

**A LEVEL**

*Prescribed Literary Sources*

# CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

## Invention of the Barbarian (H408/23)

Version 1



## Book 1

### 1.1

This is the account of the research of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, written so that, as time passes, events may not fade from the memory of mankind and so that the great and wonderful achievements both of Greeks and barbarians might be remembered, most especially the reason why they came into conflict with each other.

The historians of the Persians now say that the Phoenicians were responsible for the feud. For they say these people came to this shore from the sea which they call the Red Sea and that they settled in the area in which they now live. Then they started to make long voyages. Loaded with Egyptian and Assyrian merchandise, they came to various places and finally to Argos. At this time, Argos was the most important city in the area which is now known as Hellas. Once they had arrived in Argos, the Phoenicians unloaded their cargo. On the fifth or the sixth day after they had arrived, when they had nearly sold everything, the king's daughter and many other women came to the shore. According to these sources and to the Greeks, her name was **Io**, the daughter of Inachus. These women stood around the stern of the ship, buying whatever they wanted from the cargo; the Phoenicians encouraged each other and then charged at the women. Most fled, but **Io**, along with a few others, was captured. They threw her onto the ship and set sail for Egypt.

## Notes

**1.131–140****1.131**

I know that the Persians use the following customs; they do not set up and use statues, or temples, or altars. This is not their custom and they consider those who do have this custom as foolish. I think this is because, unlike the Greeks, they do not think that their gods have human form. Their custom is to go up to the highest peaks of the mountains to sacrifice to Zeus, which is their name for the whole circle of the heavens. They sacrifice to the sun and the moon, and to the earth and to fire, and to water, and to the winds. They only ever sacrificed to these gods at the beginning, later they learned to sacrifice to heavenly Aphrodite, picking up this custom from the Assyrians and Arabians. The Assyrians refer to Aphrodite as Mylitta, the Arabians as Alilat and the Persians as Mitra.

**1.132**

This is the established method of sacrifice for the Persians to these gods: when preparing to sacrifice, they do not use altars nor do they make fires, they have no use for libations, or flutes, or fillets, or barley meal. Instead, if a man wishes to make a sacrifice to one of the gods, he leads an animal to a place which has been purified and, wearing a wreath, preferably made from myrtle leaves, he calls upon the god. He may not pray only for good fortune for himself alone, he must instead pray for the sake of all the Persians and particularly for the king. For he himself is one of those Persians for whom he prays. When he has butchered the victim, he boils the meat and spreads out the softest grass, preferably three leafed clover, he then places all the meat on top of this. When this is all ready, a Magus stands next to the meat and sings a song about the origin of the gods, they say that this is a charm. Indeed, it is not their custom to make any sacrifice without a Magus being present. Then after waiting a short while, the man who has performed the sacrifice takes away the meat and does with it as he chooses.

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**1.133**

Each man counts his birthday as the most special day. They think it right that they should have a more special feast on this day; the rich among them have an ox, a horse, a camel or a donkey roasted whole in ovens and placed before them, while the poor have sheep or goats. They have few courses but many desserts, which are not all served at the same time. Because of this, the Persians say that the Greeks stop eating while they are still hungry, since there is nothing worth bothering with served after the meal, and that if something else were offered that the Greeks would then never stop eating. They are very partial to wine and none may vomit or urinate in the presence of another man, such behaviour is not allowed. They usually make decisions on the most important matters when they are drunk; then the decision they have made in this state is put before them by the master of the house on the next day, when they have sobered up. If they then reapprove their original decision, they move forward with the plan, but if not, they toss the suggestion aside. And whatever they have decided when sober, they reconsider when they have been drinking.

**1.134**

When they meet each other on the road, one can work out if they are equals in status. For instead of greeting each other, they kiss on the lips. However, if one is slightly lower than the other then there is a kiss on the cheek. Finally, if one is much lower than the other, then he falls to the ground and kisses the ground. Out of everybody, they value most highly those who live closest to them, after these come those who live next closest and so on. The ones who live furthest away are honoured the least. They consider themselves to be the best of all men in every way by far, then the rest are placed in order of merit, until those who live furthest away from them, who are considered the lowest. Under the rule of the Medes, the tribes governed each other. The Medes themselves ruled every tribe and particularly those closest to them, who then ruled their neighbours, who in turn ruled those who were next to them, along the same principle as the Persians give out honour. Each race succeeded the other in rule and control.

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**1.135**

Of all men, the Persians are the most accepting of foreign customs. They wear Median dress, deeming it more beautiful than their own. In war, they arm themselves with Egyptian style breastplates. They have adopted different pleasures from all over, in particular they have adopted pederasty from the Greeks. Each Persian man has many lawful wives, but also takes on many more concubines.

**1.136**

The worth of a man is shown first by his prowess in battle, and then by the number of his sons. Every year the king sends gifts to the man who has the greatest number of sons. The principle is the more the better. Their children are educated from the ages of five to twenty but they are taught only three things: to ride, to fire a bow and to tell the truth. A father does not see his son until he is five years old, before then he spends his time with the women. This is done to save the father from grief if his son should die as a very young child.

**1.137**

I do have praise for this custom. I also admire the law that not even the king may put a man to death for one crime only. Similarly, no Persian master may do irreparable harm to one of his servants for only one wrongdoing. But, after consideration, if a man's misdeeds are found to be more serious and more plentiful than his noble acts, then another may indulge their rage. They say that no son has ever killed his own father or mother; whenever such deeds have actually taken place, they give the explanation that the child must have been either not the natural son or illegitimate. For they say that it is beyond belief for a son to kill his own parent.

**1.138**

The things which they are not allowed to do, they are not even allowed to talk about. Lying is considered by them to be the worst sin of all, owing money is considered the next most shameful act; there are many reasons for this but

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particularly that they presume that a debtor must have first spoken some lie. If a man has either leprosy or the white sickness, he is not allowed to enter the city or to mix with other Persians. They say that he has committed some sin against the sun. Many Persians will drive out of their country any stranger who is infected with either of these diseases. They even drive away white doves, levelling the same accusation against them. They do not urinate or spit into rivers, nor do they wash their own hands or let anyone else wash their hands in them. Such is their reverence for rivers.

### 1.139

There is another custom which is always the case amongst the Persians, they do not notice it, but we do. Their names, which match their bodies and their individual character, all end with the same letter. The Dorian Greeks refer to this letter as "san", the Ionian Greeks as "sigma"; if you look into this, you will find that it is the case that all Persian names end with this letter, not some but not others; every single name ends in the same way.

### 1.140

I can say this much about the Persians with confidence in my own knowledge; however, matters concerning their treatment of the dead are spoken of obscurely, as if they are secrets; for instance, that a Persian man is not buried until his corpse has been torn by a bird or a dog. I know, without a doubt, that this is what the Magi do, for they make no secret of it. The Persians embalm bodies with wax before they bury them in the ground. The Magi are completely different from all other men and particularly from the priests in Egypt. Whereas Egyptian priests have respect for life and do not kill any creature, except those which they sacrifice, the Magi kill every creature, except dogs and men, with their own hands; in fact, they make it an important competition between themselves, killing ants and snakes and all other creeping or flying creatures. As this has always been their custom from the very beginning, we should leave them to it. I will now return to my earlier story.

## Notes

**Book 2****2.48–58****2.48**

On the eve of his festival, each man sacrifices a pig in front of his house to Dionysus. He then gives the pig to the swineherd who sold him the animal, who takes it away. The Egyptians observe the rest of the festival much as the Greeks do, except for the dances. Instead of phalluses, however, they have devised puppets, which are about eighteen inches tall and operated by strings. Women carry them around the villages and the penis, which is about the same length as the rest of the body, can be made to nod. A flute player goes first, the women follow, singing hymns to Dionysus. There is a sacred myth which explains the size of the puppet's penis and why it is the only part of its body which can move.

**2.49**

From this evidence, it seems to me that Melampus, the son of Amutheon, was not unaware of this practice. For Melampus taught the Greeks the name of Dionysus, the method of the sacrifice and the procession on the phallus. He did not, however, tell them absolutely everything about the ritual; later teachers added to what he had shown the Greeks. However, Melampus did teach the Greeks about presenting the phallus to Dionysus, and, in this respect, they learned what they do today from him. I think that Melampus was a clever man, who taught himself how to be a prophet and then brought over to the Greeks, amongst many other things, lessons about the worship of Dionysus, which he did not really change from what he had picked up himself in Egypt. For the similarities between the Egyptian and Greek worship of Dionysus cannot be a coincidence. Otherwise the practices would be more recognisable as Greek rites and less recently adopted. But I would deny that the Egyptians instead

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took this or any other practice from the Greeks. I think that Melampus learned about Dionysus from Cadmus, the Tyrian, and those who came with him from Phoenicia to that country now known as Boeotia.

### 2.50

The names of nearly all the gods came over to Greece from Egypt. I have found out from enquiries that the names came from the barbarians. I think that they came mostly from Egypt. Apart from Poseidon, and the Dioscuri, as I have said before, and also Hera, Hestia, Themis, the Graces and the Nereids, the other names have always been known by the Egyptians in their country. I am reporting what the Egyptians themselves have told me. I think that the names of the gods which they say that they do not know were created by the Pelasgians, except for Poseidon. They picked up this god from the Lydians, who are the only people who have known the name of Poseidon from the beginning, and have always worshipped him. The Egyptians do not believe in hero-cults.

### 2.51

These customs, along with others which I will mention, were adopted from the Egyptians by the Greeks. However, the custom of carving statues of Hermes with an erect penis did not come from the Egyptians but from the Pelasgians and the Athenians were the first of all the Greeks to begin to do this and the others followed them. Already by that time the Athenians were counted amongst the Greeks and the Pelasgians came to live alongside them and from that time were counted as Greeks. Whoever has been initiated into the rites of the Cabiri, which those who live in Samothrace now practise, having once picked them up from the Pelasgians, then he knows what I mean. Those Pelasgians who moved to live amongst the Athenians used to live in Samothrace and the Samothracians took up their rites from them. The Athenians then were the first of the Greeks to carve statues of Hermes with an erect penis, since they picked up this practice from the Pelasgians; the Pelasgians have recorded a sacred myth about this, which is set down in the Samothracian mysteries.

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**2.52**

Every time they made a sacrifice, the Pelasgians used to include all the gods. I know this because I heard it at Dodona. They did not refer to any of them by name, for they had not yet heard any. They called them "gods" for this reason: the gods set all things in order and arranged all the customs. Then, after a long time had passed by, they learned the names of all the gods which came over from the Egyptians. They learned the name of Dionysus much later. After some time, they asked about the names at the oracle at Dodona, which is considered to be the location of the oldest oracle in Greece, and at that time it was the only one. When the Pelasgians asked the oracle at Dodona if they should use for their gods the names which had come from the barbarians, the oracle said that they should. From that time, they have sacrificed to the gods using those names; the Greeks later adopted these names from the Pelasgians.

**2.53**

Until a very short time ago, relatively speaking, the Greeks did not know where the gods had come from, or whether all of them had always existed, or even what they looked like. For I think that the age of Hesiod and Homer was not more than four hundred years before the time at which I am writing; they created for the Greeks the origin of the gods and gave the gods their names, influences and abilities and described what form they took. Those poets who are said to be earlier than Homer and Hesiod, I think they were born later. The priests of Dodona have told me the information about the gods, what I have said about Homer and Hesiod is my own opinion.

**2.54**

The Egyptians tell the following story about the oracles in Greece and Libya. The priests of Theban Zeus say that two priestesses were abducted by the Phoenicians. They learned that one of them was sold in Libya and the other in Greece. These priestesses, however, went on to be the founders of the first

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oracles in these two countries. When I asked them how they were so sure of this information, they told me that they had mounted a long search for these women but were unsuccessful and had later learned the story which they had told to me.

**2.55**

This is what I heard from the Theban priests, what follows was told to me by the prophetesses of Dodona. They said that there were two black doves, which had flown from Thebes in Egypt to Lydia: one had landed in Lydia but the other had come to Dodona and perched on an oak tree, where it had spoken with a human voice. It said that there should be an oracle to Zeus there. The people of Dodona understood that this was a message from the gods and they set up an oracle from that time. This is the story of the priestesses at Dodona, the oldest of whom was called Promeneia, Timarete came after her and the youngest was Nikandre. The rest of the people of Dodona who look after the temple agree with this story.

**2.56**

This is what I believe to be the case about Dodona. If it is true that the Phoenicians abducted the two priestesses, and sold one in Libya and one in Greece, I think that the latter was sold in that part of Greece which used to be called Pelasgia and is now Thesprotia. As a slave, she set up a shrine to Zeus there at the foot of an oak tree which was growing at Dodona. This seems likely as she had been an attendant at the temple of Zeus in Thebes and would therefore have a memory of this temple now that she lived in Dodona. From this time, she taught divination, once she understood the Greek language. She said that the same Phoenicians who had sold her had sold her sister into slavery in Libya.

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**2.57**

I think that these women were referred to as “doves” by the people of Dodona because they were barbarians and therefore the Greek thought that their language sounded like birds cooing. After a while, the woman began to speak in a language which they could understand and this is how the story arose that the “dove” began to speak “with a human voice”. While she spoke in a barbarian language, it seemed to them that she was talking bird language, for how else could a dove speak in a human voice? The black colour of the dove is explained by the fact that the woman was Egyptian.

**2.58**

The methods of prophecy in Egyptian Thebes and in Dodona happen to be like each other. The practice of divining the future from sacrificial victims came from Egypt. The Egyptians were also the first people to hold festivals, processions and solemn approaches; the Greeks learned all these practices from the Egyptians. Here is my proof: these ceremonies seem to have been established in Egypt a long time ago, but the Greeks have only recently taken them up.

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**Book 4****4.110–117****4.110**

The following is what is told about the Sauromatians. When the Greeks were fighting the Amazons (the Scythians call the Amazons “Oiorpata”, which in the Greek language means “man-killers”; “oior” translates as “man” and “pata” as “kill”), the story goes that, after the Greeks were victorious at the battle of Thermodon, they sailed away with three ships full of all the Amazons they could capture. However, when they were out at sea, the Amazons attacked and killed their captors. But they did not know how to handle ships, nor how to steer, nor could they use sails or oars. Since they had killed the crew, they were carried along by the waves and the winds until they came to Kremnoi near the Maeotian Lake, in the land of the free Scythians. The Amazons disembarked in this place and went to find who lived there. They took possession of the first group of horses which they found and rode them in raids against the Scythians.

**4.111**

The Scythians could not understand what was going on; they did not recognise their language, nor their clothing nor their race. They had no idea where they had come from but thought that they were all men of the same age. Nevertheless, they attacked them. After the battle, the Scythians captured some of the bodies and realised that they had been fighting women. Considering the situation, they decided to avoid killing the women but instead to send their youngest men to them, about the same number of them as there were women. These young men set up camp near to the women and did whatever they did. If the women charged, the young men should not fight but flee, and then return and set up camp again once the pursuit had ended. The Scythians came up

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with this plan because they wanted these women to bear them children. The young men who were sent followed their orders.

#### 4.112

When the Amazons realised that the young men had not come to bring trouble, they left them alone. But the camps drew closer to each other with every day that passed and now the young men, just like the Amazons, had nothing except their weapons and their horses and they shared the same way of life with the women, surviving by hunting and raiding.

#### 4.113

At midday, the Amazons would behave as follows: they would split up into ones and twos, separating from each other for the sake of comfort. When the Scythians observed this, they began to do the same thing. When one of the Scythian young men approached one of the Amazons who was wandering alone, she did not turn him away but, instead, allowed him to do what he wanted. And because she could not converse with him, as they did not understand each other, she gave hand signals that he should return on the next day, to the same place, with a friend. She gave a sign that there should be two of them, and that she would also bring a friend. The young man, when he went back, told the rest of the Scythians what had happened. On the next day, he returned to the same place and brought another Scythian youth with him and he found the Amazon and another of her kind waiting for them. When the rest of the young men learnt about this, they all began to tame the rest of the Amazons.

#### 4.114

After a short time, they mixed their camps and began to live together, each of the Scythians took the woman whom he had first had sex with as his wife. The men were not able to learn the language of the women, but the women began to pick up the language of the men. When they understood each other, the

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men said the following to the Amazons: "We have parents and possessions at home; so let us not live in this way any longer, we should return and live with the rest of our people. We will still keep you and have no other women as our wives." But the Amazons replied as follows, "We could not live alongside your women; for our customs are not the same as theirs. We fire arrows, throw spears and ride horses, we have never learned the tasks of women. Your women do none of these activities which we have just described; they stay inside their wagons doing women's chores, they do not go out to hunt or for any other reason. We would not be able to get along with them. If you want to keep us as your wives and to be seen to do the right thing, go to your parents and take from them your rightful share of possessions, and then return to us and we will live together by ourselves." The young men agreed and did as they asked.

#### 4.115

When they had taken their allotted share of possessions, they went back to the Amazons and the women said the following to them. Fear and dread of living in this country hold us, firstly since we have taken you from your parents and secondly because we have stolen so much from your land. But since you are prepared to have us for your wives, this is what we should do together: let us leave the country and live together beyond the River Tanais."

#### 4.116

The young Scythians agreed to this and they crossed the River Tanais and travelled east from the river for three days, and then, when they had reached the Maeotian Lake, they went north for three days. And when they reached the region in which they now live, they settled there. Since that time the women of the Sauromatians have kept their old customs: they go hunting on horseback, with or without their husbands, they go to war and they wear the same clothing as the men.

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**4.117**

The Sauromatians speak in the Scythian language, but they speak it badly and not in its original form, since the Amazons never perfected the language. This is their marriage custom: no maiden may marry until she has killed one of the enemy. So, some of them, because they are not able to fulfil the requirements, they grow old unmarried, and die.

**4.168–181****4.168**

The Libyan peoples live in the following order: starting from Egypt, the Adyrmachidae live closest to them geographically and their customs are mostly like the Egyptians, but they wear clothing like the other Libyans. The women wear a ring made of bronze around each leg and wear their hair long; whenever they catch lice on themselves, they bite them and throw them away. They are the only Libyan people to do this, and the only ones who display the virgins who are about to get married to the king. The king then takes the virginity of whichever girl pleases him. These Adyrmachidae spread from Egypt to the port called Plynus.

**4.169**

Next to them, the Giligamae inhabit the land to the west as far as the island of Aphrodisias. In between Egypt and Aphrodisias lies the island of Platea, which was colonised by the Cyrenaeans. On the mainland is the harbour of Menelaus and Aziris, where the Cyrenaeans lived. This is the beginning of the silphium-growing area, which spreads from the island of Platea to the mouth of the Syrtis. The Giligamae have customs which are very like the ways of the other tribes.

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**4.170**

The Asbystae live to the west of the Giligamae and south of Cyrene. They do not live on the coast, for the people of Cyrene live there. They use four-horsed chariots much more than the other Libyan tribes. They copy most of the customs of the Cyrenaeans.

**4.171**

The Auschisae live to the west of the Asbystae. They live to the south of Barce, all the way to the coast at Euhesperidae. The Bacales live right in the middle of the territory of the Auschisae, they are a small tribe, whose area stretches to the coast at Taucheira, a city under the control of Barce. They have the same customs as those who live to the south of Cyrene.

**4.172**

The Nasamones, a very large tribe, live to the west of the Auschisae. In the summer they leave their flocks on the coast and go up to the land called Augila, where they harvest the date-palms, which grow in abundance and all bear fruit. Whenever they catch locusts, they dry them in the sun and then sprinkle them into the milk they drink. Each man has many wives, and yet they still regard each other's wives as common property and available for sex; the Massagetae have a similar custom. They stick a pole in the ground and this indicates that they are having sex. When a Nasamonian man is getting married for the first time, it is customary for his bride, on her first night as a married woman, to have sex with each of those at the feast. And each of her partners presents her with a gift which he has brought from his home. They have the following customs for making oaths and receiving prophecies. They swear by laying their hands on the tombs of those men who are considered by them to have been the most just and honourable. They receive prophecies by visiting the graves of their ancestors, and then lying down and going to sleep there. They then consider whatever vision they glimpse in their dreams while sleeping there as a prophecy.

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They have the following customs for making pledges: each party offers his hand to the other, who drinks from it. If they have no liquid to use for this purpose, they instead pick up some dirt from the ground and lick that off each other's hand.

**4.173**

The Psylli used to live next to the Nasamones but they died out in the following way: the gusts of the south wind dried up their reservoirs of water, and so all the country lying within the Syrtis became arid. They discussed this together and decided to march south (I am reporting what the Libyans say), but when they reached the desert, the south wind blew the sand over them and buried them. In this way, they were wiped out and the Nasamones now inhabit their territory.

**4.174**

To the south of the Nasamones, going away from the coast, the Garamantes live alongside wild beasts. They avoid all contact with other men, even running from them. They have no weapons and no knowledge have how to defend themselves.

**4.175**

These Garamantes live inland to the south of the Nasamones; the Macae live along the coast to the west. They wear their hair in a crest by leaving the hair on the middle of their heads to grow, and shaving the hair on either side down to the skin. They go to war carrying ostrich hides. The River Cinyps, the source of which is the hill called the Hill of the Graces, flows through their territory on its way to the sea. This Hill of the Graces is densely wooded, whereas the rest of Libya, of which I have already spoken, is barren. The hill is two hundred stades from the sea.

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**4.176**

Next to the Macae are the Gindanes. The women of these Gindanes wear many leather anklets. This is the reason given for this practice: a woman puts on an anklet each time she has had sex with a different man. Whichever woman has the most anklets is considered the best, on the grounds that she has had sex with the most men.

**4.177**

There is a promontory which juts out into the sea from the territory of the Gindanes: the Lotus-eaters live on this promontory. They live on lotus-fruit alone. A lotus-fruit is the same size as a mastic berry and has a sweet taste similar to the fruit of a date-palm. The Lotus-eaters also make wine from lotus-fruit.

**4.178**

The Machlyes live along the coast from the Lotus-eaters: they also use the lotus, but not as much as the Lotus-eaters whom I have just described. Their territory runs up to the large river known as the Triton. This river empties into the large Lake Tritonis, in which there is an island called Phla. It is said that the Spartans were told by a prophecy to make a settlement on this island.

**4.179**

This story is also told: when the Argo had been built at the foot of Mount Pelion, Jason put a hecatomb and a bronze tripod on board the ship and sailed round the Peloponnese, until he reached Delphi. However, when he was sailing around Cape Malea, he was hit with a north wind which drove him to Libya. Before he saw land, he ended up in the shallows of Lake Tritonis. As Jason was struggling to find a way out, Triton appeared to him and told him that, in return for the tripod, he would show them the way out and lead them through unharmed. When Jason obeyed, the god showed them the passage through the shallows. He then set up the tripod in his own temple and prophesied the whole story to Jason and his crew. He told them that whenever one of the descendants

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of those who sailed on the Argo should remove the tripod, then one hundred Greek cities must be founded around the shores of Lake Tritonis. However, when the Libyans who lived there heard this, they hid the tripod.

#### 4.180

The Auseans live next to the Machlyes, these two peoples live around Lake Tritonis. Whereas the Machlyes have long hair at the back, the Auseans have long hair at the front. At the annual festival of Athena, the maidens of the tribes fight each other with sticks and stones; they say that this fulfils their ancestral rites to their native goddess, whom we call Athena. They refer to any of the maidens who die of wounds incurred during these fights as “false maidens”. Before they begin fighting, they observe the following custom: they choose the most beautiful maiden, dress her in a Corinthian helmet and Greek weapons and she is carried in a chariot in a circle around the lake. I am not able to say for certain the sort of armour with which they equipped the maidens before the Greeks came to live nearby, but I would guess that they wore Egyptian armour. I say this because both the shield and the helmet came to the Greeks from the Egyptians. They say that the goddess whom they call Athena was the daughter of Poseidon and Lake Tritonis. However, because she found fault with her own father, she then gave herself to Zeus, who made her his daughter. This is their story. Women are common property: they do not live together as couples but instead have sex like animals. Whenever a woman’s child is fully grown, the men assemble within three months and they deem whoever most closely resembles the child as its father.

#### 4.181

Those nomadic Libyans who live along the coast have all now been described, further inland is the part of Libya which is inhabited by the wild beasts. Beyond this wild region is a ridge of sand which runs from Egyptian Thebes to the Pillars of Heracles. A traveller along this ridge would pass mounds of salt, piled up in great lumps, about every ten days. Cool, sweet water shoots up in fountains

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from the middle of the salt. The men who dwell around these fountains are the closest to the desert and furthest from the wild region. The first of these are the Ammonians, who live ten days from Thebes and have a temple to Theban Zeus. The statues to Zeus in Thebes, as I have said earlier, show him with the head of a ram. They happen to have another spring of water, which is warm at dawn but cooler when the market has filled with people, and then cold in the middle of the day, which is when they water their gardens. Then, as the day draws on, the water becomes less cold, until, by sunset, the water is warm again. It heats up towards the middle of the night, when it boils, bubbling up. Then it cools again through the night until dawn. They call this the Spring of the Sun.

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**Book 7****7.8–19****7.8**

Following the conquest of Egypt, Xerxes was now ready to turn his mind to the expedition against Greece; he called an assembly of all the leading men amongst the Persians, so that he could find out their opinions and also tell them what he wanted to happen. When they had assembled, Xerxes said the following, "Persian men! I am not enforcing a new custom here, I am acting in accordance with a principle I inherited. As I have learned from my ancestors, we have not had a period of rest since we took our dominance of Asia from the Medes, once Cyrus had overthrown Astyages. A god has brought us this far and we continue to benefit from taking on challenges. Cyrus, Cambyses and my father Darius all conquered races and added their territories to our empire, no one needs to remind you of their accomplishments. Since I came to this throne, I have considered how best to match the accomplishments of my ancestors by increasing the power of the Persians by as much as they did. In my estimations, I have settled on a land, the conquest of which would bring us renown. This land is as great as ours and no less important, it is actually more fertile than where we live now. We would also gain our vengeance and some recompense. For this reason, I have summoned you so that I might tell you what I intend to do. I will bridge the Hellespont and lead the army through Europe to Greece. I will punish Athens for what they did to the Persians and to my father. You saw that my father, Darius, was planning an expedition against these people. But he died and did not get the chance to punish them. For him, then, and for all the Persians, I will not rest until I have captured and burnt Athens in return for the wrongs which they instigated against me and my father. First, along with our slave Aristagoras the Milesian, they took Sardis, and burnt its groves and temples.

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Secondly, you all know what they did to the army which landed on their shores, when Datis and Artaphernes led an expedition. For these reasons I have decided to lead an expedition against them, and I am sure that we will gain great benefit from it. If we subdue these men and their neighbours, who live in the country of Pelops, the Phrygian, we will have an empire which borders only heaven itself. The sun will not look down on any country which borders our own, I will turn all of their country into one of ours, as I cross through the whole of Europe. For, as I have discovered, there will be no city, nor race left which might be able to stand against us in battle, once these Greeks are out of the way. Both the guilty and the innocent will wear the yoke of slavery. It will please me most for you to do the following; when I give the time for muster, every one of you must come willingly and with resolve. Whoever comes with the best-prepared army, I will give to him the sorts of gifts which are most valuable to us. Attend to these matters. So that I do not seem to be one who does not listen to others, I open up the discussion, and ask for anyone to express their opinion." And he finished there.

### 7.9

Mardonius spoke after him, he said, "O king, you are not only the best of the Persians who have ever lived, you are also the best of any who will be born in the future. You have spoken honourably and truly about other matters: you will not allow the Ionians who live in Europe to turn us into laughing stocks when they have no right to do so. For it would be a strange thing indeed if we, who have conquered the Sacae, the Indians, the Ethiopians and the Assyrians and enslaved these and many other great races who have done us no wrong but who were still added to our empire, did not avenge the wrongs done to us, unprovoked, by the Greeks. What are we afraid of? Are we intimidated by their huge army? Do we fear their vast stores of wealth? We know their tactics, we know their wealth (it is minimal). We have conquered and added their children to our empire; races calling themselves Ionian, Aeolian and Dorian all live in our territory. I have

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already campaigned against these men, sent there by your father, I marched as far as Macedonia and then almost to Athens itself, and no-one came to stand against me in battle. I have found out that the Greeks do fight but that they do so thoughtlessly due to their lack of foresight and their stubbornness. When they declare war on each other, they find the most suitable and most level plain and, setting up there, they start to fight. The result of this is that the victors do not suffer great losses. I cannot begin to talk about the losers, because they are utterly annihilated. They speak the same language and should settle their differences with heralds and messengers rather than always resorting to war. If it is absolutely necessary for them to fight then it would be much better for them to find out each other's weaknesses and plan their attack accordingly. So the Greek way does not seem successful and when I marched all the way to Macedonia, they did not come to meet me in battle. Who then would fight against you, o king? For you will come with an army drawn from all over Asia, and your full navy. I do not think that the Greeks would have the nerve. But if I am proved wrong and, foolishly, they come to meet us in battle, they would soon learn that we are the best warriors in the world. Let us then make every effort; if nothing is ventured in life, then nothing is gained."

### 7.10

So Mardonius advanced the opinion of Xerxes in this clever way and brought his speech to this conclusion. The rest of the Persians were silent as they did not dare to offer any arguments to counter what had been said already. Then Artabanus son of Hystaspes, the uncle of the king, trusting in this relationship, he said the following, "If no one speaks against the opinions which have already been declared, it is not possible to choose the right course of action, instead, the only suggestion which has been advanced will end up being the one which has to be adopted. However if more than one course of action is suggested then the best of them can be selected. Just as gold cannot be tested for purity by itself, we test it by rubbing it against another piece of gold to discover

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which is more pure. Now I advised your father Darius, my brother, not to make an expedition against the Scythians, who have no homes to live in. However he wanted to subdue these Scythian nomads and would not listen to me. He made an expedition but left that land having lost many fine Persians. O king, you are intending to make an expedition against men who are far better fighters than the Scythians. It is claimed that they are the best fighters on the sea and on land. It is right therefore that I should tell you about the danger from them. You say that you will bridge the Hellespont and lead your army through Europe to Greece. Imagine if you lose on land or on sea, or even on both; their men are said to be strong and this is not difficult to imagine if the Athenians on their own were able to beat such a great army as that which was led to Attica by Datis and Artaphernes. Even if they were only successful on land or sea; if they attack with their ships and beat us in a sea battle they would then sail on to the Hellespont and destroy the bridge. This would be a terrible thing, o king. I am not just thinking off the top of my head, I remember the disaster which we narrowly avoided when your father bridged the Thracian Bosphorus and crossed the River Ister to attack the Scythians. At that time the Scythians tried everything to persuade the Ionians, who were guarding the bridge over the river, to destroy it. If Histiaeus, the tyrant of Miletus, had not resisted the advice of the other tyrants, Persia would have come to ruin at this point. It is frightening even just to hear that the power of the Persian king once rested on the decision of one man. So do not make a decision to head into such a dangerous situation, especially when there is no need, listen to me instead. To start with, disband this assembly, then consider your options and, when the time is right, announce what you have decided to do. For I find that careful consideration always yields the best results. Even if things do not then work out as you wanted them to it will be down to bad luck and not a failure to plan. If someone has come up with a bad plan and then things go well; then they will have been lucky, it will not be because they came up with a good idea. Look at how god destroys with his thunderbolt those who go beyond their limits or boast of their accomplishments, the small do not attract his wrath.

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Look at how lightning always strikes the biggest houses or the tallest trees. It is the will of god to destroy those who overreach themselves. Accordingly, a large army can be beaten by one which is smaller, the god of the lesser ones, acting with malice, will help the attack by spreading panic or hurling a thunderbolt. Soldiers do not deserve to die in this way. God will permit greatness in none but himself. Acting in haste often creates mistakes, serious consequences then often result, whereas good will often come from waiting; even if this is not immediately apparent, you will find this to be the case in time. This is my advice to you, o king. I say this to you, Mardonius son of Gobryas, do not speak of the Greeks in such derogatory terms, they do not deserve to be spoken of in this way. You think that by slandering the Greeks you will encourage the king to make an expedition against them. You seem to me to be very keen to get your way on this, I hope that you do not succeed. Such rhetoric is dangerous: two are involved but only one loses out. The one who throws out insults against another who is not there does wrong but the listener is persuaded to act before he knows the full truth of the matter. Even the one who is not there to hear what is said against him is slandered by one and falls in the estimation of the other. If it is absolutely necessary to send an army against the Greeks, listen to this suggestion. The king should stay amongst the Persian people, let us both stake our children on this, and you should lead the expedition, choosing the men whom you want and deciding on the army you think would be best. If everything turns out for the king as you say it will, then kill my children and me along with them. But if what I say comes to pass then you should suffer this fate, along with your children, if you return from Greece. If you do not agree to this bet and then, after everything, you still lead an army to Greece, then I say now that those whom you leave behind here will soon hear that Mardonius has done a great wrong to the Persians and that he is being devoured by the dogs and birds in the land of the Athenians or the Spartans, it might even happen on the road before you get that far. When this happens you will discover the sort of men against whom the king is planning to make an expedition."

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**7.11**

This was Artabanus' speech; Xerxes was very angry and made this reply, "You are the brother of my father and this alone saves you from receiving the reward you deserve for such an ill-conceived speech. However, I place upon you this dishonour for giving voice to such a cowardly reaction: you will not go with me and the army to Greece, you will stay here with the women. I will accomplish all I have said and will do so without any help from you. For unless I gain vengeance on the Athenians I am not a son Darius son of Hystaspes, son of Arsames son of Ariaramnes son of Teispes son of Cyrus son of Cambyses son of Teispes son of Achaemenes. I am fully aware that, if we choose to remain inactive, they will not and will invade our country, if anything can be gathered from their previous actions when they burned Sardis and marched into Asia. It is not possible for either side to withdraw: we must either win or lose so that everything will be either under the control of the Greeks or the Persians. There is no compromise in this conflict. It is also honourable for us to gain revenge for the wrongs which have been done to us. I will find out what terrible things will happen if I march against these men whom Pelops the Phrygian, a slave of my ancestors, conquered. Those men and their land still retain the name of the man who conquered them."

**7.12**

This is as much as he said. After nightfall, the speech of Artabanus started to bother Xerxes. During the night he became more convinced that attacking Greece was not for him to do. Once he had gone back on his original decision he fell asleep, then during the night he had a dream, or so the Persians say: a huge and handsome man stood over Xerxes and said, "Are you now changing your mind, o Persian, and deciding not to lead your army against Greece, although you have already given instructions for the Persians to gather together an army? It does not look good for you to change your mind and there is one who will not forgive you. Do as you resolved yesterday and stay on course."

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**7.13**

Once the vision spoke it seemed to Xerxes to disappear, and when the day brightened Xerxes forgot all about the dream. He assembled together the same Persians whom he had gathered before and spoke to them, "Forgive me for changing my mind this way and that way; for I have not yet grown fully confident in my thinking and those who advised me on my previous decision did not give me time to consider. When I heard Artabanus' advice my young mind flared up, so I flung out language which was inappropriate for a response to a man older than myself. However now I agree with what he said and I will follow his advice. I have changed my mind and am no longer resolved to march against Greece. Let there be peace."

**7.14**

When the Persians heard this they celebrated and kissed the ground in front of Xerxes. However, on the next night, the same vision appeared to Xerxes and stood over him while he slept, he said, "Son of Darius, you have now, in front of everyone, called off the expedition, ignoring my words and pretending as if you never heard them? Then know this: unless you lead this expedition immediately, the following will come to pass, as quickly as you became important and mighty, just as quickly you will become an ordinary man again."

**7.15**

Xerxes was terrified by the vision and immediately leapt out of his bed and sent a messenger to summon Artabanus. When he came, Xerxes said to him. "Artabanus, I spoke without thinking when I dismissed your wise advice as ill-conceived words. However, I quickly thought differently and, realising that you were right, I sought to follow your advice. And yet, I am not able to carry out what I have resolved to do. Since I changed my mind and decided on a different course of action, a vision is haunting me and will not agree to let me do what I want. The last time it left, it threatened me. Now, if it is a god which is sending

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the vision because it is so keen for me to make the expedition, then the same vision will appear to you and give you the same instructions. I think that the best way to make this happen is if you dress in my clothes, sit on my throne dressed as me and later sleep in my bed.”

### 7.16

This was what Xerxes said. At first, Artabanus did not obey the instructions, since he thought that it was not right for him to sit on the royal throne. Finally, he was forced to do so and said the following as he did as he was told, “O king, as far as I am concerned, it is just as good for a man to think sensibly as it is for him to be willing to take the advice of another who does. You have done both of these things but you are deceived by the mutterings of evil men, just as they say that the sea, the most useful thing in the whole world to men, is pushed out of its natural rhythm by the force of the winds. But the sorrow I felt when you addressed me harshly was nothing compared to the grief I felt when I heard that the Persians were faced with two options, one which would increase their arrogance, the other which would have restrained this feeling and shown how ruinous it is for the soul always to want more than it has; out of these two options you chose the alternative which was more dangerous both for yourself and for the Persians. Now you have changed to the correct option and intend to call off the expedition to Greece, you tell me that you are haunted by a vision of some god, who is stopping you from calling it off. This is not a message from god, o child. As I am many years older than you, I will explain the nature of wandering dreams which appear to men; those visions which appear to us in dreams are manifestations of our daily concerns. Over the last few days we have had our minds full with thoughts of the imminent expedition. But even if I am wrong and there is something divine involved, then you have already explained how we might put an end to this. Let it appear to me as it did to you and then make its commands. But if it does appear to me in a dream, this will be because it intends to and not because I am wearing your clothes and not my own, nor

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because I am sleeping in your bed rather than mine. Whatever this thing is that is appearing to you, it will not be so easily-fooled as to think that I am you on the grounds that I am wearing your clothes. If the vision ignores me completely and does not come in my dreams at all, regardless of whose clothes I am wearing, this will be significant. However, if it continues to haunt you, then I will admit that there is something divine involved. If you are set on this course of action and I cannot sway you, and you require me to sleep in your bed, then I am ready. I am prepared to do this for you and I hope that the vision appears to me also. Until it does, I will remain unconvinced that this is the work of god.”

### 7.17

Artabanus said this as he was hoping that Xerxes would be proved wrong and he did as he was instructed. He put on Xerxes’ clothes and sat on Xerxes’ royal throne and later, he went to bed. While he was sleeping, the same vision which had come to Xerxes came to him and, standing over Artabanus, it said to him, “Are you the man who is attempting to persuade Xerxes not to make an expedition against Greece, because you think that you can protect him? For this you will not go unpunished either now or later as you have tried to stop what must come to pass. Xerxes has already been told what will happen to him if he does not do what he must.”

### 7.18

Artabanus now thought that the vision, once he had finished his threats, was about to burn his eyes out with hot irons. Shouting out loud, he leapt out of bed and, sitting next to Xerxes, he explained to him what he had seen in the dream and then he said, “As much as any man, I have seen how often the mighty have been laid low by the blows of lesser races. I did not want you to be carried away by your youthful impulses, knowing how dangerous it is always to desire more and remembering how Cyrus’ expedition against the Massagetae and Cambyses’ campaign against the Ethiopians turned out; I also marched with Darius against the Scythians. Knowing all this, I felt that, if you ruled in peace,

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you would be thought of as fortunate by all men. But there is some divine agency at work here and, since it appears to be the will of the god that Greece is destroyed, I have changed my mind and alter my advice. You should reveal the message of god to the Persians and order them to follow your first instructions which were to prepare for war, and act in accordance with the will of the god, ensuring that you omit nothing." Once they had had this conversation they took their confidence from the vision and, when the day soon came, Xerxes explained all of this to the Persians and Artabanus now pushed for the very course of action which, earlier, he alone had openly advised against following.

### 7.19

Even now that Xerxes was intent on the expedition, a third vision came to him in his sleep, the Magi listened to him and then interpreted the dream to mean that he would enslave the whole world and all races. The vision was this: Xerxes saw himself crowned with an olive wreath, the shoots from which spread over the whole world, then the crown vanished from his head. When they heard the interpretation of the Magi, every Persian general who had gathered together hurried back to his own territory and was then very eager to fulfil the requests of the king; each man wanted to receive the gifts which had been promised. And this was the way in which Xerxes gathered his army, combing every corner of the continent.

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**7.33–37****7.33**

After this he got ready to march to Abydos. In the meantime the Hellespont was bridged from Asia to Europe. On the Hellespont, between Sestos and Madytus, there is a rocky spit jutting out into the sea opposite Abydos: not long after this the Athenians under the command of Xanthippus, the son of Ariphron, captured a Persian man called Artajctes, who was the governor of Sestos and pinned him to a plank alive; it was this man who gathered some women together in the temple of Protesilaus at Elaeus and committed unlawful acts against them.

**7.34**

Xerxes' men built their bridge to this headland, starting from Abydos, as they had been instructed, a total distance of seven stades; the Phoenicians used a flax cable and the Egyptians a papyrus one. After the bridge had been built, a powerful storm broke it up and destroyed it completely.

**7.35**

When Xerxes learned this, in his anger at the Hellespont he ordered that it should receive 300 lashes and have a pair of fetters thrown into its waters. I have also heard that in addition he sent people to brand the Hellespont. He ordered the men who were flogging it to say arrogant and barbarous words: 'O bitter water, your master places this penalty upon you, because you wronged him when you had suffered nothing at his hands. Xerxes the King will cross over you, whether you want him to or not. Rightly no one offers sacrifices to you as you are a muddy and salty river.' Xerxes gave instructions that the sea should be punished in this way and that the heads of those responsible for the building of the bridge should be cut off.

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**7.36**

The men who were given this disagreeable task carried it out, and other engineers built the replacement bridge: they lashed together penteconters and triremes – 360 ships moored at an angle on the Black Sea side and 314 moored downstream on the other, to reduce the strain on the cables. They used very heavy anchors both to east and west because of the changeable winds in the area. A narrow opening was left in three places for ships to sail through so that any small boats that wanted to might enter or leave the Black Sea. Once this was done, they stretched out the cables, tightening them from the land with wooden pulleys; they no longer kept the different types of cable separate, but used two flax ones on each and four papyrus ones. The thickness and quality were the same, but the flax cables were heavier. Once the bridge was ready, they made planks of wood equal in length to the width of the boats and arranged them over the tightened cables, and fastened them down; then they laid brushwood and soil over the top which they stamped down; then they put fencing along both sides to prevent the pack animals and horses from seeing the sea and becoming frightened.

**7.37**

When the bridges were completed and it was reported that the work on the canal at Athos, including the breakwaters at each entrance (which were added to prevent the silting up of the channel), was also completed, the army first wintered at Sardis, then, once everything was ready at the beginning of spring began to march to Abydos. As the army was setting out, the sun disappeared from its place in the sky and it changed from day to night, even though the sky was cloudless and there was clear weather. Xerxes became concerned when he learned about this, so he asked the Magi what this portent meant. They said that the god was showing the Greeks the eclipse of their cities, as the sun foretold the future for the Greeks, just as the moon did for the Persians. Once he heard this Xerxes continued the march to Abydos in good spirits.

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**7.100–105****7.100**

Xerxes, when the army had been counted and drawn up, was keen to ride along the army and view his troops. He did so, riding through his host in a chariot, stopping to question each race and his scribes wrote down their answers, until he had gone from one end to the other of both the infantry and the cavalry. When he had completed this, the ships were dragged down to the sea and Xerxes got down from his chariot and boarded a Sidonian ship. He sat under a golden canopy and he sailed past the prows of each ship asking the same questions to the sailors as he had to the infantry and writing down their answers. The captains sailed four hundred feet from the shore, turned their prows towards the shore and anchored in line. The captains then gave orders for the soldiers to arm themselves as if for war. Xerxes inspected them, sailing between the prows and the coast.

**7.101**

When Xerxes had sailed past his fleet and disembarked from his ship, he sent for Demaratus, the son of Ariston, who had joined him on the expedition against Greece; he called him over and asked: 'Demaratus, now it pleases me to ask you what I want to know. You are a Greek and as I have learned from you and the other Greeks who have conversed with me, you are a citizen of a city which is not the smallest or weakest of Greek cities. So now tell me this, whether the Greeks will wait for me and raise their hands against me. For in my opinion not even if all the Greeks and the remainder of those who dwell in the West had gathered together, they are not strong enough to stand against me if I attacked them, unless they are all in agreement. However I want to learn also from you what you say about this matter.' Demaratus replied: 'King, should I answer truthfully or to please you?' Xerxes told him to be truthful, saying that they would be on exactly the same terms as before.

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**7.102**

When Demaratus heard this, he spoke as follows: 'King, since you tell me to be completely truthful and say nothing which can be shown to be a lie later by you, in Greece poverty has always been our companion, but courage we have gained for ourselves, achieved through wisdom and strong law; through her courage, Greece has kept away poverty and despotism. I praise all the Greeks who live in the Dorian lands, but I am going to speak not about all of them but about the Spartans only: firstly it is impossible for them to accept terms from you if it means slavery for Greece, and, secondly, they will oppose you even if all the other Greeks surrender. As for the number of men, do not consider whether they have sufficient forces to do this; for if one thousand men happen to be drawn up for battle, they will fight you, and this is true whether there are more than this or fewer.'

**7.103**

At this Xerxes laughed and said: 'Demaratus, what sort of a story is this, that a thousand men would fight against an army like mine? Come, tell me, you claim to have once been king yourself of these men. Are you willing at this very moment to fight against ten men? Yet if your state is just as you say it is, you, as their king, should face against a double portion according to your laws. For if each of them is capable of dealing with ten men in my army, I demand that you be capable of dealing with twenty. In this way the story you have just told me would be proved true. If they are in fact like you and the other Greeks who have conversed with me, you are bragging a great deal; beware that what you say may be an empty boast. How could one thousand or ten thousand or fifty thousand men face an army as great as mine, especially when they are all equally free and not controlled by any one person? If they were controlled by one man as we are, through fear of him they might behave more bravely against their own nature or they might go into battle forced by the whip, a smaller number against a greater. However, as they are completely free, neither of these things would

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happen. In my opinion, even if the numbers on either side were the same, the Greeks would find it difficult to fight against the Persians alone. In my army there is this same attitude that you mentioned, yet it is found only rarely: there are those amongst my spearmen who want to fight with three Greeks at the same time. You have no experience of this and you are talking nonsense.'

#### 7.104

In response Demaratus said: 'King, I realised from the beginning that you would not like what I said if I spoke the truth. But, since you required me to speak the absolute truth, I told you the situation in Sparta. Yet you yourself well know how I happen to feel at present about my fellow countrymen, who took away my honour and inherited privileges, and made me stateless and an exile; your father took me in and gave me a home and the means to live. It is not reasonable for a sensible man to reject such kindness, but rather he should accept it. For my part I do not claim to be able to fight with ten men or two; and I would prefer not to fight even with one, if I had a choice. But if it were necessary or if there were a serious reason urging me on, I would fight most happily with one of those men who claims to be capable of dealing with three Greeks at once. In this way the Spartans, fighting as individuals, are no worse than any others, but when fighting side by side they are the best of all men. Although they are free, they are not free in every respect: they have as a master the law, which they fear much more than your subjects fear you. They do whatever it orders, and it always orders the same thing – it does not allow them to flee from battle whatever the size of the opposing forces, but commands them to stay in formation and either conquer or be killed. But if I appear to be speaking nonsense when I say this, I am willing to be silent in future. As it is, I spoke because you compelled me to. May things turn out as you wish, King.'

#### 7.105

This was Demaratus' answer, Xerxes took this in good humour and did not get angry but sent him away gracefully. Once Xerxes had discussed the matter with

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Demaratus, he appointed Mascames the son of Megadostes as governor of Doriscus, replacing the man whom Darius had appointed. He then led his army through Thrace to Greece.

## 7.145–152

### 7.145

These were the oracles which were given to the Athenians. The Greeks who had resolved to do their best for Greece now gathered and debated over the situation. Following discussions, they made agreements that first they should call an end to any wars or hostilities which currently existed between them, whatever the reason. There were many such conflicts raging at this time but the most serious was the situation which existed between the Athenians and the Aeginetans. When the Greeks learned that Xerxes was at Sardis with his army, they planned to send scouts into Asia to discover the status of the king's affairs. They also sent messengers to Argos to ask for an alliance with them against the Persian, other messengers were sent to Gelon son of Deinomenes in Sicily, others asked for help from Corcyra in Greece and others sailed over to Crete. They thought that a Greek understanding might emerge, and that all Greeks would unite and work together, as the danger threatened the whole Greek world. Gelon was said to hold more power than anyone else in Greece.

### 7.146

When they had made these decisions and when they had settled their disagreements, they first sent three men as scouts into Asia. They came to Sardis and found out information about the king's army, however they were discovered and after questioning from the generals of the land army they were taken out to be executed. So a death sentence was passed on them, however, when Xerxes learned of this, he disagreed with the verdict of the generals and sent some of his spear-bearers, telling them that, if they found the scouts alive, they should

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bring these men before him. The spear-bearers did find the men still alive and brought them into the presence of the king. When Xerxes had found out the purpose of their visit he ordered his spear-bearers to take the scouts around his army, showing them everything: his land army, his cavalry, his infantry. Once they seen all they needed to, they should then be allowed to leave and go anywhere they wanted.

### 7.147

He explained the reasons for giving these instructions: if the scouts had been executed, the Greeks would not have learned of his power, which was still beyond description, and the execution of three men would have caused no great disadvantage for his enemy. However, if he allowed these scouts to return to Greece, then he was convinced that the Greeks would hear of his great power and surrender their freedom before the expedition left Persia. Then there would be no need for them to continue their invasion. Xerxes had earlier expressed a similar opinion. When he was at Abydos, he had seen grain ships passing through the Hellespont on their way from the Black Sea to Aegina and the Peloponnese. Those who were sitting with him identified them as enemy ships and as they were keen to capture them they looked to the king to give the order. Xerxes asked his men where the ships were sailing, they said "To the enemy, o master, bringing grain." Xerxes answered them, "I thought that we were also sailing to the same place with grain, amongst other cargo? So how are they doing wrong in taking more grain there for us?"

### 7.148

So the scouts were sent back after they had completed a survey of Xerxes' army and they returned to Greece. The Greeks who had made the alliance against the Persians after they had sent the scouts, sent messengers to Argos. This is the explanation from the Argives about what followed: they knew from the start that the barbarian was planning on invading Greece and, as soon as they had learned this, had then found out that the Greeks would try to enlist their support against

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the Persians. They then sent envoys to Delphi to find out from the god what he thought that they should do for the best. They were mindful that only recently six thousand Argives had been killed by a Spartan army led by Cleomenes son of Anaxandrides. They sent envoys for this reason. When they asked their questions the Pythian priestess gave them this answer:

“Hated by your neighbours, loved by the immortal gods,  
Poise your javelin, hold your guard,  
Keep your head protected and your head will keep your body safe.”

This oracle from the Pythian priestess had come before the messengers came to Argos from the Greeks and arrived in the council to give their message. After they had spoken, the Argives replied that they would do what they were asking of them, once a thirty-year peace had been signed with Argos and they were given an equal share of the command of the army. They said that the Argives had the right to demand full control of the army but that they would settle for a joint command.

### 7.149

They say that their council gave this answer, despite the oracle advising against an alliance with the Greeks. Although they were afraid of the oracle, they were particularly keen on a thirty-year truce with the Spartans so that their children could grow into men in these years. If this treaty was not signed, and if they suffered more losses in the coming war against the Persian, then they would have no defence against the Spartans. The Spartans among the messengers made the following reply to what was said by the Argive council: they would take back the offer of a treaty to the full council in Sparta, but they could answer there and then about the command of the army: their answer was that the Spartans had two kings but the Argives only had one and they could not deny the command to either of the Spartan kings. However there was nothing to prevent the Argive king from ruling alongside the two Spartans. In response to this the Argives said that the arrogance of the Spartans was unbearable and that

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they would rather be ruled by the barbarians than yield to the Spartans. They ordered the messengers to leave Argos by sunset or to be regarded as their enemies.

### 7.150

The Argives say that this is what happened, however there is another story in Greece. It is said that Xerxes sent a messenger to Argos before he started his march to Greece. This messenger is said to have made the following announcement when he arrived in Argos: “Men of Argos, King Xerxes says the following to you. We consider Perses, son of Perseus son of Danae, and Andromeda daughter of Cepheus, to be the founder of our race and so we have shared ancestry. So it would not be right for us to march on those who share our ancestry, nor would it be right for you to help others fighting against us. You should instead look after your own business and take no action. If everything goes according to my plan, I will value no one more highly than you.” It is said that this message made quite an impact on the Argives. Although they made no immediate promise, they did ask for a share of the command when the Greeks came seeking an alliance, since they knew that the Spartans would not grant this and that they would then have an excuse for their lack of action.

### 7.151

Some of the Greeks say that this story was proved many years later by the following event. When Callias son of Hipponicus and others who had come with him were at Susa, the city of Memnon, as messengers of the Athenians on some other business, they happened to come across some Argive messengers who had also been sent to Susa at the same time. The Argives were there to ask Artaxerxes son of Xerxes whether the terms of friendship which they had had with Xerxes, and were keen to maintain, still held good, or whether they were now considered enemies of the Persians. King Artaxerxes answered that the terms certainly still held good and he considered no city more well-disposed to him than Argos.

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**7.152**

Now whether or not Xerxes ever sent a messenger with those offers to Argos and whether or not messengers were ever sent from Argos to ask Artaxerxes if the terms of friendship still held good, I cannot be sure. In fact, I know nothing for certain other than what the Argives themselves said. I do know this much, however: if everyone if the world joined together and all put their own troubles on display, in order to exchange them for the troubles of another, everyone in the world would prefer to return home with the very troubles which he had brought with him in the first place. There were others who behaved more shamefully than the Argives. My job is to record what has been said, it is not my job to decide whether or not I believe it; this is the case for my whole account. This is also said: that the Argives actually invited the Persian to invade Greece, since, after their defeat by the Spartans, they wanted any way out of their distress at that time.

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**Book 8****8.49–63****8.49**

When the leaders from the cities I have mentioned came together at Salamis, they had a council of war; Eurybiades asked if anyone wanted to give an opinion about which site, from the area still under Greek control, would be best for a naval battle. For Attica was now lost and they should focus on what they had left. Most of those who spoke urged sailing to the Isthmus and fighting a sea battle there in defence of the Peloponnese, offering the following as proof: if they were defeated at Salamis, they would be besieged on an island where no help would come to them, whereas from the Isthmus, they might be able to escape to their own territories.

**8.50**

While the admirals from the Peloponnese were having this discussion, an Athenian man entered, announcing that the barbarian had entered Attica and was setting fire to everything. For the army which was marching through Boeotia with Xerxes had set fire to the city of the Thespians, which the citizens had already left and gone to the Peloponnese, and similarly they had set fire to the city of the Plataeans. It had come to Athens and was destroying everything in the surrounding area. They burned Thespeia and Plataea when they learned from the Thebans that these cities were not prepared to surrender to the Persians.

**8.51**

After the crossing of the Hellespont, where they would begin their march, the barbarians had taken one month to cross into Europe. After three months, they had now arrived in Attica, when Calliades was in office. They captured

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the deserted city of Athens, only finding a few men in the temple, the stewards and some poor men. They had fortified the acropolis with doors and planks, defending themselves against their attackers here. They had not gone to Salamis because of their weakness but also because they thought that they had correctly interpreted the Delphic oracle which had prophesied that a “wooden wall” would be impregnable. They thought that their wooden fortification was the one prophesied and not the ships.

### 8.52

The Persians encamped on the hill opposite the Acropolis, which the Athenians call the Areopagus and laid siege to them in the following way. They set light to arrows wrapped with tow and fired them at the barricade. The besieged Athenians defended themselves, although they were in a very bad way and their barricade had let them down. They did not accept the terms of surrender offered by the Pisistratids but instead continued to defend themselves by coming up with plans. When the barbarians approached the gates, they rolled down huge boulders. For a long while Xerxes was not able to defeat them and had no idea how he might do so.

### 8.53

At last, in their despair, the barbarians found an entrance; for the Oracle had decreed that all of Attica must become subject to the Persians. In front of the acropolis, behind the gates and the entrance, there was a place which was unguarded because no-one expected that anyone would climb up that way. In this very place some men climbed up near the shrine of Aglaurus, the daughter of Cecrops, although it was a sheer cliff. When the Athenians saw that they had climbed up onto the acropolis, some hurled themselves over the wall and were killed, others fled to the inner chamber. The first Persians to climb up made for the gates, opened them and then killed those who had sought sanctuary. When they had killed all the Athenians, they plundered the temple and set fire to the whole acropolis.

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**8.54**

Now that Xerxes was undoubtedly in control of Athens, he sent a messenger to ride to Susa to announce his current success to Artabanus. On the day after the messenger was sent he gathered together the Athenian exiles who were part of his following and ordered them to go up onto the acropolis and make sacrifices according to their own customs. He either did this because he had seen something in his dreams or because he felt some guilt for burning the temple. The Athenian exiles carried out his instructions.

**8.55**

I will tell you why I have included this. On this same acropolis, there is a shrine of Erechtheus, the earth-born (so he is called). In this shrine there is an olive tree and a salt water pool which, according to the Athenians, were placed there as evidence of their presence by Athena and Poseidon respectively, when they were competing over the area. This very olive tree, along with the rest of the temple, was burned by the Persians. On the day after the acropolis was burned, the Athenians who had been ordered by the king to make a sacrifice went up to the temple. There they saw a shoot emerging from the trunk of about the length of a cubit. They reported this.

**8.56**

When the Greeks on Salamis heard about the situation on the acropolis of the Athenians, they were in such shock that some of the admirals did not wait to make a decision on whatever they were discussing but instead rushed on board their ships and hoisted their sails to seek refuge elsewhere. Those who were left behind resolved to fight to defend the Isthmus. Night came and they disbanded the assembly and went on board their ships.

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**8.57**

Then Mnesiphilos, an Athenian, asked Themistocles, who had arrived on the ship, what had been decided. When he learned that the decision had been to sail to the Isthmus and to fight there for the Peloponnese, he said, "If they sail away from Salamis, you will have no country to fight for. Each contingent will make for their own city, and neither Eurybiades, nor any other man will be able to stop the fleet being disbanded. Greece will be lost due to this poor decision. But if there is any other way, go and try to overturn what has been decided, if there is any chance that you might be able to persuade Eurybiades to change his mind and stay here."

**8.58**

Themistocles agreed with this advice and, making no reply, he went straight to Eurybiades' ship. When he arrived he said that he wanted to discuss a mutually-beneficial arrangement. Eurybiades told him to come aboard and say what he wanted to say. And so Themistocles sat next to him and repeated everything he had heard from Mnesiphilos, as if it were all his own idea, and he added much more besides, until he pleaded with and finally persuaded Eurybiades to leave his ship and call an assembly of the admirals.

**8.59**

When they were assembled, it is said that, before Eurybiades had given the reason why he had called the admirals together, Themistocles spoke for a long time and with great passion. As he was speaking, Adimantus son of Ocytus, the Corinthian admiral, said, "O Themistocles, in the games, those who false-start are beaten with rods". In his defence, Themistocles said, "But those who delay do not win the prize".

**8.60**

For the time being, he answered the Corinthian gently then, turning towards Eurybiades, he said none of what he had said before, namely that they would

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disband if they left Salamis, for it would have done him no good whatsoever to suggest, in their presence, that the allies would behave in a cowardly fashion. He had another idea and said the following, "It is your responsibility to save Greece, if you listen to me and stay here and do not follow the advice of others to retreat to the Isthmus. Listen to me and then make your decision. Joining battle off the Isthmus, you will be fighting in open water where we will be at a disadvantage as our ships are heavier and fewer in number. You will also lose Salamis, Megara and Aegina, even if we win the rest. And their land army will follow their fleet. And so you will lead them into the Peloponnese and you will endanger all of Greece. But if you do as I say, you will discover the following advantages. First, by engaging them in narrow straits, few against many, we will win a great victory; this is the likeliest outcome of this sort of battle. For fighting in the narrows benefits us just as fighting in the open sea would benefit them. And Salamis, where our women and children have been left behind, is saved. And there is this, for you the most important point: by staying here, just as much as if you leave for the Isthmus, you will be fighting for the Peloponnese nor, if you do the right thing, will you lead them to the Isthmus. And if it turns out as I expect it will, and we win with our ships, the barbarians will never reach the Isthmus nor will they advance any further than Attica, they will instead leave in disorder. We will benefit from saving Megara and Aegina and Salamis, where it has been foretold to us that we will defeat our enemies. Predictable outcomes can usually be expected by men who plan thoughtfully. Men who do not cannot expect anything and nor will the gods help their human undertakings".

### 8.61

After Themistocles had said this, Adimantus the Corinthian attacked him again, ordering him to be silent as his country was no more and urging Eurybiades not to give a say to a stateless man. He told Themistocles to join the council once he had a city to speak for. He said this to him because Athens had been captured and destroyed. Then Themistocles gave a long and aggressive speech about

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Adimantus and the Corinthians, making it clear that the Athenians had a city and a land far greater than his for as long as they had two hundred fully manned ships under their command. For no other Greek contingent could push them away, if they attacked.

### 8.62

Saying this, he turned the focus of his speech to Eurybiades, speaking more vehemently than before, "If you stay here you will show yourself to be a noble man, if you do not you will be sealing the fate of Greece; for our ships mean everything in this war. Listen to me. If you do not do as I say, we, as we are, will put on board our households and sail to Siris in Italy which is an ancient colony of ours and oracles say that we will settle there one day. And you, bereft of such allies, will then have cause to remember my words."

### 8.63

When Themistocles said this, Eurybiades changed his mind; I think that he did so largely because he was afraid that the Athenians would leave if he took his ships to the Isthmus and that, if the Athenians left, he would no longer be able to challenge the Persians with the ships he had left. So he chose Themistocles' plan, to stay and fight a sea battle where they were.

## 8.67–103

### 8.67

When these recruits were arriving in Athens, except for the Parians who had stayed behind in Cythnus watching anxiously to see which way the battle might go, the rest arrived in Phalerum. Xerxes himself went down to the ships as he wanted to talk with and hear the opinions of those who were sailing with him. When he had arrived he sat down and the admirals of the fleet, who had been summoned along with the captains from the ships, were there. They sat

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according to the honour which the king had given to each of them: first was the king of Sidon, then the king of Tyre and then the rest in turn. When they had sat down in order, each following the one before, Xerxes sent Mardonius to ask each of them if he should start the sea battle.

### 8.68

Starting with the king of Sidon, Mardonius went around questioning them. They all gave the same opinion: that they should fight a naval battle. But Artemisia said the following, "Tell this to the king from me, Mardonius. I have been among the bravest and best fighters in the sea battles around Euboea and it is right that I should speak my mind and tell you what I think is the best course of action for you. And so I say this to you – keep your ships back and do not start a sea battle. For, when fighting at sea, their men are as much stronger than yours as men are stronger than women. Why do you need to risk everything you have on sea battles? Haven't you already taken Athens, the main object of your expedition? Don't you already have the rest of Hellas? No man stands in your way. Those who did resist you got what they deserved. I will tell you what I think your enemies will do. If you do not engage in a sea battle but instead hold your ships here and stay close to the land or even advance towards the Peloponnese, you will easily get what you came here for. For the Greeks are not able to hold out against you for long, you will cause them to disperse, each will flee to his own city. I have discovered that they have no food on this island, if you lead your land army into the Peloponnese, the contingents who have come from there are unlikely to remain here and fight on behalf of the Athenians. If you engage in a sea battle straightaway, I am concerned that if something bad happens to your fleet, this will affect the land army. Think on this also, o king, good men usually end up with bad slaves whereas the slaves of bad men are usually reliable. You are the best of all men and, consequently, you have bad slaves, those men who call themselves your allies: Egyptians, Cyprians, Cilicians, Pamphylans; not a useful man amongst them".

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**8.69**

When she had said this to Mardonius, all Artemisia's friends thought her words were a mistake and that the king would react badly and do her some harm for saying that he should not fight a sea battle. But those who did not like her and were resentful of the honour which she was afforded in preference to all the other allies, were pleased and looked forward to her answer destroying her reputation. But when her opinion was reported to Xerxes, he was very pleased by what she had said. He had always thought her to be a sensible woman but now he held her in even higher esteem. Nevertheless he gave orders for the opinion of the majority to be followed, thinking that they had fought badly at Euboea because he had not been there, whereas this time he was here to watch them fighting.

**8.70**

The order to set sail was now given and the Persians sailed towards Salamis and took their time to organise themselves. There was not enough time left in the day to begin a sea battle at that time, for night was drawing in and they made their preparations for the next day. But amongst the Greeks there was terror and dread, especially with those from the Peloponnese who feared that in remaining at Salamis to fight for the Athenians they would be defeated and then barricaded and besieged on an island, while their own land was left unprotected. During the following night, the land army of the barbarians marched towards the Peloponnese.

**8.71**

The Greeks had devised every plan to prevent the barbarians from invading by land. As soon as the Peloponnesians had heard that Leonidas and his men had been killed at Thermopylae, they had rushed together from their cities and set up camp at the Isthmus; their general was the brother of Leonidas, Cleombrotus son of Anaxandrides. From their camp there, they had rendered the Scironian

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road impassable and, following deliberations, they had decided to build a wall across the Isthmus. There were many thousands there and every one of them was working hard and so the task was completed. They piled up stones and bricks and logs and baskets filled with sand and there was no rest for the workers, toiling day and night to finish the task.

### 8.72

The Greeks who helped at the Isthmus with their entire populations were as follows: the Spartans, all the Arcadians, the Eleans, the Corinthians, the Sicyonians, the Epidaurians, the Phliasians, the Troezenians and the population of Hermione. These were those who had come to help, united with concern for Greece in her hour of need. None of this mattered to the rest of the Peloponnesian states even though the Olympic and Carneian festivals had already taken place.

### 8.73

Seven communities live in the Peloponnese: two of these, the Arcadians and the Cynurians are native to the country and live now where they always have, one race, the Achaeans, have never left the Peloponnese since they arrived there to live from another country. The remaining four out of the seven communities have come to the Peloponnese from elsewhere: these are the Dorians, the Aetolians, the Dryopes and the Lemnians. The Dorians have many notable cities, the Aetolians only have Elis, the Dryopians have Hermione and the city of Asine which is near Laconian Cardamyle and the Lemnians have all the Paroreatae. The Cynurians, namely the people of Orneae and the surrounding area, are considered to be the only native Ionians but they have been ruled by the Argives for such a long time that they have become Dorians. The remaining cities of these seven territories, other than those I have mentioned, all remained neutral. In my honest opinion, if they were not against the Persians, then they were with them.

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**8.74**

And so the Greeks at the Isthmus involved themselves with this task, convinced that everything would depend on them, as they had no confidence that the ships would gain a victory. The Greeks in Salamis who had heard of the work done at the Isthmus nevertheless continued to fear, but more for the Peloponnese than for themselves. Then a rumour started, whispered from man to man, expressing amazement at Eurybiades' foolish decision. Finally this burst into the open and an assembly was held where the same arguments which had been made before were made again: that they should sail away to the Peloponnese and take their chances over this land, rather than stay where they were and fight for a country which had already been conquered. The Athenians, the Aeginetans and the Megarians all argued that they should remain at Salamis.

**8.75**

Then Themistocles, when he was being defeated in the debate by the arguments of the Peloponnesians, sneaked out of the assembly and sent a man in a boat to the Persian camp with a message which he needed to deliver. The man's name was Sicinnus, he was a servant of Themistocles and had been the personal slave of his children. Long after these events, Themistocles made him a Thespian citizen, when the Thespians were accepting citizens. Themistocles also made Sicinnus a wealthy man. When he had arrived in his boat, Sicinnus said the following to the Persian admirals, "The Athenian admiral has sent me to you without the knowledge of the other Greeks, in secret (he is a supporter of the king and wants you to win rather than the Greeks). He wants me to tell you that the Greeks have given up and are planning to flee and that now is the perfect time for you to carry out your plans, if you stop them from escaping. They do not agree with each other and no longer intend to oppose you, you will soon see that they will fight each other: those who support you against those who oppose you".

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**8.76**

Once he had said this to them, he left quickly. The Persians believed the message and acted accordingly. They landed many men on Psyttalea, an island which lies between Salamis and the mainland. Then, in the middle of the night, they pushed up their western wing towards Salamis to attempt to encircle the Greeks. The ships moored off Ceos and Cynosura also advanced and, with their ships, they occupied the whole strait as far as Munychia. They sent out their ships so that the Greeks would not be able to flee but should instead be blockaded at Salamis and then pay the penalty for fighting at Artemisium. They landed on the island called Psyttalea as, when the sea battle began, this island would be where all the shipwrecked sailors and bits of wreckage would come ashore (for the island lay right where the battle would be taking place). They could then save any of their own men who were washed ashore and finish off any of the enemy. They did all of this quietly so the Greeks would not know what they were planning. They made their preparations at night, taking no time to rest.

**8.77**

I have no way of proving that oracles are not true, their messages are clear and I have no desire to speak against them when researching such events as these.

“When they bridge the holy coast of Artemis of the golden sword  
 And sea-washed Cynosura with ships,  
 With raging expectation, having destroyed glorious Athens.  
 Divine justice will quench mighty insatiability, the son of arrogance  
 Raging terribly, intending to drink in everything.  
 Bronze will clash on bronze, Ares will turn the sea red with blood.  
 Then far-seeing Zeus and queen Victory will bring the day of freedom to  
 Greece.”

Considering what followed and seeing how clear this oracle of Bacis is, I do not intend to speak against this nor will I listen to others who do so.

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**8.78**

A long and forceful exchange of views arose between the admirals at Salamis, for they did not yet know that the barbarians had encircled them with their ships, instead they thought that they were still in the positions in which they had seen them during the day before.

**8.79**

As the admirals were debating, Aristides son of Lysimachus crossed over from Aegina, he was an Athenian man who had been exiled by the people. Knowing what I know about his way of life, I think that he was the best and most just man in the whole city of Athens. This man stood up in the assembly and called for Themistocles, not because Themistocles was a friend of his, in fact he was his worst enemy. However, their differences had been forgotten in view of the importance of the present situation and Aristides called for Themistocles so that the two could talk. Aristides had heard already that the Peloponnesians were intending to sail away to the Isthmus. When Themistocles had come out of the assembly, Aristides said this to him, "We should still contend with each other, as we always have, but now our rivalry should be about which of us can be of greater service to our country. I say to you that the Peloponnesians can say as much or as little as they like about sailing away from here, the outcome will be the same. From what I have seen myself, I tell you now that the Corinthians and even Eurybiades himself will not be able to sail away, however much they want to. We are surrounded by a ring of enemy ships. Go back in and let them know." Themistocles answered him:

**8.80**

"This is good advice, you also bring good news; for you have seen with your own eyes what I hoped would happen. You should know that I caused the Persians to behave in this way. I had to, because the Greeks did not want to begin the battle so I needed to compel them to take action. But, since you have come

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bringing good news, you should tell them yourself. If I tell them they will think that I am making it all up and will not believe that the barbarians are making these manoeuvres. So you go in and tell them what is happening. If they believe you when you tell them, then all is well and good, if they don't believe you then that is also fine. There is no chance they will be able to escape if we are indeed surrounded as you say."

**8.81**

So Aristides returned to the assembly and told them, saying that he had just come from Aegina and had sailed through the blockade unseen but with difficulty. He told them that the Greek fleet was indeed surrounded by Xerxes' ships and he advised them to prepare to defend themselves. He said this, then he left and all the discussions started again, for most of the admirals did not believe the news which he had brought.

**8.82**

While they continued to doubt the truth of the report, a trireme of Tenians who were deserting arrived, their captain was Panaetius son of Sosimenes, and they reported the whole truth of the matter. Because of this action the names of the Tenians were engraved on the tripod which was set up at Delphi to commemorate those who had defeated the barbarian. The fleet was swelled with this ship which had come over to Salamis from the Persians and the Lemnian ship which had come over earlier at Artemisium and so the Greeks now had 380 ships. For these two ships made it up to a round number.

**8.83**

Now that the Greeks had been convinced by the reports of the Tenians, they prepared for battle. The sun was just rising and those who were preparing to fight on board the ships were called to an assembly where Themistocles made a speech which was his best yet. Throughout his speech he compared the good and the bad which all men have in their natures and lives and told them that

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they must choose the right path. He then brought his speech to a conclusion and ordered the men to go on board their ships. Just as they were doing so, the trireme which had been sent to bring back the Sons of Aeacus arrived from Aegina.

#### 8.84

The Greeks advanced in full force, the barbarians immediately attacked them. The rest of the Greeks began backing up and beaching their ships but Aminias of Pallene, an Athenian man, went out in front and rammed a ship. The two ships became entangled and neither was able to pull away from the other, but now the others came to help Aminias and joined in with the battle. This is how the Athenians say that the battle began, the Aeginetans say that the ship which had brought the Sons of Aeacus from Aegina was the one which began the battle. The following is also said: a ghost of a woman appeared and called out commands for the entire Greek fleet, first rebuking them in this way, "You fools, how much further back do you plan to go?"

#### 8.85

The Phoenicians, who were on the western wing next to Eleusis, were set up opposite to the Athenians; the Ionians, on the eastern wing next to the Piraeus, were opposite the Spartans. Only a few of these Ionians fought poorly, in accordance with Themistocles' instructions, most of them fought well. I know the names of many captains who took Greek ships but I will not list them, I will only mention Theomestor son of Androdamas and Phylacus son of Histiaeus, both of them were from Samos. I have only included their names because, for this act, Theomestor was made ruler of Samos by the Persians and Phylacus was recorded as a king's benefactor and given a great amount of land. In the Persian language, these benefactors are known as "orosangae".

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**8.86**

This was what happened with two of the ships but the majority of the Persian fleet was sunk at Salamis, some were destroyed by the Athenians and some by the Aeginetans. The Greeks fought in order and with tactics, the barbarians had no organisation and did not carry out a clear battle plan: therefore, it was entirely predictable that things would turn out as they did. Even so, they fought much better on that day than they had at Euboea; fearing Xerxes, every man fought with more determination as each man thought that the king might be watching him.

**8.87**

Considering all the other ships, I cannot say exactly how each of the Greeks and the barbarians fought. But Artemisia's actions caused her to rise even higher than before in the king's estimations. Things were not going well in the battle for the king and at this point Artemisia was being pursued by a ship from Attica. She could not get away because other Persian ships were in her way for she had been the closest to the enemy, so she decided that the following action would most benefit her. With the ship from Attica behind her, she rammed a fellow Persian ship, which carried men from Calyndus and Damasithymus, the king of Calyndus. Now, it may have been that they had quarrelled when they were still at the Hellespont and she intended therefore to ram him, or perhaps the Calyndian ship had gone across her path and it was an accident. Which of these it was, I cannot say. But she rammed and sunk the ship, which was a lucky double bonus for her; for when the captain of the ship from Attica saw that she had rammed a barbarian ship, he thought that Artemisia's ship was either Greek or that she was a barbarian deserter fighting on the Greek side, and so he turned his attention to other ships.

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**8.88**

The obvious benefit was that Artemisia's ship was not sunk and able to escape, but it also happened that the sinking of a fellow Persian ship actually won her some favour in the eyes of Xerxes. For it is said that the king only saw her ramming a ship and one of those standing with him said, "My lord, do you see how well Artemisia is fighting? She has just sunk an enemy ship." Xerxes asked him if it was really Artemisia who had done this and he was told that they could be sure that it was, as they had clearly recognised the ensign on her ship. They all presumed that the ship which she had destroyed was Greek. For out of this whole story which I have told you, the luckiest part (for Artemisia, at least) was that no sailor from the Calyndian ship survived to speak against her. In response to her action, Xerxes is reported to have said the following, "My men have become women and my women men." This is what Xerxes is supposed to have said.

**8.89**

In this dreadful battle for the Persians, Ariabignes the son of Darius and brother of Xerxes, died. Many other famous names from amongst the Persians and the Medes and their allies, along with a few of the Greeks; since they could swim and those whose ships had been sunk but who had not been killed in hand to hand fighting, swam across to Salamis. As most of the barbarians did not know how to swim, they drowned. It was when the front ranks turned in flight that most of the destruction occurred. For those in the rear ranks, trying to push their ships forward so that they might prove themselves to the king, ran into their own ships which were trying to flee.

**8.90**

This also happened during the chaos of the battle. Some of the Phoenicians, whose ships had been destroyed, approached the king to accuse the Ionians of treason, saying that they had had a hand in the loss of their ships. As it turned out, the Ionian admirals were not put to death and the Phoenicians who

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accused them were given the following reward for their actions. As they had been talking, a Samothracian ship rammed a ship from Attica. While the Attic ship was sinking, a ship from Aegina reached ramming speed and crashed into the Samothracian ship. However, the Samothracians were spear-throwers and, they drove the soldiers off the ship which had rammed them and boarded it themselves, claiming the ship in the process. These events saved the Ionians, for when Xerxes saw this spectacular action, he turned to the Phoenicians and since, in his desperate frustration, he was by now blaming everybody, he gave orders for them to be beheaded on the grounds that cowards should not make accusations against braver men. Whenever Xerxes saw any conspicuous act of bravery from his own sailors, as he sat watching the battle on a hill called Aegaleos which faced Salamis, he found out the name of the captain and his scribes also wrote down the name of his father and of his city. It was unlucky for the Phoenicians that Ariaramnes, a Persian man who was well-disposed towards the Ionians, was there. So the Phoenicians were dealt with in this way.

### 8.91

When the barbarians had turned in flight and were heading towards Phalerum, the Aeginetans lay in wait for them in the strait and acted in a way worthy of further mention. For, in the chaos of battle, the Athenians sank any ship regardless of whether it was resisting or trying to escape, the Aeginetans did for any which sailed out of the strait. And so any ships which escaped the Athenians ran into the Aeginetans.

### 8.92

At this point, two ships came together: Themistocles' ship, in pursuit of an enemy vessel, and the ship of Polycritus son of Crius of Aegina, which had just rammed a Sidonian ship. This Sidonian ship had captured the Aeginetan ship which had been on guard duty at Skiathos and Pytheas the son of Ischenous had been on this ship. The Persians had brought him on board as a prisoner in admiration of his bravery, as he was badly wounded. This Sidonian ship had been taking

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Pytheas to the Persians and so, instead, once the ship had been captured, he had made it safely to Aegina. When Polycritus saw the Attic ship, recognising the admiral's ensign, he shouted over to Themistocles, showing him how ridiculous it was to claim that the Aeginetans were supporters of the Persians. Polycritus threw such taunts at Themistocles as he was on his way to ram another ship. The barbarians who managed to escape fled to their land army at Phalerum.

### 8.93

In the sea battle, the Aeginetans most distinguished themselves, then the Athenians. Amongst individuals, Polycritus, an Aeginetan, and two Athenians: Eumenes of Anagyrus and Aminias of Pallene, the man who had pursued Artemisia. If he had known that Artemisia had been on that ship, he would not have broken off the chase before he either captured her or lost his own ship in the act. For these were the instructions which had been given to the Athenian captains and, in addition, a prize of ten thousand drachmae had been promised to anyone who captured her alive. For they thought that it was dreadful for a woman to come to attack Athens; but she escaped, as I said earlier. The others, whose ships remained intact, were at Phalerum.

### 8.94

The Athenians say that Adimantus, the Corinthian admiral, was struck with fear and panicked at the very start of the battle when the first clashes occurred, and that he hoisted his sails and fled. The Corinthians had seen their admiral fleeing and done the same. It is said that when the fugitives were passing the temple of Athena Sciras on Salamis they ran into a ship which appeared to be sent by a god, as no-one admitted to sending it. The Corinthians knew nothing about what had happened to the rest of the fleet, this is why it was thought that there was something divine involved in its appearance. As it approached the Corinthian fleet someone from the ship shouted, "Adimantus, you have turned your ships in flight, and betrayed the Greeks. But the Greeks have won as complete a victory over their enemies as they ever hoped they might." When

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Adimantus did not believe them, they told him that they would be prepared to be taken as hostages and killed if it was not true that the Greeks had won the battle. At that point Adimantus and the rest all turned their ships about and returned to the camp when the battle was over. This is what the Athenians say about the actions of the Corinthians in the battle, however the Corinthians do not agree and say that they were amongst the bravest fighters in the battle; and the rest of the Greeks support their story.

**8.95**

Aristides son of Lysimachus, the Athenian man whose excellence of character I mentioned a little earlier, made the following contribution to the rout at Salamis. Taking many of the heavily-armed Athenians soldiers who had been placed along the shore of Salamis, he led them to the island of Psyttalea and they slaughtered every Persian on that island.

**8.96**

When the battle was finally over, the Greeks towed all the wrecks which happened to still be afloat to Salamis and made ready for another battle, thinking that the king might attack again with the ships which he had left. But the west wind caught up many of the surviving wrecks and pushed them to a beach on Attica which is called Colias; so that all of the rest of the prophecy about the sea battle which had been said by Bacis and Musaeus was fulfilled. Also, many years before these events the following lines, the significance of which had eluded all the Greeks, had been included in the prophecies of an Athenian soothsayer, Lysistratus.

“The ladies of Colias will cook their food on oars.”

This happened after the king had left.

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**8.97**

Xerxes, when he had realised the extent of the disaster, feared that one of the Ionians might suggest to the Greeks that they go up to the Hellespont and destroy his bridges, or that the Greeks might even think of this for themselves. In this event he would be cut off in Europe and there would be a very real danger that he would be killed there, so he planned to flee. But, so that his plans would not be obvious either to the Greeks or to his own troops, he tried to construct a mole across to Salamis by tying together some Phoenician barges, which might serve both as a bridge and as a blockade. He made other preparations for war as if he was planning to fight another sea battle. All those who watched him preparing in this way were convinced that he fully intended to stay where he was and fight again. However Mardonius was not convinced by any of this as he knew Xerxes better than anyone.

**8.98**

As Xerxes was making these preparations, he sent a message to Persia with a report of the recent defeat. There is nothing mortal which moves faster than these Persian messengers; the Persians came up with the following system. It is said that they have as many men and horses lined up as there are days in the journey. Each team of man and horse are set a day's ride apart from each other. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness checks their speed. The first rider passes to the second, the second to the third and the message crosses from one to the next just as in Greece there is the torch race in honour of Hephaestus. The Persian name for such a horse-relay system is "angareion".

**8.99**

When the first message arrived in Susa, bringing the news that Xerxes had taken Athens, the Persians back at home were so delighted that they covered every road with myrtle, burned incense and attended sacrifices and festivals. But when the second message followed they were so distressed that they all tore

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their tunics and wailed and wept ceaselessly, putting the blame on Mardonius. The Persians were not as worried about the loss of the ships as they were fearful for Xerxes himself.

### 8.100

The Persians continued to behave in this way every day until Xerxes himself put a stop to it all by returning home. Mardonius, noticing that Xerxes had taken the defeat in the sea battle very badly and suspecting that he was planning to flee from Athens, considered his own position. He thought that it was likely that he would be punished for urging the king to mount a campaign against Greece, and thought that it was better for him to gamble on either taking Greece or dying nobly in the effort. He preferred the option of trying to take Greece. Thinking through all of this he approached the king with the following suggestion, "My lord, do not grieve or worry so much over our present situation. This whole contest does not depend on wooden ships but on infantry and cavalry. Not one of these men who now think that they have beaten you would disembark from his ship and dare to stand against you, none from the mainland would either. Those that have withstood us have paid the penalty. If you agree then let us attack the Peloponnese immediately. Or, if you would rather wait, we can do that also. Do not lose heart; for there is no escape for the Greeks and they will be punished for all they are doing now and for all they have done before. They will be your slaves. The best idea then is to put this plan into action. However, if you have decided to lead the army home, I have another plan for this eventuality. My king, do not let the Persians become a laughing-stock to the Greeks. For if things have gone badly for you, you cannot find fault with the Persians for this, you cannot say that we have behaved in a cowardly manner. If the Phoenicians and Egyptians and Cypriots and Cilicians have let us down, the Persians cannot be blamed for this defeat. So now, since the Persians are not to blame, listen to my advice; if you have decided not to stay here then lead the majority of your army home, leave me to deliver Greece to you in chains, and let me choose three hundred thousand men for this purpose."

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**8.101**

Xerxes listened to these words, and despite the bleak situation, he was pleased and encouraged and told Mardonius that he would consider both options and decide which to follow. When he took advice from some Persians picked for this purpose, he decided to send for Artemisia to take part in the discussions, since, in the previous council, she had been the only one who had known what to do. When Artemisia arrived, Xerxes sent away the other Persian advisers and spear-bearers and said the following, "Mardonius is telling me to stay here and attack the Peloponnese, saying to me that the Persians and the land army are not responsible for what happened in the sea battle and that they would like to prove themselves. He is urging me to follow this plan; alternatively he wants to choose three hundred thousand men and deliver Greece to me in chains, while I lead the rest of the army home. You gave me good advice previously when you told me not to offer the sea battle, so advise me now which of these options I should choose."

**8.102**

As he had asked for her advice, Artemisia said the following, "O king, it is difficult to say what would be the best course of action, however, with things being as they are, I think that you should march back to Persia and leave Mardonius here with the troops he requires, if he is keen to do what he says and feels that he can deliver on his promises. If he takes Greece, as he says he will, and if his plan works, the achievement will be yours, my lord. For your slaves will have done the work. If things do not go according to Mardonius' plan, this will be no great disaster for you, so long as you survive and your household remains intact. For as long as you and your household are safe, the Greeks will often have to fight many battles for their existence. If Mardonius is lost, that is of no great importance, nor will the Greeks have won in any real sense by defeating him, they will have only killed your slave. You have achieved your purpose, you are returning home after burning Athens to the ground."

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**8.103**

Xerxes was very pleased with this advice; for she had said what he himself was thinking. I do not think he would have stayed in Greece even if every man and every woman in his army advised him to do so, as he was so concerned for his safety. He thanked Artemisia and despatched her to take his sons to Ephesus, for he had brought some bastard sons along with him.

**8.108–110****8.108**

When it was day the Greeks seeing that the army was still in position expected the Persian navy still to be at Phalerum; they thought that there would be another sea battle, and they got ready to defend themselves. When they found out that the ships had sailed, they at once decided to pursue them. When they got to Andros without catching sight of Xerxes' fleet, they stopped and debated what to do next. Themistocles' view was that they should sail on through the islands in pursuit as far as the Hellespont so that they could destroy the bridges. But Eurybiades proposed a very different course of action, claiming that if they did what Themistocles suggested it would be a calamity for Greece. If the Persian king were cut off from Asia and compelled to stay in Europe, he would be forced to renew his campaign, for if he did not his situation would not improve and there would be no escape home in the future and his army would starve; however if he vigorously renewed his campaign all of Europe would join him city by city and people by people, either because they were conquered or by agreement before this happened. The Persians would get their supplies from the annual harvest. As Xerxes had decided after his defeat at sea not to stay in Europe, Eurybiades thought that he should be allowed to escape back to Asia, as the war could then be carried on in his territory. The other generals from the Peloponnese also took this view.

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**8.109**

When Themistocles realised that he would not persuade the majority to sail to the Hellespont, he adopted a different approach and addressed the Athenians (they were the most annoyed at the enemy's flight and were eager to sail to the Hellespont, even if they went alone, if the others were not willing to go): 'On many occasions' said Themistocles, 'both when I have been present myself and still more that I have been told about, I know that men who have been forced back in defeat can take up the fight again and throw off their earlier feebleness. We have had the luck to save our country and ourselves by driving back so great a host of men: let us not pursue them as they escape. This was not achieved by us, but by the gods and the heroes, who are jealous that one man should be king of both Asia and Europe, especially such a godless and arrogant one. He treated sacred things as if they belonged to men when he threw down and burned the statues of the gods; he also whipped the sea and put chains on it. As fortune is smiling on us, we should stay in Greece for the present and look after ourselves and our families. Let us rebuild our houses and take care of the sowing, as we have driven the barbarian out of our land. Let us wait until spring to sail to the Hellespont and Ionia.' Themistocles said this because he wanted to have a claim on the king's gratitude in the future, so that if he fell out of favour with the Athenians he would have somewhere to escape to – this did in fact turn out to be needed.

**8.110**

Themistocles deceived the Athenians and persuaded them to follow his advice; in the past he had always been considered clever, but now they thought him both clever and an excellent adviser, so they were very willing to do exactly what he suggested. As soon as this was decided, Themistocles sent men by boat to tell the king what he had ordered; these were men he believed would keep quiet even under torture. One of these was a servant Sicinnus, whom he had sent to Xerxes before. When they came to Attica, some stayed at the boat, while

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Sicinnus went inland to Xerxes and said: 'Themistocles, the son of Neocles, the best and cleverest of all the Greek allies and an Athenian general, has sent me to tell you that Themistocles the Athenian wishes to help you and has persuaded the Greeks not to pursue your ships or destroy the bridges over the Hellespont, even though they want to. Go peacefully on your way.'

### 8.117-120

#### 8.117

They paid this penalty. The Persians, when they had journeyed through Thrace came to the crossing point and rushed to cross to Abydos over the Hellespont in their ships. They found the floating bridge no longer secure but broken by a storm. There they halted and procured more food than on the road; then, because they ate without restraint and changed the water which they were drinking, many more of those who were left in the army died. The rest came with Xerxes to Sardis.

#### 8.118

There is another version of the story to tell. When Xerxes had travelled from Athens to Eion on the Strymon, he went no further by land, but he handed the army over to Hydarnes to lead to the Hellespont and he got on board a Phoenician ship to take him back to Asia. As he was sailing, his boat was struck by a strong wind from the Strymon which also stirred the seas. The ship did not fare well in the bad weather because it was top-heavy, as the men accompanying Xerxes on deck were so numerous. The king became so afraid that he asked the captain with a shout if there was any chance of safety, and he said, "Master, there is no hope, unless we get rid of some of these sailors." When he heard these words, Xerxes is said to have addressed the following remarks to the soldiers, "Persian men, now some of you have a chance to prove how much you care about your king, for it would appear that my safety depends on you."

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When he had said this, the soldiers kissed the deck in front of him and hurled themselves into the sea, and the ship came safely to Asia, now that it was lighter. As soon as Xerxes had disembarked onto the land, he did the following: first he gave a golden crown to the captain, for saving the life of his king, then he gave orders for his head to be cut off as he had been responsible for the death of so many Persian men.

**8.119**

This is the other story which is told about the return home of Xerxes, but I do not believe the story itself or anything of what happened to those Persians. For if such advice had come from the captain to Xerxes, I am absolutely convinced that Xerxes would have ordered the Persians, the very best of the Persians I might add, who were on deck to go down into the ship's hold, he would then have given orders for an equal number of the Phoenician rowers to be thrown into the sea. But, actually, the real story is the one which I told earlier: Xerxes returned to Asia by road with the rest of his army.

**8.120**

This is an important piece of evidence. It is known that when Xerxes came to Abdera on his way back, he made a bond of friendship with them and gave them a golden sword and gilded tiara. The people of Abdera say, but I do not believe them, that Xerxes had not loosened his girdle until he had reached there from Athens, as he was only then safe. Abdera lies nearer to the Hellespont than the Styrmon and Eion, where they claim that he went on board a ship.

**8.140–144****8.140**

Alexander son of Amyntas had this ancestry. He came to Athens, sent by Mardonius, and said the following, "Men of Athens, Mardonius says the following:

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a message has come to me from the king saying the following: I forgive the Athenians for all the wrongs they have done to me and Mardonius should make sure firstly that their land is returned to them, and then that they should be able to choose any other additional land which they can then govern themselves, they can rebuild the temples which I burnt, if they come to an agreement with me. As these are the instructions, I must see that these instructions are carried out, unless you have an objection. In this case, I say the following to you. Why are you mad enough to start a war with the king? For you cannot overthrow him, nor are you able to resist him forever. You have seen the size of Xerxes' army and what they are capable of, you know of the force which I bring here with me. So, even if you overthrow and conquer us, and there is no hope of this, if you see things rationally, another, greater force will come. So do not plan to go against the king and risk your own country and always then be running scared, make peace instead. It is possible to do so on favourable terms, for the king is asking for a settlement. Be free men and agree to an alliance with us without any deceit or trickery. Athenians, this is the message which Mardonius has instructed me to give to you. I will not speak to you about the good will I feel towards you personally, because you have heard this before, but I urge you to follow Mardonius' advice. For I am convinced that you will not be able to last out forever in a war with Xerxes; if I had seen such strength in you, I would never have come here with these suggestions. For the power of the king is beyond human comprehension and it is far-reaching. If you do not agree to these terms, which are favourable and on which they are ready to agree, I fear what may happen to you. Of all the allies, you live right on the campaign trail and you alone will always be the one destroyed, since your country is in no man's land. So agree with him. This should be worth a lot to you; the Great King is willing to forgive your actions against him and befriend you, alone of all the other Greeks."

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**8.141**

This was Alexander's message. However the Spartans had learned that Alexander had come to Athens to offer an agreement with the barbarian and they remembered the oracles which had said that it would come to pass that all the Dorians would be driven out of the Peloponnese by the Athenians and the Medes. They were therefore very afraid that the Athenians would make an arrangement with the Persian and immediately decided to send messengers. It happened that both messengers arrived at the same time; for the Athenians had delayed Alexander and waited for the Spartans as they were convinced that, when they learned that a messenger had come from the king to make an agreement, the Spartans would then send messengers as quickly as possible. They had done all of this deliberately so that the Spartans might hear their intentions.

**8.142**

So when Alexander had finished speaking, the messengers from Sparta had their chance to speak, "The Spartans sent us here to implore you not to do anything harmful to Greece and to accept no terms from the barbarian. That would be a shameful and unjust act for any Greek people but for you more than the rest for many reasons. For you started this war, none of the rest of us wanted it. The battle began over your territory first, and now it involves all of Greece. Quite apart from all this, it is unbearable to think that you should be responsible for the Greeks being enslaved when you Athenians have always, up until this point, been known on many occasions as liberators. We grieve alongside you in your hardship, since you have lost two harvests and your territory has been ravaged for a long time now. In recognition of this, the Spartans and your allies declare that they will look after your women and any other household members who are incapable of fighting, for as long as this war lasts. You should not let Alexander the Macedonian win you over by polishing up Mardonius' words. He has to follow orders. As a tyrant he must work alongside a tyrant. You do not

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have to follow orders, if you consider your options carefully. You know that you never get the truth or indeed anything trustworthy from a barbarian." This was what the messengers said.

### 8.143

The Athenians made the following answer to Alexander, "We are well aware the Mede is far more powerful than us, you do not need to try and scare us with this fact. Nevertheless, as lovers of freedom, we will defend ourselves as best we can. You should not try to persuade us to make pacts with the barbarian, we will not agree. Now report to Mardonius that this is the answer of the Athenians: as long as the sun travels across the same path as it does now, we will never make any pact with Xerxes. Trusting in our allies we will fight him without end, defended by those gods and heroes for whom he showed little regard when he burned their homes and gifts. In future, do not come before the Athenians with such words, pretending to help but in truth urging us to act against our gods. We do not want you, as our friend and protector, to suffer any harm from the Athenians."

### 8.144

This was their answer to Alexander, then they said the following to the messengers from Sparta, "It is entirely understandable for the Spartans to fear that we might make an agreement with the barbarian; but it is still shameful that you should think this way. You should know the spirit of Athens better than that; there is not enough gold in the world nor is there any land which is so beautiful or would bring so much honour that we would accept that in return for favouring the Persians and enslaving Greece. There are many important reasons why we should not take this course of action, even if we wanted to. First and most importantly, the homes and gifts of our gods have been destroyed and burnt, we are compelled to exact full revenge for these dishonours, rather than make terms with the one responsible for the offences, next we are Greek, we share the same blood, the same language, the same shrines of the gods and

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methods of sacrifice, the same customs; it would not be right for the Athenians to betray all of this. So know this now, if you did not before, while there remains one Athenian alive, we will make no pacts with Xerxes. However we are grateful to you for your concern for us, that, in consideration for our current misfortune, you are willing to look after our households. Your kindness is more than we could expect, nevertheless we prefer to carry on as we are and will not impose upon your generosity. Now, as the situation is as it is, send your army as quickly as possible. We would imagine that the barbarian will soon be here to invade our country, as soon as he receives the message that we will not do what he says. Before he reaches Attica, we must march to meet him in Boeotia." When they had received this reply from the Athenians, the messengers returned to Sparta.

## Notes



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