Xenophon and Zeus

3.1.11-15

Now when despair had set in, he was distressed as well as everybody else and was unable to sleep; but, getting at length a little sleep, he had a dream. It seemed to him that there was a clap of thunder and a bolt fell on his father’s house, setting the whole house ablaze. He awoke at once in great fear, and judged the dream in one way an auspicious one, because in the midst of hardships and perils he had seemed to behold a great light from Zeus; but looking at it in another way he was fearful, since the dream came, as he thought, from Zeus the King and the fire appeared to blaze all about, lest he might not be able to escape out of the King’s country, but might be shut in on all sides by various difficulties. Now what it really means to have such a dream one may learn from the events which followed the dream—and they were these: Firstly, on the moment of his awakening the thought occurred to him: “Why do I lie here? The night is wearing on, and at daybreak it is likely that the enemy will be upon us. And if we fall into the King’s hands, what is there to prevent our living to behold all the most grievous sights and to experience all the most dreadful sufferings, and then being put to death with insult? As for defending ourselves, however, no one is making preparations or taking thought for that, but we lie here just as if it were possible for us to enjoy our ease. What about myself, then? From what state am I expecting the general to come who is to perform these duties? And what age must I myself wait to attain? For surely I shall never be any older, if this day I give myself up to the enemy.”

7.6.43-44

And after that Seuthes sent Abrozelmes, his interpreter, to Xenophon and urged him to stay behind with him with a force of a thousand hoplites, promising that he would deliver over to him not only the fortresses upon the coast, but also the other things which he had promised. He likewise said, making a great secret of it, that he had heard from Polynicus that if Xenophon should fall into the hands of the Lacedaemonians, he would certainly be put to death by Thibron. Many other people also sent Xenophon this message, saying that he had been traduced and would better be on his guard. And he, hearing these reports, took two victims and proceeded to offer sacrifice to Zeus the King, to learn whether it was better and more profitable for him to remain with Seuthes on the conditions that Seuthes proposed, or to depart with the army. The god directed him to depart.

7.8.1-86

From there they sailed across to Lampsacus, where Xenophon was met by Eucleides, the Phliasian seer, son of the Cleagoras who painted the murals in the Lyceum.58 Eucleides congratulated Xenophon upon his safe return, and asked him how much gold he had got. He replied, swearing to the truth of his statement, that he would not have even enough money to pay his travelling expenses on the way home unless he should sell his horse and what he had about his person. And Eucleides would not believe him. But when the Lampsacenes sent gifts of hospitality to Xenophon and he was sacrificing to Apollo, he gave Eucleides a place beside him; and when Eucleides saw the vitals of the victims, he said that he well believed that Xenophon had no money. “But I am sure,” he went on, “that even if money should ever be about to come to you, some obstacle always appears—if nothing else, your own self.” In this Xenophon agreed with him. Then Eucleides said, “Yes, Zeus the Merciful is an obstacle in your way,” and asked whether he had yet sacrificed to him, “just as at home,” he continued, “where I was wont to offer the sacrifices for you, and with whole victims.” Xenophon replied that not since he left home had he sacrificed to that god.59 Eucleides, accordingly, advised him to sacrifice just as he used to do, and said that it would be to his advantage. And the next day, upon coming to Ophrynium, Xenophon proceeded to sacrifice, offering whole victims of swine after the custom of his fathers, and he obtained favourable omens. In fact, on that very day Biton and Nausicleides60 arrived with money to give to the army and were entertained by Xenophon, and they redeemed his horse, which he had sold at Lampsacus for fifty darics—for they suspected that he had sold it for want of money, since the heard he was fond of the horse—gave it back to him, and would not accept from him the price of it.