

### The Four Kings

Darius the Mede	Sometimes a king is railroaded
Cyrus the Great	Sometimes a king is manipulated
Achashverosh the Anxious	Sometimes a king is afraid
Artachshasta	Sometimes a king is good?

1. Andy Kopsa, *Meet the Group of Right-Wing Christians Who Believe President Trump Was Chosen by G-d*, Rewire 7/24/17

Trump's arguably un-Christian history of alleged sexual assault and harassment, questionable business dealings, multiple marriages, and general vulgarity are of little apparent consequence to POTUS Shield [an Evangelical group-MT], since G-d put his favor on him. Recently, however, it seems POTUS Shield and other conservative Christians found a way to make Trump palatable to those less zealous among them—Trump is just a means to an end. Trump as president, right-wing evangelicals suggest, is akin to a latter-day Constantine. Constantine was the initially non-believing Roman Emperor who nevertheless converted the Roman Empire to Christianity. Viewed through this lens, Trump is still a tool of G-d and washed clean of his obvious "sins."

### How many kings is Artachshasta?

2. Ezra 6:14

...they brought the building to completion under the aegis of the Gd of Israel and by the order of Cyrus and Darius and King Artaxerxes of Persia.

3. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 3b

It was taught: Cyrus is Darius is Artachshasta [Artaxerxes]. "Cyrus" because he was a kosher king. "Artachshasta" because of his empire. And what was his name? "Darius" was his name.

4. Rabbi Zerachyah HaLevi, Baal haMaor to Rosh HaShanah, 1a **בדפי הרי"ף**

... That is what emerges in our hands according to our sages' midrash and their analyses. But the correct explanation according to the simple read is that Ezra 6:14, "And by the order of Cyrus, Darius and Artachshasta king of Persia," refers to three kings. It is as though it had said "kings of Persia", for each of them was a Persian king. The first two were mentioned regarding construction of the Temple, for Cyrus started it and Darius completed it. Beside them was Artachshasta, the last king [listed], who also built the walls of Jerusalem... And this is not the first Artachshasta, who commanded that they halt work on the Temple...

### Artachshasta's Record (as Artachshasta and as Darius)

5. First Encounter: Ezra 4:7-23, JPS 1985 edition – Blocking Construction

And in the time of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their colleagues wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia, a letter written in Aramaic and translated [in] Aramaic:

Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes as follows... "To King Artaxerxes [from] your servants, men of the province Beyond the River. And now be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have reached Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city; they are completing the walls and repairing the foundation. Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls completed, they will not pay tribute, poll-tax, or land-tax, and in the end it will harm the kingdom. Now since we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not right that we should see the king dishonored, we have written to advise the king [of this] so that you may search the records of your fathers and find in the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and states. Sedition has been rife in it from early times; on that account this city was destroyed. We advise the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, you will no longer have any portion in the province Beyond the River."

The king sent back the following message: "To Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their colleagues, who dwell in Samaria and in the rest of the province of Beyond the River, greetings. Now the letter that you wrote me has been read to me in translation. At my order a search has been made, and it has been found that this city has from earliest times risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been rife in it. Powerful kings have ruled over Jerusalem and exercised authority over the whole province of Beyond the River, and tribute, poll-tax, and land-tax were paid to them. Now issue an order to stop these men; this city is not to be rebuilt until I so order. Take care not to be lax in this matter or there will be much damage and harm to the kingdom."

When the text of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem, to the Jews, and stopped them by main force.

#### 6. Second Encounter: Ezra 6:6-14, JPS 1985 edition – Funding the Temple

"Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and colleagues, the officials of the province of Beyond the River, stay away from that place. Allow the work of this House of Gd to go on; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this House of Gd on its site.

And I hereby issue an order concerning what you must do to help these elders of the Jews rebuild this House of Gd: the expenses are to be paid to these men with dispatch out of the resources of the king, derived from the taxes of the province of Beyond the River, so that the work not be stopped. They are to be given daily, without fail, whatever they need of young bulls, rams, or lambs as burnt offerings for the Gd of Heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and oil, at the order of the priests in Jerusalem, so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the Gd of Heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

I also issue an order that whoever alters this decree shall have a beam removed from his house, and he shall be impaled on it and his house confiscated.

And may the Gd who established His name there cause the downfall of any king or nation that undertakes to alter or damage that House of Gd in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued the decree; let it be carried out with dispatch."

Then Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out with dispatch what King Darius had written. So the elders of the Jews progressed in the building, urged on by the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo, and they brought the building to completion under the aegis of the Gd of Israel and by the order of Cyrus and Darius and King Artaxerxes of Persia.

#### 7. Third Encounter: Ezra 7:11-26, JPS 1985 edition – Empowering Ezra

The following is the text of the letter which King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest-scribe, a scholar in matters concerning the commandments of the Lord and His laws to Israel:

"Artaxerxes king of kings, to Ezra the priest, scholar in the law of the Gd of heaven, and so forth. And now, I hereby issue an order that anyone in my kingdom who is of the people of Israel and its priests and Levites who feels impelled to go to Jerusalem may go with you. For you are commissioned by the king and his seven advisers to regulate Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your Gd, which is in your care, and to bring the freewill offering of silver and gold, which the king and his advisers made to the Gd of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, and whatever silver and gold that you find throughout the province of Babylon, together with the freewill offerings that the people and the priests will give for the House of their Gd, which is in Jerusalem. You shall, therefore, with dispatch acquire with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their meal offerings and libations, and offer them on the altar of the House of your Gd in Jerusalem. And whatever you wish to do with the leftover silver and gold, you and your kinsmen may do, in accord with the will of your Gd. The vessels for the service of the House of your Gd that are given to you, deliver to Gd in Jerusalem, and any other needs of the House of your Gd that it falls to you to supply, do so from the royal treasury.

I, King Artaxerxes, for my part, hereby issue an order to all the treasurers in the province of Beyond the River that whatever request Ezra the priest, scholar in the law of the Gd of Heaven, makes of you is to be fulfilled with dispatch up to the sum of one hundred talents of silver, one hundred *kor* of wheat, one hundred *bath* of wine, one hundred *bath* of oil, and salt without limit. Whatever is by order of the Gd of Heaven must be carried out diligently for the House of the Gd of Heaven, else wrath will come upon the king and his sons.

We further advise you that it is not permissible to impose tribute, poll tax, or land tax on any priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, temple servant, or other servant of this House of Gd.

And you, Ezra, by the divine wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people in the province of Beyond the River who know the laws of your Gd, and to teach those who do not know them. Let anyone who does not obey the law of your Gd and the law of the king be punished with dispatch, whether by death, corporal punishment, confiscation of possessions, or imprisonment."

#### 8. Fourth Encounter: Nechemiah 2:1-9, JPS 1985 edition – Empowering Nechemiah

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, wine was set before him; I took the wine and gave it to the king—I had never been out of sorts in his presence. The king said to me, "How is it that you look bad, though you are not ill? It must be bad thoughts."

I was very frightened, but I answered the king, "May the king live forever! How should I not look bad when the city of the graveyard of my ancestors lies in ruins, and its gates have been consumed by fire?"

The king said to me, "What is your request?"

With a prayer to the Gd of Heaven, I answered the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, to rebuild it."

With the consort seated at his side, the king said to me, "How long will you be gone and when will you return?" So it was agreeable to the king to send me, and I gave him a date.

Then I said to the king, "If it please the king, let me have letters to the governors of the province of Beyond the River, directing them to grant me passage until I reach Judah; likewise, a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the King's Park, directing him to give me timber for roofing the gatehouses of the temple fortress and the city walls and for the house I shall occupy." The king gave me these, thanks to my Gd's benevolent care for me.

When I came to the governors of the province of Beyond the River I gave them the king's letters. The king also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

#### The Talmud's View of Artachshasta/Darius

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Nisan	Iyar	Sivan	Tammuz	Av	Elul	Tishrei	Cheshvan	Kislev	Tevet	Sh'vat	Adar

#### 9. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 3b

Rav Yosef asked: "On the 24<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> month [Elul], in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius", and then "In the 7<sup>th</sup> [month, Tishrei], the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month"! If [his years changed in Tishrei], it should have been "the 7<sup>th</sup> [month, Tishrei] in the third year"! Rabbi Avahu said: Cyrus was a kosher king, and so they counted for him as from Jewish kings.

Rav Yosef challenged:

- First: Then these verses contradict each other: "And this house was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Adar in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of King Darius", and we learned, "At that time next year, Ezra left Babylon with his exiles," and it says, "And [Ezra] came to Jerusalem in the 5<sup>th</sup> month [Av] of the king's 7<sup>th</sup> year." If [his years changed in Nisan], this should have been the 8<sup>th</sup> year!
  - Also, how could you compare them? One is Cyrus, the other is Darius!
  - It was taught: Cyrus is Darius is Artachshasta. "Cyrus" because he was a kosher king. "Artachshasta" because of his empire. And what was his name? "Darius" was his name.
- Still, it is a problem! Rabbi Yitzchak said: It is no problem; one is before he went bad, one is after he went bad.

#### 10. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 4a

Rav Kahana challenged: But did he go bad? See Ezra 6:9 – "And whatever is lacking – cattle, rams, sheep for burnt offerings to the Gd of Heaven, wheat, salt, wine, oil, per the word of the priests in Jerusalem, let it be given to them daily, without fail"!

(1) Rabbi Yitzchak said: My master, it is from your own source material: "For them to bring as offerings for the Gd of Heaven and to pray for the life of the king and his sons.

- But is it not good for one to do this? Haven't we learned, "One who says, 'This coin is for tzedakah for my children to live,' or 'So that I merit life in the next world,' is fully righteous!" This is no problem: One is for Israel, one is for others.

(2) Or if you want: How do we know he went bad? Ezra 6:4 says, "Three layers of marble and one layer of wood, and let the expense be given from the palace." Why did he do this? He thought: Should the Jews rebel, I would burn it in fire.

- But didn't Solomon do this? Kings I 6:36 says, "Three layers of hewn stone and a layer of cut cedar!" Solomon did it above; he did it below. Solomon embedded it in the structure, he did not embed it in the structure. Solomon lined it with lime, he did not line it with lime.

(3) Rav Yosef, and some say Rabbi Yitzchak, said: How do we know he went bad? From here...

(4) Or if you want: How do we know he went bad? From here (Ezra 7:22): "Up to 100 *kikar* of silver, and up to 100 *kur* of wheat, and up to 100 *bat* of wine, and up to 100 *bat* of oil, and unlimited salt, etc." – At first without limit, and now with a limit. But perhaps beforehand he just didn't know the limit? Rather, clearly, it is as we answered before.

11. Ezra 6:22, 7:27-28

They joyfully celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, for the Lord had given them cause for joy by inclining the heart of the Assyrian king toward them so as to give them support in the work of the House of Gd, the Gd of Israel.

Blessed is the Lord Gd of our fathers, who put it into the mind of the king to glorify the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, and who inclined the king and his counselors and the king's military officers to be favorably disposed toward me. For my part, thanks to the care of the Lord for me, I summoned up courage and assembled leading men in Israel to go with me.