the ruler is called Darius the Mede (Daniel 6:1). This Darius ruled for only two years (538–536 BC) and is best known as the ruler who promoted Daniel to a high position in the kingdom and then cast him into the lions' den, much against his better judgment. When he saw that Daniel was unharmed by the lions, Darius decreed that "people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end" (**Daniel 6:1–28**). It is possible that Daniel used the word Darius (which means "lord") as a title for the ruler in Babylon, rather than a proper name. **Daniel 6:28** refers to "the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian," showing that Darius and Cyrus ruled concurrently. This has caused Bible scholars to posit that Darius was appointed viceroy over Babylon by his nephew, King Cyrus.

2) The book of Ezra mentions **another king named Darius**, also known as **Darius I** or **Darius the Great**. This was the son of Hystaspes, a king of Parsa. Darius I ruled Persia from about 521 to 486 BC. Darius I is presented in Ezra as a good king who helped the Israelites in several ways. Prior to Darius's reign, the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian Captivity had begun rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. At that time, Israel's enemies did everything in their power to disrupt the construction, and they had succeeded in halting the building during the reigns of the kings Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes (**Ezra 4:1–24**).

When Darius became king, construction of the temple resumed in the second year of his reign. But the Jews' enemies again attempted to thwart their efforts. Tattenai, the Persian governor of Judea, wrote a letter to Darius in an effort to turn the king against the Israelites and stop the building of the temple. But Darius responded by commanding Tattenai and his companions to stay far away from the site and let the Jewish elders continue with the rebuilding. Furthermore, the king decreed that the Jewish workers were to be paid from the royal treasury, that the builders would be given whatever was needed for the burnt offerings, and that anyone attempting to destroy the temple or disobey his decree would be impaled on a beam from his own house, which would be made a pile of rubble (**Ezra 6:1–12**). By his decrees, Darius I showed himself to be a friend of Israel, and the Jews in Jerusalem prospered under his watch. The temple was completed in the sixth year of his reign (**Ezra 6:15**).

3) A third reference to a ruler named Darius occurs in **Nehemiah 12:22**, which refers to the "reign of Darius the Persian." It is unclear exactly who this Darius is, but most historians believe it to be Darius Codomannus (336–331 BC), the last king of the Persian monarchy who was defeated by Alexander the Great.

# Darius, son of Xerxes (or Darius the Mede)

Circa 478 BC, before the revolt at Bactria, **Darius was married to his cousin Artaynte at Sardis**. She was the daughter of his uncle Masistes. At the behest of Xerxes, Artaynte committed adultery with him (Xerxes). When Amestris found out, she did not seek revenge against Artaynte, but against her mother, Masistes' wife, as Amestris thought that it was due to her connivance. On Xerxes' birthday, Amestris sent for his guards and mutilated Artaynte's mother. On seeing this, Masistes fled to Bactria to start a revolt, but was intercepted by Xerxes' army who killed him and his sons.

**In 465 BC, Darius may have ascended to the throne as King of Persia after his father was murdered** in a conspiracy carried out by Artabanus and Aspamitres the eunuch, who were confidential advisers of Xerxes. Afterwards, they deceived Artaxerxes into believing that it was his older brother, Darius, who murdered his father. Darius was then taken to the palace of Artaxerxes and put to death.

Artabanus may have had personal ambitions for the throne since, subsequently, he conspired with Megabyzus to have Artaxerxes killed. But Megabyzus revealed the plot to Artaxerxes, who put Artabanus and Aspamitres to death for the murders of Xerxes, Darius and his own attempted murder. Artabanus was killed by sword, whilst Aspamitres was left in a tub where he was eaten by insects.

## **Artaynte**

Daughter of an unnamed woman and Prince Masistes, a marshal of the armies during the invasion of Greece in 480-479 BC, and the brother of King Xerxes I.

During the Greek campaign Xerxes developed a passionate desire for the wife of Masistes, but she would constantly resist and would not bend to his will. Upon his return to Sardis, the king endeavored to bring about the marriage of his son Daris to Artaynte, the daughter of this woman the wife of Masistes, supposing that by doing so he could obtain her more easily. After moving to Susa he brought Artaynte to the royal house with him for his son Darius, but fell in love with her himself, and after obtaining her they became lovers.

At the behest of Xerxes, Artaynte committed adultery with him (Xerxes). When queen Amestris found out, she did not seek revenge against Artaynte, but against her mother, Masistes' wife, as Amestris thought that it was her connivance. On Xerxes' birthday, Amestris sent for his guards and mutilated Masistes' wife by cutting off her breasts and threw them to dogs, and her nose and ears and lips also, and cutting out her tongue as well. On seeing this, Masistes fled to Bactria to start a revolt, but was intercepted by Xerxes' army who killed him and his sons. Artaynte (The Histories IX 108-110)

**Darius died, after thirty days of illness, about sixty-four years old.**

# Xerxes I - the Great

## Ahasuerus (Xerxes)

There is some debate about the identity of the “Ahasuerus” or “Xerxes” mentioned in **Ezra 4:6** as ruling before Darius I. It is likely that this king is also known in history as Cambyes II, a son of Cyrus the Great. The “Artaxerxes” in verse 7 is called, in other historical records, “Smerdis” or “Bardiya,” another son of Cyrus (or possibly an impostor taking his place). That king ruled only seven or eight months.

A related theory suggests that Ezra spoke of Cambyes using his Chaldee name (Ahasuems) in verse 6, and by his Persian name or title (Artaxerxes) in verse 7. In that case, Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes refer to the same person—the king who immediately preceded Darius. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Darius-in-the-Bible.html>

**Xerxes I** (Old Persian: *Xšayāršā*; Ancient Greek: *Ξέρξης Xérxēs*; c. 518 – August 465 BC), commonly known as **Xerxes the Great**, was the fourth King of Kings of the Achaemenid Empire, ruling from 486 to 465 BC.

He was the son and successor of Darius the Great (r. 522 – 486 BC) and his mother was Atossa, a daughter of Cyrus the Great (r. 550 – 530 BC), the founder of the Achaemenid empire. Like his father, he ruled the empire at its territorial apex. He ruled from 486 BC until his assassination in 465 BC at the hands of Artabanus, the commander of the royal bodyguard.

Xerxes I is notable in Western history for his invasion of Greece in 480 BC. His forces temporarily overran mainland Greece north of the Isthmus of Corinth until losses at Salamis and Plataea a year later reversed these gains and ended the second invasion decisively. However, Xerxes successfully crushed revolts in Egypt and Babylon. Roman Ghirshman says that, "After this he ceased to use the title of 'king of Babylon', calling himself simply 'king of the Persians and the Medes'." Xerxes also oversaw the completion of various construction projects at Susa and Persepolis.

Xerxes is identified with the king Ahasuerus in the biblical Book of Esther, which some scholars consider to be historical romance. Xerxes's mother was the daughter of the founder of the empire. Xerxes was crowned and succeeded his father in October–December 486 BC when he was about 36 years old.

In August 465 BC, Artabanus, the commander of the royal bodyguard and the most powerful official in the Persian court, assassinated Xerxes with the help of a eunuch, Aspamitres.

Greek historians give contradicting accounts of events. According to Ctesias, Artabanus then accused the Crown Prince Darius, Xerxes's eldest son, of the murder and persuaded

another of Xerxes's sons, Artaxerxes, to avenge the patricide by killing Darius. But according to Aristotle, Artabanus killed Darius first and then killed Xerxes.

After Artaxerxes discovered the murder, he killed Artabanus and his sons. Participating in these intrigues was the general Megabyzus, whose decision to switch sides probably saved the Achaemenids from losing their control of the Persian throne.

Xerxes I had a reputation for harsh punishments, womanizing, and draining the Persian empire's coffers.

**Amestris** (Greek: Ἀμῆστρις, *Amēstris*, perhaps the same as Ἀμαστρίς, *Amāstris*, from Old Persian *Amāstri-*, "strong woman" died c. 424 BC) was a Persian queen, the wife of Xerxes I of Persia, mother of Achaemenid King of Kings Artaxerxes I of Persia.

He was the son and successor of Darius the Great (r. 522 – 486 BC) and his mother was Atossa, a daughter of Cyrus the Great (r. 550 – 530 BC),

# Xerxes's Wife, Amestris

**Herodotus 9th book, page 870**

Now at Sardis, as it chanced, king Xerxes had been staying ever since that time when he came thither in flight from Athens, after suffering defeat in the sea-fight..

108. At that time, while he was in Sardis, he had a passionate desire, as it seems, for the wife of Masistes, who was also there: and as she could not be bent to his will by his messages to her, and he did not wish to employ force because he had regard for his brother Masistes and the same consideration withheld the woman also, for she well knew that force would not be used towards her, then Xerxes abstained from all else, and endeavoured to bring about the marriage of his own son Dareios with the daughter of this woman and of Masistes, supposing that if he should do so he would obtain her more easily. Then having made the betrothal and done all the customary rites, he went away to Susa; and when he had arrived there and had brought the woman into his own house for Dareios, then he ceased from attempting the wife of Masistes and changing his inclination he conceived a desire for the wife of Dareios, who was daughter of Masistes, and obtained her: now the name of this woman was Artaÿnte..

109. However as time went on, this became known in the following manner:—Amestris the wife of Xerxes had woven a mantle, large and of various work and a sight worthy to be seen, and this she gave to Xerxes. He then being greatly pleased put it on and went to Artaÿnte; and being greatly pleased with her too, he bade her ask what she would to be given to her in return for the favours which she had granted to him, for she should obtain, he said, whatsoever she asked: and she, since it was destined that she should perish miserably with her whole house, said to Xerxes upon this: "Wilt thou give me whatsoever I ask thee for?" and he, supposing that she would ask anything rather than that which she did, promised this and swore to it. Then when he had sworn, she boldly asked for the mantle; and Xerxes tried every means of persuasion, not being willing to give it to her, and that for no other reason but only because he feared Amestris, lest by her, who even before this had some inkling of the truth, he should thus be discovered in the act; and he offered her cities and gold in any quantity, and an army which no one else should command except herself. Now this of an army is a thoroughly Persian gift. Since however he did not persuade her, he gave her the mantle; and she being overjoyed by the gift wore it and prided herself upon it..

110. And Amestris was informed that she had it; and having learnt that which was being done, she was not angry with the woman, but supposing that her mother was the cause and that she was bringing this about, she planned destruction for the wife of Masistes. She waited then until her husband Xerxes had a royal feast set before him:—this feast is served up once in the year on the day on which the king was born, and the name of this feast is in Persian tycta, which in the tongue of the Hellenes means "complete"; also on

this occasion alone the king washes his head, and he makes gifts then to the Persians:— Amestris, I say, waited for this day and then asked of Xerxes that the wife of Masistes might be given to her. And he considered it a strange and untoward thing to deliver over to her his brother's wife, especially since she was innocent of this matter; for he understood why she was making the request..

111. At last however as she continued to entreat urgently and he was compelled by the rule, namely that it is impossible among them that he who makes request when a royal feast is laid before the king should fail to obtain it, at last very much against his will consented; and in delivering her up he bade Amestris do as she desired, and meanwhile he sent for his brother and said these words: "Masistes, thou art the son of Dareios and my brother, and moreover in addition to this thou art a man of worth. I say to thee, live no longer with this wife with whom thou now livest, but I give thee instead of her my daughter; with her live as thy wife, but the wife whom thou now hast, do not keep; for it does not seem good to me that thou shouldst keep her."

Masistes then, marvelling at that which was spoken, said these words: "Master, how unprofitable a speech is this which thou utterest to me, in that thou biddest me send away a wife by whom I have sons who are grown up to be young men, and daughters one of whom even thou thyself didst take as a wife for thy son, and who is herself, as it chances, very much to my mind,—that thou biddest me, I say, send away her and take to wife thy daughter! I, O king, think it a very great matter that I am judged worthy of thy daughter, but nevertheless I will do neither of these things: and do not thou urge me by force to do such a thing as this: but for thy daughter another husband will be found not in any wise inferior to me, and let me, I pray thee, live still with my own wife."

He returned answer in some such words as these; and Xerxes being stirred with anger said as follows: "This then, Masistes, is thy case,—I will not give thee my daughter for thy wife, nor yet shalt thou live any longer with that one, in order that thou mayest learn to accept that which is offered thee." He then when he heard this went out, having first said these words: "Master, thou hast not surely brought ruin upon me?"

112. During this interval of time, while Xerxes was conversing with his brother, Amestris had sent the spearmen of Xerxes to bring the wife of Masistes, and she was doing to her shameful outrage; for she cut away her breasts and threw them to dogs, and she cut off her nose and ears and lips and tongue, and sent her back home thus outraged.

113. Then Masistes, not yet having heard any of these things, but supposing that some evil had fallen upon him, came running to his house; and seeing his wife thus mutilated, forthwith upon this he took counsel with his sons and set forth to go to Bactria together with his sons and doubtless some others also, meaning to make the province of Bactria revolt and to do the greatest possible injury to the king: and this in fact would have come to pass, as I imagine, if he had got up to the land of the Bactrians and Sacans before he was overtaken, for they were much attached to him, and also he was the

governor of the Bactrians: but Xerxes being informed that he was doing this, sent after him an army as he was on his way, and slew both him and his sons and his army. So far of that which happened about the passion of Xerxes and the death of Masistes.

#### **Herodotus 7th book page 655**

114. Having done this and many other things in addition to this, as charms for the river, at the Nine Ways in the land of the Edonians, they proceeded by the bridges, for they had found the Strymon already yoked with bridges; and being informed that this place was called the Nine Ways, they buried alive in it that number of boys and maidens, children of the natives of the place. Now burying alive is a Persian custom; for I am informed that Amestris also, the wife of Xerxes, when she had grown old, made return for her own life to the god who is said to be beneath the earth by burying twice seven children of Persians who were men of renown.

**Quotes are from Herodotus**

**See Wives in Persia harems**

<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/harem-i>

# Alexander the Great

HISTORY.COM <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/alexander-the-great>

Updated: Nov 24, 2020

Alexander the Great was an ancient Macedonian ruler and one of history's greatest military minds who, as King of Macedonia and Persia, established the largest empire the ancient world had ever seen. By turns charismatic and ruthless, brilliant and power hungry, diplomatic and bloodthirsty, Alexander inspired such loyalty in his men they'd follow him anywhere and, if necessary, die in the process. Though Alexander the Great died before realizing his dream of uniting a new realm, his influence on Greek and Asian culture was so profound that it inspired a new historical epoch—the Hellenistic Period.

## **Where Was Alexander the Great From?**

Alexander III was born in Pella, Macedonia, in 356 B.C. to King Philip II and Queen Olympias—although legend had it his father was none other than Zeus, the ruler of the Greek gods.

Philip II was an impressive military man in his own right. He turned Macedonia (a region on the northern part of the Greek peninsula) into a force to be reckoned with, and he fantasized about conquering the massive Persian Empire.

## **Bucephalus**

At age 12, Alexander showed impressive courage when he tamed the wild horse Bucephalus, an enormous stallion with a furious demeanor. The horse became his battle companion for most of Alexander's life.

When Alexander was 13, Philip called on the great philosopher Aristotle to tutor his son. Aristotle sparked and fostered Alexander's interest in literature, science, medicine and philosophy.

Alexander was just 16 when Philip went off to battle and left his son in charge of Macedonia. In 338 B.C., Alexander saw the opportunity to prove his military worth and led a cavalry against the Sacred Band of Thebes—a supposedly unbeatable, select army made up entirely of male lovers—during the Battle of Chaeronea.

Alexander put his vigor and bravery on display, and his cavalry decimated the Sacred Band of Thebes.

## **Alexander Becomes King**

In 336 B.C., Alexander's father Philip was assassinated by his bodyguard Pausanias. Just 20 years old, Alexander claimed the Macedonian throne and killed his rivals before they could challenge his sovereignty.



He also quashed rebellions for independence in northern Greece. Once he'd cleaned house, Alexander left to follow in his father's footsteps and continue Macedonia's world domination.

Alexander appointed the general Antipater as regent and headed for Persia with his army. They crossed the Hellespont, a narrow strait between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, and faced Persian and Greek forces at the Granicus River. Victory went to Alexander and the Macedonians.

Alexander then headed south and easily took the city of Sardes. But his army encountered resistance in the cities of Miletus, Mylasa and Halicarnassus. Under siege yet not beaten, Halicarnassus held out long enough for King Darius III, the newest Persian king, to amass a substantial army.

### **Gordian Knot**

From Halicarnassus, Alexander headed north to Gordium, home of the fabled Gordian knot, a group of tightly-entwined knots yoked to an ancient wagon. Legend had it whoever unwound the knot would conquer all of Asia.

As the story goes, Alexander took on the challenge but was unable to unravel the knot by hand. He took another approach and sliced through the knot with his sword, claiming triumph.

### **Battle of Issus**

In 333 B.C., Alexander and his men encountered a massive Persian army led by King Darius III near the town of Issus in southern Turkey. Alexander's forces were greatly outnumbered in men but not in experience or the determination for revenge and to claim Persia's great wealth, much of it plundered.

As it became clear Alexander would win the Battle of Issus, Darius fled with what remained of his troops, leaving his wife and family behind. His mother, Sisygambis, was so upset she disowned him and adopted Alexander as her son.

By now it was clear that Alexander was a shrewd, ruthless and brilliant military leader—in fact, he never lost a battle in his life. He would build an empire on the back of his motto, "there is nothing impossible to him who will try."

### **Battle of Tyre**

Next, Alexander took over the Phoenician cities of Marathus and Aradus. He rejected a plea from Darius for peace and took the towns of Byblos and Sidon.

He then laid siege to the heavily fortified island of Tyre in January 332 B.C., after the Tyrians refused him entry. But Alexander had no navy to speak of and Tyre was surrounded by water.

Alexander instructed his men to build a causeway to reach Tyre. All went well until they came within striking distance of the Tyrians. Again and again, Tyrian forces thwarted Alexander's clever attempts to gain entry, and he realized he needed a strong navy to penetrate their defenses.

He amassed a large fleet, finally breached the city's walls in July 332 B.C. and executed thousands of Tyrians for daring to defy him; many others were sold into slavery.

### **Alexander Enters Egypt**

After rejecting another peace offer from Darius, Alexander set out for Egypt. He was sidelined at Gaza, however, and forced to endure another lengthy siege. After several weeks, he took the town and entered Egypt where he established the city that still bears his name: Alexandria.

Alexander traveled to the desert to consult the oracle of Ammon, a god of supposed good counsel. Legends abound about what transpired at the oracle, but Alexander kept mum about the experience. Still, the visit furthered speculation Alexander was a deity.

### **Alexander Becomes King of Persia**

After conquering Egypt, Alexander faced Darius and his massive troops at Gaugamela in October 331 B.C. Following fierce fighting and heavy losses on both sides, **Darius fled and was assassinated by his own troops.** It's said Alexander was sad when he found Darius's body and he gave him a royal burial.

Finally rid of Darius, Alexander proclaimed himself King of Persia. But another Persian leader, Bessus (also thought to be Darius's murderer), had also claimed the Persian throne. Alexander couldn't let the claim stand.

After relentless pursuit by Alexander, Bessus's troops handed Bessus over to Ptolemy, Alexander's good friend, and he was mutilated and executed. With Bessus out of the way, Alexander had full control of Persia.

### **Proskynesis**

To gain credibility with the Persians, Alexander took on many Persian customs. He began dressing like a Persian and adopted the practice of proskynesis, a Persian court custom that involved bowing down and kissing the hand of others, depending on their rank.

The Macedonians were less than thrilled with the changes in Alexander and his attempt to be viewed as a deity. They refused to practice proskynesis and some plotted his death.

Increasingly paranoid, Alexander ordered the death of one of his most esteemed generals, Parmenio, in 330 B.C., after Parmenio's son Philotas was convicted of plotting an assassination attempt against Alexander (and also killed).

### **Alexander Kills Cleitus**

In 328 B.C., Cleitus, another general and close friend of Alexander, also met a violent end. Fed up with Alexander's new Persian-like persona, a drunk Cleitus continually insulted Alexander and minimized his achievements.

Pushed too far, Alexander killed Cleitus with a spear, a spontaneous act of violence that anguished him. Some historians believe Alexander killed his general in a fit of drunkenness—a persistent problem that plagued him through much of his life.

Alexander struggled to capture Sogdia, a region of the Persian Empire that remained loyal to Bessus. The Sogdians found a refuge at the pinnacle of a rock and refused Alexander's demand to surrender.

Not one to take “no” for an answer, Alexander sent some of his men to scale the rock and take the Sogdians by surprise. Supposedly, one of those on the rock was a girl named Roxane.

As the story goes, Alexander fell in love with Roxane on sight. He married her despite her Sogdian heritage and she joined him on his journey.

### **Alexander Enters India**

In 327 B.C., Alexander marched on Punjab, India. Some tribes surrendered peacefully; others did not. In 326 B.C., Alexander met King Porus of Paurava at the Hydaspes River.

Porus's army was less experienced than Alexander's, but they had a secret weapon—elephants. Even so, after a fierce battle in a raging thunderstorm, Porus was defeated.

One event took place at Hydaspes which devastated Alexander: the death of his beloved horse, Bucephalus. It's unclear if he died from battle wounds or of old age, but Alexander named the city of Bucephala after him.

Alexander wanted to press on and attempt to conquer all of India, but his war-weary soldiers refused, and his officers convinced him to return to Persia. So Alexander led his troops down the Indus River and was severely wounded during a battle with the Malli.

After recovering, he divided his troops, sending half of them back to Persia and half to Gedrosia, a desolate area west of the Indus River.

### **A Mass Wedding**

In early 324 B.C., Alexander reached the city of Susa in Persia. Wanting to unite the Persians and Macedonians and create a new race loyal only to him, he ordered many of his officers to marry Persian princesses at a mass wedding. He also took two more wives for himself.

The Macedonian army resented Alexander's attempt to change their culture and many mutinied. But after Alexander took a firm stand and replaced Macedonian officers and troops with Persians, his army backed down.

To further diffuse the situation, Alexander returned their titles and hosted a huge reconciliation banquet.

### **Death of Alexander the Great**

By 323 B.C., Alexander was head of an enormous empire and had recovered from the devastating loss of his friend Hephaestion—who was also reputed to be one of Alexander's homosexual male lovers.

Thanks to his insatiable urge for world supremacy, he started plans to conquer Arabia. But he'd never live to see it happen. After surviving battle after fierce battle, Alexander the Great died in June 323 B.C. at age 32.

Some historians say Alexander died of malaria or other natural causes; others believe he was poisoned. Either way, he never named a successor.

His death—and the bloody infighting for control that happened afterwards—unraveled the empire he'd fought so hard to create.

### **Why Was Alexander The Great 'Great'?**

Many conquered lands retained the Greek influence Alexander introduced, and several cities he founded remain important cultural centers even today. The period of history from his death to 31 B.C., when his empire folded, would come to be known as the Hellenistic period, from "Hellazein," which means, "to speak Greek or identify with the Greeks." Alexander the Great is revered as one of the most powerful and influential leaders the ancient world ever produced.

### **Sources**

- Alexander the Great. Ancient History Encyclopedia.
- Alexander the Great. Livius.org.
- Alexander the Great of Macedon Biography. Historyofmacedonia.org.
- Alexander of Macedonia. San Jose State University.
- Bucephalus. Ancient History Encyclopedia.
- The Battle of Issus. Livius.org.
- The Sacred Band of Thebes, from Plutarch, Life of Pelopidas. Fordham University.
- The Siege of Tyre (332 BCE). Livius.org.

# Hannibal

The story of Hannibal is a fascinating story of one man fighting Rome through clever strategies and technical skills almost conquered the mighty empire. It is not directly related to our history of the Intertestamental Period, but history is incomplete without reference to his use of Elephants in crossing the Alps to attack Rome. Hannibal was a worshiper of Baal. Later in life he was defeated and exiled where he found a safe have with Aniochus I, thus another connection to the Antiochus Epiphanes IV story.

## **Hannibal summary By The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica**

<https://www.britannica.com/summary/Hannibal-Carthaginian-general-247-183-BC>

Hannibal, (born 247 bc, North Africa—died c.183–181 bc, Libyssa, Bithynia), Carthaginian general, one of the great military leaders of antiquity. Taken to Spain by his father, the Carthaginian general Hamilcar Barca (d. 229/228 bc), he was sworn to eternal enmity with Rome. After the death of his father and brother-in-law, he took charge of Carthage's army in Spain (221).

He secured Spain, then crossed the Ebro River into Roman territory and entered Gaul. He marched over the Alps into Italy; encumbered by elephants and horses, he was beset by Gallic tribes, harsh winter weather, and defection of his Spanish troops. He defeated Gaius Flaminius but was severely harassed by Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator. In 216 he won the Battle of Cannae.

In 203 he left for northern Africa to help Carthage fend off Scipio Africanus the Elder's forces. He lost decisively to Scipio's ally, Masinissa, at the Battle of Zama but escaped.

He headed the Carthaginian government (c. 202–195); forced to flee, he sought refuge with **Antiochus III**, whose fleet he commanded against Rome, with disastrous results. After the Battle of Magnesia (190) the Romans demanded he be handed over; he eluded them until, seeing no escape, he took poison.

## **See Video**

<https://www.britannica.com/video/179462/Hannibal-campaign-Rome-Saguntum-attack>

# Hannibal Stories from Patrick Hunt

Patrick Hunt lecture on Hannibal Crossing the Alps – 1 hour 13 minutes

[https://youtu.be/q\\_6YAvIGT0k](https://youtu.be/q_6YAvIGT0k)

**Recommended Reading: *Hannibal* by Patrick Hunt**

Biological warfare

[https://youtu.be/q\\_6YAvIGT0k](https://youtu.be/q_6YAvIGT0k)

Hannibal's secret weapon

<https://youtu.be/7iEi6t8rtC8>

Great battles of 2nd Punic Wars

<https://youtu.be/7iEi6t8rtC8>

History Channel 1 hr+Rome vs Hannibal

<https://youtu.be/1ahem9Mr0v0>

Hannibal Romes greatest enemy Part 1-5

<https://youtu.be/e3JPe75W-Eg>

Hannibal Romes greatest enemy Part 6-10

[https://youtu.be/BWH\\_6ie7Pi4](https://youtu.be/BWH_6ie7Pi4)

Hannibal Romes greatest enemy Part 11-13 Battle of Cannae

<https://youtu.be/zDQDv-znHIE>

Engineering Rise and fall of Carthage

<https://youtu.be/Y29ExnwvWXU>

Nightmare of Rome

<https://youtu.be/qdB8r8itpAo>

---

## **PTOLEMIES AND SELEUCIDS**

---

Alexander the Great died of a fever in 323 at 32 years of age. (Review his story in last week's lesson.) After Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C. his four generals divided his empire into four parts. Ptolemy took Egypt, Seleucus took Syria, Lysimachus held Thrace and Asia Minor, and Cassander ruled Macedon. Of interest to Palestine are two, the Ptolemy and Seleucus dynasties which fought a tug of war for the area known as Israel. Ptolemies controlled Palestine from 323 to 198 B.C., then the Seleucids of Syria controlled it from 198 to 142 B.C. Palestine was a pawn in the hands of foreign kings for nearly 200 years.

The Roman Senate had declared war on the leader of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus III. By 190 B.C., being soundly defeated by the Romans, Antiochus was mercilessly brought to his knees, disarmed of much of his army, and was forced to pay a huge tribute. But the Seleucids refused to die. Before the empire finally cracked and fell, one last surge of power against Egypt and Judea would bring it to a close. Like the last surge of flames in a dying fire the new ruler, Antiochus IV, moved against Egypt only to be thwarted by Rome's intervention. Now his anger was vented against Judea, his remaining stronghold.

---

## **ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES IV**

---

It was during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-154) that the Jews greatly suffered. Antiochus came to Jerusalem with a vengeance. His demon-like fury was set against the Jews and the God they served.

There were in Jerusalem those who wanted peace with the Greeks at any cost. They were the liberal thinkers who believed that any religion was good. Upon being deposed of their religious powers they appealed to king Antiochus to gain his favor. They told him of their desire to leave the laws of their countrymen and become like the Greeks embracing their religion and way of life. They implored the king to build a Greek gymnasium (where men exercised in the nude.) They even went so far as to hide their circumcision by surgical mutilation so as to appear Gentile when accompanying non-Jews in the public baths. Antiochus granted them their requests and retired to his home in Antioch.

Upon his defeat in Egypt Antiochus set his heart on the city of Jerusalem and its treasures. He now had allies within the city and so he was able to come without fighting into the city proper. It was on the occasion of the 153 Olympiad that the king entered the city under peaceful pretenses. He suddenly turned on the people and murdered those of his own party and stole a great deal of money. He had looted the Temple of the treasures he had envied for so long. He left the Temple bare taking away the golden candlesticks, the golden altar of incense, the table of shewbread, and the altar of burnt-offering. He emptied the secret treasures and left absolutely nothing, even carrying away the veils of the Temple. He then murdered many in the temple and carried 10,000 men, women, and children away captive. He burned many of the city buildings and tore down its walls.

He tried to exterminate the Jews and their religion. He ordered the destruction of all the copies of the Torah, the Pentateuch, and required that Jews make offerings to his god, Zeus. His final atrocity was to enter the Temple and build a statue of Zeus, then offer a pig on the altar. He poured the swine broth throughout the temple polluting it. This was known to the Jews as the "abomination of desolation" prophesied by Daniel. Antiochus identified himself as the god Zeus and wished to make his own worship the religion of the Jews.

Antiochus commanded every Jew, on penalty of death, to conform to the Greek religion. He then ordered that everyone raise altars to Zeus and other Greek gods throughout the land and to offer sacrifices to the same. He forced the Jews to work on the Sabbath and worship on the king's birthday by eating idol sacrifices and entering into the public idolatrous parades.

His actions mirror the future final act of the Antichrist who is yet to come before the Return of Christ. Even the minted coins of Antiochus were stamped with the image of the Greek god, (which looked much like the king) and imprinted with Antiochus' assumed name, Epiphanes, meaning "god manifest." (Others nicknamed him Epimanes, "the madman", because of his bizarre behavior carousing with lowlifes, both men and women, bathing with them in public, and throwing stones at passers by.

Many Jews refused to abandon their faith choosing rather to die than to shame the Lord God of their fathers. Two women who refused the king's command and circumcised their boys were thrown headlong over the wall. An eighty year old priest named Eliazar, when forced to eat swine's flesh, spit it out and was murdered on the spot. One young man who spoke to the king saying, "I will not eat of it (swine's flesh) for we would rather die than disobey the laws of God," had his tongue cut off, parts of his hands and feet cut off, and then was fried in a huge cooking pan. Others were roasted alive in caves where they fled from the king's command. This horrible persecution lasted three years. (This event is referred to in Hebrews 11:35-37) Josephus reported that these committed people,

*"...they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified, while they were still alive, and breathed. They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also."*

(Josephus, Antiquities Book 12, ch. 5 part 4)



---

## JUDAS MACCABEUS

---

Opposition and deliverance from Antiochus came from an unlikely source through an elderly villager, Mattathias Hasmoneasand, a priest (cohen) and his priestly family of five sons - Judas (Maccabeus), Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eleazar.

The occasion was a visit from the king's emissary to a small village 20 miles from Jerusalem with the intent of forcing the Jews there to offer sacrifices to Greek gods. He commanded Mattathias the priest to offer the sacrifice so that the rest of the village would follow his example. Mattathias boldly refused and preached his reasons. At that point another villager stepped forward and offered the sacrifice as Antiochus commanded. Mattathias was enraged! He and his sons leaped forward killing the one who sacrificed as well as Apelles, the king's general, and a few soldiers. Mattathias boldly destroyed the Greek altar in his home village. He then cried out in a loud voice, "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" He and his sons fled to the hills and everyone left the village for the caves in the desert.

When the king heard the news he sent all his forces at the citadel in Jerusalem against the rebels. Finding them in a cave and failing to persuade them to exit or to fight on the Sabbath they set fire to the caves where thousands of men, women and children were burned alive. This triggered a 24 year war (166-142) that eventually brought the independence of Judah. Mattathias died a year later and his son, Judas, became the leader of the battle against Antiochus' armies. The title "Maccabee" (the hammer) allegedly was given to Judas who took the appellation derived from the first letters of the Hebrew words of Exodus 15:11, "Who is like unto thee among the gods, O Jehovah?" The stories of God's deliverance of the Jews by the hand of Judas and his brothers is nothing short of miraculous. It reads much like the miraculous victories of Gideon.

# Death of Eleazar by an Elephant

Judas Maccabeus besieged the Temple Mount fortress, but a Seleucid army of 50,000 men, accompanied by 30 war elephants, marched to its relief. So he lifted the siege and marched out with 20,000 men to intercept the enemy.

Unfortunately, Judas abandoned the guerrilla tactics that had won him victories and served him well until then. Instead, he lined up his men to meet the Seleucids in formal battle. It was a mistake. Judas' forces proved no match for the Seleucid heavy infantry phalanx, professional cavalry, and armored war elephants that especially unnerved the Jewish defenders. The Jews began to panic and break in fear of the pachyderms, so Eleazar Maccabeus tried to encourage his comrades by demonstrating the elephants' vulnerability. He charged at the biggest pachyderm he could find, got beneath it, thrust his spear into its unarmored belly, and killed the beast. He did not get to savor his success for long, however: the dying elephant collapsed on top of Eleazar and crushed him to death.

His comrades, appalled by his bizarre demise, did not rush in to emulate him, and the courageous demonstration did not keep the Jewish army from breaking soon thereafter

<https://historycollection.com/odd-historic-moments-that-are-almost-too-weird-to-handle/26/>