

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

By John Brug

In any study of history we inevitably desire to relate the people and events we are studying to other people and events in a uniform system of chronology. We want to study the sequence of events to look for causal relationships. We want to relate events in one culture to those in another contemporaneous culture. To be even more specific, we desire to connect the events of Old Testament and New Testament history to the chronological system of the Christian era, which is now almost universally used in historical study. We desire to place events and the lives and deeds of people into the proper year either after or before the beginning fixed for this era.

This presents difficulties in the study of ancient history, including Old Testament history. The nations of antiquity did not have a uniform system of chronology. Each nation had its own system, which was generally very closely associated with the reigns of its rulers, and frequently modified or even completely changed by the rise of a new ruler or dynasty. Also the dates assigned to the individual kings of Judah and Israel in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles give evidence of the diverse chronological systems used in the two kingdoms, and of changes and modifications in the respective systems under the various kings and dynasties.

Throughout the Old Testament, as it portrays the succession of persons and events from creation to Malachi, an abundance of inspired chronological data is offered. These chronological facts are, however, not harmonized into one precise, uniform system of chronology. Sometimes, as previously stated, they remain connected with the chronological system of a specific kingdom or king. At other times chronological details are interspersed in genealogical tables. Sometimes, round numbers may be used. At other times, successive periods of time in a given list may not follow one after the other but may overlap. Sometimes the Old Testament gives us the elapsed time interval between two very important events in the history of God's Old Testament chosen people, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the building of the Temple (Ex 12:40; 1 Kgs 6:1).

Early Chronology

The chronology of the period before the Israelite monarchy is based almost entirely on the two time intervals—the 480 years between the building of the Temple and the Exodus and the 430 years Israel spent in Egypt. There are no specific synchronisms or cross-dating with the dating systems of other nations.

Starting with a date of about 966 BC for the building of the Temple and adding 480 years, we come up with a date of about 1446 BC for the Exodus. We then arrange the data concerning Solomon, David, Saul, the judges, and Joshua so that it fits into this 480-year period. To get everything to fit we must overlap the rule of some of the judges in the book of Judges. Naturally, the set of dates for the judges fit neatly into place because they have been shaped to fit the available space.

Next we take the 430 years in Egypt and add it to 1446 BC, yielding 1876 BC for the entry

into Egypt. Then we take the data for the patriarchs in Genesis and use it to calculate a date of birth for Abraham of about 2166 BC.

For this whole period we have no synchronisms between biblical chronology and the independently derived chronologies of other nations. So, as a next step, we take the secular chronologies of Egypt and other nations and set them alongside the biblical chronology and attempt to connect them. In some cases this produces a good fit. A setting for the Exodus in 1446 fits well into the conventional dates of the 18th dynasty of New Kingdom of Egypt, and the stay of Joseph in Egypt fits well into the 12th dynasty of Middle Kingdom of Egypt.

Readers should be aware, however, that the precise dates for pharaohs that one often sees in history books are actually not that precise. There are competing versions of the standard chronology of Egypt, but the discrepancies between these different chronologies for this period are measured in years and decades, not centuries. However, the anchor points for these chronologies of second millennium Egypt are not as well established as one might believe. The astronomical anchors that provide a framework for these chronologies are of questionable reliability, and the synchronisms with other nations often rest on circular argument. The use of lunar eclipses and Venus cycles to pin-point dates is useful only if the previously mentioned dates for star cycles are sound. It is possible that there are significantly bigger margins of error than historians generally concede—errors of centuries rather than decades.

Extending the chronology further back into Genesis depends on connecting Abraham to the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. If these genealogies are complete, a chronology of the world can be calculated. If they are not complete but have gaps, it is not possible to calculate a chronology except in broad estimates. The most famous attempt to create such a chronology was that of James Ussher.

The Ussher Chronology

Most people are somewhat familiar with the efforts of Archbishop Ussher to connect all the chronological data of the Old Testament to our Christian era calendar. Since 1701, the dates at which he arrived have been printed in the margin of many editions of the King James Version of the English Bible. While this chronology represents much careful and scholarly work, at crucial points it nevertheless rests on judgments and assumptions that must be questioned.

For the period from creation to Abraham, Ussher established his dates on the basis of Genesis 5 and 11. In these chapters we have genealogies of the Messianic line from Adam through Seth to Noah's three sons, and from Shem through Terah to Abraham and his two brothers. Ussher used the details included in these genealogies to establish a chronology for this period. He did so by adding up all the ages at which each person in the respective genealogies is said to have become the father of the next individual mentioned.

With the assumption that every link in the genealogies is listed, this would be a sound procedure. It is an assumption, however, that cannot be made with certainty. Since Moses himself does not add up these ages, it cannot be asserted that they were given to provide data for a chronology. In a genealogy the important thing is to follow the direct line of descent. Listing

every link in that descent is not necessary. It is evident that other genealogies in the Old and New Testament do not list all links.

In the genealogy from Joseph to Joshua (1 Chr 7:20-27) eleven links are mentioned, but the genealogy from Levi to Moses (Ex 6:16-20) covering approximately the same period, names only four links: Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. It is significant that when he reports his own birth in Exodus 2, Moses leaves both his father and mother nameless. Amram and Jochebed may have been Moses' ancestors rather than his immediate parents, but it seems more likely that they are his parents, and that the gap in the genealogy is located at some point before Amram. Kohath is not to be understood as having been Moses' grandfather, since in that case Moses at age 81 would have had 8,600 male first cousins (Numbers 3:28). The genealogy of David at the end of Ruth is similarly abbreviated. Different reasons for the mention of four generations are given. One is that the LORD told Abraham that his people would spend four generations in a foreign land (Gen. 15:16), so this genealogy is constructed in a way to show that the four generations have passed. It is likely that this genealogy's purpose is to formally introduce Moses by mentioning his tribe, his clan, and his familial households.

In the Messianic genealogy of Matthew 1:6-11, as it covers the Davidic royal line up to the Babylonian captivity, we read: "Joram the father of Uzziah." Though Matthew follows the direct line of descent, he omits three links, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, all Davidic kings known to us from 2 Kings. He says of Joram that he "was the father of" his great-great-grandson Uzziah. Similarly Matthew states: "Josiah the father of Jeconiah," thereby jumping from grandfather to grandson, omitting King Jehoiakim, the link in between them. Both in Greek and in Hebrew the word meaning "the father of" is used for fathering not only a son but also a more remote descendant, as long as he is in a direct line of descent.

Some have contended that links could not be missing in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, because the precise age is given at which each person became the father of the next individual mentioned, and even the number of years they lived after becoming his father. Such details are admittedly not supplied in the genealogies which have omissions.

The genealogy of Jesus in Luke does list Cainan as one additional link not mentioned in the Genesis list of the Messianic line from Shem to Abraham, although this may be due to a textual problem involving the Septuagint and some later manuscripts of Luke. It should be evident that Ussher's chronology computed from Genesis 5 and 11 would be lengthened by each link in the direct line that is not listed. Because of the possibility of an unspecified number of unlisted links in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, we cannot assert that the Old Testament gives us a precise chronology from creation to Abraham.

The following is a summary of the chronology that would be produced by the "Ussher method" and its variants. These dates are based on a 1446 BC Exodus. The dates given are to be understood as approximate dates. As noted below, Ussher's results for these dates vary from the dates we are using because he had different assumptions about the date of Solomon and the time spent in Egypt than we do.

Our dates based on using Ussher's method:

- c. 966 BC The building of Solomon's temple began (1 Kings 6:1 and 1 Kings 11:43).
- c. 970 BC Solomon's accession as king of Israel (1 Kings 11:43).
- c. 1003 BC David becomes king over all Israel in Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:11).
- c. 1010 BC David becomes king over Judah at Hebron (1 Kings 2:11).
- c. 1406 BC Israel's entrance into Canaan under Joshua (Deuteronomy 1:3,8,38; 1 Kings 6:1).
- c. 1446 BC The Exodus from Egypt. 1 Kings 6:1: "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth 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 the LORD." The Septuagint reads the four hundred and fortieth year. (Passages in this section reflect the KJV language Ussher was using.)
- c. 1876 BC Israel's entrance (i.e. Jacob's 70 souls and their households) into Egypt. The Hebrew text of Exodus 12:40-41 reads: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt." Bishop Ussher followed the Septuagint, which has the addition "and in Canaan" after "Egypt" in Exodus 12:40. Thus he allots only 215 years to the actual sojourn in Egypt and the other 215 to the sojourn of the patriarchs in Canaan. The reading of the Hebrew text which ascribes the entire 430 years to the sojourn in Egypt is in keeping with the round number of Genesis 15:13 where God prophesies a 400 year stay of Abraham's seed "in the land that is not theirs." A 215-year stay in Egypt does not fit well into the Exodus accounts of Israel's growth from a family into a populous nation feared even before Moses' birth by the pharaoh who did not know Joseph. With a sojourn of 215 years there would be 64 years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses. The 430 year sojourn in Egypt is best begun with the entry of Jacob's 70 souls and their households into Egypt as reported in Genesis 46 and Exodus 1:1.
- c. 2006 BC Birth of Jacob. According to Genesis 47:9 Jacob was 130 years old when he came to Egypt.
- c. 2066 BC Birth of Isaac. According to Genesis 27:26 Isaac was 60 years old at Jacob's birth.
- c. 2091 BC Abraham's entrance into the land of Canaan. Confer Genesis 21:5 and 12:4. Abraham had been in the land of Canaan 25 years at the birth of Isaac.
- c. 2166 BC Abraham's birth in Ur of the Chaldees. According to Genesis 12:3 Abraham was 75 years old when he entered Canaan.

Compare our dates with Ussher's dates:

- 1012 BC The founding of the Temple in Jerusalem (Our date 966 BC)

1491 BC	The Exodus from Egypt (Our date 1446)
1921 BC	God's call to Abraham (Our date 2091)
2348 BC	Noah's Flood (Our date using Ussher's method would be about 2518)
4004 BC	Creation (Our date using Ussher's method would be about 4174 BC)

The reason Ussher's later dates are higher than contemporary calculations is that he was unaware of the Assyrian dates that led to the telescoping of the kings of Israel. His earlier dates are lower because he halved the stay in Egypt. The Septuagint also has different dates in Genesis 5 and 11 but these dates lack credibility.

Ussher, of course, is the subject of much ridicule today, but Ussher's work, the *Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* (*Annals of the Old Testament, deduced from the first origins of the world*), was a respected work of scholarship in its day. Ussher's proposed date of 4004 BC for creation differed little from other biblically-based estimates, such as those of Bede (3952 BC) and Ussher's near-contemporary, Scaliger (3949 BC), and such renowned scientists as Johannes Kepler (3992 BC) or Sir Isaac Newton (c. 4000 BC).

Carrying a good thing too far, Ussher deduced that the first day of Creation began at nightfall preceding Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC in the proleptic Julian calendar near the autumnal equinox. The world began on Sunday because the seventh day was a Sabbath. Jewish days begin with darkness just as the first day did. The commentator Lightfoot similarly deduced that Creation began at nightfall near the autumnal equinox, but in the year 3929 BC, though he granted "That the world was made at equinox, all grant,—but differ at which, whether about the eleventh of March, or twelfth of September; to me in September, without all doubt." This was, of course, based on the fact that the Jews had two new years, civil and religious. Note again the role of assumptions here—the chief assumption being that one can assume a straight-line continuity in the calendar since creation—an untenable assumption since there have been numerous calendar reforms, and ancient calendars were observational not calculated.

We are on somewhat more solid ground in the chronology of the kings but here too precision eludes us.

The Chronology of the Divided Kingdom

For this period the Old Testament does give us precise, detailed chronological information. Using the chronological systems followed in each of the two kingdoms of Israel, 1 and 2 Kings give us the number of years of the reign of each of the successive kings of Judah and Israel. In addition, the reign of each king of Judah is synchronized with the reign of the contemporary king of Israel using the Judean system. Similarly Israelite scribes used their own system to describe the reign of a Judean king.

Yet this precise chronological information still presents a double difficulty to the biblical scholar. The one difficulty is that of understanding the two divergent chronological systems used in the two kingdoms and their synchronizations. The other difficulty is that of relating the precise data given to our Christian era calendar.

For the second difficulty, the findings of archeology have offered valuable help. One such help is the discovery of the Assyrian eponym list covering a period of 244 years. In this list every successive year is named after a prominent Assyrian official (similar to the Roman practice of naming years for consuls). The individual year, called an eponymy, at the same time furnishes information concerning important happenings during the year. The eponymy of Bur Sagale, governor of Guzana, offers the detail that an eclipse of the sun took place in the month of Simanu. That makes it possible to fix this year as 763 BC, and the entire list as covering the years 892 to 648 BC. In the eponymy of Daian Assur, 853 BC, Shalmaneser III fought the battle of Qarqar against a group of western kings including Ahab of Israel. Twelve years later in the eponymy of Adad Rimani, 841 BC, Shalmaneser received tribute from Jehu of Israel. This makes it possible to calculate 841 BC as the date of Jehu's accession and of the deaths of both of Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, and 851 as the last year of Ahab. By working forward and backward, Christian era dates can be assigned to the reigns of all the other kings. The date for the division of the kingdom can be set at 931/930 BC; the fall of Samaria at 723/722 BC; and the fall of Jerusalem at 587/586 BC. (Lately there has been an increase of support for 587 for the fall of Jerusalem.)

To produce a precise calendar we also have to solve the problems raised by the two different systems of dating kings.

The breakthrough in this study was made by Edwin R. Thiele in the years following World War II. The following is an emended version of his chronology. The most problematic area is the reign of Hezekiah and the kings surrounding him. It is there that we have made the greatest revisions to Thiele's dates.

The Dates of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Israel			Judah		
King	Overlapping Reigns	Reign	King	Co-regency	Reign
Jeroboam I		931/30–910/9	Rehoboam		931/30–913
			Abijam/ Abijam		913–911/10
Nadab		910/9–909/8	Asa		911/10–870/69
Baasha		909/8–886/85			
Elah		886/85–885/84			
Zimri		885/84			
Tibni		885/84–880			
Omri	885/84–880	880–874/73			
Ahab		874/73–853	Jehoshaphat	873/72–870/69	870/69–848
Ahaziah		853–852	Jehoram	853–848	848–841
Joram		852–841	Ahaziah		841
Jehu		841–814/13	Athaliah		841–835
Jehoahaz		814/13–798	Joash		835–796
Jehoash		798–782/81	Amaziah		796–767
Jeroboam II	793/92–782/81	782/81–753	Azariah	791/90–767	767–740/39

Zechariah		753–752			
Shallum		752			
Menahem		752–742/41	Jotham	751/50–740/39	740/39–736
Pekahiah		742/41–740/39	Ahaz	742–736 728–715	736–728
Pekah	752–740/39	740/39–732/31			
Hoshea		732/31–723/22	Hezekiah	728–715	715–697
			Manasseh		697–642/41
			Amon		642/41–640/39
			Josiah		640/39–608
			Jehoahaz		608
			Jehoiakim		608–597
			Jehoiachin		597
			Zedekiah		597–586

Thiele set up his chronology by a painstaking trial and error method. He tried out every possible solution indicated or suggested by the biblical text of Kings until the conclusions discussed below proved successful in bringing the two systems into harmony with each other.

The major flaw in Thiele’s system was that he did not accept the co-regency of Hezekiah with Ahaz, which is necessary to harmonize the data in Kings. He posits errors in the data of Kings at this point. It should also be noted that Thiele’s system has to balance out because he sets the length of the co-regencies, which are suggested by circumstances in the text, to the exact length which he needs to get a good fit.

There are other chronologies which also suggest changes to Thiele’s system, but he can be credited with a breakthrough which shamed the critics’ scoffing at the “mysterious numbers of the Hebrew Kings.”

In the next section we will walk through the key steps in deciphering the chronology of the kings.

Chronology of the Kings of Israel And Judah

The following chart identifies the key problems of discrepancies in elapsed years. These problems are summarized in the comments that follow the chart.

I. The Data

Israel	Judah	Synchronism	Total Years
1 Jeroboam I	Rehoboam	931 BC Division of kingdom	Israel 98 years
	Abijam/Abijah		Judah 95 years
Nadab	Asa		Actual 90 years
Baasha			
Elah			
Zimri			
Tibni			

Omri			
Ahab	Jehoshaphat	853 BC	Ahab at Qarqar (?)
Ahaziah	Jehoram		
Joram	Ahaziah	841 BC	Both killed by Jehu

931 is the beginning of the reigns of both Rehobam and Jeroboam

841 is the end of the reign of both Joram and Ahaziah.

The time between these events must be the same.

Israel	Judah	Synchronism		Total Years
2 Jehu	Athaliah	841 BC	Jehu pays tribute	Israel 143 years
Jehoahaz	Joash			Judah 166 years
Jehoash	Amaziah			Assyria 120 years
				Actual 118 years
Jeroboam II	Azariah			
Zechariah				
Shallum				
2b Menahem	Jotham	743 BC	Menahem's tribute	Israel 31 years
Pekahiah				Assyria 20 years
Pekah				Actual 20 years
Hoshea				
		723/22 BC	Samaria Falls, Ahaz's 12th year and Hezekiah's 6 th	
	Hezekiah			
	Manasseh			
	Amon			
	Josiah			
	Jehoahaz			
	Jehoiakim			
	Jehoiachin			
	Zedekiah	586 BC	Fall of Jerusalem	

II. The Problems

1. On the basis of the biblical data for the lengths of the kings' reigns, the total elapsed times for the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah do not fit within the synchronisms with Assyria nor with each other.

For the first period the total years of the kings of Judah are 95 and the total years of the kings of Israel are 98.

For the second period the corresponding data is Judah 166 years, Israel 143 years, but the Assyrian annual eponym list correlated with the synchronisms between Israel and Assyria allows only 120 years.

In the last part of this period a succession of kings of Israel totals 31 years, but the Assyrian

year list allows only 20 years for this period.

2. Other types of “contradictions” occur in the biblical data.

Did Ahaziah of Judah become king in the 12th year of Joram of Israel or the 11th? (2 Kings 8:25 or 9:29?)

Did Joram of Israel begin to reign in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat or the 2nd year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 3:1 or 2 Kings 1:17)? If Joram came to the throne in the 2nd year of Jehoram, how could Jehoram have come to the throne in the 5th year of Joram as 2 Kings 8:16 says?

The problems are especially severe with the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. See *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Summer, 1990, p 181-191.

III. Approaches to the Problem

There have been four basic approaches to this problem.

1. Ignore the biblical data as unreliable, resulting in a short chronology.
2. Ignore the Assyrian synchronism as incorrect, resulting in a long chronology.
3. Blame all the problems on textual transmission.
4. Carefully study all the available data to determine if there are principles of Hebrew and Near Eastern chronology which make it possible to reconcile all of the data into a harmonious system.

We follow Thiele in attempting approach number 4.

IV. Solutions to the Problems

By trial and error and playing with the data Thiele came to the following conclusions:

1. In Israel the regnal year began with Nisan (March/April), while in Judah it began with Tishri (September/October).
2. At the time of the schism Judah reckoned the years of its kings according to the accession year system, while Israel started with the non-accession year system. (See the explanation of these systems below.)
3. Beginning with Jehoram, Judah switched over to the non-accession year system until the time of Amaziah, when the accession year system was again employed. Israel used the non-accession year system until the time of Jehoash when it adopted the accession year system and retained it to the end of its history.
4. Both Israel and Judah had co-regencies of fathers and sons or overlapping reigns of rivals. In assigning the length to their reigns both kings are credited with the overlapping regnal years

involved in a co-regency or rival rulership, but the statements which indicate the time when someone became king invariably refer to the beginning of his sole rule.

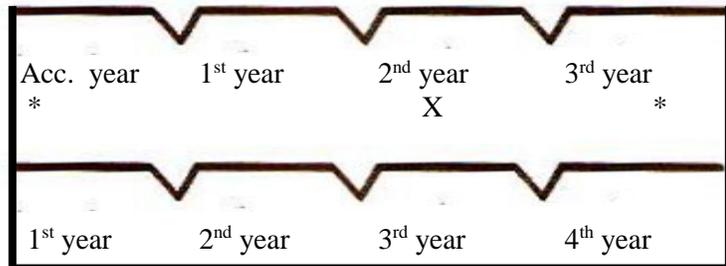
Let us look at the evidence that supports these conclusions.

Question 1: Did Israel Use Accession Year or Non-Accession Year Dating?

Comparing the systems: The asterisks mark the beginning and end of a reign:

In the **accession year system** (aka **post-dating**): The numbering of a king's reign starts with the first full calendar year. The first months of his reign before his first new year's day are not counted.

ACCESSION-YEAR SYSTEM



NON-ACCESSION-YEAR

Non-accession year (aka **antedating**): the first fractional year counts as the king's first year.

In what year of the king did the event marked with an X occur?

The second or third depending on the system.

How many years did this king rule?

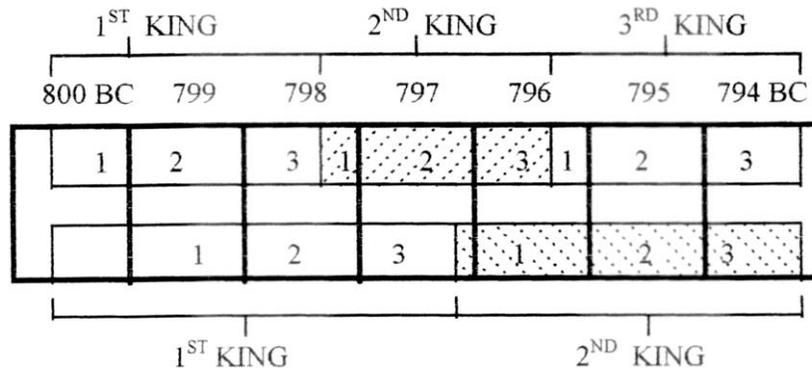
Three or four depending on the system

How does this principle explain contradictions like these listed above?

Did Ahaziah of Judah become king in the 12th year of Joram of Israel or the 11th? (2 Kings 8:25 or 9:29)? It depends on which system is being used in individual verses.

How does this explain the discrepancy of the totals for elapsed years between the king lists of Israel and Judah?

In the non-accession system the year in which there is a change of kings is counted by both kings. Thus, if one nation is using the accession system and the other the non-accession system, the total years in the king list of the non-accession year nation will increase by one year for each change of kings as compared to the king list of the nation using the accession year system.



The top line uses a non-accession system. There are 3 kings, who rule 2 actual years each for a total of 6 actual years, but they have 9 regnal years since part-years count as wholes.

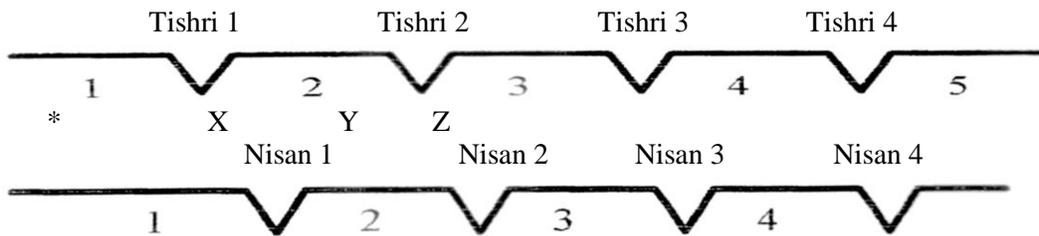
The second line uses the accession year system. There are 2 kings who rule 3 years each, 6 actual years and 6 regnal years. Result: A 3-year contradiction.

During a period in which the total years of the kings of Israel and Judah should be the same, we find that the total for Israel is 7 years too large. During this period Israel got seven new kings.

During this period _____ must have used the accession year system and _____ must have used the non-accession system.

Question 2: Did Tishri or Nisan Begin the Regnal Years?

A king begins his reign at the asterisk during the summer. The following Tishri new years (in fall) and Nisan new years (in spring) are marked by the dips in the lines. The non-accession system is followed.



How would you date the events X, Y, and Z?

X is in the second Tishri year but the first Nisan year.

Y is in the second Tishri year and the second Nisan year.
 Z is in the third Tishri year but the second Nisan year.

Events in the reigns of Solomon and Josiah show that Judah used a Tishri regnal year. There is no direct evidence for Israel, but a Nisan year works.

Question 3: How Does One Nation Refer to the Kings of the Other?

Both use their own system in referring to the kings of other nations.

Question 4: Were There Co-Regencies or Interregna?

Case 1: A father and son rule successively for 10 years each

King A 10 yrs	King B 10 yrs
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Two ten years reigns, no co-regency = 20 years elapsed time

Case 2: A father and son in Judah each rule 10 years but there is a 5-year co-regency. In Israel during the same period a father rules 10 years and his son rules 5 years |

<u>Judah</u>	
King A 10 yrs total X	King B 10 yrs total Y
<u>Israel</u>	
King C 10 yrs	King D 5 yrs

In Judah: two ten-year reigns, with a five-year co-regency = 15 actual years but 20 regnal years.
 In Israel: a ten-year reign and a five-year reign = 15 actual years and 15 regnal years. \

When did events X and Y occur?

X is the 4th year of King A or the 4th year of King C.
 Y is in the 6th year of King A, the 6th year of King C, or the 1st year of King B.

During whose reign did King B of Judah become king?

In the reign of King C or King D depending on whether you date from the coregency or the sole rule.

During whose reign did King D of Israel become king?

In the reign of King A or King B.

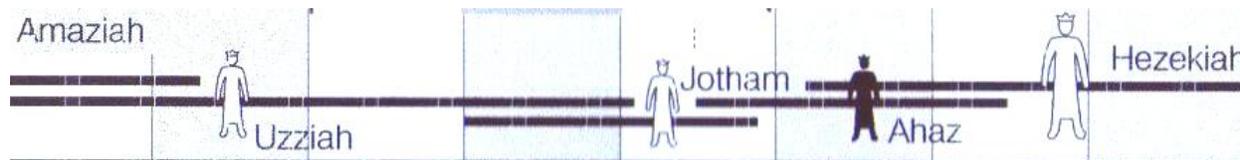
How does this principle solve this contradiction?

Did Joram of Israel begin to reign in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat or the 2nd year of

Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 3:1 or 2 Kings 1:17)? If Joram came to the throne in the 2nd year of Jehoram, how could Jehoram have come to the throne in the 5th year of Joram as 2 Kings 8:16 says?

All are true depending on which system is being used.

There were co-regencies in both nations, but no interregna. Evidence for the co-regencies is mostly indirect, e.g., double dating. Often there are indications in the text.



- Amaziah was a prisoner of war
- Uzziah was a leper
- Jotham was king in unstable times
- Ahaz and Hezekiah were political and religious opposites favored by different parties.

Question 5: Did Israel and Judah Always Use the Same Method of Chronology or Did They Switch?

Until Jehu, Judah used the accession system, Israel used the non-accession. After Athaliah, Judah also used non-accession. Both switched to accession as Assyrian influence grew.

Conclusion

The best evidence for this system is that it works. It produces a chronology which harmonizes the biblical and Assyrian chronology.

V. So What?

This theory demonstrates the possibility of harmonizing the data in Scripture when the principles of chronology which it uses are understood. It however remains a theory, not a proven fact. Some of Thiele's conclusions are still questioned, but his basic approach has been vindicated.

We here resume the listing of the chronology after the digression on the chronology of the kings.

Figuring Chronology from the Babylonian Captivity of Judah

For this period there are good contemporary records so the dates are relatively sound. Variations in most cases are only a year or two.

605 BC The first deportation of Jews under Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and other royal persons, Daniel 1:1-4.

- 597 BC The second deportation of Jews, 2 Kings 24:14-16. The deportees include King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel.
- 586 BC Destruction of Jerusalem and the third deportation.
- 539 BC The Persian conquest of Babylon under Cyrus, and the decree of Cyrus, Ezra 1:1-3.
- 537/35 BC Return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2) or Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:11) about 50,000.
- 520 BC The prophets Haggai and Zechariah arose to exhort and inspire the remnant to complete the Temple.
- 516 BC Completion of the Second Temple.
- 479 BC Seventh year of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) when Esther became queen, Esther 2:16.
- 458 BC Arrival of Ezra in Judah with an additional company of returning Jews.
- 444 BC Arrival of Nehemiah as governor of Jerusalem.

The prophet Malachi was active during the era of Ezra and Nehemiah.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951, revised 1965.

Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, a condensed paperback version of 89 pages, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1964, revised 1998.

John F. Brug, "The Astronomical Dating of Ancient History before 700 BC," University of Minnesota, 1981, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file. Also on Wartburg Project website. Appendix on scientific dating.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What difficulty do we experience in general when trying to relate Old Testament history to our own system of chronology?
2. Why is this problem compounded when studying 1 and 2 Kings?
3. What problems existed in the chronology of the Judges?
4. Which two biblical intervals between important events give us a fix on important eras? What are the Bible references?

5. Whose chronology was generally followed for many years? Why?
6. Why are Ussher's assumptions inconclusive?
7. Can you give examples of genealogies where not all links are listed?
8. Which word causes misunderstandings in these genealogies?
9. What is the added problem in 2 Kings?
10. What helps us to relate the years of the Kings of Israel and Judah to the Christian era calendar?
11. Define "eponym" list.
12. Give a brief summary of the problems and the solutions in the chronology of the kings.
13. Give the chronology which we set up for the following dates of Old Testament history:
 - a. The building of the Solomonic temple _____
 - b. David as king over all Israel _____
 - c. The Exodus from Egypt _____
 - d. Israel's entrance into Egypt (Jacob's 70 souls) _____
 - e. Abraham's entrance into Canaan _____

THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL - 931-587 B.C.

Using Edwin R. Thiele's chronology for the Hebrew kings

