Darius may have done everything right in his preparation, but everything on his left and center had now gone wrong. His left collapsed under the force of Alexander's personal charge, and his center, which might have outflanked Alexander, was now being flanked by him. His left wing had crumbled. However, his right held, although it was cut off from his center.

Darius had expected to stand in his chariot, high above the fray, watching as his powerful superior numbers cut the Greco-Macedonians to ribbons. Now, the battle swirled around him, as did Alexander's horsemen.

Darius should have stood fast, urging his men to resist, rally and counterattack, but he panicked. Fearing for his own safety, he turned his chariot around and retreated. Arrian gives an almost comical description of Darius trying to get away in his wheeled vehicle, "conveyed safely in the chariot as long as he met with level ground in his flight; but when he lighted upon ravines and other rough ground, he left the chariot there, divesting himself both of his shield and Median mantle. He even left his bow in the chariot; and mounting a horse continued his flight."

Ironically, it was only when Darius made his cowardly dash that his strong right wing collapsed. As Arrian tells us, "the Persians did not give way until they perceived that Darius had fled and the Grecian mercenaries had been cut up by the phalanx and severed from them."

The retreat of the entire Persian army can best be described as chaos. Again, perhaps relying on the eyewitness accounts of Aristobulus and Callisthenes, the later biographers tell of panic as both infantry and cavalry retreated in disorder along narrow roads. Even though the Macedonians gave chase, killing as many of the retreating Persians as they could, more injuries may have been inflicted on the Persians by their trampling on one another.

Reportedly, Alexander himself pursued the retreating Darius until nightfall but failed to catch him. The Persian king got away along with 4,000 of his troops, forced marching all the way to the Euphrates. Other Persians who escaped made their way to Tripoli in Phoenicia (now Lebanon) and got away by sea to Chios, the Persian stronghold in the Aegean, a reminder that the Persian fleet remained a power at sea even as Alexander was victorious ashore.

There is no reliable estimate of the casualties at the Battle of Issus. Arrian gives the number of Persian dead as 100,000, but it is hard to imagine that Darius had many more than that in total on the battlefield. He also points out that among the losses were Arsames, Atizyes, and Rheomithres, three Persian cavalry commanders who were veterans of the Battle of Granicus. Justinus is more specific with his numbers, though he is probably still exaggerating when he states that 61,000 Persian infantrymen and 10,000 cavalry died, and that 40,000 Persians were captured. Justinus tallies Alexander's losses as a mere 130 infantrymen and 150 cavalry troops.*

Personally, Darius felt the sting of humiliation for the dishonorable way that he had escaped from the battlefield. Perhaps the worst part of this was that in his hasty retreat, he had deserted his mother, his wife and his daughters. Imagine Alexander's surprise when he rode into the abandoned Persian camp and found the royal women huddled in their tent.

"When Alexander came to see and console them, they threw themselves, at the sight of his armed attendants, into one another's arms, and uttered mournful cries, as if expecting to die immediately," writes Justinus. "Afterwards, falling at the feet of Alexander, they begged, not that they might live, but that their death might be delayed till they should bury the body of Darius. Alexander, touched with the respectful concern of the princesses for Darius, assured them that the king was still alive, and removed their apprehensions of death; directing, at the same time, that they should be treated as royal personages, and giving the daughters hopes of husbands suitable to the dignity of their father."

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*John Clark Ridpath in *History of the World* (New York: Philips and Hunt, 1885. Volume 1, Chapter 47) notes that numbers vary widely among early accounts, and reports that the lowest number he found was 70,000 slain Persians, and 40,000 captured. George Willis Botsford and Charles Alexander Robinson in *Hellenic History,* 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1948), chapter 18, venture no guess as to Persian losses, but mention that Alexander's losses were "only 450 in number."

Alexander made good on his promise, extending it to all the Persian women who were captured at Issus, and later when Alexander occupied Damascus. Hearing that some of his men had raped some other women found at the Persian camp, Alexander ordered them tried and executed. Perhaps Alexander did this out of a sense of chivalry, or perhaps it was his savvy understanding of politics. In any case, his being magnanimous in victory could not help but enhance Alexander's reputation across the empire that he sought to rule.

Quoting Aristobulus, Arrian writes that Alexander allowed Darius's mother, wife and daughters to "retain the state and retinue befitting their royal rank, as well as the title of queens; for he had not undertaken the war against Darius from a feeling of hatred, but he had conducted it in a legitimate manner for the empire of Asia."

For many of the Greco-Macedonian officers and soldiers, what they discovered in the abandoned Persian encampment verged on culture shock. Darius was certainly a king, but to say that he "lived like a king" while on a campaign was an understatement. He traveled with a glittering portable palace, with all of the gold and jewelry which, as Arrian puts it, "the Great King was in the habit of taking with him as necessary for his luxurious mode of living, even though he was going on a military expedition." Arrian also mentions that Alexander's men discovered 3,000 talents ($46 million) in cash in Darius's camp, and even more in Damascus at Darius's headquarters there.

The splendor of Persian courtly life was beyond the imaginations of many, but it certainly got their attention and whetted their appetites for further plunder that would await them as Alexander's campaign pressed on into the heart of Persia. As Plutarch writes, "for the first time the Macedonians got a taste of gold and silver and women and barbaric luxury of life, and now that they had struck the trail, they were like dogs in their eagerness to pursue and track down the wealth of the Persians."

Darius subsequently sent Alexander a letter begging him to release his womenfolk. According to Arrian, he wrote that the battle had been decided "as seemed good to some one of the gods. And now he, a king, begged his captured wife, mother, and children from a king; and he wished to form a friendship with him and become his ally."

To the humiliation of the Persian king, Alexander declined his entreaty. Alexander replied that didn't want Darius's friendship, he wanted his empire.

According to Arrian, Alexander wrote back, telling Darius, "Your ancestors came into Macedonia and the rest of Greece and treated us ill, without any previous injury from us. I, having been appointed commander in chief of the Greeks, and wishing to take revenge on the Persians, crossed over into Asia, hostilities being begun by you. . . . I took the field against you, because you were the party who commenced the hostility. Since I have vanquished your generals and [satraps] in the previous battle, and now yourself and your forces in like manner, I am, by the gift of the gods, in possession of your land."

He then taunted Darius, telling him—with more than a little exaggeration—that he was already master of Asia. The Battle of Issus was the turning point that confirmed the decline of the Persian Empire as irrevocable. After Granicus, Darius might have regained the initiative and reversed Alexander's progress. After Issus, Darius had been reduced to begging. Taking this as a sign of weakness, Alexander taunted him by telling him that his requests could be met only by conceding his empire to Alexander.

"I am lord of all Asia," Alexander told Darius. "Ask for your mother, wife, and children, and anything else you wish. For whatever you ask for you will receive; and nothing shall be denied you. But for the future, whenever you send to me, send to me as the king of Asia, and do not address to me your wishes as to an equal; but if you are in need of anything, speak to me as to the man who is lord of all your territories."

Alexander was obviously teasing Darius when he said "whatever you ask for you will receive," because he knew full well that Darius would *never* address him as the king of Asia—even to get his family back.

CHAPTER 5

The Takedown of Tyre

In his campaign against the Achaemenid Persian Empire—of which he intended to be master—Alexander's battles alternated between field battles and sieges of fixed locations. Twice in as many years the Persians had put a great army into the field against him, and twice they had lost. For the most part, though, the campaign during these years was characterized by his methodical take down of one city after another as he cut through the Persian dominions like a sword.

As had been the case after Granicus in May 334 BC, Alexander followed the November 333 victory at Issus by continuing his relentless march. He headed southward along the Mediterranean shore, from what is now Turkey, through modern Syria and into present-day Lebanon. Strategically, it was his intention to march all the way to Egypt, thus securing all of the ports in the eastern Mediterranean. As Plutarch describes the strategy, Alexander was determined to eliminate Persian naval power by making himself "master of the seacoasts."

Many places submitted to Alexander willingly—or at least compliantly. The people of the Phoenician enclaves of Byblos and Sidon (now in Lebanon) handed over the keys to their cities. "As for Cyprus," Plutarch relates, "its kings came at once and put the island in his hands, together with Phoenicia, with the exception of Tyre."

Tyre, in what is now Lebanon, was the holdout. It had a unique place as the largest and most important Phoenician port in the eastern Mediterranean, and as an important Persian naval base. Tyre had been a prominent city for centuries by the time that Alexander arrived. The Phoenician merchants from Tyre had been among the first people to send their trading ships throughout the Mediterranean. The city grew rich and powerful and was coveted by its neighbors. King Nebuchadnezzar II, known as "the Great," who built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, had unsuccessfully besieged the city for 13 years in the sixth century BC. Eventually, the Tyrians threw in their lot with the Persians.

To secure their metropolis, the Tyrians built a new city on an island a half mile offshore from the old city on the mainland. This new Tyre was now an impregnable fortress surrounded by two miles of stone walls that were reportedly as high as 150 feet. The island had two ship harbors, the northern one named for Sidon, the southern one named for Egypt. Through these harbors, Tyre could be supplied from the sea, regardless of who controlled the adjacent mainland.

Alexander had hoped to avoid the necessity of a siege entirely. He was optimistic when his army was met on the coast road by ambassadors from Tyre, who told him, according to Arrian, that the city "had decided to do whatever he might command."

Alexander said he would like to enter their city and offer a sacrifice to Heracles—known to the Tyrians as Melqart—at the temple that had been erected to him in the southern part of their island city-state. He explained that he was descended from Heracles, as were all of the kings of Macedonia. Their response was not what he expected. The Tyrians, then ruled by King Azemilcus, told him he was welcome at another temple of Heracles located on the mainland, but he could not enter the island.

With this, the die was cast. Tyre must be taken. Thus began an epic siege that took place over the spring and summer of 332.

In a speech possibly transcribed by Aristobulus or Callisthenes, and passed down by Arrian, Alexander told his officers of his strategic view of the eastern Mediterranean, explaining why Tyre was so important:

"I see that an expedition to Egypt will not be safe for us, so long as the Persians retain the sovereignty of the sea; nor is it a safe course, both for other reasons, and especially looking at the state of matters in Greece, for us to pursue Darius, leaving in our rear the city of Tyre itself in doubtful allegiance. . . . I am apprehensive lest while we advance with our forces toward Babylon and in pursuit of Darius, the Persians should again conquer the maritime districts, and transfer the war into Greece with a larger army."

The conventional wisdom held that Tyre could be assaulted only from the sea, and its huge, solid walls would protect it from that. Besieging Tyre presented a dilemma, given that the Tyrian fleet and the allied Persian fleet under Autophradates had naval superiority in the eastern Mediterranean, while Alexander had deliberately undercut his own navy.

According to folklore, readily retold by Arrian as fact, the solution came to Alexander in a dream. He dreamed that Heracles took him by the right hand and led him up into the city, walking on dry land. Though the dream needed little in the way of interpretation, it was declared to be a good sign by Aristander, the seer who had once told Philip II that his son within the womb of Olympias would be as bold as a lion. Alexander had relied on his prognostications more than ever after he correctly predicted the victory at Granicus.

If Tyre was separated from dry land by a half mile of water, he would just take the dry land to the city. Alexander decided to solve the problem at hand by turning Tyre from an island into the tip of a peninsula by building a causeway to it from the mainland.

The portion of the channel closest to the shore was a gently sloping tidal plain. There was an abundance of rock and other construction material nearby, so getting started on this project would be relatively easy. Closer to the island fortress city, however, the channel was 18 feet deep, so it would be more challenging. A difficult task under any circumstances, building a causeway here beneath hostile walls was a serious problem for work crews with Tyrian archers raining projectiles down upon them.

However, morale inside the walls was shaky as well. The Tyrians too, had a dream. They dreamed that Apollo told them he was, as Plutarch paraphrases it, "going away to Alexander, since he was displeased at what was going on in the city."

The project began with wooden pilings being driven into the mud with a roadway constructed on top. The work proceeded rapidly at first, but as the Macedonians got into the channel, the crews came under fire from Tyrian warships. To stave off this harassment, Alexander had two tall siege towers constructed at the end of the causeway from which his troops could return fire against the ships. Their elevated position meant that the men in the towers could see farther, and their projectiles had greater range, than they would from near sea level.

The Tyrians struck back using a transport barge as an incendiary device. They piled it high with wood scraps and other flammable material, including pitch and brimstone. To its masts they fitted long double yardarms, attaching caldrons containing additional flammable material. They towed the barge near the causeway towers using triremes, setting it on fire as it neared the towers at the end of the causeway. The yardarms were long enough to cantilever over the causeway and strike the towers, which were soon engulfed in flames.

Attempts by Alexander's personnel to fight the fires were met by archers aboard the triremes. The Tyrians also landed troops on the causeway who burned catapults and other equipment before withdrawing. After a stroke of engineering brilliance in his causeway idea, Alexander had been halted rather ignominiously.

However, it was merely round one. Alexander promptly ordered the causeway to be widened and new towers to be built. Meanwhile, he decided to acquire additional warships of his own, having realized that defeating Tyre would require sea power after all.

Expanding his navy was actually easier for Alexander than might have been expected. Because most of his recent conquests and alliances had involved maritime powers, his new friends were willing to contribute to his fleet-building efforts. According to Arrian, Cyprus sent 120 warships to Alexander, while both Sidon and Rhodes contributed some triremes, and "about 80 Phoenician ships joined him."

Both Gerostratus and Enylus, the kings respectively of Aradus and Byblos, "ascertaining that their cities were in the possession of Alexander, deserted Autophradates and the fleet under his command, and came to Alexander with their naval force."

Alexander also personally joined the naval attack on Tyre, sailing with the fleet as it embarked from Sidon. His own position was at the right wing of the armada, farthest from the coast. His initial strategy had been to lure the Tyrians into a battle in the open sea.

The Tyrians had been looking forward to such a fight on the basis of Alexander's perceived naval inferiority, but when they observed Alexander's fleet most remained in port rather than accepting the challenge. Alexander's flotilla managed to sink three vessels, but aside from that they were at a stalemate.

Alexander for once had the superior numbers in a naval battle, but he could not lure out his enemy. If a fight took place, it would have to be in the tight confines of one of the island's two harbors. It was like Issus, only on water—and at Issus, it was Darius who was in too tight a space to make full use of his superior numbers.

Alexander decided to blockade Tyre and wait. He assigned the Cypriot triremes to block the northern Tyrian port and dispatched the Phoenician fleet to block the southern port.

He then turned back to his land strategy, ordering the rapid construction of catapults and siege engines, including battering rams and protected towers for the transfer of troops. These were placed on ships for the final assault against Tyre's fortifications. The Tyrians countered by building towers of their own in order to be higher than the Greco-Macedonian besiegers. It became a battle of fiery projectiles launched from higher and higher elevations.

Eventually feeling the pressure of the naval blockade, the Tyrians made an attempt to break out of the northern port using a force of seven triremes, three quadriremes and three quinqueremes. The ships moved silently so as not to alert the Cypriot blockade ships, but it would not have been necessary. The Cypriots were asleep at the tiller. Indeed, each ship was manned by a mere skeleton crew, with most hands having been quartered ashore. Catching the Cypriot fleet off guard, the Tyrians managed to sink or damage a number of vessels.

Roused from his tent—all of this happened in the heat of the summer afternoon as the officers were resting—Alexander ordered all available ships in the port on the mainland side of the channel to put to sea to prevent any additional Tyrian ships from reaching open seas. Alexander boarded a ship himself, intending as usual to lead from the front.

Despite calls from Tyrian lookouts that Alexander's ships were pulling out from their moorings, ships continued to leave the port. Alexander's fleet rallied, ramming and sinking a number of vessels, and capturing others.

Finally, Alexander developed a tactical plan that called for a complex amphibious landing under fire that would be considered ambitious even by a modern combat force. In the northern part of the island, where the causeway had been built, Tyre's walls were the most formidable and best defended, so Alexander moved to execute an unanticipated flanking maneuver by hitting a less well defended point in the southern end.

The attack would entail breaching the wall above sea level from the sea using siege engines aboard ships, and then using a portable bridge to push troops through this breach. Indeed, attacking a vertical wall above sea level is always much more difficult than putting troops across a sea-level beach using landing craft. With Tyrian defenses pierced, Alexander's fleet would attack the two Tyrian ports simultaneously.

When his first attempt to execute the plan was quickly repulsed, Alexander withdrew, postponing a renewed attempt until a patch of stormy weather had blown through. On the third day following, the seas were quieter and Alexander resumed the assault.

After seven months, the siege finally reached its climax on the last day of the month of Hekatombaion, the same month that Alexander celebrated his twenty-fourth birthday (July 20, 332 BC). Plutarch tells that after consulting some omens, Aristander had declared confidently "that the city would certainly be captured during that month." Because it was the last day of the month, and Tyre had held out for 200 days already, Aristander's words "produced laughter and jesting."

Arrian says that Alexander "led the ships containing the military engines up to the city. In the first place he shook down a large piece of the wall; and when the breach appeared to be sufficiently wide, he ordered the vessels conveying the military engines to retire, and brought up two others, which carried the bridges, which he intended to throw upon the breach in the wall. The shield bearing guards occupied one of these vessels, which he had put under the command of Admetus; and the other was occupied by the regiment of Coenus, called the foot Companions."