

## LEONIDAS of SPARTA

Leonidas (approximately 540 BC - 480 BC) king of Sparta, (Agiades dynasty) was believed to be a descendant of Hercules. Ascended the throne in 488 BC. He was the one, amongst the two kings of Sparta, that decided to go to Thermopylae, obeying an oracle of Delphi who said that: "Sparta will be wiped off the map or grieve the king".

Leonidas took over the leadership of the allied Greek army and successfully managed to keep them together, making them forget their differences. His military genius became apparent at Thermopylae by the manner he arrayed his military troops and the speed with which he toggled them in the battlefield. Simultaneously, he showed his heroism: when the king of Persians, Xerxes sent him a messenger and asked him to hand over their weapons and surrender, the Spartan king replied "Molon lave", meaning "Come and get it," wanting in this way, to challenge him to a fight and prove his value.

King Leonidas fell fighting against the Persians at Thermopylae and became a symbol of patriotic sacrifice. Facing numerous Persian forces, Leonidas with his 300 Spartans and the 700 Thespians, barricaded at Thermopylae, where after the betrayal of Ephialtes, have been all exterminated.

