When the siege engines pulled back, Alexander sent in triremes with archers and catapults to get as close as possible, even if it meant running aground, to support the infantry assault.

Again leading from the front, Alexander himself headed the assault force that went ashore. Admetus's contingent was the first over the wall, but he was killed in action, struck by a spear. Alexander then led the Companion infantry in securing a section of wall and several towers. With Greco-Macedonian troops taking and holding a rapidly expanding beachhead, the defensive advantages of the fortified city began to evaporate.

Unfortunately for the Tyrians, their royal palace was in the southern part of the city, and it was one of the first major objectives to fall to Alexander's invading troops. King Azemilcus, his senior bureaucrats and a delegation of Carthaginian dignitaries, who had been trapped in Tyre when Alexander's fleet sealed the ports, were there but escaped to take refuge in the temple to Heracles. Ironically, this was the same temple at which Alexander had originally asked to be allowed to worship.

At the same time, Alexander's fleet forced its way into the two harbors. Phoenician ships entered the southern harbor, the Port of Egypt, and the Cypriot ships breached the entrance to Tyre's northern harbor, the Port of Sidon. Here at the Port of Sidon, the larger of he two anchorages, troops were able to get ashore inside the harbor. The defenders fell back to defensive positions at the Agenoreum, a temple to the mythical King Agenor, but were quickly routed. Alexander now had beachheads on either end of Tyre and the Tyrian defenders in a pincer.

Within a matter of hours, after a bloody siege of seven months, troops from both landings linked up in the northern part of the city. All of the defenses that had been erected on the causeway side were for naught.

According to Diodorus, immediately after his victory Alexander ordered the causeway broadened to an average width of nearly 200 feet and made permanent, using material from the damaged city walls as fill.

The causeway is still there, although it if you visited it, you would not notice. Over the past 2,300 years, wave action and drifting sand

have caused it to grow into a broad isthmus about a quarter of a mile wide. The part of Tyre that was an island in 332 BC has been connected to the mainland ever since Alexander's day.*

Alexander gave no quarter to those he captured, killing them on the spot or eventually selling them into slavery. According to Arrian, the defenders suffered about 8,000 killed or executed and 30,000 made slaves, while the Greco-Macedonian force lost 400 killed in action during the entire siege. Curtius reports 6,000 Tyrian troops killed inside the city walls, and 2,000 executed in the aftermath. While these numbers were probably stretched in favor of Alexander, many later scholars, including Botsford and Robinson, repeat them. There is no way of knowing for sure.

In any case, Alexander walked into the Temple of Heracles around sundown that day to make his long-postponed sacrifice. It was the afternoon of the last day of Hekatombaion. Of all those who had laughed at Aristander for his outlandish prediction, none were laughing now.

Alexander spared King Azemilcus and gave amnesty to all those hiding in the temple when it was captured. The sight of his city's resounding defeat, and of Alexander standing in the temple that he had once asked to visit peacefully, was probably punishment enough for the king.

After the Battle of Issus and the siege of Tyre, Persia was no longer a Mediterranean superpower. Having had the heart ripped out of his army, and the bases ripped away from his navy, Darius would be unable to challenge Alexander significantly again until his army was deep inside the interior of the Persian Empire.

**Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* "Holocene Morphogenesis of Alexander the Great's Isthmus at Tyre in Lebanon," May 29, 2007. In this article, the causeway is described by Nick Marriner and his colleagues Christophe Morhange and Samuel Meulé of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre Européen de Recherche et d'Enseignement des Géosciences de l'Environnement in France. Using sediment core samples and computer modeling, they reconstructed the geological history of Tyre. They not only show how the causeway became permanent, but they discovered how Alexander's engineers made use of an existing submerged sandbar in their work.

CHAPTER 6

From Gaza to Alexandria

After the campaign at Tyre, which consumed the first half of 332 BC, Alexander's army moved south toward Egypt, their way blocked by another "impregnable" fortress at Gaza. Still the scene of serious armed conflict in the twenty-first century, Gaza has been the crossroads of both major military campaigns and important trading routes for nearly 4,000 years. It was the site of both Egyptian and Canaanite settlements in the Bronze Age, and passed from the Egyptians to the Philistines 800 years before Alexander's time. According to the Old Testament, Samson pulled down the pillars of the temple here.

By the fourth century BC, Gaza was a well-established Persian city superimposed upon an Arab land and populated largely by Arabs. It was the last major city on the Mediterranean coastal road before one crossed the Sinai Desert into Egypt. Ruled by a Persian satrap named Batis (or Betis), Gaza was heavily fortified and defended by an army of Arab mercenaries.

Like Tyre, Gaza was surrounded by high walls. Unlike Tyre, it was not surrounded by water, but the fortified part of Gaza was situated high on a hilltop.

As at Tyre, Alexander initially considered the conquest of Gaza to be an engineering problem. However, according to Arrian, his officers

"expressed the opinion that it was not possible to capture the wall by force, on account of the height of the mound" on which the city was constructed. However, as Arrian adds, "the more impracticable it seemed to be, the more resolutely Alexander determined that it must be captured. For he said that the action would strike the enemy with great alarm from its being contrary to their expectation."

The audacity of Alexander's engineering vision is amazing. At Tyre, he had turned an island into a peninsula to get his way. At Gaza, he proposed defeating the high-ground defensive advantage of a hilltop fortress by constructing a higher hill on the south side of the city wall. When it was completed, this hill would allow Alexander to bring up a siege engine to begin battering the wall. Meanwhile, Alexander also undertook to excavate beneath the Gazan walls to collapse them.

When the initial assault on the south side failed to produce the desired results, Alexander ordered his engineers to build a berm, or a wall of earth, around the entire circumference of the city. Arrian describes it as being the equivalent of 250 feet high and 1,200 feet wide, making it a construction chore of gargantuan proportions. Even with modern earthmoving equipment and without people shooting arrows at you, such a task would easily take a few months—which is about the length of time that Alexander's diggers spent in the fall of 332. This may be what happened to the 30,000 Tyrians who had become slaves over the summer.

While Alexander was supervising this project, an event occurred that Aristander interpreted as an omen. Plutarch writes that "a clod of earth, which had been dropped from on high by a bird, struck [Alexander] on the shoulder. The bird alighted on one of the battering-engines, and was at once caught in the network of sinews which were used to give a twist to the ropes."

Aristander told Alexander that there was good news and bad news in the omen. The old seer believed that Alexander would defeat Gaza, but that he was at serious personal risk.

By November, the digging was finished and the battle began. With the walls collapsing from beneath and from the battering rams against the outside, it is amazing that the defenders of Gaza managed to repulse three Greco-Macedonian attempts to get inside, but they did.

For Alexander, the fourth time was the charm, however. Arrian relates that a Companion named Neoptolemus was the first to get across the wall and into Gaza. He was quickly followed by a mass of phalanx troops, who fanned out and opened the city gates from the inside.

Remembering Aristander's prediction, Alexander initially kept out of the line of fire, but when some of his troops were in danger of being overrun by some counterattacking Arab mercenaries during one of the assaults, he personally led an attack. According to Arrian, Alexander was "wounded by a bolt from a catapult, right though the shield and breastplate into the shoulder. When he perceived that Aristander had spoken the truth about the wound, he rejoiced, because he thought he should also capture the city. . . . [though] he was not easily cured of the wound."

The wound is notable for having occurred to Alexander's shoulder, just as the object dropped by the bird had struck his shoulder.

As for the battle, Arrian tells that the defenders of Gaza fought to the last man, "all slain fighting there, as each man had been stationed." Curtius mentions that "some 10,000 Persians and Arabs fell at Gaza, but for the Macedonians too it was no bloodless victory."

In the account of the battle in his biography of Alexander, Curtius relates that Alexander singled out Batis for "special" treatment, specifically by copying what happened to Hector at the hands of Achilles in the *Iliad.* Curtius explains that as Batis was brought before him, Alexander said "You shall not have the death you wanted. Instead you can expect to suffer whatever torment can be devised against a prisoner."

As Curtius explains, Batis then gave Alexander a look that "was not just fearless, but downright defiant, and uttered not a word in reply to his threats."

"Do you see his obstinate silence?" said Alexander. "Has he knelt to me? Has he uttered one word of entreaty? But I shall overcome his silence; at the very least I shall punctuate it with groans." Thongs were then passed through the holes punched in the man's ankles and he was tied to a chariot. He met his death being dragged through his defeated city.

Both Arrian and Plutarch make a point of reporting that Alexander sold Gazan women and children into slavery, repopulated Gaza with people from adjacent cities and used the fortifications that had survived the attacks as a fortress to protect his own growing Mediterranean dominions.

With Tyre and Gaza mercilessly subdued, Alexander marched across the hot, dusty Sinai Desert toward the ancient land of the pharaohs. He found a cordial welcome in Egypt, where the Persian rulers were strongly disliked for being, in the words of Curtius, "avaricious and arrogant."

After three millennia as an independent entity, most of the time as one of the leading civilizations on earth, Egypt had come under Persian rule in the sixth century BC. Inspired by Greek resistance in the fifth century BC, Egypt had thrown out the Persians, but had again become a Persian dominion just a dozen years before Alexander's arrival. In 343 BC, Pharaoh Nectanebo II, the third king of the Thirtieth Dynasty and the last native monarch of Egypt, was defeated by the Persian King Artaxerxes III, who preceded Alexander's nemesis Darius III. It was the end of an era, and the beginning of another. The latter was short-lived, as it ended the moment that Alexander reached the Nile in the late autumn of 332. Mazaces, the Persian satrap of Egypt, opened the doors and handed Alexander the keys. Without a battle, Egypt was now part of Alexander's growing empire. Though the Persians still held some island outposts, essentially everything on the rim of the Mediterranean that had been Persian now belonged to Alexander.

Even as Alexander first saw the Nile, vessels of his fleet were already moored at their new base at Pelusium on the eastern edge of the Nile Delta, having sailed there from Tyre. Alexander then directed his fleet to sail up the Nile to Memphis. Located about a dozen miles south of modern Cairo, Memphis was the ancient capital and longtime administrative metropolis of Lower Egypt.

As the ships sailed, Alexander led his troops overland to Memphis, marching south along the eastern bank of the river. On the way, Alexander was greeted with open arms. The Egyptians were only too happy to back a winner, especially one who would deliver them from

the Persians. In Memphis, he was greeted as a hero with an enormous festival of music and feasting. The Egyptians wanted to put on a good show for their new Macedonian pharaoh.

Despite such a welcome, Alexander's stay in Egypt would be brief. He had bigger fish to fry. Since Issus, he was determined to pursue Darius, defeat him decisively, and possess his empire. Egypt was just a detour in Alexander's grand strategy. Because he would not be remaining in Egypt to rule his new dominion, Alexander needed to appoint a governor. Rather than installing a Greek or Macedonian, he picked Doloaspis, an Egyptian. According to Arrian and other early sources, he originally planned to split Egypt into two sections, governed by Doloaspis and Petisis, but the latter declined the offer, or quit soon after taking the job, leaving Doloaspis in charge of the whole country.

To command the military garrison that he left behind in Egypt, Alexander assigned the generals Peucestas and Balacrus, whom Alexander had appointed as satrap of Cilicia after the Battle of Issus.

From ancient Memphis, Alexander sailed north to found a new city, which he ambitiously envisioned as the new great metropolis of the eastern Mediterranean, superseding Tyre as a port and Memphis as an administrative center. Locating it on a site on the western edge of the Nile Delta, he named it for himself, calling it Alexandria.

Having seen Alexander as a successful military engineer at Tyre and Gaza, we now become acquainted with Alexander the architect and city planner. As Arrian says, "he was seized by an ardent desire to undertake the enterprise, and he marked out the boundaries for the city himself, pointing out the place where the marketplace was to be constructed, where the temples were to be built, stating how many there were to be, and to what Grecian gods they were to be dedicated, and specially marking a spot for a temple to the Egyptian Isis."

Because he had no chalk at hand, Alexander and his helpers used grains of barley to delineate the outlines of buildings against the dark delta soil. However, as Plutarch tells it, "suddenly birds from the river and the lagoon, infinite in number and of every sort and size, settled down upon the place like clouds and devoured every particle of the

barley-meal, so that even Alexander was greatly disturbed at the omen."

Alexander no doubt saw his city disappearing before his eyes, but Aristander and the court seers were quick to spin this turn of events in the opposite direction. They told Alexander that, again quoting Plutarch, the city would "have most abundant and helpful resources and be a nursing mother for men of every nation." If that was what they actually said, they were right. Certainly by Plutarch's time, this had come to pass.

Over the course of the coming years, Alexander would establish about a dozen other Alexandrias, but this one did in fact go on to be what Alexander had planned, becoming one of the most important cities of the world, and remaining as such for many centuries. Its lighthouse, the Pharos of Alexandria, would be included as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, while the Library of Alexandria is still remembered as probably the greatest to have existed in the ancient world. Constructed under the patronage of Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, who ruled Egypt after Alexander's death as Ptolemy Soter or Ptolemy I, this library itself ranks as a legendary wonder of civilization. It flourished in the centuries following Alexander's rule and survived until the first century BC, when it burned. Today, Egypt's second largest city after Cairo, Alexandria remains one of the most important ports in North Africa. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina, a much smaller library built to commemorate the lost original, opened in the city in 2002.

Having founded his city, Alexander made good on his desire to ride four days into the desert to Siwa Oasis to visit the legendary oracle of the Egyptian deity Amun, whom the Greeks called Ammon. Just as Arrian described it, Siwa is entirely surrounded by "a desert of far stretching sand." An isolated 600-square-mile forested area with springs and standing water in the middle of the desert near the Libyan border, Siwa is today an archeological site and tourist destination. It was more or less the same in 331 BC, with Alexander as one of the tourists.

Adding a bit of color to the story of Alexander's journey, Ptolemy tells that two serpents capable of speaking Greek served to guide Alexander to the Siwa Oasis. However, both Arrian and Plutarch disparage this account, agreeing with the account by Aristobulus that it was actually a pair of ravens that guided Alexander. The story also tells

that Alexander's men never ran out of water in the desert because of several rare rain showers.

As we have seen, Alexander was a great believer in prognostication. The oracle of Delphi had assured Alexander of his invincibility, and he was naturally anxious to consult the equally prestigious and well-known oracle of Amun.

Both Perseus and Heracles, great heroes of Greek mythology, had come here—and Alexander fancied himself a descendant of both. Moreover, Amun was seen as the Egyptian deity who was parallel to Zeus in the Greek pantheon as the king of gods, and Alexander also considered himself descended from Zeus—even without the claim of Olympias that Alexander had been fathered by Zeus in the form of a snake. Alexander wished to consult the oracle as to whether this story of his paternity was true.

Plutarch tells that at Siwa, the oracle "gave him salutation from the god as from a father."

At this point, Alexander posed a trick question, asking whether "any of the murderers of his father" had escaped his efforts to kill all of the conspirators in the death of Philip II. The trick in the question was that Alexander wished to deduce whether Philip was his true father, or whether it was Zeus, as his mother insisted.

"The prophet answered by bidding him be guarded in his speech, since his was not a mortal father," reports Plutarch. "Alexander therefore changed the form of his question, and asked whether the murderers of Philip had all been punished; and then, regarding his own empire, he asked whether it was given to him to become lord and master of all mankind."

Plutarch goes on to say that in one of his many letters home to Olympias, Alexander confided that the oracle—speaking through a priest, of course—had greeted Alexander with the phrase "Oh, pai dios," meaning "Oh, son of Zeus, or "Oh, son of god." Plutarch and others have suggested that the priest meant to use the polite greeting "Oh, pai dion," meaning "Oh, my son," but had mispronounced one letter, mixing up two Greek words. Either way, the story illustrates Alexander's self-perception. It is uncertain whether he truly believed himself the son of Zeus before 332 BC, or whether he still took the

idea as symbolic. It is reasonably certain, though, that if not this year, he eventually did come around to believe in his divine paternity. After all, he was a big believer in oracles.

Having heard—or thought he heard—what he wanted from the oracle, Alexander made offerings to Amun and gave gifts in the form of cash to his priests. He then returned to his conquest of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.