

Ezra and Nehemiah Within Their Historical Context

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In a portrait, the setting is seldom the focus of a piece of art-work; rather, it merely serves to draw attention to the scene or images portrayed on canvas. In the same manner the historical setting of the biblical books enhances one's understanding of their meaning while helping to preclude erroneous presuppositions. In this article it is the writer's intention to provide the setting for the life and ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries who lived, worked, and ministered during times of great upheaval. To understand these times will help to dispel confusion and to illuminate meaning of the biblical texts. The procedures for investigation are three-fold: first by reviewing the events leading up to the accession of Artaxerxes I; second by placing in chronological order major events of the political history of the Persian empire during the reign of Artaxerxes I; third by disclosing some of the sociopolitical customs of the Persians which directly relate to the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Accession of Artaxerxes I

The events surrounding the accession of Artaxerxes I typify the political intrigue that often occurred during the transition period for the Persian throne and the instability that followed. Following the devastating defeat by the Greeks at Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale, Xerxes' great army retreated in 478 B.C. The renowned warrior (Xerxes means 'warrior' - Herod. 6.98¹) and expert horseman was to live the remainder of his life "a womanizer and a manipulator of lowly lives at his own court" before his life was to be tragically and prematurely ended.²

Although the ancient accounts are not completely harmonious³, it is certain that a highly trusted official, Artabanus (captain of the royal bodyguard, Diod. 11.69), with the help of Xerxes' chamberlain, Mithridates, and possibly Megabyzus, his son-in-law⁴, agreed to conspire against the

King. Artabanus assassinated Xerxes in August of 465 B.C.⁵ He then approached Artaxerxes, third youngest son of Xerxes, and accused Darius, Xerxes' eldest son, of the murder. This was not incredible for Artaxerxes to believe for two reasons: firstly, Darius was the next in line to become king; secondly, Darius' wife had been solicited by Xerxes to commit adultery (Herod. 9.108). Artaxerxes believed the lie and slew Darius his brother being naive of the snare into which he had been led. Ctesias records that Megabyzus disclosed the plot to Artaxerxes, and the conspirators themselves were killed including the three sons of Artabanus.⁶

Although the plot had been foiled, domestic strife in the royal household was far from resolved. Hystaspes, Xerxes' second son, was ministering in the distant satrapy Bactria. It is recorded that this satrapy revolted, which resulted in two major battles: the first concluded indecisively, while the second concluded in victory for Artaxerxes I.

The exact date of the beginning of Artaxerxes' reign is not known from available primary sources.⁷ This uncertainty reflects the present instability of the empire agreed upon by other ancient sources. Therefore, the official date reckoned for the first year of Artaxerxes I began with the Persian New Year (i.e. Nisanu 1, 464 B.C.), in accordance with the Babylonian-Persian calendar.⁸ This would be April 13th, 464 B.C.⁹ On April 8, 458 B.C., Ezra would leave Babylon to begin his mission in Judea (Ezra 7:8-9). Although the conspiracy and the struggles that followed must have sent a great unsettled message throughout the empire, this message would only become more confusing in light of what was presently happening on the western borders of the empire.

Political History of Persia during the reign of Artaxerxes I

Going back to Cyrus the Great's subjugation of the Ionian city-states there had been repeated conflicts between the vast eastern empire and the Greek city-states. This conflict heightened into two separate invasions upon mainland Greece: one by Darius I in 490 B.C. and a massive invasion by Xerxes in 480 B.C. In both expeditions the Persians were handed disastrous defeats. From then on the Greeks would be a continual problem on the western boundaries of the empire.

World Context: Delian States

Following their phenomenal victory over the Persians, the Greek city-states experienced internal conflicts which eventually caused a breach

between Sparta and Athens. Eventually, a new league of Greek city-states was formed, the Delian League in 478 B.C. It originally was not intended to replace the Hellenic league; rather, it was to serve as a sword and shield against the Persians. It provided Athens with the economic resources and the manpower to continue harassing the western border of the empire.

Conflict With Greek States

Fortunately for Xerxes, the internal conflicts of the Greek states permitted him some repose. Meanwhile, interest in continuing the struggle with Persia began to wane. Even Aeschylus' patriotic play *The Persians* (476 B.C.) was not able to awaken the lust for battle.¹⁰ Then following Themistocles' ostracism in 471 B.C.¹¹, the Athenians experienced considerable success in Cimon, a capable military leader. Cimon was the son of the renowned Miltiades, hero at the battle of Marathon. He was determined to pursue conflicts with the Persians. This was accomplished in 467/66 at the battle of Eurymedon. Here in southwestern Asia Cimon won two decisive victories, a naval and a land victory, over a much larger Persian-Phoenician force (Thuc. 1.100; Diod. 11.60-62; Plut. *Vit. Cim.* 12-13). Lydia and Caria were now liberated from Persian rule. Cimon continued harassing the Persians with several smaller victories in 465 B.C., but he became the object of controversy among the democratic group in Athens for his aristocratic sympathies, and was eventually ostracized in 461 B.C.

With or without Cimon to plague them, Persia was about to experience even greater tragedies. The palace intrigues already mentioned, the murder of Xerxes, the struggles facing the young king, and the Athenian successes were indubitably motivating factors in a major revolt, namely Egypt. Aware of the vulnerability of the empire, they seized the occasion to liberate themselves from the yoke of Persia (Diod. 11.71).

The Revolt in Egypt

The revolt in Egypt was led by Inaros, a Libyan king, and Amyrtaeus, an Egyptian in about 462 B.C. Shortly after the revolt had begun Inaros requested assistance from Athens. The expedition was looked upon as another opportunity to inflict a serious blow to the Persians. Abandoning their expedition to Cyprus, they presently sent two hundred ships to support the rebellion. The initial conflict resulted in significant losses for the Persians. Achaemenes, Xerxes' brother and the satrap of Egypt, was slain (Herod. 7.7). The Athenians won control of the mouth of the Nile River and

two-thirds of Memphis (ca. 459 B.C.). The remainder of the Persian forces escaped to the White Fortress where they were besieged for at least a year (Thuc. 1.104; Diod. 11.75).

It is not difficult for one to imagine the effect these events had on the tiny remnant that inhabited Judea. The plethora of rumors that must have reached the vulnerable towns and villages via the soldiers and the merchants must have caused a great deal of apprehension. Some scholars suggest that these events were portentous of the day of judgment that was certain to come as preached by the anonymous prophet 'my messenger' (i.e. Malachi). One writer suggests that, "Malachi was very probably active shortly before the appearance of Ezra in Jerusalem, perhaps even at the same time as Ezra. . . ." ¹² Although this is not certain by any means, the events surrounding the early years of Artaxerxes do warrant it plausible.

Artaxerxes first sought to relieve his forces by bribing Sparta to invade Attica, thus, causing the Athenians to recall their forces in Egypt. The first Peloponnesian War had just begun prior to this so it seemed to be a prudent move. Yet he was not satisfied with their lack of responsiveness. Once assured that such tactics were getting him nowhere he recalled his ambassador (Thuc. 1.109; Diod. 11.74). He then sent Megabyzus, his brother-in-law to Egypt with a formidable land and sea force of 300,000 men and 300 triremes (i.e. warships). Yamauchi speculates that these troops on the roads would have helped to dissuade robbers from Ezra's caravan. ¹³ It must have taken between one to two years to prepare such a force. Meanwhile, Ezra, the priest and scribe, was permitted to return to his homeland with royal authority to enforce the local law and to insure that Persian laws were honored (Ezra 7:25-26). Some may consider it rather unusual for the king to be concerned with the affairs of the Judean province at this time, but the importance of having allies in Palestine during this Egyptian revolt should not be de-emphasized. It is possible that the Athenians had already landed in Phoenicia, and to be more specific in the seaport Dor, for some scholars have proposed that the city Dor, "for a time had been a member of the Delian League. ¹⁴ If so, Dor would have had to have been a member of the league before 449 B.C. when the Peace of Callias was signed between Persia and Athens.

To further illustrate the significance of preserving loyalty of this tiny pocket of Jewish settlers in Palestine one need only to look at what happened at the turn of the 4th century B.C. when the Egyptian Pharaoh Amyteus successfully revolted against Persia. His successor Pharaoh Nepherites I (399-393 B.C.), continued the success by advancing across the Sinai peninsula and into the southern Palestinian coast. ¹⁵ Later, his successor made alliances with Athens and a Cyprian king who fulfilled

their part of the alliance by capturing Tyre and Sidon temporarily. This extended Egypt's control up the entire coastal plain of Palestine.¹⁶

Although Persia was gathering a massive force, Athens would be unable to immediately offer help due to problems at home. A few months after Ezra settled the problem of intermarriage in Judea (March 27, 457 B.C.¹⁷ - Ezra 10:17), Sparta invaded Boetia with a force of 11,500. The Athenians met them with about 14,000 men at Tanagra. Olmstead infers that this invasion was a result of Artaxerxes' bribery.¹⁸ Thucydides judged the outcome of the clash to be a Lacedaemonian victory, whereas Diodorus recorded it a draw (Thuc. 1.108; Diod. 11.74). Either way, Athenian military prowess was significantly hampered (cf. Isoc. *De Pace*. 85-87). Athens would not be able to give further assistance to the Egyptian revolt for several more years.

In about 456 B.C., Megabyzus took his massive force through Palestine and into Egypt. He clashed with the combined forces of Egypt and Athens, eventually recapturing Memphis. For one and a half years the Egyptian and Greek forces were stranded on the island of Prosopitis. Finally, in 454 B.C. they too surrendered; thus concluding the six year revolt. Egypt was once again under Persian rule (Thuc. 1.109-110; Diod. 11.77). Shortly after their victory, the Persians handed Athens another stunning defeat when fifty Athenian triremes had docked in the mouth of the Nile unwitting of the recent surrender. The Persians destroyed nearly all of these, dealing the Athenians back-to-back defeats. In 451 B.C. Athens would soon again attempt to harass the Persian empire (Thuc. 1.112), but the expedition was to end prematurely and Athens finally ceased from its aggression soon thereafter with the Peace of Callias, 449 B.C.

Syria's Revolt, 448 B.C - 446 B.C.

The Peace of Callias did insure some stability in the empire for the time being; however, it did not fulfill Artaxerxes' hope of experiencing a long rest from war, for his brother-in-law, Megabyzus, shortly thereafter led a revolt within his satrapy, Syria. Once again the empire was shaken.

The process of leading his forces to victory over Egypt and their mercenary army was not an easy accomplishment for Megabyzus. One writer proposes that, "The Egyptian war was the sternest struggle ever fought between the (Persian) empire and the Delian League."¹⁹ To hasten the termination of this vicious revolt, Megabyzus offered the remaining Greeks and Inaros a benevolent condition of surrender. If they surrendered they would not be harmed, and the Greeks could return home (Diod. 77.4-5; contra Thuc. 1.109²⁰). Upon hearing these terms Artaxerxes was furious,

but he honored Megabyzus' word.²¹ Once the news of the terms reached Amestris, Artaxerxes' mother, she requested the lives of the captives. For a time he refused her.²² Eventually her persistence provoked the king to yield.²³ Consequently, she had Inaros impaled and fifty Greeks decapitated.²⁴

This breach of promise infuriated Megabyzus who then returned to Syria, collected an army, and led a revolt from about 448 B.C. to 446 B.C. Once again the hill country of Judea was vulnerable, and thus was captive to many disturbing rumors. Most scholars who accept the traditional date for Ezra place the events of Ezra 4:7-23 within this time period. Ezra, who seemed to have been given some measure of civil authority by Artaxerxes I, may very well have begun to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem due to the revolt either as a precautionary move or possibly to repair what may have been damaged during the revolt. Upon reading the letter of those who opposed the work one naturally entertains the question of how could anyone believe that such a small, insignificant part of the empire (i.e. Judea), ever hope to revolt against the vast resources of the Persian empire? Two reasons are potential answers: first, the authors of this letter to the king were hostile neighbors of the Jewish remnant. As such they chose this occasion to make a startling accusation to a king who has faced one problem after another.²⁵ Second, if indeed Ezra's rebuilding took place during the revolt, then Jerusalem could potentially be another city with which he would need to contend. In short, the walls were broken down, the city left vulnerable, and the people demoralized by the time Nehemiah heard the report in December 446 B.C. (Neh. 1:1-4).

The revolt in Syria lasted from about 448 B.C. to 446 B.C. After two major Syrian victories, Megabyzus was reconciled to Artaxerxes.²⁶ The Persian empire would now experience a time of peace.²⁷

The following Persian New Year (Nisan 445 B.C.), Nehemiah, the Jewish cupbearer to the king, made a grave request of the king that was prudently timed: the war was over at last; it was the Persian New Year which was the occasion for requesting favors of the Persian monarch²⁸ (Herod. 9.110-111, Esth. 7:2); the queen sat at his side; and Artaxerxes had been drinking wine (Neh. 2:6). In summary, Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah's request, and by August of that same year he had commenced the rebuilding of the city walls. God had once again displayed his ability to work in the affairs of princely rulers to provide for his remnant people.

Sociopolitical Customs and Policies

In the previous section of this paper the concentration was on the panoramic view of world events that impacted the ministries of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the tiny Jewish state. In this section the concern will be upon a few 'parts' of the empire and a consideration of their contribution to illuminating the biblical texts. Just as the tiny remnant was not isolated from the world-scale events around them, they were also not isolated from the policies and customs of the Persians. To avoid excessive length the writer will isolate only occasional policies and customs that directly throw light on the ministry of these two men. These accounts will be limited to three realms: economics, religion, and society.

Economics in the Empire

To Darius I are credited various administrative accomplishments including the organization of the Persian empire into twenty satrapies and the restructuring of taxation (Herod. 3.89-91). The establishment of a compulsory, yearly tribute gave him the reputation of being a 'Jackster' while Cyrus was the 'father'.²⁹

Of the twenty satrapies Babylon was forced to pay the highest tribute: one thousand talents. The satrapy that formed Libya, Cyrene, and Egypt was required to pay seven hundred talents. The satrapy of *Aber Nahara* (viz. Phoenicia and Palestine), had a more modest tax, that is, 350 talents. The leniency toward this satrapy may be due to Phoenicia's military contributions against the Greeks with whom they were in constant competition on the Mediterranean.³⁰

The silver and gold that annually flowed into Persia from its satrapies has been estimated at 14,560 talents³¹ Yet out of all this, very little money was ever coined or returned to the satrapies; on the contrary, it was melted down and stored so that in time the natural resources of the satrapy became depleted.³² Olmstead captures the tantalizing situation that must have existed:

Thus, despite the precious metals newly mined, the empire was rapidly drained of its gold and silver; our Babylonian documents clearly witness a lessened use of the precious metals. For a time, credit made possible a continuance of business, but the insensate demand for actual silver in the payment of taxes drove the landlords in increasing numbers to the loan sharks, who gave money in exchange for the pledge—the actual use of the field or the slave,

whose services were thus lost until the improbable redemption. As coined money became a rarity, hoarded by the loan sharks, credit increased the inflation, and rapidly rising prices made the situation still more intolerable.³³

A very important ancient source of the empire's economics during the fifth century B.C. are the Murashu documents. In 1893 a total of 730 financial documents were discovered in Nippur, Babylon which belonged to a banker named Murashu. The Murashu family was a family that practiced such loan shark methods.³⁴ Yamauchi states that, "the economic texts show a rise in interest charged from ten percent in Neo-Babylonian times [6th-7th century B.C.] up to fifty percent charged by Murashu and Sons [5th B.C.]."³⁵ These practices shed light on the events that occurred in Nehemiah 5. This passage conveys that the deplorable methods of the loan sharks and their exploitation of the oppressive tax system were not limited to the Gentiles. Wealthy Jews were using the same means against their fellow Jews - even to the extent where Jewish children were being sold into slavery to pay the debts incurred (Neh. 5:4-5). Nehemiah responded by elevating the teaching of scripture above what had become the accepted norm of the empire using his own practice as a model. In so doing he helped to restore financial integrity to the economy of Judea.

Such economic oppression inevitably bred revolts in the empire. These revolts often appeared when the empire was vulnerable; namely, whenever a new ruler took the throne. This desire for economic liberty as the motive of a revolt is reflected in the accusatory letter of Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes I regarding what appears to be Ezra's re-building of the walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-23). They state in v. 13 that, "Be it known unto the King, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom. . . ." In conclusion, Olmstead comments that the, "inevitable result was that the whole period is filled by the story of revolts by oppressed subjects."³⁶

Religion in the Empire

Upon returning from the exile, idolatry ceased to be a problem among the Jewish remnant, at least in Judea. The centrality of temple worship, the observance of the law, and the purity of the race became the raw material that Ezra and Nehemiah used to fashion the new Jewish state.³⁷ Outside the province of Judea, however, religious syncretism did exist among the Jewish people.

Religious Syncretism. Ancient documents from the Persian empire clearly reveal that religious syncretism did exist to some extent among the Jews. Individual names recorded in the business documents of the Murashu family, for instance, combined Yahweh with the names of other religious deities.³⁸ Some Jews were even named after Babylonian gods (e.g., Esther and Mordecai: from the Babylonian gods Istar and Marduk).³⁹ Such syncretism may be inferred from the correspondence of Jews in the Elephantine papyri. Yamauchi cites one document from the papyri that states, "I bless you by Yaho [Yahweh] and by Khnum [the Egyptian god]."⁴⁰ A likely cause for this syncretism adduced from the known evidence is mixed marriages.⁴¹ Such a judgment is in complete harmony with the events recorded by both Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Ezra 9-10; Neh. 13:23f).

Persian policy toward various local deities. Ancient sources have been found which clearly indicate that it was Persian policy to restore sanctuaries and to show favor to religious personnel which parallel the accounts given in Ezra. In so doing, the Persian king would become very protective of these cultic centers, hoping not to offend the various gods belonging to their particular ethnic group.⁴² There were, in fact, several occasions during the reign of Darius I in which the political leaders offended the king by interfering with individual cultic centers⁴³ (cf. Ezra 6:6-8).

The Persian policy included not only protection, but often they used imperial funds to support local cults. This parallels the return of Ezra during the reign of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:14-15, 18-22). The king supplied Ezra for his return, "out of the king's treasury house" (v. 20). Williamson reports that the Persopolis fortification tablets from the fifth century B.C. record the delivery of various goods solely for the purpose of supporting local cults "all being supported equally by the funds from the imperial treasury."⁴⁴ Furthermore, he adds that, "in this light, the addition of another god to whatever list may have been supported by the treasury of 'Beyond the River', specifying the quantities to be supplied, need have surprised nobody."⁴⁵

Before concluding this section, one last striking parallel of Ezra's commission should be mentioned; namely, the codification of local law. Udjahorresenet was an Egyptian priest who was commissioned by Darius I to be in charge of recording all ancient laws of Egypt.⁴⁶ Interests in the local laws did not abate with Darius' successors.⁴⁷ As such, Ezra's mission was not unique from the perspective of the Persian ruler. This seems entirely in harmony with the Persian stress of ruling their empire via existing institutions and laws.

Persian Society in the Fifth Century B.C.

In Babylon evidence available from ancient documents indicates that the Jewish people assimilated into the Babylonian society, at least politically and economically. They "appear as contracting parties, agents, witnesses, collectors of taxes, and royal officials" among which included a man named Hanani who served under Darius II.⁴⁸ In fact, of the two hundred Persian officials recorded in the Murashu documents, eleven of them were Jewish.⁴⁹ Of course some immediate examples of Jewish individuals that succeeded to high positions in the empire are Daniel, Esther, Mordecai, and Nehemiah.

Twenty satrapies divided the empire. Judah was a part of the satrapy Herodotus called the fifth satrapy (Herod. 3.91). Other names of this region were *Aber Nahara* (i.e. 'Beyond the River', cf. Ezra 4:10, 11, 16; Neh. 2:7), and Coele Syria. Since these were quite large they were further divided into smaller provinces. The book of Esther makes mention of 127 provinces "from India to Ethiopia," (Esth. 1:1). Several of these provinces in Palestine are alluded to in the book of Nehemiah.

Of the neighboring provinces of Judea, little could have been said to hearten the returning Jewish exiles regarding their bordering provinces. To the north lies Samaria, whose strained relations with Judea predate the Babylonian captivity. To the east across the Jordan River lies Ammon, whose enmity to the Jewish people was perennial. To the south, encroaching upon what once had been Jewish territory, came the Edomites who had committed the odious crime of rejoicing in the suffering of the Jewish state when they fell under the heavy hand of Babylon. Although it appears that the Edomites were the predominant group in Idumea, this region was not without its Jewish population (Neh. 11:27-30). A fourth enemy is also mentioned by Nehemiah. The Arabs were a nomadic people who enjoyed extensive liberties during the Persian empire. Herodotus speaks of them as 'friends' of the Persians and not as 'subjects,' (Herod. 2.88). In an attempt to offer why the Arabians were hostile to the Jewish state, Yamauchi proposes that, "Geshem may have been opposed to Nehemiah's development of an independent kingdom because he feared that it might interfere with his lucrative trade in myrrh and frankincense,"⁵⁰ (Pre-exilic Jerusalem had a competitive trading reputation, cf. Eze. 26:2). There is evidence that the coastal plains were under control of the Phoenicians. Other provinces existed in Palestine as well, such as Ashdod, Megiddo, and Gaza.⁵¹

Being surrounded by such hostile neighbors made life difficult for the tiny Jewish state, especially since they had attempted painful efforts to

remain distinct. This is the message that Ezra attempted to convey in his parenthetical accounts of the opposition Judea faced in Ezra 4:6-23. He sought to convey that from the day the exiles returned even to his own day (i.e. Ezra's day), the Jewish remnant had been opposed continually. The adage, "if you can't beat them, join them" must have been the motto that prevailed at times, for intermarriage is mentioned as an incessant problem during this time. It is very likely that intermarriage was often a result of making peace with the surrounding provinces. This is supported by the fact that those guilty of intermarriage were often the leaders (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:28). Although the measures may appear overly severe, it must be remembered that a mingling with other ethnic groups would insure an assimilation of other faiths. For them to continue as a distinct people of Yahweh preempted even filial relationships. Thus, severe measures had to be taken to preserve the distinction of God's people (cf. Ezra 10:9ff; Neh. 10:28-30; 13:23-28).

Conclusion

The ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah were critical to the survival and preservation of God's people in Judea. This article has attempted to illuminate the books of Ezra and Nehemiah by placing them within their historical setting. In so doing one will better understand the biblical text and appreciate the incredible courage and significance of these two men and their ministries whom God used to preserve and protect His remnant until the coming of Messiah.

¹All sources from classical times use their respective abbreviations found in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

²Iraj Basher, "Xerxes I," in *Great Lives From History: Ancient and Medieval Series*, vol. 5, ed. Frank McGill (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 1988), 2368.

³See Julia Neuffer, "The Accession of Artaxerxes I," *AUSS* (January 1968) 6:60-87, for a discussion of the various accounts from ancient sources.

⁴Ctesias, *Persica*, abridged in *The Library of Photius*, Translations of Christian Literature. Series I: Greek Texts, [trans.] J. H. Freese (New York:

Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920) 1:100; hereafter referred to as: Ctesias, *Persica* (abr.).

⁵Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. - A.D. 75*. Brown University Studies (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1956) 19:17.

⁶Ctesias, *Persica* (abr.), 100-101.

⁷Neuffer, "The Accession of Artaxerxes 1," 60-61.

⁸*Ibid.*, 87.

⁹Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 32.

¹⁰A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire: Achaemenid Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) 266.

¹¹It is ironic that Themistocles, who led the Athenians to a brilliant victory over the Persians at Salamis in 480 B.C., should eventually seek sanctuary in Persia. This was graciously granted by Artaxerxes 1 in 464 B.C., (Plut. *Vit. Them.* 28; Thuc. 1.137-138).

¹²Gunther Wanke, "Prophecy and Psalm in the Persian Period," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 1:173.

¹³Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Archaeological Backgrounds of Nehemiah," *BibSac* (October-December 1980) 137:294.

¹⁴George Dahl, *Materials for the History of Dor*, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences (New Haven, Conn., 1915) 20:63-63; A. Tcherikover, *The Jews and Greeks in the Hellenistic Period*, (Tel Aviv, 1963), 73, 353, n.15 (Hebrew); quoted in Ephraim Stern, "The Walls of Dor" *Israel Exploration Journal* 1988) 38:6.

¹⁵Ephraim Stern, "The Persian Empire and the Political and Social History of Palestine in the Persian Period," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 1:75.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Parker and Dubberstein, 32.

¹⁸Olmstead, *Persia*, 308.

¹⁹Andrew R. Burns, *Persia and the Greeks* (New York: St. Martin's, 1962), 335; quoted by Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 250, n. 39.

²⁰Thucydides' record suggests that few Greeks survived.

²¹Ctesias, *Persica* (abr.), 102.

²²Ctesias stated that he refused her for five years, whereas Thucydides' account suggests that Inaros was impaled immediately. Current scholars do not disagree regarding Inaros' death, but most agree that Megabyzus led a new revolt in about 448 B.C.

²³This description of Amestris (probably the 'Vashti' of Esther) is entirely consistent with other accounts that likewise disclose her implacable disposition, (Herod. 1.109-112; Esth. 1:12).

²⁴Ctesias, *Persica* (abr.), 102.

²⁵H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985) 16:63.

²⁶Ctesias, *Persica* (abr.), 103.

²⁷Olmstead, *Persia*, 343.

²⁸Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 178.

²⁹Olmstead, A. T., *History of Palestine and Syria: to the Macedonian Conquest* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) 577.

³⁰Ibid, 578.

³¹Olmstead, *Persia*, 297-298.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid, 298

³⁴Ibid, 299.

³⁵Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Nippur," in *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. Edward M. Blaiklock and R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1983) 341.

³⁶Olmstead, *Persia*, 299

³⁷Olmstead, *Palestine and Syria*, 578.

³⁸Ibid, 577.

³⁹Michael David Coogan, "Life in the Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century B.C.," *BibArch* (March 1974) 37:7-8.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 245.

⁴²Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Archaeological Background of Ezra," *BibSac* (July - September, 1980) 137:201-203; Also Milliard, A. R. "A Decree of a Persian Governor," *Buried History* (June, 1975) 11:88-91.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Williamson, H. G. M., "Ezra and Nehemiah in the Light of the Texts from Persopolis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (1991) 1:51.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Yamauchi, "Ezra," 205.

⁴⁷R. N. Frye, "Institutions," in *Beitrage zur Achamenidengeschichte*, ed. G. Walser (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1972), 92; quoted in Yamauchi, "Ezra," 205, n. 71.

⁴⁸Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 243.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Yamauchi, "Nehemiah," 302.

⁵¹Stern, *Palestine in the Persian Period*, 80-81.