

DO THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS OF DANIEL DATE THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF NEHEMIAH OR JESUS?

Leslie McFall

The pivotal date in the book of Daniel is 536 BC. This date marked the end of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24, and the start of the 69 weeks of Daniel 9:25-26, at the end of which a messiah would appear and Jerusalem would be rebuilt 'in troublous times.' The purpose of this article is to show that Nehemiah was the prophesied messiah. He appeared 69 years after Cyrus issued his decree in 536 BC granting the Jews permission 'to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem.'

The term 'messiah', which means 'an anointed one', was given a new, linguistic significance when its Greek form 'christos' became the supreme way to refer to the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ—Jesus Messiah. Almost any leader who was anointed or appointed to his political or spiritual office was a 'messiah'. So the term had the more mundane meaning of 'leader' until Jesus became the supreme Leader of Israel by God's appointment. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to read this later, fully developed significance back into the Old Testament use of the term.

Nehemiah was appointed by a foreign power to be Governor of Judah (*Pecha*; Neh 5:14; 12:26; he is also called *Tirshatha* with control over priestly affairs, Neh 8:9; 10:1), and Cyrus, a foreign king, was appointed by Israel's God to be his messiah over Israel.¹

In a previous article I had concluded that the start of Nehemiah's appointment as Governor of Judah should be redated from the traditional date of 445 to 465 BC.² We are told that Nehemiah was Governor from "the twentieth year even unto the thirty and second year of Artaxerxes the king—twelve years" (Neh 5:14; cf. 13:6). In my previous article I had counted the twelve years from the *end* of the twentieth year.³ I now propose

¹ Similarly, God called Nebuchadnezzar, 'My Servant', when he used him to exile his people to Babylon (Jer 25:9).

² Leslie McFall, "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458?" *WTJ* 53 (1991) 263-293. This article is available at: www.btinternet.com/~lmf12.

³ Daniel referred to Xerxes as "the fourth [Persian king] who would become far richer than all [previous Persian kings]" (11:2). I proposed (using Josephus's data) that a Persian dynasty began with the mighty Xerxes in 485 BC and the consecutive numbering was continued through his son's reign (Artaxerxes I), and that Neh 5:14 is dated according to this Xerxes-Artaxerxes's dynasty. D. H. Haigh had suggested that the dating formula in Neh 5:14 was reckoned from Artaxerxes's birth, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.* vol. 2 (4 Feb., 1873) 110. It was firmly held by some that Artaxerxes had a ten-year coregency with Xerxes; see B. W. Saville, "On the Harmony between the Chronology of Egypt and the Bible," *JVI* 9 (1875/6) 38-72, esp. p. 46.

that the twelve years should be counted from the *beginning* of the twentieth year.⁴ This will push back the start of Nehemiah's Governorship by one year, to 466 BC. Consequently his period of Governorship ran from 466/5 to 455/4 BC (inclusive of both years) and his second, very brief, visit began a few days before 3rd Ab (5th month) 445 BC, which marked the start of his repair work on the walls and gates of Jerusalem. He finished this work in 52 days on the 25th Elul (6th month) and returned to Persia.

It is not insignificant that from the end of the Second Deportation⁵ to the coming of Ezra, an anointed priest, was exactly seventy years (528 – 458 BC). But more significant than this is the mention of Nehemiah the Tirshatha (Governor) and Ezra as contemporaries in 458 BC, for both are mentioned in Nehemiah 8:9, 10:1, and 12:26 (cf. 7:65, 70).⁶ The present article supplies yet another argument for placing Nehemiah alongside Ezra in 458 BC. If Nehemiah's twelve-year Governorship began in Nisan 466 BC then there is a period of exactly sixty-nine complete years (or 70 incomplete years, because they were released in the 70th year itself) between the full end of the seventy years of the First Deportation and the start of Nehemiah's messianic mission in 466 BC.

The connection between Nehemiah and Jesus is that both men were 'cut off' without a successor. Both messiahs began their mission in a Jubilee Year, Nehemiah in 466 BC and Jesus in AD 29 (cf. Lk 4:17-21, where Jesus read out the Jubilee passage from Isa 61; cf. Mk 1:15, "The time has been fulfilled."). There are exactly 490 years between them.⁷ The first Jubilee Year was the year of the exodus (Nisan 1446 to Adar 1445 BC). Exactly twenty Jubilees later, Nehemiah the messiah came, and exactly ten Jubilees later Jesus the Messiah came.⁸ From the year that Nehemiah terminated his governorship (beginning in Nisan, 454 BC) to the year that Jesus terminated his life was exactly 483 years (or 69 weeks of years) in AD 29.

⁴ Compare the use of the preposition '*ad*' in Gen 8:5, where the numbered month is not included: "and the waters have been going and decreasing until (*ad*) the tenth month; in the tenth [month], on the first of the month, appeared the heads of the mountains." The waters went down until the end of the ninth month when the mountain tops appeared for the first time.

⁵ This began in 597 BC with the exile of king Jehoiachin and Ezekiel to Babylon 'at the turn of the year' (2 Chr 36:10; that is, Nisan).

⁶ These contemporary notices are dismissed as impossible in 458 BC by liberal and some conservative scholars, but see my reply in *WTJ* 53 (1991) 263-293.

⁷ Jesus was born in 6 BC and died in Nisan AD 29 at the age of 34 years. There was a widespread belief that the messiah would appear in a sabbatical year — 'a year of the Lord' (Lev 25:2; cf. Lk 4:19 and Isa 61:2); see Ben Zion Wacholder, "Chronomessianism: The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles," *HUCA* 46 (1975) 201-218. It may be significant that Israel's chronology is anchored in the Exodus, which was pre-planned by God (Ex 12:40-41; cf. Gen 15:13), and not in the Conquest, whose date was postponed through Israel's sin. Care should be taken to distinguish between Jubilees counted from the Exodus, which ran from Nisan to Nisan (memorial only), and Jubilees counted from the Entrance into Canaan, which ran from Tishri to Tishri (creating agricultural, sabbatical years).

⁸ For a connection between Jesus and Ezra, see n. 79. It is probably a sheer coincidence that the Essenes predicted that at the end of the 10th Week (Jubilee, according to 11QMelch 2:7) the Messiah would come and a new age dawn "in which the first heaven will pass

As a consequence of the new date for Nehemiah's first mission, and that he, not Jesus, is the immediate focus of the messianic prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26a, it will become apparent that other things are not what they appear to be. For example, the 'Leader' in Daniel 9:25 and 9:26b is not the same person;⁹ the sixty-two weeks of 9:25 and 9:26a are not referring to the same chronological period in history (see section VIII below); and the 'little horn' in 7:8 and 8:9 does not refer to the same king.¹⁰ But we also get the opposite where the same thing is referred to in different ways. The expression 'time, times and half a time' seems to be the same as half a week of years, or 42 months, or 1260 days, in Scripture. A case where the same year is referred to using five different time references is detailed under section V below.

Another difficulty in unraveling Daniel's visions is that prophetic events are juxtaposed within a few sentences of each other, or even within a verse, referring to events which are hundreds of years apart (see section VI below). A similar phenomenon can be seen in Jesus' prediction and description of the destruction of Jerusalem which was to take place forty years in the future, yet elements of that description point to events lying beyond it.¹¹ Caution is required in sifting out elements in Daniel's visions that belong to different events, and especially its chronological data, which sometimes relate to different, yet contemporaneous, eras. They did not have the benefit of our single BC/AD era.

It is the conclusion of this paper that influential commentators in the past adopted certain assumptions about Daniel's 'Seventy Weeks' and these assumptions became standard, and the starting-point, for those who came later.¹² The first main assumption was that the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24 referred to the future, and the second was that the coming 'messiah' could only be Jesus who would appear at the end of the seventy weeks of years, and much ingenuity and effort was expended to force Jesus into the chronology of

away and a new heaven will appear" (1 Enoch 91:15); see Roger T. Beckwith, "The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology," *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1980) 167-202; esp. pp. 179, 190 and 201. My tables of Jubilees are taken from Benedict Zuckermann, *Jahresbericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars Fränkelscher Stiftung* (Breslau, 1857), pp. 43-45; and not those of Ben Zion Wacholder, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography* (New York: Ktav, 1976), which are one-year later (Wacholder lists proponents for and against both schemes, see p. 4 note 13).

⁹ The leader in 9:25 is Nehemiah; the leader in 9:26 is probably the same 'leader of the covenant' mentioned in 11:22, who was a Seleucid king.

¹⁰ The former refers to a Roman Emperor, while the latter refers to a Greek king (Antiochus IV Epiphanes). The 20th year of Artaxerxes in Neh 2:1 (1:1) is not the same year as the 20th year of Artaxerxes in Neh 5:14. The former is personal, the latter is dynastic (see *WTJ* 53 [1991] 263-93).

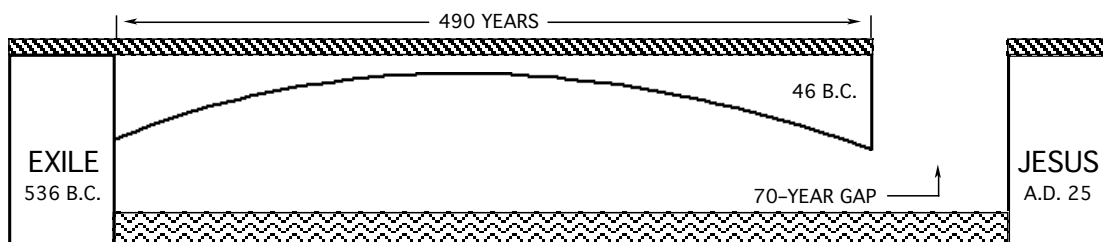
¹¹ See Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 133, 139.

¹² The 3rd century Church Father, and leading chronologist, Julius Africanus (fl. 240), dated the start of the 70 weeks of Daniel in Olympiad 83,4 (i.e. 20th year of Artaxerxes), and its completion in Olympiad 201,4, which he calculated to be the 22nd year of Tiberius Caesar. See Martin Wallraff (ed.), *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 237, 279-85. Cf. also, Louis E. Knowles, "The Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel in the Early Fathers," *WTJ* 7 (1945) 136-60.

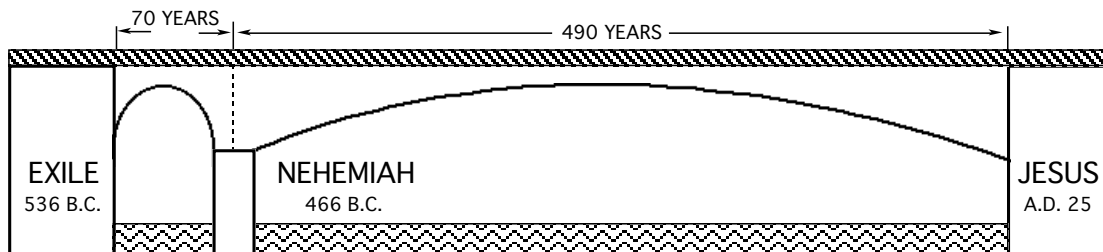
the text.¹³ These two assumptions dominated subsequent exegesis, funneling commentators into a blind canyon. This paper provides a new, alternative starting-point, based on what we now know about Hebrew and Babylonian methods of computing time and how Judah used, *at the same time*, different contemporary eras to keep track of history.

The two findings of this paper are, firstly, that the seventy ‘weeks’ of Daniel 9:24 referred to the *past* 70 years of the Babylonian exile, not to the future, and secondly, that the period of sixty-nine ‘weeks’ was intended to mark the coming of a messiah, and that messiah was Nehemiah, not Jesus. Only when Nehemiah is seen to be the messiah of Daniel 9:25 does he provide a starting-point for a different seventy ‘weeks of years’, which ended in the coming of the greatest Messiah of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. But this, calculated, seventy ‘weeks of years’ (70 x 7) is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. Jesus’ coming is hidden behind Nehemiah’s coming. It is shadowy, not explicit. Nehemiah is the over-looked stepping-stone to Jesus. One cannot fault the eagerness of previous commentators to see Jesus in every Scripture, but if he is forced into places where he is not the intended focal point, then this distorts the original meaning of the text.

The gulf between the ‘going forth of the decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem’ in 536 BC to the first year of Jesus’ messianic mission in AD 25 is 560 years. Many have attempted to ford the river of time in one leap and they all fell short by seventy years.¹⁴



But if they had inserted a shorter bridge of time to an island (= Nehemiah) in the river, and then spanned the rest of the gap with their 490-yard bridge they would have been able to ford the river securely.



¹³ The most quoted case is that of Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (10th ed.; London: James Nisbet, 1915 [1st ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881]), pp. 67-75, in which he used a shorter year of 360 days to squeeze the 490 years between 14 March, 444 BC and Jesus’ death on 6 April, AD 32. This is accepted by H. Hoehner, *ibid.*, p.137f., with minor adjustments.

¹⁴ See Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*. Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 274.

The charts at the end of this article should be examined closely as this article is a detailed commentary on them.

I. THE CHRONOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

It is important to recognize the exact sequence of dates mentioned in the book of Daniel. Daniel was taken captive to Babylon, along with some Temple treasures, in Tishri 605 BC. His first recorded prophetic word occurred in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, which was just before Tishri, 602 BC (according to Judah's Tishri calendar).¹⁵ Daniel 7:1 is dated to the first year of Belshazzar, and Daniel 8:1 is dated to the third year of Belshazzar. However, Daniel 5:30-31 relates the death of Belshazzar. It could easily be concluded from this that the book of Daniel was not written in chronological order.¹⁶ This would be a false conclusion because the book has been written in two distinct parts, and both are in chronological order, and this is the key to understanding the chronological statements in both halves.

Daniel 1–6 is Part 1; and Daniel 7–12 is Part 2. Part 1 ends with the postscript: "And this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan 6:28).¹⁷ A case can be made out for dividing Part 1 of Daniel into two sub-sections. Part 1A would be chapter 1, ending with the postscript:

¹⁵ This date would accommodate Daniel's three-year Babylonian civil service course. The second year of Nebuchadnezzar ran from Nisan 603 to Nisan 602 on the Babylonian calendar, but the second year ran from Tishri 603 to Tishri 602 on Judah's calendar. Only on Judah's calendar would Daniel have completed his course (cf. 1:5 with 1:18), because Nebuchadnezzar had an accession year of almost a full year (which had 13 months with intercalation). It is likely, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chap. 2 should be dated shortly before Tishri 602 BC, at the termination of Daniel's course. This date would also mark the start of Daniel's 66-year governance of Babylonia (602–536 BC), under five Babylonian kings, and one Persian king (Cyrus). The five Babylonian kings were Nebuchadnezzar (from 602 to 562), Abel-Marduk (562-560), Nergal-Shur-Usur (560-556), Nabonidus (556-539), and Belshazzar (538-536)(cf. Jer 27:7).

¹⁶ This was the conclusion drawn by the OT editor (Ronald B. Allen) of *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997)(Earl D. Radmacher [gen. ed.]), p. 1431, note on Dan 7:1.

¹⁷ The postscript suggests that Darius and Cyrus are two distinct kings, but the last recorded date of Daniel's governance of Babylon (under Belshazzar) is the first year of Darius the Mede, which was the third year of Cyrus's governance of Babylonia. Daniel only served under Cyrus when he served under Darius the Mede. The postscript, therefore, was probably intended to make it clear that the lesser known name of 'Darius [the Mede]' was the same as 'Cyrus the Persian', especially if 'Darius' was the new, royal title that Cyrus gave himself on ascending the Babylonian throne in Babylon. Daniel was active up to the 'first year of Cyrus' (1:21). This is the same as saying he was active up to the 'first year of Darius [the Mede],' whose first year was 536 BC. It is also possible that 'Darius the Mede' only came into existence (as it were) in the last year of Daniel's recorded biography, whereas 'Cyrus the Persian' had been in existence for the previous 15 years, from the time he became king of the Medes in 550 BC. Cf. Sulpic. Sev. *H.S.* ii. 9. Herodotus, i. 214, gives him 29 years, "There perished the greater part of the Persian army, and there fell Cyrus himself, having reigned thirty years in all save one." For nine of these years he was king of Babylonia. So while Daniel may not have served directly under Cyrus for more than one year, he could be said to have prospered throughout his long contemporary rule. (Cf. also nn. 45, 49 below.)

“And Daniel is [active] unto the first year of Cyrus the king” (Dan 1:21).¹⁸ This sub-section details Daniel’s *private* life before his involvement in the government of Babylon. Part 1B would include chapters 2–6, which details Daniel’s *public* life after his involvement in the government of Babylon.

Whereas Part 1 details actual, historical events in Daniel’s lifetime; Part 2 details his prophetic visions. Both parts are strictly in chronological order, as set out below.

Chapter 1 commences with Daniel’s deportation to Babylon in Sept/Oct 605 BC in Nebuchadnezzar’s accession year. It mentions his three-year education, and finally, that he lived through to the first year of Cyrus.

Chapter 2 traces how Daniel became ruler “over all the province of Babylon” (2:48; 5:11) just before Tishri 602 BC, in the second, official year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Daniel must have been in his late teens.¹⁹

Chapter 3 took place after Daniel’s companions had been promoted to govern the province of Babylonia (cf. 2:49). It narrates the trial of the fiery furnace for Daniel’s three companions, as a result of which they were confirmed in their high office over the province of Babylonia.²⁰

Chapter 4 is to be dated after Nebuchadnezzar’s completion of the massive walls of Babylon (cf. 4:30). The chapter contains Nebuchadnezzar’s own account of Daniel’s interpretation of his dream, which led to his animal-like existence for a period of ‘seven times’.²¹ It climaxes with Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation that

¹⁸ Whether the ‘second year’ of 2:1 is read according to the calendar of Babylon or Judah, it would still be the third year of captivity for Daniel. Nabopolassar died on 8th Ab (16 August, 605 BC) when Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem. He broke off the siege taking Daniel and some of the Temple treasures with him, and hurried back to Babylon in 21 days and was crowned on 1st Elul (7 Sept. 605 BC). However, due to an intercalated month (2nd Adar [Addaru]) in the Babylonian calendar at the close of Nabopolassar’s 20th year (606 BC), the Babylonian year had 13 months in it. This meant that Judah had already begun a new year by the time Nebuchadnezzar had been crowned king in the last month of the old year. This explains how the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar in the Babylonian Chronicle (and in Jer 52:28-30) is synchronized with the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kings 24:10-12. This difference in intercalation plus Nisan years for Babylonian rule also explains how the 10th and 18th years in Jer 32:1 can be reconciled with the 11th and 19th years in Jer 52:4-12 (cf. 2 Kgs 25:1-9).

¹⁹ Dan 2:4 to 7:28 is in Aramaic. It is used only to record what happened under Babylonian slavery, and ceases in the year of their liberation, when the writer/compiler reverts to the language of freedom—Hebrew, at the start of Dan 8, when Zerubbabel was already on his way out of Babylon. Ezra 4:8 to 6:18; 7:12-26 is in Aramaic. The writer/compiler reverts to using Hebrew only after the Second Temple has been dedicated, and the normal temple service has been resumed in Nisan 530 BC. Aramaic is the language of disruption, foreign interference and bad times; Hebrew is the language of liberation and better times.

²⁰ Daniel’s absence has been attributed to (a) sickness (cf. 8:27; 10:17), or (b) away on business (cf. 8:2; 10:4).

²¹ God demonstrates his control over all biological (DNA) processes from the moment of each person’s conception (Isa 66:9, ‘Am not I he who is causing to beget?’) to the moment of death. No biological process is outside his direct control. By manipulating Nebuchadnezzar’s DNA God caused him to grow ‘hair as eagles’ and claws, and then he reversed the process in his own good time (Dan 4:33; cf. Moses’s leprous hand, Exod 4:6-7). The ‘two times’ of Gen 43:11 means two full years, according to 45:6. Daniel 4:32 may refer to seven years.

Daniel's God was supreme above all gods (4:34-37). The reigns of Nebuchadnezzar's three successors (covering twenty-six years) are omitted between chapters 4 and 5 (cf. Jer 27:7; see note 15 above).

Chapter 5 is dated to the last year of Belshazzar's rule (Nebuchadnezzar's great great grandson), which was his third year, or 536 BC. Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall, and as a result he was promoted to become "the third ruler in the kingdom" (5:29).²² That same night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede succeeded him.

Chapter 6 relates Daniel's rescue from the den of lions and climaxes in Darius the Mede's proclamation that Daniel's God was to be feared throughout the Persian Empire (6:26). Daniel must have been over 80 years of age by this time.

It is at this point that historical events cease to be recorded and the compiler goes back over Daniel's life and records in Part 2 the prophetic visions given to Daniel.

Chapter 7 contains two visions (written by Daniel himself) and these are dated to the first year of Belshazzar, which is 538 BC. This was the year that Cyrus conquered the Province of Babylon. The scope of the dream covers the Babylonian Empire through to the Roman Empire.

Chapter 8 is a vision which is dated to the third year of Belshazzar, which was also the last year of the Babylonian Empire (536 BC). The scope of the vision is limited to the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire. This vision was given before the events of Daniel 5 occurred because of the time break in 8:27.

Chapter 9 is dated to the first year of Darius the Mede. This was the first year of Persian rule over God's people in the city of Babylon, where Daniel resided. Daniel had discovered, through reading Jeremiah's writings, that this year was the 70th and last year of Judah's captivity. He was given a prophecy concerning the future of God's people.

Chapters 10-12 are dated to the third year of Cyrus, which is the same year as the first year of Darius the Mede (cf. 11:1). The date in 10:1 is an editorial addition setting the scene for Daniel's Damascus Road type of vision which reassured Daniel that behind the scenes Divine and angelic powers were in control of the future flow of history (Persian and Greek) to the advantage of God's people. Xerxes is the prophesied fourth ruler of Persia (11:2). Alexander the Great (11:3) and Antiochus Epiphanius (11:13) are clearly identified as future world-stage figures. It is possible that 12:1 is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, if so, this would be the most distant event revealed to Daniel.

From this survey it is clear that the visions of the last five chapters of Daniel took place in one year, namely, the 70th year of Judah's First Deportation. The visions were designed to reassure Daniel and his

²² The first ruler was Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus (556-539), who was captured just before or during the siege of Babylon. Nabonidus was still alive in Belshazzar's third year according to the logic of Dan 5:29.

people that God was going to fulfill his new promises as surely as he had fulfilled his ancient threats (Dan 9:5, 11-12; Zech 8:14-15).

II. ARE THE SEVENTY WEEKS IN THE FUTURE OR THE PAST?

It is very common to find Daniel 9:24 translated as referring to the future, which comes out in the translation: 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people.' Here is a cross-section of translations.

The Living Bible (1971): The Lord has commanded 490 years of further punishment upon Jerusalem and your people. Then at last they will learn to stay away from sin, and their guilt will be cleansed; then the kingdom of everlasting righteousness will begin, and the Most Holy Place (in the Temple) will be rededicated, as the prophets have declared. Now listen! It will be forty-nine years plus 434 years from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One comes! Jerusalem's streets and walls will be rebuilt despite the perilous times. After this period of 434 years, the Anointed One will be killed, his kingdom still unrealized . . .²³ and a king will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple.

The Knox Translation (1949): It is ordained that this people of thine, that holy city of thine, should wait seventy weeks before guilt is done away, . . . Be assured of this, and mark it well; a period of seven weeks must go by, and another period of sixty-two weeks, between the order to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Christ to be your leader. Street and wall will be built again, though in a time of distress; and then sixty-two weeks must pass before the Christ is done to death; the people will disown him and have none of him.

New Jerusalem Bible (1968): Seventy weeks are decreed²⁴ for your people and your holy city, for putting an end to transgression, . . . Know this, then, and understand: from the time this message went out: "Return and rebuild Jerusalem" to the coming of an anointed Prince, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, with squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt, but in a time of trouble. And after the sixty-two weeks an anointed one will be cut off—and . . .²⁵ will not be for him—

American Standard Version (1901): Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, . . . Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing:

²³ The lacune is part of the translation, for some believe that something has dropped out of the text at this point.

²⁴ The footnote at this point reads: "See v.25. The seventy 'weeks of years' are from Jeremiah's prophecy to the rebuilding of Jerusalem."

²⁵ The lacune is part of the translation, for some believe that something has dropped out of the text at this point.

The Scofield Reference Bible (1909): Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, . . . Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.²⁶

Helen Spurrell, *A Translation of the Old Testament from the Original Hebrew* (1885): Seventy weeks are appointed unto thy people and unto thy holy city, to complete the apostasy, . . . Know therefore and understand, from the issuing of the command to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks and three-score and two weeks: it shall be rebuilt, the streets and their walls, even in afflictive times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be put to death; but not for his own sake.

The above translations support the coming of the messiah after the 69th week. The following translations support the coming of the messiah after the 7th week.

The Moffatt Translation of the Bible (1935) reads: Seventy weeks of years are fixed for your people and for your sacred city, . . . Know then, understand, that between the issue of the prophetic command to re-people and rebuild Jerusalem and the consecrating of a supreme high priest, seven weeks of years shall elapse; in the course of sixty-two weeks of years it shall be rebuilt, with its squares and streets; finally after the sixty-two weeks of years, the consecrated priest shall be cut off, leaving no successor;

Revised Standard Version (1952): Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, . . . Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing;

The New American Bible (1970): Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and for your holy city: Then transgression will stop and sin will end, . . . Know and understand this: From the utterance of the word that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt until one who is anointed and a leader, there shall be seven weeks. During sixty-two weeks it shall be rebuilt, with streets and trenches, in time of affliction. After the sixty-two weeks an anointed one shall be cut down when he does not possess the city; . . .²⁷

²⁶ C. I. Scofield assumed in his footnotes that Christ would come at the end of the 69th week as the predicted Messiah. The 70th week has still to be fulfilled in his prophetic scheme.

²⁷ The footnote takes the 62 weeks, or 434 years, to be from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the beginning of the Seleucid persecution, and not to the coming of Christ, though the Church Fathers understood the prophecy 'to be to Christ, the final realization of the prophecy.'

New English Bible (1970): Seventy weeks are marked out for your people and your holy city; then rebellion shall be stopped; . . . Know then and understand: from the time that the word went forth that Jerusalem should be restored and rebuilt, seven weeks shall pass till the appearance of one anointed, a prince; then for sixty-two weeks it shall remain restored, rebuilt with streets and conduits. At the critical time, after the sixty-two weeks, one who is anointed shall be removed with no one to take his part;

English Standard Version (2001): Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, . . . Know therefore, and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.²⁸

The alternative translation is that Daniel 9:24 is a reference to the *past* and should be translated as: “Seventy weeks [of punishment] were decreed upon your people and upon the holy city to finish the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to cover iniquity, and to bring in ages of righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies.” Daniel 9:25-26, on the other hand, refers to the future and should be translated as: “And you should know and consider wisely: From a word going out to restore and to build Jerusalem until messiah-leader [is] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. Broad place and moat are restored and built and [this] in distress of the times. And after the sixty-two weeks messiah is cut off and there is nothing to him. And the city and the holy place the coming leader’s people do destroy and its end—in the flood [= overwhelming]. And until the end is devastating war determined.”

In Daniel 9:24 the Hebrew verb נִחַתְּ (nechtak, decreed) is the Niphal Suffix-form (or Perfect, from the root נָחַת). This verb, when followed by the preposition ‘al, means ‘fixed, determined,’ and from this came the more specialized use of ‘decreed’. Now Daniel had learned from reading the writings of Jeremiah that 70 years had been decreed by God for a number of nations to come under Babylonian rule (Jer 25:9-38). Judah was one of those nations. Consequently, when Daniel pointed this out in his prayer to God, he was saying that the 70 years were up, and therefore, surely, it would be an injustice to prolong the exile past the 70 years. Jeremiah wrote: “For thus said Yahweh, ‘Surely at the fullness of Babylon—seventy years—I will inspect you, and I will establish my good word toward you, to bring you back to this place . . . to give you prosperity and hope’” (Jer 29:10-11; 25:12).

²⁸ The words: “Then for sixty-two weeks . . .” are not a translation of the Hebrew, but a very loose interpretive paraphrase, because no messianic prince appeared 49 years after 536 BC., i.e. in 487 BC.

It could be objected that what Daniel may not have taken into account is that since there were at least four deportations, there were at least four possible starting points for the 70 years. Gabriel could have pointed out to Daniel that the 70 years only commenced with the capture and deportation of the Davidic king (along with some of the Temple treasure and Ezekiel) in the Second Deportation, in which case, Daniel's calculations were seven years too soon.²⁹ Or Gabriel could have pointed out that the clock only started to run down with the deportation of the entire working population in the Third Deportation, in which case Daniel's prayer was 20 years too soon. It must have come as some comfort to Daniel to hear Gabriel's statement that, yes, 70 years *had been* decreed by God, and that Daniel was right to commence the count from the First Deportation, and that the 70 years had now expired. If correct, this will impinge on future translations and exegeses of Daniel 9:24.

The justification for a past reference in Daniel 9:24 is as follows. It is well known that the Hebrew Prefix-form when it has the strong *waw* ('and') prefixed to it is used almost exclusively to relate past events.³⁰ The Suffix-form with a prefixed *waw* is used extensively in contexts which refer to what will take place in the near (about to) or distant future.³¹ But that is not the form used in Daniel 9:24. Rather, it is the Suffix-form without the prefixed *waw* that is used here.

The Suffix-form without a prefixed *waw* ('and') occurs 13,874 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is translated as a past in 10,830 places (78%), as a present 2,454 times (17.7%), as a future 255 times (1.8%), as other moods (2.4%). It can be seen from this that it is rare to translate the Suffix-form on its own (i.e. without a prefixed *waw*) with a future sense—only 1.8% occurrences, and these under very specific conditions.

²⁹ The Essenes dated the 70 years of the exile from the Second Deportation; see Roger T. Beckwith, "The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology," *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1980) 167-202, esp. p. 183.

³⁰ In the past this was called the Waw Consecutive because it appeared to convert the future tense of the Prefix-form (which is normally used to relate events in the future) into a past tense. When the name was changed to Waw Consecutive it was a change in name only; the consecutive function was retained in practice. Hebrew does not have tenses, aspects, mode of action, foregrounding versus backgrounding categories. It has two Perspectives, which I have called Emanative and Attributive (or Imputative). The verb-form conveys the relationship between the 'actor' and the 'action', *without reference to time*. In the Emanative Perspective the 'action' *proceeds from* the 'actor'. In the Attributive (or Imputative) Perspective the 'action' is *brought to* the 'actor'; the 'action' is *imputed to* the 'actor'. In the former, the 'action' and the 'actor' are inseparable; in the latter they are separate entities which need to be brought together by the speaker. Hebrew writers convey the time in which an event takes/took place through the use of non-verbal words. Consequently the term Waw Consecutive is inadequate. Its more accurate function is to *recall* past events using the Emanative Perspective. It should be called the Waw of Recollection. The heavy, prefixed *waw* is a definite, annalistic marker which lies outside the verb-form itself (though now inseparably prefixed to it), informing the reader/listener that *historical* events are being recalled.

³¹ See the author's analysis of the use of the Perfect in past, present and future situations, in *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (England, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982), Appendix 1 and 4.

If we examine the translation of the 101 occurrences of the Suffix-form without a prefixed *waw* within the book of Daniel itself, it is translated 93 times as a past (92%), 5 times as a present (4.9%), and 3 times as a future (2.9%). The three future occurrences occur in Daniel 11:36 [2x], 39. Where the Suffix-form (without a prefixed *waw*) is given a future reference it will be found that it follows a future tense in the English translation, but that is not the case in 9:24.

Hebrew does not have a tense system (i.e. an in-built linear location system), though it has its own unique way of locating events either in the past, present or future. Consequently, the translations which give Gabriel's 70 years in Daniel 9:24 a future reference have not taken the Hebrew verbal system into account, or have misunderstood it here. Daniel 9:24 should have been understood as a past event. A literal translation would be: 'Seventy sevens were fixed³² upon your people and upon your holy city for to complete the transgression³³ and to complete the sin offerings, and to make atonement *for* iniquity, and to bring in righteousness of ages, and to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies.' The whole tenor of this statement is to convey to Daniel the good news that the predicted prophecies relating to their exile and punishment have all run their course. They are all sealed up (vision and prophet) as bygone events. The future is bright. God looks forward with joy, and promises a new beginning at the end of their 70-year exile. God uses the Attributive verb-form when He says, I have "cleansed them from all their iniquity, that they have sinned against me, and I have pardoned all their iniquities that they have sinned against me, and that they have transgressed against me. And it has been to me a name of joy for praise and for beauty to all nations of the earth" (Jer 33:7-8). Here God *attributes* to himself actions which will be accomplished 60 years in the future.

To the question: Are the seventy weeks in the future or in the past? The answer must be they are in the past. Translators ran ahead of themselves when they added the $7+62+1 = 70$ weeks, and then assumed that Daniel 9:24 referred to 70 weeks in the future.

It is no objection to point out that the clause 'to bring in ages of righteousness'³⁴ (9:24) was not fulfilled under Nehemiah. It is a fact that not all the elements in v. 24 were fulfilled *immediately* but took time.

³² Or 'determined' and hence decreed; see Jer 25:11-12.

³³ The idea is that the *punishment* for their transgression is completed. The Old Testament saints were fully aware that God's forgiveness was not obtained by a wave of the hand, but atonement for sin had to be offered and righteous living expected for the rest of their lives.

³⁴ Older translators read 'everlasting righteousness' here, which evoked the everlasting righteousness which the Lord Jesus obtained for the Elect. However, the term 'age-during' (*'ôlâm*) is not synonymous with 'eternal'. When Yahweh was furious with Judah, leading up to the Babylonian exile, he said, "For a fire you have kindled in mine anger; unto the age (*'ad 'ôlâm*) it burns" (Jer 17:4). His anger was not 'eternal', but lasted only as long as it was required to achieve his purpose (Jer 23:20). Jeremiah cursed the day of his birth and wished that his mother's womb had been his grave, saying, "And her womb a pregnancy age-during" (Jer 20:17; cf. also 25:9). The servant who has

Consequently, the reference to bringing in ‘ages of righteousness’ could be fulfilled any time future to 536 BC. God pointed out the future effect that the exile would have on the people well before they returned in 536 BC. “And I have taken you out of the nations, and have gathered you out of the lands, and I have brought you in unto your land. And I have sprinkled over you clean water. . . And I have put in you a new heart and a new spirit, . . . And my spirit I put in your midst, . . . so that you walk in my statutes and you keep my judgments. . . . In the day of my cleansing you from all your iniquities, I have caused the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places have been built. . . . And known have the nations who are left round about you, that I, Yahweh, have built the thrown down” (Ezek 36:24-27, 33, 36). The return signaled a new age in the relationship between Yahweh and Judah. He threw all their sins into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19). A new era of righteousness was expected of his people. Instead of two nations, ‘Israel’ and ‘Judah’, they would become one nation under one king, namely, ‘My servant David is their Prince unto the age’ (*‘ad ‘ôlâm*)(Ezek 37:24-25).

The exile marked a watershed—a terminus—to the nation’s past life, of putting away its sins for ever, and a statement of what was expected of them in the future. God presented his people with a clean sheet, a fresh start, to bring in a new age of lasting righteousness. The Jews squandered this new opportunity. The ministry of Jesus brought in a final offer of a clean sheet, a fresh start, a new age of righteous living, 490 (70x7) years later, but on this occasion the offer was not confined to the Jews, but was offered to the whole world, which God loved from the beginning.

III. DANIEL’S SEVENTY WEEKS OR DANIEL’S SIXTY-NINE WEEKS?

It has been traditional to refer to Daniel’s Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9:24 as though they were a unit of time, with a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, but this is not the case. Gabriel refers to a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, after which the messiah makes his appearance and restores Jerusalem as a place of habitation once again. At the end of sixty-two weeks the messiah is ‘cut off’ which could be taken to refer to his death, but the Hebrew reads: “and after the weeks—sixty and two—messiah is cut off and there is nothing to him.” This suggests that the messiah went away empty-handed because the expression ‘there is not to him’ is the usual way of saying that someone has no possessions. It might conceivably mean death (Ps 39:14), or that he has no one to succeed him on his throne. The least that one can infer with certainty from the context is that the messiah departs the scene in Jerusalem. Whether that departure was due to death or removal is not stated. The verb ‘cut off’ is ambiguous in this context. Only in the light of subsequent history

his ear pierced to the master’s door is a ‘servant age-during’ (Dt 15:17), meaning, for the rest of his life. It does not mean ‘eternal’. See also note 67 below where the term *l’ôlâm* ‘to the age’, cannot be translated as ‘for eternity’.

would this ambiguity be removed. In the case of Nehemiah, his position as Governor of Judea was terminated (cut short?) and he went back to Susa to become cup-bearer to Artaxerxes I in 454 BC.

The so-called seventieth week in Daniel 9:27 has nothing to do with the coming of the messiah or with his mission. The 'leader' making the covenant with God's people (9:27; cf. 11:22, 28, 30-31) appears to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 – 164 BC), who desecrated the Temple and stopped the daily services being held there for exactly three years, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 7.12 §16; 25 Kislev 167 – 25 Kislev 164 BC; cf. 1 Macc 1:54 with 4:52), or two full years, according to 2 Maccabees 10:3. It is tempting to read the 'one week' in 9:27 as a 'week of years', but if it is, then it is of a different order to the preceding 69 'weeks', which are single years (see section VI below).

The conclusion of this section is that the 70 weeks of 9:24 are unrelated to the 69+1 weeks of 9:25-27. The former refers to the past, the latter to the future. This constitutes a major point of disagreement with modern treatments of Daniel 9.

IV. ARE THE 'SEVENS' SINGLE YEARS OR 'WEEKS' OF YEARS?

The next question that arises is: Are the 'weeks' single years or seven years? There are two indications that the 'weeks', or 'sevens', are single years. First, God used the term 'seventy years' for the duration of the exile in Jeremiah 25:11-12, and Gabriel used the term 'seventy sevens' for the same period in Daniel 9:24; so the 'sevens' are single years. The land was to rest for a determined number of Sabbatical years. The Sabbatical year was a 'seven', the same term that is used for 'week'. In Daniel 9:24-27 it is a name for a special year, and not a numeral. (See section VI below for further expansion of this point.)

Second, the Chronicler, writing many years after the return from exile, can look back and point out where Judah went wrong. One of the things Judah omitted to do was to keep the 'seventh year', or the Sabbatical year, holy. Moses made it clear that God was the landowner and the Israelites were the land-tenants. They deliberately disobeyed the Landowner's instructions not to plough his land every seventh year. They were commanded to let it 'rest' or lie fallow every 'seven (week)'. The Chronicler pointed to this act of disobedience and said that they were driven into exile in order that the land would rest for the total number of 'seventh' or 'week' years that it missed out. He noted that this was prophesied from the beginning of their tenancy, so the exile had to happen, "To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath to fulfill seventy years" (2 Chr 36:21; cf. Lev 26:34-35, 41; probably: '...to fulfill seventy years *in exile*.'). So here we have a connection between the Sabbatical year, which was the 'seventh' year, and the term 'week' in Gabriel's use of the term.

Is it sheer coincidence that from the division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon in 931 BC, to the Third Deportation in 586 BC, the people should have observed exactly fifty Sabbatical years, and the duration of the Third Deportation, which comprised the bulk of the manual population, was exactly fifty years, or fifty 'sevens' (from 586 to 536 BC)? By removing the population, the land was left untilled, or rested, for fifty years. If Israel did not keep the Sabbatical years before the Davidic monarchy was instituted by God, which seems very likely, could these omissions of ignorance have been 'overlooked' (cf. Acts 17:30) by God once the Temple and its worship was moved by David from Shiloh (or Nob?) to Jerusalem, and the Law took central stage? Did this geographical shift of the 'throne of God' to a new capital city constitute a new beginning, a new era, in God's relationship with Israel? God destroyed his house in Shiloh for the people's wickedness (Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6, 9). If a new era commenced with David and Zion, and the past was overlooked, then this would explain why the population was sent into exile for exactly fifty years, which, appropriately, terminated in 536 BC.

The division of the Kingdom gave Jeroboam, who ruled ten of the twelve tribes of Israel (and consequently controlled most of the arable land), an opportunity to drop the observance of the Sabbatical Year. He severed Israel's link with the Temple in Jerusalem and he introduced his own priesthood and changed times and dates of religious festivals. From the coincidence that fifty Sabbatical years intervened between the division and the exile it is likely that the Sabbatical Years were not observed during this period in either Judah or Israel. But this is only surmise from the figures.

However, this could be a case where one year in seven has been collected into a single block of time lasting fifty years, consequently, to refer to this special collection of fifty Sabbatical years as being made up of fifty 'sevens (weeks)' would make sense to those who knew that 'seven' was a reference to the seventh year of the Sabbatical cycle of years. So, on this understanding of 'seven', 'seventy sevens' are seventy single years, not 490 years.

It is interesting that when Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BC this was a Sabbatical year, which it was not in 398, the other date sometimes given for Ezra's return, and there was a law which demanded that every Sabbatical year the entire Torah had to be read to the people (cf. Deut 31:10-11). This Ezra did (cf. Neh 8:1).

There is one, clear reference to a Sabbatical year in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 34:8-22 refers to a Sabbatical year, after which Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC.³⁵ Fourteen years later was a Jubilee, which coincided with the 25th year of Jehoiachin's captivity.³⁶

³⁵ Isa 37:30 (= 2 Kgs 19:29) appears to describe a Sabbatical year scenario. Sennacherib invaded Judah in the year before the Sabbatical Year (Tishri 700 to Tishri 699 BC), and so captured the nation's entire food supply which was needed to get through the next two years. The 'sign' (or miracle) that Yahweh presented to Hezekiah was that he would supply the loss of the nation's harvest.

Extra-biblical evidence exists for a few Sabbatical years, including 164/3, 38/7 BC and AD 68/9.³⁷ It so happens that if we extrapolate backwards from these known, extra-biblical, Sabbatical years then 458/7 BC is also a Sabbatical year. If we extrapolate still further backwards, then the first Sabbatical year after the return from exile was 535/4 BC. It was exactly a year earlier (in Tishri 536) that the altar had been set up (cf. Ezra 3:6) and the Feast of Tabernacles observed, and it was their first chance to sow their own seed. However, Yahweh cursed their first harvest because they neglected his House ('You have sown much and brought in little,' Hag 1:6; cf. 1:11). As a result of Yahweh's curse they had barely enough food to see them through the Sabbatical year of 535/4 BC. But Yahweh encouraged them to stay their second year on his land and he would give them sufficient food (Hag 2:18-19). It says something for the faith of these first returnees under Zerubbabel that at the end of their first disastrous harvest in Tishri 535 they set aside their second year on the land as a Sabbatical Year, and devoted their time to rebuilding the Temple, which was completed in the sixth year of Darius the Mede, not Darius I.³⁸

³⁶ Some have assumed, following the Talmud's interpretation, that 'the head of the year' in Ezek 40:1 was evidence for the shift of the New Year from Nisan to Tishri. The Talmud is a mixture of fact and fantasy. The modern Jewish practice of commencing the new year in Tishri is no earlier than AD 500. See Ben Zion Wacholder, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography* (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976), p. xiv. The LXX correctly translated 'the head of the year' in Ezek 40:1 as 'the first month', i.e. Nisan. The LXX was a translation made by Jews for Jews two centuries before the NT was written, and about 600 years before the Talmud was put together. In Bible times the New Year always began with Nisan. Nisan is the head (רִאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה) month (Ezek 45:18), as well as the head (רִאשִׁית) of the year (Exod 12:2). The revolution of the year begins in the spring and returns back to it (1 Kgs 20:22, 26; 2 Chr 36:10). It was the traditional start of military campaigns because the harvests were needed to feed an army on the move (2 Sam 11:1; 1 Chr 20:1). Consequently Sabbatical and Jubilee years are dated by Nisan years and the Sabbatic Year itself ran from the middle of one year to the middle of the next Nisan year (i.e. Tishri to Tishri). This accounts for the 49th and the 50th years both being called holy. However, caution is necessary when it comes to month numbers in *anniversary years*. These months will be numbered from the first month of the anniversary year, and not from Nisan. A good example of this is Ezra 3:8, where the 'second month' is not Iyyar, but Marcheshvan, which is the tenth month in a Nisan year. Cf. also the 3rd month of the 15th year of Asa. Asa's regnal years ran from Tishri to Tishri, so the third month would be Chislev (Nov.) and not Sivan (June) (2 Chr 15:10).

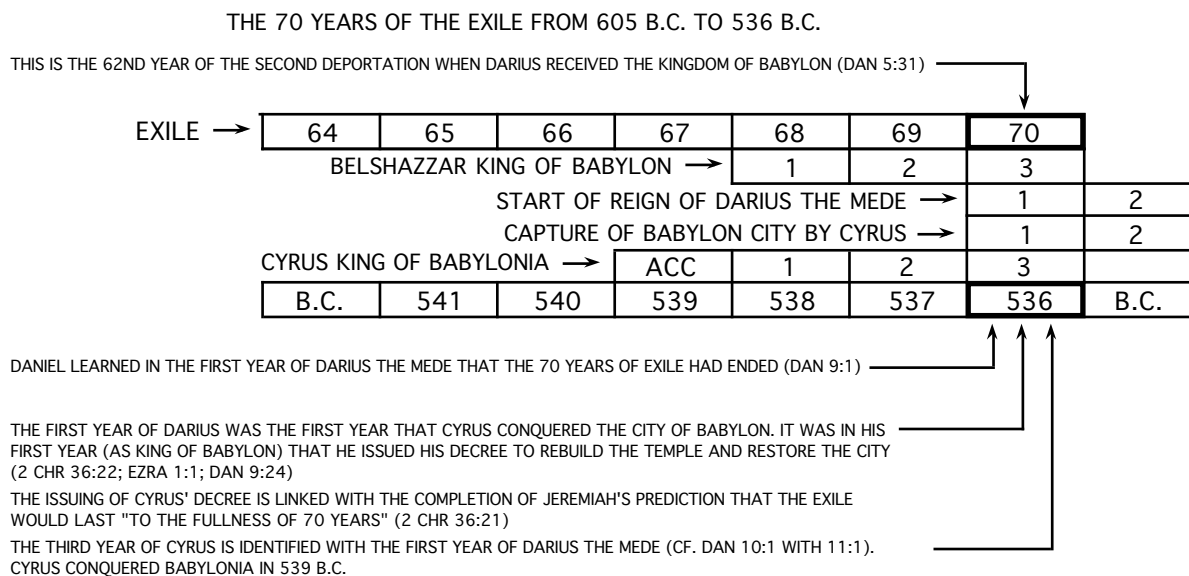
³⁷ Solomon Zeitlin, *Megillat Taanit* (Philadelphia: At the Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 17.

³⁸ Note that the date in Ezra 3:8 is an *anniversary* era, and the years ran from Tishri to Tishri (see 3:1; confirmed by Josephus, *Ant.* xi. §4.2), 'in the second year of their coming in to the House of God to Jerusalem, in the second month began Zerubbabel' (The second month is Marcheshvan, not Iyyar.) The date in Ezra 3:8 (start of Temple; presumed to be 1st day of Marcheshvan) and 6:15 (completion of Temple; 3rd Adar) means that the traditional date for the dedication of the Second Temple must be moved back from 516 to 3rd Adar 530 BC (c. 17 March, 530 BC) (Ezra 6:15; 1 Esd 7:5 & Josephus *Ant* 6.11, §4.7, read 23rd Adar). The total time taken to rebuild the Second Temple was 4 years, 6 months, and 3 days (because the 2nd and 5th years contained an intercalated month). The king is Darius the Mede (536-530), not Darius I (522-486), and Darius the Mede is Cyrus the Mede. Jeremiah predicted that the fall of the city of Babylon would be accomplished by 'the kings of the Medes' (Jer 51:11, 28). Donald J. Wiseman appealed to the Harran inscription which refers to the 'king of the Medes,' who in that year, 546 BC, could be 'no other than Cyrus the Persian,' Media having been incorporated into what became the greater realm of Persia in 555 BC. For Wiseman's sources and evaluation see James M. Bulman, "The Identification of Darius the

By resetting the start of the Sabbatical cycle in 535/4 BC, this threw it out of synchronization with the original, pre-exilic cycle (see the charts below, which show on the top lines the two pre-exilic systems of Sabbatical and Jubilee years alongside the post-exilic system which is given above them marked off with the 19-year Metonic cycle). It is interesting that by Jewish tradition, the era of the exile ended in year 70, and was followed by the era of the Rebuilding of the Temple (Mishnah: Gittim 8:5; Talmud: B. Av.Z. 9a).

V. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SEVENTIETH YEAR

There is uncertainty among some scholars over the year when Cyrus issued his decree granting all captured peoples the freedom to return to their ancestral lands. The choice is between 539/8 and 536 BC. The biblical evidence is clear that it was 70 years after the First Deportation in 605 BC, which would put the decree in Nisan 536 BC. (If the decree was issued in Nisan 538, and the 70 'weeks' are 490 years, then a messiah should have appeared in 48 BC. No messiah appeared, therefore there was no fulfillment.) The seventieth year of the exile is referred to in five different ways. The following chart summarizes the relevant data.



First, the 70th year can be synchronized with the first year of Darius the Mede (Dan 9:1-2; 11:1, 24).³⁹ This Darius should not be confused with Darius I (the Persian; 522-486 BC). Second, the 70th year is also the

Mede," *WTJ* 35 (1973) 247-67), who also claims that Cyrus is called 'king of the Medes' in secular literature (op. cit. p. 258). Herodotus relates that when Cyrus attempted to rule over the Massagetae tribe, their queen referred to Cyrus, then in the last year of his life, as 'king of the Medes' (op. cit. vol. I, bk. 1, §206). The Darius mentioned throughout Haggai and Zechariah is Darius the Mede, not Darius I (as most commentators have it). See chart 4 in the appendix for the chronological setting of this important event.

³⁹ That Babylon would be captured by the Medes was predicted as early as Isaiah (739-686 BC) in Isa 13:17; 21:2; and by Jeremiah (627-586 BC) in Jer 51:11. Even Moses (in 1406 BC) envisaged Israel and her king being exiled to a strange land (Deut 28:36). The heavy hand of Israel's God is unmistakable in Daniel. It is He who sets kings on their thrones, and kings 'receive' their thrones from Him (5:31,

first year of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22; Ezra 1:1; cf. Dan 1:21), which must be reckoned from his rule over the city of Babylon itself.⁴⁰ Many commentators understandably confuse the first year of Cyrus, which was 539/8 BC, with the first year of Cyrus as king of Babylon city (or king over the Jews in Babylon, including Daniel, which was the first time for him to come under Persian rule), which was 536 BC.

If the decree to return home was issued in 539/8, then the exile did not last 70 years but only 67 years. This would contradict Jeremiah 25:12, “Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, . . . So I will bring on that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all nations.” Compare Zechariah 1:12, spoken by the angel, two years after the return from Babylon, “how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem, . . . against which you have been angry these seventy years?” So emphatic is the full number⁴¹ of seventy years, that some are compelled to push back the start of the Babylonian exile to 609 BC in order to accommodate the full 70 years.⁴² However, if Cyrus proclaimed liberty in 539/8, but it was not taken up by the Jews until 536, why is Daniel so agitated about the non-fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy in 536 BC, when the decree had already been issued three years earlier? There is also an inherent contradiction between Daniel’s high political status (president of the 120 satrapies; Dan 6:1-2) and his ignorance of Cyrus’s decree, if the decree was issued in 539/8 BC and if he was unaware of it. There is also an inherent contradiction between, on the one hand, the third year of Cyrus, which was the first year of Darius the Mede (both must be dated to 536), and the issuing of the decree in 539/8 BC if this was the one and only ‘first year’ of Cyrus. The contradiction arose through the failure to notice that Daniel only received the answer to his prayer in the first year of Darius the Mede (which was the third year of Cyrus)(cf. Dan 9:1 with 10:1 and 11:1). The solution is simple. The contradictions are removed once it is recognized that Cyrus had two first years, one in 539/8 when he captured the *land* of Babylon, and another in 536 when he captured the *city* of Babylon.

Third, the 70th year can also be identified with the third year of Cyrus (10:1), which year is reckoned from his capture of the Province of Babylon in 539/8 BC. It should be noted that chapters 7–12 are in chronological order, so that we get:

‘Darius . . . received the kingdom’; Dan 4:17, 25, 32, 35; 5:21; 7:6, 18, where the saints of the Most High ‘received the kingdom’ from the Ancient of Days; cf. Ezra 1:2).

⁴⁰ In Dan 2:12, the term ‘Babylon’ refers to the city and not to Babylon the province.

⁴¹ Both Dan 9:2 and Jer 25:12 use the infinitive ‘to fulfill’ (to fill out or complete) when referring to the full duration of the seventy years.

⁴² See Earl D. Radmacher (gen. ed.), *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997)(OT editor: Ronald B. Allen), p. 764 in the note for 2 Chr 36:22, where the 70 years are given as 609 to 539 BC. Nebuchadnezzar only commenced his reign in 605 BC, and that date is beyond dispute.

Chapter 7: 1st year of Belshazzar (538 BC). The date has been added by the editor (7:1).

Chapter 8: 3rd year of Belshazzar (536 BC). The date comes from Daniel's memoirs (8:1).

Chapter 9: 1st year of Darius the Mede (536 BC). The date comes from Daniel's memoirs (9:1-2).

Chapter 10: 3rd year of Cyrus (536 BC). The date has been added by the editor (10:1).

Chapters 11-12: 1st year of Darius the Mede (536 BC). The date comes from Daniel's memoirs (11:1).

Fourth, the seventieth year is also the third year of Belshazzar (5:30), because this was the year he died. There is a fifth identification, namely, in Daniel 5:31 the third year of Belshazzar was the year in which Darius the Mede received the kingdom 'as a son of years – sixty and two.' The age of Darius is an irrelevance as the OT does not record the age of any foreign king. It is more likely that this is an era date having its starting-point in 597 BC, which was the commencement of the Second Deportation.⁴³ It is probably no coincidence that the 62nd year of the Second Deportation is the same as the 70th year of the First Deportation.

That the third year of Cyrus (10:1) and the first year of Darius the Mede (9:1; cf. 11:1⁴⁴) are the same year is certain⁴⁵ given that as soon as Daniel realized that the seventy years were up, he set his face by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes, to plead with God not to delay the return ("do not delay", 9:19). The same period of fasting and prayer is referred to again in 10:2-3, where it is dated to the first 'three weeks of days' at the commencement of the Babylonian New Year (10:4), which would be Nisan of the 70th year.

But there is an even closer connection between the first year of Darius the Mede and the third year of Cyrus in that Gabriel twice refers to the commencement of Daniel's supplication. In 9:24 Gabriel introduces himself and says, "O Daniel, now I have come forth to help you to consider understanding wisely; at the start of your supplications did the word come forth, and I have come to declare it." And in 10:12, Gabriel says, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you did give your heart to understand, and to humble yourself

⁴³ For the evidence for other dynastic reckonings, see Leslie McFall, "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458?" *WTJ* 53 (1991) 263-293, esp. p.274 n. 29. Jehoiada the high priest is said to have been 130 years when he died (2 Chr 24:15). The 130 years are probably not his own age but are to be counted from the Division of the Kingdom which occurred between Nisan and Tishri 931 BC. (I am indebted to Rodger Young for this precise dating of the Division, see R. Young, "When Did Solomon Die?" *JETS* 46 [2003] 599-603.) On this reckoning the death of Jehoiada would have occurred in 802 BC, which was the 34/35th year of Joash of Judah, under whom he served. The Temple was restored during Jehoiada's high priesthood, probably in preparation for the anniversary of the XIIIth Jubilee (809-808 BC) after the exodus (Nisan, 1446 BC).

⁴⁴ Dan 11:1 is altered from "the first year of Darius" to the "first year of Cyrus" in the LXX and Theodotion. In the extracts from Daniel's written accounts, Daniel correctly refers to Cyrus by his contemporary new title, 'Darius the Mede' (cf. 9:1; 11:1, spoken by the contemporary angel); but the editor prefers to identify him by his more common name, Cyrus (cf. 1:21; 6:28, where the two names for the same individual are given; and 10:1).

⁴⁵ This was also the view of Brian E. Colless, "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel," *JSOT* 56 (1992) 113-126, esp. p. 116. (Cf. also nn. 17, 49, of this article.)

before your God [which is recorded in ch. 9], your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words . . . and I have come to help you to understand that which will happen to your people in the latter end of the days.” Further on in the same message, Gabriel mentions that ‘in the first year of Darius the Mede’ his immediate task was to strengthen the hand of the Median appointee during his first year. This suggests that Darius’s first year and Cyrus’s third year are one and the same year, so the date is 536 BC, the year when Daniel received the reply to his prayer revealing the immediate implementation of a 69-‘week’ programme for his people. We have already noted above that the last active year of Daniel was the third year of Cyrus, but this last year is also called the first year of Cyrus in Daniel 1:21. This puts the matter beyond dispute: Cyrus’s third year as conqueror of Babylonia, is the same as his first year as conqueror of Babylon, even though we have no extant, secular record detailing the three-year gap.

The apparent discrepancy between the first year of Cyrus, which was followed three years later by the first year of Darius the Mede, can be filled in with the three years that Belshazzar ruled between these two dates. Belshazzar ruled only the city of Babylon itself from 538 to 536 BC. If Cyrus did enter Babylonia unopposed in 539/8 (see Jer 51:30), he did not enter into the very heart of the city of Babylon unopposed (see Jer 50:14-15, 29; 51:44, 58). It was another three years before he finally captured the entire city, though we have only the biblical record to infer this. The city of Babylon was one of the most impregnable cities of the world. Tyre was able to withstand a thirteen-year siege by Nebuchadnezzar,⁴⁶ and Jerusalem withstood a three-year siege on three occasions. It is not improbable, therefore, that it took three years to capture Babylon (from 539/8 to 536 BC). Herodotus gives us the dimensions of the city of Babylon as being a square, the sides of which were each fourteen miles long, or 56 miles in circumference. It had an inner wall which was as strong as the outer wall. Its residents boasted to Cyrus that they could withstand a siege of twenty years.⁴⁷ The city was captured only after Cyrus dug channels to divert the river Euphrates round the city. Capturing Babylon was no walkover as the official record claims.⁴⁸ Pompous rulers were not prone to notice setbacks, only their ultimate victories.

⁴⁶ We have no contemporary record of this siege, only the biblical notice in Ezek. 29:18-20 and Josephus, *Life* i. 21; *Antiq.* vol. 6, Bk 10 §219. It occurred between 587 and 574 BC, when Ethbaal III ruled c. 591–573 BC.

⁴⁷ See *The Histories of Herodotus*. 4 vols. The Loeb Classical Library. Translated by A. D. Godley. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975), vol. 1, Book I. §§178-192, and Josephus, *Apion* 1.150-53, who gives Xenophon’s account (*Cyropaedia*, VII. v.47), “Thus, then, his men were employed, while the enemy upon the walls laughed his siege-works to scorn, in the belief that they had provisions enough for more than twenty years. . . .”

⁴⁸ The text of the Cyrus cylinder was first published by T. G. Pinches, “On a Cuneiform Inscription Relating to the Capture of Babylon by Cyrus,” *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.* 7 (1880) 139-76. Pinches has argued that the annals are dated according to the 17 years of the reign of Nabonidus, not Cyrus. The cylinder shows that Cyrus entered into a *part* of the city of Babylon called Suanna (p. 150 n 1). As for the claim that Cyrus took Babylon without fighting, Pinches wryly pointed out that, “It will be noticed that there is no mention whatever

On the biblical evidence, Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede are the same person. D. J. Wiseman identified Darius the Mede with Cyrus.⁴⁹ Darius was not just the local ruler of Babylon under Cyrus the Persian. Darius was king of the entire Persian empire, and in that capacity he issued a proclamation that Daniel's God was to be feared throughout his empire of 120 provinces (Dan 6:26). He could not have done this unless he was Cyrus.

That Cyrus could have two beginnings, and hence two 'first years', is not strange, if these related to doubling the size of his kingdom and his coffers. The conquest of Babylonia/Babylon was worthy of a new, royal title, to mark this outstanding achievement. It marked a new beginning, a new era, to his expanded and enriched empire. King Herod Agrippa I had coins dated years one to eight, but when the Roman emperor Gaius gave him Galilee and Judaea, he issued new coins dated one to four, which reflected his enlarged rule over the Jews.⁵⁰ He had two first years. He had two eras.

The word 'beginning' (*b'rêshîth*) is used only five times in Scripture, in Genesis 1:1 and four times in Jeremiah. Twice the word is used of the beginning of Zedekiah's reign (Jer 28:1; 49:34), and twice of Jehoiakim's reign (Jer 26:1; 27:1⁵¹). Jeremiah lived through both kings' reigns. It so happens that Zedekiah had *two separate starts* to his reign,⁵² and Jehoiakim had *three*,⁵³ but in each case, when Jeremiah dates some event

of draining the Euphrates" (p. 149)! There is also a major discrepancy between the cylinder and ancient historians. The former claims that Nabonidus was captured in Babylon, while the latter state that it was in Borsippa. Daniel does not support the Cyrus cylinder.

⁴⁹ D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: Tyndale, 1965), p. 12. He has been supported by J. M. Bulman, "The Identification of Darius the Mede," *WTJ* 35 (1972-73) 247-267; William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting," *AUSS* 29 (1991) 235-257; and Brian E. Colless, "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel," *JOT* 56 (1992) 113-126. This solution was derived from interpreting the *waw* in Dan 6:28 as explicative, "so Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Cf. Ps 74:11, 'why do You turn away your hand and [=even] your right hand.' Also, v. 16, 'You established a luminary and [=even] the sun.' LXX has, 'sun and moon.' 1 Chr 5:26, "The God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is [literally, 'and'] the spirit of Tiglathpileser king of Assyria." (See also Rev 11:15.) For other examples, see D. W. Baker, "Further Examples of the *Waw Explicativum*," *VT* 30 (1980) 129-36. The name 'Ahasuerus' has been understood to be a royal Iranian title rather than a personal name. Josephus states that Darius was the son of Astyages (*Antiq. X. 11,4*), probably to try and identify Ahasuerus, suggesting a dynastic title. According to Herodotus and Xenophon, Cyrus, whose paternal ancestry was Persian, on his maternal side was grandson of the Median king Astyages. If Asytages and Ahasuerus are the same person then Cyrus was the 'son' of Ahasuerus in the sense of a descendant. Tobit 14:15 identifies the Median king Cyaxares as Ahasuerus.

⁵⁰ Wolf Wirgin & Siegfried Mandel, *The History of Coins and Symbols in Ancient Israel* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), chapter 6, pp. 121-140.

⁵¹ This verse, and 26:1, 28:1, refer to the first year of Jehoiakim's independence, not to his first coronation in 608 BC. But they are also evidence for the start of Zedekiah's coregency in 600 BC.

⁵² Zedekiah was coregent from 600 to 597, and then as a Babylonian vassal (596-586).

⁵³ First as an Egyptian vassal (608-605), then as a Babylonian vassal (605-601), and then as an independent king (600-597).

to the very first year of their kingship—the absolute beginning—of both kings, he uses *bʿrêshîth* and avoids using *ʿchillâh*. It would appear that Jeremiah is using *bʿrêshîth* with the meaning ‘the very beginning’—the absolute start of their reigns, and not any one of the other fresh beginnings (or vassalages) that they experienced. Not understanding that a king may have two or more ways of counting his regnal years the majority of commentaries on Jeremiah 27:1 have changed Jehoiakim to Zedekiah,⁵⁴ which is unnecessary once the conventions of the time are known and appreciated.

VI. ARE THE 69 ‘SEVENS’, 69 YEARS OR 483 YEARS?

If the ‘seventy sevens’ of Daniel 9:24 is the same number as the ‘seventy years’ of Daniel 9:2, then the 69 ‘sevens’ are 69 years. If so, then the isolated ‘seven’ mentioned in Daniel 9:27 must also be a single year. This means that ‘seven’ is synonymous with ‘year’ throughout Daniel 9, and it means that the term ‘seven’ is the name given to identify a specific or special kind of year and that it ceases to be a number.⁵⁵

On the other hand, if others want to take ‘seven’ as a numeral then ‘seventy sevens’ could be read as ‘seventy times seven’, or 490 years.⁵⁶ But for this to be so the LXX Greek text would need to read: ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ, ‘seventy times seven’ (cf. Mt 18:22). However, the LXX reads: ἑβδομήκοντα ἑβδομάδες, which is a true representation of the Hebrew, ‘seventy sevens’. The only other place in the LXX where ἑβδομάδες occurs in the fem. plur. form is in Leviticus 25:8, where it reads: “And it shall be to you seven weeks of years, nine and forty years.” Here, ἑβδομάδες is clearly used as a number, which some think may be used in a coded fashion in the five places where it occurs in Daniel (9:24, 27 [2x]; 10:2, 3).

If the first 69 ‘weeks’ are 69 years, and terminate in the coming of Nehemiah as the promised messiah, as set out in 9:25-26a, then there is a large chronological gap between 9:26a and 26b. There are two interpretations of 9:26b. First, if the ‘Leader’ is the Roman Emperor Titus, and if the destruction of the people

⁵⁴ A typical example would be the comment in John L. Mackay, *Jeremiah* (2 vols; Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 2:135: “Most Hebrew manuscripts read ‘in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim’ (NKJV), which is undoubtedly a textual corruption since it contradicts the mention of Zedekiah as king in vv. 3 and 12. It is also at variance with the introduction to the following chapter which is explicitly linked back to this one” Cf. also J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 528, who places chs. 26-27 after the 597 BC exile (see pp. 531, 535). He reads 28:1 as the 4th year of Zedekiah (pp. 528, 537 n. 1) when in fact the events took place in Zedekiah’s official accession year.

⁵⁵ In Daniel a week is equated with a year. In Ezekiel a day is equated with a year. When Ezekiel lay on his side for 390 days this represented the 390 years that Israel rebelled against Yahweh (Ezek 4:4-6; cf. Num 14:34).

⁵⁶ The earliest evidence for this comes from the Testament of Levi and the Pseudo-Moses Documents (4Q 387a, etc.) dated about 150 BC, and the Qumran fragment *Melchizedek* (11QMelch)(pre-AD 70?). See Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian. Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 262.

is to be identified with the decimation of the Jewish people during the First Jewish Revolt, AD 66-70, then the chronological gap between 9:26a and 26b is from 455 BC to AD 70, or 525 years.

Secondly, the verb 'destroy' (in some of the above translations) can have the meaning of 'corrupt' on occasions, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem's holy or clean status. This opens up the interpretation that the city and the Temple were not destroyed but corrupted or desecrated, and the obvious candidate is Antiochus IV Epiphanes. If so, this would place a gap of about 280 years (454–175 BC) between 9:26a and 26b. Whichever interpretation is correct these severe switches from one event to another within a single verse are bewildering, but undeniable.

VII. FROM WHAT POINT DID DANIEL'S SIXTY-NINE 'WEEKS' BEGIN?

In the absence of a single era by which to date events, the years of a king's reign was the norm. However, national events, especially catastrophes, were used throughout the Ancient Near East, to mark the passage of time. A notable earthquake occurred 'in the days of Uzziah' (Zech 14:5) and this became such a datum point. Amos dated his call to two years before this notable earthquake (Am 1:1). Ezekiel, apparently, dated the start of his ministry from the discovery of the book of the Law, which was made just before Nisan in a Jubilee year (beginning in Tishri, 623 B.C.), and Josiah instantly ordered the keeping of the Passover.⁵⁷ If Amos could date the start of his ministry by a seismic event—the earthquake in Uzziah's day—was not the discovery of the book of the Law a seismic event of even greater significance for a priest to date his ministry from?⁵⁸ The exodus from Egypt was also used as an era (Exod 19:1; 40:17; Num 1:1; 9:1; 33:38; Dt 1:3; 1 Kgs

⁵⁷ Ezekiel's 30 years are numbered from Nisan in my charts, and not from the start of the Jubilee year, which years were, apparently, never kept in the pre-Exilic period, according to Ben Zion Wacholder, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography* (New York: Ktav, 1976), p. 2. If Ezekiel's 30th year is counted from the first year after the Tishri 623 BC Jubilee year, the arithmetic does not work, because if the years are Tishri, then the 30th year of Ezekiel is not the 5th year of his captivity, but the 6th year. This contradicts Ezek 1:2, where the 30th is synchronized with the 5th year of his (and Jehoiachin's) captivity.

⁵⁸ All the dates in the book of Ezekiel are dated from Nisan, not from Tishri (see 1:1; 3:15; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; and 40:1). The Jubilee began in Tishri of the 49th Nisan-to-Nisan year, and ended in Elul in the 50th Nisan-to-Nisan year. Jubilee and Sabbatical years should be viewed as embedded within a Nisan year calendar, not standing outside it, or running alongside it half a year late. The dominance of the Nisan calendar cannot be stressed enough when it comes to dating events in the OT. It is always the first option to adopt. The national calendar is always counted in Nisan years, *even including the Sabbatical and Jubilee years*. The only exception is the personal calendar of the royal dynasty of Judah, which dated the years of the king from Tishri to Tishri. But this is a purely *royal family* calendar. When Ezekiel refers to 14 and 25 years from [or after] an event (as in Ezek 40:1), the years will be anniversary years (which happen to be from Nisan). In most other cases the counting will be according to the national calendar—in Nisan years, and the first year, if it is incomplete can be discounted (accession) or counted (non-accession) as a full year. The second year will commence on the first Nisan after the event in a non-accession year system of counting. This is the method Jesus used when He stated that He

6:1). God's punishment of Judah involved three⁵⁹ significant deportations to Babylon, each of which had a different starting date. These three significant deportations constituted eras in their own right, so that great care needs to be taken to identify which era is being used at any given point in the narrative. It is not clear from Daniel's narrative itself which era is intended, and it is this difficulty that has given rise to so much debate over the past 2000 years of interpretation.⁶⁰

The key to the understanding of Daniel 9 is to identify the start and finish of the three eras or deportations, and then to find a reason why the 69 'weeks' are split into two periods of seven and sixty-two 'weeks' respectively. The three eras are as follows.

The first year of the First Deportation (Era) was 605/04 (Nisan years) and the 70th year of this era was 536/5 (Nisan years), which was the year when the Babylonian exile finished according to God's decree, and the exiles returned home. It is important to note that the regnal dating (and counting) system began on 1st Nisan in Babylon, but on 1st Tishri in Judah, or exactly six months apart. This discovery has important implications, in that a numbered year in the Babylonian regnal system would straddle two half years in Judah's regnal system. Nebuchadnezzar was crowned king on 1st Elul (7 Sept.) 605 BC. Now, because the Babylonian priests had added a thirteenth month (known as intercalation⁶¹) to the previous year, this meant that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, using the Babylonian calendar, ran from Nisan 605 to Nisan 604, but on Judah's regnal calendar his first year ran from Tishri 605 to Tishri 604.⁶² And to complicate matters,

would rise from the dead "after [*meta*] three days" (cf. the LXX *meta* in Ezek 40:1). Here the counting is given in the non-accession format, where part of a day is counted as a full day.

⁵⁹ There was a small, fourth deportation in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar (581–582 BC) in which 745 persons were exiled (Jer 52:28-30). In his 18th year, 832 persons were exiled. In his 7th year, 3,023 were exiled. In his accession year (605 BC), no total is given, but this is the key deportation which Daniel used to count the 70 'weeks' of exile.

⁶⁰ The same difficulty occurs over the beginning of a king's reign in Israel and Judah which involves a coregency. Only a thorough knowledge of the whole chronology can determine his coregency period.

⁶¹ Confirmation of the intercalation system used in Judah may come from the dating of Ezekiel's prophecies. There are 14 dated prophecies (see note 57 above). Nos. 7 to 12 relate solely to Egypt. So the arrangement is topical. They are, however, in chronological order except for no. 8, which was the latest dated prophecy in the Book of Ezekiel. This has been brought forward to its present position due to the topical arrangement of the Book. No. 11 is dated 12th year, 12th month, 1st [day] of the month (32:1). No. 12 is dated 12th year, 15th of the month (32:17). The month number is missing. It could be that this is a reference to the intercalated, or 13th, month, which did not have a number in Judah's calendar. According to my calculations, there was an intercalation in this year in Judah. See the charts at the end of this article.

⁶² For a list of the intercalated months see R. A. Parker & W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. – A.D. 75* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown Univ. Press, 1956). In the charts in the appendix Judah's intercalated months are indicated with small black squares immediately above the lower BC/AD dateline, and immediately above them are the Babylonian/Seleucid intercalated months (black squares for Nisan and black circles for Elul). Judah's Metonic cycle of intercalated months is repeated on the very top line, and below them is the Seleucid Metonic cycle which existed in Josephus's time, which has been projected backwards. There is no evidence that it

Nebuchadnezzar's first year was termed his 'accession year', or year zero, and his first official, or regnal, year did not begin until Nisan 604. The accompanying chart shows how the calendars of the two nations should be synchronized.

Daniel was correct to state that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem 'in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah' (Dan 1:1), because he was using Judah's Tishri-to-Tishri regnal calendar. But Jeremiah was also correct when he stated that the fourth year of king Jehoiakim was the 'beginning year' (הַשָּׁנָה הָרְאשׁוֹנִית) of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:1). Jeremiah used the word *rî'shonîth* to refer to Nebuchadnezzar's accession year. Jehoiakim's fourth year included Nebuchadnezzar's accession year of seven months and the first six months of his official first year.⁶³

The period of 'seventy years' in Zechariah 1:12; 7:6 is based on the numbering of the First Deportation years. The figure 'seventy' had become a closed, block period, because it is referred to in the second and the fourth years of Darius the Mede (Zech 1:7, 12; 7:1, 6). Daniel went into exile during the First Deportation, so that he lived through the entire seventy years. His own birthdays ensured there was a living calendar to mark the passage of the years.

The first year of the Second Deportation (Era) was 597/96 (Nisan years) (or seven years after the First) and the 70th year of this era was 529/28 (Nisan year). The next year was the commencement of the sixty-two 'weeks' of Daniel 9:25, to be distinguished from the sixty-two 'weeks' of 9:26. King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel went into exile at this time. Jehoiachin was eighteen years of age when he was deported, so he was about fifty-four years of age when he was released from prison in the 37th year of the Second Deportation (Jer

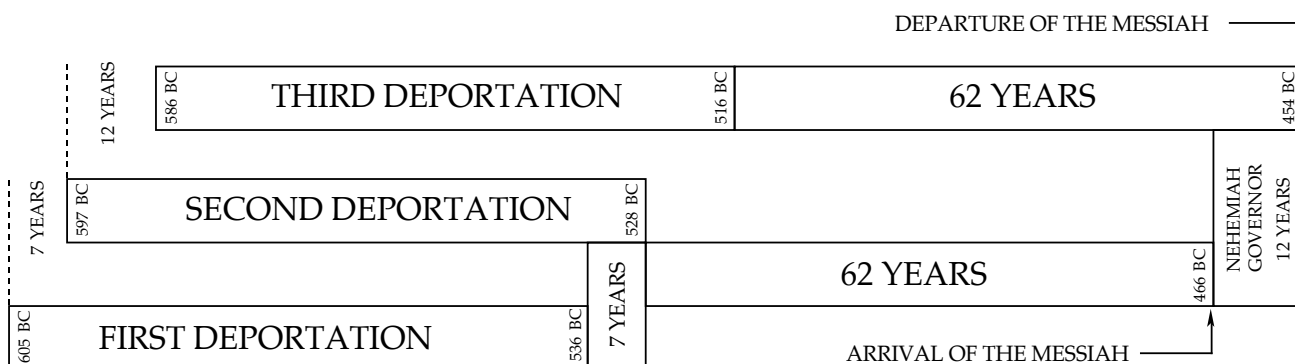
rivalled the Babylonian Metonic cycle, but it has been added here for completeness. On the difference between the Metonic and Callippic cycles see, George Cornewall Lewis, *Historical Survey of the Astronomy of the Ancients* (London, 1862), p. 122.

⁶³ Elsewhere the first, official year of a king is called his '*achat* (אָחַט) year' (cf. Dan 1:21; 7:1; 9:1, 2; 2 Chr 36:22; Ezra 1:1). However, the fourth year of Jehoiakim in Jer 46:2 cannot be a *regnal* Tishri-to-Tishri year because the battle of Carchemish occurred in Jehoiakim's third year (when Nebuchadnezzar was not yet king). The possibilities are (a) that the counting is by non-accession years, or (b) the count is by Nisan-to-Nisan years (Babylonian influence), or (c), most likely, that Jehoiakim had a coregency period contemporaneous with Jehoahaz's three-month reign, which began before Tishri, and ended after Tishri. This gave Jehoiakim a single coregency year, before he succeeded Jehoahaz. But it also meant that he had an official accession year which lasted almost an entire year. In this case, Jeremiah would have dated the battle of Carchemish using Jehoiakim's coregency numbers. In the OT there are many examples where coregency numbering takes precedence over the regnal numbering (see the author's article, "A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 148 (1991) pp. 3-45). If Jeremiah is using coregency numbering, then 46:2 is the only evidence of a coregency for Jehoiakim.

52:31-34; 2 Kgs 25:27⁶⁴), which was the 45th year of the First Deportation, and the 26th year of the Third Deportation.

The first year of the Third Deportation (Era) was 586/85 (Nisan years). The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon’s Temple occurred on 20 July, 586 of this year. The 70th year of this era ended in Adar 516 BC. It is from the end of this era that Gabriel dated the cutting off of the messiah. The first year of this era was 516/15 (Nisan years).

DANIEL'S THREE ERAS OF DATING



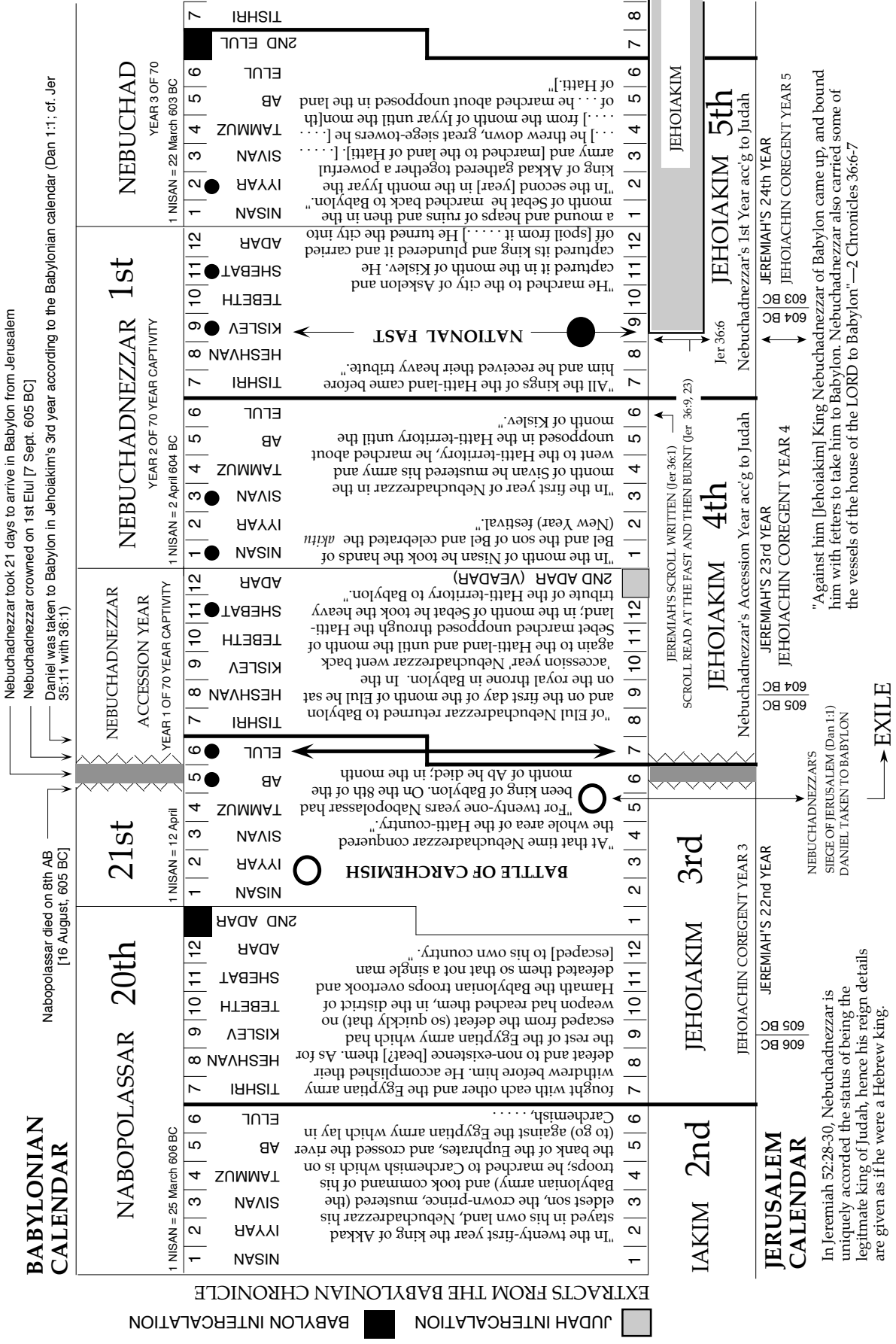
Ezekiel used two of these eras *simultaneously* to date his Temple Vision in Ezekiel 40:1, “In the twenty-fifth year of our removal, . . . in the fourteenth year after the city was demolished, in this self-same day had the hand of Yahweh been upon me.” The first time-reference is to the Second Deportation era (dated from ‘our removal’ in 597 BC), and the second is a reference to the Third Deportation era (dated from ‘after the city [Jerusalem] was demolished’ in 586 BC). Both eras began in Nisan. Consequently, the 14th year of the Third Deportation is identical with the 25th year of the Second Deportation. It was on the 10th day of Nisan (LXX, ‘the first month’) that Ezekiel received his prophetic vision.

That Hebrew historians, chroniclers and diarists should switch their time reference points back and forth between a number of different eras should not surprise us, but it does. We look for consistency where there is none. This is a fact of life in all Near Eastern civilizations. It requires mental adjustment to this reality in handling chronological issues in the Bible, otherwise we will demand a consistency that is not a reality in those civilizations. Without this necessary mental adjustment in place, the rest of this article will be difficult to comprehend by the Western mind.

The following three charts set out the exact starting-point of each of the three deportations to Babylon.

⁶⁴ 2 Kgs 25:27 gives the day of Jehoiachin’s release as the 27th, but Jer 52:31 gives it as the 25th. This suggests that the Babylonians commenced the start of the month two days earlier than the Jews in Jerusalem, due to a different visual sighting of the New Moon. 2 Kings gives the Babylonian date-line, whereas Jeremiah gives the Jerusalem date-line. However, see K. Stenring, *The Enclosed Garden* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965), p. 96, for Gerhard Larsson’s alternative lunar/solar calendar explanation.

START OF THE FIRST DEPORTATION ERA IN 605 B.C.



START OF THE SECOND DEPORTATION ERA IN 597 B.C.

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months and ten days (2 Chr 36:9). At that time the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar . . . came up . . . and the city was besieged. . . . Nebuchadnezzar . . . came to the city while his servants were besieging it; . . . Jehoiachin . . . gave himself up to the king of Babylon (2 Kgs 24:10).
ca. 20 Heshvan to 2 Adar

KISLEV: 18 Dec—16 Jan																																																											
NEBUCHADNEZZAR 6th YEAR 7 OF 70 YEAR CAPTIVITY 1 NISAN = 6 April 599 BC			NEBUCHADNEZZAR 7th YEAR 8 OF 70 YEAR CAPTIVITY 1 NISAN = 27 March 598 BC			NEBUCHADNEZZAR 8th YEAR 9 OF 70 YEAR CAPTIVITY 1 NISAN = 13 April 597 BC			NEBUCHADNEZZAR 8th YEAR 10 OF 70 1 NISAN = 3 April 596 BC																																																		
12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12								
2ND ADAR (VEADAR)												2ND ELUL												2ND ELUL												2ND ELUL																							
ON YEAR 2 COREGENT												LIBERATION YEAR 3 ZEDEKIAH COREGENT												YEAR 4 COREGENT												YEAR 5 COREGENT																							
9th COREGENT YEAR 9												10th JEHOIAKIM JEHOIACHIN COREGENT YEAR 10												11th JEHOIACHIN COREGENT YEAR 11												ZEDEKIAH ACCESSION YEAR												ZEDEKIAH 1st											
599 BC JEREMIAH'S 28th YEAR												599 BC JEREMIAH'S 29th YEAR Nebuchadnezzar's 6th Year according to Judah's calendar												598 BC JEREMIAH'S 30th YEAR Nebuchadnezzar's 7th Year according to Judah's calendar												597 BC JEREMIAH'S 31st YEAR Nebuchadnezzar's 8th Year according to Judah's calendar																							
"In the sixth year in the month of Kislev the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to the Hattai-land. From the Hattai-land he sent out his companies, and scouring the desert they took much plunder from the Arabs, their possessions, animals and gods. In the month Adar the king returned to his own land."												"In the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched to the Hattai-land, and encamped against (i.e. besieged) the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own choice, received its heavy tribute and sent (them) to Babylon."												"In the eighth year, the month of Tebet, the king of Akkad [marched] to the Hattai-land as far as Carchemish In the month of Sebat the king re[turned] to his own land."												"In the ninth year, the month of [the king of] Akkad and his troops [marched along] the bank of the Tigris [. . .] the king of El[am] [which is on the bank of the Tigris he pitched his camp."																							

ca. 20 Kislev to 2 Nisan
 "The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign" —2 Kings 24:10-12
 "The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah" —2 Kings 24:17

→ EXILE

As early as the time of Isaiah (740–c. 680 BC), God had revealed the coming of a messiah who would be instrumental in releasing his people from a predicted exile in Babylon.⁶⁵ That messiah was the Persian king, Cyrus, a non-Jew (Isa 45:1). Isaiah records Yahweh’s words concerning Jerusalem, “You shall be inhabited,” and of the cities of Judah, “You shall be built and I will raise up her waste places” (Isa 44:26). God repeats the promise concerning the city of Jerusalem itself in Isaiah 44:28, “You shall be built,” and in Jeremiah 30:18, “And the city has been built on its heap.” (Cf. 31:4). To quibble that no walls of Jerusalem are specifically mentioned in these texts, or in the abstract of Cyrus’s decree recorded in 2 Chr 36:22-23 (cf. Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5) is to detract from the generosity of Yahweh and his message of a full restoration. Yahweh is not being miserly in granting houses in Jerusalem but no wall. Of Cyrus God says, “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways. He shall build my city and let my exiles go free, . . . says the Lord of hosts” (45:13).⁶⁶ There is one prophecy, however, where Yahweh promises: “Lo, days are coming, an affirmation of Yahweh, and the city has been built to Yahweh, from the Tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner, and gone out again has the measuring-line over-against it, unto the height of Gareb, . . . unto the corner of the horse-gate eastward, . . . it is not plucked up, nor is it demolished (הָרַס) any more to the age (לְעוֹלָם)” (Jer 31:39-40).⁶⁷ This is a clear reference to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Three locations in God’s account are mentioned in Nehemiah’s list of repairs in Nehemiah 3. They are the Tower of Hananeel (Neh 3:1), the horse-gate (3:28), and possibly the gate of the corner in 3:24 or 3:31. Hanani reported that the wall had been breached (פָּרַץ), not demolished (הָרַס)(Neh 1:3). Since Nehemiah only *repaired* the breaches in the wall on his second visit, they must have been rebuilt prior to, or during (as Josephus has it), his first period as Governor of Judah. It is clear from the last part of God’s statement, that once the walls had been rebuilt they

⁶⁵ Micah the Morashtite, in the time of Hezekiah, had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Mic 3:12), and exile to Babylon (Mic 4:10; Jer 26:18-19).

⁶⁶ The common theology of the Ancient Near East viewed the worship of conquered nations as important, and so it was the duty of the conqueror to rebuild the temple of each nation’s god who, after all, had granted the conqueror his victory. This inevitably involved putting things to right again, including the prosperity of the defeated peoples and the rebuilding of their cities. See E. J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 71-107, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra.” There was no dichotomy between rebuilding a god’s temple and rebuilding his city. Shame and dishonor resulted to the god if either was not restored. Nehemiah exploited the oriental sense of shame when Artaxerxes granted his *personal* request to repair the walls of the city in which his fathers’ graves were lying in shameful surroundings (Neh 2:5). This grant came in the form of a *private* gift from a king to his most trusted official (his cupbearer). It was not a *public* decree, or a re-issued decree. Daniel’s 69 ‘weeks’ could not have started in Nisan 445 BC. In Daniel 9, a ‘week’ is just one year, not seven years. In any case, no messiah appeared in Nisan 376 BC (= 445 – 69) or in Nisan, AD 39 (= 445 – 483).

⁶⁷ Here the term *l’ôlâm* ‘to the age’, cannot be translated as ‘for eternity’, because the walls of Jerusalem were demolished completely and no longer exist (see also n. 34).

could not be *demolished*, though they could be *breached*. Jeremiah 31:39-40, therefore, becomes an important witness to the existence of rebuilt walls which were later breached a few months before Nisan 445 BC.

In typical Hebrew fashion, although the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem did not happen in Cyrus's lifetime, Cyrus's decree is the energizing force that will see it through. His decree facilitated the return of Ezra's group of exiles, and any others that preceded or followed his.

VIII. THE DIVISION OF THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS

There are three possible reasons why the 69 years have been divided into 7 and 62 years respectively. One cannot miss the message coming out of the book of Daniel that God is working to a global timetable. He knows all things and all events that will happen. If God is working from a fixed timetable, he has a holistic view which is denied to us. However, if something is dated after the first seven years but before the start of the 62 years, this could account for the split. Three events happened at the end of the first seven years. First, Ezekiel was given a prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar would conquer Egypt and it, like Judah, would lie desolate—in Egypt's case for 40 years (Ezek 29:12-13). Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt in 568 BC. Forty years on from that time coincides with the end of the 70 years of Judah's Second Deportation, in 528 BC.

Second, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with power from Artaxerxes to control religious affairs in the province of Judah, exactly seventy complete years from the end of the 'seven weeks'. Ezra, for all intents and purposes, was Artaxerxes's priestly messiah. Two of God's messiahs, a princely and a priestly, arrive seventy years from the 70th year of the First and Second Deportations, respectively. The timing is impeccable.

And thirdly, the 'seventy weeks' of the Second Deportation era ended at the close of the 'seven weeks'. It is also worth noting that at the end of the seven years the First and Second Deportations come into one stream, and the 62 'weeks' can be seen as the continuation of these merged eras. The twelve-year difference between the end of the merged eras (528) and the end of the Third Deportation (516) allows Nehemiah's twelve-year Governorship to merge all three deportations in Nisan 454 BC.

There are two mentions of '62 weeks' (Dan 9:25 and 9:26). These do not refer to the same chronological period, which has been the traditional assumption, despite the article being with the second occurrence of 'weeks'. However, in Daniel 9:25, the 62 years are added to the preceding 7 years, making 69 years to the coming of the messiah. Nehemiah, for all intents and purposes, was Artaxerxes's political messiah, who appears at the end of the 69 years (when its first year is synchronized with the first year of the seven 'weeks'). Nehemiah was Governor for 12 years. Daniel 9:26 then states that the messiah 'is cut off' and 'has nothing' at the end of 62 years. This 62-year period is counted from the end of the Third Deportation. Consequently, the solution is simple. The 62 years of 9:25 is counted from the end of the Second Deportation;

the 62 years of 9:26 is counted from the end of the Third Deportation. The 62 'weeks' in 9:25 run from 528 to 466 BC, whereas the 62 'weeks' in 9:26 run from 516 to 454 BC.

Darius the Mede was given the kingdom of Babylon and this is dated to the third year of Cyrus (536 BC; cf. Dan 10:1 with 11:1 and 9:1). From that year to the first year of Nehemiah (inclusive) is exactly 70 years (or 'weeks'). According to Josephus, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the 25th year of Cyrus. If Josephus's statement is correct then we have a problem, because Xerxes did not reign 25 years. He was murdered in the fifth month of his 21st year. It is likely, therefore, that the reigns of Xerxes and his son, Artaxerxes I, were run together as a single, dynastic, reign. In that case, reckoned from the beginning of Xerxes's reign, the 25th year would fall in Artaxerxes's reign. It is not unusual for kings to have two or more names as they enlarge their empires. Artaxerxes I was also known as Cyrus.⁶⁸

Josephus tells us that Nehemiah finished building the walls of Jerusalem in the ninth month in the 28th year of Xerxes, and that he took two years and four months to complete the task. Subtracting the two years and four months from the completion date means that they were started in the seventh month of the 26th year of Xerxes's (or Artaxerxes's) dynasty. Josephus wrote: "And these hardships he [Nehemiah] endured for two years and four months, for this was the length of time in which the wall of Jerusalem was built, in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Xerxes, in the ninth month." (*Ant.* vol. 6. bk. 11, §5.7).⁶⁹ Is it a coincidence that just as Nehemiah completed building the wall, Ezra arrived in 458 BC? Did Ezra come to dedicate the newly completed wall? He was present when the wall was repaired and dedicated in Nehemiah's second visit in 445 BC. Nehemiah and Ezra were both absent from Jerusalem when the abuses of Nehemiah 13:4-6 took place between 454 and 445 BC.

Confirmation that there were two separate days of dedication for Jerusalem's walls in the post-AD 70 but pre-AD 132 Jewish calendar, may come in the document *Megillat Taanit*. This document goes systematically through the twelve months of the Jewish year marking which days Jews are forbidden to mourn on. It reads: "On the 7th day of Iyyar [= 2nd month] was the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem and it is forbidden to mourn thereon." And another entry reads: "On the 7th of Elul [= 6th month] was the day of

⁶⁸ See Abraham J. Sachs & Hermann Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia: Volume 1. Diaries from 652 B.C. to 262 B.C.* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 1:61. Artaxerxes was also called Arshu (I.61, cf. 77, 141), and called Ahasuerus (Asueros) by Josephus (*Ant.* 6. bk 11, §6.1), and Xerxes was also called Ahasuerus (Esth 1:1; Ezra 2:6).

⁶⁹ For further comment on Josephus's statement see Leslie McFall, "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458?" *WIJ* 53 (1991) 263-293, esp. p. 281. If the names Artaxerxes and Xerxes were interchangeable, as regards naming the dynasty, this would explain the flight of Themistocles which occurred in Xerxes's time, being put under Artaxerxes's name. For the sources see R. Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (London: James Nisbet, 1915), pp. 254-55. Due to an intercalated 2nd Adar (VeAdar) month in 458, Nehemiah commenced building the walls in Tishri, 460 BC, and finished in Kislev, 458 BC, which was three months after Ezra arrived to dedicate them.

the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, on which it is forbidden to mourn.”⁷⁰ According to the comment by the document’s scholiast, the holiday in Iyyar goes back to the dedication of the wall in the time of Nehemiah (Neh 6:15; 12:27), but that the dedication was delayed until the rest of the house building programme was completed and the city inhabited, which took a further eight months. Nehemiah 6:15 states that the repaired wall was completed on 25th Elul.

If 7th Iyyar was the dedication of Nehemiah’s completed wall, then what completed wall was dedicated on 7th Elul? Could this dedication be for the original wall completed by Nehemiah the Governor in the autumn of 458 BC when we know Ezra was present? If so, this would corroborate Josephus’s extra-biblical data that Nehemiah was involved in restoring the wall on two separate occasions. Ezra took four months to reach Jerusalem. He reached Jerusalem on 1st Elul, 458 BC (Ezra 7:11), which was three months before the wall was completed.⁷¹

IX. MAKING SENSE OF THE DOUBLE REFERENCE TO 62 WEEKS IN DANIEL 9:24–26

At first sight, the reference to 62 weeks in 9:25 and 26 looks like a reference to the same historical period of time. Gabriel sets before Daniel the prospect of Jerusalem, as a city, being rebuilt again. He says: “And you should know and consider wisely: From a word going out to restore and to build Jerusalem until messiah-leader [is] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. [This is 466 BC.] Broad place and moat are restored and built and [this] in distress of the times. [This is 458 BC.] And after the sixty-two weeks messiah is cut off and there is nothing to him. [This is 454 BC.]”

Sixty-nine years from the *end* of the 70-year exile, Nehemiah was appointed Governor of God’s people in Judah. Nehemiah did indeed build the broad place and he did it under constant threat of attack by surrounding enemies. He completed the task he was commissioned to do by God ‘in troublous times’ (cf. Ezra 4:4-7, 23-24). However, Gabriel added a negative note, which in itself, if fulfilled, would be a further reassurance that Yahweh was in total control of all that happened to his people. Gabriel added: “And after sixty-two ‘weeks’ cut off is messiah, and the city and the Holy Place are not his.”

⁷⁰ Solomon Zeitlin, *Megillat Taanit: As a Source for Jewish Chronology and History in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (A Thesis submitted February 1917. . . Doctor of Philosophy in the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning)(Philadelphia: At the Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 68-69.

⁷¹ 1 Macc 4:60; 6:7 mentions walls encompassing the Temple (not the city) built by Judas Maccabaeus, but this was in Kislev. No memorial day was set up for it such as Judas set up for the rededication of the Temple ‘at that season’ (cf. 1 Macc 13:52). His brother, Jonathan, also built the city walls (10:6; cf. v. 45; 12:36; 13:10; 14:37).

It seems odd to foretell the coming of the messiah 62 years after the first seven years, and then immediately to foretell his cutting off after the 62nd year. At most, this would give the messiah one year (the 62nd year) in which to rebuild Jerusalem 'in troublous times'. (This one-year mission would rule out Jesus being the messiah.) The solution is that the first seven years are reckoned from the end of the First Deportation and the 62 years are a continuation of the seven years. However, if one adds 62 years to the end of the 70-year deportation which commenced in 586 BC, the 62nd year coincides with the end of Nehemiah's 12-year period as Governor of Judah. He is 'cut off' in the 62nd year, and in truth 'the city and the holy place are not his'.

Why three important events occurred in the 62nd year of three different eras is a puzzle. However, the fact that number 62 locks all three important events together chronologically is an intriguing coincidence. Important chronological deductions can now be drawn from the use of number 62, given that we know the exact dates of each of the three major deportations (605, 597 and 586). The deductions are as follows:

The 62nd year of the Second Deportation coincides with the 70th year of the First Deportation. This settles the date when Darius the Mede captured Babylon. It was 536, and not 539/8 BC.

The 62nd year following the 'seven weeks', which were themselves an extension to the 70th year of the First Deportation, marked the arrival of the messiah, and the start of Nehemiah's 12-year Governorship. This settles and confirms the date when the messiah Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem from Persia. It was 466 BC.

The 62nd year following the 70th year of the Third Deportation (which began in 586 BC) coincides with the cutting-off of the messiah and the last year of Nehemiah's Governorship. This settles and confirms the date when the messiah Nehemiah departed from Jerusalem to Persia. It was 454 BC.

X. EVIDENCE FOR PRE-PLANNED PERIODS IN SALVATION HISTORY

God provided Israel with its own system of eras in the form of 49-year blocks of time (Jubilees), which were cyclical and socially functional. Unfortunately, due to disobedience, the system never caught on. The Jubilee eras were made up of 7×7 years, which is the number of completeness multiplied by itself.⁷² The Sabbathic cycle was made up of 7×1 years, but, again, it was never used to mark off units of time in the pre-exilic period. It is only with hindsight that we can see a pattern in the diversity of units of time that God used as the carpet of history is rolled out. There are many studies attempting to draw out these patterns in the

⁷² On the interpretations of symbolic numbers see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), pp. 122-123.

Bible, some forced, and some plausible. Some are based on faulty data (such as Ussher's chronology), others are based on more modern, fully researched chronological studies. Daniel encouraged God's people to count the 'days' for in them is revealed the plan of God. He tells his generation that there are 1290 days between the cessation of the sacrifices and the appearance of the 'abominating desolation', and the man who waits until day 1335 will be blessed (Dan 12:11-12).⁷³ John the divine tells his generation that the Woman who had just given birth to a child was cared for by God for 1260 days (Rev 12:6), which period is said to be 'a time, times, and half a time' (12:14), recalling the same expression in Daniel 12:7. These enigmatic numbers convey the assurance that God is in control of history and that all things are leading up to a climactic end.

Why all three deportation eras are fixed at 70 years is not clear. It is almost as if the 70 years had become associated with punishment,⁷⁴ but in future they are to be associated with prosperity and good times. The New Testament gives us an insight into the orderliness of God's workings, for at a time chosen by him, he sent his Son into the world at a predetermined moment (Gal 4:4). The number seven is associated with the number of completeness, and after seven of these 70-year blocks of time, the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ, appeared in AD 25. Jesus' *regal* genealogy is made up of 3x14 (7x6) generations (Mt 1), and Jesus' *humanity* genealogy is made up of 77 (7x11) generations (Lk 3).

The Old Testament also reveals God's orderliness. Israel was in Egypt exactly 430 years *to the day* (Ex 12:41). Moses, the supreme mediator of God's Law, lived 120 years, which was made up of three distinct 3 x 40-year periods.⁷⁵ The number sixty plays an important role in Israel's history.⁷⁶ From the birth of Abraham to

⁷³ For interpretations of these figures see, W. Bell Dawson, "The Hebrew Calendar, and Time Periods," *JVI* 61 (1929) 40-59, esp. p. 49. *Ibid.*, "Prophetic Numbers in Daniel, in Relation to Celestial Cycles," *JVI* 67 (1935) 129-156, esp. p. 141, ". . . the numbers 1,260 and 2,300, taken as solar years, proved to be strikingly correct soli-lunar cycles." These articles deal with the Metonic, Jubilee, and Cheseaux cycles.

⁷⁴ Cf. Isa 23:15-18, where Tyre's punishment is that it would be forgotten for 70 years, and then it would be 'inspected' by God. Seventy years of catastrophe finds a precise counterpart in an Assyrian source, see A. Malamat, "Longevity: Biblical Concepts and Some Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 19 (1982) 215-224, esp. p. 216 note 17.

⁷⁵ For numerical patterns in the Bible see, Duane L. Christensen, "Job and the Age of the Patriarchs in Old Testament Narrative," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986) 225-228; W. M. Feldman, *Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy* (New-York: Hermon Press, 1965).

⁷⁶ The sexagesimal system formed the basis of Mesopotamian arithmetic. There were two systems of units. The oldest was: 1, 10, 30 (changed to 60), 100 (omitted), 300 (changed to 600), 3000 (changed to 6000). The unit 3600 (*shar*) was later replaced by 6000. Large numbers were multiples of sixty, supplemented by using 1 and 10. See Hildegard Lewy, "Origin and Development of the Sexagesimal System of Numeration," *JAOS* 69 (1949) 1-11; Dwight Young, "The Influence of the Babylonian Algebra on Longevity Among the Antediluvians," *ZAW* 102 (1990) 321-35; and O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993). Dated to before Noah's Flood are the Mesopotamian seven sages (*apkallus*), said to parallel the seven men in Cain's genealogy (Gen 4:17-24). See Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 149-158. Berossus (356-323 BC) mentions ten antediluvian sages. These are said to parallel the ten patriarchs in Gen 5. These sages each lived thousands of years. The units are multiples of *shar* (3,600)=(60x60), so that the first man Alóros (Adam, in Hebrew) lived 36,000 (10x3,600) years. For

the Exodus is 720 years (60x12)(2166⁷⁷-1446 BC). From the birth of Abraham to the foundation of Solomon's Temple is 1200 years (60x20)(2166-967 BC). From the birth of Abraham to the birth of Jesus is 2160 years (60x36)(2166-6 BC). From the Exodus to the foundation of Solomon's Temple is 480 years (60x8)(1446-967 BC).⁷⁸ From the foundation of Solomon's Temple to the birth of Jesus is 960 years (60x16)(967-6 BC). From the Exodus to the birth of Jesus is 1440 years (60x24)(1446-6 BC). From the foundation of the Second Temple to the year Jesus entered it was 560 years (70x8)(535 BC-AD 25).⁷⁹ The multiple of 70x8 is a reminder of the 70-year block, and eight was regarded as the number of resurrection, of which Jesus was the first-born (or first-fruit).⁸⁰ The Second Temple was not a shadow of its former, Solomonic glory, but God encouraged his people with the promise that he would fill this modest Temple with honor, such that, 'Greater would be the honor of this latter house than the former, . . . and in this place I will give peace' (Hag 2:7-9). Solomon may have walked in the First Temple, but a greater than Solomon walked in the Second Temple. Solomon's name spelled out 'peace'; but Jesus brought the reality of his peace into the world in the thirtieth Jubilee year from

an ingenious correlation (using numerics) between the biblical and Babylonian numbers, see Julius Oppert, "Die Daten der Genesis," NKGW 10 (1877) 201-23. For a summary of his view see, U. M. D. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961-67), p. 255. For another numeric solution, see John Urquhart, *The New Biblical Guide* (6 vols: London: S. W. Partridge, 1900), vol. 6, pp. 249-256. On Berossus, cf. also Erasmus Rask, *A Short Tractate on the Longevity Ascribed to the Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis and its Relation to Hebrew Chronology* (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), pp. 27, 87; James Smith, *The Patriarchal Age* (London, 1859), pp. 189-230, esp. pp. 209-213, and the Chronological Table; F. A. Jones, *The Dates of Genesis* (London, 1909), p. 50; Arthur C. Custance, *Hidden Things of God's Revelation*. Vol. VIII. The Doorway Papers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), who notes that a *soffos* was 10 times 6, or 60; a *naros* was 60 times 10 (i.e. 10 *soffi*); and a *saros* was 600 times 6 (i.e. 6 *nari*); José Ramos Garcia, "Las genealogías genesíacas y la cronología," *Estudios Bíblicos* 8 (1949) 327-353.; Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), pp. 71-72. In reply see, G. F. Hasel, "The Genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background," *AUISS* 16 (1978) 361-74; and Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), pp. 101-109 (whereas all the Babylonian figures are a multiple of six, ". . . all the numbers in the P list [of Gen 5, Heb] . . . aside from the total age of Methuselah are in multiples of five or in multiples of five after the removal of seven" [p. 108]). The age data in Gen 5 and 11 form a significantly nonrandom distribution in contrast to an expected random distribution of numbers, see, J. L. Hayward, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11: A Statistical Study," *Origins* 9 (1982) 75-81.

⁷⁷ Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology," *BibSac* 137 (1980) 241-251.

⁷⁸ 1 Kgs 6:1 reads, "in the four hundred and eightieth year . . ." not, "after four hundred and eighty years . . ." A common error among biblical chronologists is to add 480 *complete* years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign, when they should have added just 479 *complete* years (cf. Merrill, *op. cit.*, p. 248).

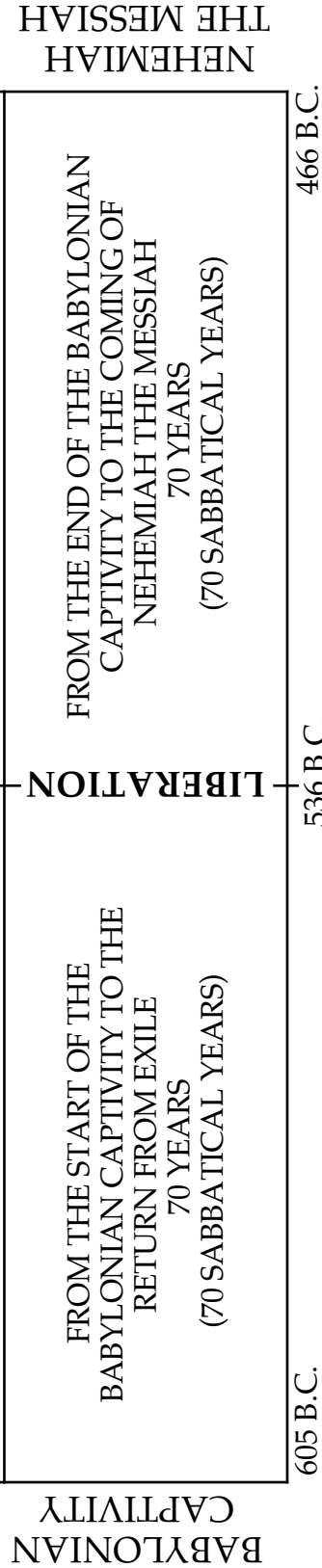
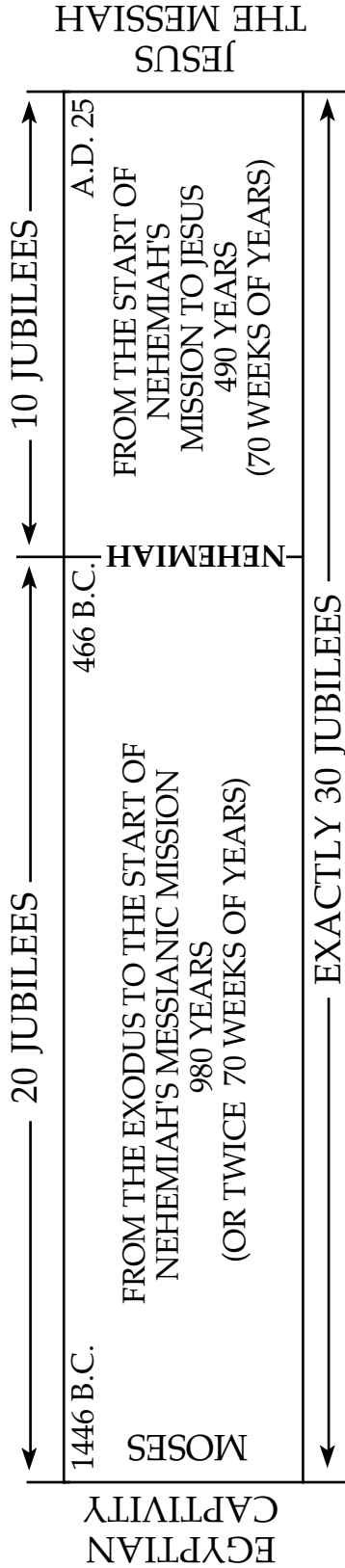
⁷⁹ The connection between Ezra and Jesus is that Ezra the scribe and priest arrived in Jerusalem exactly seventy years after the end of the Second Deportation (528 to 458 BC), and from his arrival until the arrival of Jesus was exactly 69 'weeks' of years (or 483 years)(458 BC - AD 25). Ezra was, to all intents and purposes, the *priestly* messiah of Artaxerxes through his direct appointment (Ezra 7:11-26), and Nehemiah was his *princely* messiah.

⁸⁰ The numerical value of Jesus' name (IHCOYΣ) is 888. On the significance of numbers (Gematria & Kabbala), see Malcolm White, *The Symbolical Numbers of Scripture* (Edinburgh, 1868); Reginald T. Naish, *Spiritual Arithmetic* (London: Chas. J. Thynne, 1921); and Ivan Panin, *Bible Chronology* (Lowestoft, Eng.: Green & Co., 1922).

the Exodus (49x30 = 1470 years)(1446 BC – AD 25) when he was thirty years of age — the earliest age at which a priest could become High Priest, and Jesus was God’s High Priest after the order of Melchisedek (Heb 6:20).

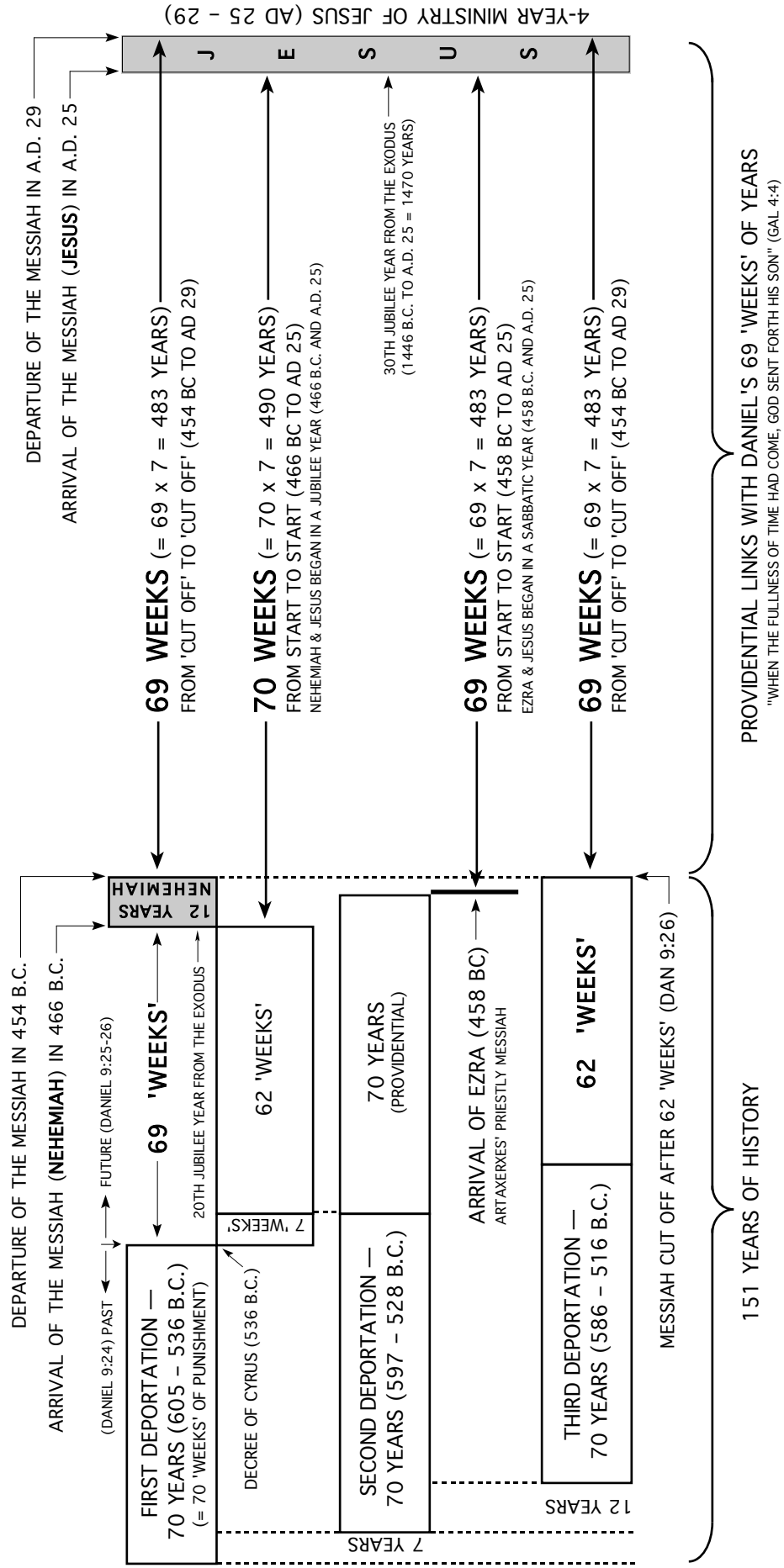
PRE-PLANNED JUBILEE PERIODS FROM THE EXODUS TO JESUS

"WHEN THE FULNESS OF TIME WAS COME ..."



PRE-PLANNED SABBATICAL PERIODS FROM THE EXILE TO NEHEMIAH

CHRONOLOGICAL LINKS BETWEEN DANIEL, NEHEMIAH, EZRA, AND JESUS



XI. THE DATE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

R. K. Harrison put his finger on the problem of dating the book of Daniel. He noted that as early as Porphyry (3rd cent.) many have reasoned from an *a priori* assumption that there could be no predictive element in prophecy, which meant that Daniel could only be history written up as prophecy. He noted:

Objections to the historicity of Daniel were copied uncritically from book to book, and by the second decade of the twentieth century no scholar of general liberal background who wished to preserve his academic reputation either dared or desired to challenge the current critical trend.

He goes on:

It can only be concluded that the critical case against the historicity of Daniel has survived to the present because its adherents have failed to take a second and more critical look at the arguments that have been propounded so unimaginatively and with such tedious repetition in recent times.⁸¹

The main objection to the prophetic nature of Daniel 7-12 is the precise details of what individual kings would say and do in the second century BC. It astounds the critics to believe that these details could have been foretold 370 years (536 – 164 = 372 years) before they happened historically. They concluded that history had been written up as prophecy. In reply, it has been noted that Daniel, living in the sixth century, had no hand in the content of the visions he was given. If the events foretold in the prophetic visions ended just before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in April 163, and did not include the rededication of the cleansed Temple in December 164, these events were outside the control of Daniel to fix, seeing he lived in the sixth century. Consequently, to date the authorship of the book of Daniel according to the latest time mentioned in the latest prophecy is a serious mistake.⁸² Those who date the book of Daniel to 164 BC do so in the belief that the historical figure of Daniel never existed, or if he did, he existed in the second century BC. Such a date is a denial that Daniel, a seventh/sixth century historical figure, could have been given prophetic revelations of what would happen to his people and to the Holy City up until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. For is not Daniel 12:1 a direct reference to the worst catastrophe that ever came upon God's people, when Josephus reports that over one million Jews were killed during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in AD 66-70 and up to a total of three million perished altogether? Jesus warned his followers to flee from Jerusalem when they saw it surrounded by its enemies (Lk 21:20), and in a direct reference to Daniel's predictions (cf. Dan 12:11; 11:31), he pointed out that the coming fall of Jerusalem would be the

⁸¹ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), pp. 1111, 1112.

⁸² A good example of a skeptic's summary for dating Daniel to 166 or 165 BC is given by Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1952), pp. 198-205.

greatest time of persecution for the Jews since the creation of the world and there would be no greater one after it (Mt 24:15-21 = Mk 13:14-19). It would eclipse even Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution between 167 and 163 BC. As far as Jesus was concerned, Daniel predicted events which were future to Jesus' own time.⁸³ Yet no skeptic would link Daniel 12:1 to the siege of Jerusalem in AD 66–70 for fear of giving credence to the book of Daniel being composed of genuine prophecies. These skeptics are forced to conclude that Daniel's 'prophecies' were historical events which were cleverly written up to appear to have been foretold because the details in the prophecies are too personal and biographical to be foretold in advance of them happening.⁸⁴ Given that Daniel was promoted to rule over the entire province of Babylon in 602 BC, his trials and the risks that he took, must have been well-known to every Jew living in Babylonia, including the prophet Ezekiel. He became a supreme example of showing faith in God. It is quite possible, therefore, that when God refers to Noah, Daniel and Job, as carrying any influence with him, he might well be referring to Daniel the prophet. God's reference is dated to 592 BC, when Daniel was already ten years in office (Ezek 14:14; see 8:1 for the date). God refers to Daniel again in Ezekiel 28:3, this time there is a strong hint that he was known for his wisdom to reveal hidden things (cf. Dan 5:11-12 for his contemporary reputation). If Daniel is in view in Ezekiel, then this would settle his sixth-century date.

This study has shown that Daniel, who lived throughout the entire 70-year period of the Babylonian exile, was given many long-term prophecies. But he was also given a short-term prophecy concerning the coming of the messiah Nehemiah who would rebuild Jerusalem in troublous times and have no successor. The fulfillment of this short term prophecy established Daniel as a true prophet, and as a consequence, God's people could trust and believe that the unfulfilled prophecies in Daniel 10–12 were also certain to happen. When Antiochus Epiphanes came and went as predicted (8:9-14, 23-25; 9:26-27), this too, would have encouraged God's people to believe all that Daniel prophesied. The book of Daniel, therefore, must have greatly encouraged all of God's faithful witnesses to endure to the end in the sure knowledge that God had demonstrated his tight control of all the details of their history so far, and he would do so to the end.

APPENDIX OF CHARTS

⁸³ See Harold W. Hoehner, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 139.

⁸⁴ This point is well made by E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960, rev. ed.), pp. 380-81.

CHART 1. 624 — 596 B.C.

SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

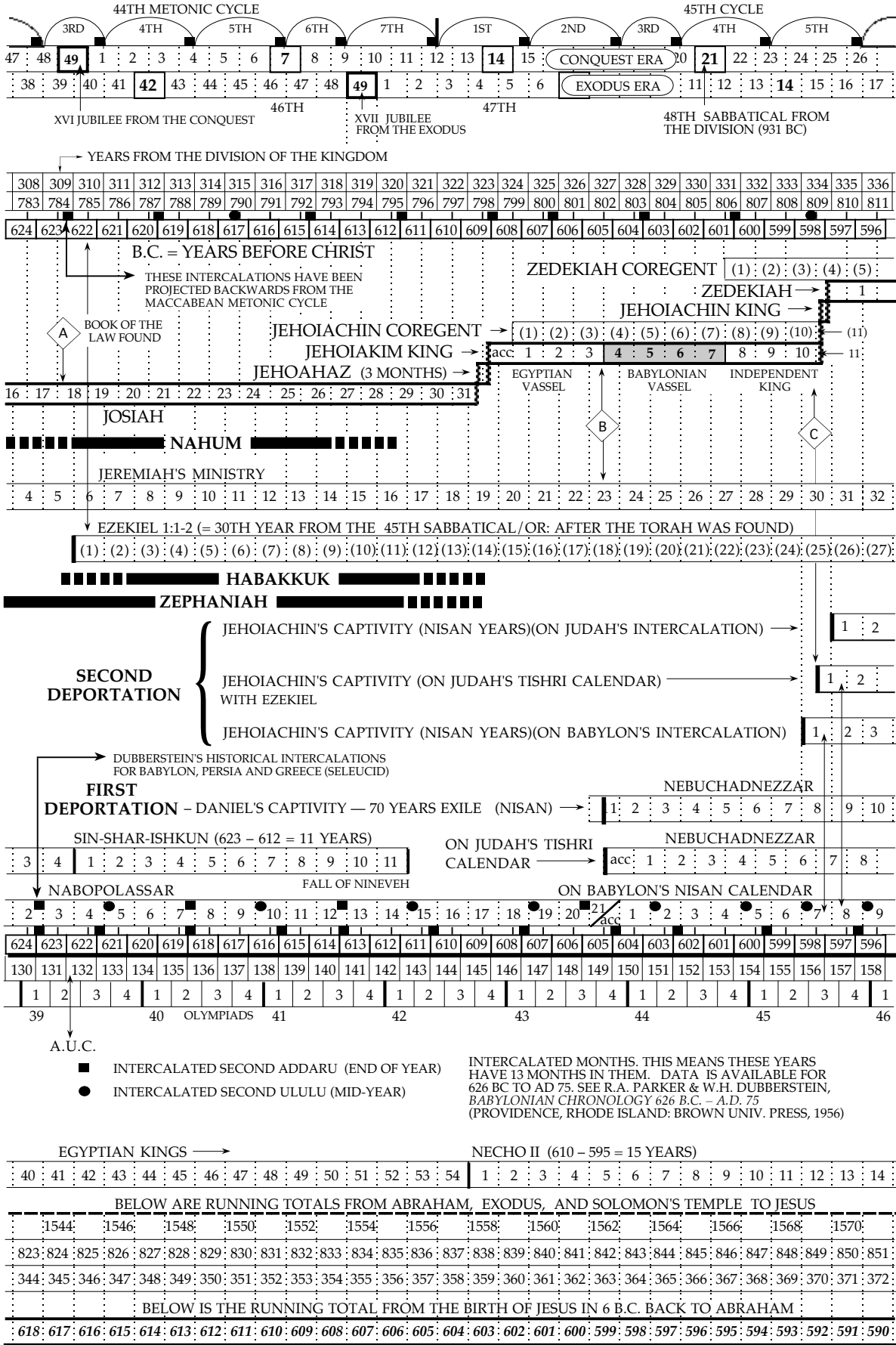


CHART 2. 596 — 568 B.C.

SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

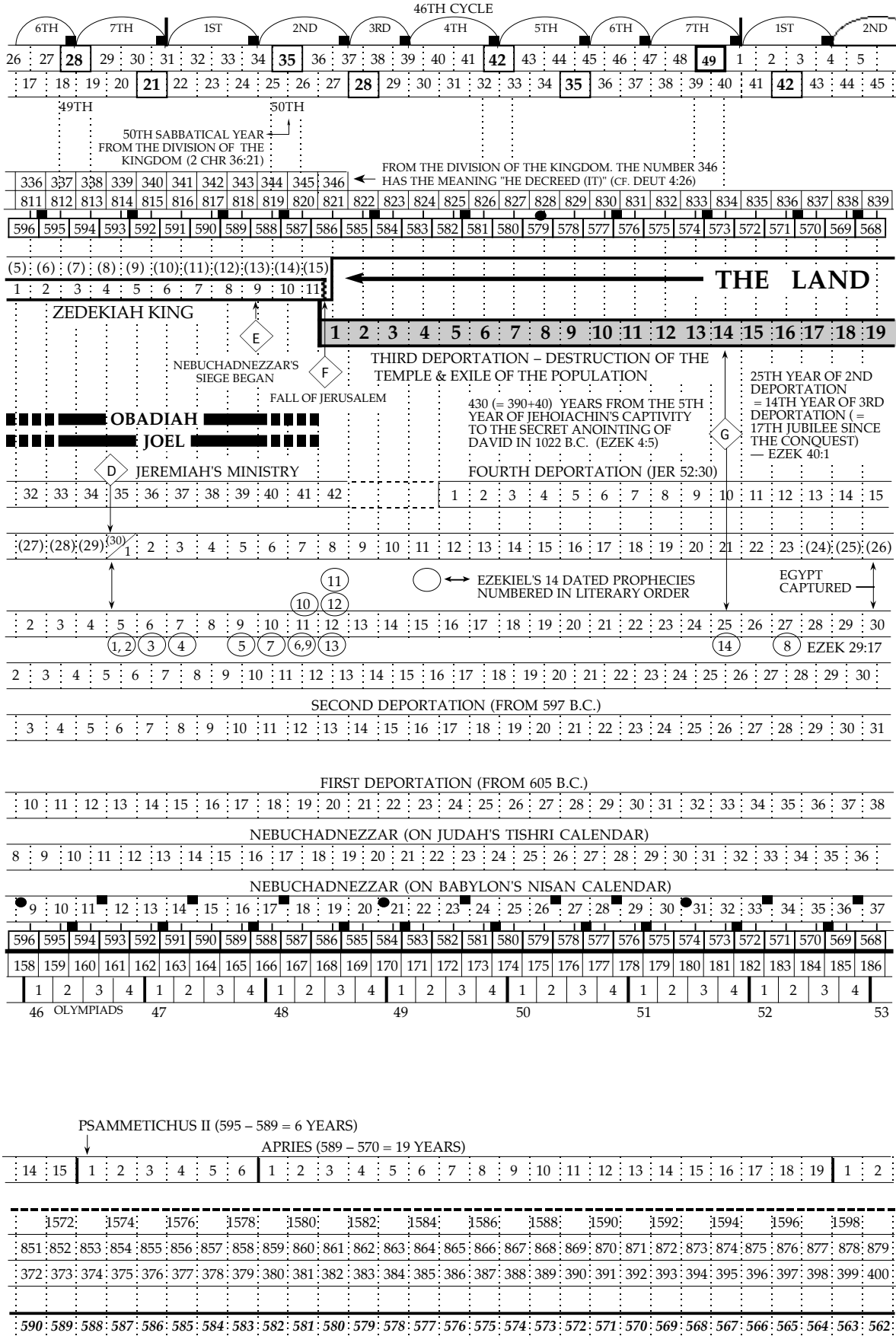
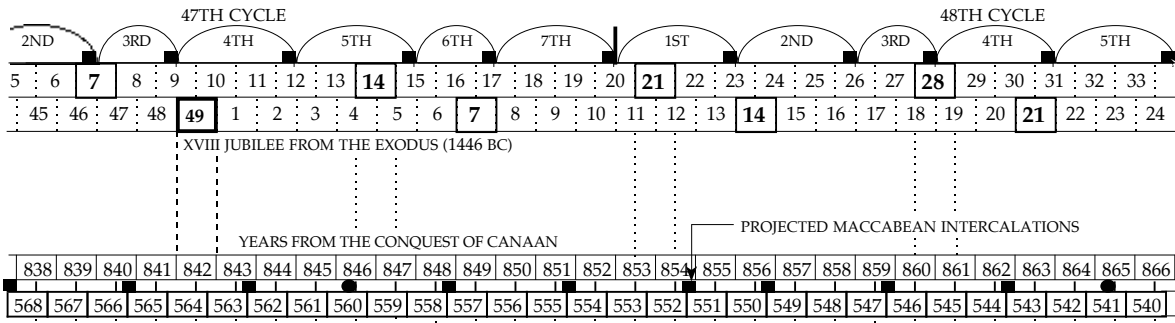
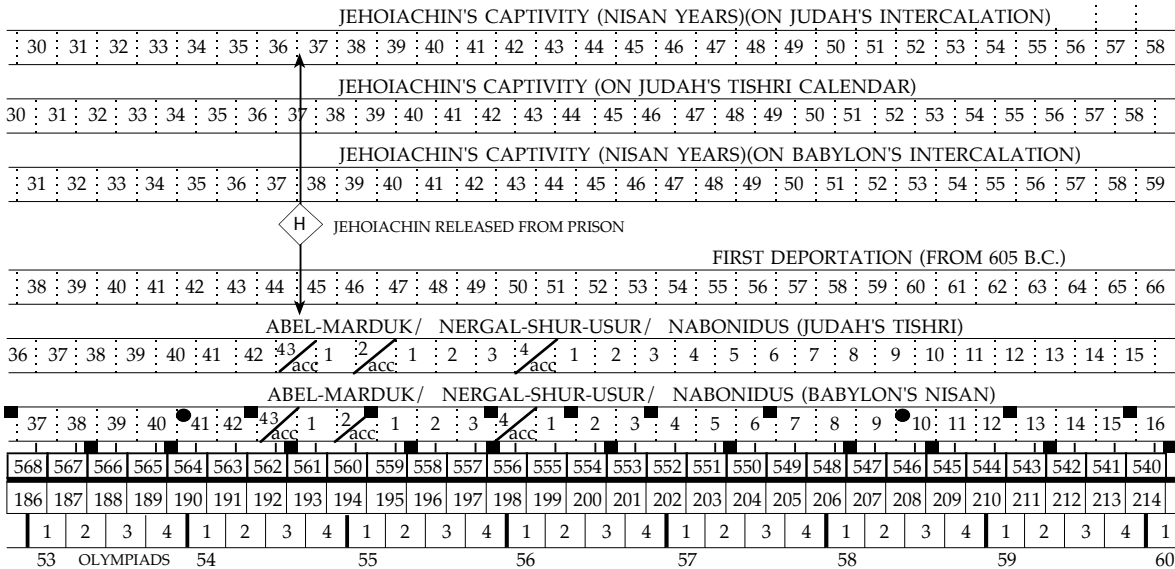
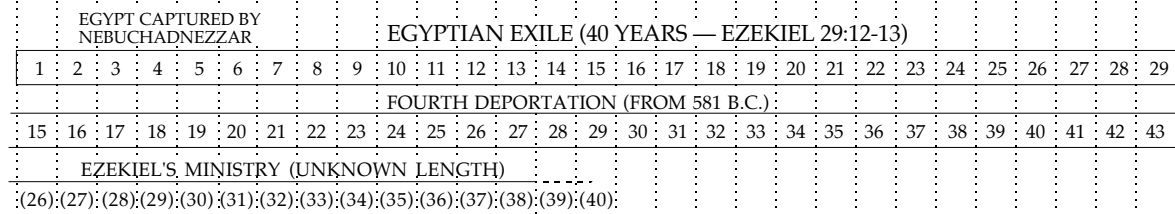
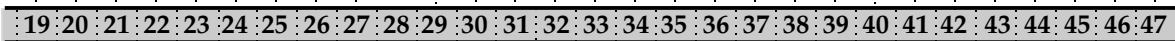


CHART 3. 568 — 540 B.C.

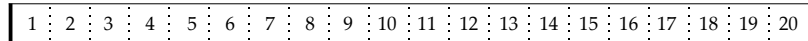
SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS



ENJOYS EXACTLY FIFTY SABBATICAL YEARS OF REST



START OF THE PERSIAN ERA



JULIUS AFRICANUS, CHRONOGRAPHY (ANTE-NICENE CHRISTIAN LIBRARY. VOL. 9. PT. II. P.184)

AMASIS II (570 – 526 = 44 YEARS)

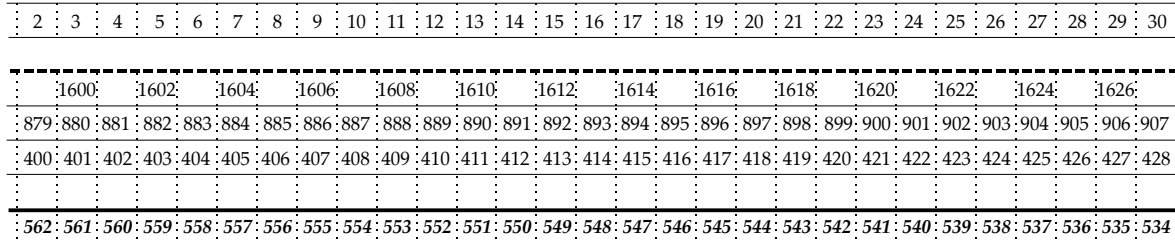


CHART 4. 540 — 512 B.C.

SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

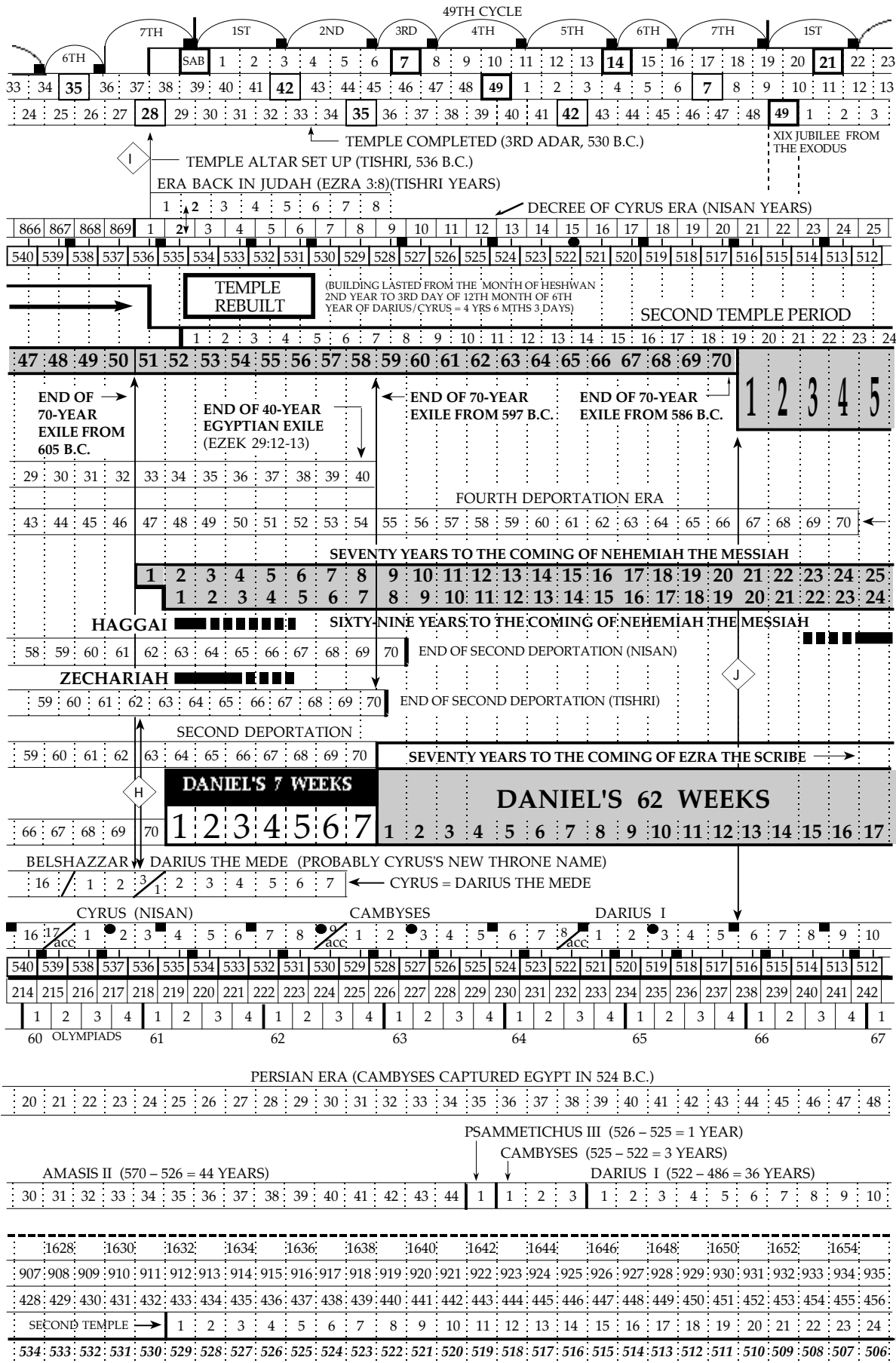
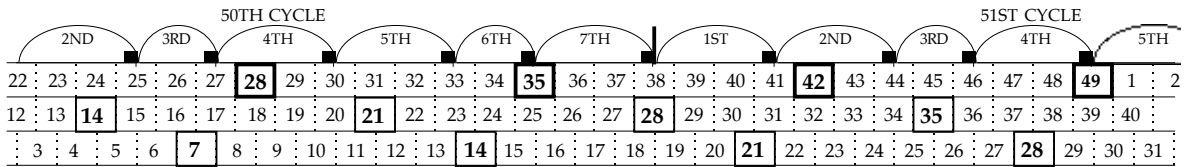
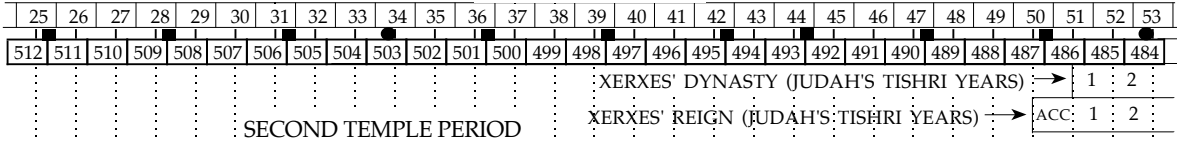


CHART 5. 512 — 484 BC

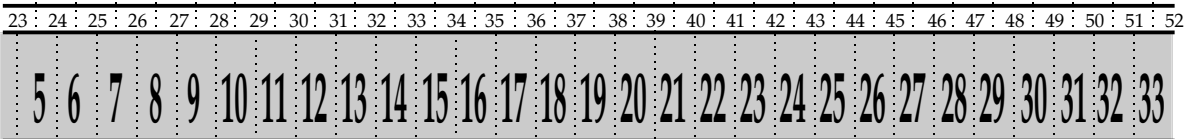
SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS



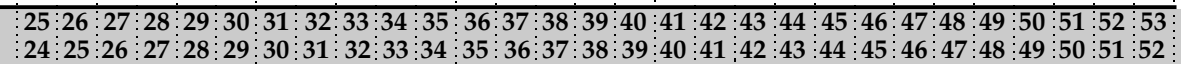
SECOND EXODUS ERA



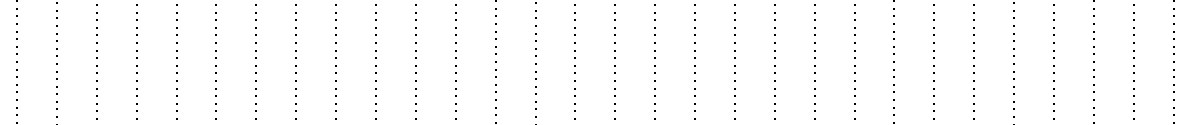
SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD



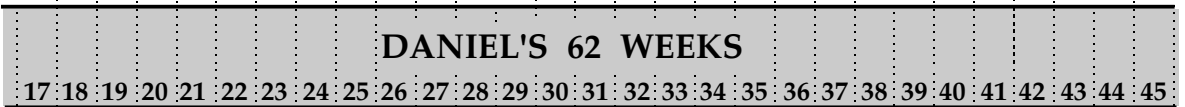
END OF FOURTH DEPORTATION



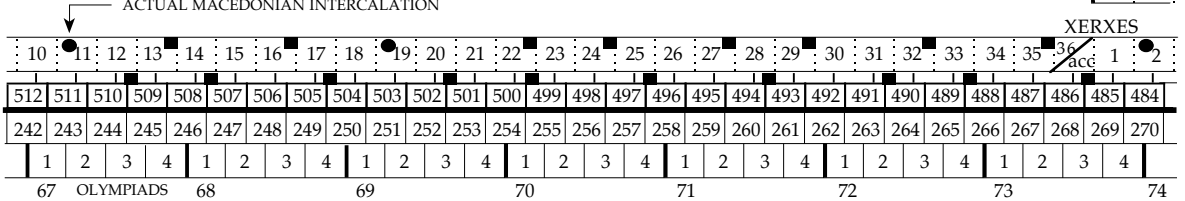
MALACHI



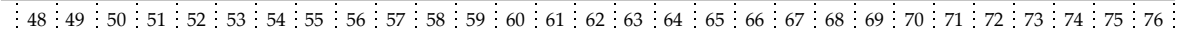
SEVENTY YEARS TO THE COMING OF EZRA THE SCRIBE



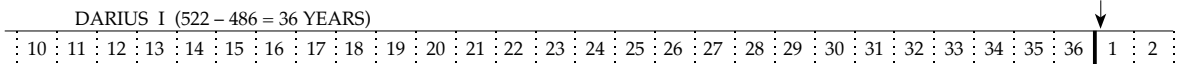
PERSIAN DYNASTY 1 2



PERSIAN ERA



XERXES (486 - 465 = 21 YEARS)



DARIUS I (522 - 486 = 36 YEARS)

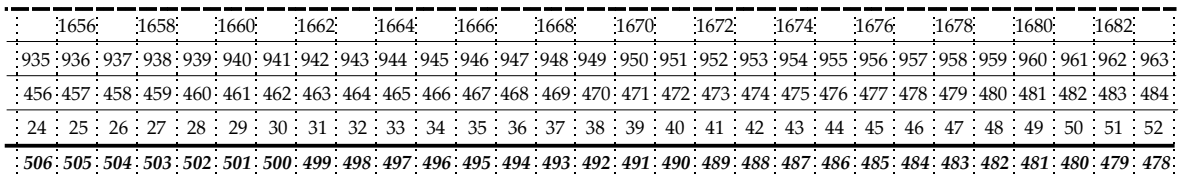
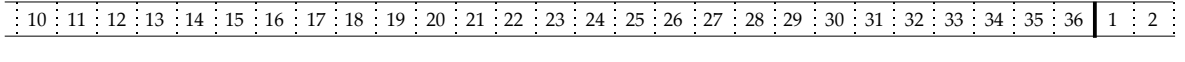


CHART 6. 484 — 456 B.C.

SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

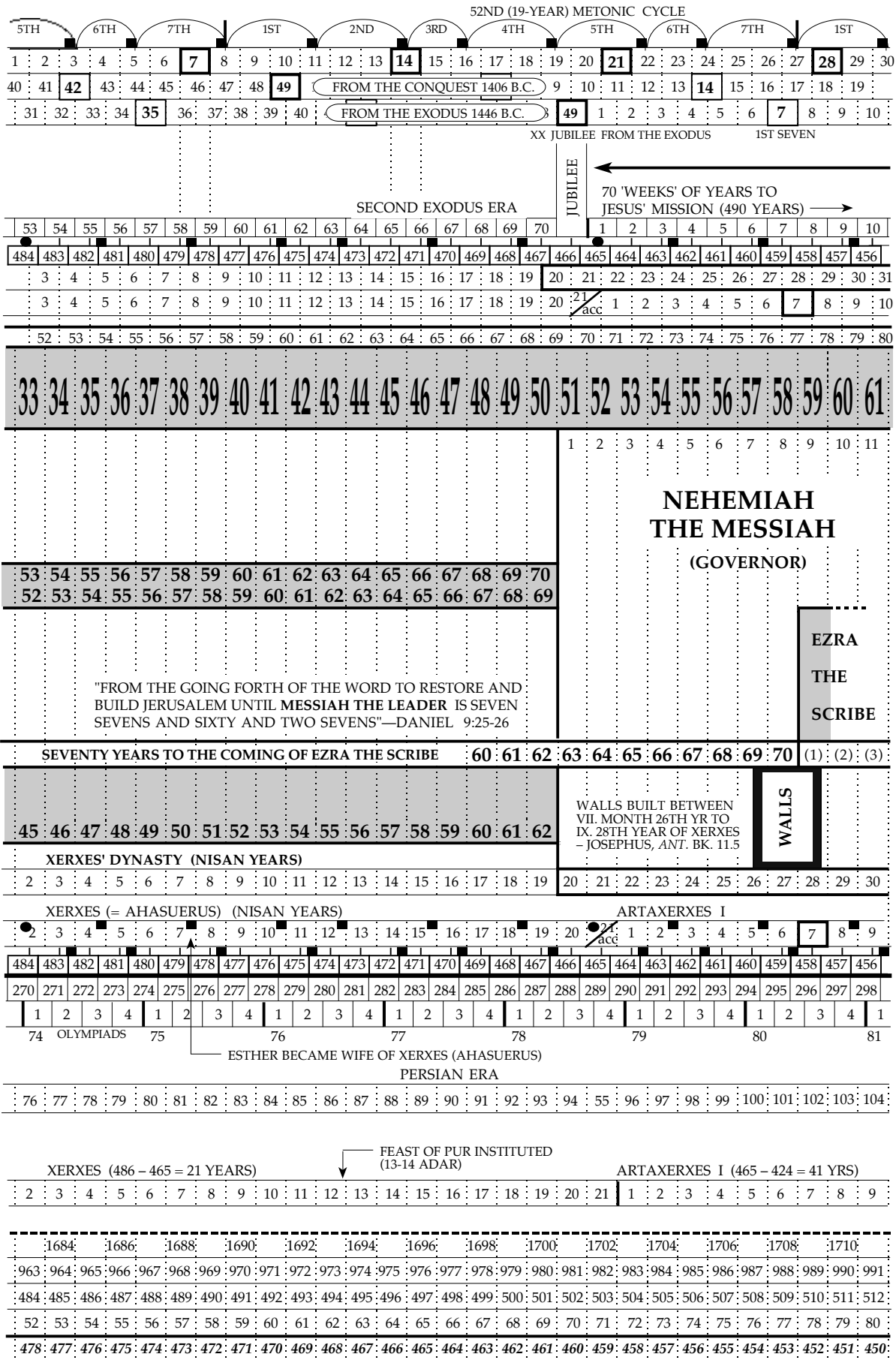
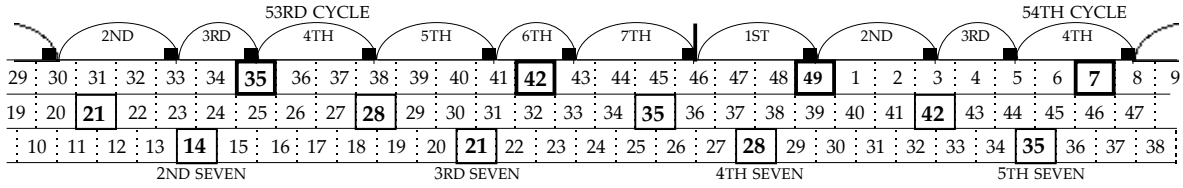
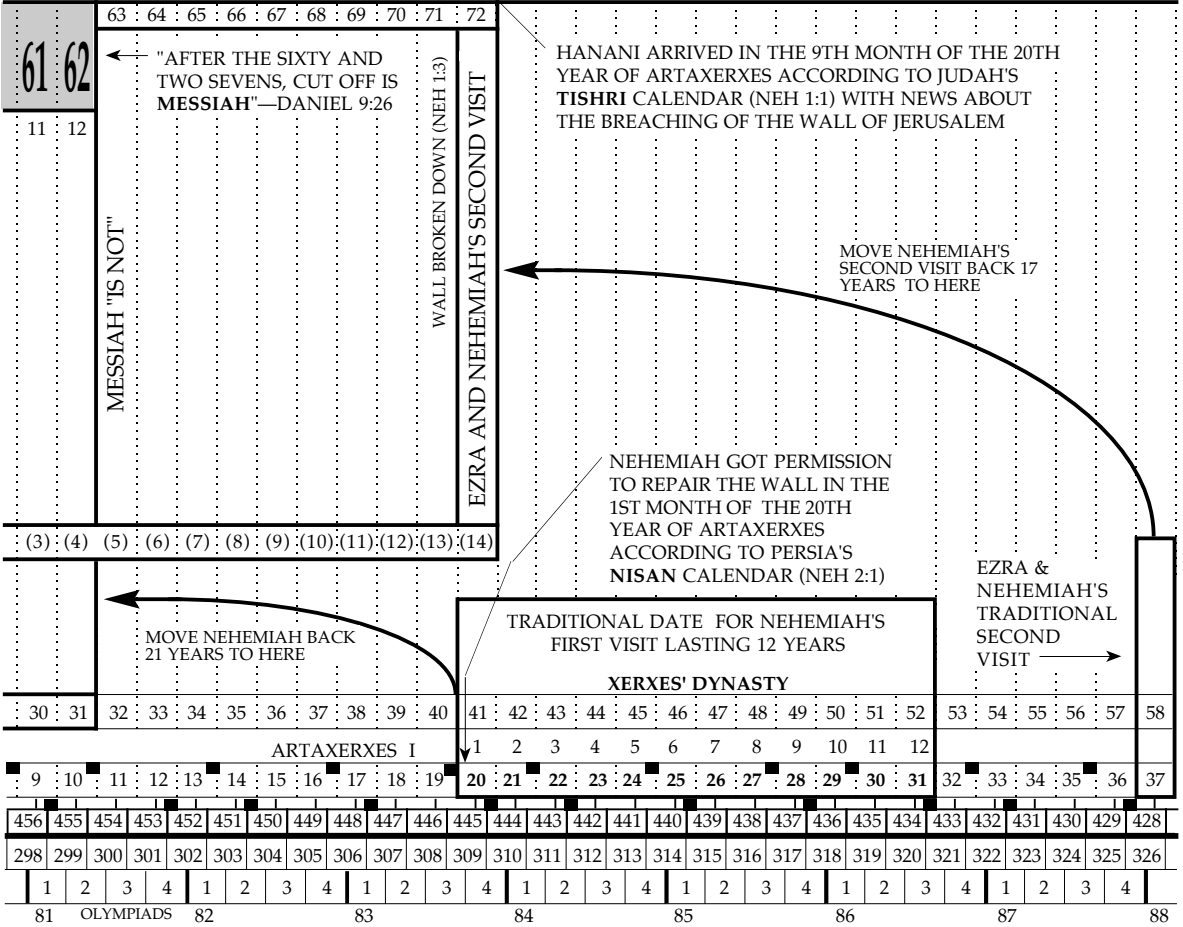
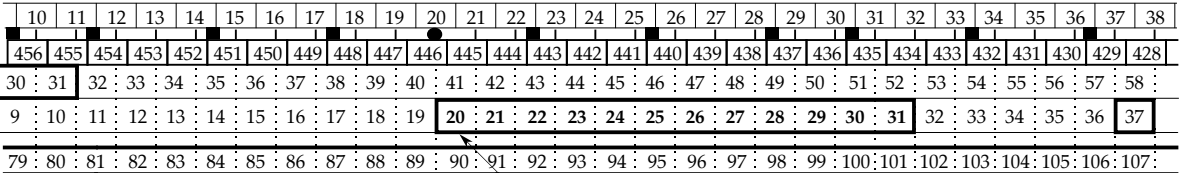


CHART 7. 456 — 427 B.C.

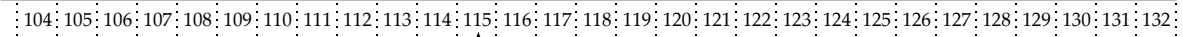
SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS



FROM THE FIRST YEAR OF NEHEMIAH TO THE FIRST YEAR OF JESUS CHRIST IS 490 YEARS OR SEVENTY 'WEEKS' OF YEARS



PERSIAN ERA



JULIUS AFRICANUS, CHRONOGRAPHY (ANTE-NICENE CHRISTIAN LIBRARY. VOL. 9. PT. II. P.184)

ARTAXERXES I (LONGIMANUS)(465 - 424 = 41 YEARS)

