

"I AM

CYRUS

KING OF THE UNIVERSE, THE GREAT KING,

the powerful king, grandson of Cyrus, the great king ... When I went as harbinger of peace into Babylon I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe ...

My vast troops were marching peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of Sumer and Akkad had nothing to fear... I sought the safety of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon ...

I soothed their weariness; I freed them from their bonds ... Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at my good deeds, and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me ... From Shuanna I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa, Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Gutu, whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them ... **I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements** ...

May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son, may they be the provisioners of our shrines until distant days, and the population of Babylon call blessings on my kingship.

I have enabled all the lands to live in peace."



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A Word from the Editor Dolly Dastoor

How can a small cylinder, nine inches long and four inches wide, with 45 lines of incomplete text, made of Achaemenid baked clay 2,600 years ago, lying buried in the ruins of Babylon till 1879, evoke so much excitement and interest with its arrival in 2013 in North America? The exhibition “*The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A new beginning The legacy of Cyrus the Great: Iran and Beyond*” opened at the Sackler Gallery, in Washington DC, March 9th 2013.

Till its arrival on the shores of North America from the British Museum, through the untiring work of the Iran Heritage Foundation, (IHF) I wonder how many people in North America had heard of Cyrus the Great Achaemenian Persian king, a towering figure in the history of mankind, the “father of the Iranian nation”, the first world leader to be referred to as “The Great”, And even fewer people I presume, would, have known of his cylinder. So why the buzz? What is on the cylinder, covered in the spiky characters of the Akkadian (Babylonian) cuneiform that is so fascinating to people, why are people flocking to see this exhibit, and who is this person Cyrus who authored this small American football sized cylinder?

We know about Cyrus from both a historical and religious perspective specially from classical Greek and Hebrew sources (he is mentioned 22 times in the Old Testament) but what was it about him that made him particularly “Great”? What is his legacy for Humanity? What was his world vision and was he motivated and inspired by a divine and supreme creator, Ahura Mazda?

The message on the cylinder reverberates with people today in this troubled world, where there is religious and sectarian violence in all countries, where human rights are violated flagrantly, where places of worship are desecrated and destroyed.

To explore these and other fundamental issues, the FEZANA Journal is publishing this special issue on *Cyrus Cylinder: A Zoroastrian Heritage*. We invited academicians, Professors of Iranian Studies (Prof Jamsheed Choksey), Professors of Hebrew Bible (Prof Jacob Wright), Professors of Ancient Iranian Studies and Zoroastrian Studies (Prof Jenny Rose) Professors of Near Eastern Studies, (Prof Lisbeth Fried) Independent scholars, (Abolala Soudavar, Ed Eduljee), Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution (Dr Marc Gopin) Historians, (Prof Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, and Prof Kaveh Farrokh), lawyers (Gary Endelman and Cyrus Mehta) across the continent to further our understanding of this towering historical figure and his cylinder by contributing to this issue.

In addition, Nagel Alexander, curator of the Smithsonian Institute brings to our readers the insider’s view of what it takes to mount an exhibition of this size together with 16 treasures of the Oxus Collection

And finally Vahid Alaghband, Chairman, Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF), Alireza Rastegar, Chairman (IHF America), and Nasser Manesh, General Manager, (IHF America) narrate the story of the seven years in the making of this exhibition.



Several people need to be thanked for the production of this issue, starting with Aban Rustomji, FIRES Librarian, for her tireless and unflinching efficient support and research every step of the way, Jenny Rose for her suggestions and help in locating the contributors, Doug Lang for his assistance in editing, Ed Eduljee for his intellectual stimulation, to Nasser Manesh (IHF America), Amy Lowman, (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Allison Peck (Freer/Sackler Gallery) for their willingness to share the photos, to Marzi Byramji of Regal Press for his assistance with this issue.

Neil MacGregor, the Director of the British Museum says “ You could almost say the Cyrus Cylinder is history of the Middle East in one object, and it is a link to a past which we all share and to a key moment in history that has shaped the world around us, Objects are uniquely able to speak across time and space , and this object must be shared as widely as possible”, Thank you British Museum and IHF for sharing it with the people of North America and hopefully this will bring a better understanding and respect between countries of the world.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D.



Dolly Dastoor outside The Avesta Museum, Khiva, Uzbekistan,
Photo credit, Jenny Rose



ERVAD BOMANSHAH SANJANA OF HOUSTON PERFORMING A BLESSING CEREMONY DURING THE OPENING OF THE MFA HOUSTON EXHIBITION. Photo: Reza Ganji / IHF America

THIS PICTURE IS PLACED IN THE BEGINNING OF THE ISSUE TO BLESS THE JOURNAL AS THE READER AND THE CYLINDER TRAVEL THROUGH THE PAGES DISCOVERING CYRUS, THE GREAT AND HIS MESSAGE.

Message from FEZANA President

Dear Zarathushtis

The Summer Issue of the FEZANA Journal is dedicated to the **Cyrus Cylinder - A Zoroastrian Heritage** that symbolizes the universal hopes and aspirations of all people for human rights and religious tolerance. The Cyrus Cylinder, a 2600 year old object of modern importance and a symbol of multi-culturalism, tolerance, diversity and human rights is presently touring the US. FEZANA is very excited to participate in the events that are taking place across the United States this year to commemorate the Cyrus Cylinder.

The US tour of *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning started* on March 5, 2013 at the Sackler and Freer Galleries at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. Nearly 350 guests from several continents gathered to view the gem of an exhibition curated by Dr John Curtis, with the involvement of Sackler's Dr Massoumeh Farhad and Dr Julian Raby, the Gallery Director. FEZANA was represented by Zarin Kapadia, Tara Jamshidian with her parents Darius and Linda, Behram Pastakia and myself. The highlight of the evening was an interview between CNN's Christiane Amanpour and Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, about the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder.

I also had the pleasure and privilege to meet Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum and present to him a token celebrating FEZANA's 25th Anniversary (see photo above). He shared with me the news that after Los Angeles, the Cyrus Cylinder exhibit moves to Mumbai, India to be exhibited at the time of the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress in December 2013.



This exhibition has turned out to be a hugely popular exhibition in DC: *More than 155,000 visitors* viewed the exhibit during its 7-week display at the Sackler Gallery. That's an average of more than 3000 visitors per day. Potential media reach has now surpassed *more than a billion impressions* thanks to the mass media coverage on TV, major news outlets, newspapers, magazines, and of course, online.

FEZANA, its member associations and Zarathushtis across North America continue to actively honor history and educate themselves and their community members in the lessons on human rights and religious tolerance that the Cyrus Cylinder symbolizes and how it shaped the ethics of the ancient world.

I would like to thank Ervad Soli Dastur, from Sarasota, Florida, who in March 10, broadcasted a North American Tele-Class on the *Cylinder of Cyrus and its Universal Appeal*. Among

other things he traced the influence of the life of Cyrus and his education, the influence of "*The Cyropedia*" on the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, who was an avid reader of the Greek historians, Xenophon and Herodotus.

On March 28th, the *Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution (CRDC)*, *Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA)*, and *National Iranian American Council (NIAC)* hosted a shared panel and celebration at George Mason University (GMU), Arlington, Virginia, in honor of the presence in Washington DC of the Cyrus Cylinder and its significance for the peaceful interaction of civilizations based on universal human rights and human dignity. It was a gathering to celebrate and reflect together during the Jewish Passover, and Nowruz, demonstrating the peaceful interaction of two ancient civilizations united in their common devotion to the legacy of Cyrus the

Great. Homi Gandhi, Vice President, FEZANA and Kersi Shroff, Vice President, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI) are thanked for coordinating and participating in this event together with Zarathushtis from ZAMWI.

A field trip to visit the Cyrus Cylinder exhibit as a group was organized by Armita Soroosh for the children of the ZAMWI Religious Class and their parents on Sunday April 7, 2013. Thank you Armita for organizing this.

The Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) gave a royal welcome to *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia Exhibit, together with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) on its arrival in Houston, on May 4th. I would like to thank Aban Rustomji and ZAH for being very active in programming special events in conjunction with the MFAH in honour of this exhibition . To read more about these events , photos, and information please refer to the FEZANA Bulletin on www.fezana.org*

We, at FEZANA continue to be very excited about the tour, which we see not only as a cultural milestone but also as an opportunity to celebrate our ancient and

remarkable Zarathushti heritage. We encourage our fellow Zarathushtis across North America to visit the museums that will host the Cylinder and its accompanying cast; to participate in discussions and other events linked to the tour; to bring it to the attention of local news media; to e-mail friends about it; to blog about it; to inform and enlighten our fellow North Americans about a history that lies at the roots of human civilization but is little known here, and to link its relevance to current world events.

We hope that the momentum continues to build as the exhibition is visited by more people, as more public programs are held, as the exhibition travels from city to city. We shall have opportunities to partner as the Cyrus Cylinder tour goes to the Metropolitan Museum in New York and then onto the West Coast at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Getty Villa in Los Angeles. For dates & locations refer to the monthly FEZANA Bulletin on www.fezana.org.

I would urge FEZANA member associations to offer programs, tours, resources, and materials that would teach and engage adults, children, and

educators and neighbors to the modern relevance of both Cyrus and the Cyrus cylinder.

A big thank you to the coordinating team of FEZANA led by Vice-president Homi Gandhi and local representatives: Armita Soroosh (ZAMWI), Aban Rustomji (ZAH), Khursheed Navder (ZAGNY), Nazneen Spliedt (ZANC), Parmis Khatibi & Behrose Taraporewala (ZAC-California), and Bakhtavar Desai (ZAKOI) who are working with associations to develop events about the Cyrus Cylinder exhibit.

It is time that the world community takes interest in building Peace Memorials in communities where the Cyrus Cylinder will stand for Human Rights and Peace and let the Zarathushti community work harmoniously with other communities to promote the achievement of these goals.

Katayun Kapadia

President, FEZANA



From the Achaemenian Empire to the United States:

A Proclamation of Freedom

Julian Raby, the Director of the Sackler and Freer Galleries in his opening remarks on 27 April 2013 at the symposium "The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning- *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great: Iran and Beyond*" at the Smithsonian Museums in Washington D.C. shared some amazing statistics. In the initial seven weeks, since the launch of the exhibit from the British Museum in the United States, the number of visitors crossed 140,000; close to 400 media outlets worldwide had carried the story and the electronic exchanges in cyberspace had crossed 1.37 billion impressions. Massumeh Farhad, Ph.D, Chief Curator and Curator of Islamic Art at the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Museums played an important role collaborating with the British Museum before it went on display and hit the road.

In just 45 lines of cuneiform writing (20 lines are missing), this iconic symbol, a building deposit from Babylon, from an Achemenian King making a proclamation and giving an account of his victories had made a worldwide impact in 2013. All like to claim Cyrus as their own. Accolades are heaped upon him by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahalvi, Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, the Islamic Republic of Iran, classical Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon, Ben Gurion from the State of Israel, Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Peace Prize winner from Iran, U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations. A special place is accorded to Cyrus in the Hebrew Bible. George Frideric Handel, the creative German settled in England, composed an oratorio "*Balshazaar*" to celebrate the Persian who freed the Jews from captivity.

The proclamation itself, baked on the clay cylinder, is in three parts. What resonates through centuries is the message in the last part – the rights of groups of people to practice their religions and beliefs in freedom. Whether these ideas came from political expediency when a monarch who had stitched together a world-wide empire in a short eleven years designed a way of governance to keep his subjects in peace that promoted prosperity, or whether he was driven by an ethical code of behavior emanating from his own culture and religious dictates will remain a subject of speculation into the future.

Was Cyrus II a Zoroastrian? K.E. Eduljee provides one perspective in this issue of the Journal. There is (so far) no archeological proof which links Cyrus the Great with the Zarathushti faith. John Curtis, the curator from the British Museum responsible in some measure for the current exhibit, calls this a vexed question ⁽¹⁾. The Cylinder of Cyrus extols Marduk, the Lord of the Babylonians. Shahrokh



Behram Pastakia with Massumeh Farhad Ph.D., Chief Curator and Curator of Islamic Art at the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Museums. Photo courtesy Nancy Bhargava

Razmjou, in a sympathetic piece, acknowledges that Cyrus "... was obviously an adherent of an all-together different religion"⁽²⁾ without giving it a name. The Old Testament recognizes that Cyrus was not a follower of the religion of the Jews.

"This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus.... I will go before you....so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel... and will bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me", and "I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me" [Isaiah 45, vv 1-5].

Perhaps his greatness as a monarch, which sets Cyrus II apart from other rulers in his era, is not pushing either overtly or covertly his own religion while being respectful of the beliefs of the peoples in the vast empire that came under his sway.

The five city tour of the exhibit has given us an opportunity to explore how our modern day multicultural and multiethnic cities can learn from the example of governance from antiquity. The Achemenians were faced with similar issues of diversity in their social fabric. We are grateful to the British Museum, the Iran Heritage Foundation of America and the five museums in the USA who have hosted this exhibit to help us grow in our thinking.

Behram Pastakia
Chair, Publications Committee, FEZANA

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D,
Editor in Chief
FEZANA JOURNAL

27th May 2013

Dear Dolly Dastor

I am delighted that the Cyrus Cylinder tour has been so successful, it has already been seen by in excess of 150,000 people in Washington and we hope that similar audiences will visit in Houston, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. The warm response from audiences, and from publications such as the FEZANA Journal, is a reflection of the importance of the Cylinder, which is an icon of Ancient Persia.

Yours sincerely,

Neil MacGregor
Director, British Museum



GEORGE BUSH

**April 30, 2013
for
May 2, 2013**

I am proud that our great city of Houston will be host to the Cyrus Cylinder – a historic relic that speaks to the importance of tolerance, diversity, and the rule of law – all essential components of good governance.

Barbara and I thank the British Museum for loaning the Cyrus Cylinder and the Iran Heritage Foundation for bringing it to Houston. We also send personal greetings to our dear friends, Ambassador Hushang Ansary and Mrs. Shahla Ansary, and to all gathered for this very special celebration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Bush".

The Cyrus Cylinder Tour of the U.S: Seven Years in the Making

The Cyrus Cylinder is an iconic object of the British Museum and one of the most famous cultural symbols because of its unique position in a turbulent world: It unites peoples, cultures, and religions. It is now touring five major cities across the U.S., an historical first, through a partnership between the Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF), the British Museum, and the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. This article is the account of how this tour came about.

Individuals, leaders, states, and cultures each see something in the Cyrus Cylinder with which they resonate. This often-called "First Bill of Human Rights" is in fact the first written record of a foundation on which human rights were later built: *The rights of communities and peoples*. It shows how a nation can be built, without the use of violence and force, by allowing each community to keep its own culture and faith while abiding the same "law of the land." It shows how Cyrus the Great chose to rule the many peoples of the Persian Empire some 2600 years ago by choosing neither to adopt and dictate a state religion nor being anticlerical.

Despite its global fame, the Cyrus Cylinder has rarely left its home, the British Museum, where it has been residing since its excavation in 1879. In particular a United States visit was long overdue given that the U.S. Constitution draws from the principles declared in the Cyrus Cylinder: Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers of the U.S. studied Cyrus as a moral model as they designed the foundation for governing this new and unique country.

It was therefore most appropriate for the IHF, a non-political and non-

religious charity foundation focused on preserving and promoting the culture, history, languages and art of Iran and the Persianate World, to make it a mission to finally bring the Cyrus Cylinder to the U.S. This would provide the country's diverse population with an opportunity to see, experience, and appreciate an ancient artifact which is as much a part of American history as it is a source of pride for Iranians.

IHF has been doing cultural work in the United Kingdom for almost two decades, and has a long standing institutional partnership with the British Museum. We have supported an annual IHF Fellow at the British Museum for 15 years. We sponsored the very successful special exhibition '*Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*' in 2005–6 as well as the accompanying international conference and the proceedings. The permanent home of the Cyrus Cylinder at the British Museum, the *Rahim Irvani Gallery*, was sponsored in 2007 by one of the IHF trustees. '*Forgotten Empire*' was followed by the equally attractive exhibition '*Shah 'Abbas: the Remaking of Iran*', again sponsored by IHF.

We first discussed the idea of exhibiting the Cyrus Cylinder in the U.S. with Neil McGregor, the Director of the British Museum in 2007. The British Museum has been entertaining the thought of a U.S. visit since 2003, and Neil has been a source of vision, energy and inspiration throughout the history of our association with the British Museum. He was enthusiastic about the idea. He often points out that the British Parliament created the British Museum in 18th century for not just the people of Britain, but

"studious and curious persons," both "native and foreign."

When the British Museum lent the Cyrus Cylinder to Iran in 2010 where it was viewed by more than half a million individuals, they discussed a possible U.S. tour with the Iranian government. "there was a great deal of discussion of course, that this was not just part of Iran's history, but of the whole Middle East, and indeed of the world," recounts Neil MacGregor. "That this has shaped the way people think ever since. We talked about our desire to bring it to the United States and that was met with great enthusiasm by the Iranian government."

Around the same time, IHF trustees were also looking into building a sister charity organization in the U.S. in order to bring the same type of cultural work and institutional partnerships to american universities and museums. Such U.S. charity would play a key role in projects such as the Cyrus Cylinder U.S. tour.

IHF America was formed in 2010 with a similar mission, and received its 501(c)(3) status as a U.S. public charity in early 2011. It started forming relationships and partnerships with a series of universities and museums which, through past grants, were working on Iranian Studies programs or projects related to the Persian arts and culture. IHF already had an institutional partnership with the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler galleries – home to the largest collection of Persian art and artifacts in the U.S. – where an IHF grant had secured the establishment of its first Persian arts curator. IHF America started creating and expanding similar relationships and set the stage for a very high profile touring

**ARTICLES FROM THE OXUS
TREASURE, FOUND IN
TASHKENT**

**Gold Bowl decorated with lions,
Gold Armlet, Votive Gold
Plaque showing
a priest. Achaemenid period 5th
-4th BCE. British Museum**

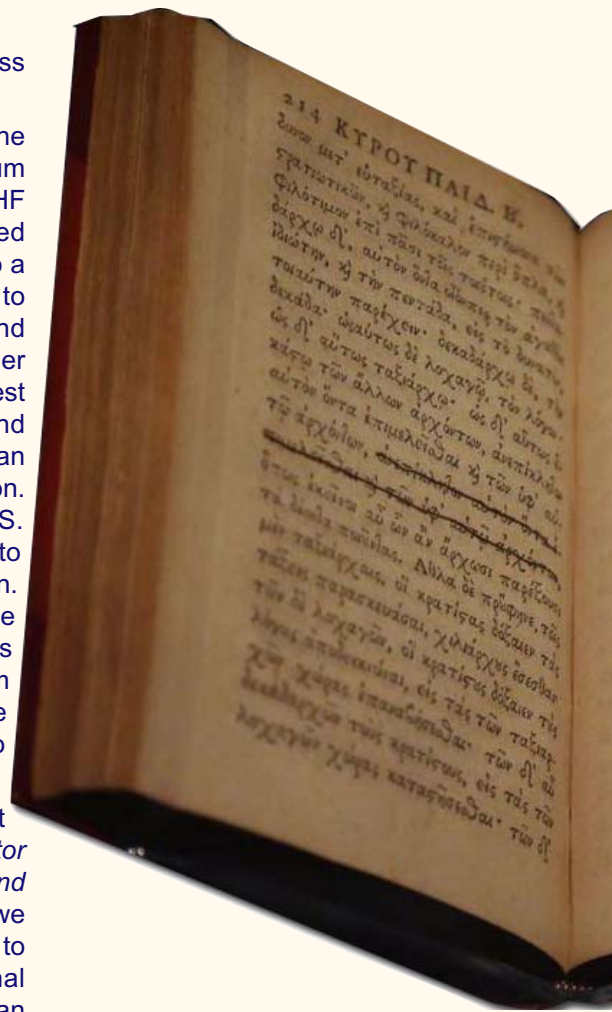


exhibition of the Cyrus Cylinder across the U.S.

In 2011 and after the return of the Cyrus Cylinder to the British Museum from Tehran, IHF America and the IHF started working on the discussed concept of the tour and turning it into a solid plan. We wanted this exhibition to be magnificent, breathtaking, and informative. Since the Cyrus Cylinder itself is a rather small and modest object despite its significance and global fame, we needed to create an appropriate context for the exhibition. Additionally, we wanted key U.S. metropolitan areas, coast to coast, to get a chance to see the exhibition. Finally, because of the sensitive nature and history of the Cyrus Cylinder a range of issues from insurance to indemnity had to be implemented to allow the tour to happen.

We discussed these issues at length with both *Julian Raby, Director of the Freer and Sackler Galleries*, and *Neil MacGregor*. The only way we could overcome these issues was to leverage our strong institutional partnerships with both the Smithsonian and the British Museum, and get as much help as possible. The consensus was for the exhibition to be not just of the Cyrus Cylinder, but a number of significant objects from the same period to highlight the many contributions of the Persian Empire to the advancement of the world's civilization. The exhibition was entitled *'The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning.'* Julian Raby and Massumeh Farhad, Chief Curator of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, suggested reaching out to the Library of Congress to borrow Thomas Jefferson's personal copy of *Cyropaedia* – the biography of Cyrus written by the Greek author Xenophon – to accompany the exhibition in DC and show the influence of Cyrus and his way of ruling on the Founding Fathers. As visitors to the DC exhibition witnessed, they indeed delivered on that promise. (*Jefferson's copy of Cyropaedia on left*)

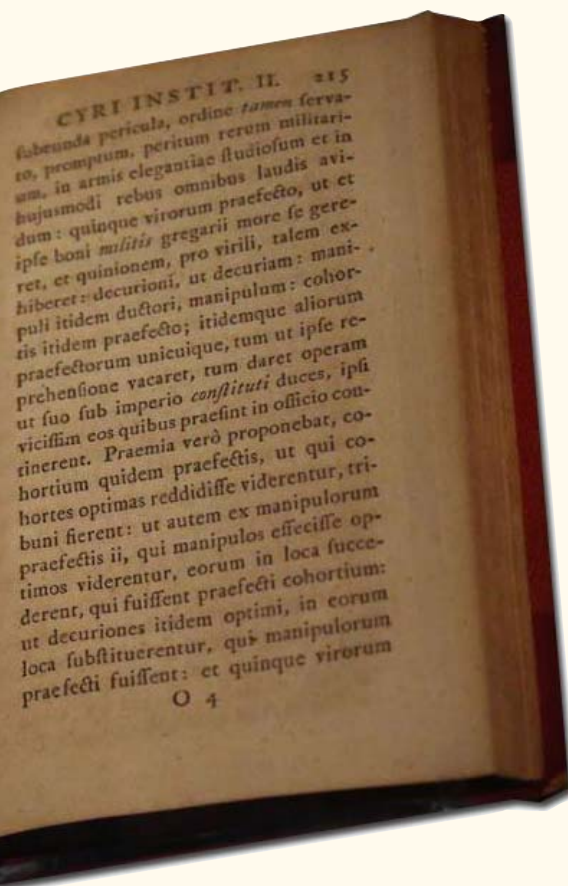
Both Julian and Neil were very generous with their time, insight, and resources, as we were all in agreement on the unique nature and splendor of



this touring exhibition. Over the course of a few months the details of the tour were worked out. Our next challenge was to identify the host venues for the tour. We were now in mid-2012, and those who have worked with museums know that exhibitions are usually planned, and the halls and exhibition spaces are booked, 2-4 years in advance. We were very fortunate that our host venues shared our vision and were very gracious and flexible in accommodating the schedule of the tour in 2013.

A tour of such magnitude and quality is very costly, and fundraising with such high level of financial goals in less than a year seemed almost impossible. The trustees of IHF America decided that they should actively talk to organizations and individuals, with the understanding that they would stand behind the tour regardless of the amounts raised, and would cover any balance through their own individual donations.

A number of individuals and organizations stepped up to the



interview of Neil MacGregor by CNN's Christiane Amanpour (which was filmed and is now available on the official website of the tour) resulted in a standing ovation by the audience. The team at the Freer and Sackler Galleries worked tirelessly to deliver an event that was unforgettable.

The launch of the tour was extensively covered by the press. Neil MacGregor and Joanna Mackle, Director of Public Engagement at the British Museum, joined Dr. John Curtis and participated in many press interviews and events around the opening of the exhibition. Dr. Massumeh Farhad and Dr. Alex Nagel, co-curators of the exhibition at the Sackler Gallery, joined Julian Raby in similar events and interviews.

Dr. Curtis and a senior Museum Assistant from the British Museum's Department of the Middle East fly to the US for each stage of the tour. They are responsible for the de-installation of the exhibition at the current venue, the safe packing of the objects, accompanying the flights to the next city and installing the objects at the new venue.

The exhibition was displayed at the Sackler Gallery through April 28th. It has since travelled to Houston (Museum of Fine Arts) where it was on display through June 14th. It will then move to New York City (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), San Francisco (Asian Art Museum), and Los Angeles (The Paul J. Getty Museum). The next stop of the Cyrus Cylinder after concluding its U.S. tour will be Mumbai, India, where a large Zoroastrian community is excited to see it. The exact dates of the U.S. tour can be found on the official website of the tour.

We hope that this tour and the legacy of the Cyrus Cylinder results in more cultural dialog and a deeper understanding of how our histories are interwoven and our values are shared. Cultural dialog transcends politics and stereotypes, narrows gaps and divides, and fosters friendship and respect. In a country built on the same values aptly represented by the Cyrus Cylinder, the presence of this relic in prominence will surely provide numerous opportunities for such dialogs.

challenge and supported the tour with their generous donations. The *Farhang Foundation* which supports Persian cultural programs for the largest population of Iranian diaspora single-handedly covered the cost of the Los Angeles portion of the tour.

In February 2013 the IHF arranged a "send off" event – a favorite Persian tradition – for the Cyrus Cylinder at the British Museum. The curator of the exhibition, Dr. John Curtis, an expert on the ancient history of the Middle East and the Keeper of Special Projects at the British Museum, led the team responsible for the safe packing and transporting the Cyrus Cylinder and its accompanying objects, including two objects from the famous Oxus Treasure, to the U.S.

The tour was launched in Washington, DC with an inaugural reception at the Sackler gallery with distinguished guests from the Capitol Hill, the Iranian-American community, the Jewish community, the Zoroastrian community, politicians, scholars, journalists, and more. An on-stage



Vahid Alaghband is the founder and chairman of Balli Group plc in the U.K. He was educated in Switzerland and the U.S., where he received his BS and MS degrees in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research at Cornell University. Mr. Alaghband is a member of the Clinton Global Initiative, a trustee of Asia House London and Global Council Member of Asia Society New York.



Alireza Rastegar is an investor and principal in a number of companies focused on real estate and franchise development across North America. He received his BS in Mining Engineering from the Imperial College, London University and his MBA from the ICMS in Tehran and Cambridge, Mass. Mr. Rastegar has been a member of the board of trustees of a number of U.K. and Swiss charitable foundations with similar objectives to the IHF's for several years.



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THE CYRUS CYLINDER AND ANCIENT PERSIA: A New Beginning – A Curator’s View

Alexander Nagel Ph.D

The US Tour of “The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning” opened on Saturday, March 9, 2013, at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington DC. The exhibition highlights the Cyrus Cylinder, an unassuming clay object excavated in Babylon almost 150 years ago. It has been interpreted as one of the earliest declarations in support of the rights of communities and peoples. Several additional objects from the British Museum’s ancient Near Eastern collections highlight artifacts related to the Cylinder and the Achaemenid Persian Empire, founded approximately 550 BCE in southwest Iran. “*The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning*” was organized by the British Museum in partnership with the Iran Heritage Foundation and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Preparations for the Cyrus Cylinder exhibition began in the fall of 2011, when the US tour planning was finalized. The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C. was chosen as the first venue. The Freer[Sackler is known for its rich collections of ancient Persian ceramics and extraordinary Sasanian metalwork—many of which are on display in the connecting corridor between The Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Also featured are a renowned collection of archival documents related to early archaeological fieldwork in Pasargadae, Persepolis and other sites in Iran. The Cyrus Cylinder offered an exciting opportunity to invite museum visitors to rethink their traditional ideas about ancient Persia. It was an opportunity not to be missed.

Since its modern rediscovery in Babylon, the Cylinder has left the British Museum only twice, in 1971 and in 2009. Both times, it was lent to Iran where the message on the Cylinder has a special symbolic meaning in affirming religious tolerance in the ancient Near East.

AN EXHIBITION IS TEAM-WORK

The Achaemenids controlled the largest empire the ancient world had seen until then. Between c. 550 and 330 BCE, some eleven rulers introduced new administrative and ceremonial ideas, and encouraged the spreading of new religions and languages. One significant challenge in the development of the exhibition was the difficulty of displaying the enormous size and wealth of this empire, which is much better envisioned when visiting the impressive Achaemenid monuments of Persepolis and Susa.

When the Sackler agreed to host the exhibition, it was in the middle of preparing two other important exhibitions for

2012, the 25th anniversary of the Sackler Gallery. Both exhibitions featured neighboring ancient cultures connected with the cultures of Achaemenid Persia. “*Nomads and Networks: The Ancient Art and Culture of Kazakhstan*,” shown between August and December 2012 focused on one of the largest modern countries in Inner Asia and a border region of ancient Persia. In the fall of 2012, the Sackler also hosted “*Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*.” The latter exhibition featured the site of Tayma in north western Saudi Arabia, where the last Babylonian king, *Nabonidus*, mentioned on the Cylinder, spent ten years, while his son *Belshazzar* was in charge of Babylon.

Beside the Cyrus Cylinder, the exhibition featured a *Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED)* lecture by Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, in which he focused on the fascinating history and several meanings of the Cylinder. An additional video introduced making cuneiform texts and religious aspects of the Achaemenid



Photo: Hasan Sarbakhshain // HF America

Empire. The exhibition included seventeen other objects from the British Museum collection that illustrated various perspectives of ancient Persia. These included the various spoken and written languages, such as Old Babylonian and Old Persian, coins and administrative seals, religious and ceremonial vessels. Some objects were part of the celebrated *Oxus Treasure*, discovered in the nineteenth century in what was, during ancient times, an eastern satrapy of Achaemenid Persia.

To provide context for the Cyrus Cylinder and related objects, the Freer|Sackler team chose large photo murals of the Apadana at Persepolis to greet visitors (below). Members of the curatorial, design, and exhibition teams met regularly to discuss the layout and graphics of the exhibition. At the same time, the education department team began discussing its Cyrus Cylinder related programs. These included a concert of the work of 18th century German composer *Georg Friedrich Handel (1685-1759)*. Handel's composition features Belshazzar, and in a panel discussion we talked about what people knew about Cyrus in the eighteenth century. D.W. Griffith's film *Intolerance*, considered one of the greatest masterpieces of the silent era, was another special offering of the museum. The film was accompanied by a highly accomplished live orchestra.

As the exhibition opening was planned to coincide with *Nowruz, the Persian New Year*, it was visited by some 6,000 visitors on the first weekend, and 9,500 people came on the second weekend. "Cuneiform-Tweets" became a hit during

the weekends and docents gave tours explaining the tolerance of Achaemenid rulers, as illustrated by messages written in several languages. The exhibition concluded with a symposium on April 26-27 about the ancient and modern legacies of Cyrus the Great.

“KNOWLEDGE BEGINS IN WONDER”

The Cylinder and the objects arrived a week before the exhibition opening in mid-February. The walls of the galleries were painted, and the cases were in place waiting for the objects. For the background color, our team had decided on a royal blue. It took two days to install the Cylinder and the other objects; after which, the exhibition was illuminated to create a dramatic presentation.

The press preview was scheduled for the Wednesday before the opening so timing was crucial. One element we could not control was the weather in early spring. A snowstorm forced the museum to postpone the press preview. Expectation only grew and the story of the Cylinder created tremendous excitement, which grew weekly. As an earlier Smithsonian secretary said, *“Knowledge begins in Wonder.”* The message of the Cyrus Cylinder on its tour of the United States is important. We invite our museum audience to contemplate our current understandings and traditional ideas about ancient Persia. It has been a great privilege to work with the British Museum on this exhibition.



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Cyrus the Great - His Life, Leadership and Faith

PART I: CYRUS' LIFE AND GOVERNANCE STYLE

K. E. EDULJEE

Today, more than 2,500 years after his death, we celebrate and honour the life of King Cyrus II, the Great. He is famed as one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known. His subjects loved him as a father. His adversaries became his allies. Peoples of distant lands who had never seen him, preferred him as a leader to one of their own.



Image credit: Historical Atlas by William Shepherd (1923-26)

not sheltered. He was taught the elements of wise, considered decision-making. He began to hone his leadership skills at an early age when hunting in the wild and while enduring the rigours of camp life.

ASSYRIAN DOMINANCE

During Cyrus' youth, the kingdom of Media was the senior of the two sister Aryan kingdoms, Media and Persia. For 500 years, several Aryan kingdoms, including Media and Persia, had been under the dominance of Assyria, a kingdom located in today's northern Iraq. They were also the victims of Assyrian plundering raids. Astyages' father Cyaxares united the Aryan countries and together, they threw off their yoke as Assyrian vassals. Nevertheless, the Assyrians remained a constant threat to the Aryan nations - the region Classical Greek author Herodotus called 'Upper Asia,' - lands west of the Jaxartes River (Syr Darya) and below the steppes of present-day Russia (Herodotus' 'Scythia'). Herodotus considered all of Russia, namely Scythia, even Asian Russia and likely Kazakhstan, as part of Europe.

THE ASSYRIAN MENACE

By the time Astyages died, leaving the Median throne to his son Cyaxares II, the Assyrians had regained control of Hyrcania (Gorgan on the SE Caspian coast) and had begun to threaten the eastern kingdom of Bactria (Balkh). The Assyrians aggressively strove to bring the Medes and Persians back under their control (*Cyropaedia* at 1.5.2).

YOUNG CYRUS TAKES COMMAND OF HIS TROOPS

With an Assyrian assault as the backdrop, Cyrus' leadership skills began to emerge. The Medes and Persians mustered their forces and Cyrus, now a young man, was appointed commander of the Persian army. On the night before he and his troops were to march and join the

Who was Cyrus the man? What was so exceptional about his leadership and governing style? What did he do to earn the title "great"?

CYRUS' BACKGROUND

King Cyrus lived from around 600 to 530 BCE. He was a member and seventh king of the Persian Achaemenid dynasty of kings. The Achaemenids ruled Parsa-Anshan (Pars/Pers/Persia) from the founding of the dynasty by the eponymous King Hakhmanish (English-Greek Achaemenes) around the eighth or seventh century BCE until its overthrow by Alexander in 330 BCE. Persia was in the south-west of the Iranian plateau. Persia's sister kingdom Mada (Media) was to its north.

CYRUS' UPBRINGING

According to the Athenian Xenophon in his biography of Cyrus, the *Cyropaedia* (Book 1), three people were pivotal in Cyrus the Achaemenid's upbringing: his mother Mandana; his father Cambyses, king of Anshan, Persia; and his maternal grandfather Astyages king of the Medes. They ensured that Cyrus had a complete education and, more important, they were his mentors. His life was privileged but

Medes, Cyrus, a devout and pious man, prayed before the family fire (*Cyropaedia* at 1.6.1).

FATHERLY COUNSEL

Xenophon relates what happened next (*Cyropaedia* at 1.6.2-46). Cyrus' father Cambyses reminded Cyrus that only those who work diligently to become who they ought to be, have the right to pray for divine blessings and success in their endeavours. He then reminded Cyrus of the maxims that had served the family so well: *those who strive to achieve succeed where the idle fail; those who are vigilant and thoughtful live more securely than those who are indifferent.* Cyrus replied that he remembered well what his father had taught him. In addition, his father's admonitions that good governing required great diligence had often made him think about its guiding principles. Amongst those principles was that a ruler ought not to be self-indulgent and arrogant. Rather, through foresight the leader should engage in planning and preparation for contingencies.

CYRUS, THE FATHER: PLACING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS BEFORE HIS OWN

Benevolence and taking care of the basic needs of others under his care was a maxim that would serve Cyrus well throughout his life. Xenophon at 8.43-44 writes, "*What other man but Cyrus, after having overturned an empire, ever died with the title of 'The Father' from the people whom he had brought under his power? For it is plain fact that this is a name for one who bestows, rather than for one who takes away!*"

When leading his troops into battle, Cyrus quenched his thirst after his troops had quenched theirs and he ate after his troops had eaten. With his troops solidly behind him and motivated, Cyrus led them to victory after victory over the Assyrians-emerging from the mêlée with Medes and Persians admiring his leadership.

CYRUS BECOMES KING, THEN KING-OF-KINGS

When he was about forty years of age, Cyrus succeeded his father as king of Persia-Anshan. Cyrus would rule as king for another thirty years. He entered Babylon when he was about sixty years of age. It wouldn't be long before he elevated Persia to the position of senior partner in the Mede-Persian federation. Accounts differ about Cyrus' rise to power. According to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (at 4.1; 5.5; 6.1; 8.5.19), Cyrus' uncle Cyaxares II realized that admiration and loyalty for Cyrus had been steadily growing. A jealous and aging Cyaxares therefore abdicated as king-of-kings in favour of Cyrus. Cyaxares II also offered Cyrus his daughter's hand in marriage. Further, as he had no heir, Cyaxares II gave Cyrus the kingdom of Media as a dowry. Herodotus and other accounts have Cyrus deposing his grandfather Astyages by force (Herodotus does not mention Cyaxares II). In this scenario, Astyages would have been very old and the dates are difficult to reconcile.

CYRUS' CHARACTER

While there is disagreement among Classical Greek authors about the way Cyrus became king-of-kings, what

we read is Cyrus' ability to turn adversaries into trusted members of his government. According to Xenophon, Cyrus gave Cyaxares II vice-regal authority over Babylon and other territories. At the least, Cyrus was not vengeful. Even Herodotus acknowledges that, "*Cyrus kept Astyages at his court during the rest of his life, without doing him any further injury.*" The King of Armenia, once an adversary, became his ally and the King of Lydia who had commanded an allied force against Cyrus became a close advisor.

The one trait that earned Cyrus the unwavering loyalty of his subjects was that he kept his word even when the other party to whom he had given his word committed a wrong. He required every one who acted in his name to follow this policy. As a result, people willing put themselves in his charge.

Cyrus also embraced self-control and moderation while shunning lust and avarice.

CYRUS' CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Cyrus is known to history as a king who built an empire as a liberator and not as a cruel conqueror. While kings before him destroyed conquered cities, looted its homes, raped the women, enslaved the population and destroyed its temples, Cyrus (as noted in the Cyrus Cylinder) stated that:

I gave no cause for fear and no one was terrorized. I concerned myself with the needs and welfare of the citizens... and with promoting their well-being. I freed them from their improper oppression and bondage. I healed their afflictions and put an end to their misfortune. I restored their dilapidated dwellings. I assisted the displaced who had been held in bondage to return to their homes. I rebuilt sanctuaries and chapels that lay in ruins... I returned deities to their (rightful) sanctuaries and restored their temples.

These words are the essence of what we call Cyrus' charter of fundamental rights and freedoms and what others have called a human rights policy—the first in history. Cyrus' governance policy tacitly acknowledges a person's right to live with dignity. It enabled people to go about their lives without fear of harassment by the state and those in power. He gave people security for their property against unlawful seizure. In doing so, Cyrus limited the power of the state. He developed public works that helped make people's lives more comfortable thus spelling out the role of government to serve the people. He allowed people to hold and practice their spiritual beliefs thus establishing the novel policy of religious freedom.

SUCCESSION

Xenophon laments that when Cyrus died, everything "deteriorated." Herodotus later stated that people called Cyrus "the father" because he always strove for their well-being; they called his son Cambyses the master because he was harsh and arrogant, and they called Darius the merchant because he made a petty profit out of everything

(*Histories* 3.89). If only Cyrus could have somehow established a succession plan that included good leadership, governance, and accountability to the people.

HEBREW BIBLE'S TITULAR HONOUR

Cyrus' place in history was nevertheless secure. So just and benevolent was Cyrus' law that the Hebrew Bible remembers him with words not accorded to any non-Jew before or since. Cyrus was given the Bible's highest titular honour. In Isaiah 45.1, God names Cyrus the anointed, the Messiah of the Lord. The Bible's Septuagint Greek version

has God saying, "To Cyrus my Christ." That title is no small honour.

CYRUS' TOMB

According to Plutarch, the inscribed epitaph of Cyrus' tomb read: "***O man, whoever you are and wherever you come from, for I know you will come, I am Cyrus who gave the Persians their empire. Do not grudge me this piece of stone that covers my body.***"

PART 2: CYRUS' RELIGION AND INSPIRATION

Cyrus is famed for his humanity and benevolence. What inspired him to adopt these traits? To what religion did he belong?

Since we have no direct statement by Cyrus about his faith, we will search the oldest available records to seek answers to our questions.

Alexander of Macedonia destroyed the bulk of Achaemenid records when he invaded Persia and deposed the Achaemenids. What remains of Achaemenid records are mainly rock inscriptions. Most of our information about the Achaemenids now comes from foreign sources: Classical Greek and Roman texts—even the Hebrew Bible.

MAZDAYASNA & ACHAEMENID INSCRIPTIONS

Several Achaemenid inscriptions before and after Cyrus acknowledge and extol "***Ahura Mazda.***" The Zoroastrian/Zarathushti religion is the only religion whose term or word for God is "Ahura Mazda" or "Ahuramazda." The older name for the religion is Mazdayasna meaning "Mazda-worship," that is, "God-worship." A Mazdayasni worships, reveres, acknowledges or extols Ahura-Mazda.

The earliest surviving Achaemenid stone inscriptions are brief lines by *King Ariaramnes* the third member of the Achaemenid dynasty (who reigned from 640 to 590 BCE), and those by his son, *Arsames*. Both acknowledge Ahura-Mazda. Darius I, the Great, the ninth in the dynastic line, left several inscriptions that extol Ahuramazda.

We can only hope that inscriptions of Cyrus await discovery. Thankfully, we have many Greek and Roman references to the religion of the Persians, Achaemenids and Cyrus. It is to these references that we now turn our attention.

ZARATHUSHTRA AND THE MAGIAN RELIGION IN GREEK/ROMAN TEXTS

In his *Alcibiades I*, Greek philosopher Plato called Zoroaster (Zarathushtra) the founder of the doctrine of the magi. Plato's disciple, *Hermodorus*, said Zoroaster was the first Magian. During Cyrus' time, the Western, that is, the Greek- or Latin-based name for the Zoroastrian or Mazdayasna religion was either the "*Religion of the Magi*" or the "*Magian Religion.*"

THE PERSIAN MAGIAN RELIGION

The English translations of several Classical Greek and Roman authors describe the Persian religion from their frame of reference. They call Ahura Mazda "Zeus" or "Jupiter" and call the Yazata-angels, "gods."

Immediately after describing the rise of Cyrus the Great as "master of Upper Asia", Classical Greek author Herodotus (c. 485-420 BCE) launched into a description of the customs and religion of the Persians (at 1.130 of his *Histories*).

Herodotus describes the Persian religion as one whose priests were the magi. Importantly, he notes that the Persian religion "*has come down to them (the Persians) from ancient times.*" In other words, the religion of Persia that he describes was not a newly formed religion, but one already ancient in his time. Herodotus describes the defining feature of the Magian religion when he states that the Persians:

Have no images of the gods, no temples and no altars—and consider their use a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods [sic] to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine. Their wont, however, is to ascend the summits of the loftiest mountains, and there to making offerings to Jupiter 0))(chief Roman deity, namely, Ahura Mazda), which is the name they give to the whole circuit of the firmament.

Herodotus adds that during a religious offering, one of the "*magi comes forward and chants a hymn, which they say recounts the origin of the cosmos. No prayer or offering can be made without a magus present.*" At 1.140, Herodotus states, "*There is another custom which is spoken of with reserve, and not openly, concerning their dead.*" After describing the practice he adds, "*That the magi have this custom is beyond a doubt, for they practise it without any concealment.*" The one feature that sets the Zoroastrian/Zarathushti religion apart is its funerary customs. Herodotus and other Classical authors make the magi part of all the stories regarding Cyrus' birth and his early years. We describe their involvement during Cyrus' later years below.

Herodotus does not note the presence of any other Persian religion. Albert de Jong in *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* states:

There is no trace of a plurality among the Iranians. On the contrary, in the (Greek and Latin) Classical texts, only one religion is recognized: the religion of the Persians. This religion is often connected with the name Zoroaster, who enjoyed a wide reputation in the ancient world as the founder of the order of the magi, and by extension as the founder of the wisdom and religion of the Persians.

The Classical texts are replete with references to the Achaemenid kings expressing their Magian piety, their consultations with the magi, and their participation in ceremonies officiated by the magi. We will now begin an examination of Cyrus' religion.

THE MAGIAN RELIGION OF CYRUS

Mary Boyce in *A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II: Under the Achaemenians* (page 46) makes a convincing argument about a dramatic congruence between the writings of the Second (post Babylonian) Isaiah (in the Hebrew Bible) and the much older Yasna 44, part of the Gathas, the hymns of Zarathushtra in the scriptures, the Avesta. (It is in Isaiah 44-45 that we read a reference to Cyrus that bears some similarities to the first part of the text on the Cyrus Cylinder.)

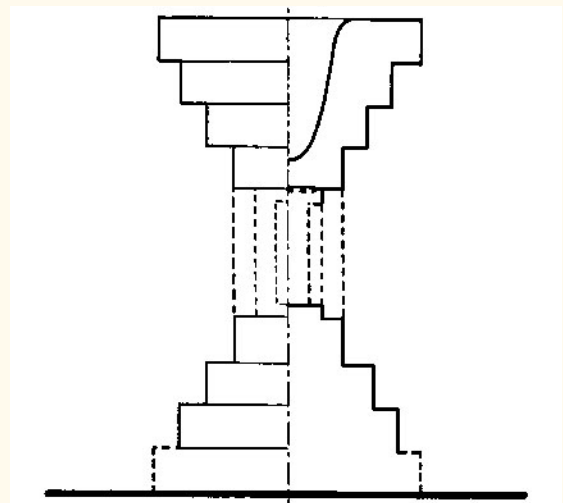
Boyce suggests that the relationship between the Second Isaiah and the teachings of Zarathushtra developed through the agency of a magus during the time Cyrus liberated the Jews from Babylon. She ends her analysis by stating that this was "good evidence that the Persian king (Cyrus) was not only a believer (in Zoroastrianism), but one committed to establishing the (Zoroastrian) faith throughout his realms..." Boyce goes on to state that the cosmological teachings of Anaximander of Miletus—a contemporary of Cyrus from Greek Ionia—"show marked Zoroastrian influences."

A broken fire-holder or fire altar has been found in Pasargadae. The same style of stepped fire-holder continued to be used for Zoroastrian/ Zarathushti fire-holders/altars in later centuries up to and beyond the Sassanian era. Fire altars/holders of this style had been used by the Medians as well. The known tradition regarding the use of stepped fire holders/altars extended for more than a thousand years and includes the reign of Cyrus.

Of the several references relating to Cyrus and the magi in Classical Greek/Roman literature, we will mention only a few. *Arrian*, a second century CE Roman historian, notes that the magi were charged with looking after Cyrus' tomb at Pasargadae and had a "small house" close to the tomb. The only purpose of having priests close to a tomb continuously would have been to tend to an ongoing religious function at the tomb site. One such function could have been the tending of an ever-burning fire and another could have been the recitation of prayers during the five watches of a day.



Stepped fire alter bowl inverted at Pasargadae. Image Credit Stronach (see accompanying image for details)



Drawing of ..Cyrus' 6th century BCE fire alter at Pasargadae. Image credit: David Stronach in *Pasargadae: A report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963 Oxford (1978), p 141.*



Stepped fire altar on a silver drachma of the Sassanian King Shapur I (241-272 CE)

Xenophon, in his *Cyropedia*, devotes a great deal of Book 8 to Cyrus' exceptional piety and his Magian beliefs. At 8.1.23-26, Xenophon notes that Cyrus: *Showed himself in the first place more devout in his worship of the deities (Ahura Mazda and the Yazata angels) now that he was more fortunate. From the time he first instituted the College of Magi, he never failed to sing hymns to the deities at daybreak or make daily offerings to whatsoever deities the magi directed.*

Xenophon continues: *"Thus, the institutions established by him at that time have continued in force with each successive king even to this day. In this respect, therefore, the rest of the Persians also imitated him from the first; for they believed that they would be more certain of good fortune if they revered the deities just as he who was their sovereign did—for he was the most fortunate of all. (The Persians) thought also that in doing this they would please Cyrus."*

Here we see that Cyrus' faith was no different from the faith of his successors or from that of other Persians. Further, *"Cyrus considered that the piety of his friends was a good thing for him too... He reasoned that if all his associates were God-fearing men, they would be less inclined to commit crimes against one another or against him."* He also led by example. *"By always paying scrupulous regard to what was upright, others would be more likely to abstain from improper gains. They would endeavour to make their way by upright methods."* Xenophon goes on to remark about Cyrus' adherence to self-control and moderation.

CHARIOT OF FIRE

Xenophon also describes a procession directed by the magi where Cyrus' chariot was preceded by a chariot carrying the sacred fire on a great altar. The procession's chariot of fire must have been a spectacular sight.

THE RELIGION & INSPIRATION OF CYRUS IN CONCLUSION

From the above, we see that Cyrus was a devout and pious man. His Magian faith inspired him to value above all the qualities of character that made him care about the welfare of others. His faith and the qualities of character it held in high regard, inspired Cyrus to treat others with respect. He embraced honesty and trustworthiness while spurning greed and lust. Though supremely self-confident in his goals, he was humble when dealing with others.

WE ALSO SEE THAT:

* *The Achaemenid kings before and after Cyrus, extolled and acknowledged Ahuramazda. They were by definition Mazdayasni another name for the Zarathushti/Zoroastrian religion*

* *The Achaemenids were described by Classical writers as Magian and the magi officiated in all religious duties at court to the exclusion of any other religion.*

* *The Achaemenid kings therefore belonged to the Mazdayasna-Magian-Zarathushti religion.*

* *Cyrus was an Achaemenid and a pious Magian-Mazdayasna-Zarathushti. His faith inspired his acts of greatness*

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Cyrus Cylinder Contents by K. E. Eduljee



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The Zoroastrian Heritage website www.zoroastrianheritage.com <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/>

The Cyrus Cylinder

Small Cylinder, Big Message

K. E. EDULJEE

DESCRIPTION

Modest in scale and appearance, the Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most famous icons to have survived from the ancient world. It is 21.9 cms long and 10 cms in diameter towards the centre.



Image Credit: Averain at Flickr

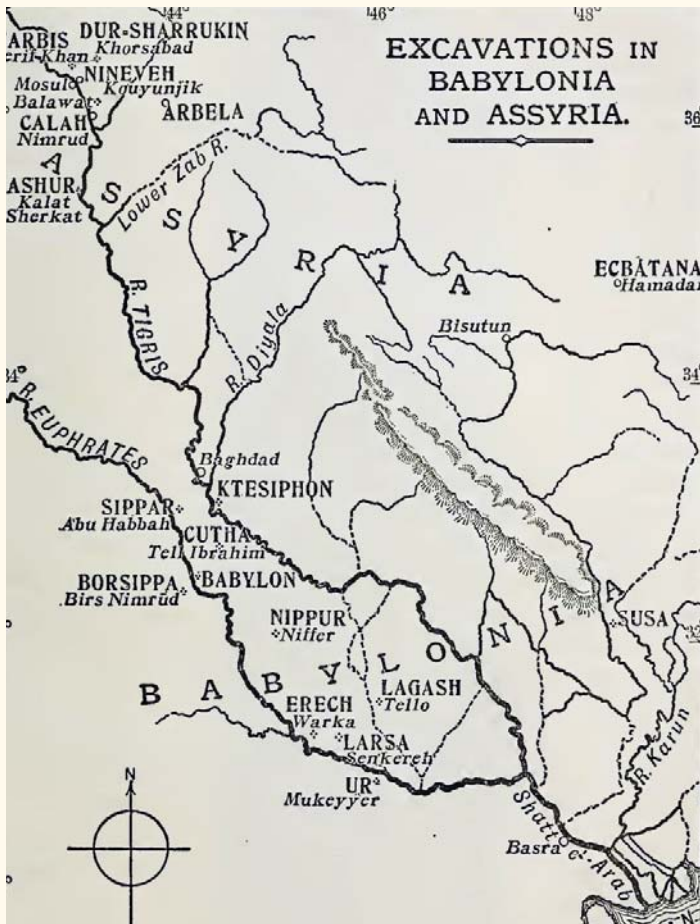
The Cylinder is finely inscribed in the Babylonian–Akkadian cuneiform script. It commemorates the taking of Babylon by Cyrus' forces on October 12, 539 BCE, and records the moral and divine authority for Cyrus' mission to bring freedom and justice to Babylon (and all the lands in his realm). It also records his edict that no citizens be harmed or terrorized; that the oppressed be free from oppression; that those enslaved be freed from bondage; that civil works and buildings in ruins be repaired or rebuilt; that temples be restored; that people be given the freedom to worship; and that steps be taken to ensure public safety. Because the norm for conquests by other kings before him was the antithesis: destruction, looting, rape, wonton killing, enslavement, oppression and continued fear — Cyrus' governance system, as proclaimed in the text of the Cylinder, is thought by scholars to be the first of its kind in history.



*Fragments of tablet with Babylonian Cuneiform inscriptions,
Clay, excavated at Babylon, Iraq 1922-23, Achaemenid 539-330 BCE, British Museum*

According to one theory derived from other Babylonian (Nabonidus) chronicles, Cyrus formally entered the city on October 29, 539 BCE, greeted by jubilant citizens.

Apparently, the Cylinder was made to be placed in the foundation of a building being restored by Cyrus—presumed to be ancient Babylon’s Marduk Temple otherwise called the Esagila complex — though the edict, with localized versions, was intended for distribution throughout Cyrus’ realm. We estimate that the Cylinder was made between 539 and 534 BCE.



Historical sites Mesopotamia. The Cyrus Cylinder was discovered in Babylon (centre of the map) on the east bank of the Euphrates River. Persia lies just to the east of Susa, Media was located where we see Ecbatana.

DISCOVERY

The cylinder was discovered in the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon, which lies in the centre of Iraq. The archaeologist credited with the Cylinder’s discovery in March (some say February) 1879 is Hormuzd Rassam. He was a native of Mosul and an employee of the British Museum. It is a miracle that the fragile Cylinder survived the site’s devastation, which was razed to the ground and heavily looted.

According to Irving Finkel, in his *The Cyrus Cylinder* (2013) p. 49, the Cylinder was discovered at Tel-amran (Tell Amran/Omran) and Jumjama between March 17 and 23, 1879, when Hormuzd Rassam had left the site in the charge of his assistant and overseer of excavations, Daud Toma.

POSSESSION & CONDITION

Finkel notes that the shipping documents show that the cylinder was shipped in 1879 and received by the British Museum in August of that year in a broken condition (as documented by the Museum’s curator for cuneiform, Theophilus Pinches). When Pinches re-assembled the Cylinder, he found that pieces were missing. The restored Cylinder contains 35 lines of text.

The Cylinder (# BM 90920) has been in the British Museum since then.

YALE CYLINDER FRAGMENT

Fortunately, one of the missing pieces of the Cylinder, measuring 8.6 by 5.6 cm, was found in the U.S. amongst Mesopotamian archaeological fragments in Yale University’s Nies’ collection.

In 1970, Paul-Richard Berger, of the University of Munster, determined that these fragments contained lines 36–45 of the Cyrus Cylinder’s text. The lines continued the Cylinder’s proclamation or edict of Cyrus. Without them, some authors had surmised that the Cylinder was just another foundation deposit. Berger’s discovery changed those perceptions.

BRITISH MUSEUM TABLET FRAGMENT

On December 31, 2009, while examining the British Museum’s 130,000 unpublished Mesopotamian fragments and tablets, Wilfred Lambert, a retired professor from Birmingham University, came across a tablet fragment that he recognized contained the same text as the Cyrus Cylinder. *(Photo above, part of the present exhibition).*



The Devastated Ruins of Babylon



Brick with inscription of Cyrus,excavated at Ur Iraq, Achaemenid 539-330 BCE, British Museum

Soon afterwards, on January 5, the museum’s curator Irving Finkel, came upon another fragment with additional text.

The two cuneiform fragments had been a part of the museum’s collection since 1881 when they were recovered from a small dig site supervised by Hormuzd Rassam, at Dailem, near Babylon. The text provided by these fragments partially restored lines 1–2 and 44–5 of the Cylinder’s text. The discovery of additional fragments at another site proved that Cyrus’ proclamation had been reproduced and distributed to other centres in his realm.

CHANGED PERCEPTIONS

Prior to the addition of the discovered fragments, some scholars had expressed their doubts about the significance

of the Cylinder’s text. Without providing evidence that the Cyrus Cylinder’s text matched text found elsewhere, these sceptics had ascribed the Cylinder and its text as a standard foundation deposit that resembled other Mesopotamian foundation deposits.

With the discovery of the fragments, the British Museum began to change its previous assessment. It now stated:

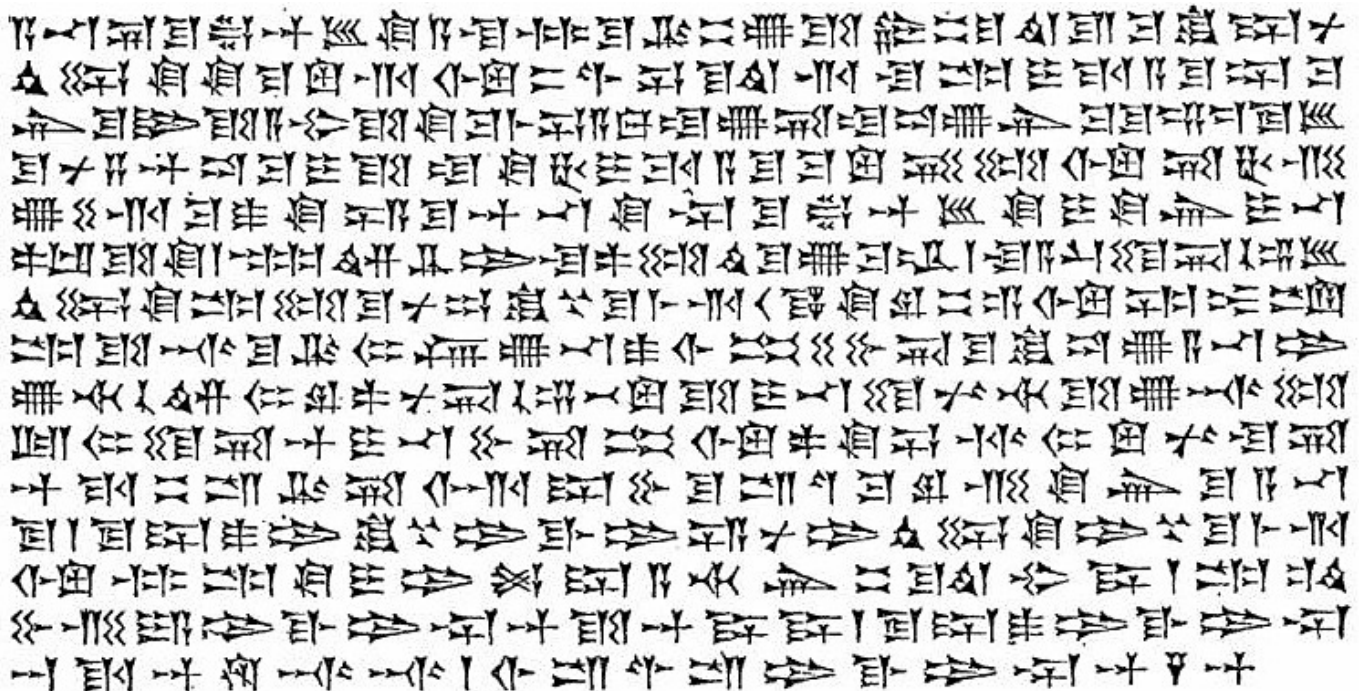
“Remarkably, the new pieces assist with the reading of passages in the Cylinder that are either missing or are obscure, and therefore help improve our understanding of this iconic document. In addition, they show that the ‘declaration’ on the Cylinder is much more than a standard Babylonian building inscription. It was probably an imperial decree that was distributed around the Persian Empire, and it may have been pronouncements of this sort that the author of the biblical book of Ezra was able to draw upon when writing about Cyrus.”

Despite these fortuitous finds, the full text of Cyrus’ proclamation remains incomplete, we must continue to hope that additional copies will be discovered and the Cyrus Cylinder’s lacuna completed.

CYLINDER’S TEXT AND CONTENTS

The Cyrus Cylinder is inscribed in the Babylonian-Akkadian cuneiform script. Cuneiform is a wedged shaped writing system developed around 3,000 BCE for writing on moist, soft clay, by means of a blunt reed, which was hardened by drying in the sun or firing. The following is an excerpt (lines 15–21) from the Cyrus cylinder cuneiform text:

A transliteration of this selection in the Latin alphabet, and an English language translation:



Lines 15–21 of the Cyrus Cylinder in Babylonian-Akkadian cuneiform script.

Image credit: Wikipedia

*Robert W. Rogers in *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (1912). Line 20 marks the transition between two parts of the proclamation. The portion before line 20 states the moral and divine authority under which Cyrus took and liberated Babylon; lines 20 and 21 state Cyrus' title and lineage, in the usual Achaemenid fashion, which is followed by Cyrus' edict (or decree/proclamation).

TRANSLATIONS

As acknowledged by Hormuzd Rassam in his *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (New York, 1897), Sir Henry Rawlinson, was the first person to translate the text of the Cyrus Cylinder [cf. a paper to the Royal Asiatic Society by Rawlinson titled *A Newly Discovered Cylinder of Cyrus the Great*]. We also read of the involvement of Theophilus G. Pinches in that translation. Together they wrote *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia 5* (London, 1884, 1909). Since then, the text has been translated by:

- **Robert W. Rogers** in *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (1912);
- **A. L. Oppenheim** in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET, 1950 pp. 315-16, 1955, 1969), ed. James B. Pritchard;
- **P. R. Berger** in *Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment in Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 65 (1975, pp. 192-234);
- **R. M. Ghas Abadi** in *Cylinder of Cyrus* (Tehran, 1998, 2001 pp. 35-36);
- **Maria Brosius** in *The Persian Empire from Cyrus II to Artaxerxes I* (2000, London);
- **Mordechai Cogan** in *The Context of Scripture. Vol. II: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), ed. W. H. Hallo and K. L. Younger;
- **Piotr Michalowski** in *Historical Sources in Translation: The Ancient*

Transliteration (R. W. Rogers* 1912: 380-84)	Translation (Adapted from R. W. Rogers* 1912: 380-84)
<i>a-na ali-Šú Bab-ilani^{ki} a-la-ak-Šú ik-bi ú- Š a-aš-bi-it-su-ma har-ra-nu Babilī ki-ma ib-ri ú tap-pi-e it-tal-la-ka i-da-a-Šu</i>	15. To his city, Babylon, he caused him to go; he made him take the road to Babylon, going as a friend and companion at his side.
<i>um-ma-ni-Šu rap- Ša-a-tim Šá ki-ma me-e nari la &uacute;ta-ad-du-ú ni-ba-Š&uacute;un kakke-Š ú-nu ša-an-du-ma i-Šá-ad-di-<u>ha</u> i-da-a- Šú</i>	16. His numerous troops, in unknown numbers, like the waters of a river, marched armed at his side.
<i>ba-lu qab-li ú ta-<u>ha</u>-zi ú- Še-ri-ba-aŠ ki-rib Babilī ala- Šú Bab-ilani^{ki} i-ti-ir i-na Š ap-Šá-ki^{m, i^u} Nabu-na'id Šarru la pa-li-<u>hi</u>-Š ú ú-ma-al-la-a qa-tu-u Š- Šu</i>	17. Without battle and conflict, he permitted him to enter Babylon. He spared his city, Babylon, a calamity. Nabonidus, the king, who did not fear him, he delivered into his hand.
<i>niŠe Babilī ka-li- Šú-nu nap-<u>har</u> ^{māt}Š ú-me-ri u Ak-ka-dī^{ki} ru-bi-e ú Š ak-ka-nak-ka Šá-pal-Š ú ik-mi-sa ú-na-aŠ -Š i-qu Še-pu-u Š- Šú i^h-du-ú a-na Š arru-ú-ti- Šú im-mi-ru pa-nu-uŠ - Šú-un</i>	18. All the people of Babylon, Sumer, and Akkad, princes and governors, fell down before him and kissed his feet. They rejoiced in his sovereignty; their faces shone.
<i>be-lu Šá i-na tu-kul-ti- Šá ú-bal-li-tu mi-tu-ta-an i-na bu-ta-qu ú pa-ki-e ig-mi-lu kul-la-ta-an <u>ta</u>-bi-iŠ ik-ta-ar-ra-bu- Šu iŠ-tam-ma-ru zi-ki-ir-Š ú</i>	19. The lord, who by his power brings the dead to life, who amid destruction and injury had protected them, they joyously blessed him, honouring his name.
<i>a-na-ku^m Ku-ra-aŠ Šar kiŠ-Š at Šarru rabuŠarru dan-nu Š ar Babilī Šar ^{māt}Š ú-me-ri ú Ak-ka-di Šar kib-ra-a-ti ir-bit-tim</i>	20. I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world...
<i>mar^m Ka-am-bu-zi-ia Šarru rabu Šar alu An-Šá-an mar mari^m Ku-ra-aŠ Šarru rabu Šar alu An-Š á-an ŠA. BAL. BAL^m Š i-iŠ-pi-iŠ Š arru rabuŠar alu An-Š a-an</i>	21. ...son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, king of the city of Anshan; great-grandson of Teispes, the great king, king of the city of Anshan;

Near East, (Blackwell, 2006, pp. 428-29), ed. Mark Chavalas;

- **Irving Finkel**, Curator of Cuneiform Collections at the British Museum/Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East (unknown date).

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<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/achaemenian/cyrus.htm>
2. **Cyrus Cylinder at**
<http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.ca/2013/03/the-cyrus-cylinder.html>

Photo Right : Achaemenid Gold Daric with "royal archer" kneeling with a bow in one hand and a spear in another, weighed 8 grms(0.29 ounces). British Museum.



Hormuzd Rassam

(1826-1910)

K. E. Eduljee

Hormuzd Rassam, an evangelical Christian, a native Iraqi born in Mosul, northern Iraq, across the Tigris River led a British Museum archaeological team that discovered the Cyrus Cylinder in 1879.

Rassam's archaeological career began at age 25 when a British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard who was leading an excavation team at Nimrud, hired him as a paymaster. Layard, impressed by Hormuzd's hard work, people skills and character, made Hormuzd his assistant, and helped him enrol in Oxford's Magdalen College.

When Layard resigned to become a diplomat, the British Museum asked Hormuzd to direct the excavations at Nimrud. Upon the completion of this assignment (1852 to 1854), Rassam was offered a post as an interpreter at Aden for the East India Company. In Aden, says the London Quarterly Review, "*Mr. Rassam opened communications with the Arab chiefs and succeeded in establishing a direct intercourse with them.*" Peace was "*made and maintained by his influence.*"

In 1866, the British government assigned Hormuzd Rassam as Queen Victoria's special envoy tasked with negotiating the release of two Christian missionaries, imprisoned by the King of Ethiopia, Tewodros II. As Rassam was about to gain the release of the missionaries circumstances intervened. Rassam's mission was deemed a failure and the British sent an expeditionary force to free the Europeans and Rassam. Rassam went to England and a year later, on June 8, 1869, married Anne Eliza Price, a woman of Irish descent in Brighton, and had seven children. In 1876, the British Museum reassigned Hormuzd to lead an archaeological expedition in Iraq. It was during this assignment that in March 1879, the Cyrus Cylinder was found by his dig team supervised by his assistant and overseer of excavations, Daud Toma.



Hormuzd Rassam in traditional wear (1854). Image credit: Wikipedia

On completion of the assignment in 1882, Rassam returned to England, and in recognition of his work, the Royal Academy of Sciences at Turin awarded him the Brazza prize, of 12,000 Fr. He also became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the Society of Biblical Archaeology, and the Victoria Institute. Hormuzd Rassam died on September 16, 1910 at age 84 in Steyning, and is buried in the Brighton Cemetery. [This biography is based on the page *Cyrus Cylinder & Its Discoverer - Hormuzd Rassam* at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.ca/2013/03/cyrus-cylinder-its-discoverer-hormuzd.html>

CYRUS AS AN ASTUTE MAZDA-

JAMSHEED K. CHOKSY

The Cyrus Cylinder bears an inscription aimed at rationalizing, legitimizing, and thereby reducing resistance toward rule by a foreigner. From the stance of pragmatic politics it should not be surprising that the Achaemenid Persian King Kurush or Cyrus II the Great (ruled 559-530 BCE) had himself cast as implementing the will of Marduk the God of Babylon: *“Exalted Marduk ... took the hand of Cyrus ... called him by his name, proclaimed his kingship ... and ordered that he should go to Babylon.”*

Indeed, Cyrus sent his troops into the ancient city of Babylon during October 539 BCE to oust an ostensibly erratic ruler named Nabonidus and allegedly reestablish stability there. In so doing, Cyrus was extending his absolute imperial authority. Yet it seems, according to extant documents including the Cylinder, that Cyrus' endeavor was both politically effective and societally beneficial. Not only did his forces enter “without much fighting” with Cyrus as a self-proclaimed “bringer of peace,” the king appears to indeed have ensured “the safety of the city of Babylon.” Cyrus tended to the religious concerns of the Babylonians as well by restoring “shrines which had previously become dilapidated” and by “increasing the offerings to the divinities.” Particularly aware of strains generated by dislocation and refugee status, Cyrus says he “gathered together all the people and returned them to their original settlements.” Possibly the reason Babylonians did not rebel was that they indeed came to regard Cyrus' reign as one during which they were “freed from their bonds.” Cyrus' textual hyperbole aside, his approach succeeded because it excised the danger that Babylonians had previously felt, rebuilt a failing administration, mitigated internal conflict, ensured welfare, and reintegrated people and resources

while respecting and working within the mores of the society which he had occupied.

The same seems to have been the case for other socio religious groups in the former Babylonian Empire, including the Israelites who regained their own freedom and subsequently completed building the Second Temple around the year 516 BCE. Like the Babylonians they too probably were encouraged by Cyrus' officials to regard the Persian king as chosen by their own divinity. So biblical authors such as Second (Pseudo) Isaiah and Ezra proclaimed that Cyrus was king by the will of their God: “Thus says Yahweh to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him ... it is I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.” In the Jewish canon, Cyrus would also be the Lord

Parsa, the Persian heartland of southwestern Iran, archeological evidence indicates Cyrus worshipped Ahura Mazda the Wise Lord or God of the Iranians (Boyce 1979), most likely following in the footsteps of his Persian and Median ancestors.

Among the surviving religious sites from Cyrus' time is the outdoor area at Parsarga or Pasargadae, his winter royal capital near modern Shiraz (Stronach 1978). On that ground are two hollow white limestone plinths, aligned north to south, with the southern one having post holes on its top which once secured a railing and fitting together with stairs which led to its top (FIGURE 1). The plinths' function is revealed by reliefs carved above the rock cliff tombs of seven subsequent Achaemenian rulers, including Darius I (ruled 522–486 BCE), at Naqsh-e Rostam and



FIGURE 1

God of Israel's “shepherd” presumably chosen to facilitate that community's liberation.

As the far-sighted founder of a vast, powerful, and multinational empire which would endure for over two centuries, Cyrus presented himself as the representative of many different peoples and their deities. Yet in ancient

Persepolis (FIGURE 2).

The tomb reliefs suggest that a holy fire or its embers may have been carried in a brazier, as still occurs in contemporary praxis in Iran and India, to the northern plinth. The king or a magus would have climbed to the top of the southern plinth, faced the

WORSHIPPING RULER



northern one or altar with its fire, and performed devotions. The open air complex at Pasargadae thus functioned as an ateshgah or “place/space of the fire,” i.e., a Mazdean or Zoroastrian fire precinct (Choksy 2007). Three fragmentary stone plinths, also discovered at Pasargadae and similar to the fire altar in the precinct, add to the material evidence that fire was used in religious rituals during Cyrus’ time.

Indeed, it could be surmised that Cyrus was following the Mazdean faith’s basic tenet of doing good by freeing the Israelites or ancient Jews from their Babylonian Exile and by restoring social, political, and religious order to the Babylonians. In the context of his life and actions, the Cyrus Cylinder’s text may therefore be viewed as not just a work of political propaganda but as a record of the Persian king’s active adherence to the Mazdean creed of humata, huxta, huwarshta or “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” which ensured that, in the words of the Cyrus Cylinder, God “walked by his side as a friend and a companion.”

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Cyrus, The Good Shepherd

Jenny Rose

In an article published a few years ago, the Bisutun inscription delineating the accession of Darius I (r. 522-496 BCE) was identified as the earliest Ancient Persian articulation of a resolution to the “**historical, cosmic, political and moral**” crisis caused by the incursion of evil¹. The trilingual inscription portrays the period immediately before Darius’ installation as a time of disruption on all fronts and the Old Persian text describes how, when Darius’ precursor, Cambyses, had gone to Egypt, “*the people allied with evil (ahrika), and the Lie (drauga) proliferated in the lands*” (DB 1.34-35). Several prominent leaders, including the “Magian” Gaumata, the Babylonian king Nidintu-Bel (that is, Nebuchadnezzar III, purported son of Nabonidus), and nine rebel provincial kings, are all discredited as “liars” (DB 4.2-31). In contrast, Darius declares that he did not side with evil, nor was he a Lie-follower, but that he acted to punish those who were (DB 4.38, 61-65, 68).

The Bisutun inscription is the first written Iranian text to establish the construct of the Ancient Persian king as the instrument of divine order, and therefore as the antithesis of evil, particularly in the form of “the Lie.” Its central motif echoes the much earlier Gathas, which clearly express the binary opposition between those who follow - or possess - *Druj* (“the Lie”) and those who are motivated by Asha (“Order,” “Right” and “Truth”). The Gathas also introduce the figure of the *saoshyant*, the “*one who will be strong in the world, who opposes anger or destructive thought with good thought*” (Y. 48.1, 11-12).

No internal Iranian text can be dated with certainty to the time of Cyrus II (r. c. 559-530), but we do have contemporary Babylonian and Biblical

Photo credit Jenny Rose



accounts. These external texts suggest that it was Cyrus, not Darius, who first propagated the notion that the Persian king stood in opposition to the Lie, and that his role was that of a strong *saoshyant-type* ruler, combatting evil and restoring order to the world. As products of such propaganda, the Akkadian texts of the Cyrus cylinder, the *Chronicle of Nabonidus* and the Verse Account of Nabonidus, alongside the Biblical account of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa.40-55) and - more

remotely - the decree of Cyrus preserved in the book of Ezra (Ezra 1.1-11, 6.2-5), may be regarded as containing an equally authentic “voice” of Cyrus to that of Darius at Bisutun. Although the language and points of reference are different, the themes are similar, most notably that of the dichotomy between those leaders who personify evil in following the Lie, and the Ancient Persian king as an embodiment of, and force for, good.



In such propaganda, it seems that the Persians deliberately connected their own religious themes with those of the subject peoples, using terminology from the mythico-history of the latter. Both Second Isaiah and Ezra portray Cyrus as an ideal ruler, who is concerned with the welfare of the people, the sacred city of Jerusalem, and the land. In Isaiah 45.1 Cyrus is even entitled a *mashiach* - that is, "one who is anointed by God."² A similar perspective is presented in the Cyrus

cylinder, where Cyrus is proclaimed as chosen by the Babylonian divinity Marduk, and identifies himself with the titles of earlier Assyrian kings, stating that he is a just, peaceable ruler, who sought the welfare of the city of Babylon, and the restoration of religious sanctuaries there and elsewhere in Babylonia.³

In contrast to the heroic Cyrus is his evil counterpart, Nabonidus of Babylon. Both the Cyrus cylinder and the *Nabonidus Chronicle* claim that

Nabonidus was able to be deposed because he had lost the favor of the gods through his unholy actions, which included following bogus cults, installing a foreign image of the moon in the temple, impropriety in religious performance, neglect of the Babylonian Akitu (New Year festival), and working the people to death, or causing them to starve through famine. The Chronicle states that Nabonidus had been away in Arabia for ten years, during which time a confusion of both political and religious order had grown within Babylon. This situation pre-empted Cambyses' absenteeism in Egypt, which, Darius I claims, was the catalyst for the Lie to grow in Iran.

The Akkadian texts depict Cyrus as the one who restrains Nabonidus. It is Cyrus whom Marduk takes by the hand to enter Babylon peacefully, enabling the resumption of the correct ceremonies, and the redress of Nabonidus' double sins of sacrilege and neglect, both of the cult of Marduk and of his people, bringing liberty and joy to the city.

Persian promulgation of Cyrus as a liberator who was morally superior to the kings of Babylon is also found in Biblical descriptions, where Cyrus' qualities mirror those of King David: both are shepherds, both are *mashiach* - the "Lord's anointed" - both are associated with the consolidation of worship of the God of Israel in Jerusalem.⁴ The Biblical elevation of Cyrus as one chosen by the God of Israel continues through Josephus' *Antiquities* (11.1-3) to Talmudic times. The motif of a Persian monarch ruling in the line of Davidic kingship is depicted iconographically in the Dura Europos synagogue, dedicated in 244/5 CE. There, in a fresco of the story of Esther, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) sits on the Throne of Solomon. In the 14th century Ardashir Nameh, the Jewish Persian poet Shahin Shirazi conflated Biblical story with current Islamic historiography to present Cyrus as the son of the Sasanian king

Ardashir and the Biblical Esther. Earlier, the 12th century Judeo-Persian Farsnameh of Ibn Balkhi had formally incorporated Cyrus into the Hebrew royal lineage through the identification of his mother, Mandana, as Jewish.

Cyrus is also recognized as the epitome of good and just rule in classical Greek texts. Herodotus relates that the Persians of his time still referred to Cyrus as a “father” figure, in contrast to Cambyses whom they called “a despot,” and Darius who was a “shopkeeper,” who had imposed tribute, and had run the empire like a retailer (Histories 3.89.3). For Xenophon, Cyrus was the paradigm of great leadership, whose death was followed by a time of strife during which “all things began to decay” (Cyropaedia 8.2). Xenophon also claims that, in his time, the character of Cyrus was still the subject of Persian stories, as it obviously was amongst the Greeks.

But there is no mention of Cyrus’ name (nor that of any other Achaemenid ruler) in Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts. This suggests that Cyrus had early on been transformed within the internal Iranian religious schema. As a cipher of good rule, perhaps Cyrus had somehow coalesced with the figure of Kavi Vishtaspa, the supporter of Zarathushtra. Or perhaps he had become identified with Yima, whose description as “radiant” with divine glory and as “of good herds” (Vd. 2.2, Yt. 19.31) resembles the depiction of Cyrus as “the shepherd, who will fulfill God’s purpose” in Second Isaiah (44.28). This identification recalls a saying attributed to Cyrus by Xenophon, which compares the duties of a good king to that of a good shepherd: both should strive to make those in their charge happy (Cyropaedia 8.2.14). As the new ruler of Babylon, Cyrus had jurisdiction over temple property, including the right to all the animals on temple land. He became a literal, as well as metaphorical, shepherd, whose large flocks of sheep and goats supplied the imperial banquet table.⁵

The theme of the ideal ruler who exhibits the qualities of a good herdsman is found in the *Ahuna Vairya*

mantra, which refers to Ahura Mazda as “pastor” (Av. *vastar*), in the sense of “herdsman,” or “shepherd,” of the poor. In the Gathas, those qualities of the conscientious pastor that promote growth and harmony amongst living beings are incumbent upon the individual motivated by *asha* and good thought (Y. 31.9, 10; 29.6). This contrasts with the non-pastor, who, driven by the *lie*, brings only injury and deception (Y. 31.15).

Persian propaganda from the time of Cyrus seems to include a skillful interweaving of shared typology – particularly that of the divinely-chosen “good” king versus the negligent “bad” king - into the narrative texts of the Babylonians and Jews, providing “historical, cosmic, political and moral” legitimacy for the intervention of Cyrus’ good rule. This trope - initially associated with Cyrus - of the heroic leader who thwarts both bad stewardship of the realm and also false religion, bringing instead a state of good order, so that the people are happy and the land is able to thrive, is then reiterated in the inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes.⁶ It represents a continuity of the unique ethos of the Gathas, connecting good understanding with action that brings benefit to the entire world.

This article is extracted from a paper presented at the Aram Conference on “Zoroastrianism in the Levant,” Oxford University, July 2010. It was partly inspired by the exhibitions “Babylon: Myth and Truth,” at the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, and “Babylon: Myth and Reality” at the British Museum.

- 1 **Bruce Lincoln**, “A la recherche du paradis perdu,” *History of religion Empire and Torture* (Chicago and London: U. Chicago Press, 2007), 48-49.
- 2 Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the concept relates to Jewish kings, priests and prophets.
- 3 This approach contrasts with the Biblical accounts of the legendary cruelty of the Assyrians and the exile imposed by the Babylonians.
- 4 See 1 Sam. 16.13 and 17.15, 20. The Biblical book of Chronicles idealizes

David, just as Xenophon idealizes Cyrus: both models form the basis for subsequent speculative and utopian political philosophies.

⁵ **Pierre Briant**, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. P. Daniels (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 72 ff.

⁶ The theme reappears in the much later inscriptions of the Sasanian king, Shapur I (r.c. 240-270 CE) and of Kerdir, the Sasanian high priest.



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Jenny lectures extensively at other academic institutions, museums, and Zoroastrian Association events throughout North America. This spring she led a study-tour of some of the most important archaeological, cultural and devotional sites in Central Asia.

“I AM CYRUS”

CYRUS’ CYLINDER

**His cylinder was his diary
Where he inscribed his thoughts
“How one should tread & be treated
Not like a slave who is being humiliated
Poked prodded waiting to be bought”
“Every human doesn’t need
To be discriminated because of
Colour Caste Religion or Creed
But with Self Respect Tolerance
Equality as well Dignity
Is what humans need”**

**He was a man with a mission
Who shared Asho Zarathushtra’s vision
Soon realized that too much venom
Of violence & hatred
Was being spewed
Doing nobody any good
Throughout his mighty
Persian Empire
His vision of Peace
He did enhance
By giving “Peace A Chance”**

**He was just and noble ruler
Though his fame spread
Far and wide
He was a simple down
To earth soul
Without Ego or Pride
He built himself a
Magnificent palace
Befitting a king**

**But when he passed away
Buried with neither bejeweled robes
Or precious belongings
Nor a marble tomb
With the epitaph
‘Here lies Cyrus
The Persian King’
Alas! Instead
A simple clump
Of earth was his covering**

Cyrus the Great:

HISTORY'S STEP FORWARD IN CITIZENS' RIGHTS

KAVEH FARROKH

Cyrus the Great (559-530 BCE) is unique among the great personages of human history for his achievements in statesmanship. Four independent sources corroborate Cyrus' achievements, especially respecting his important advancements regarding human rights, Babylonian, biblical, Greek, and the archaeological record. These non-Iranian sources are remarkably consistent in their reports of Cyrus' achievements promoting citizens' rights.

One of the key areas where Greek, Babylonian and biblical sources agree pertains to Cyrus' entrance into Babylon (the city) on October 29, 549 BCE, and the implications of his arrival for Babylonian and non-Babylonian's rights and privileges. The Babylonian Nabonidus Chronicle reports that the inhabitants of Babylon city welcomed Cyrus as a liberator: "In the month of Arahsumah, the third day, Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs, doubtless reeds or rushes to smooth out the path of his chariot were spread in front of him. The state of peace was imposed on all the city. Cyrus sent messages of greetings to all of

Babylon." (Nabonidus Chronicle (III, 12-22).

BABYLONIAN SOURCES

Cyrus' arrival was unusual in three ways. First, unlike previous near eastern conquerors such as the Assyrians, he did not massacre, plunder, or forcibly deport conquered populations. Second, Cyrus paid homage to the local god Marduk instead of Mithras (the God of War and Pastures) or Mazda (the Supreme Wise Lord of Good). Third, Cyrus proclaimed what may be the first declaration of citizens' rights in history, known today as human rights. These were inscribed on what is now known as the Cyrus Cylinder, which is housed at the British Museum. In it, Cyrus made declarations: (a) the god Marduk is respected, again signaling that Cyrus had not come as a conqueror intent on imposing the Iranian culture, theology, and language on the people (b) a slum-clearance program was ordered, a clear reference to Cyrus' concern for the welfare of all citizens despite their social standing (c) restoration of gods to their original locales, signaling the rights of citizens to freedom of worship, like the Constitutional declarations of the Founding Fathers of the United States and (d) the right of citizens to again engage in the New Year festivals, thereby declaring the right of citizens to freely engage in their culture. Thus the Cyrus Cylinder accords citizens the right to dignified living conditions, freedom of worship, and culture. These declarations were soon followed by deeds. Cyrus' arrival did not disrupt the economic life of Babylon (shipping, real estate, and industrial). The local civil administration was left intact and supported. The temples were restored as promised by the Cylinder and robust commercial activity spread throughout the country, especially at Ur and Uruk. Notably, 8 of 12 business documents found at Ur were issued during Cyrus' lifetime.



BIBLICAL SOURCES

Cyrus was also the first ruler in history to guarantee the cultural and religious rights of the Jewish people. Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE) forcibly had exiled the Jews from their homeland in [modern day] Israel to Babylon, then sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple of Yahweh. Cyrus worked to reverse these historical injustices to the Jews. They were set free of their Babylonian captivity and allowed to return to their homeland (up to 40,000 have returned). Sacred Jewish utensils confiscated by Nebuchadnezzar were returned to the Jews by Cyrus (Ezra I: 7-8), a process continued by Darius the Great (549-486 BCE) (Ezra VI: 3-5). Cyrus authorized imperial funds to be distributed to the Jews for rebuilding their temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:7), a policy that continued into the reign of Darius the Great (Ezra 5:13-17). Cyrus' policies may explain why he is the only Gentile given such high honors in the Hebrew religious tradition, notably the Second Book of Isaiah (Isaiah, 44:28; 45:1; see also 35, 40-55). These Jewish-Iranian bonds may explain why Jews sided with the later Parthian and Sassanian Empires against Rome; notably, Pacorus 40-39 BCE and General Shahrbaraz in 613-619 CE.

GREEK SOURCES

Despite the state of conflict between ancient Greece and the Achaemenid Empire at the time, Greek sources are consistent with the Nabonidus Chronicle. Herodotus (I, 19) and Xenophon (Cyropaedia, 7. 5.15) report that Cyrus' arrival was heralded by the Babylon citizenry with festivals and celebrations.

Despite the Greco-Persian wars, notably, the battles of Marathon (490 BCE), Thermopylae (480 BCE), Salamis (480 BCE) and Plataea (479 BCE)—Herodotus (III, 89) noted Cyrus' benevolence to the citizens and his concerns for their material well-being. The wisdom of Cyrus is also attested by Aeschylus who observed that cites the king had a "temperate soul." Plato noted that under Cyrus' rule, the empire was bestowed with "a spirit of freedom, friendship and community". A further testament of Cyrus'

beneficence appears in Xenophon's eight-volume biography of Cyrus, the *Cyropaedia*.

Even Alexander, who conquered and destroyed the Achaemenid Empire, paid homage to Cyrus at his tomb at Pasargadae. Post-Alexandrian sources, such as Diodorus Siculus report Cyrus as having been "considerate and humane in his treatment of his subjects" (Book 9, 22-24).

ARCHEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Finally, there are archaeological data to support the sources in their description of Cyrus the Great's pioneering of human rights. These include the Jewish Temple at Elephantine in Egypt where a memorandum (issued after Cyrus' death) mentions of funds that were needed to be sent from Persia to cover reconstruction costs. Egyptian temples, notably those at Sais and Amon, were also repaired by the Persian administration.

Perhaps the most remarkable, yet not widely known, archaeological discovery was made in 1979 by a French expedition at the site of ancient Lykia, in Western Turkey. Their find is a decree which exhibits striking parallels with the Cyrus Cylinder. However the Lykian version is dated to 358 BCE, long after Cyrus' time and just decades before the empire's fall to Alexander. The Lykian document, written in Lykian, Aramaic, and Greek, declared support and respect for local traditions and customs as well as stating the government's obligation to address the people's needs. This makes clear that Cyrus the Great's policies were not just anomalous, but a system of laws and ethics respecting human rights, much like that seen with the United States Constitution, close to two thousand years later.

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Cyrus the great and freedom of religion

THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ANCIENT MINORITY

Dr. Marc Gopin

This is a good time in history to reflect on the potential of great civilizations to become a model of enlightened behavior. We live in a period of history when many civilizations are at a crossroads. It becomes crucial that we highlight the great potential of civilizations to enlighten each other, strengthen each other, rather than compete in destructive ways or destroy each other.

Cyrus comes along in history in a dramatic way that stands out in the annals of many people in the surrounding regions of ancient Persia. I want to highlight the implications of Cyrus' impact on a small people at the heart of the Middle East, the Hebrews of ancient Palestine, who became known as Jews with their religion of Judaism.

The Torah, the Hebrew Bible that is sacred to religious Jews for the past 2000 years, also known by Christians as the Old Testament, is oftentimes not a happy book of history or prophecies. There are many sad episodes and difficulties with experiences of slavery, constant wars with neighbors, civil wars, and ultimately exile. There are many kings and human leaders described in its pages, most of them reviled as impious and cruel to the poor. These disparaging portrayals and dire prophecies that excoriate these leaders refer often to most non-Jewish and Jewish kings. The notable exceptions are the heroic and prophetic figures, such as Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and Josiah. Kings of neighboring countries are particularly rebuked by the prophets for their brutality and injustice.

This is why it is so astonishing that one of the strongest ancient sources that praises Cyrus in the deepest way as a servant of God and savior comes from the Jews, this small people in the Middle East who had been battered by just about everyone else. The level of praise in these holy books for a foreign king who is not a Jew is truly astonishing, extremely rare in a Bible that is quite rigorous in its monotheistic standards of piety.

Koresh, or Cyrus, is seen in the books of Isaiah, Ezra, and Chronicles, and by the later Jewish historian Josephus, as a saintly man who freed slaves, established humanitarian equality, and insisted on the right of this tiny people to worship God in its own way on its own land. The commitment of Cyrus was seen as his desire to fulfill God's wishes to be a savior to the Jewish people. That is why he freed them from Babylonian captivity and heavily invested in their return to Jerusalem to build their destroyed temple. In many ways, Cyrus is described as a messianic figure, a Messiah. The concept of a central savior will figure

prominently in the development later of Christian theology, and will appear as well as the Islamic concept of the Mahdi, the savior of history. But the origin of this Biblical idea is from key sources such as Isaiah 45, and the central player in that narrative was in fact Cyrus. Thus, Cyrus' actions in history, at least as they were remembered by the Biblical Jewish authors, become a paradigm for the major Western religions in their faith in salvation, redemption and the liberation of oppressed peoples. Isaiah saw the unique act of redemption and salvation from exile for a defeated people that Cyrus initiated as a kind of hand of God in history.

For us today, we should see this as a unique moment of enlightened global leadership that expresses one of those rare moments when leaders can capture the imagination of philosophers and poets and give rise to a faith in human possibility, the possibility of freedom and redemption even for beleaguered minorities.

At the same time, it must be remembered that Cyrus was a pragmatic leader of a real country with real international interests and ambitions. I will submit that in making this grand gesture he calculated that restoring peoples to their homelands, expressing generosity to whole peoples when they are vulnerable, offering honor in an intercultural way, are also good diplomatic tactics. There are ways to satisfy the needs of others but also the needs of the empire and state.

This is a vital lesson of history, namely the rationality, the pragmatic advantage, of humanitarian gestures, generosity, honor, in a word, respect for minority rights. Cyrus understood that this was the best way to create international allies all over the region. He understood that the humanization of the other is the most practical way to create safety in the far-flung borders of one's regions of influence. By contrast, the demonization and

dehumanization of neighbors near and far would guarantee instability and a perpetual state of conflict.

Cyrus the conqueror was thus also Cyrus the liberator and an expert in conflict prevention. He planted the seeds of relationships between the powerful and the less powerful, knowing the wheels of history and fortune and how essential it was to cultivate friends and to help those who at present are weak.

It behooves us to learn the lessons for today. We need to cultivate leadership amongst ourselves that promotes an embrace of those who are vulnerable, a wise commitment to the practicality of kindness, compassion, generosity and fairness. We need to promote young leaders who understand that such traits are not the traits of weakness but

the traits of heroic leaders, great men who understood what it was to engage the world from a position of strength.

Cyrus looked on his world and saw that a major tactic of war and occupation was the forced displacement of peoples and the destruction of their culture through the generation of refugees. He saw Babylonia and Assyria engaging in these kind of conquests and forced exiles of hundreds of thousands of people, and empires saw this as a standard practice of conquest. He might look on our world today, see all the history of genocides, ethnic cleansing and forced migrations of millions and conclude that not much has changed. There are still brutal selfish empires that look at their short-term interests and commit the same atrocities as in his time. But he would also note that such leaders, while appearing strong for a few short years, were often consigned to the dustbin of history within a short time. Far wiser an investment in one's civilization comes from investment in people, one's own citizens, but also immigrants from everywhere. This creates vitality, gentle commerce and a benign attitude of most people to your leadership. We can only hope that the great civilizations of today take heed of Cyrus' vision and style of global leadership.



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Representative Articles Accompanying the Exhibition



Achaemenid Pottery Ostrakon inscribed in Aramaic c 475-BCE, The British Museum



Achaemenid Omphalos Bowl Winged Lions, Silver 5th-4th BCE, The British Museum



Achaemenid Chalcedony Stamp Seal showing the Persian Royal hero defeating a winged bull, 5th-4th BCE, The British Museum

THE EUPHRATES SONNETS

Cyrus Meets the Jews

Keki Daruwala

1

You met them by the waters of the Euphrates,
their faces gaunt and ridged, their looks intense;
their eye sockets were as old as history.
To you their language didn't make much sense.
A wheel had turned somewhere and gone its rounds;
you sensed that much. An interpreter spoke,
while your eyes took in frayed Nazarene beards,
and frayed yarn that showed through their threadbare
cloaks.

*"Jerusalem has been our anchor and shackle for long.
We are flutes without breath, lyres without notes;
but mention the city and we flower into song."*

They gifted you candelabra as silver token.
Memory stirred somewhere. Of course you'd heard of
them:
a people who were exiled; a temple that was broken.

2

You didn't know them when you saw them first-
the desert sands creased over the mouth,
desert scrub bristling over the jawline.
They were the tribes that had come in from the south,
their women pale as pale-stoned Jerusalem.
They came from valleys far off, that much was known;
from seas where silence curdled into salt,
the vales of Judea, the mountains of Hermon.

You didn't know the names, no Persian would.
*"They were robbed, penalized, King! But their prophets
thought
the Lord's punishment just."* They saw you brood.
A deep-throated tongue stood at the door; elders
came.
You didn't understand, yet you understood.
You don't need words to know privation, pain.

3

Brooding over God's wrath you think of your own fate.
You know of statues crashing in the sands,
the rigid Pharaohs with their joint less bones
exchanging notes with Ammon or shaking hands.
Yet they disappeared like a jackal howl
or marsh bird in mid-flight. You were fairly pissed
at these royal blur-outs, with none to help, no
Sobek in the marshes, and no Anubis.

Around your portals, language thickets grew
and struggled for the sun. A scripture died
because a script vanished. Vowels wilted and
withdrew.

A prophecy was slipped in, your interest aroused:
*"Let the tribes and the dialects filter back.
Let them go to Jerusalem and build His house."*

4

A dead saint can be turned into a prophet -
do as he predicted. Two reputations are secure.
The stamp of divinity gets embossed on your brow;
you fulfill what Jeremiah said years before.
The edict rings through town crier and bell:
"The loot of Nebuchednezzar be returned."
As history is reversed, each bronze pillar he brought
goes back, as does gold and silver, each vessel, urn.

They travel back to their landscapes besieged by scrub
from where they were thrown out once like apparitions
hurled by an exorcist into some black outer space.
An era ends, but no prophecy fails -
a dream without a retina finds its eyes at last;
a people without land filters back to its vales.

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***Sonnets to be published in poetry volume "Fire-
altar: Poems on the Greeks and the Persians"***

CYRUS THE GREAT AND THE TEN "LOST" TRIBES OF ISRAEL

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The Cyrus Cylinder chronicles Cyrus' return of Babylonian gods to the habitations from which they had been removed and which had lain in ruins for a long time, as well as his order that permanent temples be re-established for them. It also records his command that their (i.e., the gods') peoples be returned to their original habitations: The gods who dwell in their midst I returned and set them up in eternal dwellings; their peoples I gathered up and returned to their inhabited lands (l. 32).

The Hebrew Bible asserts similarly that Cyrus the Great ordered the rebuilding of the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem, and a return of YHWH's people to Judah (Ezra 1:1-4). There is both inscriptional and archaeological data to support this widespread Persian policy.

INSCRIPTIONAL DATA

The 1926-7 excavations at Neirab, Syria, revealed clay tablets dating from the kings of Nebuchadnezzar up to the early years of Darius I. The transactions described on the tablets refer to a people named the Neirabians, i.e., the people who lived in the city where the archive was found. Yet the places where the transactions occurred were all in the vicinity of Nippur in Babylon. A community of Syrians who had been exiled to Nippur under Nebuchadnezzar, had been released to their own city in Syria in the beginning of Darius' reign.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

The archaeology of the Levant also supports the Cyrus cylinder and the biblical text. It reveals a destruction first by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians, followed by a settlement gap in both the northern and southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah). Habitation appears again from the beginning of Persian rule.

JUDAH

Excavations in Judah reveal a complete destruction of all its settlements and fortified towns at the hands of the Babylonians. This was accompanied by a drastic drop in population due to slaughter, deportation, pestilence, flight, and



Figure 1 Judah

the resultant economic collapse.

Jerusalem and its environs experienced a total devastation and depopulation of the inhabitants at the beginning of the sixth century (BCE) with a gradual repopulation and rebuilding starting only at that century's end under the Persians.

Other cities in Judah fared the same. Jericho and En-Gedi were totally destroyed at the beginning of the sixth century (BCE) with partial recovery only under the Persians. Judean cities of the Negev (e.g., Beer Sheba, Arad, Horvat. Uza, and others) were either destroyed or voluntarily abandoned at time of the Babylonian conquest with settlement recovery only under the Persians. The new occupants of these southern cities included Arabs and Edomites, as well as Judeans.

The picture is similar in the towns and villages of western Judah. Lachish, once the second largest town in Judah, was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE with settlement beginning again only in the mid-fifth century, under the Persians when the site became a Persian administrative center. Western Judah was a settlement vacuum after the Babylonian conquest until under the Persians when an entirely new settlement pattern emerged.

It was not just the cities that were destroyed. Surveys and excavations of fifty rural sites in Judah also reveal a drastic decline with little or no continuity of farmsteads into the Babylonian period.

ISRAEL

The picture is duplicated in the areas of the northern kingdom. Settlements throughout the Galilee (i.e., Tel Dan, Tel Hadar, 'En Gev), were destroyed by the Assyrians and only recovered under the Persians. Hazor may have been an administrative center under the Assyrians, but it was abandoned under the Babylonians and occupied again only under the Persians. Tel Chinneret was destroyed by the Assyrians and rebuilt only under the Persians. Jokneam and Tel Qiri were destroyed by the Assyrians and resettled only under the Persians. The population in this area was Phoenician, however,



not Israelite. A sanctuary located at Mizpe Yammim just north of the Sea of Galilee contained an inscription in Phoenician script to the Phoenician goddess Astarte.

Major cities of the province of Megiddo were totally destroyed by the Assyrians and did not recover until the Persian period. The provincial capital city, Megiddo, was completely destroyed apparently by Pharaoh Necho in 604 BCE, and did not recover until the Persian period. Tel Kedesh was destroyed in a violent conflagration that the excavators attribute to

Tiglath-pileser III. Occupation did not reoccur until the Persian period. Ta'anach appears to have been destroyed by Pharaoh Sheshonq who lists Ta'anach among the sites he conquered. Occupation was light until the Persian period. Indeed, the majority of the cities in the province of Megiddo were destroyed by the Assyrians and their populations deported. Although several sites were used as Assyrian administrative centers, these were destroyed by the Babylonians and emptied of their populations. Habitation resumed again only under the Persians. Forty-four sites with Persian period artifacts were found in the Beth-Shean Valley, while 73 additional sites with Persian period artifacts were found farther north, near the Sea of Galilee. All in all, the number of occupied sites in the province of Megiddo returned under the Persians to their pre-exilic level.

The cities of the province of Samaria did not suffer destruction at the hands of the Babylonians as happened elsewhere. The Assyrian governors may have simply transferred their allegiance to Babylon without a fight as there are no destruction layers in these cities. Even so, there does not appear to be occupation during the Babylonian period. Tell el-Far'ah (North) appears to have been an Assyrian administrative center. It was gradually abandoned in the sixth century and not rebuilt. The city of Samaria continued as an Assyrian administrative center, but few remains survive from that period and none from the Babylonian period which followed. A rich hoard of coins dating to the Persian period (356-333 BCE) was found however, plus fragments of a gold throne which may have belonged to a Persian governor. Among the coins dating to the Persian period were six with the name Jeroboam, the first king of Israel. These coins indicate a deep connection to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Associated with the city of Samaria are documents and seals found in the near-by Wadi ed-Daliyeh dated to just before the Alexandrian conquest. The city of Shechem attests to destruction by the Assyrians and limited occupation afterwards under the Assyrians. There was vigorous occupation again under the Persians, however, and a temple to YHWH was built



on the summit of nearby Mount Gerizim (see below). Gezer was completely destroyed by the Babylonians, and rebuilt only under the Persians after a settlement gap.

To summarize, in the southern area of Samaria there were 190 inhabited sites prior to the Assyrian invasion. After a widespread settlement gap during the Assyrian and Babylonian periods, ninety settlements were rebuilt under the Persians. In the northern area of Samaria the number of populated sites went from 238 to 95 as a result of the Assyrian deportations.

Intensive settlement is noted again only in the Persian period when the number of sites returned to the pre-exilic levels (247 sites). The author of the survey proposes a return of exiles to Samaria and not only to Judah.

Mt GERIZIM

Remains of a temple on Mt Gerizim, near Shechem, have been dated to the seventh century BCE by the excavator, Yitzhak Magen. This ancient cult site to YHWH was then rebuilt under the Persians, in the early- to mid-fifth century BCE, after a gap of 200 years, at about the same time as the temple to YHWH was built in Jerusalem. Numerous inscriptions found on the site testify to a temple to YHWH there. Some contain the titles of priests, others say “before God in this place,” or “before YHWH.” One reads, “that which Joseph offered for his wife and his children before YHWH in this temple.” Another mentions “the house of sacrifice” Moreover, during excavations at the site a small gold bell with a silver clapper was found matching the description of the bells on the fringes of the high priest’s ephod (Exod. 28:33-35).

All this indicates that a true temple to YHWH stood on the site from the fifth century BCE. The Persians thus permitted a temple to YHWH to be built in Samaria just as they did in Judah, something never permitted by either the Assyrians or Babylonians. The construction of this temple to YHWH is correlated with the overwhelming preponderance of Yahwistic names on onomastica from coins, bulla, and papyri of Persian period strata throughout the province of Samaria. This suggests that Persian rulers, in the pattern established first by Cyrus and then by Darius, permitted not only the Judeans to return from Babylon to Judah, but also the people of Samaria, the people of Israel, the so-called “ten lost tribes” who had been deported to the lands of Assyria, to return to Samaria, their homeland, and to build a temple there to YHWH their God.



Figure 4 The Sacred Precinct on Mt. Gerizim. The Temple Stood Where the Byzantine Church now Stands

CONCLUSION

Those who built a temple to YHWH on Mt. Gerizim would have been the people of Israel who had been deported to Assyria by the Assyrians and who returned only under the Persians. They would not have been foreigners to Samaria. People in antiquity did not worship foreign gods. Under the Persians, temples were built in the Nile Island of Elephantine and in near-by Syene to the Judean god YHWH, to the Babylonian god Nabu, and to the Aramean god Bethel. They were built by Judeans, Babylonians, and Arameans respectively, members of the Persian garrisons posted there, for their own worship. Even though families of foreign garrisons were based in Egypt for over 200 years, they never built temples to the local Egyptian gods, but only to the gods they brought with them from their various homelands. Likewise, the Carian

garrison stationed in Lycia under the Persians built a temple to their own Carian god, King Kaunios, in Xanthus Lycia, and did not worship the local Lycian gods on whose property they built their temple. The Phoenicians who expanded into the Galilee under the Persians did not build a temple to YHWH, but built a temple to their own Phoenician goddess Astarte. Since Judeans would not have built a rival temple to their own in Jerusalem, the existence of a temple to YHWH on Mt. Gerizim demonstrates that its builders were the people of Israel, from the "ten lost tribes" who were able to return to their homeland under the Persians.

Maps courtesy of Michael Fried.

Photo Mt. Gerizim, courtesy BibleWalks.com



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The Cyrus Cylinder And A Dream For The Middle East

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In a recent TED lecture that is well on its way to becoming one of the most popular in a distinguished series, the director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, narrated the fascinating history of a 2,600-year-old clay object known as the Cyrus Cylinder. The ancient artifact is unremarkable in appearance. It resembles thousands of cuneiform-inscribed tablets and objects from Mesopotamia housed in museums all over the world.

So why is a replica of this object displayed prominently at the U.N. Headquarters in New York? Why did more than a million people come out to catch a glimpse of the Cylinder when the British Museum loaned it for a three-month exhibit last year in Tehran? And why does the Cylinder continue to arouse so much excitement in the media?

MacGregor's captivating TED lecture seeks to identify the reason. The Cylinder bears one of the "great declarations of a human aspiration," comparable to the American Constitution and the Magna Carta. Cyrus the Great and the Persian Empire he established (ca. 550-330 B.C.E.) bequeathed to history "a dream of the Middle East as a unit, and a unit where people of different faiths could live together." We can applaud MacGregor's eloquent appreciation of the religious and cultural tolerance that the Cyrus Cylinder symbolizes. But did Cyrus and his court that produced this impressive artifact really share the dream MacGregor ascribes to them? Can we rightfully call the empire promoted by the Cylinder a model of "a great multinational, multifaith, multicultural society"?

As most historians who specialize in early Persian history would readily point out, the chief objective of Cyrus and his successors was no different than that of other imperial powers: to maintain control of their vast empire and to exploit the wealth of its subjects. Palace reliefs at Persepolis and Susa express this "vision of peace" in dramatic visual form: Delegations from

various peoples are shown solemnly bearing precious gifts up to the enthroned king.

Cyrus conquered Babylon and thereby inherited a world empire that owes its earliest contours to Assyria. Yet he did not dismantle this empire and restore sovereignty to the various kingdoms that had once existed. Instead he and his heirs expanded it. And in the process, they also reorganized it for the purpose of greater control, exploitation and expansion.

Influenced in great measure by the biblical image of Jews returning to their homeland under Persian hegemony, many assume that the rule of Persian kings was much more tolerant than that of the Assyrians. But recent research has demonstrated the significant lines of continuity between these two empires. The Persians engaged in the same mass deportations and harsh punishment of rebels for which the Assyrians are famous. The extent to which the Persian court involved itself in the affairs of its subject peoples was determined by concerns for the king's prosperity. In order to ensure that wealth flowed from the provinces into the imperial coffers, rulers sometimes practiced the politics of benefaction, granting favors to representative groups in return for loyalty and compliance.

The point is illustrated by the Cyrus Cylinder. Written long after the conquest of Babylon, it presents the Persian conqueror and his vast army peacefully marching into Babylon, without mentioning the bloody battles that they fought. By depicting Cyrus as one who rebuilt temples and sought the welfare of the population, it reflects the sectarian interests of the Babylonian priests of the god Marduk, whom the former king of Babylon, Nabonidus, had offended through his patronage of a different god named Su'en. Yet even while seeking to promote Cyrus as a benevolent liberator, the inscription does not go so far as to claim that he granted political

sovereignty to its inhabitants. To the contrary. We are told that all bowed before him and kissed his feet, while the kings of the lands brought him "heavy tribute."

Given these and many other considerations brought forward by historians, it would be mistaken to identify the empire Cyrus built as a model for a peaceful Middle East and multicultural society. Likewise, it would be wrong to call the Cyrus Cylinder a charter for human rights or a paradigm of religious liberties. The fact that such noble aspirations have firmly fastened themselves to this ancient artifact, and that millions wait in line to view it, witnesses to the human need to anchor our highest ideals in objects that are physical and concrete, objects that have been retrieved from the ruins of a past civilization and that we can touch and see. Ironically, the attribution of these ideals to the Cylinder is due in large part to the Hebrew Bible: When the British Museum archeological team uncovered the artifact in 1879, the public in Europe could not help but viewing it, with wild enthusiasm, against the backdrop of the biblical books of Isaiah and Ezra, which portray this conqueror as a great liberator of the Jewish exiles.

The Persian Empire undeniably did accomplish many things of great consequence and enduring value for political thought. In addition to developing sophisticated systems of administration and creating a rich cosmopolitan cultural legacy, it forced its subjects and opponents to confront and reflect upon the nature of expansionistic, exploitative imperial power.

The impact of such reflections can be discerned first in the Classical literature of Greece. The Persian advance not only prompted the independent Greek city-states to unite for collective resistance but also elicited some of the most profound works of history, drama and philosophy that Western authors ever produced. Much of this Classical literature from fifth century B.C.E. Athens treats the

problem of hubris, overstepping boundaries and laying claim to the territory of others. (Eventually, however, the Greek world would produce its own invincible conqueror – one who supposedly developed his plans for world domination at the feet of a notable Athenian philosopher.)

Meanwhile, in the small and relatively insignificant town of Jerusalem, authors were creating, under the auspices of the Persian Empire, what became biblical texts. These texts present a generally favorable image of the Persian kings. It was, after all, during their rule that the Temple in Jerusalem and the city itself were rebuilt, much of the Hebrew Bible was written and many of the most enduring institutions and practices of Jewish life emerged. But the biblical authors also reveal the dark underbelly of the Persian Empire. In several places we hear of the hardships endured by the community. For example, the Persian-appointed governor Nehemiah reports the complaints of people who lost their homes and children in order to pay

imperial taxes. In a lengthy collective prayer, the community declares that they are slaves in their own land due to the oppressive tribute they owe the imperial government. And in response to the imperialist vision that Persia inherited from Assyria, the biblical authors articulate norms prohibiting Israel from expanding beyond its borders. The vision of national coexistence they set forth stands over against a Middle East controlled by a single power.

The values of tolerance that the Cyrus Cylinder has come to represent today must be held high. Yet in doing so, we must also heed the voices of those who opposed Persia's imperial reach. Otherwise, we lose sight of the danger posed by any power that would organize the world primarily for the purpose of greater control, exploitation and expansion.

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"But come to those who by their own ability and not through fortune have risen to be princes. I say that Moses, *Cyrus*, Romulus, Theseus and such like are the most excellent examples"

Niccollo Michiavelli - Italian Historian - *The Prince* (ca 1513)

A year ago, Dr. Jacob Wright, who is an associate professor of The Hebrew Bible at Emory University, wrote an essay in the Huffington Post in reaction to the TED talk, given by Neil MacGregor, the British Museum's director, on the Cyrus Cylinder. Alarmed by the popularity of the talk, Wright warned that the picture depicted by MacGregor had to be tempered by what "most historians who specialize in early Persian history" would tell you: that Cyrus and his successors were primarily motivated "to maintain control of their vast empire and to exploit the wealth of its subjects." I am not sure what yardstick Wright uses to determine that Cyrus exploited his subjects, and whether he would apply the same to assess the behavior of Western Powers in the 19th and 20th centuries, or the US when it intervenes in the four corners of the world to protect its national interest. But as the Cyrus Cylinder has embarked on a five-city tour beginning in Washington DC, it is perhaps appropriate to not let the positive symbolism of a precious object that is the legacy of human civilization as a whole, and not Iran in particular, be tarnished by anti-Iranian sentiments.

One must know that Cyrus has long been a role model for non-Iranians, rather than Iranians themselves. For, it is a fact that the memory of Cyrus was completely erased from Iranian and Zoroastrian chronicles, while Jews revered him as the Messiah or Anointed One, and Greeks, who otherwise treated Iranians as barbarians, bestowed the highest praise on him and considered him a role model. He also became a role model for some of the Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, who cherished his memory through their own copies of *Cyropaedia* (a Greek account of Cyrus' life).

But Iranians themselves only began to appropriate Cyrus in the previous century, and under the influence of Western historiography. The most misguided appropriation of Cyrus happened during the festivities organized in 1971 by the Shah of Iran who decided to celebrate the "2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire" in the southern province of Fars. Its high point was when the Shah stood before Cyrus's tomb and asked him to "sleep tight" as he would oversee the empire that he had founded. To celebrate monarchy, he not only put Cyrus to sleep but the whole Iranian nation, only to be awakened by the nightmare of theocracy.

The 2500 years concept had always been puzzling to me-as to what constituted its starting year, and who conceived that idea-until a few years ago when the late Farrokh Ghaffari, who was in charge of those ceremonies, revealed to me that the original idea actually came from David Ben Gurion and André Malraux. After retiring from premiership, Ben Gurion wanted to celebrate the birth of Israel through a meaningful event. The 2500th anniversary of the conquest of Babylon in 539 BC by Cyrus, and the liberation of the Jews who had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar, seemed admirably suited. As for Malraux who had a keen sense of history, the fall of Babylon was a civilization landmark that merited celebration on an

international scale. Iran was advised to be a participant and a host, but the Iranian Court hijacked the idea and created its own senseless 2500th year extravaganza, which didn't even fall on the right date. What was supposed to be the celebration of a noble event turned into a farce in Fars, that drew the ire of the Western press. Ben Gurion did not participate in the 1971 festivities. He did, however, write an essay for a conference that was held in Shiraz in the same year. It was entitled *Cyrus, King of Persia* and was published in the first volume of *Acta Iranica*. In it, Ben Gurion states that "Cyrus was a great figure, one of the greatest in terms of general history" and that he deserved all the "eulogies" that the Old Testament bestowed on him. I wonder if Ben Gurion's praise must be tempered as well.

Trying to show the harshness of Persian rule in Judea, Wright further argues that "the Persian-appointed governor Nehemiah reports the complaints of people who lost their homes and children in order to pay imperial taxes." Ironically, there are still many in that land who would like to complain today about the losses of their homes, as well as harsh treatment, but they don't know who will listen.

As for Wright's contention that Cyrus liberated the Jews to better exploit them, it is contradicted by the Bible itself. *Ezra* (6:3-5) produces the decree by which Cyrus ordered the Temple of Jerusalem to be rebuilt by monies paid from his own treasury, and it ascertains that all the gold and silver that the Babylonians had brought from the Temple were returned to the Jewish elders. It was a magnanimous act, unparalleled in history. For, where in history can one find a conqueror who enters a city, and who, instead of looting it, is willing to return the riches of a minority who happened to be there? If one must find fault with Cyrus, it is that he was too magnanimous, and that he trusted the Jewish elders with money and gold, without oversight. As a result, money and gold vanished and the Temple was not built. Three decades later, the Jews had to petition Cyrus's cousin and third successor, Darius, to have the Temple rebuilt. But rather than entrusting it to the local people, this astute king decided to build it himself and levied new taxes to that effect (*Ezra* 5-15). Twice paid by the Persians, and once built, the Second Temple was finally destroyed by the Romans.

Wright is right to point out that the walls of Persepolis depict tribute bearers from the subjects of the empire, but he is wrong to assume that they were bringing it to Cyrus. Persepolis was built by Darius who organized Cyrus's empire, the Achaemenid Empire, and instituted the tax levies.

When Cyrus conquered Babylon, Judea was not part of his empire, nor did he ever send any troops there; in all probability Judea submitted on its own volition some five years later. It thus seems rather farfetched to think that Cyrus freed the Jews to go home, in the hope that they would someday submit to him to be "exploited." The fact is that Jews who were liberated by Cyrus were free to go, but the vast majority of them preferred to stay. Not only did they

stay, but many joined the Achaemenid administration as tax collectors. Ben Zion Netanyahu (the father of Benjamin) who has written a book about the Spanish Inquisition, traces the origin of the hatred for the Jews to their activities as tax collectors during the Achaemenid empire. Tax collectors have never been popular; neither then, nor now. But taxes are necessary and one cannot leisurely allege “exploitation” without showing proof of egregious demand. As far as I am concerned, neither the Achaemenids excessively taxed their subjects nor were the Jews, who served them in this respect, tools of exploitation.

By all accounts. Cyrus was a magnanimous man and the archetype of a wise ruler. The policies that he introduced did indeed promote religious tolerance, and the right for communities to live according to their own laws and beliefs. What Cyrus promoted is a model to be emulated and not criticized. One must be grateful that Neil MacGregor delivered his TED talk, and is allowing the Cyrus Cylinder to tour the United States of America.



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CYRUS, KING OF PERSIA

David Ben-Gurion

The Bible as we have it today ends with these two very significant verses:

“Now in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken in the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying :“*Thus saith Cyrus King of Persia. All the kingdom of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him and let him go up*”

(II Chronicles, XXXVI, 22, 23)

A special privilege this, to be accorded to a ruler who was not a Jew-to close the Book of Books, and to close it with a word that in our day as well has a fateful meaning for the whole people of Israel, but for our State and for Jewry in the Diaspora, the Hebrew word that says---“let him go up”

And no other foreign ruler was given such praise, and that by one of the grandest of the prophets of Israel, as Cyrus had, from the lips of Isaiah whom Biblical criticism names the “:Second Isaiah “

“*That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem . Thou shall be built: and to the temple. Thy foundation shall be laid. “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have bolden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates: an the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places...”*

(Isaiah, XLIV, 28 XLV,1-3)

Beyond question, Cyrus was deserving of these eulogies, and not only because of his proclamation, and of his permitting the Babylonian exiles to return to their country and rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus was a great figure, one of the greatest, from the point of view of great history also. He was one of the most outstanding military commanders in an age when there were but a few such among the mighty conquerors. .

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HOW CYRUS' VIEW OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION MAY HAVE INSPIRED THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

Gary Endelman and Cyrus D. Mehta

The display of the Cyrus Cylinder in museums across America has sparked interest on whether Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire in 549 BCE, may have influenced the U.S. Constitution. Our essay explores the extent to which Cyrus may have influenced one of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, who in turn inspired the Religion Clauses in the First Amendment, which provide: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The Cyrus Cylinder describes how Cyrus freed people enslaved by the Babylonians, and allowed them to practice their religion and returned their various gods to their sanctuaries. A notable inscription from the Cyrus Cylinder reads, "I returned them unharmed to their cells, the sanctuaries that make them happy." The Cyrus Cylinder, often referred to as the first charter of human rights, demonstrates that Cyrus was a tolerant king who allowed people in his vast multinational empire to freely practice their various religions. The Old Testament also has references to Cyrus permitting the Jews to return from exile and to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Indeed, the father of Israeli independence, David Ben Gurion, openly cited Cyrus as a hero and President Harry S. Truman proudly compared himself to Cyrus when, in 1948, the United States became the first nation to recognize the new state of Israel. Much as Cyrus ended the Babylonian captivity, enabling the Jews to return to their biblical homeland and rebuild their ancient temple, Truman made possible the re-establishment of an independent Jewish state after almost 2000 years.

Although the Cyrus Cylinder was discovered long after the death of the Founding Fathers of the U.S. Constitution in 1879, it is well known that Jefferson was influenced by Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, which dwells on Cyrus as an ideal ruler although it is by no means a historical account. It is



well known that Jefferson possessed two copies of *Cyropaedia* - one of which was a Greek and Latin version. All the Founders were familiar with Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Isaiah in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jefferson mentions Xenophon as a master of rhetoric in his autobiography. Xenophon viewed Cyrus as a just and tolerant ruler, who ruled over his subjects with persuasion rather than through force. Cyrus did not force his religion, presumably Zoroastrianism, on the various subjects of his vast empire. (right Jefferson's copy of *Cyropaedia*, together with a quote from the president, at display at the Sachler Gallery, Washington DC)

There are also several biblical references to Cyrus, most notably the words of Deutero-Isaiah, in which he presents Cyrus in a divine manner: "That says to Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Surely, these references to Cyrus would not have escaped Jefferson's attention, given that he was a keen student of Xenophon's *Cyros*. Jefferson's interest in and appreciation for Cyrus was an inheritance from the Scottish Enlightenment. Scottish intellectuals often cited Cyrus in their own efforts to arrive at the proper relationship of church and state.

Jefferson strongly believed that religion was a personal matter and

should be free from government influence. In his Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVII, Jefferson objected to laws that allowed children who could be taken from their parents if they had not been baptized by stating, "But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty gods, or no gods. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." It was in Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802, in response to why as President he had not proclaimed national days of fasting that he famously referred to the "wall of separation between church and state" which has served as the basis for interpreting the Establishment Clause.

Like Cyrus, Jefferson saw in the lack of government intervention not the absence of piety but the creation of an opportunity for the robust expression of individual conscience. Cyrus' true gift to Jefferson and to us is the sublime realization that liberty of thought and action is the one true measure of devotion whose inheritance can only



strengthen those bonds which unite a people to their rulers and to their God. The measure of great power Cyrus knew and the Founders realized was not its ruthless exposition but the principled decision to refrain from its exercise. It was this insight that turned imperial obedience into civic acceptance both for ancient empires and the young republic. The one true test of power is the strength not to use it, either to compel the dictates of individual conscience or to shape the conduct of subjects and citizens in the public arena.

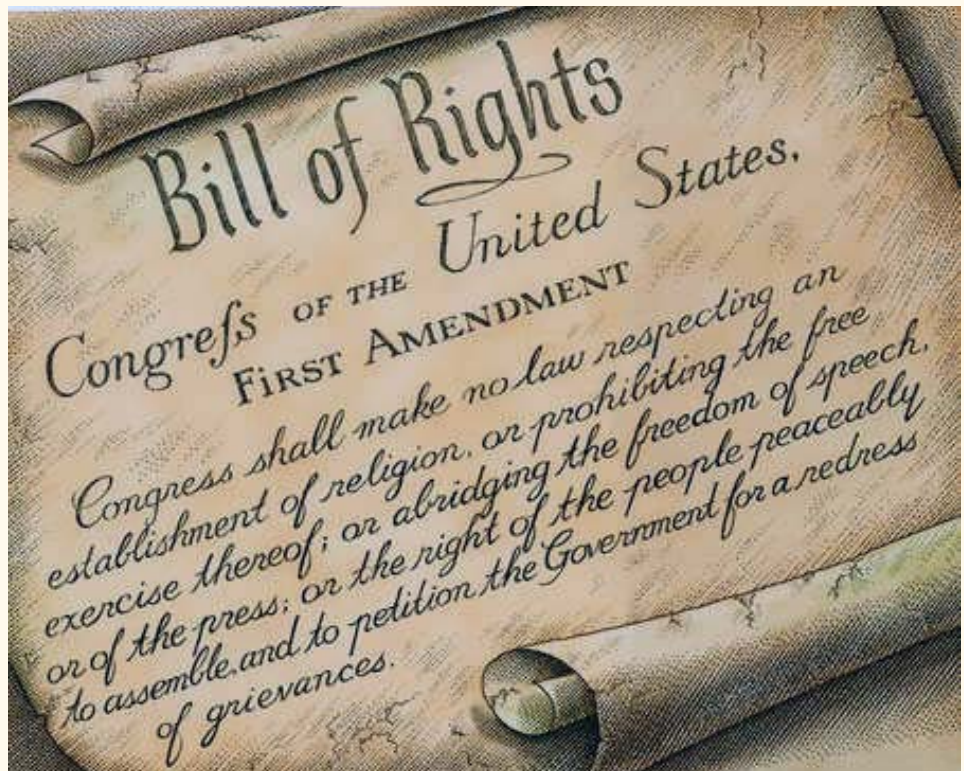
The First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution expresses America's commitment to religious pluralism through two provisions – one protecting the free exercise of religion (the Establishment Clause) and the other barring the establishment of the religion (the Free Exercise Clause). The interpretation of these two clauses has remained contentious, but their very existence has endowed freedom of worship with a secular legitimacy that it might otherwise have lacked, much as Cyrus did by treating diversity as a source of strength not weakness. While some believe that the government should strictly enforce separation by not supporting any form of religion in schools or other governmental institutions, including references to God on currency and pledges, others contend that the Judeo-Christian values of the Founding Fathers provide a historical sanction for overt religiosity such as prayer in public school and references to God in the public sphere.

Notwithstanding the lack of unanimity in interpreting the Religion Clauses, America has been successful in integrating so many groups of immigrants since its founding as it is similar to Cyrus' model, where the government does not support one dominant religion while at the same time is not against religion. Indeed, the American model relating to freedom of religion was later adopted in the Indian Constitution. Even though India is a religious country, where the majority belong to the Hindu religion, it is also a

home to other major religions. The Indian Constitution in Article 25 grants to citizens of India of all religious persuasions freedom to profess, practice and propagate their faith in a way that does not disrupt public order and does not affect public health and morality adversely. It is thus no coincidence that Zoroastrians and Jews have been able to worship freely, and prosper, in India and America.

In an age where governmental actors are increasingly foisting their religious beliefs on people, resulting in strife, Cyrus' model of not interfering in religion, which influenced America's and India's system of government, is worthy of further consideration and

skepticism upon others, respecting their faith even as he doubted the value of adopting it. For Cyrus and Jefferson, tolerance was at the core of their approach towards governance. As effective rulers, they made it easy for those whose beliefs they did not share to accept, indeed to embrace, their political supremacy, whether it be the evangelical Baptists who loved Jefferson or the ancient Hebrews who honored Cyrus. Circumspect in their public manifestations of piety, Cyrus in his day and Jefferson in his knew the pragmatic dividend to be reaped from tolerance. The Declaration of Independence speaks fleetingly of "Nature and Nature's God" and the



emulation even in the second decade of the 21st century. Cyrus understood that only the strong can be tolerant, that the wise ruler encourages a government powerful enough to protect the people but wise enough to restrain it.

Whatever doubts Jefferson may have entertained on key Christian doctrines, such as the divinity of Jesus or the truth of his resurrection, he did not feel the need to impose such

Constitution makes no mention of the Deity nor imposes any religious test for office. Cyrus and the Founding Fathers sought not to banish religion but to subordinate it as an organizing principle to what they regarded as a more meaningful immortality, imperial fame for Cyrus and the republican nobility of the American revolutionary experiment for Jefferson. That was the one, true and abiding glory they both sought.

As more countries in a globalized world attract immigrants who follow different religions, Cyrus' model of religious tolerance will go a long way in fostering peace and harmony. The fact that in America new immigrant groups can freely establish their places of worship, even after facing religious persecution elsewhere, is redolent of the inscription on the Cyrus Cylinder that "I returned them unharmed in their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy." The lasting attraction of America was and remains the one central truth that here one could become all that one is capable of being regardless of one's origin. For that to live on, the American creed has always celebrated personal freedom and religious diversity. No one in the ancient world exemplified that more completely than Cyrus. That is the enduring meaning of what Cyrus first established more than 2,000 years ago by allowing people for the very first time to freely practice their own religion, and which inspired Xenophon's Cyropaedia.

Cyrus was not a Jeffersonian reformer and the link between them is more diffuse than direct. In our desire to make Cyrus relevant, we must not forget that, like all rulers, he was a product of his own time. Yet, it remains true to note that his philosophy of toleration lived on far beyond what Cyrus ever could have imagined and its continuing influence upon those who launched the American experiment in freedom was both pervasive and undeniable. Thomas Jefferson was hardly a naïve reformer. Like the other Founding Fathers, he followed Cyrus not because he shrank from power but because he wished to exercise it more effectively, knowing that the ability to weave together a mosaic of culture and thought will in the end produce a more enduring fabric. This remains our most sacred inheritance.

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“THE CYRUS CYLINDER AND THE DE-CONFESSIONALIZATION OF IRANIAN IDENTITY”

MOHAMAD TAVAKOLI-TARGHI

On the occasion of Rosh Hashana in September 1971, Lotfollah Hay (b. 1917), the head of the Iranian Jewish Council addressing his “Iranian Jewish sisters and brothers” requested:

When you gather in synagogues, open the Holy Book of Torah and read Chapter One of Prophet Ezra and Chapter 45 of Prophet Isaiah; once again you become aware of the spiritual and celestial splendor and magnificence that the Lord has bestowed upon Cyrus the Great. Cyrus’s liberation proclamation concerning Iran and Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem were truly the first declaration of freedom in the history of humanity. Luckily we, the children of the liberated slaves of Babylon, are the carriers of this message from the depth of centuries and ages to the twentieth-century world, a world that despite all the publicity and propaganda concerning justice, equality and human rights, is full of oppression, cruelty, injustice and discrimination.

In this call, Lotfollah Hay, who had served as a Jewish representative in the Iranian parliament, further explained that the holy books of Jewish prophets were “the trusted guardians of the invaluable and ancient foundation,” which had been established by Cyrus the Great.

A couple of years after Hay, another Jewish deputy, Yousef Cohen, addressing his parliamentary colleagues remarked:

Whereas a quarter of a century ago the world [community] was compelled intellectually to issue the declaration of human rights, twenty-five centuries ago the founder of the Iranian imperial ethos not only declared but also enacted the principles of human rights. It is for this reason that the Iranian nation considers Cyrus’s historical proclamation as the most illuminating page of its golden and glorious history . . . If Iranians are today recalling their past with pride and gratification, it is not because of its conquests and victories. But because the Iranian order at its inception was distinguished by its respect for human rights.

This rights-based account of Iranian history was fundamentally different from the earlier modern historical narratives, which were based on assertions of racial and linguistic purity. Unlike such Aryan and Persian purist accounts, which were

disseminated in the earlier part of the twentieth-century, the coupling of the Cyrus Cylinder with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights made possible the telling of a multi-confessional, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual civilizational narrative. Instead of lamenting the pre-Islamic past as a lost archaeotopia, this tolerance-based civilizational account synthesized the pre-Islamic and the Islamic pasts into an organic and other-accommodating whole. While reactivating and refashioning particular aspects of the past, this was indeed an inclusive and accommodationist project for a futural Iran. Iran’s sizable Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha’i religious communities along with other diverse ethnic and linguistic social formations, provided the lived and experiential foundations for this civilizational retrospection and prospectation.

Various elements of this civilizational narrative of caritas and tolerance had been in the making since the late nineteenth-century. While Cyrus had been hailed as a just king in

Persian historical sources, the biblical accounts coupled with the 1879 discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder, made this Achaemenid ruler doubly distinctive in early modernist historical narratives. The nineteenth-century constitutionalist Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani (1883-1897), for instance, viewed Cyrus as a “philosopher king,” as the “founder of Iran’s true splendor,” and as the forebear of the Illuminationist

Philosophy, a philosophical school identified with Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1155-1191) and the “project of reviving the philosophy of ancient Persia.” Hailed as exemplary children of “mother Iran,” during the Constitutional Revolution, Cyrus and Darius, were appraised as the architects of an Iranian archaeotopia, an ideal ancient past to be restored in the modern future. In another instance, veteran constitutionalists Hassan Taqizadeh (1878-1970) and Vahid al-Mulk Shaibani, recalling the national sovereignty and integrity of Iran since the time of Cyrus, wrote a petition in 1917 to the conveners of the proposed International Socialist Peace Conference in Stockholm protesting against the forceful and violent occupation of Iran by Russian and the British forces. In this petition they importantly recounted Iran’s enduring “hospitality,” “good manners” and “relative lack of religious fanaticism towards non-Muslims.” Hassan Pirnia (1871-1935) explained how Cyrus inaugurated an “ethical revolution” and established a “modern mode” of relating to other nations.

In the second part of the twentieth-century, prior to the 1979 Revolution, this enduring ethos was linked to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The distinguished lawyer Mahmoud Sarshar (1901-1964), for instance, in a lecture on the occasion of Human Rights Day in 1957 found the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not only in full concord with the Zoroastrian axiom of “Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds,” but also with various verses of the Quran. Like the Persian translators of the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen who sought to demonstrate its full concord with Islam, Sarshar demonstrated the agreement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with Qur’anic principles and with an Iranian social ethos. This lecture was so important that Kanun-i Vukala, the journal of the Iranian Bar Association, published the UN principles together with their concordant Qur’anic verses as “Human Rights in Islamic Religion.” During this generative period for the

human rights discourse in Iran, numerous Persian articles and books explored how Islam and Iranian culture embodied the principles set out in the UN declaration. While in the earlier historical accounts Islam had been presented as an Arab religion and alien to pure Persian culture, the rights-based civilizational account with its much greater sophistication considered Islam as an integral part of Iran’s multi-confessional civilization.

While there are many other examples of efforts to describe the Cyrusian experiment as an enduring cultural ethos, I would like to bring to your attention a lecture by Baqir ‘Amili (1912-1998), a two-time Minister of Justice, on the Cyrusian Revolution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ‘Amili explained that the Cyrusian Revolution in governance was founded on “care, affection, and attention, and in general on the governance of hearts.” It was due to this significance that Cyrus’s revolution in governance “was cited in the holy

books of Jewish religion.” Referring to the drama of Cyrus’s birth as recounted in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, ‘Amili remarked, “It is significant that a person whose rights were violated, and who was condemned to death prior to birth, was so life-approving for humanity.” Explaining the common tenor of Iranian civilization, ‘Amili further elaborated that “Iranian education or, even better, Cyrusian education . . . which never left the people and the nation of Iran, was based on truth-seeking and justice-loving. After citing numerous verses to this effect by Firdawsi, Sa’di, Hafiz and Hatif Isfahani, ‘Amili explained, “If it would be possible to interrogate our hearts, it would be evident that human-adoration and love are engrained in the soul of each Iranian.” ‘Amili, who had recently returned from the United States, observed that the hippie counter-culture and the slogan of “make love, not war” greatly resembles the “love that is pervasive in our literature,” “a love that transforms men into humans . . .” Concluding his



22 April 1968. The International Conference on Human Rights, New Majlis Building, Teheran: Secretary-General U Thant (left), congratulating Princess Ashraf Pahlavi of Iran on her election as President of the Conference; and Mr. Marc Schreiber (right), Director of the United Nations Division of Human Rights and Executive Secretary of the Conference.

lecture on human rights and the enduring Cyrusian education, 'Amili argued that respect for humanity, acceptance of equality and brotherly behavior, which is pervasive in Iranian literature, is evident in the axiom, "caritas toward friends and tolerance of foes."

Viewing himself as the inheritor of the Cyrusian legacy, the Shah often mentioned the Cyrus Cylinder in his speeches in the 1960s and 1970s. At an Iranian Studies Congress in Tehran in August 1966, for instance, he stated that "from its inception our civilization and culture was a humanistic and worldly civilization and culture" He further remarked that Iranian thinkers, philosophers, mystics, authors, and poets always had "a humanist and global perspective and always viewed the entire world from spiritual, moral, humanitarian aspects." Referring to the Cyrus Cylinder and to the establishment of the Persian empire, he argued that instead of unconditional domination, Cyrus proclaimed "liberty and respect for the rights and beliefs of individuals as the foundation of government."

Hard to believe today, the linking of the UN Declaration of Human Rights to the Cyrus Cylinder propelled Iran to play an increasingly important role in the global discussion of human rights in the 1960 and 1970s. This was most evident at the first UN International Conference on Human Rights, which was held in Tehran between the 22nd of April and the 13th of May 1968. With the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. just a few weeks earlier and the Prague Spring in full bloom, an Asian-African bloc that commanded vastly more votes and considerably more intellectual energy dominated this conference. Designated as the Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1965, during the Tehran conference Princess Ashraf Pahlavi "was a confident, tough, and aggressive spokesperson for the Third World." In his welcoming address Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi reported, "My compatriots . . . are very proud that their country should have been chosen as the site of the first International

Conference on Human Rights. Their pride is the more legitimate in that, in their view, a remarkable coincidence underlies this choice; for I need hardly tell you that the ancestor of the documents recognizing the rights of man was promulgated in this very country by Cyrus the Great . . ."

After a decade of preparation, the Iranian government designated the Iranian year 1350, which spanned the period from March 1971 to March 1972, as the Year of Cyrus. As noted on invitation letters, during that year world leaders were invited to an impressive celebration "on the occasion of the 2500 anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire in the hand of Cyrus the Great who issued the first Declaration of Human Rights." Via its identification as the first declaration of human rights, the Cyrus Cylinder served as the pivotal icon for this celebration at the ancient city of Persepolis, a monumentalized site that has played a crucial role in the making and remaking of the modern Iranian historical imagination.

Following this celebration, a discussion on altering the confessional calendar of Iran, which was based on the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad, moved to the forefront of the national political agenda. In a joint session of the Iranian Parliament on 14 March 1976 the deputies moved to change the base of the Iranian calendar from

the Hegira of Muhammad in 621 CE to the ascension of Cyrus to the throne on 559 BCE. Explaining the underlying logic, the joint statement issued by the deputies noted:

The legacy that Cyrus left behind was of an extensive land with nations of differing beliefs and an order that demonstrated its value in governing and leading [diverse] ethnic residents of the Iranian plateau. But what added worth to this glorious legacy was the respect and the significance that it assigned to human position and [human] beliefs; so that without fear and intimidation, [people] could live in intimate concord with their traditions and creeds and no one could intervene in their affairs. It was such a desirable form of governance that after Cyrus it remained as a respected eternal law for the nation and the rulers of Iran.

This moment of great enthusiasm, however, proved to be a moment of collective insanity. Instead of solidifying Iran's multi-confessional social fabric, the change of calendar unleashed a counter movement focused on the primacy of Iran's Islamic identity. With the intensification of the opposition against the Shah, who was popularly viewed as the mastermind of this change, the Cyrusian discourse on human rights ironically hastened the downfall of its powerful promoter.



Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi is Professor of History and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. He has served as President of the International Society for Iranian Studies (2008-10), was the founding Chair of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto-Mississauga (2004-07), and was the Editor-in-Chief of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (2001-12), a Duke University Press journal. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of Iran Nameh and is coeditor of the Iranian Studies book series. In addition to numerous articles, he is the author of two books: Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography (2001) and Tajaddud-i Bumi [Vernacular Modernity] (2003). He is currently completing a manuscript that explores the discursive transformation of modern Persian political language from biopolitics to spatial governmentality. He holds a BA in political science and an MA in history from the University of Iowa, and a PhD in history from the University of Chicago.

منشور کورش بزرگ

تیرماه ۱۳۸۷ رییس کل موزه‌های ایران خبر داد که در آینده‌ای نزدیک منشور کورش بزرگ برای زمانی کوتاه به ایران آورده خواهد شد. این بازگشت با توافق موزه‌ی بریتانیا با موزه‌ی ملی ایران انجام خواهد شد. اعلام این خبر شور و هیجانی در میان دل‌بستانان به تاریخ کهن ایران پدید آورد.

گفت‌وگوها میان موزه‌ی ایران و موزه‌ی بریتانیا ادامه یافت. تا آن که سرانجام ساعت ۴ و ۲۵ دقیقه‌ی بامداد آدینه ۱۹ شهریور ماه ۱۳۸۸ منشور کورش بزرگ به همراه با چهار تکه‌ی تازه پیدا شده‌ی آن به ایران آورده شد. این منشور به سرپرستی جان ادوارد کرتیس، مدیر بخش خاورمیانه‌ی موزه‌ی بریتانیا، به ایران سپرده شد تا در خزانه‌ی موزه‌ی ملی ایران جای بگیرد. منشور کورش بزرگ طی آیینی ویژه با باشنگی‌های فرهنگی سازمان میراث فرهنگی، فرشین موزه‌ی ملی ایران، کارشناسان میراث فرهنگی، نمایندگان موزه‌ی بریتانیا و خبرنگاران، از خزانه‌ی موزه‌ی ملی ایران خارج و درون ویترین نمایش جای گرفت.

در همان روزهای نخست مه‌ماه با آمدن منشور کورش رکورد بازدیدهای موزه‌ی ملی ایران شکسته شد. شمار بازدید کنندگان روزانه، برپایه‌ی اعلام موزه‌ی ملی، ۲ هزار و ۲۰۰ نفر شده بود. بازدید کنندگان می‌توانستند همه‌ی روزه از ساعت ۹ تا ۲۱ منشور کورش بزرگ را ببینند. در تالار ویژه‌ی منشور، راهنمای دیجیتالی، بازدید کنندگان را با ویژگی‌های منشور آشنا می‌کرد.

انجام چندین سخنرانی تخصصی هفتگی در تالار سخنرانی‌های موزه‌ی ملی ایران از دیگر برنامه‌های تدارک دیده شده برای شناخت بیشتر منشور کورش بزرگ بود.

همزمان با این رویدادها، دانشجویان دانشگاه تهران در همایشی پرشور، به مناسبت ۷ آبان روز جهانی کورش بزرگ، در تالار فردوسی دانشکده‌ی ادبیات، خواستار ثبت روزی به نام «روز کورش بزرگ» در سالنمای رسمی کشور شد.

۲۱ دی‌ماه زمان سپرده شدن منشور به موزه‌ی ملی ایران به پایان می‌رسید. اما با تلاش موزه‌ی ملی ایران، زمان بازدید سه ماه دیگر افزوده شد. بدین‌گونه منشور کورش بزرگ مهمان سفره‌ی نوروزی ایرانیان می‌شد و تا ۱۸ فروردین در ایران می‌ماند.

روز ۲۷ فروردین‌ماه، منشور کورش که ۲۱۸ روز مهمان موزه‌ی ملی ایران بود، از محفظه‌ی شیشه‌ای آن در موزه‌ی ملی بیرون آورده شد و راهی موزه‌ی بریتانیا شد. موزه‌ی ملی ایران اعلام کرد که بیش از ۲ میلیون تن از منشور کورش بزرگ دیدن کرده‌اند.

در این بازه‌ی زمانی که منشور کورش بزرگ مهمان ایرانیان بود، بارها دیده شده بود که بازدیدکنندگان با دیدن این اثر بی‌مانند، که گواهی بر دیرینگی تاریخ ایران و پای‌بندی ایرانیان به آزادی ملت‌ها است، دگرگون شده و ناخودآگاه به پهنای صورت اشک ریخته بودند. چنین دل‌بستگی‌ای به یادمان تاریخی ایران کهن شگفتی بازدیدکنندگان خارجی، و حتا مسوولان موزه را برانگیخته بود. نکته‌ی درخور توجه دیگر، آمار بالای بازدیدکنندگان شهرستانی از منشور کورش بزرگ بود. شمار کسانی که در این بازه‌ی زمانی کوتاه خود را از شهرستان‌های دور و نزدیک به تهران رسانده بودند تا منشور را از نزدیک ببینند، بیش از آن چیزی بود که در آغاز گمان برده می‌شد. افزون بر آن دانش‌آموزان دبستانی و دبیرستانی با کنجکاو بسیار به موزه‌ی ملی می‌شتافتند تا نگرنده‌ی منشوری پُر‌آوازه‌ای باشند که نشان از سربلندی ایرانیان و پیشگامی آن‌ها در نگاهی از حقوق بشر دارد. در میان بازدیدکنندگان، سالخورده‌گانی نیز دیده می‌شدند که به دشواری از پله‌های موزه‌ی ملی بالا می‌رفتند تا در صف بایستند و برای زمانی کوتاه منشور کورش بزرگ را از پشت محفظه‌ی شیشه‌ای آن ببینند. زمانی که بازدیدکنندگان در صف انتظار بودند، گفت‌وگو درباره‌ی کورش بزرگ و یگانگی او در تاریخ جهان، شنیده می‌شد. مردم با شور فراوانی از اهمیت و ارزش این یادمان تاریخی سخن می‌گفتند. چنین گفت‌وگو‌هایی بیش از هر چیز دیگر نشان از آگاهی ملی ایرانیان نسبت به تاریخ کهن و دیرپای خود داشت. کتابچه‌های کوچکی نیز که در بردارنده‌ی برگردان فارسی منشور کورش بزرگ بود، در همین بازه‌ی زمانی از کتاب‌های پُر فروش بشمار می‌رفت. ایرانیان می‌کوشیدند از نو ارزش و جایگاه این اثر باستانی را دریابند و دیگر بار به بزرگی آن پی ببرند. آن روزها کورش بزرگ، بیش از هر زمان دیگری، با مردم و در کنار هم‌میهنانش بود. هرچند روز ۷ آبان، روز جهانی کورش بزرگ، به مردمی که می‌خواستند در این روز ویژه در کنار منشور کورش باشند، اجازه‌ی بازدید داده نشد!؟

شهاداد حیدری

هفته نامه امرداد

Cyrus Cylinder

An Iranian Retrospective

For a few short months during 2008-09, Persians were reunited with the iconic Cyrus Cylinder and reminded of their 2,500 year old Achaemenian heritage and ties to Cyrus the Great (Kouroush in Persian).

Record crowds, running high with national and cultural pride, formed long



The cylinder being viewed by President Ahmedinejad with Neil McGregor, Director of the British Museum in the background.

queues at the Iranian National Museum during the 218 day loan of the Cyrus Cylinder from the British Museum.

Excitement began in July 2008 when Mohammad Reza Mehrandish, Director of Iran's National Museum, announced that an agreement had been reached between the British and Iranian Museums for the loan. By September 22, preparations were concluded for the Cylinder's display and security. In a respectful, yet joyous, ceremony Mr. John Edward Curtis, in charge of the Middle Eastern section of the British Museum, presented the Cylinder to the Directors of the Iran National Museum and the Iranian Cultural Heritage Preservation Organization. This notable event was witnessed by cultural heritage experts, academics, museum staffs, and journalists.

Though the loan was originally scheduled from September 2008 through January 2009; the Iran National Museum prevailed in their request to extend the loan by three months, giving the Iranian people a

special Nowrooz gift and centerpiece for their Haft Seen Table.

The Museum and its auditorium became the loci for Iranians for more than seven months. With overflow crowds exceeding 2,200 visitors daily, museum hours were extended from their normal 9 hours a day to 21. Visitors' experiences were enriched with presentations from history and archaeology experts, digital guides, and brochures. Many educational books, photographs, and mementos were sold to visitors—undoubtedly to become treasured heirlooms for many generations.

People from throughout Iran made the pilgrimage to the Museum. The aged and infirm were helped by friends, family, and strangers to secure a fleeting view of this historical artifact. Through tears and proud smiles, aged visitors chatted poignantly with one another and younger generations about the Cylinder's importance. Students from the University and School of Arts absorbed the ambiance created by the Cylinder and its effect on the visitors—scribbled notes and sketches were later crafted into polished essays and artistic impressions.

In a marvelous juxtaposition of Persia's ancient heritages, Tehran University students delivered a rousing seminar in the University's Ferdowsi Auditorium to mark and celebrate "Cyrus the Great Day," on October 28, as an Iranian national holiday. Ironically, the museum display was closed on that day; much to the chagrin of those that wanted to be close to Cyrus on that special day.

Too soon, the Cyrus Cylinder was returned to the British Museum. For a mere blink of the historical eye, Persians had been reunited with Cyrus the Great, inspirer of civilizations and world leaders—with a voice as relevant today as it was then.

(Ed: Fezana recognizes and thanks Mr. Shahdad Heidari, who wrote the original article that inspired this "retrospective." A special thanks to Mr. Babak Salamati, Editor in Chief of Amordad Publications, for providing us with Mr. Heidari's original. We also thank Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary, Chief Mobed, Tehran Anjuman, for the English translation.)



Mr. Shahdad Heidari, 44 years, is a journalist who has a cooperative arrangement with Amordad Publications, specially for online news and cultural topics. The Fravahar Journal, printed his article on The Diplomacy and Peace Seeking Attitude of the Achaemenian Kings in 1992. In that same year the Vohuman Journal printed an equally popular article, by him, on the Encounters (Conflicts) between the Achaemenians and the Greeks.

شهادت حیدری، خبرنگار و همکار
هفته‌نامه‌ی «امرداد»، زاده‌ی سال
۱۳۴۷ است. نخستین نوشته‌ی او در
شماره‌ی ۳۳۱ مجله‌ی «فروهر» (سال
۱۳۷۱) چاپ شد. این نوشته درباره‌ی
سیاست مدارانه‌جویانه و آشتی‌خواهانه‌ی
هخامنشیان بود. نوشته‌ی دیگری از او
درباره‌ی برخورد هخامنشیان با یونان در
مجله‌ی «وهومن» و در همان سال انتشار
یافت. این نوشته‌ها زمینه‌ی آشنایی بیشتر
او با مجله‌های زرتشتی را فراهم کرد.
همکاری پیوسته‌ی او با هفته‌نامه‌ی
«امرداد» از سال ۱۳۸۶ آغاز شد که
تاکنون نیز ادامه دارد. از زمان آغاز به
کار «تارنمای امرداد» نیز خبرنگار این
رسانه بوده است

THE JOURNEY OF THE CYLINDER

FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM TO THE FIVE MUSEUMS OF NORTH AMERICA

(MARCH TO DECEMBER 2013)



The British Museum and the Iranian Gallery where the Cylinder is displayed

"You could almost say that the Cyrus Cylinder is a story of the Middle East in one object and it is a link to a past which we all share and to a key moment in history that has shaped the world around us. Objects are uniquely able to speak across time and space and this object must be shared as widely as possible. I am delighted that it will travel to the US and am hugely grateful to both our US partners and the Iran Heritage Foundation for making this possible"

**Neil MacGregor,
Director of the British Museum**



"For thousands of years, philosophers viewed Cyrus the Great as the paragon of the 'Virtuous Ruler,' and the Bible refers to him as 'the anointed' of the Lord, crediting him with permitting Jews to rebuild their Holy Temple in Jerusalem. This magnanimous image inspired even the Founding Fathers of the United States. One of the goals of this exhibition is to encourage us to reflect that relations between Persians and Jews have not always been marked by the discord that disfigures the political map of the Near East today."

**Julian Raby, the Dame Jillian Sackler
Director of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the Freer Gallery of Art**



"The Cyrus Cylinder tells a great story of human history. We are thrilled to be able to bring this touchstone of ancient civilization to Houston, and to present the Cyrus Cylinder and related objects in the context of our collections."

Gary Tinterow,
Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

New York, NY

June 20 - August 4, 2013



"The new world view, enshrined by the Cyrus Cylinder and the objects in this exhibition, remains as relevant today as it did several millennia ago. The tolerance embraced by the Cylinder's text has been applauded throughout history and we at The Metropolitan Museum of Art are proud to share this message with our diverse international audience."

Thomas P. Campbell,
Director and CEO of The Metropolitan Museum of Art



"The San Francisco Bay Area is home to both the signing of the United Nations Charter and the birth of the Free Speech Movement, major pillars supporting human rights and civil liberties. The Asian Art Museum is proud to partner with the British Museum and our US museum partners to bring the Cyrus Cylinder to San Francisco. This important object not only provides a foundation for understanding the ancient world, but also a touchstone for continued efforts to strive for common human freedoms."

Jay Xu,

Director of the Asian Art Museum



"The Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most important artifacts to have survived from the ancient world and we are delighted that it will be on view next fall to visitors at the Getty Villa, where it will be shown in the context of other artifacts and inscriptions from the period of the Achaemenian empire. More than any other document from the ancient world, this declaration by King Cyrus of the return of conquered nations to their settlements, has a continuing relevance to the peoples of the Middle East and indeed throughout the world. As home to the largest community of Iranian Americans in the United States, I have no doubt that Los Angeles will be thrilled by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Timothy Potts,

Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum

WHAT SCHOLARS SAY



"The Cyrus Cylinder and associated objects represent a new beginning for the Ancient Near East. The Persian period, commencing in 550 BC, was not just a change of dynasty but a time of change in the ancient world. Some of these changes and innovations are highlighted in the exhibition."

John Curtis,
Keeper of Special Middle East Projects at the British Museum, Curator of the Exhibition

"Cyrus is one of the most fascinating and least known personalities in ancient history. Cyrus was perhaps one of the greatest statesmen and kings of the ancient world, where his view on religious tolerance was a turning point for the history of Eurasia. His cylinder is a firsthand testament to this openness and acceptance of those of other traditions. Cyrus' vision and actions are truly a model for humanity."

Dr. Touraj Daryaei, Associate Director of Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California, Irvine



A very significant addition to existing studies of this iconic object, which only seems to grow in stature with the passage of time. With reference to Irving Finkel's observations, it is of great interest to learn that the text existed in more than one format. That is to say that two newly identified fragments from a conventional tablet show that Cyrus' exceptional message was not only written on barrel-shaped cylinders that were intended for internment in the foundation of major structures, but that it was also written on large, flat tablets that were possibly intended for public display. In line with certain statements in the Book of Ezra, this finding could also lend new authority to the supposition that Cyrus issued separate proclamations addressed to separate components of the populations of Babylon"

David Stronach, OBE, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Archaeology, University of California, Berkeley.

Photos of Museums from <http://cyruscylinder2013.com/>

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REPRESENTATIVE ARTICLES ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION



**Stamp seal showing hunter in Median Garb.
Achaemenid, 5th-4th BCE .**



**Part of Column base with old Persian (right), and Babylonian (left) inscriptions Gray limestone, Hamadan, Iran
Achaemenid, 5th-4th BCE.**

This event has given FEZANA and the Zoroastrian community a useful opportunity to bring about awareness of Zoroastrianism. At the registration table, there was a good dissemination of literature on the Zoroastrian religion including the pamphlet *“Zoroastrians (Zarathushtis) followers of Ancient Faith in a Modern World”*, and back issues of the FEZANA Journal.

The video of the panel presentation and the Question/Answer session can be viewed at

<http://blip.tv/conflict-analysis-and-resolution/iranian-jewish-dialogue-on-the-cyrus-cylinder-panel-part-1-6562013>

Q & A <http://blip.tv/conflict-analysis-and-resolution/iranian-jewish-dialogue-on-the-cyrus-cylinder-q-a-part-2-6562022>



April 7, 2013: Washington D.C.:Zarathushtis from the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington DC., Inc at the Haupt Garden with the Smithsonian Castle in the background, at the entrance of to the Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Museums that hosted the exhibit. Photo Armita Soroosh

“FEAST YOUR EYES: A TASTE FOR LUXURY IN ANCIENT IRAN”

On April 7th 2013, Armita Soroosh organized a field trip for the children of the, ZAMWI Avesta Religious Education Class and their parents to visit the Cyrus Cylinder. Ms. Soroosh created a handout and gave a short talk before the group went inside to see the exhibit.

The Achemenian exhibit on loan from the British Museum fits into one small room. The team of curators from the United Kingdom and the USA added another exhibit room to showcase the copy of the Cyropedia owned by Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, on loan from the library of Congress. The walls of this second room were lined with quotations extolling Cyrus II through the centuries, to underline the theme articulated by Neil MacGregor, the Director of the British Museum in his TED talk *“Everyone loves Cyrus the Great”*

ACHEMENIAN, SASSANIAN AND POST -SASSANIAN (ISLAMIC) ART

To place the British exhibit in proper geographic and historic context, the curators at the Sackler and Freer Galleries, selected items from their own collections of Achaemenian, Sassanian and post-Sassanian (Islamic) periods for public viewing. This adjoining gallery, had a special focus on luxury metallic table ware from Ancient Iran

Ewer: Iran, (photo left)

Buyid Period, third quarter of the 10th Century. Freer Gallery of Art F 1943.1 This gold Ewer is inscribed with the name and title of *Abu Mansur Izz-Amir al Bakhtiyar ibn Muizz al-Dawla* (reigned 967-978).



Phoro Armita Saroosh

"At a time when Islam disapproved the trappings of wealth and luxury, some members of the elite seemed to ignore religious objections and commissioned works of art that evoked Sassanian refinement and the taste for luxury."

The Shapur Plate : From Sassanian Iran. Shapur II was one of the most powerful rulers of the Sassanian dynasty which controlled Iran and much of the Ancient Near East from 224 to 651 CE.

This masterpiece of Silverwork of 4th Century CE was acquired in Russia by a wealthy family and displayed in St Petersburg till 1917. In 1934 it was acquired by the Smithsonian.

Source: <http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/ancient-world/shapur-plate/>



Gazelle-shaped Wine Horn, on view at the Sackler Gallery, was used to impress guests at elaborate Iranian feasts. *Image courtesy of the Sackler Gallery.*

In his play, *The Acharnians*, Aristophanes complained,

"And those pitiless Persian hosts! They compelled us to drink sweet wine, wine without water, from gold and glass cups."



Source: <http://blogs.smithsonianmag.com/aroundthemall/tag/iran/#ixzz2UWCmV7ml>

THROUGH THE EYES OF A ZOROASTRIAN EDUCATOR AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

THE CYRUS CYLINDER



Jenny Rose Photo credit Meheryar Rivetna

Marduk guided Cyrus' hand to enter Babylon but the Cyrus Cylinder guided mine to "spread the word" to the Houston community at large in the capacity of an educator and senior docent at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH).

For months, the arrival of the Cyrus Cylinder was anticipated with enthusiasm. Communication between the Education Department and ZAH Library committee was set into motion. Thanks to the graciousness of Margaret Mims, our Interim Education Director, and the leadership of Aban Rustomji, we Zoroastrians were granted the privilege of co-sponsoring Jenny Rose's lecture (photo left) which was received with a thunderous applause from a crowd of over 500 attendees between Friday May 10th and Sat May 11th. Eighty to a hundred Zoroastrians attended the event thanks to a free bus service graciously arranged by the Khosravians of Houston. This was indeed a significant event that will leave an indelible mark on the Zoroastrian community in Houston.

Houston had 2900 visitors from all over Texas and the exhibits were extended it by 2 more days as there were throngs of people – Iranian, white, and otherwise

Besides the lecture, the Cylinder quietly continues to speak to the visitors. Within a week of its arrival, it has drawn a crowd of over a thousand people from all over Texas, revealing to the modern world its ancient glory and heritage. The accompanying artifacts bring to light the Zoroastrian faith

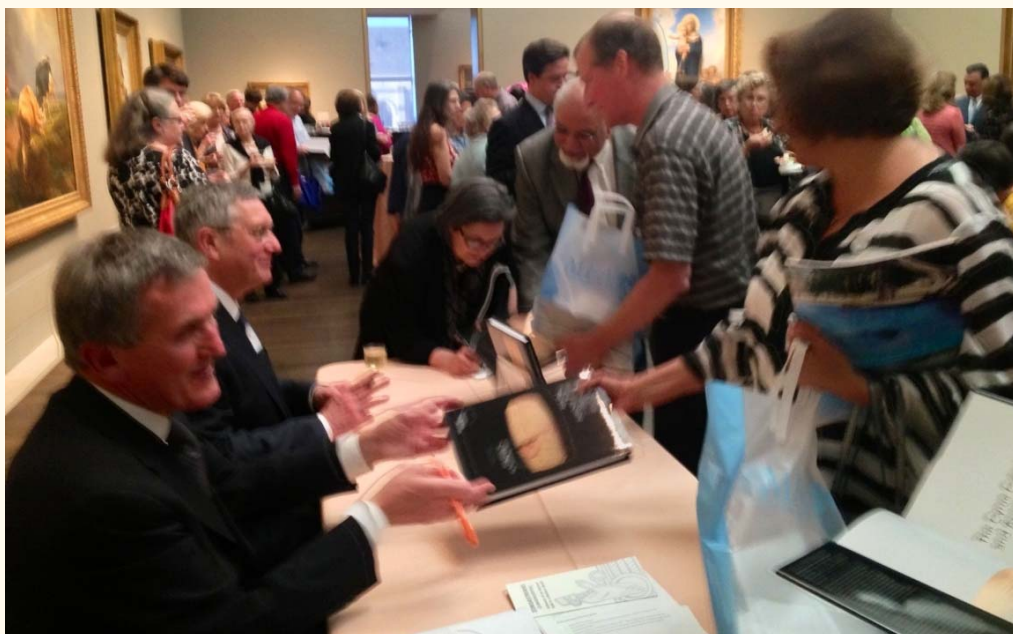
which had thus far been oblivious in the minds of many.

On a personal level, I was fortunate to see the Cylinder being rolled into the gallery on a simple cart, accompanied by Dr. John Curtis from the British Museum, and a few members of the staff. This humble sight was a sacred experience for me. I watched the installation with awe and reverence as I continued to explain it to a group of students (even before it was set up for public viewing)!

As an Educator, I have embarked upon a personal mission to "spread the word" through tours for adults and students, workshops, docent education sessions and even a special presentation for a program called "Art beyond Sight" (for the visually impaired) and "Looking Together" (for an Alzheimer's Group).

I continue to pursue art and hands-on activities with the MFAH and ZAH Sunday School. approximately 300 students have been educated through this personal mission within the first week of its presence.

The Cyrus Cylinder was "put on a pedestal" by Dr. Neil MacGregor and Dr. John and



Book signing by Neil MacGregor and John Curtis -- the British Museum official book. The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia.

Dr Vesta Curtis through their brilliant lectures and will continue to be exalted in three other lectures by prestigious speakers: Dr Matthias - Henze, Rice University, Dr. Alexander Nagel, Freer and Sackler Gallery and Dr Sarah Kiehl Costello, University of Houston.

May the hand of Ahura Mazda continue to guide us in the footsteps of Cyrus “the Anointed One” and may the ancient voice of Zoroastrianism continue to resonate throughout the modern world.

There was a book signing by Dr Neil Mcgregor and DR Jihn Curtis

I would like to acknowledge the Museum of Fine Arts for the allowing me to pursue these programs and also for supporting the Zoroastrian Community.



CYRUS CYLINDER

Through the eyes of Texans visiting The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

RESPONSES FROM FIRST GRADERS –

- A little first grader excitedly raised her hand and commented “It reminds me of corn on the cob”!
- Another remarked ... “it looks like a cactus”.
- ... “a drum”, ... “a coffin”, ... “a barrel”
- ... “buried treasure because it’s broken”

ART BEYOND SIGHT TOUR -

On a tour for a program called Art beyond Sight (for visually impaired attendees) the Cyrus Cylinder provided an extremely interactive dialogue.

- A visitor (with sight) remarked “this artifact speaks more to me than the entire Egyptian exhibition that took place last year at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston”.

The Cyrus Cylinder and its artifacts continue to resonate with information, knowledge and universal respect deep in the hearts of Texans.

Vehishta Kaikobad has been an educator for 25 years working in the field of early childhood education based on the Montessori Method.



She also works as an educator at large and a teaching artist for the education department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, holding multiple workshops for educators and homeschool groups at the museum. She has served as a Sunday School teacher at the

Zoroastrian Association of Houston since 1980. Her goal is to nurture interfaith and universal understanding in the religious education of children and adults from all faiths.

(photo credit Yezdi Engineer)

CYLINDER AT THE 26th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FEZANA MAY 3, 2013, DALLAS, TEXAS

The Zoroastrians from Florida (The Florida Zoroastrian Association; ZATAMBAY, small group from Tampa Bay, and the Central Florida chapter of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce) have collaborated in broadcasting tele-religious classes for North America in from Sarasota, Orlando and Miami . They were recognized for their contributions to the worldwide Zarathushti diaspora on Friday, May 3, 2013 at the 26th Fezana Annual General Meeting held in Dallas, Texas.

On March 10, 2013, as the Tour of the Cylinder from the British Museum began in the USA, *Ervad Dr Soli Dastur* from the North American Mobeds Council presented a special one hour class on the Cylinder of Cyrus. He was recognized at the AGM in Dallas.



From left, ZAF President Furrokh Irani, Khushnam Irani, Jo Ann Dastur, Ervad Soli Dastur, North American Mobeds' Council, FEZANA President, Katayun Kapadia
(Photo credit Ervad Soli Dastur)

Fariborz Rahnamoon, President of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia [ZSBC] was recognized by the FEZANA UN-NGO committee, for the efforts of his Zarathushti association in Canada for taking a lead in making efforts to create a monument in a public park in the city of Vancouver to raise a monument to peace themed on the iconic symbol of the Cylinder of Cyrus from Ancient Iran. The city has rules and regulations whereby only original works of art can be provided space in public spaces, and this initiative remains a works in progress for the ZSBC. Artists and sculptors interested in helping with their creations are welcome to contact ZSBC



Left to Right ..Behram Pastakia, Co-Chair, FEZANA UN NGO committee, Katayun Kapadia, President FEZANA, Fariborz Rahnamoon, President ZSBC, Homi D Gandhi, Vice President, FEZANA Photo credit: Er Soli Dastur

Cylinder On Display at the United Nations and on Postal Stamps

On October 14, 1971, to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy, the sister of the Shah of Iran, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi presented the UN with a replica of the Cylinder also known as Farman-e-Kourosh ('Cyrus the Great Cylinder'). Secretary General U Thant accepted the gift, linking it with the efforts of the UN General Assembly to address "the question of Respect for Human Rights in Armed Conflict"

A replica of the cylinder is on display with a translation in all six official languages of the UN

In the photo above Shashi Tharoor, the former United Nations Under Secretary-General looking at the replica of the Cylinder which is housed at the UN headquarters in New York.



On October 12, 1971, the Cyrus Cylinder was depicted on an Iranian postage stamp to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy



Stamp issued by India in 1971 to mark the 2500th Anniversary of the Charter of Cyrus the Great.

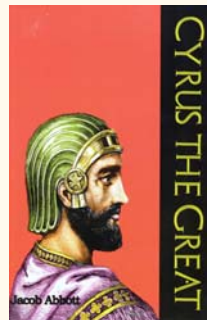


Cyrus the Great – Reading List

Although Cyrus' military accomplishments rank with those of Julius Caesar and Genghis Khan, he was also known as a master of diplomacy and tact. He brought together groups of people to create the first far-flung empire in history. According to historian Will Durant, Cyrus the Great's military enemies knew that he was lenient, and they did not fight him with that desperate courage which men show when their only choice is "to kill or die." As a result the Iranians regarded him as "The Father," the Babylonians as "The Liberator," the Greeks as the "Law-Giver," and the Jews as the "Anointed of the Lord."

Much of what we know about Cyrus the Great comes from the Old Testament, the Babylonian Chronicle, and the writings of the ancient historians Herodotus and Xenophon. From these sources, authors have written a number of books about Cyrus the Great and his impact on the world. Whether you are an avid reader, a business executive, a high school student, or a scholarly reader, there is a biography tailored for you.

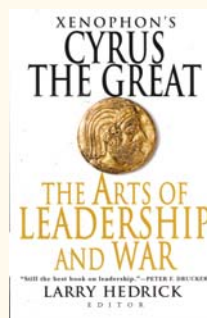
FOR AVID READERS



Cyrus the Great by Jacob Abbott, Timeless Classic Books : 2011.

Jacob Abbott, born in 1803, was a prolific author, writing juvenile fiction, brief histories, biographies and religious books for the general reader. Based on the texts of Herodotus and Xenophon, his book on Cyrus the Great is the story of the founder of the ancient Persian Empire, perhaps the most wealthy and magnificent the world has ever seen.

FOR BUSINESS EXECUTIVES



Xenophon's Cyrus the Great: The Arts of Leadership and War by Larry Hedrick (Editor) New York : Truman Talley Books/ Saint Martin's Press, 2006.

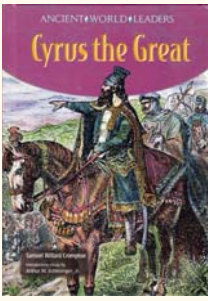
Larry Hedrick has fashioned a more intimate Cyrus for a new generation of readers, including executives, managers, and military officers who can learn from Cyrus's leadership and wisdom. Hedrick bases his book on Xenophon's biography of Cyrus the Great, The Cyropaedia, written in the early 4th century BC. Xenophon was a Greek historian, soldier, mercenary, philosopher and a contemporary and admirer of Socrates. He is known for his writings on the history of his own times, preserving the sayings of Socrates, and describing life in ancient Greece and the Persian Empire.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



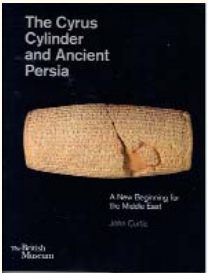
Cyrus the Great by Harold Lamb. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960.

Harold Lamb narrates the life of Cyrus, the King of Persia who conquered the Medes, Lydians and Babylonians, forging the largest empire of the time. Some of the book is informed speculation about everything from Cyrus's childhood to his motivations as an adult. The book was originally written in 1960 and should be available in public and school libraries.



Cyrus the Great by Samuel Willard Crompton. NY: Chelsea House, 2008.

This book is part of the Ancient World Series that looks at leading figures of the ancient world who have led armies to victory and ruled over vast domains in ages long past.



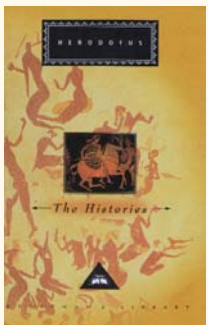
Cyrus Cylinder by John Curtis. London: The British Museum Press, 2013.

This catalog is published in conjunction with the first ever tour of the object to the United States, along with sixteen other objects from the British Museums collection. An introductory essay by Neil MacGregor and The book discusses how these objects

demonstrate the innovations initiated by Persian rule in the Ancient Near East (550 BC-331 BC), a prime example being a gold plaque from the Oxus Treasure with the representation of a priest that shows the spread of the Zoroastrian religion.

FOR SCHOLARLY READERS

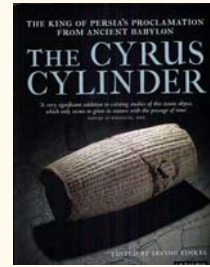
Cyropaedia by Xenophon translated by J. S. Watson & Henry Dale (London, 1855); Henry Dakyns (London, 1897) & Walter Miller (London, 1914) Xenophon's masterpiece *The Education of Cyrus*, a work admired by Machiavelli for its lessons on leadership, is at last available in a new English translation. Also known as the *Cyropaedia*, this philosophical novel is loosely based on the accomplishments of Cyrus the Great, founder of the vast Persian Empire that later became the archrival of the Greeks in the classical age. It offers an extraordinary portrait of political ambition, talent, and their ultimate limits. The writings of Xenophon are increasingly recognized as important works of political philosophy. In this text, Xenophon confronts the vexing problem of political instability by exploring the character and behavior of the ruler.



The Histories by Herodotus translated by George Rawlinson. NY: Everyman's Library, 1997. Herodotus who was born in Halicarnassus, Caria (modern day Bodrum, Turkey) and lived in the fifth century BC (c. 484 –425 BC). He has been called the "Father of History", and was the first historian known to collect his materials systematically, test their accuracy to a certain extent and arrange them in a well-constructed and vivid narrative.

The Histories—his masterpiece and the only work he is known to have produced—is a record of his "inquiry" into the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars and includes a wealth of geographical and ethnographical information.

Although some of his stories were fanciful, he claimed he was reporting only what had been told to him.



The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon by Irving Finkel (Editor) New York: I B Taurus, 2013.

Finkel studies the cylinder and allows us to understand it as a historical object. He argues that the text had different formats. Other than the barrel shaped cylinder, the text was also

recorded on large flat tablets, which may have been displayed publically.

FOR RESEARCHERS

Historical sources about Cyrus the Great are derived from Babylonian and Persian inscriptions, artifacts, Hebrew scriptures, and classical Greek and Roman texts.

1. Babylonian, Persian and other inscriptions and artifacts:



- a. Cyrus Cylinder (after conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE)
- b. Nabonidus (556-539 BCE; Babylonian king deposed by Cyrus) and Babylonian Chronicles
- c. Achaemenid inscriptions (6th-5th cent. BCE)

2. Hebrew scriptures otherwise called the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament:



- a. Isaiah (8th – 6th cent. BCE?) at 44.28; 45.1,
- b. Ezra (5th – 4th cent. BCE?) at 1.1-11; 4.3; 5.13; 6.3,14,
- c. Chronicles (4th – 3rd cent. BCE?) at (2) 36.22,23 and
- d. Daniel (contemporary of Cyrus – 6th century BCE though the date of writing could be the 2nd cent. BCE?) at 5.28; 6.9-29; 10.1

3. Classical Greek and Roman texts such as:

- a. Herodotus' (c. 485-420 BCE; born in Halicarnassus, Caria, modern Bodrum, Turkey) *Histories* at 1.46-95; 1.108-1.130; 1.141-1.214
- b. Xenophon's (c. 430-354 BCE; born in Athens) *Cyropaedia*
- c. Strabo's (c. 64 BCE-24 CE; born in Amaseia, Pontus, modern Amasya Turkey) *Geography* at 15.3.2,7,8,24
- d. Ctesias' (5th cent. BCE; contemporary of Xenophon) *Persica* at 7-11

Selected reading list compiled by: K. E. Eduljee and Aban Rustomji



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I would advise you to undertake a regular course of History and Poetry in both languages. In Greek go first thro' the Cyropedia and then read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's Hellenus and Anabasis

Thomas Jefferson (1801- 1909) President of the United States, in a letter written to his grandson, Francis Wayles Eppes. (October 6, 1820).

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—PLUTARCH, *Life of Alexander*, 69.4



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