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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have recently been studying the chronology of the last kings of Judah, and I am struggling to understand the date and circumstances of Josiah's death (2 Kings 23:28-30, 2 Chronicles 35:20-25) as presented by the Watchtower publications and hoped you may be able to help me.

According to BM 21901 Egypt marched to conquer Harran in month 4, year 17 of Nabopolassar (which was the 31st year of Josiah). Regarding this the Insight book says "*this record is in harmony with the activity of Pharaoh Nechoh recorded at 2 Kings 23:29, which activity resulted in the death of King Josiah of Judah (c. 629 B.C.E.)*" [1, p. 205]. Therefore, Josiah must have died sometime around month 3 – approximately May/June 629 B.C.E.

The fact that Josiah's death must have been just before month 4 in Nabopolassar's 17th year has been stated by a number of other authors including Tadmor [2, p. 228], Malamat [3, p. 139], Clines [4, p. 29], Horn [5, p. 17] and Hyatt [6, p. 208].

Now as far as I understand the Watchtower publications assume that the Judean kings around this time were reckoned on a non-accession system, and that the Bible writers were then converting the reign of the Nebuchadnezzar to their non-accession counting too (such that his year is listed one higher than the Babylonian chronicles), with the only exception being Jeremiah 52:28-29. This assumption then allows the following synchronisms to work:

- Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2 date the battle of Carchemish to Jehoiakim's 4th year and Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year – 625 B.C.E. (Although this was really the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar according to BM 21946 Obv) [7, p. 480] [1, p. 418]
- 2 Kings 24:12 dates Jehoiachin's capture to the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar, although BM 21946 Rev. 11 dates the capture to the 7th year, and Jeremiah 52:28 says captives were taken in the 7th year. [8, p. 88]
- "*In the 11th year of Zedekiah's reign (Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year if counting from his accession year or his 18th regnal year), a breach was made in Jerusalem's wall.*" [7, p. 481]

If we know Jehoiakim's 4th year began in the year of the battle of Carchemish 625 B.C.E. then his 1st year must have begun sometime after Nisan / the spring in 628 B.C.E. His rule cannot possibly have started any earlier than this otherwise he would have died in his 12th year rather than 11th year (2

Kings 23:36, 2 Chronicles 36:5). Prior to Jehoiakim, we know that Jehoahaz ruled for 3 months (2 Kings 23:31, 2 Chronicles 36:2), so his rule cannot have begun earlier than around month 10 or January 628 B.C.E. **However, the problem which I am struggling to understand is that this then leaves a gap of at least 6 months between Josiah's death around month 3 of his 31st year (May/June 629 B.C.E.) and Jehoahaz's accession no earlier than month 10 (around January 628 B.C.E.)?**

Furthermore, in my search to resolve this I appear to have found contradicting dates for Josiah's death in the Watchtower publications. According to the Insight book Josiah died in 629 B.C.E. (the 17th year of Nabopolassar, so consistent with month 4 given in the chronicle) [1, pp. 205, 418, 450, 768] [7, pp. 804, 1227]. Whereas in the Watchtower September 1979 it instead states Josiah died in 628 B.C.E. [9, p. 25] which would eliminate the 6-month gap but instead contradict the dates given by the BM 21901 chronicle.

I have attached below a timeline which I have hopefully created correctly from the dates given in the Insight book – and may help understanding what I am confused by?

Kind regards

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References

- [1] Insight on the Scriptures - Volume 1: Aaron-Jehoshua, vol. 1, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2018.
- [2] H. Tadmor, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 15, p. 226–230, 1956.
- [3] A. Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem: An Historical—Chronological Study," *Israel Exploration Journal*, vol. 18, p. 137–156, 1968.
- [4] D. J. A. Clines, "Regnal year reckoning in the last years of the Kingdom of Judah," *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. 2, p. 9–34, 1972.
- [5] S. H. Horn, "The Babylonian Chronicle and the Ancient Calendar of the Kingdom of Judah," *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)*, vol. 5, p. 2, 1967.
- [6] J. P. Hyatt, "The Beginning of Jeremiah's Prophecy," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol. 78, p. 204–214, 1966.
- [7] Insight on the Scriptures - Volume 2: Jehovah-Zuzim and Index, vol. 2, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2018.
- [8] "Babylonian Chronology—How Reliable?," *The Watchtower*, p. 88–92, 1 February 1969.
- [9] "The Royal "Shepherd" of Bible Prophecy," *The Watchtower*, p. 24–31, 1 September 1979.

Year B.C.E.	Babylon Accession Reckoning	Babylon Non-Accession Reckoning	Judah Non-Accession Reckoning	Biblical and Babylonian Sources
629	Nabopolassar 17		Josiah 31 ???	Battle of Megiddo, death of Josiah (2Ki 23:29, 2 Ch 35:20) - approx. Month III Egyptians attack Harran (BM 21901, 66) - Month IV 6 month gap? Jehoahaz rules for 3 months (2 Kings 23:31, 2 Chronicles 36:2)
628	Nabopolassar 18		Jehoahaz 2 Jehoiakim 1	
627	Nabopolassar 19		Jehoiakim 2	
626	Nabopolassar 20		Jehoiakim 3	
625	Nabopolassar 21 Nebuchadnezzar Acc.	Nebuchadnezzar 1	Jehoiakim 4	Battle of Carchemish (Jer 46:2) (BM 21946 Obv 1-4) - Month I-V Nebuchadnezzar Accession (BM 21946 Obv 11) - Month VI Jehoiakim 4th = Nebuchadnezzar 1st (Jer 25:1)
624	Nebuchadnezzar 1	Nebuchadnezzar 2	Jehoiakim 5	
623	Nebuchadnezzar 2	Nebuchadnezzar 3	Jehoiakim 6	
622	Nebuchadnezzar 3	Nebuchadnezzar 4	Jehoiakim 7	

621				
	Nebuchadnezzar 4	Nebuchadnezzar 5	Jehoiakim 8	
620				Jehoiakim made servant of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki 24:1)
	Nebuchadnezzar 5	Nebuchadnezzar 6	Jehoiakim 9	
619				
	Nebuchadnezzar 6	Nebuchadnezzar 7	Jehoiakim 10	
618				
	Nebuchadnezzar 7	Nebuchadnezzar 8	Jehoiakim 11 Jehoiachin Acc.	Death of Jehoiakim in 11th year (2 Kings 23:36, 2 Chronicles 36:5) - Month VIII Jehoiachin rules for 3 months (2 Chronicles 36:9, 2 Kings 24:8)
617				Siege of Jerusalem (2 Ki 24:10, Jer 52:28, Dan 1:1, 2 Ch 36:6) (BM 21946 Rev 12) - Month XII
	Nebuchadnezzar 8	Nebuchadnezzar 9	Zedekiah 1	Jehoiachin brought to Babylon (2 Ch 36:10) - "at the start of the year"

609				
	Nebuchadnezzar 16	Nebuchadnezzar 17	Zedekiah 9	
608				Beginning of Siege on Jerusalem (2 Ki 25:1, Jer 52:4, Jer 39:1) - 10th month
	Nebuchadnezzar 17	Nebuchadnezzar 18	Zedekiah 10	Zedekiah 10th = Nebuchadnezzar 18th (Jer 39:1)
607				
	Nebuchadnezzar 18	Nebuchadnezzar 19	Zedekiah 11	Capture of Jerusalem (2 Ki 25:4, Jer 52:6, Jer 39:2, Jer 52:29) - 4th month Desertion of Jerusalem (2 Ki 25:1) - 7th month