

# ANCIENT WORLD CHRONOLOGY

A SERIES  
BY  
QADESH LA YAHWEH PRESS

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# *Preface to the Series*

Correct history cannot stand without an accurate chronology. As Edwin Thiele so poignantly expressed it, “Without exact chronology there can be no exact history.”<sup>1</sup> Albert T. Olmstead, likewise, argued, “For the historian the framework is chronology.” He then adds:

Without chronology, there can be no history, since history itself is merely a record of human events in time relation. Sad to admit, chronology is the most tricky subject with which the historian must deal, and special attention is always devoted to its intricacies in the historical seminar.<sup>2</sup>

Yet if chronology is the skeletal framework upon which the meat of history clings, Israelite chronology is surely the backbone upon which all of ancient world history is fastened. It stands in this important position for two reasons:

- First, unlike the histories of other ancient nations, the chronology found in ancient Israelite sources forms the only complete official and continuous chronology of a people spanning the entirety of their early civilization. Furthermore, this history extends down to more well-known historical times. A comparison of our present MT (Masoretic Text), which is a truncated version of the original with the LXX and various ancient fragments and documents of Scriptures recently found at both Qumran and other places in Israel has only served to verify its accuracy. Secular records from this earlier bygone era for other nations, on the other hand, are disjointed and incomplete. They contain many unexplained discrepancies, with ill-defined, overlapping reigns and dynasties, leaving a great deal to guesswork.
- Second, various historical events, the names of ancient contemporary foreign kings, and important empires are discussed and dated by the Israelite records. Kings, events, and empires, accordingly, can be “clocked in” to Israelite history, thereby providing a solid foundation upon which we can place their historical settings. At the same time, within the secular records produced by these other civilizations we find the names of still other contemporary kings and events. This cross-referencing then branches out to construct the chronological framework for the ancient world.

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<sup>1</sup> MNHK, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> JNES, 2.1, p. 6.

Israelite chronology, as a result, becomes the backbone upon which all the remaining supporting skeletal structure of ancient world chronologies rest—and, subsequently, any proper understanding of ancient history. Indeed, with few exceptions, it fills the void left by secular history for the periods prior to the collapse of the Assyrian Empire in 610 B.C.E. The popular chronologies advanced today for this early period are not only disputed by scholars themselves (various long and short arrangements being advocated) but they have been largely based upon unsound assumptions and unproven theories.

It is remarkable that in the post-Assyrian world—beginning with the Neo-Babylonian Empire, for which we have relatively abundant information—Scriptures provide us with no more than a sketchy outline. In fact, what information we do possess from the Israelite sources relies heavily upon secular history to be correctly dated and understood. Yet when we reach back into the Assyrian period and those times preceding it, the roles played by biblical and secular sources are reversed. It is the scriptural record that proves to be the light guiding us through the darkness of this more remote past.

## Flaws in Previous Attempts

There have been numerous attempts to master Israelite chronology, ranging from the interpretations of the ancient 3rd century B.C.E. chronologist named Demetrius and the 2nd century B.C.E. book of Jubilees down to the numerous works produced from our own time, including the important studies by Edwin Thiele and William Foxwell Albright.<sup>3</sup> Yet these efforts have all suffered from overinterpretation, laced with the subtle art of superimposing personal prejudice upon scriptural data. These distortions have resulted in a nightmare of conflicting opinions and contradictory chronologies.

### ANCIENT ATTEMPTS

Various Jewish and Christian chronologists from the 3rd century B.C.E. forward have distorted Israelite history by stacking the reigns of the Israelite kings found in Scriptures, shortening some periods, and falsely lengthening others. In the Septuagint, for example, the scribes supplied an additional 100 years to the lives of many early patriarchs,<sup>4</sup> thereby claiming hundreds of years more for historical periods beyond those found in the MT. It is not known whether these longer dates existed in the earliest copies of the LXX, which was a translation commissioned by an Egyptian king during the 3rd century B.C.E. Yet by the 1st century C.E. these figures do appear and are in

<sup>3</sup> For the fragments of Demetrius the Chronographer, see OTP, 2, pp. 843–854. For examples of Thiele’s work, see JNES, 3.3, pp. 137–186; JBL, 93.2, pp. 174–200; MNHK; CHK; and SFPOT. For examples of Albright’s work, see BASOR, 58, pp. 10–18, 100, pp. 16–22, 130, pp. 4–11; JBL, 51.2, pp. 77–106; BA, 5.4, pp. 49–55; JPOS, 1.1, pp. 49–79.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., cf. the king lists from the MT at Gen., 5:1–32, and 11:10–26, with the LXX version. That the pre-Flood patriarchs were kings, e.g., see Jos., *Antiq.*, 1:3:3, who refers to Noah’s kingship. In addition, the pre-Flood patriarchs from Adam to Noah—identified in the Chaldaean King List as the period from Aloros (the first man) to Xisouthros (the king who survived the Flood)—are all referred to as kings, and their years of reign are provided (Syncellus, 18, 30; Eusebius, *Chron.*, p. 9).

conflict with the dates found in the MT, reflecting the different interpretations prevalent during that time. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the MT is a truncated version of earlier texts. Kainan, for example, is left out of the chronological list of the descendants of Shem,<sup>5</sup> the story of the circumcision of the sons of Moses is incomplete,<sup>6</sup> and many other details are absent throughout the text. Patrick W. Skehan, during his discussion of the book of Samuel, for example, reports:

For with all due respect to the scholars who would have it otherwise, it has long been held by serious students of Samuel that in their case the Masoretic text presents us with a truncated text with notable omissions, both deliberate and accidental; it is a text that is much below the standard of excellence observable in the received text of other Old Testament books.<sup>7</sup>

Julian Morgenstern in his discussions on these works comments:

The additional variant readings of LXX and Sam. are less likely the result of textual corruption than of individual revision and glossation of various manuscripts from which these versions were made. For a time the text of Gen. 1, AS WELL AS OF THE ENTIRE TORAH, must have varied somewhat in minor details in different manuscripts, until eventually an official, approved, and accepted text was fixed by the authorities of the time, presumably the Soferim or the Great Synod. In this way the creation story in Gen. 1-2:4 came into being in practically its present form in the Masoretic Text.<sup>8</sup>

Frank Moore Cross, Jr., while comparing the books in the MT with other various ancient versions, likewise points out:

The agreement between the text of Chronicles and 4Q Sam<sup>a</sup> is most significant. It makes clear now that the text of the Deuteronomic history used by the Chronicler toward 400 B.C. was by no means identical with the received text. Yet it is equally clear that the Chronicler used the Old Palestinian text current in Jerusalem in his day.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these efforts to extend or shorten the biblical chronology were born out of a desire to satisfy the writer's personal need to compete with other

<sup>5</sup> Cf. MT at Gen., 10:24, 11:10-14, with LXX Gen., 10:24, 11:10-14; Luke, 3:35f; Jub., 8:1-6; etc.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. MT at Exod., 4:18-27, cf. Yashar, 78:7-79:14, which gives the more complete account.

<sup>7</sup> BA, 28.3, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> AJSLL, 36.3, p. 212.

<sup>9</sup> HTR, 57.4, p. 294.

contemporary national and religious histories or to justify certain desired interpretations. Dying civilizations (especially those of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians), ever since the fall of the Assyrian Empire, had begun to offer exaggerated and stacked chronologies to fortify their respective claims to antiquity, fame, and authority. To demonstrate, in the 3rd century B.C.E., the Chaldaean priest Berosus (Berossus, Berosos, etc.) wrote a book on Chaldaean history and its chronology. Shortly thereafter, an Egyptian priest from Sebennytos by the name of Manetho composed his own book on Egyptian history and its chronology. Each text clearly touted the antiquity of their respective homelands. In doing so, they demonstrate the competition between the two regions for the glory of being the oldest civilization. In this regard, the Byzantine historian George Syncellus referred to these two competitive writers as liars due to their exaggerations. He states:

. . . what Manetho of Sebennytos wrote to Ptolemy Philadelphus about the Egyptian dynasties is full of lies, written both in imitation of Berossos and at about the same time as Berossos or a little later. . . . If one carefully examines the underlying chronological lists of events, one will have full confidence that the design of both is false, as both Berossos and Manetho, as I have said before, want to glorify each his own nation: Berossos the Chaldaean, Manetho the Egyptian.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, William Gillian Waddell similarly writes:

The works of Manetho and Bêrôssos may be interpreted as an expression of the rivalry of the two kings, Ptolemy and Antiochus, each seeking to proclaim the great antiquity of his land.<sup>11</sup>

Neither were these two civilizations the only competitors. For example, the ancient writer Justin reports:

The nation of the Skuth (Scythians) was always regarded as very ancient; although there was a long standing dispute between them and the Egyptians concerning the antiquity of their respective peoples.<sup>12</sup>

In response to such exaggerated pagan histories, various Jewish and Christian writers during the Greek and Roman periods, using sundry techniques of their own, were able to push the biblical dates back much further than the original text would allow. Some of these ancient chronographers reorganized and exaggerated Israelite chronology in order to make Jewish history competitive with that of other nations. W. G. Waddell, as a case in

<sup>10</sup> FGrH, 609 T 11c, cf. 11b.

<sup>11</sup> Waddell, *Manetho*, p. x.

<sup>12</sup> Justin, 2:1.

point, observed that the list of Egyptian dynasties created by Manetho in his *Egyptian History*, which stacked the reigns of kings on top of each other and ignored contemporary kings and dynasties, was “used by the Jews when they engaged in polemic against Egyptians in order to prove their extreme antiquity.”<sup>13</sup> The “lengthened” dates created in the LXX, as another example, were very probably motivated by their desire to create a Jewish history that could compete with the claim made by these other nations.

Some chronologies appear to have been built upon the long-established view that the messiah would appear in the 5th millennial day and again at the beginning of the 7th millennial day. Indeed, there was a firm belief among many Christians and Jews alike that the seven days of creation were, in fact, a prophecy of the Age of Man and the coming Age of the Messiah. One day in Scriptures was prophetically counted “as a thousand years.”<sup>14</sup> The first 6 days (6 thousand years), therefore, belonged to the reign of man and Satan, while the 7th millennial day (the great millennial Sabbath) would be ruled by the messiah.<sup>15</sup> The 8th millennial day that follows will be the Judgment Day, at which time the great general resurrection of all mankind will take place.<sup>16</sup> Yet to bring the 6th millennial day closer to their own time, more years were required than existed in the official Biblical record. The “lying pen” of some of “the scribes”<sup>17</sup> appears to have accommodated their desired outcomes.

Of course there were various other views as well, especially regarding the messiah’s arrival at the beginning of the 5th millennial day.<sup>18</sup> In either case, this messianic expectation was present everywhere during 1st century C.E. Judaea. Suetonius, writing in the early part of the 2nd century C.E. and while discussing events occurring in the reign of Vespasian (69–79 C.E.), comments:

There had spread over all the East an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world. This prediction, referring to the emperor of Rome, as afterwards appeared from the event, the people of Judaea took to themselves; accordingly they revolted and after killing their governor, they routed the consular ruler of Syria as well, when he came to the rescue, and took one of his eagles.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Waddell, *Manetho*, p. ix.

<sup>14</sup> Ps., 84:10, 90:4; 2 Pet., 3:7–10. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 80:5, 81:3f; Jub., 4:30; Gen. Rab., 8:2, 19:8, 22:1; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:39; Hippolytus, *On Dan.*, 2:4; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 4:16:1, 5:28:3; Commodianus, 35; and so forth.

<sup>15</sup> Heb., 3:7–4:11; Rev., 20:4–8. Cf. Papias, frag. 6 (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:39); Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 81:3f; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 5:2–3; Hippolytus, *On Gen.*, 49:27, §3, *On Dan.*, 2:4.

<sup>16</sup> See APPC.

<sup>17</sup> Jer., 8:8.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., see B. Sanh., 97a–b; cf. B. A.Zar., 9a. Hos., 6:2, speaks of two millennial days passing from the death of the messiah until the First Resurrection at the beginning of the Sabbath millennial day (i.e., the 7th millennial day), see SBT, *Sanh.*, 97a, n. 33; cf. Rev., 20:1–5.

<sup>19</sup> Suetonius, 8:4:5.

Tacitus, the contemporary of Suetonius, likewise, writes that there were many omens among the Jews during these days:

Few interpreted these omens as fearful; the majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judaea should possess the world.<sup>20</sup>

Others tried to put in place a particular interpretation of chronology for political reasons. The chronology put forth in the *Seder Olam*, to demonstrate, originated with the followers of Bar Kochba, an early 2nd century C.E. political and religious leader from Judaea. It was an attempt to create support for his claim to be the Jewish messiah. This claim was based upon the interpretation of some of the prophecies contained in the book of Daniel, especially the 70 weeks prophecy which the followers of Bar Kochba interpreted to mean 490 years (incorrectly equating a day for a year). The prophecies were rearranged and certain historical periods were “shortened” in such a way as to make it seem that, when Bar Kochba made his appearance, he was the prophesied coming of the messiah.<sup>21</sup> Bar Kochba proved to be false, yet the erroneous chronology built to justify his messiahship has remained with us until this day being referred to as the “Years Since the Creation” for the Jewish calendar.<sup>22</sup>

#### RECENT ATTEMPTS

Many modern-day chronologists have also radically distorted the dates found in Scriptures in their attempt to make them conform with their own preconceived and prearranged interpretations of history. These interpretations are born out of an unreasonable and subtle bias against Scriptures that is held by many mainstream historians. Others are openly hostile. Holding to the view that many of those historical events spoken of in Scriptures must be myths (simply because the historian, on his own authority and interpretation, had judged them to be so), they reduce the historical information found in Scriptures to a role of being untrustworthy and relatively unimportant.

Meanwhile, pagan annals and inscriptions produced by the Assyrians, Egyptians, and other ancient societies—despite their use of exaggerated chronologies laced with their own religious agendas, interpretations, and deceptive devices—are given status as being better informed. One of the main efforts has been to use the Assyrian and Egyptian historical records to

<sup>20</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5:13.

<sup>21</sup> See below SJC, Chaps. I & XXX.

<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Yose ben Khalaphta (Rabbi Jose ben Halafta), the author of the *Seder Olam*, calculated the “*molad tohu* (bringing forth from a wasteland)” to be in the month of Tishri (Sept./Oct.) in the year 3761 B.C.E. on the proleptic Julian calendar. That this particular year was intended is confirmed by Athâr-ul-Bâkiya of Albîrûnî (c.973–1048 C.E.) (Sachau, *Vestiges*, pp. 18, 141, who places creation 3448 years prior to the year 313 B.C.E., the beginning of the Era of Alexander). Also see JTLE, p. xxi.

structure Israelite chronology and history.<sup>23</sup> This device is openly and proudly admitted as a primary tool.<sup>24</sup> The conservative scholar Albert T. Olmstead, after stating his bias that, “the Bible cannot be understood by itself,” goes on to explain this method:

It has become obvious that before we may claim to know the Bible, we must first investigate all these

<sup>23</sup> For the ante-Hezekiah period, special emphasis has been placed on the mentioning of a king named “*Akhabbu mat Sir’laai*” who fought in the battle of Qarqar in an alliance of Arami tribes against King Shalmaneser (III) of Kalah, Assyria (CIOT, 1, pp. 182–189, lines 91f). “*Akhabbu mat Sir’laai*” of this story, based solely upon an assumed timeframe and a similarity in phonetics, has been mistakenly identified with “Ahab of Israel.” This view is held despite the fact that the name “*Israel*” is in no other document used by the Assyrians for the country of either the house of Israel or the house of Judah. Everywhere else in Assyrian literature, including the records of Shalmaneser III, either (1) the name “*mat Bit-Ghumria* (land of the house of Ghumri),” a name derived after its famous king Ghumri (Khumri, English “*Omri*”), the father of Ahab, was utilized or (2) “*al Samirinaaa* (of Someron = Samaria),” the name of Israel’s capital city, was used for the house of Israel. Meanwhile, Judah is referred to as “*mat Yaudaaa* (the land of Judah).” For an in-depth analysis, see IM.

Furthermore, nowhere in Scriptures or any other ancient source is there any mention that King Ahab of Israel ever took part in an Arami coalition or that he ever went to battle with the Assyrians. Just the opposite. Ahab was never an ally of the king of Aram and was constantly at war with him (1 Kings, 20:1–43, 22:1–37). These facts are merely brushed aside. Next, after making their speculation about Akhabbu, a chronology is formed by comparing the date given for Akhabbu (the 6th year of the reign of Shalmaneser III) with their date for the man named “*Yahua mar Ghumria* (Yahua son of Ghumria),” who paid tribute to this same Assyrian king during that king’s 18th year of reign (ARAB, 1, §§610f, cf. §§590, 672). This Yahua—despite the fact that he is called “son of,” a title usually reserved for a temporary appointee and not a “king”—is then identified with King Yahua (Jehu) of Israel. Also ignored is the fact that Akhabbu’s kingdom is called *mat Sir’laai*, while Yahua is called the son of *Ghumria*, *Bit Ghumria* being the Assyrian name for the land of the house of Israel (cf. TOT, p. 339). This name is also rendered *Humria*, *Khumria*, *Humrî*, etc. (JBL, 117.2, pp. 204–211; ARAB, 1:15; EJ, 6, p. 1034). This discrepancy further verifies that the two kingdoms were not the same. Nevertheless, this important evidence is ignored.

Unfortunately, if this popular view is adhered to, a conflict between the two sources (Assyrian and Israelite) is immediately noted. King Jehu of the Scriptures, like King Ahab, is never mentioned as paying tribute to, or having any other connection with, the Assyrians. In addition, the 12-year spread between Akhabbu and Yahua can only work if the events mentioned refer only to the last year of Ahab and the accession year of Jehu. The spread is possible, but the chronology does not conform with the accounts given in Scriptures that are connected with the end and beginning of their respective reigns. Ahab, for example, did not end his reign in a war against Assyria. Rather, he died in a war against his mortal enemy, the king of Aram (1 Kings, 22:28–37). Of further interest, in his war against Aram, Ahab was allied with the king of Judah.

Finally, based upon the popular dating of the Assyrian kings, the 6th and 18th years of Shalmaneser III are given as 853 and 841 B.C.E. (CAW, pp. 70f). Yet if we base this presumption upon Scriptural data, as demonstrated later on in our work, Ahab’s last year can be no sooner than 848 B.C.E. and Jehu’s 1st year no earlier than 836 B.C.E. These and other details should have raised a red flag. At minimum, they leave the popular view of identifying Akhabbu and Yahua with Ahab and Jehu suspect. As we shall prove in Volume IV of our series, these identifications are not only errors but demonstrate a total misunderstanding of the Assyrian King Lists, which stacked the king lines of Assur, Kalah, and Nineveh one on top of the other, when in truth they were overlapping and, in good part, parallel dynasties.

<sup>24</sup> Thiele, for example, argues that for the historian to obtain a desirable scheme in Israelite chronology, “Our only hope of doing this is to find some cardinal point of contact where Hebrew history ties with certainty into the history of some other nation whose chronology is known. . . . Assyrian chronology back to the beginning of the ninth century B.C. rests on a highly dependable basis” (MNHK, p. 67). These chronologists blindly overlook the obvious evidence that the scribes of the Assyrian King Lists had stacked the different lines of their confederate kings from Assur, Kalah, and Nineveh (see below the comment quoted from R. P. BenDedek found in MCMS, p. 1).

varied sources and arrange their data in a general narrative. Then and only then we are ready at long last to fit the Biblical stories into ancient history.<sup>25</sup>

No one can object to investigating all the varied sources. This approach is proper and correct. Yet it is an unfortunate reality that whenever present-day chronologists compare the biblical records against the Assyrian and Egyptian king lists (and here we are not speaking of actual texts written in the time of these kings but of lists compiled many decades and even centuries after the fact), they always give their preference to the lists from pagan sources. David Freedman, for example, states:

No modern reconstruction of Biblical chronology can ignore the fixed dates provided by extra-Biblical sources; AND THE BIBLICAL DATES MUST BE MODIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PATTERN OF NEAR EASTERN CHRONOLOGY NOW FIRMLY ESTABLISHED for the second and first millennia b.c., within limits that decreased from a generation in the earlier periods to a few years in the central section to certainty in the latter part.<sup>26</sup>

The noted chronologist Edwin Thiele, as another example, while referring to the discrepancies between the modern arrangement of Assyrian kings and their view of Israelite chronology, points out that “it is clear that Menahem and Tiglath-Pileser were contemporaneous and that either the system of biblical chronology . . . for the termination of Menahem’s reign is wrong, or Assyrian chronology is wrong.” Thiele then gives favor to the present-day arrangement for Assyrian chronology by stating that the dates for Tiglath-pileser “are fully established.”<sup>27</sup> As we shall amply prove in our forthcoming discussions, these pagan king lists were purposely stacked by ancient scribes in an effort to lengthen their own national histories and thereby give their own nation a more glorious past. Dynasties which ruled parallel in Assyria (as well as in Egypt and elsewhere) but ruled from different cities were made to appear as if one king line from one city entirely preceded the other. Using this distorted system, the chronology provided by Scriptures would, of course, make no sense.

Underlying all of the rhetoric and postulation by present-day chronologists is their bias against Scriptures. R. P. BenDedek amply phrased the problem when he wrote:

Unfortunately however, anti-Biblical bias is strong, and some historians take a less than scientific approach to their work. For some, admitting that the

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<sup>25</sup> JNES, 2.1, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> BANE, ch. 7, p. 203.

<sup>27</sup> M NHK, p. 141.

scriptural record of history might be right, seems to be sufficient incentive to ensure that the Scriptural Record be summarily rejected. . . . Whilst we might not blame Academics for distrusting the Biblical Material, what is hypocritical is that many of these same Academics will quote the very Scriptures which they consider to be fictional, to support their many and various hypotheses.<sup>28</sup>

Our task in this series on *Ancient World Chronology* is to overcome all of these obstacles and biases. Our first effort will be to recover the ancient Sabbath and Jubilee cycle as used by the ancient Israelites. Utilizing this important cycle as a guiding hand, we shall next move backwards in time and reconstruct the original chronology of the ancient Israelites from their entrance into the land of Egypt in 1839 B.C.E. until the end of the neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C.E. From this block of time, we shall then move further back in order to discover the date for the creation of Adam. Then we shall move forward from 539 B.C.E. up until 70 C.E., at which time the Second Temple (which had been enhanced by King Herod) was destroyed by the Roman Empire. In this investigation, we shall examine Jewish chronology that is connected with Judaea as well as the chronology of Yahushua the messiah and his apostles. This construct, in turn, will provide an accurate framework upon which we can properly construct the chronologies belonging to the leading nations of the ancient world, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Arami, Chinese, and many others.

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<sup>28</sup> MCMS, p. 1.

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