

HERODOTUS Book VIII: Lines 126-144

~4K words (Read aloud time ~30 min + map pointing)

126. Artabazos meanwhile the son of Pharnakes, a man who was held in esteem among the Persians even before this and came to be so yet more after the events about Plataia, was escorting the king as far as the passage with six myriads [92](#) of that army which Mardonios had selected for himself; and when the king was in Asia and Artabazos on his march back came near to Pallene, finding that Mardonios was wintering in Thessaly and Macedonia and was not at present urgent with him to come and join the rest of the army, he thought it not good to pass by without reducing the Potidaians to slavery, whom he had found in revolt: for the men of Potidaia, when the king had marched by them and when the fleet of the Persians had departed in flight from Salamis, had openly made revolt from the Barbarians; and so also had the others done who occupy Pallene.

127. So upon this Artabazos began to besiege Potidaia, and suspecting that the men of Olynthos also were intending revolt from the king, he began to besiege this city too, which was occupied by Bottiaians who had been driven away from the Thermaian gulf by the Macedonians. So when he had taken these men by siege, he brought them forth to a lake and slew them [93](#) there; and the city he delivered to Critobulos of Torone to have in charge, and to the natives of Chalkidike; and thus it was that the Chalkidians got possession of Olynthos.

128. Having taken this city Artabazos set himself to attack Potidaia with vigour, and as he was setting himself earnestly to this work, Timoxeinos the commander of the troops from Skione concerted with him to give up the town by treachery. Now in what manner he did this at the first, I for my part am not able to say, for this is not reported; at last however it happened as follows. Whenever either Timoxeinos wrote a paper wishing to send it to Artabazos, or Artabazos wishing to send one to Timoxeinos, they wound it round by the finger-notches [94](#) of an arrow, and then, putting feathers over the paper, they shot it to a place agreed upon between them. It came however to be found out that Timoxeinos was attempting by treachery to give up Potidaia; for Artabazos, shooting an arrow at the place agreed upon, missed this spot and struck a man of Potidaia in the shoulder; and when he was struck, a crowd came about him, as is apt to happen when there is fighting, and they forthwith took the arrow and having discovered the paper carried it to the commanders. Now there was present an allied force of the other men of Pallene also. Then when the commanders had read the paper and discovered who was guilty of the treachery, they resolved not openly to convict [95](#) Timoxeinos of treachery, for the sake of the city of Skione, lest the men of Skione should be esteemed traitors for all time to come.

129. He then in such a manner as this had been discovered; and when three months had gone by while Artabazos was besieging the town, there came to be a great ebb of the sea backwards, which lasted for a long time; and the Barbarians, seeing that shallow water had been produced, endeavoured to get by into the peninsula of Pallene, [96](#) but when they had passed through two fifth-parts of the distance, and yet three-fifths remained, which they must pass through before they were within Pallene, then there came upon them a great flood-tide of the sea, higher than ever before, as the natives of the place say, though high tides come often.

So those of them who could not swim perished, and those who could were slain by the men of Potidaia who put out to them in boats. The cause of the high tide and flood and of that which befell the Persians was this, as the Potidaians say, namely that these same Persians who perished by means of the sea had committed impiety towards the temple of Poseidon and his image in the suburb of their town; and in saying that this was the cause, in my opinion they say well. The survivors of his army Artabazos led away to Thessaly to join Mardonios. Thus it fared with these who escorted the king on his way.

130. The fleet of Xerxes, so much of it as remained, when it had touched Asia in its flight from Salamis, and had conveyed the king and his army over from the Chersonese to Abydos, passed the winter at Kyme: and when spring dawned upon it, it assembled early at Samos, where some of the ships had even passed the winter; and most of the Persians and Medes still served as fighting-men on board of them. [97](#) To be commanders of them there came Mardontes the son of Bagaios, and Artañntes the son of Artachaies, and with them also Ithamitres was in joint command, who was brother's son to Artañntes and had been added by the choice of Artañntes himself. They then, since they had suffered a heavy blow, did not advance further up towards the West, nor did any one compel them to do so; but they remained still in Samos and kept watch over Ionia, lest it should revolt, having three hundred ships including those of the Ionians; and they did not expect that the Hellenes on their part would come to Ionia, but thought that it would satisfy them to guard their own land, judging from the fact that they had not pursued after them in their flight from Salamis but were well contented then to depart homewards. As regards the sea then their spirit was broken, but on land they thought that Mardonios would get much the advantage. So they being at Samos were taking counsel to do some damage if they could to their enemies, and at the same time they were listening for news how the affairs of Mardonios would fall out.

131. The Hellenes on their part were roused both by the coming on of spring and by the presence of Mardonios in Thessaly. Their land-army had not yet begun to assemble, when the fleet arrived at Egina, in number one hundred and ten ships, and the commander and admiral was Leotychides, who was the son of Menares, the son of Hegesilaos, the son of Hippocratides, the son of Leotychides, the son of Anaxilaos, the son of Archidemos, the son of Anaxandrides, the son of Theopompos, the son of Nicander, the son of Charilaos, [98](#) the son of Eunomos, the son of Polydectes, the son of Prytanis, the son of Euryphon, [99](#) the son of Procles, the son of Aristodemos, the son of Aristomachos, the son of Cleodaios, the son of Hyllos, the son of Heracles, being of the other royal house. [100](#) These all, except the two [101](#) enumerated first after Leotychides, had been kings of Sparta. And of the Athenians the commander was Xanthippos the son of Aripnon.

132. When all the ships had arrived at Egina, there came Ionian envoys to the camp of the Hellenes, who also came a short time before this to Sparta and asked the Lacedaemonians to set Ionia free; and of them one was Herodotus the son of Basileides. These had banded themselves together and had plotted to put to death Strattis the despot of Chios, being originally seven in number; but when one of those who took part with them gave information of it and they were discovered to be plotting against him, then the remaining six escaped from Chios and came both to Sparta and also at this time to Egina, asking the Hellenes to sail over to Ionia: but

they with difficulty brought them forward as far as Delos; for the parts beyond this were all fearful to the Hellenes, since they were without experience of those regions and everything seemed to them to be filled with armed force, while their persuasion was that it was as long a voyage to Samos as to the Pillars of Heracles. Thus at the same time it so chanced that the Barbarians dared sail no further up towards the West than Samos, being smitten with fear, and the Hellenes no further down towards the East than Delos, when the Chians made request of them. So fear was guard of the space which lay between them.

133. The Hellenes, I say, sailed to Delos; and Mardonios meanwhile had been wintering in Thessaly. From thence he sent round a man, a native of Europos, whose name was Mys, to the various Oracles, charging him to go everywhere to consult, [102](#) wherever they [103](#) were permitted to make trial of the Oracles. What he desired to find out from the Oracles when he gave this charge, I am not able to say, for that is not reported; but I conceive for my part that he sent to consult about his present affairs and not about other things.

134. This Mys is known to have come to Lebadeia and to have persuaded by payment of money one of the natives of the place to go down to Trophonios, and also he came to the Oracle at Abai of the Phokians; and moreover when he came for the first time to Thebes, he not only consulted the Ismenian Apollo,—there one may consult just as at Olympia with victims,—but also by payment he persuaded a stranger who was not a Theban, and induced him to lie down to sleep in the temple of Amphiaraos. In this temple no one of the Thebans is permitted to seek divination, and that for the following reason:—Amphiaraos dealing by oracles bade them choose which they would of these two things, either to have him as a diviner or else as an ally in war, abstaining from the other use; and they chose that he should be their ally in war: for this reason it is not permitted to any of the Thebans to lie down to sleep in that temple.

135. After this a thing which to me is a very great marvel is said by the Thebans to have come to pass:—it seems that this man Mys of Europos, as he journeyed round to all the Oracles, came also to the sacred enclosure of the Ptoan Apollo. This temple is called "Ptoon," and belongs to the Thebans, and it lies above the lake Copaïs at the foot of the mountains, close to the town of Acraiphia. When the man called Mys came to this temple with three men chosen from the citizens [104](#) in his company, who were sent by the public authority to write down that which the god should utter in his divination, forthwith it is said the prophet [105](#) of the god began to give the oracle in a Barbarian tongue; and while those of the Thebans who accompanied him were full of wonder, hearing a Barbarian instead of the Hellenic tongue, and did not know what to make of the matter before them, it is said that the man of Europos, Mys, snatched from them the tablet which they bore and wrote upon it that which was being spoken by the prophet; and he said that the prophet was giving his answer in the Carian tongue: and then when he had written it, he went away and departed to Thessaly.

136. Mardonios having read that which the Oracles uttered, whatever that was, after this sent as an envoy to Athens Alexander the son of Amyntas, the Macedonian, both because the Persians were connected with him by marriage, (for Gygaia the sister of Alexander and daughter of Amyntas had been married to a Persian Bubares, [106](#) and from her had been born to him that Amyntas who lived in Asia, having the name of his mother's father, to whom the king gave Alabanda, [107](#) a great city of Phrygia, to possess), and also Mardonios was sending him

because he was informed that Alexander was a public guest-friend and benefactor of the Athenians; for by this means he thought that he would be most likely to gain over the Athenians to his side, about whom he heard that they were a numerous people and brave in war, and of whom he knew moreover that these were they who more than any others had brought about the disasters which had befallen the Persians by sea. Therefore if these should be added to him, he thought that he should easily have command of the sea (and this in fact would have been the case), while on land he supposed himself to be already much superior in force. Thus he reckoned that his power would be much greater than that of the Hellenes. Perhaps also the Oracles told him this beforehand, counselling him to make the Athenian his ally, and so he was sending in obedience to their advice.

137. Now of this Alexander the seventh ancestor [108](#) was that Perdiccas who first became despot of the Macedonians, and that in the manner which here follows:—From Argos there fled to the Illyrians three brothers of the descendents of Temenos, Gauanes, Aëropos, and Perdiccas; and passing over from the Illyrians into the upper parts of Macedonia they came to the city of Lebaia. There they became farm-servants for pay in the household of the king, one pasturing horses, the second oxen, and the youngest of them, namely Perdiccas, the smaller kinds of cattle; for [109](#) in ancient times even those who were rulers over men [110](#) were poor in money, and not the common people only; and the wife of the king cooked for them their food herself. And whenever she baked, the loaf of the boy their servant, namely Perdiccas, became double as large as by nature it should be. When this happened constantly in the same manner, she told it to her husband, and he when he heard it conceived forthwith that this was a portent and tended to something great. He summoned the farm-servants therefore, and gave notice to them to depart out of his land; and they said that it was right that before they went forth they should receive the wages which were due. Now it chanced that the sun was shining into the house down through the opening which received the smoke, and the king when he heard about the wages said, being infatuated by a divine power: "I pay you then this for wages, and it is such as ye deserve," pointing to the sunlight. So then Gauanes and Aëropos the elder brothers stood struck with amazement when they heard this, but the boy, who happened to have in his hand a knife, said these words: "We accept, O king, that which thou dost give;" and he traced a line with his knife round the sunlight on the floor of the house, and having traced the line round he thrice drew of the sunlight into his bosom, and after that he departed both himself and his fellows.

138. They then were going away, and to the king one of those who sat by him at table told what manner of thing the boy had done, and how the youngest of them had taken that which was given with some design: and he hearing this and being moved with anger, sent after them horsemen to slay them. Now there is a river in this land to which the descendents of these men from Argos sacrifice as a saviour. This river, so soon as the sons of Temenos had passed over it, began to flow with such great volume of water that the horsemen became unable to pass over. So the brothers, having come to another region of Macedonia, took up their dwelling near the so-called gardens of Midas the son of Gordias, where roses grow wild which have each one sixty petals and excel all others in perfume. In these gardens too Silenos was captured, as is reported by the Macedonians: and above the gardens is situated a mountain called Bermion,

which is inaccessible by reason of the cold. Having taken possession of that region, they made this their starting-point, and proceeded to subdue also the rest of Macedonia.

139. From this Perdiccas the descent of Alexander was as follows:—Alexander was the son of Amyntas, Amyntas was the son of Alketes, the father of Alketes was Aëropos, of him Philip, of Philip Argaios, and of this last the father was Perdiccas, who first obtained the kingdom.

140. Thus then, I say, Alexander the son of Amyntas was descended; and when he came to Athens sent from Mardonios, he spoke as follows: (a) "Athenians, Mardonios speaks these words:—There has come to me a message from the king which speaks in this manner:—To the Athenians I remit all the offences which were committed against me: and now, Mardonios, thus do,—first give them back their own land; then let them choose for themselves another in addition to this, whichever they desire, remaining independent; and set up for them again all their temples, which I set on fire, provided that they consent to make a treaty with me. This message having come to me, it is necessary for me to do so, unless by your means I am prevented: and thus I speak to you now:—Why are ye so mad as to raise up war against the king? since neither will ye overcome him, nor are ye able to hold out against him for ever: for ye saw the multitude of the host of Xerxes and their deeds, and ye are informed also of the power which is with me at the present time; so that even if ye overcome and conquer us (of which ye can have no hope if ye are rightly minded), another power will come many times as large. Do not ye then desire to match yourselves with the king, and so to be both deprived of your land and for ever running a course for your own lives; but make peace with him: and ye have a most honourable occasion to make peace, since the king has himself set out upon this road: agree to a league with us then without fraud or deceit, and remain free. (b) These things Mardonios charged me to say to you, O Athenians; and as for me, I will say nothing of the goodwill towards you on my part, for ye would not learn that now for the first time; but I ask of you to do as Mardonios says, since I perceive that ye will not be able to war with Xerxes for ever,—if I perceived in you ability to do this, I should never have come to you speaking these words,—for the power of the king is above that of a man and his arm is very long. If therefore ye do not make an agreement forthwith, when they offer you great things as the terms on which they are willing to make a treaty, I have fear on your behalf, seeing that ye dwell more upon the highway than any of your allies, and are exposed ever to destruction alone, the land which ye possess being parted off from the rest and lying between the armies which are contending together. [111](#) Nay, but be persuaded, for this is a matter of great consequence to you, that to you alone of the Hellenes the great king remits the offences committed and desires to become a friend."

141. Thus spoke Alexander; and the Lacedemonians having been informed that Alexander had come to Athens to bring the Athenians to make a treaty with the Barbarians, and remembering the oracles, who it was destined that they together with the other Dorians should be driven forth out of the Peloponnese by the Medes and the Athenians combined, had been very greatly afraid lest the Athenians should make a treaty with the Persians; and forthwith they had resolved to send envoys. It happened moreover that they were introduced at the same time with Alexander; [112](#) for the Athenians had waited for them, protracting the time, because they were well assured that the Lacedemonians would hear that an envoy had come from the Barbarians to make a treaty, and that having heard it they would themselves send envoys with

all speed. They acted therefore of set purpose, so as to let the Lacedemonians see their inclination.

142. So when Alexander had ceased speaking, the envoys from Sparta followed him forthwith and said: "As for us, the Lacedemonians sent us to ask of you not to make any change in that which concerns Hellas, nor to accept proposals from the Barbarian; since this is not just in any way nor honourable for any of the Hellenes to do, but least of all for you, and that for many reasons. Ye were they who stirred up this war, when we by no means willed it; and the contest came about for your dominion, but now it extends even to the whole of Hellas. Besides this it is by no means to be endured that ye Athenians, who are the authors of all this, should prove to be the cause of slavery to the Hellenes, seeing that ye ever from ancient time also have been known as the liberators of many. We feel sympathy however with you for your sufferings and because ye were deprived of your crops twice and have had your substance ruined now for a long time. In compensation for this the Lacedemonians and their allies make offer to support your wives and all those of your households who are unfitted for war, so long as this war shall last: but let not Alexander the Macedonian persuade you, making smooth the speech of Mardonios; for these things are fitting for him to do, since being himself a despot he is working in league with a despot: for you however they are not fitting to do, if ye chance to be rightly minded; for ye know that in Barbarians there is neither faith nor truth at all."

Thus spoke the envoys:

143, and to Alexander the Athenians made answer thus: "Even of ourselves we know so much, that the Mede has a power many times as numerous as ours; so that there is no need for thee to cast this up against us. Nevertheless because we long for liberty we shall defend ourselves as we may be able: and do not thou endeavour to persuade us to make a treaty with the Barbarian, for we on our part shall not be persuaded. And now report to Mardonios that the Athenians say thus:—So long as the Sun goes on the same course by which he goes now, we will never make an agreement with Xerxes; but we will go forth to defend ourselves [113](#) against him, trusting in the gods and the heroes as allies, for whom he had no respect when he set fire to their houses and to their sacred images. And in the future do not thou appear before the Athenians with any such proposals as these, nor think that thou art rendering them good service in advising them to do that which is not lawful; for we do not desire that thou shouldst suffer anything unpleasant at the hands of the Athenians, who art their public guest and friend."

144. To Alexander they thus made answer, but to the envoys from Sparta as follows: "That the Lacedemonians should be afraid lest we should make a treaty with the Barbarian was natural no doubt; [114](#) but it seems to be an unworthy fear for men who know so well the spirit of the Athenians, namely that there is neither so great quantity of gold anywhere upon the earth, nor any land so much excelling in beauty and goodness, that we should be willing to accept it and enslave Hellas by taking the side of the Medes. For many and great are the reasons which hinder us from doing this, even though we should desire it; first and greatest the images and houses of the gods set on fire or reduced to ruin, which we must necessarily avenge to the very utmost rather than make an agreement with him who did these deeds; then secondly there is the bond of Hellenic race, by which we are of one blood and of one speech, the common temples of the gods and the common sacrifices, the manners of life which are the same for all;

to these it would not be well that the Athenians should become traitors. And be assured of this, if by any chance ye were not assured of it before, that so long as one of the Athenians remains alive, we will never make an agreement with Xerxes. We admire however the forethought which ye had with regard to us, in that ye took thought for us who have had our substance destroyed, and are willing to support the members of our households; and so far as ye are concerned, the kindness has been fully performed: but we shall continue to endure as we may, and not be a trouble in any way to you. Now therefore, with full conviction this is so, send out an army as speedily as ye may: for, as we conjecture, the Barbarian will be here invading our land at no far distant time but so soon as he shall be informed of the message sent, namely that we shall do none of those things which he desired of us. Therefore before he arrives here in Attica, it is fitting that ye come to our rescue quickly in Boeotia." Thus the Athenians made answer, and upon that the envoys went away back to Sparta.
