

Political Relationships between Iran and the Jewish

(From coronation of Cyrus the Achaemenid to death of Darius the Achaemenid)

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Abstract: Achaemenian was the greatest regular and durable empire in the ancient times, undoubtedly, that controlled the world with specific political and administrative arrangements for more than two centuries. The ancient world that was under the obedience of Achaemenid kings, had various nations and religions, and in most of the cases, there was no close relationship between this nation and these religions; however, the Persian management had all these races and thoughts side by side and in the obedience of one king during two centuries. One of these nations was Jewish, who got familiar with Iranians at the beginning of Achaemenid Empire, and formed some part of political relationships of Iran with themselves during the history of Achaemenid Empire. In the present research, the author has tried to consider the political relationships of Jews with Achaemenid Empire in the empire periods of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. Moreover, the researcher has tried to conduct a research on this issue by applying a theoretical and citation approach.

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1. Introduction**1.1. Cyrus Empire**

Persians were Aryan tribes, who entered Iran from the beginning of first millennium BC, some of whom dwelled in the region of Pars. This tribe has been named for the first time in Assyrian inscriptions in the ninth century BC. They were obedient by Assyria, and they were obedient by Median from sixth century BC (Daniel Tsadik. 2007). During these centuries, Cyrus, Persian Cambyses' son, and Azhdahak's daughter's grandchild was born in 559 BC (Mousavi, Ali.2005). His dynasty was from Pasargadae that had the leadership position among Pars tribes. In the beginning of his rule, he was related to Median king, but then he rioted against it, and he conquered the Median in 550 BC (Curtis, John E. and Nigel Tallis (eds.).2005). Since then, Iran found a way to the field of world history. Cyrus conquered Lydia in 546 BC, and in furtherance, he took the Greek cities of Asia Minor under his ownership. In 539 BC, Cyrus conquered Babylon, and then the Iranian government turned into a global empire under Cyrus's leadership (Gardiner-Garden, (1987)). The extent of the northern kingdom of Cyrus was to the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, the western extent was to Dardanelles, the southern extent was to Arabia, and the eastern extent was to Indus

2.1. Conquered Babylon

Babylon was simply conquered by Cyrus because of some reasons that can be briefly considered and named under the titles of rulers' inability, Clergymen, and public dissatisfaction with

the government, internal dissention, and the existence of alien prisoners residing in that land. Cyrus moved to seize Babylon in 559 BC. It was impossible to conquer Babylon via attack. Moreover, it needed a lot of time to conquer Babylon; therefore, Cyrus ordered to build a ditch and divert water to that, so that, his army entered the city through the bed of this river, and this wish came true (Alizadeh, Parvin (2000)). Cyrus was crowned immediately after entering the temple of this city. Therefore, the beginning of Cyrus kingdom can be calculated from his coronation in Babylon (Xenophon (1962)).

3.1. Cyrus's Attitude toward Jews Residing in Babylon

Arriving to Babylon land, Cyrus started political, social, and cultural reforms. One of his significant measures was releasing prisoners and restoring gods to the countries, the dictator kings of which have jailed them in their countries (Bachrach, B.S. (1973)). One group of these prisoners were Jews, whom Cyrus ordered their freedom and release in addition to the other prisoners, which was reflected in the Holy Bible.

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel-he is the God who is in Jerusalem.

When Cyrus set the Jews free to stay or return in Babylon, he took measures to help the

Jewish tribe. These measurements and services are as the following:

- A. Cyrus let all the Jews residing in Babylon return to their homeland. Occupying Babylon, the land of Judah that was Babylon obedient, was regarded as Iran territory and no government was allowed to object the returning of this tribe to the land of Judah (Nikki R. Keddie (2002)).
- B. Cyrus returned all the silver dishes and golden wares that were taken by Bakht Nasr from Jewish temple, to them again (Loveday, Helen.1999)
- C. Cyrus asked Jews to start rebuilding the ruined temple after they returned Jerusalem, and the king accepted all the expenditures.

Although, this group of Jews who preferred residing in prosperous Babylon to going to the destroyed land of Judah, these people welcomed Cyrus so greatly that they denoted some silver and golden gifts to immigrants. Apparently, the group of Jews wished to come back who were poor, tribal leaders or more idealistic. Ezra describes the immigrants as the following in his book: Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. When Jews were getting ready to return to the homeland, Cyrus appointed a reliable representative called "Sheshbazzar." He received enough credit to rebuild the Jerusalem temple from Iranian court, and Jews started their immigration (The Holy Bible). Undoubtedly, the immigrants did not return Babylon in the first year of Cyrus's coronation, since they owned houses and jobs during forty-eight years of prison, the gathering of which needed a lot of time. Some historians believe that Jews movement to Jerusalem took place two years after Cyrus issued the freedom command. Finally, four hundred and twenty-three thousand six hundred people returned the land of Judah. In addition to this number, seven thousand, three hundred and thirty-seven servants, and two hundred male and female singers returned to their homeland (The Holy Bible).

However, not all the Jews were not interested in returning and using the chance Cyrus has created for them, and about five thousand of fanatic Jews migrated from Babylon to Jerusalem; however, some Jews who had learned affairs such as business, stayed in Babylon, since they wouldn't like to lose the economic station and returned Jerusalem ruins.

Therefore, Cyrus let this group stay in Babylon and live like other Babylon citizens, freely (Bertold Spuler, M. Ismail Marcinkowski (2003)). Jews succeeded to arrive at Judah through the Arabia deserts after four months of suffering. The book of Psalms refers to this return in some statements, and no interpretation except those of happiness, and joy cannot be understood from them. When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy" (The Holy Bible).

However, this returning brought some difficulties for them as well, the most significant issues of which were as the following:

A: The country to which the Jewish tribe returned was not prosperous like the old times, and it had dysfunctional conditions. Therefore, Jewish immigrants faced with various problems in the first years of residence (Abba Solomon, Eban).

B: Another problem of immigrant Jews was Semitic race tribes, who were taken to this land by "Esarhaddon" in 722 BC, and were Samarra residents, situated in northern areas of the land of Judah. They turned to Judaism later; however, they saved their Assyrian beliefs, and brought them in Jewish, so they had a mixture religion of the both (Davies, William David.1989).

The immigrant Jews repaired the ruins of Jerusalem and resided in such a way in this city that it seemed they have lived there since thousands years ago; undoubtedly, if Cyrus did not show his generosity and did not help them, they would not be able to reside in that city (Bertold Spuler, M. Ismail Marcinkowski (2003)). However, after a short time, some problems happened between the Jews who had returned from Babylon and Semitic race immigrants; the Jews, who had tried the taste of exile for years, looked at the residents with disgust, and regarded them as disobedient of religion of Moses. In fact, they believed that they were not pure yet and the problem culminated in the building of the temple. The Jewish Excellencies were afraid of racial combinations with those Semitic races, because they feared that this combination led to weaknesses of Jewish immigrants in religion and Sharia. When the newcomer tribes saw this condition, they made a hard time for newcomer Jews. Despite all these hardships, the Jews started rebuilding the temple, and established an alter in the temple and they held every morning and night to held their rituals; however, rebuilding the temple, did not complete at the time of

the Great Cyrus due to the above-mentioned reasons; however, the official ceremonies were held. Perhaps the religious/political office would like to finish rebuilding the temple (Curtis, John E. and Nigel Tallis (eds.).2005). However, the reason of Cyrus's attention to Jews forms one of the most delicate issues; Islamic historians consider the reason of this attention as a kind of kinship between Cyrus and Jews. In Marvaj Alzahab, Massoudi writes: "when Bakht Nasr attacked the territory of Israel, shahanshah of Iran was married to a Jewish woman; therefore, Iranians rushed to help the Jewish people and Jewish prisoners were released and returned to their land. In Fars Nameh (The Persian Book) Ibn Balkhi believes that Cyrus's mother is the daughter of one of Jewish prophet (Ibn Balkhi). Regarding the Islamic historians' texts, it can be concluded that the above-mentioned issue does not have any historical document, because there is not any hint or mention to the marriage of Cyrus or his father to a Jewish girl, in any contemporaneous Hebrew and Greek sources with Cyrus. However, it can be stated that one of the reasons of supporting Jews was their positive role in conquering Babylon. Jews affected Cyrus's success to conquer Babylon. Jewish prophets made the atmosphere of the society ready for Cyrus's attack to Babylon, and they regarded Cyrus as a prophet or Jesus to prevent Babylon people to fight with Cyrus, so that people do not support the Babylon ruler to save their lives. These factors influenced Cyrus's success, and made the Babylon society ready to accept him. In the furtherance, Cyrus aimed at training a nation loyal to his monarchy against his foreign enemies that were Egypt and Sparta, to have a good military base against them (Davies, William David.1989). In the near future, either he or his son should attack Egypt; therefore, having a loyal union seemed necessary. In addition, the existence of a puppet loyal government of Jewish in the eastern coast of Mediterranean, related Achaemenid Empire to the sea trade (Curtis, John E. and Nigel Tallis (eds.).2005). Of course, the above-mentioned issues do not mean that Cyrus respected the tribes to save his political interests. When a land was conquered, none of the people's religious and national beliefs were marred by Cyrus. In fact, diplomacy and freedom of opinion were his outstanding features (Loveday, Helen.1999). Moreover, he honored poor and weak nations as well, one typical sample of which was the humble and weak followers of "Zin" who worshiped Moon, and their temple was insulted severely, the reason of which was enmity of Marduk's followers with them, and Cyrus sooth them as well (Nikki R. Keddie (2002)). It should be always contemplated that Cyrus behaved well with all the affiliated tribes and all the tribes were thankful to

him. However, since Jews were the only tribe who recorded their behavior and history, we do not have any other reports rather than those of Jews about Cyrus (Nikki R. Keddie (2002)).

4.1. Cambyses Imperial

After the Great Cyrus's death, his eldest son, Cambyses, who was the governor of Babylon at the time of his father, sat on Iran throne. However, some riots occurred in Iran in the outset, and the new king decided to root out the riots that would undermine his kingdom. Herodotus indicated Cambyses as a cruel king, who suppressed all the riots occurred in the provinces under his rule in the first four-year of his government. Then he formed a great troop to fight with Egypt (Olmstead). However, before moving his troops to Egypt, he killed his brother, Bardiya, who used to be the governor of Gorgan, Kharazm, and Part at the time of his father, who took after his father characteristically and many people were advocates of him. Thus, Cambyses was fearful of his brother, lest Bardiya would revolt against him. Cambyses then moved his troops to Egypt, arrived at Gaza in 526 BC, and reviewed his great army alongside Mediterranean. At the same time, Egyptians faced with a misfortune, when Amasis II had just been succeeded by his son Psamtik III, Cambyses led his troops to Pelusium, and defeated the Egyptian army at the side of eastern branch of Nile. At the outset, Cambyses behaved Egyptians generously, but after three years, he was anxious since he was informed that some riots occurred in the Capital city of Iran, someone named Bardiya sat to throne, and the troops were caught in sandstorm in deserts of Egypt and Abyssinia. Having resided in Egypt for three years, Cambyses had no chance except coming back to Iran; therefore, he moved to Iran, but he died in the current Syria, and committed suicide in according to Darius. Analyzing the resources, it can be inferred that similar to his father, Cambyses tolerated Jews in the beginning. Moreover, in Jewish resources, Cambyses is named beside his father's name as he has been called as the Jewish Shepherd and the complement of Jewish tribe's God. Furthermore, some information has been obtained from Jewish colonies in Egypt, which acknowledged that Cambyses, king of Persia, destroyed all the temples of Egyptian gods; however, he kept Jewish ones safe and sound (John Curtis, Nigel Tallis, 2005). Yet, it was Cambyses, who made the Jews dwelling in Median Mountains immigrate to haunted mountains of Afghanistan, for the first time (Goldwurm, Hersh (1982)) and since he was fighting with Egypt, he couldn't help the Jews in the Holy Land. However, Jews immigration to Iran can be regarded as the most outstanding event in this period, because based on what stated earlier in this article, most of Jews were not interested in coming back to

Jerusalem due to bad and poor condition, and most of whom did not wish to stay in Babylon. Therefore, in this period, we witnessed the immigration of Jews toward Iran, they dwelled in different regions of Pars and Median, and they formed a large crowd at the time of Xerxes.

5.1. Darius Imperial

When Bardiya died in Syria, the secrets of his death mixed with the secret of his brother, and the situation was chaotic (Herodotus Book; the third Book; para.66). According to Darius, the Great, and the records at the Behistun inscription, this event can be explained as this: Gaumata, the Magi, who was appointed to manage the affairs by Cambyses's command, pretended to be Cambyses's younger brother, Bardiya, who had been assassinated some three years earlier, because of many similarities with him. In this way, He sat to Achaemenid throne. To hide this secret, he did not appear in public, and except some confident people of Harem, nobody visited him. In order to win people's attention, he forgave the three-year tax and the heads paid much attention to the reforms he did. Finally, after eight months Darius killed him and made an end to the story of false Bardiya (Tolini, Gauthier). The dawn of Achaemenid emperors started when Darius was crowned, with a territory from Seyhoun to Nile. In the beginning Darius, suppressed all the riots strongly, and revived the monarchy, which was the best of him in the given point of time. His empire lasted for 36 years. One can refer to the completion of Jerusalem temple construction in the history of Jewish and at the time of Darius, the great. To verify this issue, one can talk about two men named Zerubbabel and Jeshua who brought the prisoners from Babylon to Jerusalem at Darius age. Moreover, these two men finished building of the temple by Darius's command (Daniel Tsadik. 2007).

Darius I undertook extensive measures for the development of Achaemenid governance. Furthermore, he undertook the following measures to develop his empire and to develop Achemenian relationships with other tribes: improving the roads, the business of coin mintage, etc. Jews played a significant role in the economic growth of that province, and was the major operators of Babylon banks. Thus, this factor might be regarded as a good reason for Darius kindness that was a fan of a rich country with Jews. In addition, the Jewish country was located in the near of Nile river, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. All these economic reasons can be regarded as good justifications for a king who was seeking betterment and prosperity for his country. Yet, another issue was Darius personal interest in the support of different religions clergymen from his government, because to maintain

the integrity of his country, clergymen satisfaction seemed to be the single choice. Therefore, he helped them to complete the construction of Jerusalem temple.

3. Conclusion

Through analyzing the political history of Jews at the time of three great Achaemenid emperors, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, it can be concluded that the general policy of these Achaemenid emperors were kindness, generosity, and honoring all the religions. Jewish was not excluded from this policy, as well. However, these emperors pay more attention to Jews, possibly; the reasons of which can be summarized as the following: At the time of Cyrus, and in the issue of Babylon victory, Jewish priests played a significant role in creating suitable social conditions and preparing Babylon people to help Cyrus to attack; so Cyrus considered them as a reliable ally and feed them with his royal attentions. To conquest Egypt and have a nation except Persians in who people trusted, their presence seemed necessary at the time of Cambyses. Thus, the young king was very much generous to them for their services. Yet, since Jews of Babylon were managing some economic affairs at the time of Darius and he was always seeking betterment and economic improvement for his country, the Jews were in the spotlight of attention. Moreover, the King of Persia would like a reliable nation to be resided in the sensitive position at Mediterranean Sea, Nile River, and Red Sea. The political relations between Iran and Jewish can be rated excellent during Achaemenid era.

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