

Lesson 1

As you read in the [syllabus](#), the goal of this course is to develop your ability to read, understand, and respond to texts written in Greek during the classical period of ancient Greece, which began in the six century BCE and came to a close with the rise of Macedonian power in the Mediterranean during the last half of the fourth century. To achieve this goal, you will engage with a series of readings based on a variety of ancient Greek texts, and through this engagement you will gradually acquire the language. In the first semester the readings will concern a household in a village not far from Ecbatana in Media. As you will learn in the second semester, this is where Cyrus, who would go on to establish the Achaemenid Empire, spent his childhood as recorded in the *Histories* of Herodotus and Xenophon's *Cyropaideia*. You will eventually meet Cyrus through Kydraios, one of his contemporaries in the village.

In this first reading Kydraios speaks with a boy, approximately his own age, who has recently come into the village where Kydraios and his family live seeking a household where he could work in return for the necessities of life. Kydraios' father, Astibaros, has determined that the boy is of Hebrew descent and surmises that his family was among those whom the Babylonians brought as captives from Jerusalem when their king, Nebuchadnezzar, finally captured the city about ten years earlier. How he wandered away from Babylon and journeyed all the way to Media almost three hundred miles northeast of Babylon remains unclear. Astibaros has decided to keep this boy, whose name is Ζαφών, Zaphōn, because "νόμος ἐγένετο ἐν Μήδοις, ὅστις πένης τροφῆς ἕνεκα προσίη ἀνδρὶ εὐπόρῳ ἑαυτὸν διδούς, ὅπως τρέφοιτό τε καὶ ἀμπέχοιτο, ἴσα καὶ δοῦλον νομίζεσθαι ἐκείνου" ("Among the Medes was a custom that whoever was poor and in need of food and approached a man of means, giving himself over to him so that he would be fed and clothed, would be thought of as his slave.") Thinking that Zaphōn could not only contribute to the livelihood of the household but be a companion for his younger son, Astibaros has entrusted the boy to Kydraios, who will, first of all, have to teach Zaphōn how to communicate with the family. (Of course, Kydraios and his family spoke Median, but that language only survives in a limited number of words that made their way into Old Persian. This course asks you to think of the readings as Greek translations of what would have been in Median and, as you will see, Hebrew.)

Follow along and begin learning ancient Greek along with Zaphōn by reading through this selection a number of times improving your pronunciation of the Greek each time and working to achieve full comprehension.

Reading (τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα)

χαῖρε, ὦ φίλε. ἐμοὶ τὸ ὄνομά ἐστι Κυδραῖος, ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ ἐσμεν παῖδες. ἐγὼ εἰμι Μῆδος τὸ γένος καὶ σὺ εἶ Ἑβραῖος. οἰκοῦμεν ἐν τῇ Μηδικῇ χώρα

τὸ ὄνομά σοί ἐστι Ζαφών.

ὁ πατήρ ἐμοὶ καὶ ὁ δεσπότης σοὶ Ἀστιβάρος ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ ἐμοὶ ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ δέσποινα σοὶ Ζαρναία. ἐμοὶ εἰσὶ ἀδελφὸς καὶ ἀδελφή. τὸ ὄνομα ἀδελφῷ ἐστὶ Θρασύστομος καὶ ἀδελφῇ Ἑλένη. ἐσμέν οὖν τέκνα τοῦ τε Ἀστιβάρου καὶ τῆς Ζαρναίας.

ἐγὼ υἱὸς εἰμι τοῦ Ἀστιβάρου καὶ τῆς Ζαρναίας. ἐγὼ καὶ ἀδελφὸς, Θρασύστομος ὀνομαστί, υἱοὶ ἐσμεν τοῦ Ἀστιβάρου καὶ τῆς Ζαρναίας.

ἡ ἀδελφὴ ἐμοῦ, Ἑλένη ὀνομαστί, θυγάτηρ ἐστὶ τοῦ Ἀστιβάρου καὶ τῆς Ζαρναίας.

Vocabulary

※ Green background color indicates core vocabulary.

Nouns (τὰ ὀνόματα)	Definition	Dict.	Gram.	Author

φίλος	friend ὃ φίλε (address) friend οἱ φίλοι the friends ὁ φίλος the friend (male) ἡ φίλη the friend (female)	LSJ	287	Her Xen
ὄνομα	name τὸ ὄνομα the name τὰ ὀνόματα the names ὀνομαστί by name	LSJ	258	Her Xen
παῖς	child ὁ παῖς the child (male), boy ἡ παῖς the child (female), girl	LSJ	257	Her Xen
Μῆδος	Mede (i.e, a person from Media ὁ Μῆδος the Mede (male)	LSJ	264	
γένος	kin, race τὸ γένος the race; in this instance: "with regard to race"	LSJ	264	Her Xen
πατήρ	father ὁ πατήρ the father	LSJ	262	Her Xen
μήτηρ	mother ἡ μήτηρ the mother	LSJ	262	Her Xen
ἀδελφός	brother ὁ ἀδελφός the brother τῷ ἀδελφῷ to (or for) the brother	LSJ	231	Her Xen
ἀδελφή	sister ἡ ἀδελφή the sister τῇ ἀδελφῇ to (or for) the sister	LSJ	216	Xen
θυγάτηρ	daughter ἡ θυγάτηρ the daughter	LSJ	262	Her Xen
υἱός	son ὁ υἱός the son οἱ υἱοί the sons	LSJ	231	Her Xen
τέκνον	child τὸ τέκνον the child τὰ τέκνα the children	LSJ	231	Her
χώρα	land, area, region ἡ χώρα the land ἐν τῇ χώμα in the land	LSJ	216	Her

Pronouns (αἱ ἀντωνυμῖαι)	Definition	Dict.	Gram.	Author
ἐγώ	I		325	
ἐμοί	me, to me, for me		325	

τί	what (singular)		334	
σοί	you, to you, for you		325	
σύ	you (singular)		334	
ἐμοῦ	of me, my		325	

Adjectives (τὰ ἐπίθετα ὀνόματα)	Definition	Dict.	Gram.	Author
Μηδικός, -ή, -όν	Median ή Μηδική χώρα the Median land οἱ Μηδικοὶ παῖδες the Median (male) children τὸ Μηδικὸν γένος the median people	LSJ	287	

Verbs (τὰ ῥήματα)	Definition	Dict.	Gram.	Author
εἰμί	I am ἐστί he, she, or it is ἐσμέν we are εἶ you (singular) are εἰσὶ they are	LSJ	768	Xen
χαῖρε	You (singular) be happy, glad.	LSJ	383	Her Xen
οἰκοῦμεν	We live	LSJ	385	Her