

## ~MEDES, MEDIA (480)

- .. Geography
- .. Principal Occupations
- .. History
- .. With Babylonians Defeat Assyria
- .. Lose Dominant Position To Persians
- .. With Persians Defeat Babylon
- .. Conquered By Alexander The Great

- The Medes were an Aryan race, hence of Japhetic stock and evidently descended from Japheth's son Madai.
- The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. ([Genesis 10:2](#))
- They were closely related to the Persians in race, language, and religion.
- As a people, the Medes do not begin to appear in Biblical history until the [Eighth Century B.C.E](#), while the first mention of them in available secular records dates from the time of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III, a contemporary of King Jehu, circa [904-877 B.C.E](#).
- Archaeological and other evidence is viewed as indicating their presence on the Iranian Plateau from about the middle of the [Second Millennium B.C.E](#). onward.
- .. Geography
- Though its boundaries undoubtedly fluctuated, the ancient region of Media basically lay West and South of the Caspian Sea, being separated from the coastland of that sea by the Elburz mountain range.
- In the Northwest it evidently reached beyond Lake Urmia to the Araxes River valley, while on its West boundary the Zagros Mountains served as a barrier between Media and the land of Assyria and the lowlands of the Tigris, to the East lay a large desert region, and on the South the country of Elam.
- The land of the Medes was thus mainly a mountainous plateau averaging from 900 to 1,500 meters (3,000 to 5,000 feet) above sea level. A considerable portion of the land is arid steppe, rainfall being

generally scanty, though there are several fertile plains that are highly productive.

- Most of the rivers flow toward the great central desert, where their waters are dissipated into marshes and swamps that dry up in the hot summer and leave salt deposits.
- Natural barriers made it relatively easy to defend. The western mountain range is the highest, with numerous peaks over 4,270 meters (14,000 feet) high, but the tallest single peak, Mount Damavand (5,771 m)(18,934 feet), is found in the Elburz range near the Caspian Sea.

### .. Principal Occupations

- Evidently, then as now, most of the people lived in small villages or were nomadic, and stock raising was a principal occupation. Cuneiform texts recounting Assyrian incursions into Media present such a picture and show that the excellent breed of horses raised by the Medes was one of the main prizes sought by the invaders.
- Herds of sheep, goats, asses, mules, and cows were also pastured on the good grazing grounds of the high valleys. On Assyrian reliefs Medes are sometimes represented as wearing what appear to be sheepskin coats over their tunics and as having high-laced boots, necessary equipment for pastoral work on the plateaus where the winters brought snow and bitter cold. Archaeological evidence shows that the Medes had capable metalsmiths working in bronze and gold.

### .. History

- The **Medes** left virtually no written records, what is known of them is derived from the Bible record, from Assyrian texts, and also from the classical Greek historians.
- The **Medes** appear to have been formed into numerous petty kingdoms under tribal chieftains, and the boastful accounts of Assyrian Emperors Shamshi-Adad V, Tiglath-pileser III, and Sargon II refer to their victories over certain city chieftains of the distant land of the Medes.
- Following the Assyrian victory over the kingdom of Israel in **740 B.C.E.**, the Israelites were sent into places of exile in Assyria and in the cities of the **Medes**, some of which were then in vassalage to Assyria.

- In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and then led Israel into exile in Assyria and kept them dwelling in Halah and in Habor at the river Gozan and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:6)
- After that the king of Assyria took Israel into exile in Assyria and set them down in Halah and in Habor at the river Gozan and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 18:11)
- Assyrian efforts to subjugate the insubmissive Medes continued under Assyrian King Esar-haddon, son of Sennacherib and evidently a contemporary of King Manasseh of Judah, 716-662 B.C.E.
- In one of his inscriptions, Esar-haddon speaks of, a district on the border of the salt-desert which lies in the land of the distant Medes, on the edge of Mount Bikni, the lapis-lazuli mountain, powerful chieftains who had not submitted to my yoke, themselves, together with their people, their riding-horses, cattle, sheep, asses and Bactrian camels, an enormous spoil, I carried off to Assyria. My royal tribute and tax I imposed upon them, yearly. [Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, by D. D. Luckenbill, 1927, Vol. II, pp. 215,216]
- According to the Greek historian Herodotus [I, 96], the Medes were formed into a united kingdom under a ruler named Deioces. Some modern historians believe Deioces to be the ruler named Daiaukku in the inscriptions.
- He was captured and deported to Hamath by Sargon II as a result of one of the Assyrian raids into the region of Media. However, most scholars consider that it was not until the time of Cyaxares or Kyaxares, a grandson of Deioces according to [Herodotus I, 102,103] that the kings of Media began to unite under a particular ruler.
- Even then they may well have been like the petty kings of Canaan, who at times fought under the direction of a particular king while still maintaining a considerable measure of independence.
- And it came about that as soon as Jabin the king of Hazor heard of it, he went sending to Jobab the king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and the king of Achshaph. (Joshua 11:1)
- And to the kings that were to the north in the mountainous region and in the desert plains south of Chinnereth and in the Shephelah and on the mountain ridges of Dor to the west.

**(Joshua 11:2)**

- The Canaanites to the east and the west, and the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Jebusites in the mountainous region and the Hivites at the base of Hermon in the land of Mizpah. **(Joshua 11:3)**
- So they went out, they and all their camps with them, a people as numerous as the grains of sand that are on the seashore for multitude, and very many horses and war chariots. **(Joshua 11:4)**
- Then all these kings met together by appointment and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. **(Joshua 11:5)**
- The **Medes** had been growing in strength despite Assyrian incursions and now came to constitute Assyria's most dangerous rival. When Nabopolassar of Babylon, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, rebelled against Assyria, Cyaxares the Mede allied his forces with the Babylonians.
- Following the **Median** capture of Asshur in Nabopolassar's 12th year **634 B.C.E**, Cyaxares, called *Ú-ma-kis-tar* in the Babylonian records, met with Nabopolassar by the captured city, and they **made an entente cordiale**. [Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, by A. K. Grayson, 1975, p. 93]
- Berossus, known through Polyhistor and Abydenus, both quoted by Eusebius, says that Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, married the daughter of the Median king, her name being Amytis or Amuhea according to Abydenus. [Eusebius, *Chronicorum liber prior*, edited by A. Schoene, Berlin, 1875, col. 29, lines 16-19, col. 37, lines 5-7]
- Historians disagree, however, as to whether Amytis was the daughter of Cyaxares or of his son Astyages.

**.. With Babylonians Defeat Assyria**

- After further battles against the Assyrians, finally in the 14th year of Nabopolassar, **632 B.C.E**, the combined forces of the **Medes** and the Babylonians conquered Nineveh.
- And he will stretch out his hand toward the north, and he will destroy Assyria. And he will make Nineveh a desolate waste, a waterless region like the wilderness. **(Zephaniah 2:13)**

- **Assyrian resistance was transferred to Haran, some 360 kilometers (225 miles), to the West, but though Assyria received assistance from Egypt, the effort to continue Assyrian rule was ineffectual and the Assyrian Empire was split up between the Medes and the Babylonians.**
- **And Nineveh, from the days that she has been, was like a pool of waters, but they are fleeing. Stand still, you men! Stand still! But there is no one turning back. (Nahum 2:8)**
- **Plunder silver, you men, plunder gold, as there is no limit to the things in arrangement. There is a heavy amount of all sorts of desirable articles. (Nahum 2:9)**
- **Emptiness and voidness, and a city laid waste! And the heart is melting, and there is a tottering of the knees, and severe pains are in all hips, and as for the faces of all of them, they have collected a glow of excitement. (Nahum 2:10)**
- **Where is the lair of lions, and the cave that belongs to the maned young lions, where the lion walked and entered, where the lion's cub was, and no one was making them tremble? (Nahum 2:11)**
- **The lion was tearing to pieces enough for his whelps, and was strangling for his lionesses. And he kept his holes filled with prey and his hiding places with animals torn to pieces. (Nahum 2:12)**
- **Look! I am against you, is the utterance of Yehowah of armies, and I will burn up her war chariot in the smoke. And a sword will devour your own maned young lions. And I will cut off from the earth your prey, and no more will the voice of your messengers be heard. (Nahum 2:13)**
- **Your shepherds have become drowsy, O king of Assyria, your majestic ones stay in their residences. Your people have been scattered upon the mountains, and there is no one collecting them together. (Nahum 3:18)**
- **There is no relief for your catastrophe. Your stroke has become unhealable. All those hearing the report about you will certainly clap their hands at you, because upon whom was it that your badness did not pass over constantly? (Nahum 3:19)**

- The **Medes** appear to have taken the northern portion of the territory while the Babylonians took the southern and southwestern portion, including Syria and Palestine.

- Cyaxares thereafter pushed into Asia Minor as far as the Halys River, where a war with Lydia resulted in a stalemate and the Halys became the far-western boundary of the **Median** Empire.

- This empire now extended over the greater part of the Iranian Plateau, northern Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Cappadocia.

#### • Lose Dominant Position To Persians

- At this time the **Medes**, with their capital at **Ecbatana**,

- And at **Ecbatana**, in the fortified place that was in the jurisdictional district of Media, there was found a scroll, and the memorandum to this effect was written within it. (**Ezra 6:2**)

- Held the dominant position over the related Persians, who had occupied the area to the South of **Media**. Greek historians Herodotus [I, 107,108] and Xenophon [Cyropaedia, I, ii, 1] both relate that Cyaxares successor Astyages, also called Ishtumegu in the cuneiform texts, had given his daughter Mandane in marriage to Persian ruler Cambyses, resulting in the birth of Cyrus II.

- Cyrus, upon becoming king of Anshan, a Persian province, united the Persian forces in an effort to throw off the Median yoke. The Nabonidus Chronicle indicates that the army of Ishtumegu or Astyages revolted and in fetters they delivered him to Cyrus, who thereafter seized the Median capital. [Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by J. Pritchard, 1974, p. 305]

- From this point forward **Media** merges with Persia to form the **Medo-Persian** Empire. Thus, the vision received by the prophet Daniel aptly likened the dual power of **Medo-Persia** to a two-horned ram, the taller of the two horns being the one that came up afterward, representing the ascendancy of the Persians and their dominance of the empire for the remainder of its existence.

- When I raised my eyes, then I saw, and, look! A ram standing before the watercourse, and it had two horns. And the two horns were tall, but the one was taller than the other, and the taller was the one that came up afterward. (**Daniel 8:3**)

- The ram that you saw possessing the two horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia. (Daniel 8:20)
- The evidence is, however, that Cyrus gave positions of power and authority to the **Medes** so that they continued to maintain a considerable measure of prominence within his government.
- Thus, the prophet Daniel interpreted to King Belshazzar the cryptic writing on the wall as predicting the division of the Babylonian Empire and its being given to the **Medes** and the **Persians**, and elsewhere in the book of Daniel the **Medes** continue to be listed first in the phrase the Law of the **Medes** and the **Persians**.
- Peres, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. (Daniel 5:28)
- Now, O king, may you establish the statute and sign the writing, in order for it not to be changed, according to the Law of the **Medes** and the **Persians**, which is not annulled. (Daniel 6:8)
- Then it was that they approached and were saying before the king concerning the interdict of the king; Is there not an interdict that you have signed that any man that asks a petition from any god or man for thirty days except from you, O king, he should be thrown to the lions pit? The king was answering and saying; The matter is well established according to the Law of the **Medes** and the **Persians**, which is not annulled. (Daniel 6:12)
- Finally these able-bodied men themselves entered as a throng to the king, and they were saying to the king; Take note, O king, that the Law belonging to the **Medes** and the **Persians** is that any interdict or statute that the king himself establishes is not to be changed. (Daniel 6:15)
- In the following century the book of Esther;
- In the third year of his reigning he held a banquet for all his princes and his servants, the military force of Persia and **Media**, the nobles and the princes of the jurisdictional districts before himself. (Esther 1:3)
- And those closest to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, seven princes of Persia and **Media**, having access to the king, and who were sitting first

in the kingdom. (**Esther 1:14**)

- And this day the princesses of Persia and **Media**, who have heard the affair of the queen, will talk to all the princes of the king, and there will be plenty of contempt and indignation. (**Esther 1:18**)
- If to the king it does seem good, let a royal word go out from his person, and let it be written among the laws of Persia and **Media**, that it may not pass away, that Vashti may not come in before King Ahasuerus, and her royal dignity let the king give to a companion of hers, a woman better than she is. (**Esther 1:19**)
- Reverses the order, with one exception.
- As for all his energetic work and his mightiness and the exact statement of Mordecai's greatness with which the king magnified him, are they not written in the Book of the affairs of the times of the kings of **Media** and **Persia**? (**Esther 10:2**)
- In which the **Medes** are listed as preceding the **Persians** historically.

#### .. With Persians Defeat Babylon

- In the **Eighth Century B.C.E**, the prophet Isaiah had foretold that Yehowah would arouse against Babylon, the **Medes**, who account silver itself as nothing and who, as respects gold, take no delight in it. And their bows will dash even young men to pieces.
- Here I am arousing against them the **Medes**, who account silver itself as nothing and who, as respects gold, take no delight in it. (**Isaiah 13:17**)
- And their bows will dash even young men to pieces. And the fruitage of the belly they will not pity, for sons their eye will not feel sorry. (**Isaiah 13:18**)
- And Babylon, the decoration of kingdoms, the beauty of the pride of the Chaldeans, must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. (**Isaiah 13:19**)
- There is a hard vision that has been told to me. The treacherous dealer is dealing treacherously, and the despoiler is despoiling. Go up, O Elam! Lay siege, O Media! All sighing due to her I have



caused to cease. ([Isaiah 21:2](#))

- The term, **Medes** here may well include the Persians, even as the classical Greek historians commonly used the term to embrace both Medes and Persians.
- Their disdain for silver and gold evidently indicates that in Babylon's case conquest was the prime motive with them rather than spoil, so that no bribe or offer of tribute would buy them off from their determined purpose.
- The **Medes**, like the Persians, used the bow as a principal weapon. The wooden bows, though sometimes mounted with bronze or copper
- He is teaching my hands for warfare, and my arms have pressed down a bow of copper. ([Psalms 18:34](#))
- Likely dashed the young men of Babylon to pieces by the hail of arrows, individually polished so as to penetrate even deeper.
- Polish the arrows. Fill the circular shields, O men. Yehowah has aroused the spirit of the kings of the **Medes**, because it is against Babylon that his idea is, in order to bring her to ruin. For it is the vengeance of Yehowah, the vengeance for his temple. ([Jeremiah 51:11](#))
- It may be noted that;
- Polish the arrows. Fill the circular shields, O men. Yehowah has aroused the spirit of the kings of the **Medes**, because it is against Babylon that his idea is, in order to bring her to ruin. For it is the vengeance of Yehowah, the vengeance for his temple. ([Jeremiah 51:11](#))
- Sanctify against her the nations, the kings of Media, its governor's and all its deputy rulers and all the land of each one's dominion. ([Jeremiah 51:28](#))
- Makes reference to the **kings** of **Media** as among those attacking Babylon, the plural perhaps indicating that even under Cyrus, a subordinate **Median** king or kings may have continued to exist, a situation by no means incompatible with ancient practice.

- And all the kings of Zimri and all the kings of Elam and all the kings of the **Medes**. (**Jeremiah 25:25**)
- Thus, too, we find that when Babylon was captured by the combined forces of **Medes**, **Persians**, Elamites, and other neighboring tribes, it was a Mede named Darius who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans, evidently as an appointee of King Cyrus the Persian.
- And **Darius** the **Mede** himself received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. (**Daniel 5:31**)
- In the first year of **Darius** the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the **Medes**, who had been made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans. (**Daniel 9:1**)

**See Also DARIUS 1**

#### • Conquered By Alexander The Great

- In the time of King Ahasuerus, believed to be Xerxes I, reference was still made to the military force of **Persia and Media**, the kings privy council was formed of seven princes of **Persia and Media**, and the laws were still known as the laws of **Persia and Media**.
- In the third year of his reigning he held a banquet for all his princes and his servants, the military force of **Persia and Media**, the nobles and the princes of the jurisdictional districts before himself. (**Esther 1:3**)
- And those closest to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, seven princes of **Persia and Media**, having access to the king, and who were sitting first in the kingdom. (**Esther 1:14**)
- If to the king it does seem good, let a royal word go out from his person, and let it be written among the laws of Persia and **Media**, that it may not pass away, that Vashti may not come in before King Ahasuerus, and her royal dignity let the king give to a companion of hers, a woman better than she is. (**Esther 1:19**)
- In **334 B.C.E.** Alexander the Great won his first decisive victories over the Persian forces, and in **330 B.C.E.** he occupied **Media**. Following his death, the southern part of **Media** came to form part of

the Seleucid Empire, while the northern part became an independent kingdom.

- Though it was dominated variously by the Parthians and by the Seleucid Empire, Greek geographer Strabo indicated that a **Median** dynasty continued in the **First Century C.E.** [Geography, 11, XIII, 1]
- At Jerusalem, **Medes** along with Parthians, Elamites, and persons of other nationalities were present at Pentecost in the year **33 C.E.** Since they are spoken of as, Jews, reverent men, from every nation, they may have been descendants of those Jews exiled to cities of the **Medes** following the Assyrian conquest of Israel, or perhaps some were proselytes to the Jewish faith.
- Now while the day of the festival of Pentecost was in progress they were all together at the same place. (**Acts of Apostles 2:1**)
- As it was, there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, reverent men, from every nation of those under heaven. (**Acts of Apostles 2:5**)
- Parthians and **Medes** and Elamites, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the district of Asia. (**Acts of Apostles 2:9**)
- By the **Third Century C.E.** the **Medes** had merged with the rest of the nation of the Iranians, thus ceasing to exist as a distinct people.