THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

IMPORTANT B.C. DATES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date B.C.** | **Event** |
| 3961 | Adam created |
| 2906/2905 | Noah born |
| 2404/2403 | Shem born |
| 2306 | Flood of Noah |
| 2084/2083 | Terah born |
| 1954/1953 | Abram born |
| 1884/1883 | Abram called in Ur |
| 1854/1853 | Isaac born |
| 1794/1793 | Jacob born |
| 1703/1702 | Joseph born |
| 1535/1534 | Moses born |
| 1454 | The Exodus |
| 1414 | Joshua crosses Jordan River |
| 1382/1381 | Othniel's 40 years |
| 1342/1341 | Ehud's 80 years |
| 1262/1261 | Deborah's 40 years |
| 1222/1221 | Gideon's 40 years |
| 1085/1084 | Philistine oppression |
| 1021/1020 | Saul starts sole reign |
| 1019 | David starts reigning in Hebron |
| 979/978 | Solomon starts reigning |

\*These B.C. dates are based on the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, beginning on Nisan 1, April 23, 586 B.C. (as determined by astronomical calculation), and the logic of the material presented in the text.

KEYS TO BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

If there is not an accurate chronology, there cannot be an accurate history. The chronology of the Old Testament contains some of the most glaring apparent contradictions in the Scriptures. The following information should help to clarify why these apparent contradictions exist.

In ancient Israel there were two ways to count the years of a king’s reign. They are the accession year system and the non-accession year system. In both systems, the counted years correspond to calendar years, with the duration of the reign being reckoned from New Year’s Day to New Year’s Day and not by simple elapsed time.

Accession and non-accession year dating

In the accession year system, the portion of the year from the king’s accession to the throne to the next New Year’s Day is not counted as his first year but is known as his accession year. In the non-accession year system, a king is attributed a whole year of reign for the remainder of the calendar year from the time he began to reign until the next New Year’s Day. Thus in the non-accession year system, if a king started his reign in the eleventh month of the year, when the calendar year changed, the new year would count as his second year. So the Scripture would say that he had reigned two years when he had actually reigned two months in one year and a period of time in the next. The extreme case with this system would be if a king began his reign in the last month of one year and only reigned through the first day of the next year. Under the non-accession system of reckoning he would be recorded as reigning two years.

In the accession year system the time a king reigns from his accession to the next New Year’s Day is known as his accession year. Thus even if a king began his reign in the first month of the calendar year, he would not have been considered to have been in his first year of reign until the next year, after a New Year’s Day. The extreme case in this system would be if a king began to reign on the first day of the first month of one year and reigned until the last day of the last month the next year. Even though he had actually reigned nearly two years, the first would have been called his accession year and Scripture would have recorded a reign of only one year for that king. By contrasting the two systems it is easy to see how apparent contradictions can occur. For example:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Calendar years: |  | **1** | **2** | **B3** | **4** | **5** |  | = 5 yrs. |
| Accession year system | **A** | acc. yr | 1 | B2/Acc | 1 | 2 |  | = 4 yrs |
| Non-accession year system | **A** | 1 | 2 | **B** 3/1 | 2 | 3 |  | **= 6 yrs.** |

The above timeline represents two kingdoms, each using different systems to reckon the reigns of kings: one kingdom uses accession year counting while the other uses non-accession year counting.

Two kings begin reigning at the same time in each kingdom (point A), and each king is succeeded by another king during the middle of the third calendar year of their reign (point B). The total actual calendar years covered by the reigns of the two kings is five.

According to non-accession year counting, the first calendar year of the king in the non-accession system is counted as a year of the king’s reign, which seems okay since he was reigning that year. However, the first part of the third calendar year that that king’s reign before the second king took over at point “B” is also counted as a year of the first king’s reign, and thus the first king is reckoned as having reigned three years even though he reigned only 2 ½ years. Then, to confuse matters, the last half of the third calendar year, which is when the second king reigned, is counted as the first year of that second king, so he is also said to have reigned 3 years when he only reigned 2 ½ years. Thus although only five calendar years passed, the reigns of the two kings are counted as six years.

In contrast, according to accession year counting The first year of the king’s reign is not counted as part of his reign but is counted as an “accession year” because he is actually sharing the year with the king who reigned before him, and it is that earlier king who gets credit for reigning that year. Thus the king in the accession year system may reign almost a full year but it is not counted as a year of his reign. In the above illustration, the first king may reign almost 2 ½ years but get credit for only 2 years. Then, when the second king takes over the first part of the year that he reigns is credited to the king before him, not to him. Thus, the two kings in the accession year system may reign for 5 calendar years but only get reckoned as reigning for 4 years. So, the following situation exists: there would actually be a passage of five calendar years. The kings in the accession year system would be reckoned to have reigned four years, while the kings in the non-accession year system would be counted as having reigned six years. From this example it can be seen why apparent contradictions exist in the Bible when the reigns of kings are counted, but if we understand how regnal years were counted and when, we can see the information in the Bible is actually correct, and that there is an explanation for apparent contradictions. There are also other factors that must be considered when studying biblical chronology.

Understanding the possible variations in counting years

The majority of the time (not all the time!) the variations of all the above information is used in the Bible as follows:

Accession year system: reckoning of ages of people, reigns of Judah’s king

Non-Accession year system: time spans in general, reigns of Israel’s kings

Nisan to Nisan year: sacred calendar, regnal year in Israel, the month numbers after the Exodus (i.e., the second month, etc.)

Tishri to Tishri year: civil calendar, regnal year in Judah[[1]](#footnote-1), the month numbers before the Exodus (i.e., at the time of the Flood)

There are, of course, other factors that influenced the way chronology is recorded in the Scripture. A few of these are:

Synchronisms: Each kingdom recorded the reigns of other kingdoms in the same way it recorded its own reigns. Thus Judah would record information about Israel’s kings according to Judah’s own system and vice versa.

Co-reigns: There were times when a father and son would reign simultaneously. Sometimes the Scripture records the length of the son’s reign from the time he began with his father, and sometimes the son’s reign is calculated from the time his father died and he began to reign alone. Also, the length of the father’s reign may be reckoned with our without the co-reign. There are co-reigns where the regents are not related, as with Saul co-reigning with Samuel.

Conformity: When a nation was captured, their dating method was usually conformed to the official method of dating used by the capturing nation. However, there were times when captured nations dated local events according to their native method of dating.

Epochs: When a date is given it must be clearly understood what event commenced the time span. For example, in II Corinthians 16:1 the year Baasha built the city of Ramah is dated according to the 36th year of the “reign of Asa.” This “reign” is not Asa’s personal reign as king, but rather the time of the kingdom of Judah since the division of the united monarchy of David and Solomon. Similarly, in Judges when the land had rest for 40 or 80 years, the 40 or 80 year time span started with the end of the previous judge, not the last year of the slavery preceding the judge.

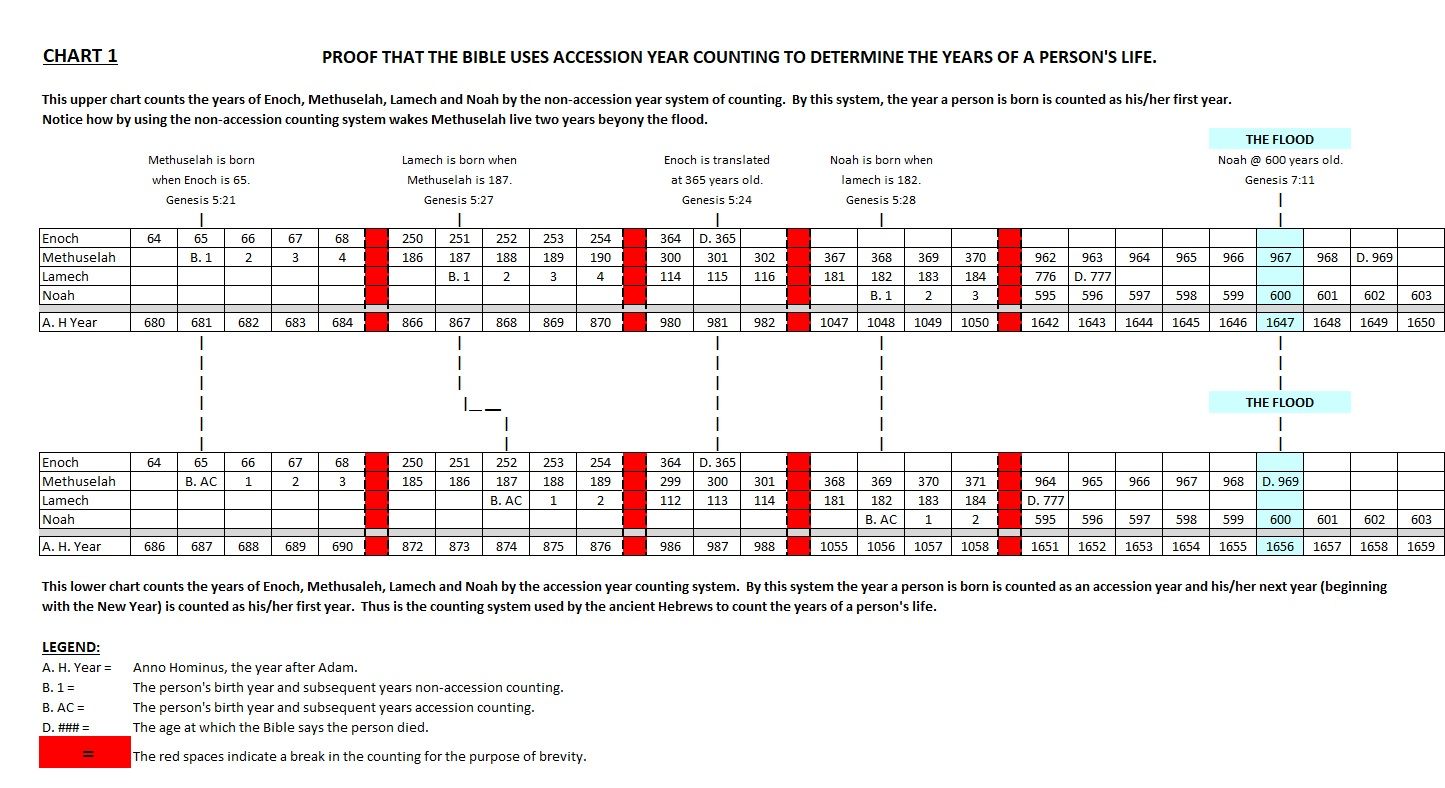
From the above information, it can be seen that chronological information needs to be accurately understood if all the scriptures are going to fit together without apparent contradiction. While those who merely glance at the Scripture chronology will see many apparent contradictions, those people who take the time to work the Word and study the biblical culture will see its inherent accuracy.

A point of interest: the way the chronology is recorded in the Bible actually is evidence that it is accurate, and “God-breathed” even as it says (2 Tim. 3:16), and written by people such as Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, etc. No late author would have dreamed up so many intricate details that, upon first reading, were nothing but contradictions. In fact, it is doubtful that any late author would have known the exact dating practices of the ancient kings and kingdoms in order to write them accurately.

COUNTING THE YEARS OF A PERSON’S LIFE

The Bible uses the accession system to count the years of a person’s life. The year in which a person is born is his accession year, his birth year, and is not counted as his first year.[[2]](#footnote-2) Thus, A.H. (Anno Hominis = year of man) 130 is the birth year of Seth, and Seth’s year one would be Adam’s 131st. It can be proven that God counted this way by the example of Methuselah. Methuselah died at 969 years old, the year of the flood (Genesis 5:27). The consequence of counting the birth year as year one of a person’s life will place the death of Methuselah two years after the flood (see chart).

The number of years a person lives is counted in whole numbers. Thus, Noah is said to be 600 years old at the time of the flood, even though the flood is only in the first month of this 600th year. The part of a year Noah lived is reckoned as a whole year.



[Click to see full size Chart](https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/i/Chronology/Chronology_Chart_1.jpg)

“A son of X years” is the standard biblical formula (the way the Hebrews spoke) for the age of a person, just as we today would say someone is X years old. However, the expression does not always refer to the age of the person. The formula can be used to express the number of years from a previous event. In that case, that event is thought of as being the “father.” For example, 2 Kings 24:8 says Jehoiachin was “a son of eighteen years.” Eighteen was Jehoiachin's actual age. 2 Chronicles 36:9 says Jehoiachin was “a son of eight years.” The event that “fathered” Jehoiachin eight years before was Jehoiachin’s surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, at which point Judah became part of the Babylonian Empire.

Saul was the first king of Israel. 1 Samuel 13:1 says “Saul was a son of one year and reigned two years over Israel” [Hebrew text]. Obviously, Saul was not one year old when he began to reign over Israel. The key to understanding this verse is finding the event that “fathered” Saul.

Hundreds of years earlier Moses had foretold that Israel would want a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-15). When Saul was chosen as king, Moses’ prophecy finally came to pass. Saul was the very first king, and the first year of his reign made him “son of one year.”

NOAH’S SONS

Genesis 5:32 needs to be properly understood in order to rightly divide the chronology of the Old Testament.

**Genesis 5:32)** Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Although this verse seems to say that all of Noah’s sons were born when he was 500 years old, in actuality, only the oldest son, Japheth, was born at that time. This can be clearly seen by studying related scriptures. Japheth is said to be the eldest son in Genesis 10.

**Genesis 10:21)** To Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, to him also were children born.

Also, Ham is said to be the youngest son in Genesis 9:24, where the word “younger” should be better translated “youngest.”

**Genesis 9:24)** Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him.

The flood came when Noah was 600. Since Genesis 11:10 states that Shem was 100 years old two years after the flood, he would have to have been born when Noah was 502 years old.

ABRAHAM’S BIRTH

The birth year of Abraham must be properly understood to arrive at a correct chronology of the Old Testament.

For an understanding on calculating the birth year of Abraham see <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Genesis/chapter11/26>

THE FLOOD OF NOAH

Noah and his family were on the ark for a year and ten days. They entered the ark on the 17th day of the second month of Noah’s 600th year (Genesis 7:11, 13) and left the ark on the 27th day of the second month (Genesis 8:14-19) of the 601st year (Genesis 8:13).

The common misunderstanding of this time period comes from not seeing the parenthesis in Genesis 7:5-9. In Genesis 7:4 God says, “For yet seven days ….” Verse 10 records “after seven days.” During the seven-day period, Noah was loading the ark as God had instructed in Genesis 7:1-4. The parenthesis in verses 5-9 shows the loading of the ark. “There went in two and two unto Noah” (verse 9). Anyone who has moved can appreciate the seven-day period it took for Noah to load the ark. Noah started loading the ark on the 10th day of the second month, and went in himself on the 17th day. Because God told Moses to make Nisan the first month of the year, and since it seems that Adam and Jesus would have been “born” on the same day, the calendar from Adam to the Exodus would have been based on a Tishri year system. Therefore, the second month would be the month after Tishri, which is Marcheshvan (called “Bul” in 1 Kings 6:38).

THE 430 YEARS

The length of time from the call of Abraham in Ur to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt is 430 years (thus, there is no way Israel spent 400 years in slavery in Egypt, as many people believe). We get the 430 year figure from Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17. Exodus 12:40 refers to the “sojourning” of the children of Israel, while Galatians 3:17 refers to the time between the “promise” (Gal. 3:16) and the “covenant” (Gal. 3:17; i.e., the covenant made at Sinai the year of the Exodus, the “Old Covenant”).

See <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Exodus/12/40>

SOJOURNING IN A STRANGE LAND

The length of time between Abraham’s seed and the Exodus was 400 years (Acts 7:6; Genesis 15:13).The length of time between the Calling and the Exodus was 430 years (Exodus 12:40; Galatians 3:16-17).

The length of time from the Calling to the Seed was 430-400 = 30 years (31 years by inclusive counting).

Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, so he was 70 years old at the Calling he received at Ur. Acts 7:2; Genesis 11:31; 15:7; 21:5; Nehemiah 9:7.

Abraham was 75 when he left Haran (Genesis 12:4). Since he left Ur and went to Haran when he was over 70 and he left Haran when he was 75, he spent five years (75 - 70 = 5 years) in Haran (six years by inclusive counting.)

Isaac was born 25 years after Abram left Haran (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). +25 years

(26 years by inclusive counting.)

Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born. (Genesis 25:26) +60 years

Jacob was 91 years old when Joseph was born. That is calculated from: +91 years

* Genesis 41:46 – Joseph was 30 when he stood before the pharaoh.
* Genesis 41:53 – the seven years of plenty had ended (= 7 years).
* Genesis 41:54; 45:6 – the second year of famine had set in (= 2 years).
* Genesis 47:9 – Jacob was 130 years old when he stood before the pharaoh.
* So: Jacob is 130 when Joseph is 39 (30 + 7 + 2), so Joseph was born when Jacob was 91.

Joseph lived for 110 years. Genesis 50:26 +110 years = 291 years

The number of years between the Call of Abraham and Joseph’s death is 291 years. (292 years inclusive counting).

The maximum years of bondage (if Israel was enslaved the same year Joseph died) was 430 years - 291 years = 139 years.

Length of time between Joseph’s death and the birth of Moses was 139 - 80 = 59 years.

Moses was 80 years old at the time of Exodus (Acts 7:23ff, 7:30ff; Deuteronomy 34:7) and the foundation of the Temple was laid in the 480th year after the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1).

JACOB

Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old (Genesis 25:26), and lived 147 years (Genesis 47:28). The key to dating the events of Jacob’s life is that Jacob was 130 years old when he stood before Pharaoh (Genesis 47:9). This was the second year of the famine (Genesis 45:6 and 9). Joseph would have been 39 years old that same year. Thus the age of Jacob at Joseph’s birth was 91 years. Joseph was born the last year of Jacob’s 14-year service for Laban (Genesis 30:25 and 26). Thus Jacob was 77 years old when he started working for Laban and 84 years old when he married Leah and Rachel. He was 97 when he returned from Haran to the land of Judah (Genesis 31:38-41).

[Quote Keil & Delitzsch for the fact that Jacob had 11 sons in 7 years.]

JACOB’S SONS

We know from Genesis 47 that Jacob was 130 years old when he moved to Egypt.

**Genesis 47:8-9)** Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many are the days of the years of your life?” Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”

And we know from Genesis 41 that Joseph was 30 years old when he first appeared before Pharaoh.

**Genesis 45:6)** For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

**Genesis 45:9)** Hurry and go up to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not wait.

So Joseph, then, would have been 39 years old when his father Jacob came to Egypt at age 130. He was 30 when he first went before Pharaoh, then seven years of plenty, plus two years into the famine would make him 39. Our mathematics would then make Jacob 91 years old when Joseph was born. The record of Joseph’s birth and the births of his older brothers is given in chapters 29 and 30 of Genesis.

Genesis 30 tells us that Jacob, sometime soon after serving Laban for fourteen years, wanted to discontinue working for Laban.

**Genesis 30:25-26)** It came to pass when Rachel had borne Joseph that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go, for you know my service with which I have served you.”

Now at this time (after fourteen years), eleven of Jacob's twelve sons had been born. (The twelfth son, Benjamin, was born after they had left Laban – near Bethlehem, Genesis 35:16-19.) However, Jacob continued working for Laban an additional six years before he finally decided to leave.

**Genesis 31:38)** “These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I haven’t eaten the rams of your flocks.

**Genesis 31:41)** These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you 14 years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

The first seven of the twenty years Jacob spent working for Laban as the dowry in order to be able to marry Rachel.

**Genesis 29:20-21)** And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

But the wife Laban gave Jacob, in the light of day, turned out to be Leah, rather than Rachel.

**Genesis 29:25-27)** It came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah. He said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Didn’t I serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?” Laban said, “It is not done so in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service that you will serve with me yet seven other years.”

So Jacob was given Rachel, as well as Leah, at the end of his seven years. But another seven years of work for Laban was tacked on.

After the end of the second seven years, Jacob wanted to leave Laban, as we read in Genesis 30:26. Since we know that by that time Joseph had been born, mathematically, we see that Jacob had had eleven sons in the second seven-year period of working for Laban. To have eleven sons in seven years is not impossible, because there were two wives and two handmaids. Genesis 29:31-35 and Genesis 30:1-22 give the general sequence of the births of these eleven sons. The following chart shows the years in which they may have been born.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Jacob’s Age | Leah | Zilpah | Rachel | Bilhah |
| 85 | Reuben (Gen. 29:32) |  |  |  |
| 86 | Simeon (Gen. 29:33) |  |  |  |
| 87 | Levi (Gen. 29:34) |  |  |  |
| 88 | Judah (Gen. 29:35) |  |  |  |
| 89 |  | Gad (Gen. 30:9-11) |  | Dan (Gen. 30:5-6) |
| 90 | Issachar (Gen. 30:17-18) | Asher (Gen. 30:12-13) |  | Naphtali (Gen. 30:8) |
| 91 | Zebulun (Gen. 30:19-20) |  | Joseph (Gen. 30:22-24) |  |

Four things need to be pointed out: First, the words “stopped bearing” in Genesis 29:35 and again in Genesis 30:9 may enclose a parenthesis (as “for this reason” in Ephesians 3:1, 14). This means the verses inside the parenthesis (Genesis 30:1-8) do not necessarily fit at that place chronologically.

Second, the reference to Rachel in Genesis 29:31 seems to indicate that the parenthesis fits after the birth of Leah’s first child, after “the Lord …opened her (Leah’s) womb,” and she bore Reuben.

And, third, we know that Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born. And we know that Joseph was born at the end of the second seven years of service (Genesis 30:25-26). Therefore, Jacob must have been 84 years of age when he married Leah and Rachel within one week of each other.

Finally, we know that Leah bore a daughter, Dinah.

**Genesis 30:21)** Afterwards she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

The word “afterwards” indicates a time lapse, so Dinah was not born in the seven-year period.

So, allowing time for Rachael to see that she had not gotten pregnant—while Leah had given birth to Rueben—it is feasible that Rachel gave Bilhah to Jacob so that Dan was born near the time of Simeon. Then, only a few months need to have passed after the birth of Judah before Leah would see that she was not pregnant again and would give Zilpah to Jacob, giving the possibility of the birth of Gad within a year or so. Given these facts, the above chart is feasible and allows the eleven sons to be born within a seven-year period.

Leah’s six sons born in the seven years, as opposed to Rachel’s one son born in the same time period is explained in Genesis 29.

**Genesis 29:31)** Yahweh saw that Leah was hated, (i.e., loved less) and he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Leah bore six sons in the seven years because the Lord opened her womb. Finally, after six years, God opened Rachel’s womb, too.

**Genesis 30:22)** God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

And Rachel conceived and bore Joseph, the son of Jacob’s old age (Genesis 37:3).

FROM JOSEPH TO MOSES

The time between the first call of Abraham and the law is 430 years. All but one of the smaller time periods making up the total of 430 years are specifically stated. The unspecified time period in the 430 years is between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses. The specified time periods in the 430-year period are 30 years from the call to the birth of Isaac (which is 31 years by inclusive counting), 60 years from Isaac to Jacob, 91 years from Jacob to Joseph, 110 years of Joseph’s life, and 80 years of Moses’ life at the time of the Exodus.[[3]](#footnote-3) These periods total 371 years, which subtracted from the 430 year total, leaves 59 years. However, the 430-year period, being a time span and not a person’s life, is counted inclusively. Counting inclusively the actual elapsed time from Abram’s first call to the birth of Isaac is 31 years. Thus the total of the specified time periods is actually 372 years and the gap between Joseph's death and Moses’ birth is 58 years, as can be seen on the graph.

THE CONQUEST OF THE LAND

Soon after Israel crossed the Jordan River they started to conquer the Promised Land. The fighting lasted seven years. This seven-year period of wars can be documented from Caleb’s life. Caleb was 85 years old 45 years after Moses sent him as one of the 12 spies chosen to spy out the Promised Land (Joshua 14:10). The spies were sent in the second year of the forty-year wandering.[[4]](#footnote-4) The 85th year of Caleb was also the year the organized war for the Promised Land stopped (Joshua 14:15). The total time elapsed since the spies were sent was 45 years (Joshua 14:10). A period of 45 years after the second year of wandering would end the seventh year after crossing the Jordan. Thus the wars of Joshua lasted seven years.

THE PERIOD OF THE ELDERS

After the death of Joshua the children of Israel continued to serve the Lord during the lives of the elders that outlived Joshua (Josh. 24:31). After the death of the elders, the people of Israel forsook God and were enslaved by foreigners. The time between the end of the wars of Joshua and the first servitude of Israel is 26 years. These 26 years can be calculated from the greater context. In Judges 11:26 Jephthah stated that Israel had dwelt along the coast of the Arnon River for 300 years. That 300 years is composed of the 40th year of the wandering when that area was conquered, the seven years of war after Joshua crossed the Jordan, the time of the elders (unstated) Othniel’s 40 years, Ehud’s 80 years, Deborah’s 40 years, Gideon’s 40 years, Abimelech’s 3 years, Tola’s 23 years, Jair’s 22 years, and the Ammonite oppression of 18 years. Since the total time of all the definite periods is 274 years, the time of the elders that outlived Joshua until the first servitude is 26 years.

“AND THE LAND HAD REST”

In Judges 11:26 Jephthah said that Israel dwelt in the trans-Jordan around the Arnon River 300 years. However, if the time periods of Joshua and Judges are totaled, the sum appears to be 327; and that figure does not even include the time after the wars of Joshua that the elders lived, which is 26 more years. Jephthah, a man who loved God and Israel, would not have been wrong by more than half a century in only 300 years.

The problem in the dating of the early judges period involves the phrase “and the land had rest \_\_\_ years.” This phrase occurs four times: Judges 3:11; 3:30; 5:31 and 8:28 (where it is translated “the land had rest”). The phrase only occurs in the part of Judges prior to the 300-year figure given by Jephthah. To be able to understand the phrase better, the occurrence of the phrase in Judges 3:30 will be used as an example.

**Judges 3:30)** So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. The land had rest: eighty years.

The usual interpretation of this phrase is that after Moab was subdued, the land rested for 80 years. Then, the 81st year would start the next enslavement of Israel. The 80 years, however, cannot refer to a long time of “rest.” The very next verse, Judges 3:31, says Shamgar delivered Israel from the Philistines, which would indicate the land was not at rest for 80 years. Also, the rest cannot refer to spiritual rest and freedom from idolatry. Gideon made an ephod immediately following his victory over the Midianites “and all Israel prostituted themselves *by going* after it there,” (Judges 8:27). Yet the very next verse, Judges 8:28, says the land had rest 40 years.

The key to understanding the phrase “and the land had rest 80 years” is to realize that the number of years does not refer to just the rest period, but the entire period since the last judge. The 80 years includes the slavery, the fight for deliverance, the rest period and the return to idolatry. The Hebrew text has a disjunctive accent on the word “rest.” Ivan Panin, in his *Bible Chronology* translated this as a colon. “And the land had rest: eighty years.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In other words, after the last Judge, there was a period of apostasy, then a war that brought deliverance, then a period of rest while the Judge lived, then a colon, then the total time elapsed. It should also be noted that it was the common practice of oriental rulers to date their rules from the previous legitimate ruler and not from a slavery or foreign dominion.[[6]](#footnote-6) Thus, the 80-year figure, which is a total sum of several parts, would customarily refer to the end of the last judge.

Lastly, understanding the 80 years as a total figure makes the statement of Jephthah clear. The total period for Othniel was 40 years, for Ehud was 80 years, for Deborah was 40 years and for Gideon was 40 years. Add to that the rest of the chronological information and the total is 274 years. However, still to be added is the period of time of the elders that outlived Joshua. A period of 26 would be very reasonable and would make the chronological information given by Jephthah accurate.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

**Ruth 1:1a)** And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged that there was a famine in the land,

**Ruth 4:18-22)** Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron was the father of Ram, and Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon was the father of Salmon, and Salmon was the father of Boaz, and Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David.

In considering the information given in the Books of Ruth and Judges, it is found that the genealogy listing only five men from Salmon to David is complete as given in Ruth 4:18-22. The listing is sufficient to span the period of time from the entry into Canaan to the birth of David, and is therefore an important key to the chronology of the Book of Ruth in the Judges period of Israel.

Four separate sections of scripture record the lineage of David. They are: Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chronicles 2:11-15; Matthew 1:5-6; and Luke 3:31-32. Though each is set in a different context and written from a different perspective, the number of the generations and the names listed from Salmon to David are identical in all four accounts.

The average fathering age of Salmon, Boaz, Obed, and Jesse necessary for their lives to span the period between Israel’s entry into Canaan and David’s birth is between 97 and 106 years. According to the Biblical record and culture, this age for fathering children was not common, but neither was it an impossible or singular occurrence.

Depending on Salmon’s age when he entered the Land of Canaan, the birth of Obed can be set in the Judges period between the years of 2700 and 2719 A.H. (between 1264/63 and 1245/44 B.C.). Hence, the events of Ruth could have taken place near the end of Ehud’s judgeship of during the first part of Deborah’s reign as judge in Israel. The beginning of those events would then fall between the years of 2689 and 2708 A.H.(years after the creation of Adam; between 1273/72 and 1254/53 B.C.).

Certain Biblical research keys are essential to the understanding of this study. The Bible is the only primary source in considering biblical history. All other sources are secondary. Information from secondary sources may give additional data, but may not contradict that which is clearly stated by the Scriptures.

Several passages of Scripture may supply information concerning an identical person, event, or subject, each augmenting but not contradicting the other. When there is an abundance of clear scriptures regarding an identical situation or person, and only a few apparently contradicting scriptures, the authority of the many clear ones must not be rejected while the few are allowed to dominate; but rather the few must fit with the many. Also important to this study is the knowledge of Biblical culture and Oriental customs concerning marriage and parenthood.

Agreement of the Scriptures

The four listings of David’s lineage in the Bible are in complete agreement concerning the generations that span the period of the Judges.

The genealogy listed in Ruth 4:18-22 includes ten generations. The period from Israel’s crossing of the Jordan to David’s birth, however, includes only five of these men, because the other men predate the crossing of the Jordan into Canaan. Rahab, being the only believing woman in Jericho spared by Israel upon their entry, became the wife of Salmon shortly after that entry.

**Matthew 1:5-6)** and Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, and Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David the king.

Luke lists the same five generations.

**Luke 3:31-32)** … the *son* of Nathan, the *son* of David, the *son* of Jesse, the *son* of Obed, the *son* of Boaz, the *son* of Salmon, the *son* of Nahshon,

Likewise, in the Old Testament the same five generations are enumerated.

**1 Chronicles 2:11-15)** and Nahshon became the father of Salma, and Salma became the father of Boaz, and Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed became the father of Jesse; and Jesse became the father of his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimea the third, Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh,

If there were to be generations added to this portion of David’s lineage, one would expect to find the names Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David elsewhere in the Bible with other names inserted between them. The names “Salmon” and “Obed” are listed in other genealogies in the Book of Chronicles, but the people are not the same ones as those in the Book of Ruth. Both names appear later in chapter two of 1 Chronicles:

**1 Chronicles 2:37-38)** and Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal became the father of Obed, and Obed became the father of Jehu, and Jehu became the father of Azariah,

**1 Chronicles 2:50-51)** These were the sons of Caleb, The son of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah: Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim, Salma the father of Bethlehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader.

Though a cursory reading of these verses may indicate additional generations in the line from Salmon to David, a more thorough reading of the entire chapter reveals that these latter verses refer to a separate genealogy which happens to include men with the same names as the men listed among David’s ancestors.

Other genealogies listing the name “Obed” are 1 Chronicles 11:47; 26:7; and 2 Chronicles 23:1. All of these refer to men who were contemporary with David or later kings, and not with any of the judges of Israel.

There is absolutely no scriptural evidence of additional generations in the line of David during the Judges period. To add generations to the genealogy clearly and identically given four times in the Word of God is to allow the apparently unclear chronological information given in Ruth 1:1 and 4:18-22 to dominate over the abundance of clear scriptures which supply identical genealogical listings, and so, violate important Biblical research principles. Rather, the three other records support and confirm the integrity of the genealogy listed in the Book of Ruth.

See <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Ruth/chapter4/18>

THE JUDGES PERIOD

The period of time corresponding to the five generations from Salmon to David begins at Israel’s crossing of the Jordan with Salmon’s marriage to Rehab and ends with the birth of David. Utilizing the dates from John W. Schoenheit’s work on Old Testament chronology[[7]](#footnote-7), the length of the period is calculated as shown in the REV Chronology at <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/chronology/1383BC>. Also see <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Ruth/chapter4/18>.

All the years of the Judges, from the crossing of the Jordan to Samuel’s death, total up to 394. Adding the two years of Saul’s sole reign before David became king gives a new total of 394 plus 2 equals 396. However, it is the number of years from Salmon to David’s birth, not the beginning of his reign, that must be calculated. The date of David’s birth is then found by subtracting his age at the beginning of his reign.

**2 Samuel 5:4)** David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

Thus, the number of years from the crossing of the Jordan to the birth of David is 396 minus 30 equals 366 years. This is the length of the period spanned by the generations from Salmon to David.

AVERAGE FATHERING AGE

The problem of determining the average fathering age of Salmon, Boaz, Obed, and Jesse necessary for these four men’s lives to cover a period of 366 years now becomes a simple mathematical calculation. It does involve, however, more than a division of the total number of years by four, because all of the men do not share equally in the time period.

It must first be noted that Salmon, in order to have married Rahab, must have been an adult at the beginning of this period of time. Their marriage would have come under the regulations of Numbers 31:14-18 and Deuteronomy 21:10-14 regarding the taking of wives from among the captives of a war.

**Deuteronomy 21:10-12)** “When you go out to battle against your enemies and Yahweh your God delivers them into your hands and you carry them away captive and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you have a desire to her and would take her to you as wife, then you are to bring her home to your house;

In order to have the privilege to marry Rahab, Salmon certainly would have fought in the war, and therefore had to be over twenty (Numbers 1:3). Rahab, because she had the well-respected position and responsibility of running the inn at the city wall in Jericho, was certainly very capable but could easily have been in her teens or early twenties. Rahab was probably not Salmon’s first wife, nor he her first husband.

At the other extreme of Salmon’s possible age range when he entered Jericho, he could not have been older than 59, because all those who were age twenty or older at the Exodus died before Israel entered the Promised Land forty years later.

**Numbers 14:29)** your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness, and all who were numbered of you according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward who have murmured against me,

**Numbers 14:33)** Your children will be wanderers in the wilderness forty years and will bear your prostitution until your dead bodies be consumed in the wilderness.

Thus Salmon’s age when Israel entered Canaan was between 20 and 59 years old. Having defined this range, a linear function can be used to describe the average fathering age for the four men, corresponding to each extreme of Salmon’s age and all possible points between.

According to that function, the average fathering age of the men in the genealogy from Salmon to David is 96.5 if Salmon was 20 when Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. If he was 59 at the time of the crossing, the average fathering age is 106.2. For all the possible ages between the extremes, the average follows the same function. For example, if Salmon’s age at the beginning of the period was 40, about half-way between the extremes, the corresponding average fathering age would be 101.5, halfway between the extreme average ages. It also must be kept in mind that there could have been a long time between when Salmon married Rahab and when she had her first child. There are certainly plenty of examples in the Bible of women who were barren for years and then conceived, and Rahab could have been one of them.

BIBLICAL VALIDITY OF AVERAGE FATHERING AGES

In contrast to the many who have rejected the ages implied by the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22 as impossible, the Bible gives several examples of men who at ages over 100 had not lost their vitality, and who either fathered children or were able to do so. All of the examples discussed here occurred after the flood of Genesis 6. Aspects of Biblical culture related to old age are also discussed.

Genesis 11 lists nine men who lived well beyond the age of 100 and fathered a number of children during their lifetimes. At the head of the roster is Shem, who had several children after he reached the age of 100.

**Genesis 11:10-11)** This is the history of the descendants of Shem. Shem was 100 years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood. Shem lived 500 years after he became the father of Arpachshad and became the father of sons and daughters.

Abraham also became a father at age 100, though this birth was a miracle, brought to pass by his faith (Romans 4:18-21).

**Genesis 21:5)** And Abraham was an hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him.

Many of the men and at least one woman involved in Israel’s exodus and wanderings in the wilderness lived to be well over 100. Moses lived to be 120 and was still very strong and vital physically until his death.

**Deuteronomy 34:7)** Moses was 120 years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force (ejaculation)[[8]](#footnote-8) abated.

Aaron, who was three years the elder of Moses, lived to be 123 (Numbers 33:39). Miriam, much older than Moses, also died in Israel’s fortieth year in the wilderness. Joshua lived to the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29). Caleb was 85 the year Joshua died.

**Joshua 14:10-11)** Now, behold, Yahweh has kept me alive, as he spoke, these 45 years from the time that Yahweh spoke this word to Moses while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am 85 years old today. As yet I am as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war and to go out and to come in.

The last of the elders to outlive Joshua died 26 years[[9]](#footnote-9) after Joshua died. Caleb could have lived to be any age up to 85 plus 26, or 111. Clearly, long, vital lifetimes were not uncommon at this general time in Biblical history. Modern medical evidence also adds credence to the high fathering ages. A survey of books and reports published on the subject of aging strongly endorses the possibility of fatherhood at ages much older than those considered to the norm.

Many men in their seventies and eighties are capable of intercourse. There is a decline in the level of sperm production, but not a complete cessation. Preliminary evidence suggests that a surprising number of men at an advanced age are still capable of reproduction.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Another study specifically addresses the possibility of ejaculation at advanced age. As far as aging is concerned, there is no evidence that a regular cessation of spermatogenesis takes place at any particular age. The ejaculates of men as old as 90 years have shown active and living sperm, and examination of testes of many old men has also shown active sperm-forming cells in the testes.[[11]](#footnote-11) Masters and Johnson, in their widely-read report on *Human Sexual Response*, comment on the relationship between mental and physical well-being.

There is every reason to believe that maintained regularity of sexual expression coupled with adequate physical well-being and healthy mental orientation to the aging process will combine to provide a sexually stimulating climate within a marriage. This climate will, in turn, improve sexual tension and provide a capacity for sexual performance that frequently may extend to and beyond the 80-year age level.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Extensive studies of the many centenarians living in the Caucasus Mountains of the southern USSR show also that a vital family life and the accompanying respect given to the elderly in the culture greatly affects and encourages longer lifetimes.[[13]](#footnote-13)

These factors of physical activity, mental attitude, and respected position in society for the aging were all present in the culture in the period of the Judges. In Ruth 4:2 reference is made to the elders at the city gate. These were the aged men of the city who, due to their respected standing in society, sat at its entrance to administer justice.[[14]](#footnote-14) Boaz was still mentally and physically strong enough to administer business (Ruth 4:1-11) and to work on his own land and threshing floor (Ruth 3:2).

Finally, old age in the Bible is associated with trust in God and service to Him. Proverbs 3:1-2 says, “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.” The men of David’s lineage from Salmon to Jesse well exemplified this active trust in God's Word. Salmon, as one of the men who followed Joshua in the battle of Jericho, had to have been obedient to the detailed commands given in Joshua 4-6 for the crossing of the Jordan, the march around Jericho, and the destruction of the city. Boaz is shown to have kept God’s commandments concerning crops to be left for the poor and for widows during the harvest. He spoke of his trust in God in his first encounter with Ruth.

**Ruth 2:12)** May Yahweh repay your work and a full reward be given to you from Yahweh, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

The details of Obed’s life are not given in the Bible.

Jesse, the father of David, sanctified himself and his sons and went to the sacrifice in obedience to Samuel, the man of God (1 Samuel 16:5). He raised David to be a responsible and fearless tender of the family’s herds and a faithful messenger (1 Samuel 17:20). He was known in the days of Saul as an old man.

**1 Samuel 17:12)** Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons, and the man was old in the days of Saul, advanced *in years* among men.

These men were men of great faith. The Biblical evidence indicates they kept God's commandments and that each could have expected to live the long life promised by God's Word. It also must be remembered that the ages of the women in this genealogy are not given, but it would not be unusual for the women to be younger, even much younger, than the men. Ruth was certainly decades younger than Boaz when they married, and so the difficulty that we might perceive in older women getting pregnant and giving birth might not have existed in this case. In light of the evidence, an average fathering age between 97 and 106 for the men listed in the fourth chapter of Ruth is quite possible and far from extraordinary.

THE DATE OF RUTH 1:1

**Ruth 1:1a)** And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged…

The approximate date of the opening events of the book of Ruth may be figured by working backwards from the date of Obed’s birth. Utilizing the average fathering ages and the date of 2547 A.H. for Israel’s crossing of the Jordan into Canaan, Obed’s birth is dated between 2700 and 2719 A.H. Three points of internal chronology then need to be subtracted: the time between Ruth’s marriage to Boaz and the birth of Obed, the time between Ruth’s arrival in Bethlehem and her marriage to Boaz, and the time between the beginning of the narrative and Ruth’s arrival in Bethlehem. The three are considered in reverse chronological order.

The Bible indicates that the first time Boaz and Ruth came together in sexual intercourse, Obed was conceived.

**Ruth 4:13)** So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went to her and Yahweh gave her conception, and she bore a son,

**Ruth 4:17b)** … and they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Josephus agrees with this in his history of the Judeans, … Boaz married Ruth, and they had a child within a year’s time.[[15]](#footnote-15) Hence, about nine months passed between Ruth’s marriage to Boaz and the birth of Obed.

The length of Ruth and Boaz’s premarital relationship is determined by a consideration of the two harvests during which Ruth gleaned in his fields. She arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest and began to glean in Boaz’s fields immediately. The barley harvest begins shortly after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Ruth continued in Boaz’s fields until the end of wheat harvest, which ends shortly before Pentecost. Pentecost falls fifty days after the weekly Sabbath of the Feat of Unleavened Bread. Boaz and Ruth were married very shortly after the end of the wheat harvest. Thus the time between Ruth’s arrival in Bethlehem and her marriage to Boaz was about two months.

The period of time between the beginning of the Book of Ruth and Ruth’s arrival in Bethlehem with Naomi is “about ten years.”

**Ruth 1:4)** and they (Elimelech’s sons) took wives for themselves of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other was Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

**Ruth 1:7)** So she (Naomi) set out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they went on the road to return to the land of Judah.

Adding these three periods of time—Ruth’s nine month pregnancy with Obed, her premarital acquaintance with Boaz of about two months, and the family’s ten year stay in Moab—gives a total of approximately eleven years. This eleven year period is subtracted from Obed's birth (2700 to 2719 A.H.) to yield a range of years between 2689 and 2708 A.H. during which the record of Ruth could have begun.[[16]](#footnote-16)

This range of dates, according to the dates assigned to the Judges period, correspond to the last part of Ehud's judgeship and to the first part of Deborah’s reign as judge in Israel.[[17]](#footnote-17) These dates fall in the first half of the period of the Judges.

RESULTS

The integrity of the chronology of the Book of Ruth is clearly seen when all the Biblical evidence is taken into consideration. The genealogy mentioned at the close of the book does indeed cover the years of the Judges period sufficiently. The average fathering age of the men listed in the genealogy from Salmon to Jesse was between 97 and 106 years.

Merging the genealogy listed in Ruth with the history of the Judges period places the events of Ruth near the end of Ehud’s judgeship or in the first part of Deborah’s reign as judge in Israel, or sometime between 2689 and 2708 A.H.

LINEAR CHRONOLOGY – JUDGES AND RUTH

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A.H.[[18]](#footnote-18) |  |  |
| 2540- |  | Crossing of the Jordan, Joshua 4:18,19 Wars in Canaan - 7 years |
| 2550- |  |  |
| 2560- |  | Elders that outlived Joshua - 26 years |
| 2570- |  |  |
| 2580- |  | Servitude to Mesopotamia and deliverance by Othniel - 40 years; Judges 3:11 (1384/83 B.C.) |
| 2590- | + |  |
| 2600- | + + |  |
| 2610- | + + |  |
| 2620- | + + | Servitude to Moab and deliverance by Ehud - 80 years; Judges 3:30 (1344/43 B.C.) |
| 2630- |  |  |
| 2640- |  |  |
| 2650- |  |  |
| 2660- |  |  |
| 2670- |  |  |
| 2680- | \* |  |
| 2690- | \* \* |  |
| 2700- | \*# \*# | Servitude to Canaanites and deliverance by Deborah - 40 years; Judges 5:31 (1264/63 B.C.) |
| 2710- | # # |  |
| 2720- | # |  |
| 2730- |  |  |
| 2740- |  | Servitude to Midian and deliverance by Gideon - 40 years; Judges 8:28 (1224/23 B.C.) |
| 2750- |  |  |
| 2760- |  |  |
| 2770- |  |  |
| 2780- |  | Abimelech - 3 years - Judges 9:1,22; Tola - 23 years - Judges 10:1,2 (1181/80 B.C.) |
| 2790- |  |  |
| 2800- | x | Jair - 22 years - Judges 10:3 |
| 2810- | x x |  |
| 2820- |  | Ammonite oppression - 18 years - Judges 10:8 |
| 2830- |  |  |
| 2840- |  | Jephthah - 6 years - Judges 12:7 |
| 2850- |  | Ibzan - 7 years - Judges 12:8,9 |
| 2860- |  | Elon - 10 years - Judges 12:11,12 |
| 2870- |  | Abdon - 8 years - Judges 12:14 |
| 2880- |  | Philistine oppression - 40 years; Judges 13:10 (1087/86 B.C.) |
| 2890- |  |  |
| 2900- |  | David born - 2913/14 A.H. (1051/50 B.C.) |
| 2910- |  | Samuel begins judging - 24 years; 1 Samuel 7:15 |
| 2920- |  |  |
| 2930- |  |  |
| 2940- |  | Saul's sole reign - 2 years - 1 Samuel 13:1; David begins to reign at age 30 - 2 Samuel 5:1-4 |
| 2950- |  |  |
| 2960- |  |  |
| 2970- |  |  |
| 2980- |  |  |
| 2990- |  |  |

KEY - RANGE OF YEARS

+++ = Boaz's birth  
\*\*\* = Ruth 1:1  
### = Obed's birth  
xxx = Jesse's birth

THE JUDGESHIP OF SAMUEL

The length of time that Samuel judged Israel is not directly stated. However, the time that Samuel judged between the end of the Philistine captivity and the sole reign of Saul can be easily calculated. The key scripture is 1 Kings 6:1.

**1 Kings 6:1)** It came to pass in the 480th year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh.

There were 480 years (inclusive counting) from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon when the Temple foundation was laid. This 480-year period is composed of many smaller periods of time (i.e., 40 years wandering, 7 years war, etc.), all of which are known except the period of time from the end of the Philistine oppression to the start of Saul's sole reign. The smaller time periods total 456 years. Subtracting 456 from 480 leaves a period of 24 years for the gap between the Philistines and Saul.

During that 24-year period Saul was anointed king and was ruling Israel. However, only after Samuel died was Saul accounted a sole reign as king because “Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Samuel 7:15).

THE REIGN OF SAUL

One of the problems in Biblical chronology is the reign of Saul, the first King of Israel. The King James Version starts Saul’s reign in the following way:

**1 Samuel 13:1-2)** Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel…

The Hebrew text does not read the way the King James does. The Hebrew reads, “A son of one year was Saul when he became king, and two years he reigned over Israel.” Thus, according to the Hebrew text, Saul reigned two years. The standard way to list the reign of a king is to give the years of his reign first and then begin to list the events that occurred in his life. For example, 1 Kings 14:21b says:

**1 Kings 14:21)** … Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, …

Thus the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 13 is the standard formula for listing the reigns of kings in the Old Testament.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The two-year figure in 1 Samuel 13:1 is Saul’s sole reign as king, not his total reign. The first part of Saul’s reign as king occurred at the same time Samuel was judging. Samuel’s reign as judge lasted his entire life (1 Samuel 7:15). It was the sole reign of Saul that started with the death of Samuel that lasted two years. Thus, Saul’s reign is reckoned like the reign of Jehoram of Judah where the total years of reign reckoned do not include the period of co-reign (Cp. 2 Kings 8:16 with 2 Kings 1:17 and 3:1).

There is no exact number of years listed for the co-reign of Saul. However, David started to reign when he was 30 years old, and he was still a teenager when he fought Goliath, which explains why he was not with the army of Israel. A co-reign for Saul of about 15 years would be necessary. It should be noted that Josephus says that Saul reigned eighteen years while Samuel was alive and two years after Samuel died. The 18 year figure is well within reasonable limits.

Saul could not have reigned for 40 years. The Israelites took the Ark of the Covenant into a war with the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:4) before there was a king (Saul was chosen king in 1 Sam. 10:24). The Ark remained with the Philistines 7 months (1 Sam. 6:1). The Philistines sent it back to Israel, and it remained in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2). King David brought the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 13), but because of the death of Uzzah, it was delayed in the house of Obed-edom for 3 months (1 Sam. 6:11; 1 Chron. 13:12-14). David then brought the Ark from the house of Obed Edom to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:25; 16:1), where he was reigning as king. Therefore, from the time the Ark was captured, before there was a king, until David brought it to Jerusalem, was about 21 years. However, when David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, he had already been reigning in Hebron for seven years (2 Samuel 5:5; 1 Kings 2:11). The text implies quite clearly that when Ishbosheth was murdered, the Israelites came to David very quickly (1 Sam. 4:7; 5:1). So the total time available for Saul to reign was the time the Ark was at Kiriath-jearim, or 20 years. Since David reigned in Hebron for seven years of that 20, the longest Saul could have reigned was 13.

[ To the reader, work on 1 Samuel 14:49 continues. This lists Saul’s children he had when reigning, and Ishbosheth is not mentioned. Yet he was 40 when he started to reign. This would give Saul a long reign. Henry Smith notes there is a textual variant in 1 Samuel 14:49 and that Ishbosheth is mentioned (I.C.C., “Samuel,” p. 127). Continue to check back for updates and added content.]

THE CHRONOLOGY OF ACTS 13

When the context of Acts 13 is understood, and when the textual variants are clarified, the chronological information given here will fit with that supplied in the Old Testament.

First, it must be understood that the Apostle Paul spoke from the Old Testament in Antioch of Pisidia to refresh the people’s memories and to get on the same terms with them, not to teach the people something new or start a controversy about the Old Testament scripture. The whole teaching was aimed toward verse 23 where the concept of Jesus as savior is introduced. Hence, the figures given will be, at best, a certification of the correctness of the beliefs held at that time. It is also interesting to note the employment of the word *hos*, “about,” even with well established truths such as the 40 years in the wilderness mentioned in verse 18. Acts 13:19-21 need to be considered carefully.

**Acts 13:19-21 (KJV)** 19And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21And afterwards they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

Verse 20 has a significant textual variant which transposes the phrases “and after that he gave *them* judges” and “about the space of 450 years.” In this light, verses 19 and 20a would read as follows.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Acts 13:19-20 (REV)** 19And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave *them* the land as an inheritance. 20And after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet—all this took about 450 years.

With this reading of Acts 13, counting inclusively a span of 450 years from the dividing of the land of Joshua, gives us the 21st year of Solomon. It just so happens that 1 Kings 9:10-11 mentions a year very close to this.

**1 Kings 9:10-11 (REV)** 10It came to pass at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king’s house… 11that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

The “Galilee” in this verse almost certainly corresponded to part of the inheritance allotted to Asher in Joshua 19:24-31, because it bordered Phoenicia. This is the first time that any of the land that was originally allotted to the children of Israel was given away or sold. Therefore, the space of time that God was dividing to Israel their land was about 450 years. Before the land in Galilee was sold, Israel was at the peak of its expansion. After this time the land that Israel occupied dwindled away section by section.

With the phrase “about the space of” removed, the text of Acts 13:20 reads as follows:

**Acts 13:20 (KJV)** And after that he gave *unto them* judges … until Samuel the prophet.

**Acts 13:20 (REV)** And after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet—all this took about 450 years.

The Aramaic text omits the words “after that.” This is significant because the 40-year period that is mentioned in the next verse is not “after” the aforementioned 450 years but during it.

Acts 13:21 begins with the word *kakeithen*, translated “afterward” in the King James Version. This word does mean “afterward in time;” but this is a meaning in more modern Greek.[[21]](#footnote-21) During the Koine Greek period, this word meant “from whence.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Therefore, this verse should read “From whence [Samuel] they desired a king….”[[23]](#footnote-23) With this information, the 40-year figure given at the end of the verse can be seen not only to apply to Saul, but also to Samuel. This 40-year period began during the corrupt judgeship of Eli when Saul was established to be a prophet, as recorded in 1Samuel 3:20. Then it included the period of time that Samuel was sole judge, and the short-lived judgeship of his sons, plus the period of time in which both Samuel and Saul were alive and finally, the two years of 1 Samuel 13:1 in which Saul reigned alone.

Properly translated, Acts 13:19-21 reads:

**Acts 13:19-21)** 19And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave *them* the land as an inheritance. 20And after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet—all this took about 450 years. 21“And afterward they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

THE EXODUS TO SOLOMON

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Apparent Years Elapsed | Actual Years Elapsed: 300 Judges 11:26 | Actual Years Elapsed: 480 1 Kings6:1 | Actual Years Elapsed: About 450 Acts 13:20 |
| Sinai | 40 | 1 (40th Year) | 40 | -- |
| wars | 7 | 7 | 7 |  |
| elders | 26 | 26 | 26 |  |
| Cushan\* | 8 | -- | -- | -- |
| Othniel | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Eglon\* | 18 | -- | -- | -- |
| Ehud | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 |
| Jabin\* | 20 | -- | -- | -- |
| Deborah | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Midian\* | 7 | -- | -- | -- |
| Gideon | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Abimelech | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Tola | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| Jair | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Ammon | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| Jephthah | 6 | -- | 6 | 6 |
| Ibzan | 7 | -- | 7 | 7 |
| Elon | 10 | -- | 10 | 10 |
| Abdon | 8 | -- | 8 | 8 |
| Philistines | 40 | -- | 40 | 40 |
| Samuel | 24 (after Philistine oppression) | -- | 24 | 24 |
| Saul | 2 | -- | 2 | 2 |
| David | 40 | -- | 40 | 40 |
| Solomon | 4 | -- | 4 | 40 |
| Total | 533 | 300 | 480 | 443 |

\*Time of captivity which is included in time of following Judge.

THE SHIFT FROM NISAN TO TISHRI

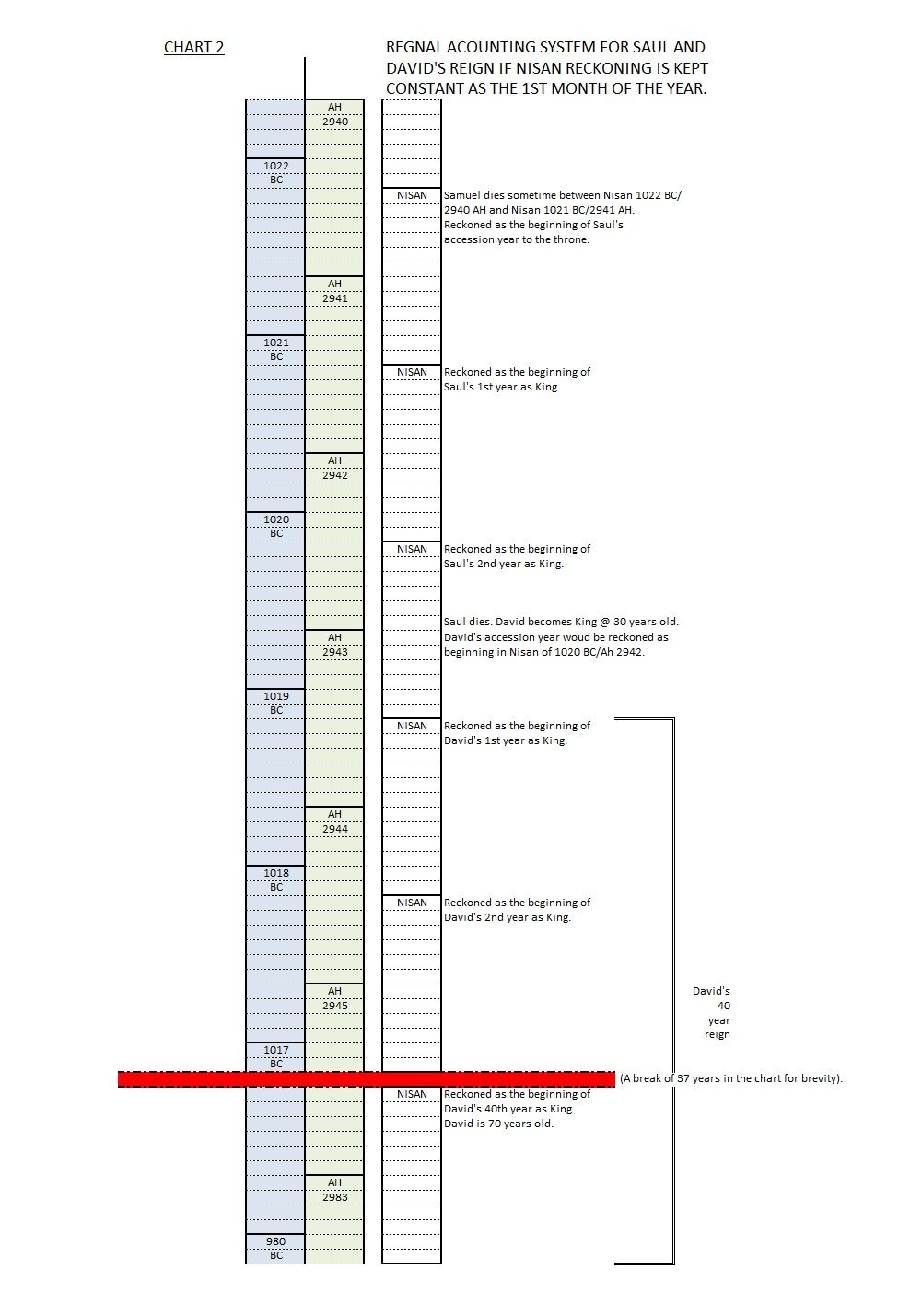
David, Solomon, and the Kings of Judah reckoned their reign using a Tishri calendar. King David instituted the change from Nisan reckoning to Tishri reckoning during his reign. The years from the Exodus to David were based on a Nisan calendar, so the Word of God must show this vital switch, and it does.

The key to this problem is in 2 Samuel 5:4 and 5.

**2 Samuel 5:4-5)** 4David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned 33 years over all Israel and Judah.

There appears to be a contradiction here, since forty years does not equal forty years and six months. Why did God incorporate an additional time span of six months?

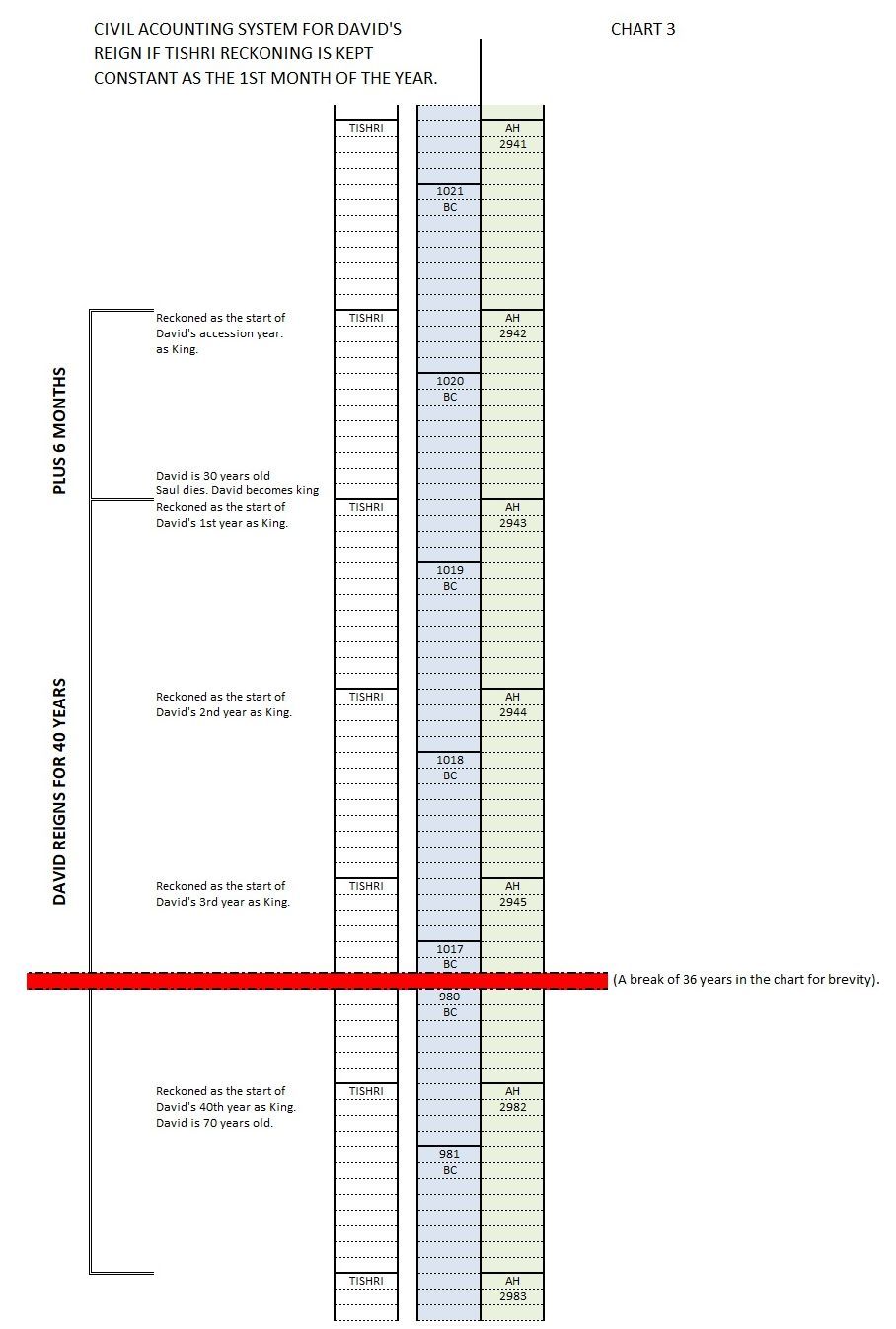
The following chart shows the regnal accounting system with Saul and David if a Nisan reckoning is kept constant throughout David’s reign.



[Click to see full size Chart](https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/i/Chronology/Chronology_Chart_2.jpg)

Saul reigns for two years after Samuel’s death. Because Nisan was the sacred start of the Israelite year, it was natural to count the years of a king’s reign starting from that same month.

Nevertheless, David switched the accounting of a king’s reign to Tishri. There are six months difference between Nisan and Tishri, and it is this fact that documents the shift. The following chart depicts this shift.

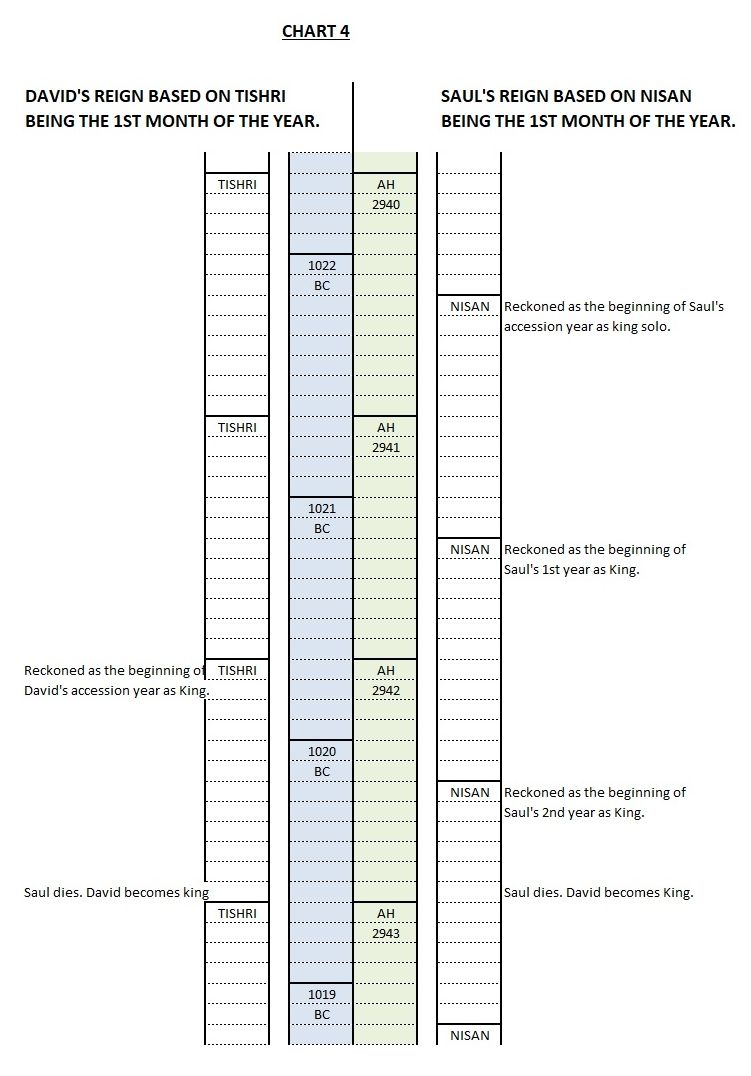


[Click to see full size Chart](https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/i/Chronology/Chronology_Chart_3.jpg)

At the end of two years, Saul dies. But David, once he becomes king in Hebron, starts the commencement of his reign from the Tishri, which already passed. Since Tishri was approximately six months earlier, it adds the additional six months as written in 2 Samuel 5:5.

In actuality, David reigned forty years, and the additional six months was strictly a record of the accounting shift done in his reign.

One additional problem does arise within this chronology. In looking at every aspect, it is feasible to have Saul die anywhere within his second year, and two years would still be reckoned. Therefore, if Saul died before the second Tishri of our charts then David would have had his reign starting on the first Tishri rather than the second. A comparison set of charts will show this quite easily.



[Click to see full size Chart](https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/i/Chronology/Chronology_Chart_4.jpg)

Two major changes are noticed which need explaining in the right hand diagram. First of all, under Nisan reckoning, if Saul died between Nisan and Tishri, then David’s first year of reign would have corresponded with Saul’s second—both being the same year from Nisan to Nisan. That is why David’s year “1” is in the same block as Saul’s year “2”.

Secondly, the diagram on the right then necessitates a shift up the yearly calendar by one year as a comparison of the diagrams shown. This causes a major problem. All of the subsequent chronology would have to shift by one year, including the fourth year of Solomon's reign when the foundation of the temple was laid. When the system of the diagram on the left is used, the foundation of the temple is laid exactly 480 years after the Exodus, as written in 1 Kings 6:1. The right diagram would allow for a gap of only 479 years, which proves it to be in error.

Therefore, once the monarchy split after the death of Solomon, the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin maintained the regnal system as set up by David, which began on Tishri. The ten northern tribes under Jeroboam’s decree changed to Nisan for the reckoning of their kings.

THE LORD’S SECOND APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON

Sometime after the dedication of the temple, the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time and gave him the revelation written in 1 Kings 9:2-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22. However, 1 Kings 9:1 and 2 Chronicles 7:11 seem to indicate that this occurred after Solomon finished building his own house, thirteen years after the temple was completed.

1 Kings 9:10 and 2 Chronicles 8:1 both begin “and it came to pass at the end of twenty years.” If Solomon received the revelation after the completion of his own house, then this phrase is chronologically misplaced and belongs before Solomon’s revelation. In essence, the verses repeat 1 Kings 9:1 and 2 Chronicles 7:11, calling attention to the chronological misplacement of 1 Kings 9:2-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22, which could actually be placed in parenthesis.

There are various kinds of parenthetical figures used throughout the scriptures. The one most appropriate for 1 Kings 9 and 2 Chronicles 7 is the figure *parembole*. A *parembole* is an addition complete in itself by way of an insertion of an independent statement—even digression. The context is not needed or required to understand the statement inside a *parembole*.

Both 1 Kings 9:2-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22 are complete in themselves and easily understood. It is evident from the context that God is referring to the temple (which was recently dedicated) and not to Solomon’s palace when he spoke of “this house.” The opening statement “the Lord appeared to Solomon” sets these sections as independent of the preceding events of the dedication and the following events of “at the end of twenty years.”

When a parenthetical figure is used the emphasis is increased beyond the punctuation. The reader could actually skip from 1 Kings 8:66 over to 1 Kings 9:10 without interrupting the progression of the record, but without the depth of the clearness and sense required to understand it more completely.

The emphasis here is not on the temple of the king’s house, but on Solomon and his walk for God. God told him the benefits of walking with integrity and uprightness of heart and the consequences of turning from Him and serving other gods. Historically Solomon stopped walking for God during the thirteen years he was building his own house. God would not have given him this revelation as out of fellowship as Solomon was at the time his house was completed.

Therefore, it is evident that 1 Kings 9:2-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22 occurred soon after the dedication of the temple and not following the completion of Solomon’s house. These sections of scripture are actually chronologically misplaced and belong in parenthesis.

THE ACCURACY OF 1 KINGS 6:1

The chronology of the Old Testament contains a number of apparent contradictions; there are numerous instances where the figures presented in the Bible do not seem to agree with one another. In working these sections, it is essential that we adhere to one of the most fundamental of biblical research principles: the Word of God is to be accepted literally whenever and wherever possible. When a word or words in the Word of God are not literal, they may be a figure of speech. There is also the possibility that there has been an error in the transmission of the text, or in the translation of it.

A verse that has been difficult for Biblical chronologies is 1 Kings 6:1:

**1 Kings 6:1)** It came to pass in the 480th year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh.

The problem with this verse is that the sum of the many time periods mentioned in the Word between the Exodus and the fourth year of Solomon's reign appears to be far greater than 480 years. In addition to this there is a difficulty posed by Judges 11:26 where Jephthah states that it has been 300 years since Israel passed through Moab and Ammon on their way into the Promised Land. Once again the recorded time periods seem to total more than 300 years (see revisedenglishversion.com/chronology.

One must then consider the possibility of a mistranslation. However, there is no Biblical evidence to support the idea that the numbers were wrongly transcribed. The numbers are written in Hebrew words, not as numerals, thus making error less feasible. Also Judges 11:26 and 1 Kings 6:1 would have to be mistranslations. However, both verses are “off” by the same number of years, a very unlikely “coincidence.” There is no evidence to support the idea of an error in the translation of these verses.

One method of dealing with the situation is the system devised by E.W. Bullinger, which he terms "*lo ami*." The words *lo ami* in Hebrew mean “not my people.” According to this system of counting, certain periods where Israel was not walking with God would not be counted in the chronology. This system literally causes there to be two separate chronologies in the Old Testament. An actual chronology of calendar years and a chronology of Israel when they were in favor with God. However, there is no other evidence, internal or external to the text, that a “*lo ami*” system existed. It is a contrived system that was developed to make Judges 11:26 (about Jephthah’s 300 years) and 1 Kings 6:1 (about the 480 years from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon) “fit” the chronological information of the Old Testament. Good internal evidence that the *lo ami* system was not used in the Bible is that it certainly was not used (even by Bullinger) with any consistency. For example, under the *lo ami* system, the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity would be absent from the divine chronology, as would the time of the Egyptian captivity and many periods of time in the book of Kings and Chronicles. These periods are not counted as “*lo ami*” periods by chronologists who use the “*lo ami*” system because the Old Testament chronology fits perfectly when all the numbers are taken literally and fit together. However, according to the thesis of the *lo ami* system, those numbers should not be included in the counting of the chronology. It can be concluded that the contrived *lo ami* system of dating does not offer a viable solution to the problem at hand.

The apparent discrepancy caused by 1 King 6:1 and Judges 11:26 lies in our understanding of what has been written. When the time periods recorded in Joshua and Judges prior to Judges 11:26 are totaled, the sum at first appears to be 327 years, rather than 300. Also, an additional 26 years would be needed to complete the gap between Joshua's seven years of warfare and the first Judge, thus making an apparent total of 353 years, rather than 300 years.

The solution to the apparent contradiction in the chronology lies in the key phrase “and the land has rest \_\_\_\_\_ years.” This key phrase occurs four times in Judges 3:11; 3:30; 5:31; and 8:38 (8:28 is translated “the country was in quietness” (KJV)). All of these verses are prior to Jephthah's statement that Israel had dwelt in the land for 300 years. All four occurrences of this key phrase occur at a time when a foreign nation has been subdued by Israel and Israel seems to be back on the track with God. For example:

**Judges 3:30)** So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. The land had rest: eighty years.

Generally it has been thought that the 80 years was in reference to just the period of rest time from the end of Moab’s rule until the next foreign domination. Israel has been enslaved by Moab for 18 years before they gained their freedom under the leadership of Ehud, the Judge at that time. The phrase “and the land had rest 80 years” has been thought to be separate from the 18 years of slavery, making a total period of 98 years for the time of Moab and Ehud instead of 80. The idea has been that Israel “had rest” as long as the Judge was in power to keep them in tune with God. Yet, the year immediately following the last year of “the rest” starts a new enslavement. No time period is allowed for Israel to return to idolatry before the next slavery. As seen in the record of Gideon, forsaking the true God did occur before the next enslavement. Gideon made an ephod and “all Israel prostituted themselves *by going* after it there” (Judges 8:27). Clearly, the rest does not refer to Israel's spirituality or abstaining from idolatry.

The phrase “and the land had rest \_\_\_\_\_ years” cannot possibly carry the relationship which has normally been conferred upon it if the Word of God is going to fit together. When the phrase is studied, the Hebrew text has a disjunctive accent on the word “rest.” Ivan Panin in *Bible Chronology* translates as a colon.[[24]](#footnote-24) Perhaps a period would communicate even better than a colon: “and the land had rest. 80 years.” The 80 years does not relate to the rest period alone. It relates to the entire period since the last judge. This would be in keeping with the practice of oriental rulers to date their reigns from the previous legitimate ruler and not from a time of foreign rule.[[25]](#footnote-25) Thus the 80-year figure according to custom would refer to the entire time since the last judge; the slavery, the deliverance, the rest, and the time when the people returned to idolatry.

When the figures given by the phrase “and the land had rest \_\_\_\_\_ years” are seen as inclusive figures, Jephthah’s statement of Israel dwelling in the trans-Jordan 300 years is both clear and accurate. The total time period was, for Othniel 40 years, for Ehud 80 years, for Deborah 40 years, and for Gideon 40 years. Add this to the other recorded time periods in Joshua and Judges and the total is 274 years.[[26]](#footnote-26) This leaves 26 years to fill the gap between the seven years of war and the Book of Judges. With this information Jephthah's statement is completely accurate.

The accuracy of 1 Kings 6:1, that there was 480 years from the Exodus to the laying of the foundation of the Temple in Solomon's fourth year still needs to be established. The problem most chronologists have had with this period is caused by the mistranslation of 1 Samuel 13:1-2 and Acts 13:18-21.

**1 Samuel 13:1-2 (KJV)** 1Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in Mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

The Hebrew text does not read the way the King James does. The Hebrew reads, “A son of one year was Saul when he became king, and two years he reigned over Israel.” Thus, according to the Hebrew text, Saul reigned two years. The standard way to list the reign of a king is to give the years of his reign first, then begin to list the events that occurred in his life. For example, 1 Kings14:21 says:

**1 Kings 14:21)** … Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, …

The Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 13 offering to Saul is the standard formula for listing the reigns of kings in the Old Testament.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The Old Testament gives Saul a two year reign. Another problem in the chronology of Saul’s life has been caused by a mistranslation in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 13 Paul gives a brief history of Israel from Moses to Jesus Christ. In verse 20 he mentions a time period of “about the space of four hundred and fifty years.” In order for this time period to fit with the information given us in the Old Testament, both the context of the verse and the textual variants must be understood.

The purpose of Paul's discourse is to bring the people of Antioch to Jesus Christ, not to establish Israel's history. Hence the word *hos*, translated as “about,” is used in reference to both the 450 years and the 40 years wanderings in verse 18.

Acts 13:20 contains a significant textual variant which transposes the phrases “and after that he gave them Judges” and “about the space of forty years.” There is also a second textual variation[[28]](#footnote-28) in verse 20 which omits the phrase “after that” from “and after that he gave them judges….” Hence verses 19 and 20 would read as follows:

**Acts 13:19-20)** 19And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave *them* the land as an inheritance. 20And after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet—all this took about 450 years.

Counting inclusively, the 450 year span would start with the end of the wars in Joshua and go to the twenty-first year of Solomon. In light of this, 1 Kings 9:10-11 is extremely significant.

**1 Kings 9:10-11)** 10It came to pass at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king’s house 11… that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

Prior to this verse Israel had been expanding, continuing to acquire areas of the land which God had originally allotted to them. This is the first time a portion of the Promised Land was sold or given away! Solomon sold the land to pay a debt, an unprecedented event in Israel's history. Therefore throughout the previous 450 years God was dividing to Israel their land. After this, it begins to dwindle away.

The second textual variant, omitting “after that,” is also significant. It places not only the judges but the 40 years period mentioned in Acts 13:21 during, not after, the 450 years.

Acts 13:21 begins with the word *kakeithen*, translated “afterward” in the King James version. This word does mean “afterward in time.” This is its meaning in more modern Greek.[[29]](#footnote-29) However, during the Koine Greek period, this word meant “from whence.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Therefore, this verse should be translated “From whence (Samuel) they desired a king …”[[31]](#footnote-31) This is exactly accurate. The people asked Samuel to “make us a king to judge us like all the nations” 1 Samuel 8:5. Understanding this information, the 40 year figure given at the end of the verse may be applied to Samuel as well as Saul. This 40 year period began during the corrupt judgeship of Eli when Samuel was established to be a prophet, as recorded in 1 Samuel 3:20. Then it included the period of time that Samuel was the sole judge, and the time during which Saul reigned alone after Samuel's death.

The two year figure given in 1 Samuel 13:1 and 2 is not Saul’s entire reign, but his reign alone following Samuel’s death. Saul was anointed as King during Samuel’s ministry. However, 1 Samuel 7:15 states, “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.” Thus the chronology of the time when Samuel was the judge and Saul was the king is attributed to Samuel, Saul's reign being counted as a co-reign as long as Samuel is alive. Thus the early years of Saul's reign were as co-regent with Samuel. His sole reign, his reign after Samuel's death is reckoned in 1 Samuel 13:1 and is two years.

The precise length of Saul’s entire reign is not specifically stated in the Word of God. We do know (by calculating within the 480 year period of 1 Kings 6:1) that there were 26 years between the Philistine oppression and the beginning of David's reign in Hebron. The Philistine oppression ended during the judgeship of Samuel before the anointing of Saul. It is interesting that Josephus says that Saul reigned eighteen years while Samuel was alive and two years after Samuel died. Josephus' 18 year co-reign would be logical, and Josephus must have been using chronological information available during the first century. The total reign for Saul of between fifteen and twenty years would fit with the chronological information for this time period.

With the information given above, Jephthah’s 300 year period, and the 480 year period from the Exodus to Solomon's fourth year fit perfectly. There is no need to contrive a system of “lo ami” dating. The Word of God fits when taken literally. The “rest” periods in Judges fit logically and do not have to be squeezed into the text. 1 Samuel 13:1-2 about the length of Saul’s sole reign can be translated accurately and seen to fit perfectly into the chronology. Acts 13:18-22, when translated properly, accurately reflects the history of Israel, even pointing out that black day when Solomon sold some of the Promised Land.

REHOBOAM

Rehoboam was born in the 39th year of the reign of King David to Solomon and an Ammonite girl named Naamah. Solomon was in his late teens, or early twenties at the time. When the Temple foundation was laid in Jerusalem, Rehoboam was a child of five years. When the Temple was finished and Solomon dedicated it with 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep, Rehoboam was 12 years old. Over the next 13 years of Solomon’s life, Solomon turned against God and His law. The focus of his wisdom turned from the things of God to the things of this world. At the end of the 13-year period (which would be the 24th year of Solomon’s reign), Solomon even gave away part of the Promised Land to pay a debt to Hiram, the Phoenician King (1 Kings 9:11). Needless to say, selling any of the Promised Land is in strict contradiction to the law of God (Leviticus 25:23). It is interesting that the cities Solomon gave to Hiram were not even a decent gift. Hiram was not pleased with them (1 Kings 9:12-13) and gave them back to Solomon (2 Chronicles 8:2). Rehoboam was an impressionable young man of 13-25 while this fundamental shift in Solomon’s life and heart was taking place.

After Solomon's 24th year (when Rehoboam was 25 years old) very little is mentioned about Solomon until his death. This is quite in accordance with the heart of the Scripture, which has no reason to record Solomon’s actions when they are outside the will of God. Both Kings and Chronicles do record the visit of the foreign queen, the Queen of Sheba. It is added testimony to the worldly nature of Solomon at this time that he sent her back to Sheba (Egypt) with more material goods than she brought to Israel (2 Chronicles 9:12), rather than making sure that God's people, Israel, was blessed with material abundance. It is also extremely significant that both Kings and Chronicles say that Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba “all her desire, whatsoever she asked.” This is not a compliment! Samson lost his holy spirit because he told a pagan woman “all his heart,” (Judges 16:17) and King Hezekiah set the stage for the fall of Jerusalem by simply showing pagan ambassadors the wealth of his kingdom (2 Kings 20:12-19). The Queen of Sheba incident shows very vividly that Solomon was more interested in seeking to please men than seeking to please God.

After the record of the Queen of Sheba, both Kings and Chronicles mark Solomon’s wealth with the number 666, which epitomizes human independence from God and opposition to God (1 Kings 10:14; 2 Chronicles 9:13). Solomon surrounded himself with servants, drank only from gold vessels (1 Kings 10:21), elevated himself above the people (1 Kings 10:18-20), freely availed himself of Israelite and pagan female companionship (1 Kings 11:3), and built altars to and worshipped idol gods. There is no doubt that Rehoboam, the heir to Solomon’s throne was close by Solomon while all this was going on, and followed in his father’s footsteps.

Rehoboam was in his early teens when Solomon started downhill. When Rehoboam was 41 years old, Solomon died and Rehoboam took over the kingdom. Just after his formal coronation, the people of Israel learned the hard way that Rehoboam had learned the ungodly ways of his father, Solomon. Rehoboam announced to the people of Israel that he would be harder on them then Solomon had been. “My father [Solomon] also chastised you with whips, but I [Rehoboam] will chastise you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:14). Due to Rehoboam’s hard-hearted attitude and lack of love for God or for people, the United Kingdom of Israel disintegrated and left two small kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. A man called Jeroboam was elected to rule over Israel, while Rehoboam reigned over Judah.

Jeroboam, King of Israel, was surrounded by men and advisors who were in league with the Devil (2 Chronicles 13:7). These men acted to make sure that Israel and Judah would never form a united kingdom again. Rehoboam’s ambassador to Israel was stoned to death (1 Kings 12:18). Also, cities were fortified in Israel, which caused Rehoboam to fortify in self-defense (2 Chronicles 11:5). Although the separation between Israel and Judah happened very quickly, there is little doubt that peace could have been made and the twelve tribes united again as one kingdom. Almost twenty years after the split of the kingdom, Abijah [Abijam in Kings], Rehoboam’s son, accurately pointed out that demonic people were responsible for the continued animosity between Jeroboam and Rehoboam. Abijah said Rehoboam was “young and tenderhearted” and could not withstand Jeroboam and his evil advisors (2 Chronicles 13:7). “Young and tenderhearted!” Rehoboam was 41 years old and had lived some 25 years of that in revelry and debauchery! The word “young,” however, can mean “young in years” or “young in experience, untried.” Similarly, “tenderhearted” can mean either “tender or soft of heart” or “weak or feeble of heart.” Rehoboam was “untried” and “feeble-hearted” when it came to the only thing that really could have helped keep the Kingdom of Israel together—the Word of God and the power of God. Rehoboam was untried because he had never relied on the power of God—he had relied on man’s strength and man’s wisdom while his father Solomon was king. Rehoboam was feeble-hearted because he had never built the Word of God into his life and thinking. The fact that he was untried and feeble-hearted made it impossible for him to withstand the attacks of Jeroboam’s advisers.

Rehoboam had wasted his energy on worldly pleasure while his father, Solomon, ran the kingdom. When Rehoboam’s time to rule came, he had not “prepared his heart to seek the Lord,” and he could not hold his kingdom together (2 Chronicles 13:14). His rule was an inglorious one. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and forsook the law. He continued the pagan worship and sexual perversion that marked the end of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 14:24). In his fifth year, he was defeated by Egypt’s army and lost the great wealth of his kingdom. After that humiliating defeat he humbled himself before God (2 Chronicles 12:6), although he still did evil in God’s sight because of his weakheartedness (2 Chronicles 12-14). After the 17-year reign, Rehoboam died and the kingdom of Judah was passed to Abijah, his son.

CHRONOLOGY - ELIJAH’S LIFE

An apparent contradiction in the chronology of Elijah's life is the “third year” of 1 Kings18:1.

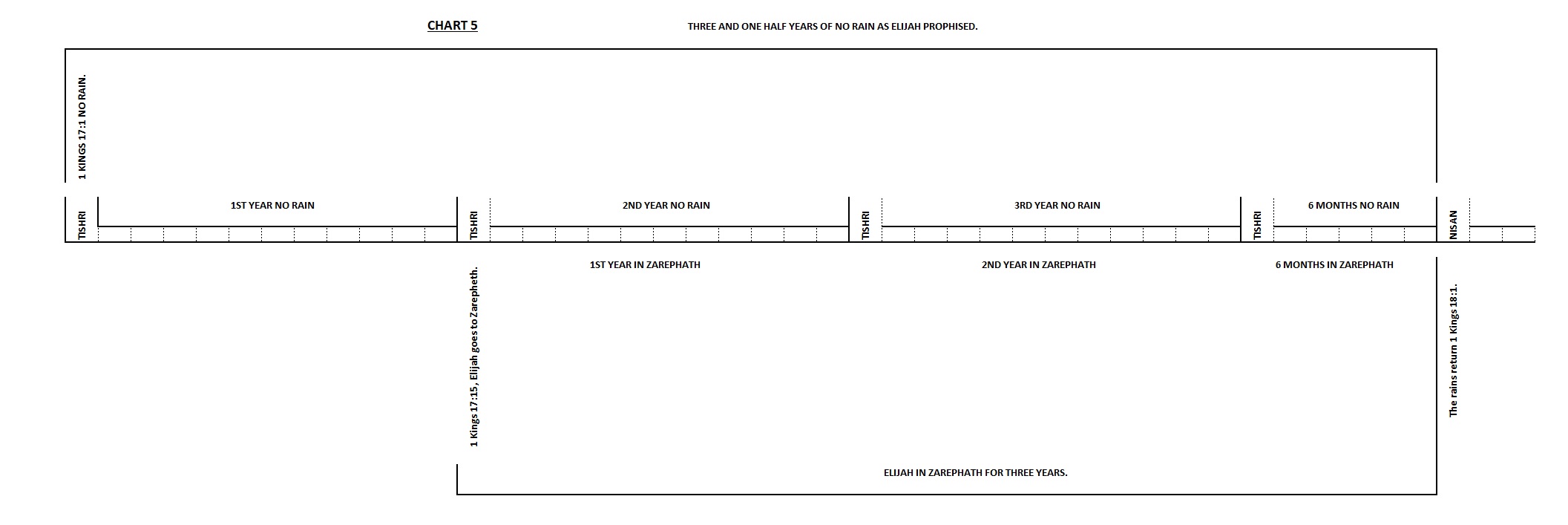
**1 Kings18:1)** It came to pass after many days, in the third year, that the word of Yahweh came to Elijah, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.”

The ancient Israelites counted time spans by inclusive counting. Thus the “third year” would be a period of two years and some weeks or months. Yet Luke 4:25 and James 5:17 record that it did not rain in Israel for three and a half years, which would be four years by Israelite counting. Why then does 1 Kings18:1 say that the Word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year instead of the fourth year? The answer is simple, but often overlooked, and the error is in people's understanding. The Bible never says that when the Word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year that it had been that long since it rained. The immediate previous context deals with Elijah's sojourn at Zarephath.

Elijah went to Zarephath and lived with a widow. Elijah believed God to multiply her food “and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days” (1 Kings 17:15). Following the context the next reference of time simply describes how long that “*many* days” is. 1 Kings18:1 notes that “*after* many days” i.e., the days of 1 Kings 17:15, “in the third year” i.e., the third of Elijah’s stay at Zarephath.

The third year of 1 Kings18:1 is the third year of his stay at Zarephath, not the third year since it had last rained. Thus by standard Biblical reckoning, Elijah had stayed with the widow for two years and some weeks or months.

The timing of the three-and-a-half year drought period can be pretty closely determined from the chronological information either given or implied in the Word. Elijah was speaking to Ahab of Israel, so the calendar being used was a Tishri calendar. The rains in Israel usually come shortly after the new year (Tishri 1 was New Year’s Day in Israel) and extend through the winter, ending in the spring. It would be logical that when Elijah presented himself to Ahab and said “there will not be dew or rain these years except by my word.” (1 Kings 17:1) that it would have been shortly before the rainy season so that his words would be noted as having an effect very quickly. (Israel has a Mediterranean climate—six months it is dry and the other six months it rains or occasionally snows.) Also, at the end of the drought, because of Israel’s Tishri year counting, the last six months of the entire three-and-a-half year period would have been from Tishri to Adar, the first six months of the fourth year. Thus the situation in Israel would be a full three-and-a-half years without rain, with the rain resuming in Nisan, around the time of the latter rain.



[Click to see full size Chart](https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/i/Chronology/Chronology_Chart_5.jpg)

JEHOSAPHAT AND JEHORAM (OF JUDAH)

In the eighteenth year of Jehosaphat (his sole reign) Joram of Israel began to reign (2 Kings 3:1). This same year was the second year of Jehoram, Jehosaphat's son (2 Kings 1:17).[[32]](#footnote-32) However, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the second year of Jehoram of Judah appears to contradict 2 Kings 8:16-17 which say that Jehoram of Judah started his reign in the fifth year of Joram of Israel. How could both Joram and Jehoram both start to reign when the other was already reigning? The answer lies in the way co-reigns were counted.

Jehosophat, Jehoram’s father, had a co-reign with his father Asa. This can be seen and charted because 1 Kings 22:42 says Jehosaphat reigned 25 years. Yet if Joram started eighteen years after the death of Asa and five years later (non-accession counting), then Jehoram took over when Jehosaphat died (2 Kings 8:16-17). There is not time for Jehosaphat’s twenty-five years reign. The “missing years” of Jehosaphat are the years that he co-reigned with Asa.

Similarly, Jehoash co-reigned with Jehosaphat. He started in Jehosaphat’s seventeenth year according to the sacred calendar (Israel's reckoning) and thus was in the second year of his co-reign when Joash of Israel started as 1 Kings 1:17 says. However, when Jehosaphat died and Jehoash took over the throne of Judah, Joash of Israel was in his fifth year, just as 2 Kings 8:16-17 say.

JOTHAM

The period of time around the reign of Jotham has caused much confusion in the field of Biblical chronology. There are many possibilities that have been set forth by different people to explain the different apparent contradictions. This paper will not go into the intricacies of the problem or the many solutions that have been advanced[[33]](#footnote-33) but will move ahead with a solution that is both logical and fits the biblical information given.

The problem is in large part caused by the misunderstanding of 2 Kings 15:30.

**2 Kings 15:30)** Then Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and killed him, and reigned in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

This verse seems to say that Jotham was still alive and Hosea killed Pekah in his 20th year. However, Jotham only reigned for 16 years (2 Kings 15:33). 2 Kings 15:30 should have been translated “… the twentieth year FROM Jotham,” i.e., from the start of Jotham’s sole reign. Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656 A.D.) saw that the word “of” should be translated “from” in 2 Kings 15:30 as can be seen from the marginal reading of Bibles that use his dating system. Donovan Courville, author of *The Exodus Problem and its Ramifications* also noted that “from” should be the proper translation (Seventh Day Adventists Review, August 10, 1978, pp. 6-8).

THE REIGN OF PEKAH

The reign of Pekah can only be properly understood if one understands that he co-reigned with both Menahem and Pekahiah. According to 2 Kings 15:25, Pekah was a captain (*shalish*) during Pekahiah’s reign. Pekah governed or oversaw the area of Gilead and the Trans-Jordan during the reigns of Menahem and Pekahiah. When Pekah killed Pekahiah he had 50 men of Gilead with him. Also, Pekah records his reign as starting during the reign of Menahem. The strongest evidence for Pekah’s reign during that of Menahem is that both Jotham and Ahaz date their reigns from Pekah’s total reign, which dated back into the reigns of Menahem and Pekahiah.

During Pekah’s reign, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, attacked and carried Naphtali, Galilee and Gilead into captivity (2 Kings 15:29). It is significant that in the very next verse (2 Kings 15:30), Hoshea conspires against Pekah and kills him. Once the Gileadites, Pekah's strong supporters, were out of the way it was safe to assassinate Pekah. Hoshea did just that; he assassinated Pekah and reigned in his stead.

DATING OF THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Nebuchadnezzar’s Reign** | **Dating:** | Reign of the kings of Judah and associated events. |
|  | 610 BC | ***Jehoahaz*** *(2 Kings 23:30-33) becomes King.* |
|  |  | Son of Josiah and Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (verse 31). He was Josiah’s son. |
|  |  | Twenty-three years old when he began to reign (verse 31). |
|  |  | Made king by the people (verse 30). |
|  |  | Reigned three months (verse 31). |
|  |  | Pharoah-Necho put him in bands at Riblah in Hamath. Land put to tribute (verse 33). |
|  | 610 BC | Dies in Egypt (verse 33). |
|  |  |  |
|  | 610 BC | ***Jehoiakim*** *(Eliakim. verse 34) (2 Kings 23:34-24:6) becomes King.* |
|  |  | Son of Josiah and Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah (23:36) |
|  |  | Twenty-five years old when he began to reign (verse 36). |
|  |  | Reigned 11 years (23:36) |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s accession year to the throne in Babylon. | 605 BC | Jeremiah’s warning (by revelation) in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 26:1-16). |
|  | 605 BC | Nebuchadnezzar comes and Jehoiakim becomes his servant (24:1; Jeremiah 25:1; Daniel 1:1 and 2). |
|  |  | Jeremiah’s prophecy of the 70 year captivity (Jeremiah 25). |
|  |  |  |
|  | 605 BC | FIRST CARRYING AWAY (Daniel 1:1-3). |
|  |  | *Daniel goes to Babylon* |
|  |  | The events of the book of Daniel begin with his carrying away. |
|  |  | Jehoiakim burns the scroll (Jeremiah 36:21-32). |
|  |  | Jehoiakim rebels against Nebuchadnezzar after three years (2 Kings 24:1). |
|  |  | The Lord sends Chaldees, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah (2 Kings 24:2). |
|  |  | Nebuchadnezzar binds Jehoiakim in fetters to carry him to Babylon. He also carries some vessels back to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6 and 7). |
|  |  | Jehoiakim dies before he can be taken to Babylon (24:6) and receives the “burial of an ass” (prophesied Jeremiah 22:19; 36:30-31). |
|  |  | 2 Kings 24:7 Pharoah-Necho is defeated and loses all land between the River of Egypt and the Euphrates. |
|  |  |  |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th year. | 598 BC | ***Jehoiachin*** *(2 Kings 24:8-16) (Jeconiah-Esther 2:5)becomes King.* |
|  |  | Son of Jehoiakim and Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem (verse 8). |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 8th year. | 597 BC | Eighteen years old when he began to reign (verse 8). He began to reign in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighth year.) |
|  |  | Reigned three months (verse 8). |
|  |  | Servants of Nebuchadnezzar come and besiege Jerusalem (verses 10 and 11). |
|  |  | Jehoiachin, his mother, servants, princes and officers surrender (verse 12). |
|  |  | Nebuchadnezzar carries away treasures of the Temple and the king’s house (verse 12). |
|  |  | SECOND CARRYING AWAY (verse 14-16, Jeremiah 52:28). -Jehoiachin is carried to Babylon (verse 15). -Ezekiel is carried to Babylon (Ezekiel 40:1). -The dating of the book of Ezekiel begins with this carrying away. -Kish, Mordecai's great-grandfather is carried away (Esther 2:5 and 6). -(Jehoiachin lived at least 37 years longer. 2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34.) |
|  |  | ***Zedekiah*** *(Mattaniah -- verse 17) (2 Kings 24:17-25:7)becomes King.* |
|  |  | Son of Josiah and Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings 24:18). |
|  |  | Twenty-one years old when he began to reign. Made king by Nebuchadnezzar. Reigned 11 years. (24:17 and 18). |
|  |  | Nebuchadnezzar makes him swear by God that he will not rebel (2 Chronicles 36:13; Ezekiel 17:18; Jeremiah 51:59). |
|  |  | Zedekiah rebels against Nebuchadnezzar (24:20). |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 16th year. | 9th year 10th mo. 10th day of 589 BC | Nebuchadnezzar comes and besieges Jerusalem (25:1; Ezekiel 24:1-2). |
|  |  |  |
|  |  | Jeremiah in “mire,” and a secret talk with Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38). |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 18th year. | 11th year 4th mo. 9th day of 587 BC | Jerusalem falls, Zedekiah flees (25:2-4; Jeremiah 39:1-4; prophesied in Ezekiel 12:1-16). |
|  |  | Zedekiah captured, judged and carried away to Babylon (25:5-7; Jeremiah 39:6-7). |
|  | 11th year 5th mo. 7th day of 587 BC | Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed (25:8-10; Jeremiah 39:8; Ezekiel 24:15-24). |
|  |  | Jeremiah freed (Jeremiah 39:11-40:5) |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year. | 586 BC | THIRD CARRYING AWAY (25:7-11; Jeremiah 52:29) |
| Nebuchadnezzar’s 23rd year. | 582 BC | FOURTH CARRYING AWAY (Jeremiah 52:30). |

THE 23 YEARS OF JEREMIAH 25:3

According to Jeremiah 25:3 there are 23 years from the 13th of Jeremiah until the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah is counting non-accession (for periods of time) and using Nisan years (Jeremiah 28:17). Thus, Josiah ends in the 19th year of Jeremiah's counting. Jehoahaz’s three-month reign also ends in the 19th year, and Jehoiakim’s accession year starts in the 19th year. The 23rd year of Jeremiah’s counting is the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar.

THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

Jehoahaz’s reign is counted in months, not years even though it overlapped Tishri by a few days. He reigned three months (2 Chronicles 36:2; 2 Kings 23:31). The proof that Jehoahaz’s reign crossed Tishri 1 is in the solution to the apparent contradiction between Jeremiah 25:2 and Daniel 1:1. Jeremiah 25:2 equates the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar with the fourth year of Jehoiakim while Daniel 1:1 equates the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar with the third year of Jehoiakim (the siege of Jerusalem mentioned in Daniel 1:1 occurred during the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar).

The solution of the apparent contradiction is that Jeremiah used Nisan to Nisan reckoning, while Daniel used Tishri to Tishri reckoning. However, if Jehoahaz’s reign ended before or on Tishri 1, there would be no solution to this apparent contradiction.

Since Jeremiah uses a Nisan to Nisan calendar, Jeremiah 46:2 can be easily explained and also fits with the records from Babylon.

JEREMIAH/DANIEL

In Jeremiah 25:1 the first year of Nebuchadnezzar is said to be the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Yet, in Daniel 1:1; Nebuchadnezzar “king of Babylon” sends to Jerusalem in Jehoiakim’s third year.

In order to understand this apparent contradiction it must be known that Jeremiah is dating by Nisan years, while Daniel is using Tishri years (work on this difference in dating continues, please refer back for updates and added research). Furthermore, the “first” year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:1) should have been translated his “accession” year. Nebuchadnezzar was reigning as king, but when he started the year was credited to his father, Nabopolassar, who had died earlier in the year. Charted out, it can be easily seen that there is no contradiction between Jeremiah and Daniel. To Daniel, on a Tishri year system, the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar was the third year of Jehoiakim, while to Jeremiah, on a Nisan year system, the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar was the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

THE 70-YEAR CAPTIVITY

The prophecies in Jeremiah 25:11-12, and Jeremiah 29:10 concerning the 70-year captivity have caused no end of problems to Biblical chronologists.

**Jeremiah 25:10-11)** 10Moreover I will take from them the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11This whole land will be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

**Jeremiah 29:10)** For this is what Yahweh says, “After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

**2 Chronicles 36:21)** to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had made up for its Sabbaths. As long as it lay desolate it kept Sabbath to fulfill seventy years.

Most Bible Dictionaries and commentaries do not handle the problem. Matthew Henry is uncertain about the start of the 70 years. The Anchor Bible calls the 70 years a round number probably representing three generations. The Interpreter’s Bible calls the 70 years a round number probably representing a lifetime. E.W. Bullinger just mentions the 70 years without a reference to the reigns of the Babylonian kings. Martin Anstey charts the 70 years to the first year of a sole reign of Cyrus by having Cyrus co-reign with a Median king after he had already conquered Babylon, but this supposed “co-reign” is absent from the Bible and ancient history.

What exactly is the cause of the confusion? The prophecy of Jeremiah apparently says that the captivity of the Judeans would last 70 years, at which time Babylon would be punished. However, Babylon was smitten by Persia during the 68th year. That is the reason most modern chronologists handle the 70 years as a “round number.”

The problem is one of both translation and understanding. It is significant that the prophecy of Jeremiah is mentioned in Ezra 1:1 and Daniel 9:2. Ezra 1:1 occurs in “the first year of Cyrus.” Daniel 9:1 occurs in “the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus….” Both Darius and Ahasuerus are titles. In Daniel 9:1 “Ahasuerus” is Cyrus, and Darius is Cambyses, Cyrus’ son. Cyrus set up Cambyses in Babylon, which is why Daniel 9:1 says he “was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.” The first year of Cyrus as king of Persia and Babylon, and the first year of his son Cambyses is the same calendar year. The year is the “first,” and not the accession year. Since Babylon fell to Cyrus in 540 B.C. Thus, 540/539 B.C. is Cyrus’ accession year and the first year of Cyrus’ reign is 539/538 B.C. Yet, according to Ezra 1:1 the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy had not yet been accomplished In the Hebrew text the words translated “That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished…” clearly indicate that the “word of the Lord” was not yet fulfilled. Also, the context of Daniel 9, occurring the same year as Ezra 1:1, indicates the 70 years was not fulfilled. The exact subject and intent of Jeremiah’s prophecy is cleared up in Daniel. Daniel understood by the books (writings) of Jeremiah that there would be “seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). The “desolations” cannot refer to the physical destruction of Jerusalem, because Ezra 1:1 was only 50 years after Jerusalem was burned. The subject of the prayer in Daniel chapter 9 was the desolate sanctuary. Daniel prayed “O our God … cause your face to shine on your sanctuary that is desolate.” (Daniel 9:17). The desolation of the sanctuary started in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar when he took from Judah “part of the vessels of the house of God, and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god,” (Daniel 1:2). Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian in the 68th year of Jeremiah’s 70 years. In the first year of Cyrus (which was also the first year of Cambyses being set over Babylon) both Ezra and Daniel knew that Jeremiah’s prophecy was not fulfilled yet. It was in the first year of Cyrus (the 69th year of Jeremiah’s 70 years) that he allowed some of the vessels of the temple to return to Jerusalem. More importantly, however, he gave the permission to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. The altar of the Lord was set up in the month Tishri (Ezra 3:1-3). Ezra uses a Tishri calendar, so Tishri would be the first month of Cyrus’ second year by Ezra’s dating. Also, in the month Zif, the second month, the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:8). Thus, the altar was set up and the work on the temple started in the second year of Cyrus, exactly 70 years after the “desolation” had started when Nebuchadnezzar carried away some of the temple vessels.

In order to understand the 70-year period foretold by Jeremiah, it must be seen that Jeremiah never says that Babylon will be destroyed after 70 years. The consequences of the unbelief of Israel are listed in Jeremiah 25:8-11. There are many listed. The 70 years does not refer just to the last consequence of Jeremiah 25:11 (i.e., “serve the king of Babylon”). A comparable situation can be found in Exodus 12:40.

**Exodus 12:40)** Now the time of the sojourn of the children of Israel (who lived in Egypt) was 430 years.

This verse does not say that the children of Israel were in Egypt 430 years. It says the “sojourning” was 430 years. The entire sojourning of the children of Israel from the call of Abraham until the Exodus was 430 years. The phrase “who lived in Egypt” was simply a part of the sojourn and helps to identify the children of Israel. In like manner “serve the king of Babylon” in verse eleven refers only to a part of all the consequences that are listed from verses 8:11.

Also, it must be remembered that the word “when” does not mean “immediately.” At first reading Jeremiah 25:12 seems to say that immediately after the 70 years Babylon would be punished. However, it was years after the 70 years of Jeremiah that Babylon became “desolate forever.”

**Jeremiah 25:12)** When seventy years are accomplished, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, says Yahweh, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever.

After Cyrus conquered Babylon, the city of Babylon still maintained its splendor but decay and degeneration began. A revolt of the people during the reign of Xerxes caused much of the city defenses to be dismantled. Alexander the great desired to restore the city but his death prevented any real progress.

Since then, Babylon has been a quarry from which all the tribes in the vicinity have perpetually derived the bricks with which they have built their cities, and (besides Selucia) Ctesiphon, Al Modain, Baghdad, Kufa, Kerberlah, Hillah, and numerous other towns, have risen from its ruins. The “great city,” “the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,” has thus emphatically “become heaps” (Jeremiah 51:37) she is “truly an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant.” Her walls have altogether disappeared – they have “fallen” (Jeremiah 51:44), been “thrown down” (Jeremiah 50:15), been “broken utterly” (Jeremiah 51:58). “A drought is upon her waters” (Jeremiah 50:38); for the system of irrigation, on which in Babylonia fertility altogether depends, has long been laid aside; “her cities” are everywhere “a desolation” (Jeremiah 51:43), her “land of wilderness;” “wild beasts of the desert” (Jackals) “lie there,” and “owls dwell there.” The natives regard the whole site as haunted, and neither will the “Arab pitch tent, nor the shepherd fold sheep there” (Isaiah 13:20). [Smith’s Dictionary of the bible, Vol. 1, page 219]

Thus, the prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 25 concerning Babylon has been fulfilled.

JEHOIACHIN CARRIED TO BABYLON

In 2 Chronicles 36:10 Jehoiachin was taken captive “at the return of the year.” This year is the Nisan year. Jehoiachin began to reign after the death of Jehoiakim. According to Jeremiah 36:30, Jehoiakim was not buried, but thrown out “in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.” This fits with the turn of the year being Nisan, and the time of Jehoiakim’s death being winter, not with Jehoiakim’s death being summer. When we realize that Jehoiakim died after Nisan, the synchronisms given in Ezekiel and 2 Kings fit together perfectly.

In Jeremiah 52:28, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have taken captives (3,023 in number) from Jerusalem in the seventh year of his reign (Nisan dating). 2 Kings 24:12 says Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive along with other captives (10,000 in number) in the eighth year of his reign (Tishri dating). These two carryings away both occurred within a calendar year (the eighth year according to Kings). The seventh year ended (Nisan dating) with just 3,023 of the people carried away. The rest of the people were carried away during the next six months.

Jehoiachin was carried away at the turn of the year (Nisan). Thus, the month Nisan of 3364 A.H. became the first month of the captivity of Jehoiachin.

ZEDEKIAH’S REIGN

The reign of Zedekiah marks a switch in the way reigns are reckoned in Kings and Chronicles from the Tishri calendar to the Nisan calendar (see revisedenglishversion.com/chronology). Judah was vassal state to Babylon, and adopted Babylonian Nisan dating when Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah’s name to Zedekiah and made him king over Judah (2 Kings 24:17). It would have been natural for a vassal kingdom to adopt the dating of its conqueror, and the shift in dating is confirmed by three sets of synchronisms.

The first set of synchronisms are Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4; and 2 Kings 25:1, which concur in dating the siege of Jerusalem. This is further confirmed by Ezekiel 24:1-2, which use the same figures, but date the event in terms of Jehoiachin’s captivity (also Nisan calendar).

The second set of synchronisms involves the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 39:2; 52:5-6; and 2 Kings 25:2-3 concur. And there is further confirmation that 2 Kings 25:8 and Jeremiah 52:12 give this year as the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar.

The third synchronism is in Ezekiel 40:1. This verse synchronizes the 25th year of Jehoiachin’s captivity with the 14th year after Jerusalem was smitten by Nebuchadnezzar. The switch in official regnal calendar of Judah from Tishri to Nisan clears up any apparent contradiction between Kings and Jeremiah (and any omissions of Thiele).

THE 37th YEAR OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN THE YEAR 568 B.C.

The 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar is in the year of 568 B.C. This date has been established by astronomical calculations and can be used as a date from which to establish an absolute chronology of the Old Testament. An absolute chronology places an event on a specific date on the scale of B.C. and A.D. years of the Julian calendar. This is opposed to relative chronology, which determines the time interval between two events.

Practically all chronologies available today, Biblical and secular, rest on the Canon of Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer living in Alexandria in the first century A.D. This Canon is the only work from antiquity which lists the kings from the Babylonian Empire directly through to the Roman Empire. This list has been used as an authority by scholars for centuries. The only other choice to using Ptolemy’s Canon is to painstakingly piece together the records of kings and rulers from a number of different empires. This process is subject to many errors, and admittedly there are several gaps where there are no records outside of Ptolemy. (These gaps exist primarily in the Persian record.)

One reason why the Biblical student may wish to approach an uncritical use of Ptolemy’s dates with caution is that Ptolemy was not a contemporary observer. In evaluating historical witnesses, the highest authority is granted to a witness who is contemporary with the event that he describes. It would be fitting to be able to establish the dating system of the Old Testament by a contemporary witness to a Biblical event or date that can be likewise datable to a point on the Julian calendar. The only suitable type of record is an astronomical observation made contemporary with a known date in the Biblical era. Then this observation can be fixed on the Julian calendar by confirming the ancient observation with calculations of the lunar and planetary positions on that date.

Several types of observations are not suitable for this study because of lack of precision or the nature of the observation. For example, there are extensive records of lunar sightings in Babylon for the purpose of fixing the length of the month. Unfortunately, these observations lack any precision useful for determining a fixed and absolute date in antiquity. The same is true for the tables that have been discovered of the observations of the planet Venus.

Eclipses of the sun or moon would seem to be a singular enough event to be an accurate timing base. However, ancient records seldom give the record of an eclipse with sufficient information to even tell within which year an eclipse occurred. Dating of these observations has been so vague that practically all such records are subject to interpretation. Because of this, eclipse records have not been very useful in helping to establish absolute dates. In fact, gross mistakes have been made in chronologies based on the dating of an eclipse that was claimed to be fixed more precisely than it could actually be fixed. The book, *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*, notes that there are at least three suggested dates for the lunar eclipse recorded by Josephus. Only with extensive external evidence was it possible to sort out which eclipse was the correct one. Out of the volumes of astronomical observations that have survived from antiquity, particularly from Babylon, most have proved unsuitable for the purpose of establishing an absolute date.

As a result, the only type of observation that could be suitable for fixing an absolute date would be the observation of the positions of planets. This type of observation would be precise enough to be confirmed by modern calculations. Also, any conjunction which may have occurred would be unique enough to be likewise confirmable. However, the most extensive records of observations which are accurate enough for the purpose survive only from the era of 300-200 B.C. in Babylon. This is too late to be of any use for dating Old Testament events.

There is one exception to this, and it is an observation recorded on a tablet during the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. A summary of the tablet was given in *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy* by Dr. Robert Newton. In this book, he mentioned that the tablet recorded nine measurements of moonrise and moonset, five conjunctions of the moon with specified stars, along with one conjunction of Mercury, two conjunctions of Venus, and three of Mars with specified stars during the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. Dr. Newton’s own calculations showed that indeed the bodies in question were within one degree of the recorded observations on the tablet in all but one case. Dr. Newton felt that this was a degree of accuracy seldom matched among ancient astronomical records and should be accorded the highest degree of confidence. The positions of the moon and planets corresponded to the year 568 B.C. Therefore, the dating of the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar beginning Nisan 1, April 23, 568 B.C. should be given the greatest confidence possible, since the dating comes from a contemporary observer.

THE SEVENTY YEARS OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah mentions a period of seventy years that has been a puzzle to historians and chronologists.

**Zechariah 1:12)** Then the angel of Yahweh replied, ‘O Yahweh of Armies, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these seventy years?’

This prophecy occurred in the second year of the Persian emperor Darius, as is stated in Zechariah chapter one.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Zechariah 1:1)** In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying,

**Zechariah 1:7)** On the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying,

That the seventieth year mentioned in verse twelve is also the second year of Darius is clear from reading the verses themselves. The vision was continuous with no time break.

**Zechariah 1:7-13)** 7On the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying, 8“I had a vision in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in a ravine; and behind him there were red, sorrel, and white horses. 9Then I asked, ‘My lord, what are these?’ The angel who talked with me said to me, ‘I will show you what these are.’ 10 The man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, ‘They are the ones Yahweh has sent to go back and forth through the earth.’ 11They reported to the angel of Yahweh who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, ‘We have walked back and forth through the earth, and behold, all the earth is at rest and in peace.’ 12Then the angel of Yahweh replied, ‘O Yahweh of Armies, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these seventy years?’ 13Yahweh answered the angel who talked with me with kind and comforting words.

It is noteworthy that there is no actual problem with Zechariah’s seventy years, but rather a manufactured one. When commentators see the reference to “Jerusalem … against which Thou hast had indignation….” they immediately think that the seventy-year period started with the sack of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple. Of course, there is not seventy years between the sack of Jerusalem and Darius’ second year. Thus the following comment by Keil and Delitzsch is typical: “At the same time, the remark made by Vitringa, Hengstenberg, and others must not be overlooked … inasmuch as there were also (not perhaps quite, but nearly) seventy years between the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple, and the second year of Darius.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

The commentators recognize that the period of time from the sack of Jerusalem to the second year of Darius is not seventy years but almost seventy years. However, when God’s Word says seventy years, it means seventy years exactly. There are exactly seventy years between the start of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the ninth year of Zedekiah and the second year of Darius. Zechariah does not mention the destruction of the Temple as the starting point for his seventy years. That has been wrongly assumed. The prophecy refers to the “indignation” that God has held for seventy years. Indignation is intense anger, and the anger of the Lord was expressed against Judah at the time Nebuchadnezzar began his attack on Jerusalem, exactly seventy years prior to the second year of Darius.

The Judeans had aroused God’s anger by their evil words and deeds, and the attack of the Babylonians was the result of their evil.

**2 Chronicles 36:15-17)** 15Yahweh the God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place: 16but they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Yahweh arose against his people, until there was no remedy. 17Therefore he *brought on them* [emphasis added] the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or gray-headed; he gave them all into his hand.

The exact date of the Babylonian attack is set in 2 Kings.

**2 Kings 25:1)** It came to pass in the ninth year of his [Zedekiah’s] reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it around it.

The Book of Ezekiel clearly shows that this was the time that God's indignation, His great anger, was aroused against Judah.

**Ezekiel 24:1-2, 6, 9, 12-14)** 1And in the ninth year, [of Zedekiah], in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, [This is the day of the start of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem] the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, 2“Son of man, write the name of the day, even of this same day; the king of Babylon drew close to Jerusalem this same day. 6Therefore this is what the Lord Yahweh says: Woe to the bloody city, to the caldron whose rust is in it and whose rust will not go out of it! Empty it piece by piece. No lot has fallen on it. 9Therefore this is what the Lord Yahweh says: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile *of wood* large. 12She has wearied herself with toil, yet her thick rust doesn’t come off her; her rust doesn’t come off by fire. 13In your filthiness is lewdness; because I have cleansed you and you weren’t cleansed, you will not be cleansed from your filthiness any more until I have caused my wrath toward you to rest. 14I, Yahweh, have spoken it; it will happen, and I will do it. I will not go back, nor will I spare, nor will I repent; according to your ways, and according to your doings they will judge you, says the Lord Yahweh.”

Counting inclusively (because the seventy years is a time span) from the ninth year of Zedekiah to the second year of Darius, there are exactly seventy years, just as Zechariah 1:12 says.

ZECHARIAH'S SECOND SEVENTY YEARS

Zechariah 7:5 mentions 70 years of fasting and morning. From the destruction of Jerusalem to the 4th year of Darius is 70 years. Fast on the 5th month (2 Kings 25); fast in the 7th month (death of Gedaliah; Jeremiah 41:1). Key: “even those 70 years” = “even these 70 years.”

Also check Zech. 8:19 and Companion Bible notes.

THE TRAVELS OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The children of Israel crossed over the Jordan and came into the promised land in 1416 B.C. After this, it took until 1409 B.C. (seven years) to subdue and conquer the promised land. Sometime during these seven years or right after them, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were taken to Shiloh.[[36]](#footnote-36)

**Joshua 19:51)** These are the inheritances that Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers’ houses of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before Yahweh at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. So they made an end of dividing the land.

The Ark of the Covenant was taken out of the Tabernacle in Shiloh, in 1067 B.C. or 1066 B.C.[[37]](#footnote-37) The minimum amount of time that the Ark was at Shiloh is 342 years (1409 B.C. through 1067 B.C.) and the maximum amount of time is 350 years (1416 B.C. through 1066 B.C.).

When the Ark was taken out of Shiloh, it was taken to somewhere right next to Ebenezer. The Israelite army had set up camp there and the Philistines had just killed about four thousand men in a battle. This is recorded in 1 Samuel 4:1-2. The record continues:

**1 Samuel 4:3-4)** 3When the people had come *back* into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has Yahweh struck us down today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of Shiloh so that he will come among us and save us out of the hand of our enemies.” 4So the people sent to Shiloh and they brought from there the ark of the covenant of Yahweh of Armies who sits above the cherubim, …

A battle was again fought, and the Philistines won. They took the Ark. This is in 1067 B.C. or 1066 B.C.[[38]](#footnote-38) They put the Ark in the house of their god, Dagon. The record follows.

**1 Samuel 4:10-11)** 10So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated and they fled, each man to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel 30,000 foot soldiers. 11And the ark of God was taken…

**1 Samuel 5:1-2)** 1Now the Philistines took the ark of God, and they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2And the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

Twice the Philistine priests came into where Dagon was kept and found him on the floor. He had fallen down during the night. Also, the people of Ashdod and of the coasts of Ashdod were inflicted with emerods. They decided to move the ark out of Ashdod. The record follows.

**1 Samuel 5:7-8** 7And when the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not stay with us, for his hand is severe against us and against Dagon our god.” 8So they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines and said, “What should we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” And they answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel turn toward Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel over *there*.

Great sickness and emerods, inflicted the people of Gath, also. The people of Gath sent the Ark away. The record follows.

**1 Samuel 5:10)** So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But it came to pass as the ark of God came to Ekron that the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought around the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people.”

By this time the Ark had been in the country of the Philistines for seven months. It was seven months later in 1066 B.C. or in 1067 B.C.

**1 Samuel 6:1)** And the ark of Yahweh was in the territory of the Philistines seven months.

The Philistines wanted the destruction that was happening in their country to stop, so they decided to return the Ark with a trespass offering.

**1 Samuel 6:10-12, 14)** 10And the men did so. And they took two cows *that were* giving milk and tied them to the cart and closed in their calves at home; 11and they put the ark of Yahweh on the cart, and the chest with the gold mice and the images of their tumors. 12The cows went straight on the road, on the road to Beth-shemesh. They stayed on one path, lowing as they went, and did not turn to the right or to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth-shemesh. 14The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. And a great stone was there, …

There was a great slaughter in Beth-shemesh, because some of the men of Beth-shemesh looked inside of the Ark of the Covenant and Beth-shemites suffered the consequences. The record follows.

**1 Samuel 6:19)** He struck of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of Yahweh,...

Because of this, they wanted to get rid of the Ark so they gave it to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim.

**1 Samuel 6:21)** And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of Yahweh. Come down and take it up to yourselves.”

**1 Samuel 7:1-2)** 1The men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of Yahweh and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to guard the ark of Yahweh. 2And it came to pass, from the day that the ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim, that a long time passed, for it was twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh.

In verse 2, the context of the twenty years that the Ark spent in Kiriath-jearim is that all the house of Israel was lamenting. This refers to a period of oppression. In this instance, the oppression that is referred to is the Philistine oppression, which lasted 40 years. The Ark of the Covenant was in Kiriath-jearim for twenty years out of the forty years of Philistine oppression. The Ark was still in Kiriath-jearim after the oppression was over and was not moved from there until 1014 B.C. through 1000 B.C. This means that the Ark was in Kiriath-jearim from sometime in 1067 B.C. or 1066 B.C. until sometime in 1014 B.C. through 1000 B.C. The most amount of time was 67 years (1067 B.C. to 1000 B.C.). The least amount of time was 52 years (1066 B.C. to 1014 B.C.).[[39]](#footnote-39)

In 1 Samuel 14:18, the Ark of the Covenant is mentioned. The record seems to indicate that the Ark had been or was going to be moved from Kiriath-jearim.

**1 Samuel 14:18)** Then Saul said to Ahijah, “Bring the ark of God here” (for the ark of God on that day was *with* the children of Israel).

The part of the verse that reads “the Ark of God. For the Ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel” is different in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint this part of verse 18 reads, “the ephod, for he wore the ephod at that day before Israel.”[[40]](#footnote-40) The word rendered “bring” is inappropriate for the Ark.[[41]](#footnote-41) Thus we conclude that this verse was mis-copied in the Hebrew text, and should, like in the Septuagint, be talking about the ephod instead of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark was taken out of Aminadab’s house in Kiriath-jearim when David took it. The record follows.

**2 Samuel 6:2, 4)** 2And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God that is called by the Name, even the name of Yahweh of Armies who sits enthroned above the cherubim. 4and they brought it out of the house of Aminadab that was on the hill with the ark of God *on it*; and Ahio went before the ark.

Verse 4 says that the Ark was taken from Aminadab’s house which was at Gibeah. This does not fit with 1 Samuel 7:1-2 which says that the Ark was taken to Aminadab’s house which was in Kiriath-jearim.

**1 Samuel 7:1-2)** 1The men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of Yahweh and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to guard the ark of Yahweh. 2And it came to pass, from the day that the ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim,

The word “Gibeah” means “on the hill” or “in the hill.” In the verse above, it says that the Ark was taken to Aminadab’s house “in the hill.” “Gibeah” in 2 Samuel 6:4 should be translated “in the hill” or “on the hill.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

In 2 Samuel 6:2 and 6:4, David had the Ark moved from Aminadab’s house. Uzzah touched the Ark while it was being moved, and he died. David was afraid and he took the Ark to the house of Obed-edom. It stayed there for three months.

**2 Samuel 6:8-11)** 8And David became angry because Yahweh had broken out against Uzzah,… 9David was afraid of Yahweh that day and he said, “How can the ark of Yahweh come to me?” 10So David would not move the ark of Yahweh to be with him in the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11The ark of Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months,

The household of Obed-edom was blessed because of the Ark, so David took it to Jerusalem and placed it in a tent that David had made for it, not in the Tabernacle.[[43]](#footnote-43) The record follows.

**2 Samuel 6:12, 17)** 12It was told king David, saying, “Yahweh has blessed the house of Obed-edom and everything he has because of the ark of God.” So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with rejoicing. 17They brought in the ark of Yahweh and set it in its place in the middle of the tent that David had pitched for it,…

The Ark stayed in Jerusalem until it was taken out of the city when David fled from his son Absalom, who was trying to kill him. The priests took the Ark out of Jerusalem.

**2 Samuel 15:14, 24)** 14David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise and let us flee; for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom. 24Behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, carrying the ark of the covenant of God, and they set down the ark of God,

David then tells the priests to have the Ark of the Covenant taken back into Jerusalem.

**2 Samuel 15:25, 29)** 25The king said to Zadok, “Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of Yahweh 29Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

The Ark of the Covenant stayed in the city of David until Solomon moved it from the tent David had made for it. He put it in the Temple, which was just finished being built. The record follows.

**1 Kings 8:1, 4)** 1Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chiefs of the fathers’ households of the children of Israel, to king Solomon in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of the city of David, 4They brought up the ark of Yahweh and the Tent of Meeting

The Temple was finished in 970 B.C.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Ark was taken out of Kiriath-jearim in 1014 B.C. through 1000 B.C. At the least, it has been thirty years (1000 B.C. to 970 B.C.), and at the most, it has been forty-four years (1014 B.C. through 1000 B.C.). During this time, the Ark was in Jerusalem except for the three months that it was in Obed-edom, after it was just taken out of Kiriath-jearim.

The priests put the Ark in the temple.

**1 Kings 8:6)** The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place,

The Tabernacle was also put in the temple.[[45]](#footnote-45)

**1 Kings 8:4)** They brought up the ark of Yahweh and the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent, even these the priests and the Levites brought up.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER

The chronological framework of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther has been a subject of controversy and debate for centuries. Today, however, the controversy has apparently subsided since almost all modern chronologists agree that the Ahasuerus of Esther is the Persian monarch Xerxes, and the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah is Artaxerxes I Longimanus. This paper will show that the conclusion drawn by the modern chronologists is in error. The Ahasuerus of Esther and the Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah are both one and the same man, the Darius of Ezra 4-6.

The reason the modern chronologists were misled as to the proper identity of the kings in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther is that they trusted secular records more than the Word of God. Admittedly, the chronology of the Ezra-Nehemiah period is not simple, but the Word of God contains keys that allow a proper chronology to be constructed.

Before the chronology can be properly examined, however, it must be realized that Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Ahasuerus are not personal names. They are appellatives, titles. It can easily be seen how the use of appellatives instead of names could cause confusion to students of the Bible. For example, in Ezra the same person is called Darius and Artaxerxes, and contrariwise, there are two different men called Artaxerxes. Nevertheless, a careful study of the scriptures and the appellatives will bring an end to any confusion.

There are a number of scriptures that show that the Persian King Darius is also the Darius of Ezra chapters 5 and 6, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, and the Artaxerxes of Ezra chapters 7-10 and Nehemiah.

Ezra 7:1

Ezra contains a very important scripture for determining the chronology of the Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther period.

**Ezra 7:1)** Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra, the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

The reason this scripture is so important is that the time of the death of Seraiah, who is mentioned in this verse, is known.

**2 Kings 25:18-21)** 18The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest and the three keepers of the threshold, 19and out of the city he took an officer who was set over the men of war and five men of those who saw the king’s face who were found in the city, and the scribe, the captain of the army who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 21The king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away captive out of his land.

Seraiah was killed by Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, the same year that the temple was burned and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. That year was 586 B.C. If Ezra was the son of this Seraiah, then he would have had to have been conceived before 586 B.C. The Persian King Artaxerxes, known better as Artaxerxes I Longimanus, reigned from 464 B.C. to 424 B.C., a total of 41 years. Nehemiah asked permission to go to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of “Artaxerxes” (Nehemiah 2:1). After Nehemiah went to Jerusalem, both he and Ezra were there together (Nehemiah 8:1-9). The twentieth year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus was 445/444 B.C. (The Persians used a Nisan year calendar.) If Ezra was conceived the year Seraiah was killed, and was still alive in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus then he would have been 141 years old that year. If, on the other hand, Darius I is the “Artaxerxes” of Nehemiah, then Ezra would have been 84 years old in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, a very reasonable figure. (Daniel was around that same age when he was forced into the lions’ den.)

Obviously, modern scholars have a problem with Ezra being at least 141 years old when he ministers in Jerusalem, so they say that the genealogy in Ezra chapter seven is incomplete and that there is at least a generation between Seraiah and Ezra. That is not good biblical research, however. While it is true that the Word of God does contain many genealogies that either skip generations or leave out the siblings of a given generation, there is not one single genealogical listing in the Bible that skips a generation between the last two people mentioned in the genealogy.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Thus Ezra 7:1 provides a strong Biblical basis for understanding the Artaxerxes as Darius I.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Nehemiah 2:5-6

A second scripture that is important for setting the chronology of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther is Nehemiah 2:6.

**Nehemiah 2:5-6)** 5I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” 6The king said to me (the queen was also sitting by him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

The phrase, “the queen sitting by him” in Nehemiah 2:6 is unique. There is not a phrase like it anywhere else in the Bible. Furthermore, the word “queen” itself is unique. The word translated queen is *shegal*, a word only used two times in the scriptures. *Shegal* is an Akkadian loan word and is used of a foreign queen. The logical reason for inserting the phrase “the queen sitting by him” into the record at this time is to show the support and interest that the queen had in this situation. This would be most true if the queen were Esther, the foreign queen to whom the word *shegal* would apply perfectly. E.W. Bullinger recognized that the queen had to be Esther and commented:

Esther is introduced here (parenthetically) because of her sympathy and interest, which Nehemiah so greatly needed at this juncture, as Mordecai had needed it before. (Est. 4:14).

If Esther is introduced in Nehemiah 2:6 as the foreign queen of Artaxerxes, then it can be seen that the Artaxerxes of Ezra chapters 7-10 and the Ahasuerus of Esther are one and the same man, and evidence was presented earlier in this paper to show the Artaxerxes of Ezra chapters 7-10 and Nehemiah is Darius I.

Modern scholars are not able to explain Nehemiah 2:6 except to say that the queen mentioned must have had an interest in Judean affairs or that it was due to the presence of an unknown woman who the king wanted to impress that he granted Nehemiah’s request. It is obvious that both of these possibilities are weak and do not offer real explanations of the problem. The reason that the obvious solution to the problem, i.e., that the queen is Esther, is rejected, is that the Ahasuerus of Esther and Artaxerxes of Nehemiah would be the same person, and modern scholars have already ruled out that possibility.

The genealogy of Mordecai in the book of Esther is a key to the chronology of the Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther period.

**Esther 2:5-6)** 5There was a certain Jew in the palace-fortress of Susa whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite 6who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Esther 2:5-6 say that Mordecai was carried away from Jerusalem at the carrying away of Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was taken captive in 597 B.C. Yet Mordecai was alive and well in the twelfth year of the Ahasuerus of Esther (Esther 3:7). If the Ahasuerus of Esther is Xerxes, as modern scholarship would have us believe, then Mordecai was at least 124 years old when he became Ahasuerus’ right-hand man This is very improbable. Modern scholars get around the problem in various ways. More liberal scholars, who are not concerned with the literal accuracy of the scriptures simply point this verse out as just another error in the text and that “the author has here made a blunder in the chronology.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Other scholars have stated that the Hebrew could be read such that Kish, not Mordecai, was carried away.

According to Burg in Estius, West., Part., Cler., Ramb., Raw., the relative pronoun who refers, not to Mordecai, but to his great-grandfather Kish. Against this view are the facts, that, as just remarked, Kish is probably not an immediate ancestor, but is the father of King Saul; and that Hebrew usage demands the reference of who to Mordecai. The appositives ben Jair, ben Shimei, ben Kish, like Johnson or Jackson, serve merely as surnames to Mordecai. If, however, Mordecai himself was carried away with Jehoiachin in 596, he must have been at least 113 years old in the third year of Xerxes (483 B.C.), supposing him to have been an infant in arms at the time of his deportation. When he became grand vizier in the twelfth year of Xerxes (37 82), he was at least 122 years old. An appointment at such an age seems very unlikely, although most Jewish and some Christian communities have not hesitated to accept it.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The above quotation is very revealing. The reason that some scholars accept the admittedly forced usage of the Hebrew text that makes Kish, not Mordecai, be the one carried away is that Mordecai would be too old to be Xerxes’ “grand vizier.” Thus the problem is caused by wrongly identifying the Ahasuerus of Esther with Xerxes.

Biblical “scholars” have contrived and “solved” a problem that never actually existed. The solution to the problem is simple: read Esther 2:5-6 properly and Mordecai was the one carried away. This is entirely possible if Darius I was the Ahasuerus of Esther (as has been shown earlier). Mordecai would have been 88 years old when he was promoted.

Mordecai’s advanced age could explain why there is nothing known of him in the Persian records. It is quite possible that he only served for a short time. Also the closing verse of Esther contains information that may explain how a person like Nehemiah obtained the position of the king’s cupbearer.

**Esther 10:3)** For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and favorably accepted by the multitude of his brothers, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his descendants.

Mordecai strove to place Judeans in positions of power and prominence, and Nehemiah’s position as cupbearer could have been a direct result of Mordecai’s influence.

Ezra 6:14

Ezra chapter 6 contains a verse that identifies the appellative Darius with the appellative Artaxerxes.

**Ezra 6:14)** The elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They built and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

This verse is a genuine problem to modern scholars who want to separate Darius and Artaxerxes and make them two different people. The subject of the verse is the Temple, which can be easily seen from the context.

**Ezra 6:3)** “In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree: Concerning God’s house at Jerusalem, ‘Let the house be built, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let its foundations be strongly laid: its height sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits,

**Ezra 6:6-8)** 6“Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and your companions the Apharsachites who are beyond the River, you must stay far from there. 7Leave the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place. 8“Moreover I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: “That from the king’s goods, even from the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence to these men, so that they are not hindered.

**Ezra 6:14-16)** 14The elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They built and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15This house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. 16The children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the children of the captivity kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

The problem these verses cause to the modern scholar is that Artaxerxes (mentioned in verse 14) had nothing to do with the building of the Temple. In fact, Artaxerxes came to the throne more than 50 years after the Temple was completed. Scholars attempt to deal with Artaxerxes’ name in Ezra 6:14 in two basic ways. One way is to say that the name “Artaxerxes” was not in the original text and that someone added it. However there is no genuine textual evidence for that conclusion, it is simply one that “makes sense” to them.

The other way scholars handle the mention of the name Artaxerxes in Ezra 6:14 is to say that since Artaxerxes I Longimanus was the one under whose rule the walls of Jerusalem were completed, his name was inserted to “complete the picture” of the kings involved in Israel’s rehabilitation.[[50]](#footnote-50) This is a contrived and forced solution which warps the context of Ezra chapter 6.

The genuine solution to the presence of the name “Artaxerxes” in Ezra 6:14 is simple. In the phrase “Cyrus, and Darius and Artaxerxes King of Persia” the last “and” should be translated “even.” Thus the phrase would read, “Cyrus, and Darius, even Artaxerxes King of Persia.”

Darius is believed to have executed the Behistun Inscription about the 5th year of his reign, though some portion of it was perhaps added a little later. In this wonderful rock Inscription he records the fact that during the first five or six years of his reign he reconquered all the revolted provinces of the Persian Empire (Elam, Susiana, Sagartia, Media, Babylonia, Parthia, Armenia, etc.), and overthrew all the nine pretenders to his throne, including (1) Gomates, the Pseudo-Smerdis, the Magian who claimed to be the brother Cambyses, and who occupied the throne for a period of 7 months; (2) a Nidinta-Bel, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar II, the son of Nabonidus, and claimed to be the King of Babylon; (3) Phraortes, who said he was the son of Cyaxares, and claimed to be King of Media; (4) a second pretender who claimed to be Bardis or Smerdis the brother of Cambyses, and several others.

He thus became “Arta-Xerxes” (Great Shah) (Ezra 6:14, 7:1, etc.), “King of Assyria” (Ezra 6:22), “King of Kings” (Ezra 7:12), King of Babylon (Neh. 13:6), and master of the entire World-Empire of Persia.

This accounts for the change of name from Darius to Artaxerxes, which we note, when we pass from the events of his 4th to those of his 7th year in Ezra 6:12 and 7:1.

The change of name which is so puzzling to us, was perfectly well understood at the time when the Book of Ezra was written, and is thus a proof of the contemporaneity of the Record.

But in order that there might be no mistake about the matter, the writer tells us in the most distinct and explicit manner that this Darius is the King who was also called Artaxerxes. The Ezra 6:14 he says, “They builded and finished it according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius (even Artaxerxes), King of Persia.” Two persons, and two only, are named here; two decrees, and two only are specified, and the Hebrew *Vav* should be translated “Darius, even Artaxerxes,” not “Darius and Artaxerxes,” as though a reference were intended to some third decree by some third person, a reference which was not in the writer's mind at all.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The reason God would include “Darius even Artaxerxes” in the text is to let the reader know that He is now going to refer to Darius I as Artaxerxes. It is paradoxical that one of the criticisms of equating Darius I with Artaxerxes in the Bible is that it is a confusing way of using appellatives. On the contrary, God shifts from the appellative “Darius” to “Artaxerxes” in Ezra chapter 6, and He tells the reader that that is what He is doing in Ezra 6:14. Then the rest of the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah uses “Artaxerxes” throughout. Ezra 6:14 is solid proof that the Bible calls the same man Darius and Artaxerxes.

Priests in Nehemiah

The book of Nehemiah contains three lists of priests that are nearly identical. Although this is exactly what one would expect if the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was actually Darius I, it is a problem if the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah is actually Artaxerxes I Longimanus. The lists are recorded in Nehemiah 12:1-7; 12:12-21; and 10:2-8 and are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Nehemiah 12:1-7** (returned with Zerubbabel) | **Nehemiah 12:12-21** (list with heirs) | **Nehemiah 10:2-8** (sealed the covenant with Nehemiah) |
| Seraiah | Seraiah | Seraiah Azariah |
| Jeremiah Ezra | Jeremiah Ezra | Jeremiah |
|  |  | Pashhur |
| Amariah Malluch Hattush (no male heirs) | Amariah Malluchi | Amariah Malchijah Hattush |
| Shecaniah | Shebaniah | Shebaniah Malluch |
| Rehum\* | Harim | Harim |
| Meremoth | Maraioth | Meremoth Obadiah Daniel |
| Iddo | Iddo |  |
| Ginnethon | Ginnethon | Ginnethon Baruch Meshullam |
| Abijah Mijamin Maadiah Bilgah Shemaiah Joiarib Jedaiah Sallu (sp?) Amok Hilkiah Jedaiah | Abijah Mijiamin Moadiah Bilgah Shemaiah Joiarib Jedaiah Sallai (sp?) Amok Hilkiah Jedaiah | Abijah Mijamin Maaziah Bilgah Shemaiah |
| \*Rehum is Harim |  |  |

This list is Nehemiah 12:1-7 is the “priests … that went up with Zerubbabel [that is, returned from Persia to Judea with Zerubbabel] the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua [Jeshua was the high priest as per Haggai 1:1 and 2:2].” The priests in this list returned to Judah in the first year of Cyrus as the first chapter of Ezra records. That was in 538/537 B.C.

The list in Nehemiah 12:12-21 is the priests that came back with Zerubbabel and Jeshua giving their chief heir. The list of the priests that returned with Zerubbabel is the same as the list that had heirs with one exception, Hattush, and it is very possible that Hattush had no male heir.[[52]](#footnote-52) The similarity of these lists is exactly what one would expect if the names in the lists are personal names. Modern commentators, who say the personal names of Nehemiah 12:1-7 became clan names by Nehemiah 12:12-21, cannot explain the omission of Hattush from this latter list. This is especially so in light of the fact that the name Hattush appears in the list of Nehemiah 10. This “discrepancy” is easy to explain if the names are read as they appear; i.e., as personal names. Hattush returned with Zerubbabel and is in the Nehemiah 12:1-7 list. He had no male heir so he is absent from the list of Nehemiah 12:12-21, yet he was still alive at the time of Nehemiah and sealed the covenant with him in Nehemiah 10.

The third list of names is in Nehemiah 10:2-8. It is a list of the priests who were with Nehemiah and sealed the covenant that they would walk before the Lord. It is significantly different from the lists in Nehemiah 12. There are names that appear in both lists of Nehemiah 12 that do not appear in the list of Nehemiah 10, and there are seven names that appear in Nehemiah 10 that do not appear in either list of Nehemiah chapter 12.

These lists make perfect sense if the Artaxerxes of Ezra chapters 7-10 and Nehemiah is the same man as the Darius of Ezra 4-6. Nehemiah 12:1-7 lists the names of the priests that returned with Zerubbabel in 538/537 B.C. Then, Nehemiah 12:12-21 gives the heirs of those men and the list is identical except for Hattush, who probably had no male heir. Nehemiah’s covenant was sealed in or after the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1). If this Artaxerxes was Darius I there would be a span of 37 years from the people’s return to the sealing of the covenant. It can be easily seen that in a span of 37 years a portion of the priests who returned with Zerubbabel would have died. If, on the other hand, the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was Artaxerxes I Longimanus, as modern scholarship presumes, the time span between Zerubbabel's return (538/537 B.C.) and the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (445/444 B.C.) increases from 37 years to 94 years. It is not conceivable that 14 [15 if Ezra is the same as Azariah] of the original 22 priests that returned with Zerubbabel lived 94 years longer and then sealed the covenant Nehemiah made with God.

Modern commentators try to circumvent this problem by saying that the original names of the twenty-two men listed in Nehemiah 12:1-7 became the clan names for the priests. Modern commentators hold this interpretation because the simple solution, i.e., that the names are names of people, is thought to be untenable because of the erroneous belief that Artaxerxes is Artaxerxes I Longimanus.

The 21 names [in Neh. 10:2-8] are virtually identical with the 22 said to have returned with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:1-7) and the 21 listed as heads of priestly phratries in the next generation (Neh. 12:12-21). Since the same men cannot be involved [emphasis added] (Zerubbabel, c. 520; Neh. 11, c. 430 B.C.), these must be family, or rather course, names, exemplifying the post-exilic arrangement of the priesthood according to courses, each course being responsible for temple services for a fortnight.[[53]](#footnote-53)

There are problems with saying the names of the priests in Nehemiah 10 are not personal names but the names of priestly courses (besides the one already mentioned about the name Hattush). Who could seal a covenant representing an entire course of priests? If that could be done, why were the other courses not represented? The list then becomes a mixture of the priestly clans’ personal names. Furthermore, there were to be twenty-four priestly orders. Yet both the list in Nehemiah 12:12-21 and the list in Nehemiah 10:2-8 which, according to modern commentators list the representatives of the priestly orders, have only 21 names.

Since there were originally twenty-four priestly divisions for sanctuary duties (I Ch. 24:7-19), and this number was in force again in later Judaism, it may be that two names have dropped out in the copying, just as one name in the present list (Hattush, verse 2) has failed to reappear in verses 12-21. But equally it may be that the full rota had not yet been restored.[[54]](#footnote-54)

There is absolutely no evidence for the idea that names have “dropped out in copying.” Furthermore, the one explanation given that postulates that the full twenty-four courses may not have been restored by the time the list in Nehemiah 12:12-21 was compiled will not explain the presence of only 21 names in Nehemiah 10. In 94 years there would have been plenty of time to restore the priestly courses.

The answer to the problems caused by the lists of priests in Nehemiah is simple. The proper names in the three lists are just what they appear to be: proper names. Priests came back with Zerubbabel, had heirs, and signed a covenant with Nehemiah. There is no problem at all if there is no long time span artificially added between lists of Nehemiah 12 and Nehemiah 10.

Esther 10:1

Esther chapter 10 contains a verse that indicates the Ahasuerus of Esther is Darius I, not Xerxes.

**Esther 10:1)** And King Ahasuerus imposed a tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea.

According to Herodotus (Book III, 96) Darius laid a tribute on the islands of the sea. According to the book of Esther so did Ahasuerus, but he did so after the twelfth year of his reign (Esther 3:7). The Persian King Xerxes did control the islands of the sea, but he lost them before the twelfth year of his reign.

Herodotus (iii, 96), Thucydides (Book i), and Plato (Menexenus), all tell us that Darius Hystapes subdued all the Islands of the Aegean Sea, and Diodorus Siculus (Book xii) tells us that they were all lost again, by his son Xerxes, before the 12th year of his reign (B.C. 474), which we can well believe after the humiliating defeat of his vast host of warriors by land and sea at Thermopylae, Salamis and Platea, B.C. 480. The later Kings of Persia held none of these Islands except Clazomene and Cyprus (Xenophon, Hellenica, Book v). This is conclusive, both for the identification of the Ahasuerus of Esther with Darius Hystaspes, and against his identification with Xerxes, or with any later occupant of the Persian throne.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Since these islands were lost to Xerxes before his twelfth year, and the Ahasuerus in Esther laid tribute on the islands after his twelfth year, then Ahasuerus cannot be Xerxes. Since Darius was the one who conquered these islands and is the only other king to whom 10:1 could refer, Darius must be the Ahasuerus of Esther.

Laying a tribute on the empire fits Darius exactly. The kings who were before him, Cyrus and Cambyses, did not exact any formal tribute on their subjects. Darius, on the other hand, did exact tribute.

Herodotus that great storyteller, informs us that Cyrus and Cambyses imposed no formal tribute upon their subject peoples but were content to receive gifts. Darius, however, fixed the tribute and the other dues, and for this he was called the “huckster.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

A.T. Olmstead goes on to say:

Rarely among ancient monarchs do we find a ruler who so thoroughly understood that the successful state must rest on a sound foundation.

No doubt Haman understood his king’s concern for a financially strong government when he offered the king ten thousand talents (66,000 pounds) of silver in return for permission to kill all the Judeans (Esther 3:19).[[57]](#footnote-57)

Babylon

Nehemiah chapter thirteen contains a reference to the King of Babylon.

**Nehemiah 13:6)** But during all this *time* I was not at Jerusalem, for in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after certain days asked I leave of the king,

During the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, Babylon was a thriving city and the headquarters of a satrapy. Xerxes, however, destroyed the fortifications of the city, tore down temples and confiscated private lands. Olmstead writes:

So thoroughly was Babylonia ravaged that barely a half-dozen tablets have survived from the remainder of the reign. Syria was detached from Babylonia and made a fully independent satrapy. Babylonia itself lost its identity through incorporation with Assyria and was henceforth ferociously taxed.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The mention of Babylon in Nehemiah 13 clearly indicates this verse refers to a time before Babylon’s ruin in the reign of Xerxes. Loring Batten’s comment that the reference to “Babylon” is “hardly original” and “from a later hand” is not at all convincing.[[59]](#footnote-59) The word Babylon is in the manuscripts, and furthermore, there is no logical reason any contemporary scribe would add a word that would introduce so obvious an error. The text of Nehemiah is literal, and it makes perfect sense if Artaxerxes is Darius I.

It is clear from the scriptures that the Darius of Ezra chapters 4-6 is the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah and the Ahasuerus of Esther. Yet modern commentators and historians almost all agree that the Ahasuerus of Esther is Xerxes and the Artaxerxes of Ezra is Artaxerxes I Longimanus.

… it is important to determine at the outset who is the king that is called Ahasuerus (Ahashwerosh). On this point until recently opinions have differed widely. Every king of Media and of Persia, from Cyaxares to Artaxerxes Ochus, has been selected by someone for identification with this monarch…. This controversy has been brought to a close by the decipherment of the Persian monuments, in which the name Xerxes appears in such a form as to leave no doubt that he is the king who is meant by Ahasuerus.[[60]](#footnote-60)

However this “evidence” from the Persian records is not evidence at all if it flies in the face of the testimony of the Word of God. Furthermore it must be remembered that it is not valid to base an argument on what has not been recovered from ancient records. Edwin Yamauchi gives some very striking examples of how little material has actually been recovered from ancient civilizations.

Coins, for example, were minted in quantities. Yet an examination of any numismatic catalogue will show numerous examples of unique specimens; that is, only one out of the hundreds or thousands has been found in these cases. There were 116 Assyrian kings, not a few of whom probably erected more than one statute of themselves. Yet statues in the round of only two kings, Shalmaneser III and Ashurnasirpal II, have been discovered.

Every temple in Egypt had papyri records describing its personnel and their tasks month by month. From a small temple at Abusir we know that it would have taken ten meters of papyri per month or 120 meters (about 130 yards) per year to list such records. If we were to estimate that there were only one hundred temples in Egypt, and were to multiply this times the 2,000 year period from 2500-500 B.C., we could calculate (120 x 100 x 2,000) that the Egyptians must have used a total of 24 million meters of papyri for their temple records. Of this grand total the only temple records that have been recovered are thirteen meters from Abusir and a similar length from Illahun. An even more striking example of the small fraction of our survival and recovery of texts is given by Samuel:

In the first 300 years of the empire there were never less than twenty-five Roman legions, and each legion had 5,000 men. The legions were paid three times a year, so that there were 375,000 pay vouchers a year. Multiply that by 300, and the result is 112.5 million. Of those, only six and a fragment of a seventh survive.[[61]](#footnote-61)

If there are clear verses in the Word of God concerning a subject, and in the case of the identity of Artaxerxes and Ahsuerus there are, then the Word of God must be believed above all secular records.

The Elephantine papyri are another set of secular records that have influenced the modern historian's dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. Documents found at Elephantine, Egypt mention a Sanballat who was governor in Samaria (although ruling through his sons) in 408 B.C. This would make him in his prime during the time of Artaxerxes I Longimanus and he would then be the Sanballat of Nehemiah chapter 2ff. It was common, however, to reuse family names, and there is no reason why the Sanballat of the Elephantine papyri cannot be a descendant of the Sanballat of Nehemiah.

In contrast to secular records which may or may not be accurate, the scripture has many clear verses that testify that the Darius of Ezra 4-6 is the same man as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah and the Ahasuerus of Esther.

EZRA - NEHEMIAH - ESTHER

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **REFERENCE** | **KJV** | **PERSIAN TITLE** | **DATE** | **EVENT** |
| Ezra 1 and 2 | Cyrus | Cyrus | 1st year (accession system) | Judeans can return to Jerusalem |
| Ezra 3:8-13 | - | - | 2nd mo., 2nd yr. | Foundation of the Temple laid |
| Ezra 4:6 | Ahasuerus | Cyrus | - | Letter from Samaritans to Cambyses to stop work on Temple |
| Ezra 4:7-16 | Artaxerxes | Cambyses | - | Letter from Samaritans to Cambyses to stop work on the Temple |
| Ezra 4:17-23 | Artaxerxes | Cambyses | - | Letter from Cambyses to Samaritans to stop the work on the Temple |
| Ezra 4:24 | Artaxerxes | Cambyses | - | The work on the Temple halted |
| Haggai 1:1-13 | Darius | Darius I | 2nd yr. 6th mo. | Haggai prophesies to resume work on the Temple |
| Haggai 1:14,15; Ezra 5:2 | Darius | Darius I | 24th day, 6th mo., 2nd yr. | Work on the Temple Resumed |
| Ezra 5:3-17 | Darius | Darius I | - | Work on the Temple challenged by the Samaritans |
| Ezra 6:1-14 | - | - | 2nd yr. | Darius confirms resumption of the work on the Temple |
| Esther 1:3 | Ahasuerus | Darius I | 3rd yr. | Feast; Queen Vashti deposed |
| Esther 2:1-5 | - | - | (before 7th yr.) | Esther taken to palace |
| Ezra 6:15 | Darius | Darius I | 3rd of Adar in 6th yr. | Temple finished |
| Ezra 7:6,9 | Artaxerxes | Darius I | 1st day, 1st mo. 7th yr. | Ezra leaves Babylon to go to Jerusalem |
| Ezra 7:8 | - | - | 5th mo. 7th yr. | Ezra arrives in Jerusalem |
| Esther 2:16-18 | Ahasuerus | Darius I | 10th mo. 7th yr. | Esther is crowned Queen |
| - | - | - | - | All the rest of Esther is completed before the book of Nehemiah |
| Nehemiah 1:1-3 | - | - | Month Chislev 20th yr. | (Persian dating) Report of the state of Jerusalem to Nehemiah |
| Nehemiah 2:1-8 | Artaxerxes | Darius I | Month Nisan, 20th yr. (four mo. after Chislev) | Nehemiah requests to build Jerusalem. Esther the Queen is seated next to Darius at this time |
| Nehemiah 6:15 | - | - | 25th of Elul | Wall around Jerusalem finished in 52 days |
| Nehemiah 7-10,13:1-3; Ezra 9,10 | - | - | - | Ezra and Nehemiah work to bring the people back to the Word |
| Nehemiah 13:6 | Artaxerxes | Darius I | 32nd yr. | Nehemiah returns to Babylon for "certain days" |
| Nehemiah 13:4,5 | - | - | - | Corruption starts again at Jerusalem with Nehemiah gone |
| Nehemiah 13:7-31 | - | - | - | Nehemiah works to reestablish order |
| Malachi | - | - | - | Spiritual corruption entrenched |

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AGES

**(According to a Biblical Perspective)**

Usually the revised archaeological ages are the dividing lines of major periods of Israel's history. At the beginning of EBIV (some scholars call it EB1112) there is a sharp distinctive break. Every chronologist has his own set of starting/ending dates which vary slightly, so these are to be regarded as accurate to +100 years for the early Bronze Age and slightly better in accuracy after that. No matter who is classifying them, all excavators agree that every excavated town in Palestine shows the same sharp break at the EBIII/EBIV boundary line, with new inhabitants coming in at that point. Kathleen Kenyon documented widely varying patterns of burial at Jericho, Megiddo and Gaza indicating tribal organization -- just what the Israelites had. The intermediate period, which does not show up everywhere -- it concentrates around Jericho -- shows nomadic camps and temporary settlements for the period of the conquest. Conventionally it's thought to represent thousands of years of sparse settlement. It really reflects around 6 years of temporary settlement by a dense population. MBI is also very sketchily recorded throughout the country but contains evidence of people with high technological skill operating under adverse conditions. Bronze appears used for weapons and new pottery with rims made on a fast wheel. (All the ages are basically defined by pottery traditions.) MBII shows another extreme cultural change (which Kenyon attributes to new inhabitants and many say are the Hyksos). This is the time of the United Monarchy when the people have had a chance to build elaborate houses and practice their crafts. This cultural sequence shows no break for 800 years (until Assyria comes along); also it shows a marked Egyptian influence, which is to be expected.

The Assyrian conquest marks the Bronze Age -- Iron Age boundary. Late Bronze (after Solomon) shows rapid deterioration and Iron I shows a very bad decline. Cities were destroyed on a large scale as they were during the conquest but there is no new population influx. A new culture emerges characterized by poorer architecture and lack of fortification. The situation in Judah does not show such large-scale change at this time. It is difficult finding a lot of detail on the Iron Age. It can only be said with certainty that the entire Assyrian-Babylonian-Persian eras belong in this age (this is the Vaninger/Courville scheme. Bimson's scheme doesn't seem as workable because he drastically shortens the Iron Age but overly stretches LB. This scheme here presented provides the best overall match of archaeological periods with Biblical history.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Years B.C.** | **Revised Archaeological Ages** |  |
| c. 2300 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Dispersion |
|  |  |  |
| 2200 | Early Bronze 1 |  |
|  |  | -- |
| 2100 |  | Patriarchal Era |
|  |  |  |
| 2000 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
|  |  |  |
| 1900 | Early Bronze II | -- |
|  |  |  |
| 1800 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| 1700 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | -- famine |
|  |  |  |
| 1600 | Early Bronze III | Israel in Egypt |
|  |  |  |
| 1500 |  |  |
|  |  | Exodus |
| 1400 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | 40 years in Sinai Conquest |
|  |  |  |
| 1300 | Early Bronze IV Intermediate | Early Judges |
| 1200 | Middle Bronze I |  |
|  |  |  |
| 1100 | Middle Bronze IIA | Later Judges |
| 1080 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| 1000 | Middle Bronze IIB |  |
| 970 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | United Monarchy |
| 925 | Middle Bronze IIC |  |
| 900 |  |  |
|  | Late Bronze I |  |
| 800 |  | Divided Monarchy |
|  | Late Bronze II A&B |  |
| 700 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | -- Assyrian Conquest Judah |
|  |  |  |
| 600 | Iron Age |  |
|  |  | -- Babylonian exile |
| 500 |  |  |
|  |  | Persian era |
| 400 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| 300 |  |  |

**The above chart is under continual review with the emergence of new archeological findings and facts (i.e. Pharaohs and Kings by David Rohl and others). We ask for patience as the research continues.**

DATES IN THE BIBLE

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1st month | 1st day | Exodus 40:2, 17 | Tabernacle reared up |
|  |  | Numbers 1:1ff; 7:12 | Offering of Judah |
|  |  | 2 Chronicles 29:17 | Beginning of Hezekiah's cleaning of the temple |
|  |  | Ezra 7:9 | Ezra leaves Babylon |
|  |  | Ezra 10:17 | List completed of men taking strange wives |
|  |  | Ezekiel 29:17 | Word concerning Nebuchadnezzar and Egypt |
|  |  | Ezekiel 45:18 | Bullock offered for cleaning in future temple |
|  | 1st day | Ezekiel 26:1 | Prophecy on Tyrus given |
|  | 2nd day | Numbers 7:18 | Offering of Nethanel of Issachar |
|  | 3rd day | Numbers 7:24 | Offering of Eliab for Zebulun |
|  | 4th day | Numbers 7:30 | Offering of Elizur for Reuben |
|  | 5th day | Numbers 7:36 | Offering of Shelumiel of Simeon |
|  | 6th day | Numbers 7:42 | Offering of Eliasaph for Gad |
|  | 7th day | Numbers 7:48 | Offering of Elishama for Ephraim |
|  | 8th day | Leviticus 9:1 | Offering of Aaron |
|  |  | Numbers 7:54 | Offering of Gamaliel for Manasseh |
|  |  | 2 Chronicles 29:17 | Completion of temple cleansing of Hezekiah |
|  | 9th day | Numbers 7:60 | Offering of Abidan for Benjamin |
|  | 10th day | Numbers 7:66 | Offering of Ahiezer for Dan |
|  |  | Joshua 4:19 | Israel comes up out of Jordan |
|  | 11th day | Numbers 7:72 | Offering of Pagiel for Asher |
|  | 12th day | Numbers 7:78 | Offering of Ahira for Naphtali |
|  |  | Ezra 8:31 | Ezra departs for Jerusalem from Ahava River |
|  | 13th day | Esther 3:12 | Letters of Haman go forth |
|  | 16th day | 2 Chronicles 29:17 | "They made an end" of Hezekiah's cleansing |
|  | 17th day | Genesis 8:4 | Ark rested on Ararat |
|  | 24th day | Daniel 10:4 | Vision of Daniel by River Hiddekel (note 21 days in v. 13 up 'til this time) |
|  |  | Esther 3:7 | Haman begins to cast lots |
|  |  | Nehemiah 2:1 | Nehemiah requests to go to Jerusalem |
|  | | | |
| 2nd month | 2nd day | 2 Chronicles 3:2 | Solomon begins construction of temple |
|  | 14th day | 2 Chronicles 30:15 | Passover of Hezekiah |
|  | 15th day | Exodus 16:1 | Israel arrives in wilderness of Sin |
|  | 20th day | Numbers 10:11 | Cloud taken up from tabernacle |
|  |  | Ezra 3:8 | Zerubbabel, Jeshua begin construction of temple |
|  | | | |
| 3rd month | 1st day | Ezekiel 31:1 | Prophecy to Pharaoh |
|  | 3rd day | Exodus 19:1, 16 | God comes down to Mt. Sinai |
|  | 23rd day | Esther 8:9 | Proclamation of Ahasuerus |
|  |  | 2 Chronicles 15:10 | Covenant of Israel under Asa |
|  |  | 2 Chronicles 31:7 | Beginning of tithes under Hezekiah |
|  | | | |
| 4th month | 1st day | Genesis 8:5 | Tops of mountains seen |
|  | 5th day | Ezekiel 1:1 | Vision of Ezekiel |
|  | 9th day | Jeremiah 39:2; 52:6 | Jerusalem broken up by Nebuchadnezzar |
|  | | | |
| 5th month | 1st day | Numbers 33:38 | Death of Aaron |
|  |  | Ezra 7:9 | Ezra arrives in Jerusalem |
|  | 3rd day | Nehemiah 6:15 | Jerusalem walls finished 52 days after this date on Elul 25 |
|  | 7th day | 2 Kings 25:8 | Temple burned with Jerusalem |
|  | 10th day | Jeremiah 52:12 | cp. 2 Kings 25:8 |
|  | 10th day | Ezekiel 20:1 | Word to elders of Israel |
|  |  | Jeremiah 28:1 | Prophecy of Hananiah against Jeremiah |
|  | | | |
| 7th month | 1st day | Ezra 3:6 | People begin burnt offerings at Jerusalem |
|  |  | Nehemiah 8:2 | Ezra reads law to people |
|  | 1st day | Genesis 8:13 | Waters "dried up" (cp. 8:14) covering of ark removed |
|  | 2nd day | Nehemiah 8:13 | Reading of law concerning feast of tabernacles |
|  | 21st day | Haggai 2:1 | Prophecy of Haggai on future glory of temple |
|  | 23rd day | 2 Chronicles 7:10 | Solomon sends people away |
|  | 24th day | Nehemiah 9:1 | Confession of Levites to covenant |
|  |  | 1 Kings 8:2; 2 Chronicles 5:3 | Ark brought to temple by Solomon |
|  |  | 2 Chronicles 31:7 | Hezekiah completes collection for priests |
|  |  | Jeremiah 28:17 | Death of Hananiah |
|  |  | Jeremiah 41:1 | Rebellion of Ishmael |
|  | | | |
| 8th month |  | 1 Kings 6:38 | Completion of temple of Solomon |
|  |  | Zechariah 1:1 | Prophecy to Zechariah |
|  | 15th day | 1 Kings 12:32 | Apostate feast of Jeroboam |
|  | 17th day | Genesis 7:11 | Rain began |
|  | 27th day | Genesis 8:14 | Earth "dried" (cp. 8:13) |
|  | | | |
| 9th month |  | Jeremiah 36:9 | Fast proclaimed king destroys manuscript |
|  |  | Nehemiah 1:1 | News comes to Nehemiah of state of ruined Jerusalem |
|  | 4th day | Zechariah 7:1 | Word of Lord unto Zechariah |
|  | 20th day | Ezra 10:9 | Gathering of people concerning strange wives |
|  | 24th day | Haggai 2:10, 20 | Prophecies to priests, to Zerubbabel (2:18-?) |
|  | | | |
| 10th month | 1st day | Ezra 10:16 | Ezra sits to decide matter of strange wives (rainy-v.13) |
|  | 5th day | Ezekiel 33:21 | Word comes that Jerusalem is smitten |
|  | 10th day | 2 Kings 25:1; Ezekiel 24:1 | Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem |
|  | 12th day | Ezekiel 29:1 | Prophecy against Egypt |
|  |  | Esther 2:16 | Esther taken to Ahasuerus |
|  | | | |
| 11th month | 1st day | Deuteronomy 1:3 | Moses speaks to Israel |
|  | 24th day | Zechariah 1:7 | Prophecy to Zechariah |
|  | | | |
| 12th month | 1st day | Ezekiel 32:1 | Lamentation for Pharaoh |
|  | 3rd day | Ezra 6:15 | Temple finished |
|  | 13th day | Esther 3:13; 8:12; 9:1 | Planned destruction of Judeans; actual destruction of Judeans' enemies |
|  | 14th day | Esther 9:19 | Feast proclaimed |
|  | 15th day | Ezekiel 32:17 | Prophecy against Egypt |
|  |  | Esther 9:21 | Feast proclaimed |
|  | 25th day | Jeremiah 52:31 | Evil-meradach advances Jehoiachin (compare 2 Kings 25:27) |
|  |  | Esther 3:7 | Haman completes casting lots against Judeans |

Other time periods with specific month not given:

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2nd day | 1 Samuel 20:27 | Saul confronts Jonathan about David |
| 9 months | 20 days | 2 Samuel 24:8 | Time required to take census of Israel |

1. A “regnal year” is the period of time that is counted as one year in the reign of a king. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The exception occurs when the person was born on the change of the calendar year. A person born on Tishri 1 (Jesus Christ for example) would be counted one year old from birth since there is no time for an accession year. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The age of Moses at the Exodus was 80. He died at 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7) after wandering for 40 years in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 2:7, etc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The exact time is not given. But comparing Numbers 10:11, Deuteronomy 1:2 and Numbers 13:20 (first ripe grapes = late summer) indicates clearly that the spies were sent out in the late summer of the second year. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ivan Panin, Bible Chronology (Vancouver, B.C., Canada: The Association of the Covenant People, reprint 1950), p 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), p. xli. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. John W. Schoenheit, “Old Testament Chronology” (Unpublished year-by-year chart of every year from Adam to Jesus Christ). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Hebrew word for “natural force” is leach. Brown, Driver, and Briggs’ Lexicon defines it “moisture, freshness, vigor.” William Holladay’s Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament defines it, “sap (of life), vigor.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See https:/revisedenglishversion.com/chronology. See years 1409 BC through 1383 BC [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Robert W. Prehorda, Extended Youth - The Promise of Gerontology (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1968), p. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Nathan W. Shock, Aging - Some Social and Biological Aspects (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1960), p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Wm. H. Masters and V.E. Johnson, Human Sexual Response (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1966), pp. 248,249,270, quoted in Prehoda, Extended Youth, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Alexander Leaf, “Every Day is a Gift When You Are Over 100,” National Geographic, January 1973, p 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. KC. Pillai, Light Through An Eastern Window (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1963), p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. William Whiston, trans. Josephus, p 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See the Linear Chronology beginning on page 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John W. Schoenheit, “Old Testament Chronology”, p 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. These dates are based on the accession of Xerxes December 486 B.C. or January 485 B.C. and the logic of the material in the text of John W. Schoenheit’s Old Testament chronology research notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Other examples are numerous. 1 Kings15:2, 10; 22:42; 2 Kings 8:16, 26; 12:1; 14:2; 15:33; 16:1; etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Nestle-Aland text. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The Expositor’s Greek New Testament, Vol. 2, “Apostles, Romans, First Corinthians,” p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Thayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Expositors, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ivan Panin, Bible Chronology (Vancouver, B.C., Canada: The Association of the Covenant People, reprint 1950), p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The time periods are: 1 year, the last of the 40 years in Sinai when Israel moved into the area; 7 years of Joshua’s wars; 3 years of Abimelech; 23 years of Tola; 22 years of Jair; 18 years of Ammonite oppression. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Other examples are numerous. 1 Kings 15:2, 10; 22-42; 2 Kings 8:16, 26; 12:1; 14:2; 15:33; 16:1; etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Expositors Vol. 2, pp. 292-294. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Thayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Expositors, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Joram is of Israel, Jehoram is Jehosaphat’s son, of Judah. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Several untenable positions need to be obviated without going into detail. Some chronologers like Lightfoot and Anstey have Jotham’s reign being reckoned four years after he died. Other chronologers like Edwin Thiele assume that the last four years of Jotham were attributed to Ahaz. For a review of some of the problems in this period, see “Chronology” in the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible and chapter six of The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew King by Edwin R. Thiele. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The next chronological reference in Zechariah is Zechariah 7:1, which occurred in the fourth year of Darius. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, volume 10, (Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1975) p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. John Schoenheit, “Old Testament Chronology” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. John Schoenheit, “Old Testament Chronology” [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. John Schoenheit, Research and work continues regarding these points. Please check back for updates and new research.. The shift in calendars can be seen in the REV Chronology by performing the numerous mathematical calculations within the related events. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The Septuagint (reprinted., London: Zondervan, 1976), p. 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The Companion Bible, p. 384. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. S.R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C.A. Briggs, eds, International Critical Commentary (1899; Edinburgh: T & T Clark), p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The Companion Bible, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. John Schoenheit, “Old Testament Chronology.” [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The Companion Bible, p. 460. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. One of the hundreds of genealogical listings in the Bible, there are none that have skipped a generation between the last two entries in the genealogy. This conclusion is based on a name-by-name comparison of all genealogical lists in the Old and New Testaments.

    There **are** omissions of different kinds in many of the genealogies listed in the Bible. These omissions fall into two general categories. First, a generation or generations may be skipped in a listing of generations. Second, one or more offspring in a single generation may be left out.

    In reviewing every genealogy listed in the Bible, the immediate or remoter context, in most cases, indicates the reason for these omissions. In many records one or more offspring in a single generation are omitted to give emphasis to the offspring that is listed. This is especially common in the lists of descendants of such men as Abraham, Jacob (Israel), and David, who had many sons. A particular son or sons was often singled out with his entire line of descendants to emphasize either the believing, unbelief, accomplishments, detriments, obedience, or disobedience of that son.

    The omission of generations from a list of generations in a family is less common. A man or woman was often called the son or daughter of a patriarch many generations prior as a means of identifying that person with the "father" or head of the family line. For example, priests were often referred to as being “of the sons of Aaron;” Jesus Christ was called the son of David.

    However, in any genealogical listing including three or more names, the omission of a generation is neither common nor without definite reason. For example, in the genealogy of Jesus Christ through Mary his mother, there are obvious omissions. When compared with the Old Testament records of the kingly line of Judah, four generations are found to be missing from the listing in Matthew. See Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed, footnote on page 125: “One possible reason for their omission could be idolatry and other wickedness, since certain generations had names deleted for this reason. (Note Exodus 20:4 and 5 and Deuteronomy 29, especially verse 20.)”

    In none of the genealogical listings including three or more names is a generation left out between the last two entries in the list. In observing this pattern in all the genealogies in God’s Word, there is no logical basis for the assumption that in Ezra 7:1-5 there is a generation missing from the list between Seraiah and Ezra, the last two names in the list. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Darius I and Artaxerxes I Longimanus were the only two possible choices. The “Artaxerxes” of Nehemiah reigned at least 32 years (Nehemiah 13:6). Cyrus only reigned 9 years, Cambyses 8 years, and Xerxes 21 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The International Critical Commentary “Esther,” (Edingburgh: T & T Clark, 1976) p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., p. 168, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Derek Kidner, Ezra and Nehemiah, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press: 1979) p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Martin Anstey, Chronology of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1973), p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. This is with the understanding that Rehum of Neh. 12:3 is the same as Harim of Neh. 12:15 as per the International Critical Commentary and Ezra and Nehemiah by Derek Kidner. It is also possible that Ezra (Hebrew = help) of Nehemiah 12 is the same as Azariah (Hebrew = Jehovah has helped) of Nehemiah 10. Kidner, p. 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. D.J. Clines, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), p. 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Derek Kidner, Ezra and Nehemiah, p. 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Martin Anstey, Chronology of the Old Testament, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. O.T. Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid. p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Loring W. Batten, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, International Critical Commentary, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Lewis B. Paton, The International Critical Commentary, The Book of Esther, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Edwin Yamamuchi, The Stones and the Scriptures (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972), p.157. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)