

## **SECTION III**

# **THE POST-HEZEKIAH PERIOD**

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Chapter XIII

## *The Sabbath Year of 589/588 B.C.E.*

Our next datable Sabbath year occurred in the post-Hezekiah period. It happened during the 9th year of the reign of Zedekiah (589/588 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning), the last king of Judah. In Jeremiah, 34:8–22, we read about the year in which King Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem made a covenant to observe the scriptural law to release all Hebrew slaves, an act performed during the Sabbath year.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the goodwill they created with Yahweh was shattered when, after freeing these slaves, they shortly thereafter reneged on their commitment and forcibly returned these slaves to their owners. The backsliding on this covenant is said to have taken place at the time when the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, had “withdrawn” his Chaldaean army from their siege against Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> In another passage, the book of Jeremiah defines this pause in the siege by saying that it was prompted by the approach of an Egyptian army sent to assist King Zedekiah:

And Jeremiah came in and went out among the people, for they had not put him in a prison house. And Pharaoh’s army had come out of Egypt. And when the Chaldaeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the news about them, they departed from Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

In still another place, we are told:

And it happened, when the army of the Chaldaeans departed from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army, then Jeremiah went out from Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to receive a portion from there in the midst of the people.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, there is a direct connection between the release of the Hebrew slaves during a Sabbath year and the withdrawal of the Chaldaean army during their siege against Jerusalem in the reign of King Zedekiah. At

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<sup>1</sup> Exod., 21:2–6; Deut., 15:12–18.

<sup>2</sup> Jer., 34:21, “the army of the king of Babylon that has withdrawn from you”; LXX Jer., 41:21, “the host of the king of Babylon, them who ran away from them (the Judahites at Jerusalem)”; cf. Jer., 34:8f, 15f.

<sup>3</sup> Jer., 37:4f; LXX Jer., 44:4f.

<sup>4</sup> Jer., 37:11f; LXX Jer., 44:11, “when the host of the Chaldaeans had gone up from Jerusalem for fear of the host of Pharaoh.”

the same time, this repose from the siege against Jerusalem and King Zedekiah was only temporary, for Yahweh told Jeremiah:

Behold, Yahweh states, I will command and bring them (the Chaldaeans) back to this city, and they will fight against it, and capture it, and burn it with fire. And I will give the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

In another passage, we similarly read:

Behold, Pharaoh's army, which has come out to help you (King Zedekiah), shall return to his own land of Egypt. And the Chaldaeans shall return and fight against this city and take it, and burn it with fire.<sup>6</sup>

The scenario thus admits that, after Nebuchadnezzar II's army dealt with the Egyptian threat, they would return to lay siege against Jerusalem and, this time, would continue to besiege that city until it was destroyed by fire.

### **Year of Withdrawal**

Josephus and Severus date the beginning of the Chaldaean siege against King Zedekiah of Judah, the withdrawal of that siege, and then its renewal to Zedekiah's 9th year.<sup>7</sup> We begin to date this 9th year by observing that, during the last month (Addaru) of the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, the Chaldaean king of Babylon—whose records are reckoned by the accession-year system (AY)—the Babylonians carried King Jehoiachin of Judah captive.<sup>8</sup> They then replaced him on the throne at Jerusalem with his uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar II renamed Zedekiah.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, we are in full agreement with the well-established dates now given for the kings of the neo-Babylonian Empire (625–539 B.C.E.). These dates have been fully vetted, being firmly calculated by means of astronomical events and cross-references to

<sup>5</sup> Jer., 34:22; LXX Jer., 41:22.

<sup>6</sup> Jer., 37:7f; LXX Jer., 44:7f.

<sup>7</sup> The renewal of the siege was dated to the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah (AY), see 2 Kings, 25:1; Jer., 39:1, 52:4; Ezek., 24:1; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4. The S.O., 26, dates the Sabbath year for this event to the 7th year of Zedekiah, a position made untenable for several reasons. First, it dates King Zedekiah far too late in history, based upon a total corruption of the chronology by the compilers of the S.O. (see above Chaps. I & 2). Then, after creating this false chronology, the rabbis merely cycled back their contrived dates for the Sabbath year until it lined up with their incorrect dates for King Zedekiah. As we shall prove as we proceed, the scriptural evidence demonstrates that this Sabbath year was the 9th year of King Zedekiah of Judah. The calculation in the S.O., on the other hand, is untenable and has no value.

<sup>8</sup> The *Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle* 5 (ABC, pp. 99f, obverse, l. 12) specifically identifies the year that Nebuchadnezzar II acquired the throne as his “accession year.” Under the “accession-year system (AY),” also called the “post-dating” system, the year in which the new king came to the throne is designated as his “accession year.” The new king’s “Year 1” did not begin until the 1st day of the following year.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings, 24:15–18; 2 Chron., 36:8–11; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:1f.

contemporary kings. As such, the chronology for these kings is now agreed upon by all reputable scholars of ancient history.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Babylonian records, Nebuchadnezzar II's father, Nabopolassar, died in his 21st year of reign, on Abu 8 (August 13/14, sunset reckoning), 605 B.C.E., and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II, ascended to the throne of Babylon on Ululu 1 (Sept. 5/6, sunset reckoning), 605 B.C.E.<sup>11</sup> Nebuchadnezzar II's "1st" regnal year (AY) began on the following New Year's day, Nisānu (Nisan) 1 (March 31/April 1) of 604 B.C.E., when he "took the hand of Bel and the son of Bel," his gods, and "celebrated the Akitu festival."<sup>12</sup> As a result, the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (AY) extended from Nisānu 1 (March 25/26) 598 B.C.E. to Addaru 29 (April 11/12) 597 B.C.E. During the "7th year" of Nebuchadnezzar II, the *Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle 5* reports:

He (Nebuchadnezzar II) encamped against the city of Judah and on the 2nd day of the month of Addaru he captured the city (and) SEIZED (ITS) KING. A king of his own choice he appointed in the city. Taking a vast tribute, he brought it into Babylon.<sup>13</sup>

Addaru (Hebrew "Adar") is the last month of the Chaldaean and Hebrew year (Chart B). Clement of Alexandria states that the exile of these Jews began in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar II,<sup>14</sup> although, as 2 Kings, 24:12, notes, Jehoiachin did not actually arrive in Babylon until after the 1st day of the new year, i.e., during Nebuchadnezzar II's 8th year. Jeremiah also reports that the exile of the Jews at this time began in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar II:

This is (the number of) the people who Nebuchadnezzar exiled: in the 7th year: 3,023 Jews.<sup>15</sup>

According to the accession-year system (AY), Zedekiah held the throne of Judah for 11 years.<sup>16</sup> If one uses the non-accession-year system (NY),<sup>17</sup> it is 12 years.<sup>18</sup> The city of Jerusalem was destroyed and the reign of Zedekiah brought to an end during the 5th month of the 11th year of Zedekiah (AY), being the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (AY).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> E.g., MNHK, pp. 179f, 227; BC, pp. 3–46; CCK, pp. 1–96; CAW, pp. 42f; cf. Ptolemy, *Can. Babylonian Chronicles* (see BC); and other ancient texts (e.g., see texts in ABC).

<sup>11</sup> ABC, pp 99f, l. 9–11; cf. Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:11:1. For a slightly different view on the dates represented by Abu 8 and Ululu 1 of 605 B.C.E., see BC, pp. 24f, which respectfully gives Aug. 15th and Sept. 7th, midnight reckoning. Our calculations show that the actual dates were one day earlier. In either case, nothing will change with regards to our conclusions.

<sup>12</sup> ABC, p. 100, l. 14f.

<sup>13</sup> ABC, p. 102, l. 12f.

<sup>14</sup> Clement, *Strom.*, 1:21:127:1.

<sup>15</sup> Jer., 52:28.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Kings, 24:18; 2 Chron., 36:11; Jer., 3:1, 52:1; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:5.

<sup>17</sup> In the "non-accession-year system (NY)," also called "ante-dating," the actual year that the new king comes to the throne is counted as his "year 1" of reign, even though it may consist of only a partial year.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Clement, *Strom.*, 1:21:122:1; Severus, 1:54; Sec. Hier. Cod., p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kings, 25:8–11; Jer., 1:3, 52:12–15, 28; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:2, 5.

The New Year date for Zedekiah's reign began with Nisan 1 (April 12/13, sunset reckoning) of 597 B.C.E. As a result, the 1st year of Zedekiah (AY) agrees with the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (AY), i.e., 597/596 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. In turn, his 11th year agrees with the 18th of Nebuchadnezzar II (587/586 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning).<sup>20</sup> Using the NY method, on the other hand, Zedekiah's 1st year would be counted with his accession to the throne in the last month of the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (598/597 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning), while his 12th year would be equivalent to the 19th (NY), i.e., 18th (AY) of Nebuchadnezzar II (587/586 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning).<sup>21</sup>

Zedekiah continued to serve Nebuchadnezzar II as a vassal for a number of years before he decided to revolt. To demonstrate, Josephus, using the AY system, gave Zedekiah 11 years as king and made it equivalent to the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar II.<sup>22</sup> He then writes:

AFTER maintaining his alliance with the Babylonians FOR 8 YEARS, Zedekiah (Greek "Sacchias") broke his treaty with them and went over to the Egyptians, hoping to overthrow the Babylonians if he joined the other side. And, when the Babylonian king heard of this, he marched against him and, after ravaging his country and taking his fortresses, he came against the city of Jerusalem itself to besiege it. Yet when the Egyptian king (Wahibre Haaibre) heard of the plight of his ally Zedekiah, he raised a large force and came to Judaea to end the siege. THEREUPON, THE BABYLONIAN KING LEFT JERUSALEM AND WENT TO MEET THE EGYPTIANS and, encountering them in battle, defeated and put them to flight and drove them out of the whole of Syria.<sup>23</sup>

Josephus continues by saying that the prophet Jeremiah told the people the truth, informing them that the Babylonian king would defeat the Egyptians and, among other things, "would lead an army against Jerusalem and besiege it and destroy the people by famine."<sup>24</sup> The Seder Olam points out that, at this precise time, "the army of Pharaoh swept away Gaza and returned to Egypt."<sup>25</sup> Since Josephus reports that the battle took place in Judah, yet the Seder Olam states that before returning to Egypt, Pharaoh "swept away Gaza," it indicates that the battle between the Egyptians and Babylonians occurred in the territory of Judah but near the northern border of Gaza. It was here that the Chaldaeans stopped the Egyptian advance coming through Gaza

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jer., 52:29; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:5.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 2 Kings, 25:8; Jer., 52:12, cf. 32:1; both sources using the NY system.

<sup>22</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4, 10:8:1, 2, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3. Haaibre is also called Hophra (Jer., 44:30) and Apries (Herodotus, 2:161; Diodorus, 1:68).

<sup>24</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3.

<sup>25</sup> S.O., 26.

and turned Pharaoh back. In the same way, Severus, who gives Zedekiah 12 years of rule, thus using the NY system, makes the following comment about King Zedekiah's revolt:

Accordingly, AFTER A PERIOD OF 9 YEARS,  
Nabuchodonosor made war against him (Zedekiah),  
and having forced him to flee within the walls,  
BESIEGED HIM FOR 3 YEARS.<sup>26</sup>

Severus, by counting the short period in Zedekiah's accession year as Year 1, makes the 9th year of Zedekiah equivalent to his 8th year as argued by Josephus. Accordingly, it was not until "AFTER" the 8th year (AY) in Josephus, which equals "AFTER" the 9th year (NY) in Severus, that Zedekiah revolted from the Babylonian king and made an alliance with the Egyptian pharaoh. This makes Zedekiah's 9th year (AY), i.e., his 10th year (NY), a Sabbath year, the year in which the Israelites set all their Hebrew slaves free, albeit, later breaking their covenant by returning the slaves to their owners. Severus does not speak of the temporary withdrawal from the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king due to the appearance of the Egyptian army. Instead, he simply reckons that the siege occurred during the last 3 years of the reign of Zedekiah (years 10 through 12). In both cases, the 9th year (AY), or 10th year (NY), is 589/588 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning.

### **Renewing the Siege**

Our chronological arrangement is further enhanced by the exact date for the Chaldaean renewal of the siege against the city of Jerusalem. Various ancient sources all date the renewing of the siege to "the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year (AY)" of King Zedekiah, continuing until the 9th day of the 4th month of the 11th year,<sup>27</sup> a period of 18 months by Israelite reckoning, i.e., from January 14/15 of 588 B.C.E. until July 27/28 of 587 B.C.E. That "the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year (AY)" began the continual siege that lasted until the walls of the city of Jerusalem were breached, 2 Kings informs us:

And it happened, in the 9th year of his (Zedekiah's) reign, in the 10th month, on the 10th (day) of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and camped against it and built against it a siege-mound all around it. And the city entered into the siege UNTIL THE 11TH YEAR OF KING ZEDEKIAH, ON THE 9TH (DAY) OF THE MONTH, when the famine was severe in the city and there was no food for the people of the land. Then the city was broken into.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Severus, 1:54. For the 12-year figure, also see above n. 18.

<sup>27</sup> 2 Kings, 25:1-4; Jer., 39:1f, 52:4-6; Ezek., 24:1f; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4; S.O., 26; etc.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Kings, 25:1-4; cf. LXX 4 Kings, 25:1-4, "And the city was besieged UNTIL the 11th year of King Sedekias on the 9th day of the month."

Notice that the siege continued from the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year “until” the 9th day of the month (i.e., the 4th month) of the 11th year of King Zedekiah. Jeremiah is even more specific. He writes:

In the 9th year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the 10th month, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and all his army came against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. In the 11th year of Zedekiah, in the 4th month, the 9th (day) of the month, the city was breached.<sup>29</sup>

We read in Josephus that, after the Chaldaeans left Jerusalem to do battle with the Egyptians, they returned:

In the 9th year of the reign of Zedekiah, on the 10th day of the 10th moon, the king of Babylon MARCHED A SECOND TIME against Jerusalem and, encamping before it, besieged it with the utmost energy for 18 months.<sup>30</sup>

And again, Josephus writes:

Now the Babylonian king applied himself very strenuously and zealously to the siege of Jerusalem. . . . And thus they (the Judahites) held out for 18 months until they were exhausted by the famine and by the missiles which the enemy hurled at them from the towers. The city was taken in the 11th year of the reign of Zedekiah, on the 9th day of the 4th moon.<sup>31</sup>

According to this evidence, the withdrawal from the siege had to take place not many days prior to the 10th day of the 10th month (Shebat), i.e., January 14/15, of the 9th year (588 B.C.E.), the date that Nebuchadnezzar II renewed the siege and continued until the city was breached in the 4th month of the 11th year. This pause in the siege allowed the people within the walls of Jerusalem to leave that city in order to attend to other concerns.<sup>32</sup> It was just long enough to allow false prophets to deceive King Zedekiah into believing that the Babylonian king would be defeated by Pharaoh and not return to make war on the people of Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> As we shall see below, this reprieve in the siege would last no more than a month and probably much less.

### First Nine Months of 589 B.C.E.

It is clear that the remaining chronological issues regarding this Sabbath year must fall prior to the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah,

<sup>29</sup> Jer., 39:1f; LXX Jer., 46:1f.

<sup>30</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4.

<sup>31</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:1.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Jer., 37:4, 11f; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3 §111.

<sup>33</sup> Jer., 37:6–11; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3.

i.e., prior to January 14/15 of 588 B.C.E., yet must also follow after Nisan 1 (March 15/16) of 589 B.C.E., at which time Zedekiah revolted from the Babylonians. It would have taken no more than 5 days for Nebuchadnezzar II to pack up and march his forces from Jerusalem to the border between nearby Gaza and Judaea (about 66 to 70 miles),<sup>34</sup> where he did battle with the Egyptian army. Even if the subsequent conflict took as long as 3 weeks to accomplish (although only a single battle is actually mentioned),<sup>35</sup> plus the addition of another 5 days for his army to return to Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar II would have taken no more than approximately 5 weeks to accomplish the entire task, if not much less. That moves our date for the withdrawal of the siege of Jerusalem back no further than about the beginning of the 9th month (Tebeth 1, i.e., December 6/7) of the 9th year of King Zedekiah (589 B.C.E.).

We are also told that, when Pharaoh heard of the attack upon Judah, "he raised a large force and came to Judaea to end the siege."<sup>36</sup> The Egyptian capitals were in Memphis and Sais during this period.<sup>37</sup> So, it would take no more than a few weeks for Pharaoh to receive the report from the people of Judah or his scouts, gather his forces, and march through Gaza and to the border of Judah. The march from the border of Egypt at Pelusium to Gaza took no more than 10 days.<sup>38</sup> To this figure we need to add the time that it took Pharaoh to raise his army, gather supplies, and march from Sais or Memphis to the border of Egypt, no more than 2 to 3 weeks. Again the total time expended would be about a month. There also would be little doubt that Pharaoh would not hesitate in making these arrangements, seeing that his newly-won ally in Judah was in imminent danger.

Placing the arrival time of the Egyptians on the border of Judah, where the two forces met, at approximately the 1st day of the 9th month of the 9th year, another month back brings us to about the 1st day of the 8th month of the 9th year as the time for the arrival of the Chaldaean army in Judah (Khisleu 1, or November 7/8 of 589 B.C.E.). This time gave Nebuchadnezzar II at least a month to ravage the kingdom of Judah, which was now a mere shadow of its

<sup>34</sup> See below n. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3. Nebuchadnezzar II may have chased the Egyptians all the way back to Pelusium on the northeast border of Egypt, for Josephus adds, "Thereupon the Babylonian king left Jerusalem and went to meet the Egyptians and, encountering them in battle, defeated and put them to flight and drove them out of the whole of Syria" (Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:2).

<sup>36</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:3.

<sup>37</sup> Although the main capital of Egypt was at Memphis, during Dynasty XXVI, to whom the pharaohs of this period belonged (e.g., Herodotus, 3:10, 13), residency was also held at Sais (e.g., Manetho, frags. 68 & 69; Herodotus, 2:154, 163, 169, 172).

<sup>38</sup> For example, Thutmose III of Egypt marched from Sile to the city of Gaza, a trip of about 145 miles, in 10 days (ARE, 2, §409), i.e., about 14.5 miles per day. Xenophon speaks of a Greek army marching through Assyria over 70 parasangs (about 245 miles), in 14 days, averaging about 17.5 miles per day (Xenophon, *Anab.*, 2:4). It took Alexander the Great 7 days to march from Gaza, which was located in Palestine, to Pelusium in Egypt, a distance of about 134 Roman miles (123.11 English miles), averaging about 17.5 miles per day (Arrian, 3:1:1; Curtius, 4:7). Titus of Rome made a march from Pelusium to Rhinocorura (El-Arish), a distance of about 90 Roman miles (82.68 English miles), in 3 days (Jos., *Wars*, 4:11:5), averaging about 27.5 miles per day.

former self,<sup>39</sup> before Pharaoh could arrive. In turn, that leaves seven full months for Nebuchadnezzar II to receive word of the Judahite revolt, prepare his army for the conflict, and march from Babylon to Jerusalem. Indeed, the Chaldaean king may well have had additional military forces already positioned in Damascus, Syria, or at Carchemish on the Euphrates, as well as at other cities in the west which he could have also utilized.

The longest scenario requires Nebuchadnezzar II to march his army from Babylon to Jerusalem. If that were the case, the Babylonians would have recognized the revolt only after its ambassadors were locked out of the city and the tribute due Nebuchadnezzar II was not paid. This event would have taken place at the beginning of the 1st month of the 9th year of Zedekiah. Using signal fires,<sup>40</sup> as the Jews themselves later did,<sup>41</sup> the message could reach Babylon in only a few hours and certainly within a couple of days. Yet even if military couriers were sent,<sup>42</sup> they could easily travel 30 miles or more a day, changing horses along the road (pony express style). In that event, it would take no longer than a month to reach Babylon. As an example, the news of the death of Nabopolassar in Babylon on Abu 8 (August 13/14) of 605 B.C.E. not only reached Nebuchadnezzar II in the city of Riblah, in the Hamath district of Syria,<sup>43</sup> but he was able to return to his capital by Ululu 1 (September 5/6) of 605 B.C.E. and sit upon the royal throne of Babylon in only 23 days.<sup>44</sup> A one-way courier trip from the region of Jerusalem to Babylon during the spring-time would not take much longer.

In addition, the Babylonians required time to muster an army (2 or 3 weeks at most). A military march from Babylon to Jerusalem, traveling at a rather conservative rate of 14 miles a day,<sup>45</sup> over the approximate 817 walking miles that are required, would take no more than 2 months. If we add in a month for preparation, there was plenty of time during the 7 intervening months from the beginning of the year until the Babylonian army appeared in front of Jerusalem on or about the 1st day of the 8th month (Khisleu 1, or

<sup>39</sup> For the massive depopulation of the kingdom of Judah, reducing its population to those who found safety in the city of Jerusalem, during the days of the Assyrian Sennacherib, see the records provided above in Parallel Corpora A. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar II, the Babylonian king, had already deported and killed thousands of the people of Judah prior to this final attack on Jerusalem (e.g., Dan., 1:1–4; 2 Kings, 24:8–16; 2 Chron., 36:5–10; Jer., 24:1, 27:20–22, 52:29; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:6:3, 10:7:1).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. RA, 35.3/4, pp. 174–186.

<sup>41</sup> The Jews of Jerusalem regularly used fire signals to inform the Jews of Babylon when to celebrate the new moon (R.Sh., 2:1–4; J. R.Sh., 2:intro:1; cf. 2:1:1f; Maimonides, *Code*, 3:8:3:8). This effort was accomplished in only a matter of hours.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. CCK, p. 26.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Jer., 39:4–6, 52:8–10, 26f; 2 Kings, 25:8–21; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:2, 5, which shows that Nebuchadnezzar II also made his residence at Riblah (Arablatha) of Hamath during the siege of Jerusalem in the time of King Zedekiah. It is called Arbela and Deblatha in the LXX version.

<sup>44</sup> ABC, pp. 99f, obverse, l. 9–11; CCK, p. 26; cf. RA, 35.3/4, pp. 174–186.

<sup>45</sup> See above n. 38. Even casual Jewish travelers, observing the weekly Sabbath, could reach Jerusalem from Babylon in 4 months (Ezra, 7:8f), traveling at the extremely slow average rate of 7 miles per day. A military force, on the other hand, is well-trained and deliberate in their marching. They could attain a much higher rate of travel.

November 7/8 of 589 B.C.E.) of the 9th year. These data clearly conform with the 9th year of King Zedekiah being a Sabbath year.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence demonstrates that during the 9th year of King Zedekiah of Judah, the people of Judah not only revolted from their overlord, the king of Babylon, but, initially, kept the commandment to release their Hebrew slaves, a duty required during the Sabbath year. In the autumn of that same year, while the Babylonian army had broken off their siege of the city of Jerusalem, this action was reversed and the owners of these slaves enslaved them once more. The data clearly proves that the 9th year of King Zedekiah, i.e., the year 589/588 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, was a Sabbath year.

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