



## ARTAXERXES I

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**ARTAXERXES I**, a son of Xerxes I and Amestris, whose name Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.6.1.) gives as Cyrus, Persian king 465-64 to 424-23 B.C. Greek authors (first Plutarch, *Artoxerxes* 1.1) give him the surname “Longhanded, Long-armed” (Makrocheir, Latin Macrochir, Longimanus, New Persian Ardašīr-e derāzdast). They explain the term symbolically (cf. Pollux, *Onomastikon* 2.151) as “with far-reaching power” or in a rationalized manner, because his right arm was longer than the left one (Plutarch, loc. cit.). In 465-64, in the course of a court revolution, the details of which are not clear (Ctesias F 13f. in Jacoby, *Fragmente*; Aristoteles, *Politica* 5.10.1311 b37; Diodorus 11.69.1-6; Justin 3.1.2-9), Xerxes was murdered by court officials, including the chief of his life-guards Artapanus. They accused Darius, Xerxes’ oldest son, of being the murderer. After having put aside his brother, the still young Artaxerxes (Justin 3.1.3) ascended the throne and killed Artapanus (who had made an attempt on the new king’s life) and the other murderers (Diodorus 11.71.1); he was aided by the general Megabyzus, his brother-in-law. The exact month-dates of all these events are not given. Artaxerxes’ accession year is generally thought to be the year 284 of the Babylonian Nobonassar era (beginning in December, 465 B.C.), that is, the 4th year of Olympiad 78.

This revolution and the fall of Artapanus caused further rebellions. One in Bactria was led either by the satrap Artabanus (Ctesias F 14) or more plausibly, by another brother of the king, Hystaspes (Diodorus 11.69.2), who also asserted a claim to the throne. In Egypt the Libyan king Inarus (Ctesias, loc. cit.; Thucydides 1.104.1) also headed a revolt. Since Inarus asked the Athenians



for help, the Egyptian revolt of the following years resulted in another confrontation of the Persians and the Greeks. With the utmost exertion of military forces, as well as diplomacy, Artaxerxes succeeded in subjugating and reconquering Egypt, but only in 455-54. First Inarus overthrew the Persians under the king's uncle (according to Ctesias, his brother) Achaemenes, who was the satrap of Egypt, and then an Athenian fleet under Cimon won a great triumph over the Persian ships on the Egyptian coast. Having looked in vain for an alliance with Sparta (Thucydides 1.109.2f.), Artaxerxes sent a relieving force commanded by Megabyzus, who set free the Persians enclosed in the so-called White Wall at Memphis for more than a year. Megabyzus defeated Inarus and the Athenians, besieged them at Byblus in the Nile delta, and forced them to surrender on safe retreat in the beginning of 455-54 (Herodotus 3.12.4, 160.2; 7.7; Thucydides 1.104, 109-10; Ctesias F 14; Isocrates 8.86; Diodorus 11.71.3-6, 74-75, 77.1-5). An Arsames was then appointed as the new satrap of this province, which now remained definitely under Persian control. He probably is the same person who is attested as the sender and addressee on a series of Aramaic papyri. Shortly after Callias' peace (see below), Megabyzus rebelled in Syria against Artaxerxes. According to Ctesias (F 14), this was caused by the execution of Inarus and the captured Greeks by the king, contrary to the agreement the general had made with them. Two armies under Usiris and Menostates were defeated by Megabyzus. Finally a settlement was arranged by Amestris and by Amytis (the king's sister and the wife of Megabyzus); a quarrel and reconciliation between the two men took place a second time some years later (Ctesias, *ibid.*).

Soon after his accession, Artaxerxes gave refuge to the fugitive Themistocles, thus pardoning his father's greatest antagonist. After some time Themistocles went back to Asia Minor, where he governed Magnesia, Lampsacus, and Myus and protected them against Greek attacks (Thucydides 1.137.3-138.5; Cornelius Nepos, *Themistocles* 9.1-10.3). Artaxerxes' mildness and highmindedness are praised by Plutarch (*Artaxerxes* 1.1); he was a capable, resolute, and skillful monarch (especially in foreign affairs). In spite of his youth, he showed statesmanship and seemed qualified to renew Persia's world power status. He is termed a strong and brave warrior (Cornelius Nepos, *De Regibus* 1.4) passionately interested in hunting (Ctesias F 14). But in internal affairs of the court and the family, other persons, notably Amestris and Amytis (see above), influenced the king, so that he has also been called a weakling commanded by the harem.



In 450 B.C. a large Athenian fleet made a new attack on Cyprus. It gained a victory but lost its leader Cimon, who died in Citium (Plutarch, *Cimon* 18.1-19.4). Artaxerxes sent as envoys to Athens his successful generals of the Egyptian campaign, Artabazus and Megabyzus. In reply an Athenian delegation led by Callias came to Susa; in the winter of 449-48 the so-called peace of Callias (or Cimon) was negotiated (Herodotus 7.151; Thucydides 1.112.2-4; Diodorus 12.2.3-4.6, 26.2; Cornelius Nepos, *Cimon* 3.4; Plutarch, *Cimon* 13.4-6). The basis for settlement was the *status quo ante*, whereby Persians and Athenians delimited their respective spheres of rule. Athens gave up Egypt, Cyprus, and the Ionian cities on the Anatolian coast (these being now autonomous), while the Persians promised not to advance an army beyond the Halys river or to send their larger ships beyond Phaselis in Pamphylia or beyond the “dark rocks” at the entrance to the Euxine Sea. Callias regarded this treaty, contrary to common Athenian opinion, as a diplomatic victory. While it manifests the results of Persian diplomacy and Greek corruptibility, it also indicates the decline of the Persian empire. In 440-39 Athens broke the treaty by attacking Samos, then at war with Miletus. Pericles had already sent Athenian reinforcements to the latter state (under democratic government), while the satrap of Lydia, Pissuthnes, had responded by aiding the oligarchic Samos (Thucydides 1.115.4, 116.3; Diodorus 12.27.1-28.4; Plutarch, *Pericles* 25.2-26.4). When the Peloponnesian war broke out in 431, first Sparta (Thucydides 2.67.1-3, 4.50.1-2) and then Athens tried to enter into relations with the Persian Great King; but no treaty had been achieved when Artaxerxes died in the prime of life in 424-23 (Thucydides 4.50.3; Diodorus 12.64.1; his last date is attested in this year, day 29, month 11, regnal year 41, in a Babylonian document, BM 33342; see M. W. Stolper, *AMI* 16, 1983 [1985], pp. 223-36). The generally accepted date of his death in 425-24 seems based on the Babylonian Nabonassar era; but the sources show some confusion about the length of his reign: Ctesias, for instance, gives 42 years, Diodorus 40. The chronology is complicated by the brief and officially unrecognized reigns of Artapanus before, and of Xerxes II and Sogdianus after his own.

Under Artaxerxes I the situation of the Jews in Israel considerably improved. The king appointed the orthodox scribe Ezra as a sort of court official for Jewish affairs. In the seventh regnal year Ezra proceeded to Jerusalem with about 1,500 Jewish families of the exile community (Ezra 7:7ff.). They included many priests, Levites, and temple slaves and brought sacrificial utensils and abundant money. Ezra was authorized to be their leader by Artaxerxes and commanded to regulate the Jews’ life according to the Mosaic Law (edict in



Ezra 7:11-26). The king thus conceded a measure of autonomy. In year 20 the king sent his cupbearer Nehemiah (one of several high officials who were Jews) to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1, 2:1). He was governor of Judea for 12 years (ibid., 5:14) and then returned to Susa. The restoration of the Temple, previously ordered by Cyrus the Great, so progressed in this reign that it was completed in year six of Darius II (Ezra 6:15).

Artaxerxes' queen was Damaspia (Ctesias F 15), who bore his legal heir and successor, Xerxes. The king had 17 other sons by his concubines, who included the Babylonians Alogune, mother of Secudianus/Sogdianus, q.v.); Cosmartidene, mother of Arsites; and Andria [not Andia], mother of Bagapaeus and princess Parysatis. Parysatis married her half brother Darius II Nothus, who was another son of a Babylonian concubine (possibly Cosmartidene, but Ctesias is not clear).

Artaxerxes' own building activity included the completion of the throne hall (the "Hall of 100 columns") in Persepolis—a project begun by his father. His Akkadian and Old Persian inscription (A<sup>1</sup>Pa in Kent, *Old Persian*, New Haven, 1953, p. 153; see also F. H. Weissbach, *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, Leipzig, 1911, p. 121 ), found on a marble block, records this fact. (Cf. the similar text in Akkadian edited in E. Herzfeld, *Altpersische Inschriften*. Berlin, 1938, pp. 45f., no. 22 [to be labeled A<sup>1</sup>Pb]. A minor inscription in Old Persian, A<sup>1</sup>I, is found on several silver dishes; see Kent, p. 153.) At Susa the palace (*apadāna*) of Darius burnt down during Artaxerxes' reign, who then erected a much smaller one in the southern part of the city. Artaxerxes himself is probably depicted at Persepolis, where audience reliefs occur on the northern doorway of the throne hall (E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Chicago, 1953, pls. 98-99); the king is depicted on a throne, which is borne by representatives of the nations of the empire.

A notable source for economic information during this and the following reign is found in the tablets of the business house of Murašū and Sons (possibly a Jewish family) at Nippur (see G. Cardascia, *Les archives des Murašû*, Paris, 1951). It has been suggested that under Artaxerxes, about 441 B.C., a new and distinctly Zoroastrian calendar, copying the Egyptian one, was promulgated in the empire (S. H. Taqizadeh, *Old Iranian Calendars*, London, 1938, and *BSOAS* 14, 1952, pp. 603-11).



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