

ARTAXERXES אֲרַתַּחְשֶׁרֶשׁ (Ezr 4:8, 11, 23; 6:14; cf. 4:7) and אֲרַתַּחְשֶׁרֶשׁ (Ezra 7:1-Neh 13:6). Artaxerxes was the name of at least three Persian kings: Artaxerxes I Longimanus 465-424; Artaxerxes II Memnon 404-358; and Artaxerxes III Ochus 358-338. The name Artaxerxes may also have been claimed by Arses, son of Artaxerxes III, 338-336 and Bessos, who claimed the throne after Alexander's defeat of Persia.

Ezra 4:7 mentions a letter sent to Artaxerxes by Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of their associates, while Ezra 4:8-23 contains a communication in Aramaic from Rehum and Shimshai, Persian officials, identifying Jerusalem as a rebellious city and reporting about the Jewish rebuilding of Jerusalem, resulting in Artaxerxes ordering a halt in the building activities (Ezra 4:21). According to Ezra 6:14 the Jews finished building the temple according to the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. While this last reference is a notorious crux—for chronological reasons since the temple was dedicated already in 516--all of these references are presumably to Artaxerxes I.

It is generally agreed that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I (445; Neh 2:1). Much more disputed is the date of Ezra, who arrived in Jerusalem in the seventh year of an Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:8). If this is Artaxerxes I, Ezra came in 458; if it is Artaxerxes II, Ezra came in 398. The principal argument in favor of Artaxerxes I is the order suggested by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Those who favor a date for Ezra under Artaxerxes II note the mention of a wall in Ezra 9:9, possibly referring to the wall repaired by Nehemiah, and the fact that the high priest in the time of Nehemiah was Eliashib while in the time of Ezra the high priest was Johanan son of Eliashib (Ezra 10:6). None of the arguments is decisive. A date in the thirty-seventh

year of Artaxerxes I, favored by John Bright and based on a conjectural emendation, has fallen out of favor. See EZRA AND NEHEMIAH, BOOKS OF.

In any case, Ezra and Nehemiah came to Jerusalem according to the biblical account under the auspices of an Artaxerxes. If the Books of Chronicles were written in the fourth century, Artaxerxes II would likely have been the contemporary Persian king, but there is no mention of him or of any Persian king after Cyrus in Chronicles.

Artaxerxes, born as Arsaces, the eldest son of Darius II, had the longest reign of any of the Persian kings. Early on he faced the revolt of his brother Cyrus the younger, who was killed in 401. Egypt had revolted against Persia already in 405 and was not reconquered during the reign of Artaxerxes II. During the reign of Artaxerxes III, Tennes, king of Sidon revolted ca. 349, but the effect of this revolt on Israel cannot be measured.

### **Bibliography**

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