

# THE NINTH BOOK: CALLIOPE

Strategy, Hubris, and the Final Expulsion of the Persians



## THE CONTEXT

Xerxes has fled to Asia after the naval defeat at Salamis. The war has shifted from a crusade of conquest to a desperate, entrenched occupation. General Mardonius remains in Thessaly with 300,000 picked troops. The survival of Hellenic independence hangs on a fragile alliance.

## SOURCE

Based on Herodotus, Book IX.

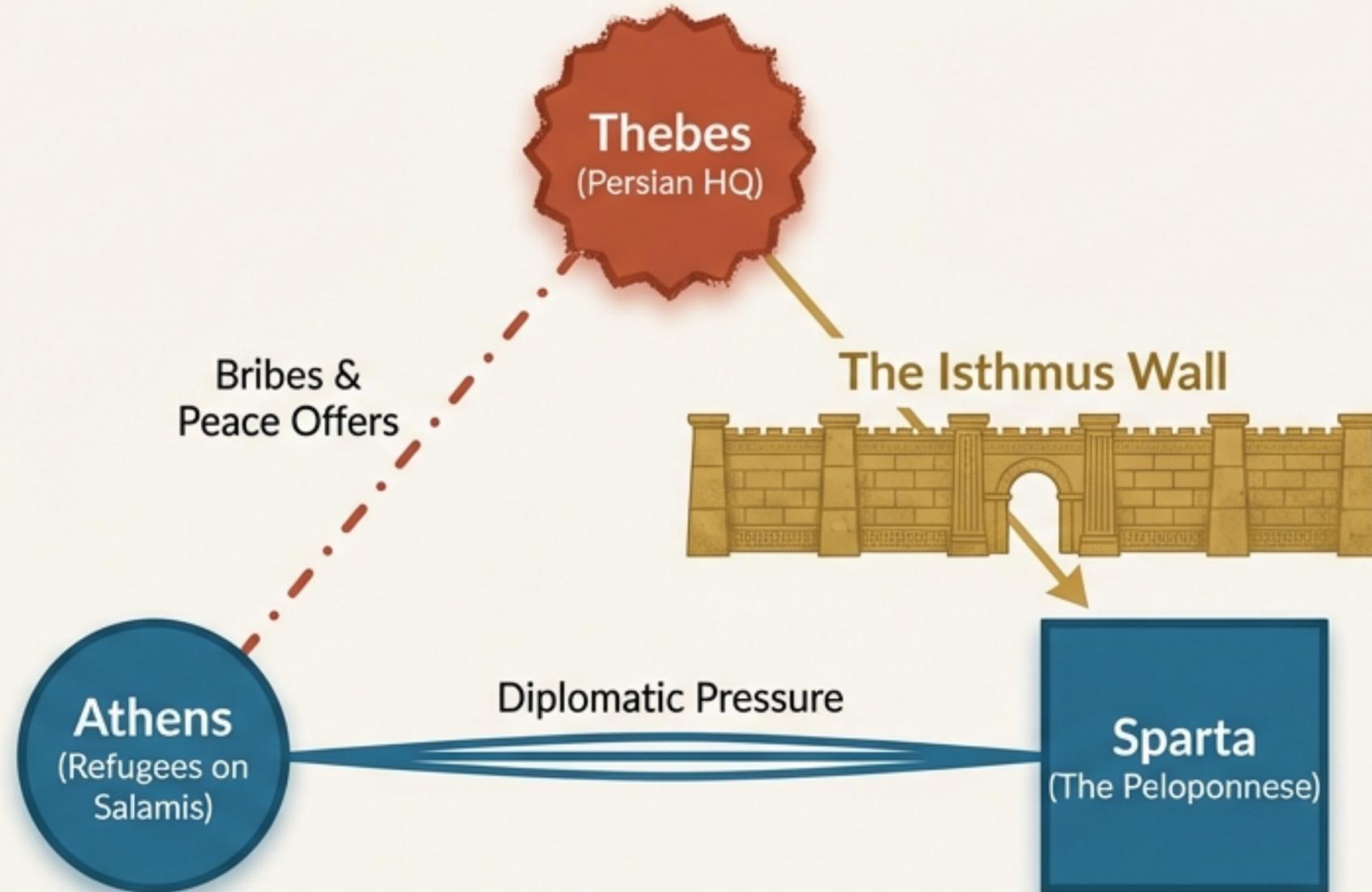
# THE DIPLOMATIC CHESSBOARD

## Attempts to Fracture the Alliance

### THE PERSIAN GAMBIT

Mardonius re-occupies a deserted Athens. He sends Murychides to offer autonomy and Persian gold.

**The Result:** Athens refuses. Councillor Lycidas, who suggests hearing the offer, is stoned to death by his peers. His wife and children are stoned by Athenian women.



### THE SPARTAN DELAY

Sparta is paralyzed by the Hyacinthia festival and reliance on their defensive wall.

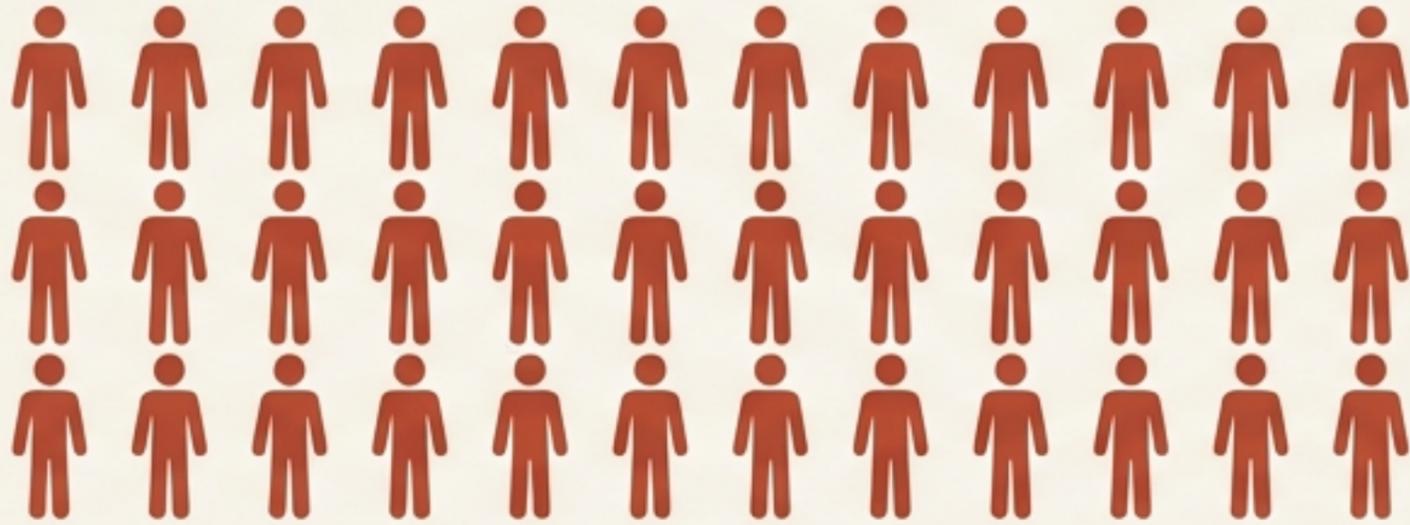
**The Turning Point:** Chileus of Tegea warns the Ephors: "If Athens sides with the Mede, your wall has wide doors."

**"There is not so much gold in the world... that would lead us to take part with the Mede." — Athenian rebuke to Sparta**

# ORDER OF BATTLE

## Quantity vs. Quality

### Persian Coalition



300,000+ Reported Strength

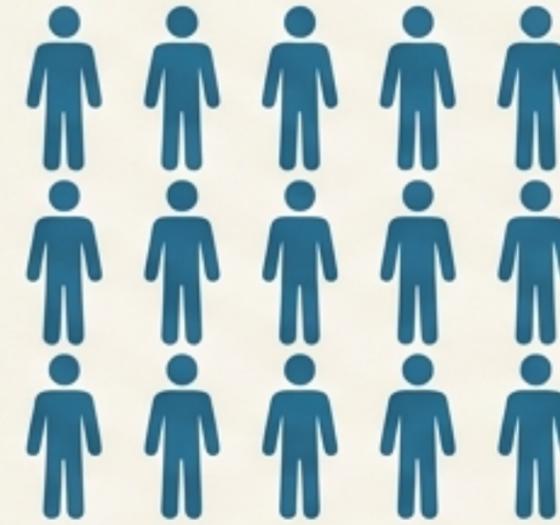
**Core:** Persians & Medes (Wicker shields, bows)

**Elites:** The Immortals & 1,000 picked cavalry

**Specialists:** Bactrians, Indians, Sacans

**Collaborators:** 50,000 Thebans & Thessalians

### Greek Alliance



~110,000 Total Force

**Heavy Infantry:** 38,700 Hoplites (Bronze armor, *doru* spears)

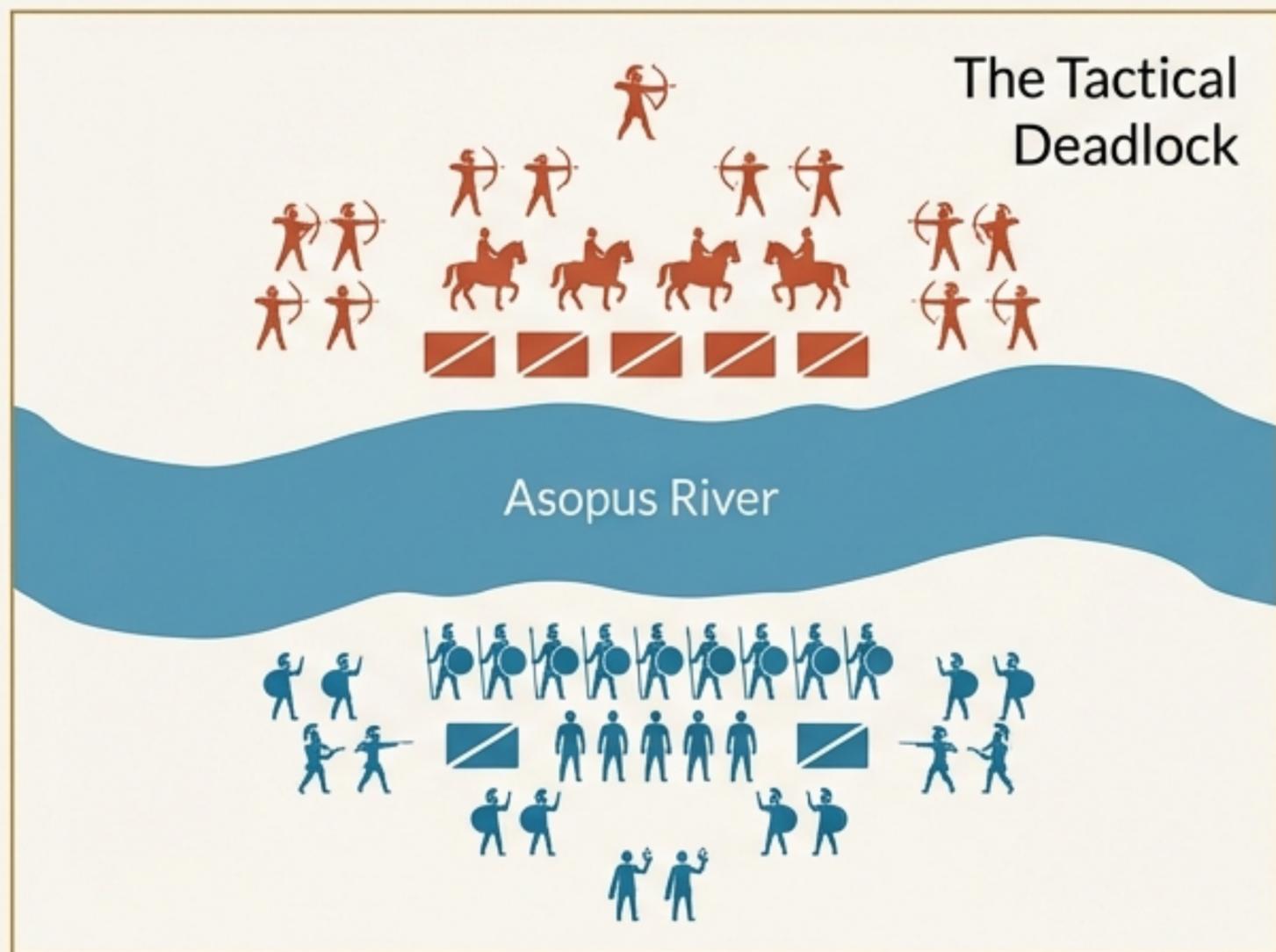
**Spartan Core:** 5,000 Spartiates + 35,000 Helots

**Athenian Wing:** 8,000 Hoplites under Aristides

### TACTICAL DISPARITY

The Persians rely on mobility, cavalry, and missile fire. The Greeks rely on the phalanx, heavy bronze armor, and close-quarters shock combat.

# THE STANDOFF & THE OMEN



## THE WAITING GAME

Both armies sit facing each other across the Asopus. The Soothsayers: Tisamenus (Spartan) and Hegesistratus (Persian) both predict victory only on the defensive. Neither side moves.



*“Verily ’tis the sorest of all human ills... to abound in knowledge and yet have no power over action.” — Herodotus, IX.16*

## THE DINNER AT THEBES

At a banquet, a Persian officer weeps to his Greek table-mate, foreseeing total destruction but feeling powerless to stop it.

# LOGISTICS AS A WEAPON

## The Choking of Gargaphia

### THE PERSIAN STRATEGY

Unable to lure the Greeks into the open plain, Mardonius utilizes superior cavalry to starve them out.

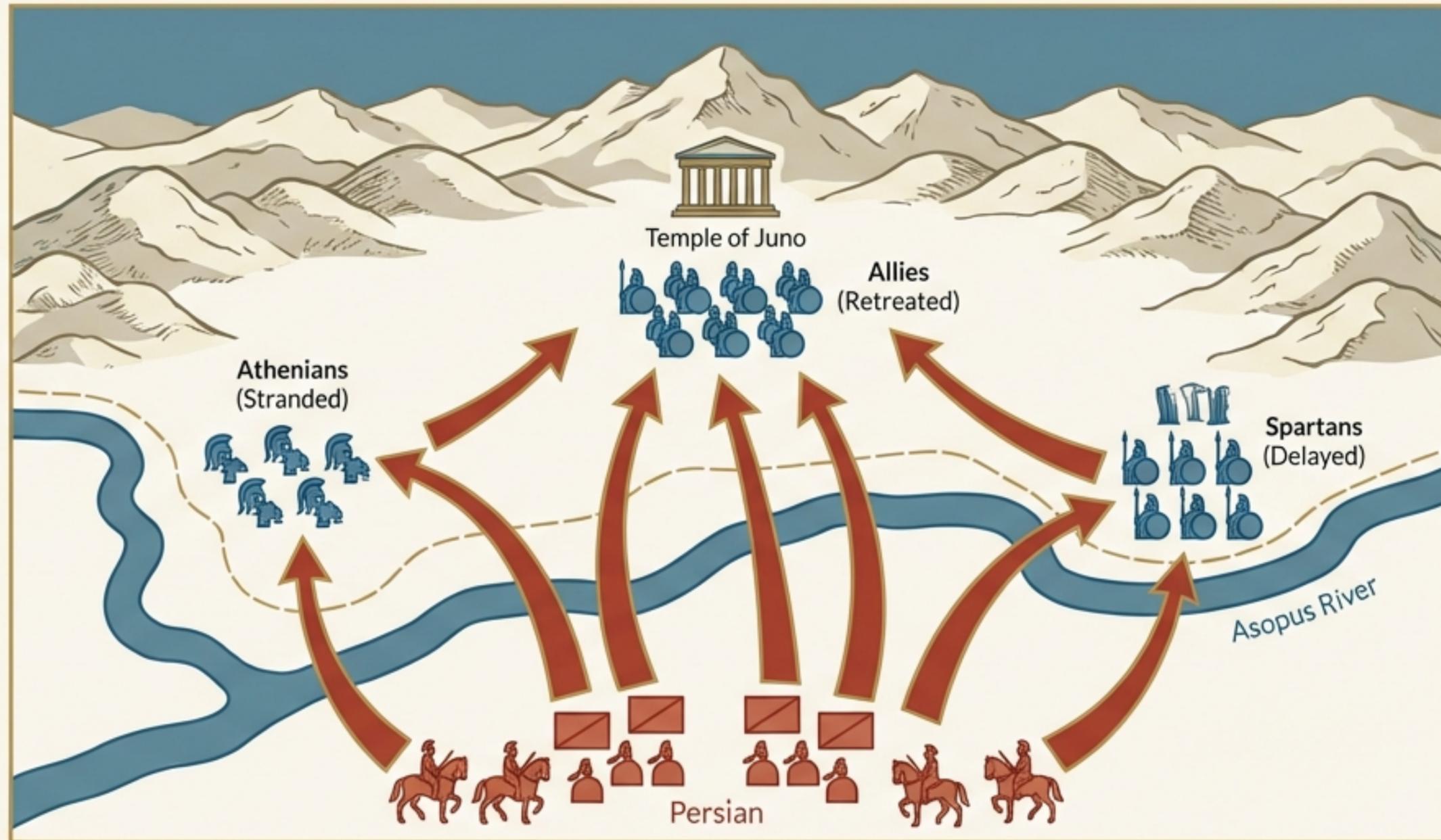
1. **The Raid:** Persian horsemen intercept a supply train of 500 beasts at the “Oak-Heads” pass, slaughtering men and animals.
2. **The Water War:** Archers cut the Greeks off from the Asopus river. The Gargaphia spring—the army’s only source—is fouled and choked by Persian cavalry.



**THE CRISIS:** Thirsty, starving, and under constant harassment, the Greek command orders a desperate night retreat to the “Island” to secure water.

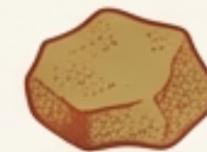
# THE FOG OF WAR

## A Retreat into Chaos



### THE NIGHT MARCH FAILS

Dawn breaks on a fragmented army. The center has retreated too far; the Athenians are stuck in the lowlands; the Spartans are delayed by insubordination.



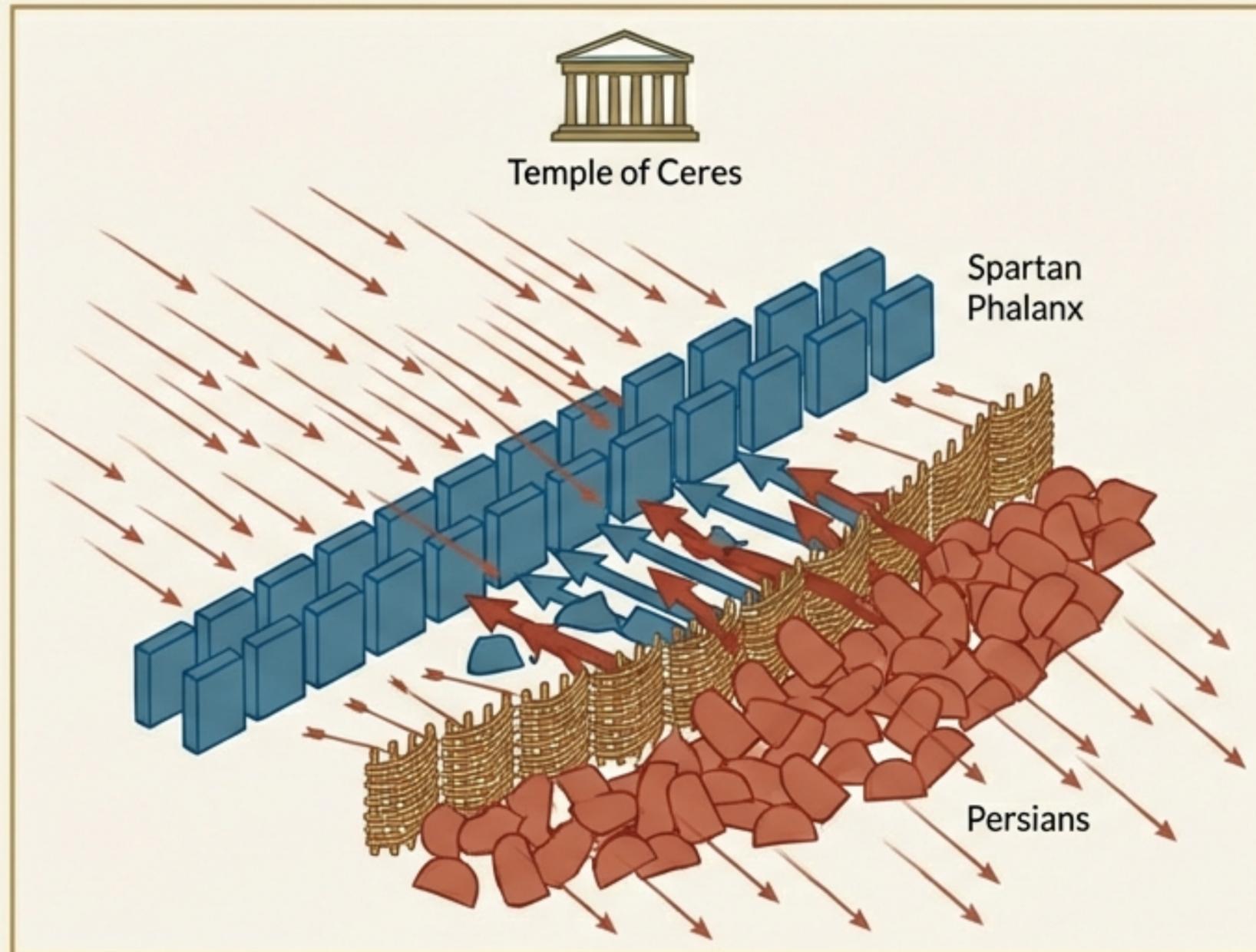
### THE INSUBORDINATION

Amompharetus, a Spartan company commander, refuses to retreat, believing it cowardly. He throws a heavy rock at Pausanias' feet: "With this pebble I give my vote not to run away."

**Result:** Mardonius sees the isolated Spartans and orders a full pursuit, believing them to be fleeing in panic.

# THE BATTLE OF PLATAEA

## Discipline Under Fire



### THE ENGAGEMENT

Persian infantry form a rampart of wicker shields and rain arrows on the Spartans.



Pausanias forces his men to stand under fire, taking heavy casualties while waiting for favorable omens.

### THE TURNING POINT

The omens turn. The Spartan phalanx advances. The wicker shield wall is demolished by heavy bronze shields and spears.



**Mardonius**, fighting bravely on a white horse, is killed by Aemnestus. The Persian command structure collapses, and the army routs.

# PROFILES IN COURAGE

## Heroism of the Outcast



### SOPHANES

#### The Anchor-Bearer

An Athenian who allegedly carried an iron anchor to chain himself to the ground so he could not be displaced by the enemy charge.



### ARISTODEMUS

#### The Redeemer

The sole survivor of Thermopylae, reviled as a coward. At Plataea, he “courted death,” breaking formation to slaughter the enemy in a suicidal rage. Sparta refused him honors because he sought death rather than victory.



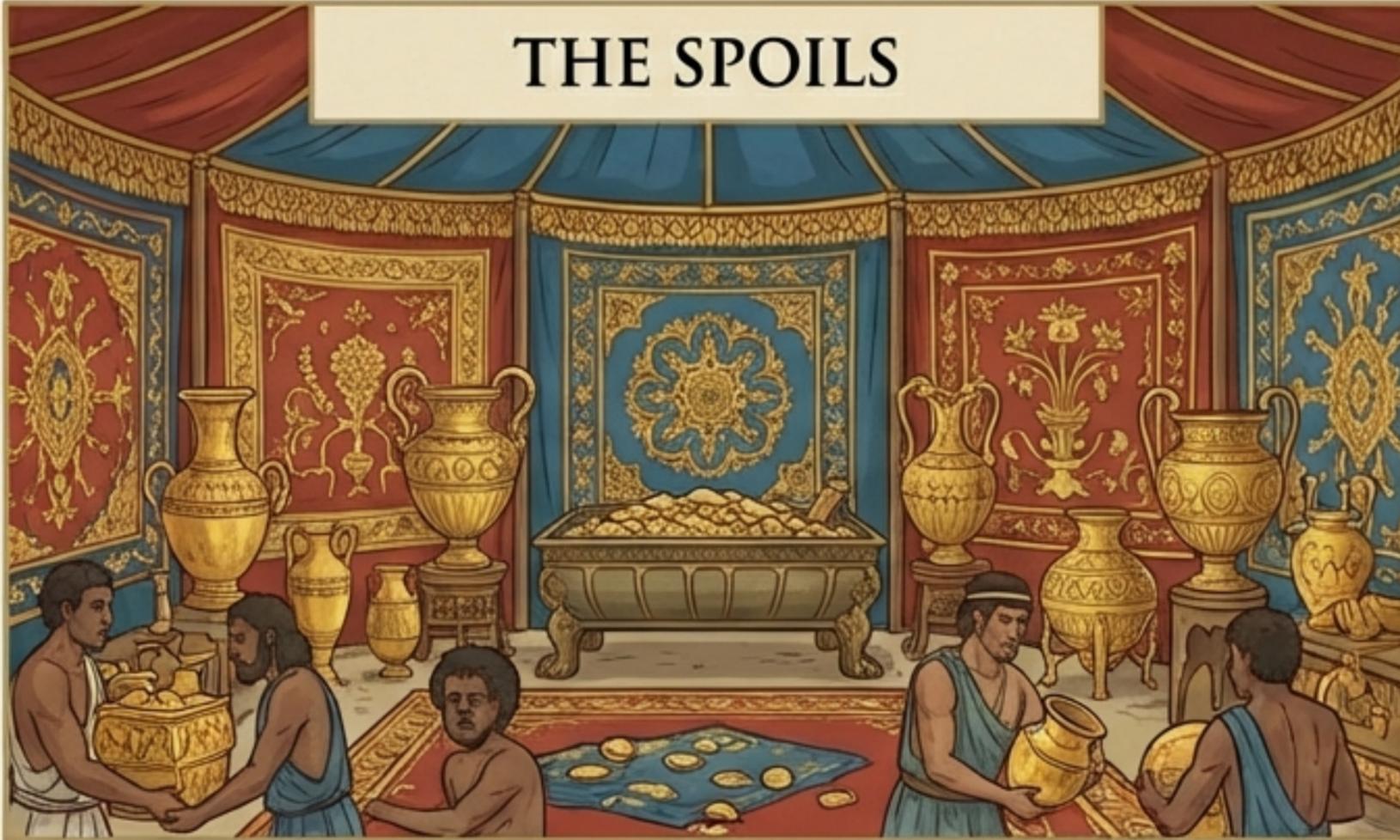
### PAUSANIAS

#### The Commander

Displayed iron discipline under fire. Showed restraint by refusing to behead Mardonius’s corpse in retaliation for Leonidas, rejecting “barbarian” behavior.

# THE SPOILS & THE SIN

## THE SPOILS



## THE WEALTH

The Greeks capture the Persian camp. Helots steal gold, mistaking it for brass. A tenth of the treasure is dedicated to the gods (The Serpent Column at Delphi).

## THE SPARTAN MEAL



## THE LESSON

Pausanias orders Mardonius's cooks to prepare a royal feast, then orders a Spartan black broth supper beside it. He laughs to his generals:

"The folly of the Mede! Living like this, he came to rob us of our poverty."

# THE SECOND FRONT: MYCALE

## Synchronized Liberation



**PLATAEA**  
(Boeotia)



**MYCALE**  
(Ionia)

### SAME DAY, ACROSS THE AEGEAN

Herodotus claims both battles occurred on the same day. As the Greeks land at Mycale, a herald's wand is found on the beach. A rumor ripples through the ranks that Mardonius has fallen in Boeotia.

### THE VICTORY

The Persians beach their ships to fight on land. The Athenians storm the ramparts. The Ionians (Samians and Milesians) turn on their Persian masters. The Persian fleet is burned.

# THE RETREAT & GEOPOLITICAL FALLOUT

## The Aftermath of Plataea & Mycale

### THE FLIGHT

Artabazus flees with 40,000 men. He deceives the Thessalians to ensure passage, but loses many men to hunger and Thracian guerillas.

### JUSTICE AT THEBES

The Greeks march on Thebes. They demand the surrender of the collaborators Timagenidas and Attaginus, who are executed by Pausanias.



### THE SEEDS OF EMPIRE

A debate begins: Sparta wants to evacuate Ionians to Greece.

Athens refuses, claiming guardianship over their colonies — planting the seeds of the future Delian League.

# THE HORROR AT SESTOS

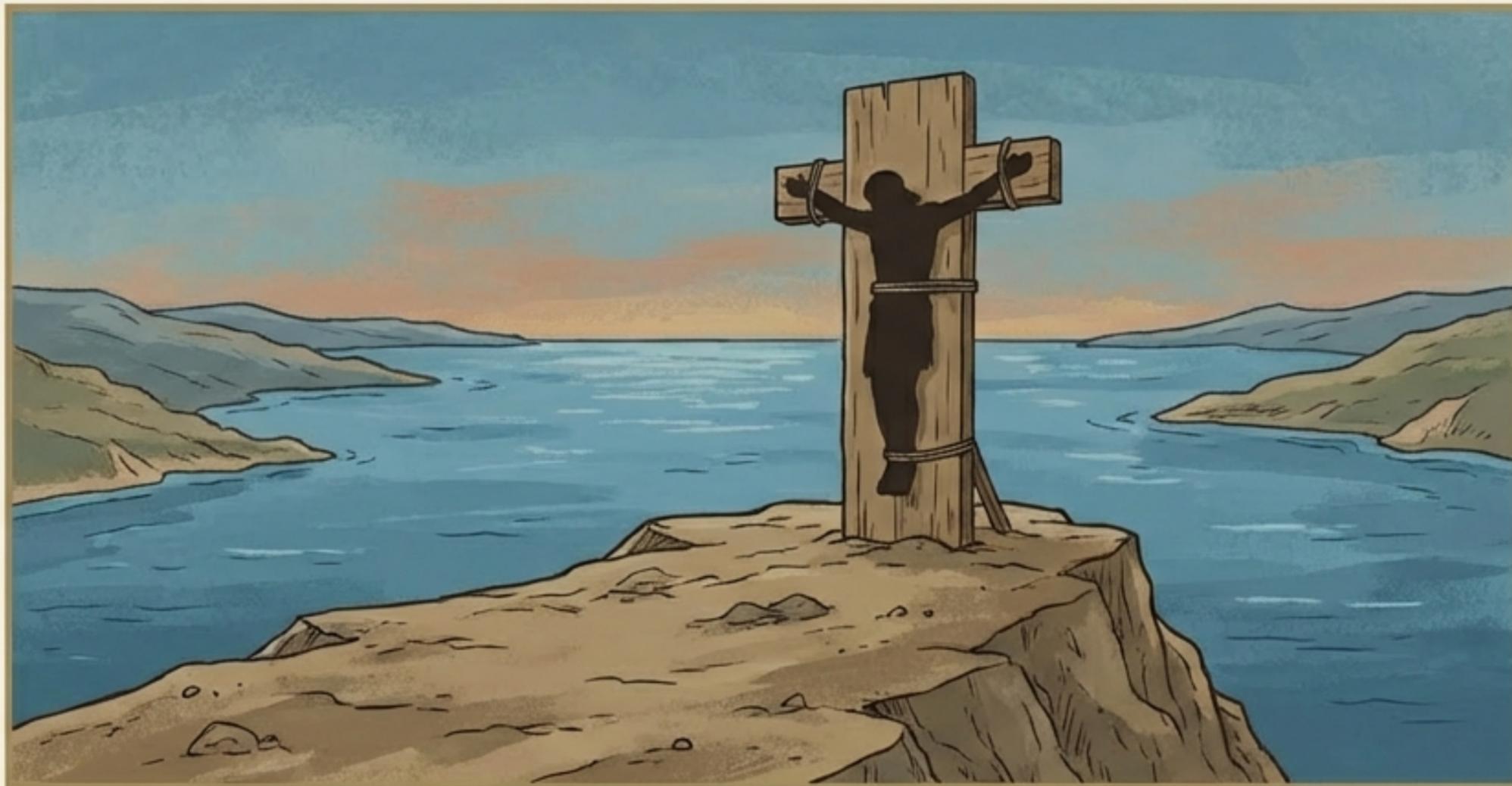
## The Limits of Mercy

### THE CRIME

Artayctes, the Persian governor, had desecrated the tomb of the hero Protesilaus, turning the shrine into a harem.

### THE PUNISHMENT

The Athenians besiege Sestos through the winter. Artayctes offers a huge ransom (300 talents). Xanthippus refuses. Artayctes is crucified on the headland; his son is stoned to death before his eyes.



**INSIGHT** Victory does not mean the end of cruelty. The Greeks show themselves capable of brutal vengeance.

# THE ROT WITHIN: XERXES AT SARDIS

While his armies perish in Greece, Xerxes engages in a grotesque soap opera at court.

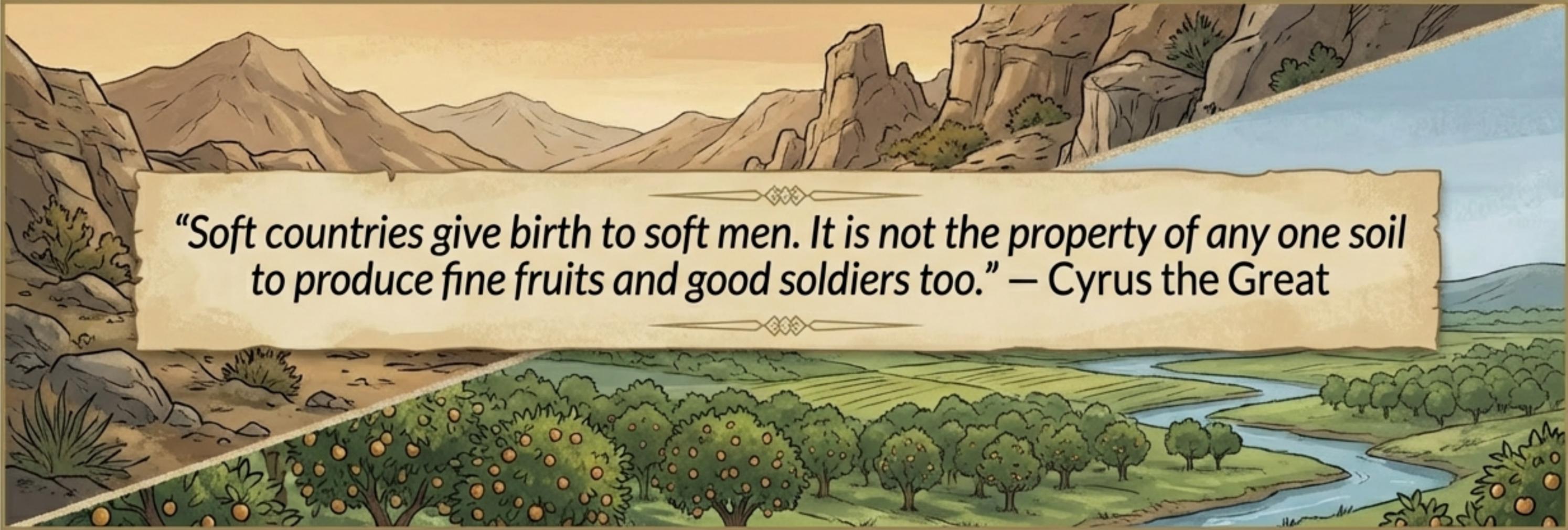
1. **The Affair:** Xerxes pursues his brother's wife, then his brother's daughter (Artaynta).
2. **The Robe:** Queen Amestris discovers the affair via a woven robe given to the mistress.
3. **The Mutilation:** Amestris demands the wife of Masistes, mutilating her and throwing her breasts to the dogs.



The Persian Empire is not just militarily defeated; it is morally cannibalizing itself.

# THE FINAL LESSON

## Soft Lands, Soft Men



*“Soft countries give birth to soft men. It is not the property of any one soil to produce fine fruits and good soldiers too.” – Cyrus the Great*

The book ends with a flashback to Cyrus. The Persians chose empire, luxury, and fertile plains, and in doing so, lost their edge. The Greeks, clinging to their ‘churlish land,’ preserved their freedom.

# PRODUCER NOTES & SOURCES



- **Primary Source:** Herodotus, “The Histories”, Book IX (Calliope).
- **Data Note:** Troop numbers (especially Persian 300k) are Herodotean estimates and should be viewed as “Reported Strength.”
- **Visual Style:** Maps are topographical relief; Icons are Red-Figure pottery style.
- **Narrative Structure:** “The Strategic Epic” – blending military data with moral tragedy.

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