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Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*. xix + 180 pp. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996. This is a welcome addition to a very difficult area of Old Testament study. Galil's approach is a cross between Thiele (Harmonist) and Hayes and Hooker (Restorationists). He accepts four out of the five main factors that Thiele built his case on, namely, coregencies, two different New Year start dates (Nisan and Tishri), accession and non-accession methods of calculating the length of reigns, and the inclusion (sometimes) of coregency years in the total reigns.

The one factor Galil rejects is Thiele's idea that data relating to the kings of Israel were reckoned by Judah's system and vice versa (pp. 10, 38). Galil was able to dispense with Thiele's fifth factor by postulating that Judah's year ran from Nisan to Nisan, contrary to Thiele's Tishri to Tishri. This seems to remove a number of minor problems of a synchronistic nature from the Division to Jehoshaphat in Thiele's scheme, but that Judah used a Tishri year from Josiah to the Exile is beyond cavil, and consequently Thiele, and not Galil, is correct for this period. The reason for this is that if Judah and Babylon both shared a Nisan-to-Nisan year then there would be no problem in synchronising their regnal years. As it is Jerusalem was captured in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 52:28; so also Josephus, *Antiq.* 10:146; Babylonian regnal years are here reckoned according to Judah's Tishri regnal year), but in the 19th year according to Jer 52:12 (both nations use their own regnal year and calendar; cf. 2 Kgs 25:1-9). The discrepancy is resolved only if the New Years in Babylon and Judah started six months apart, and if the Babylonian regnal years are reckoned according to Judah's Tishri regnal calendar. In support of this is the fact that Hezekiah's 1st year is synchronised with the 3rd year of Hoshea, but his 4th is the 7th of Hoshea (2 Kgs 18:1; 18:9). Conclusion: they could not have been sharing the same calendar: Judah used Tishri and Israel used Nisan, or vice versa. Their calendars have to be six months out of alignment to harmonise the biblical data.

Galil modified Thiele's third factor by suggesting that Judah used the accession-year system throughout its history (Thiele suggested that only from 848 to 798 BC did Judah follow Israel in adopting the non-accession-year system), while Israel followed the non-accession year system until the

beginning of the eight-century (Jeroboam II—Pekah, p. 62) when it agreed with Judah's accession-year system.

Galil modified Thiele's fourth factor with his suggestion that where coregencies existed the years of reign are always counted from the beginning of the coregency (pp. 10, 39; cf. p. 99).

Galil rather arbitrarily attributes Athaliah's 6 regnal years to Joash of Judah and so back-dates the beginning of his reign to 835 BC (Thiele 842/1), even though he would have been only one year old! He back-dates the beginning of Pekah's reign by 15 years (pp. 10, 47) giving him a sole reign of only 5 years. By additions and then subtractions he eventually arrives back at the same dates as Thiele as regards the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem.

The conclusion reached by Galil was that: "All that can be established with certainty in the study of the chronology of the period from the Schism to the Exile is that a number of Biblical data are clearly erroneous, and only a limited number of dates can be determined with any degree of confidence" (p. 8). This conclusion reflects the many deviations he makes from Thiele's widely accepted conclusions. At those many points where Galil alters the biblical data to achieve harmony for his chronology he there introduces the greatest weaknesses into his scheme. Given that Thiele did not resort to altering the numerals to achieve harmony one wonders why Galil needed to alter any of the biblical data when his overall totals agree with Thiele's. While he states that he is prepared to accept as an initial working hypothesis that the Biblical data is correct (Thiele's position) in the course of his investigation he is forced to conclude that in many instances the MT data has become corrupted in transmission, or at the hands of incompetent redactors (pp. 40, 66), or the original writers used faulty sources (pp. 11, 13, 32-33, 38, 40, 60, 65 *passim*).

As regards handling the views of other scholars who disagree with his conclusions Galil can be dismissive rather than give a reasoned objection. For instance he allows himself the luxury of arguing: "The investiture of Uzziah in the lifetime of Amaziah is not stated explicitly in the Bible, but it may be deduced from the Biblical data" (p. 58, cf. 41). He also proposed a new coregency for Jehoahaz (p. 50) which is not in Thiele's scheme. Galil is disparaging of the Chronicler's data (pp. 18, 87, 102) yet he uses 1 Chr 5:17 to make Jotham and Jeroboam contemporaries. He believed that the author of the Book of Kings lived 150 years after the Fall of Samaria and worked from information that was

“highly fragmentary” (p. 93). But when Thiele or others make similar deductions these are all too quickly dismissed as hypotheses without any biblical support (see pp. 3, 4, 7, 8-9, 39, 40, 47, 56), or that Thiele’s hypotheses are ‘too complicated’ to be likely (p. 38). Yet scholars like Thiele were always working from known facts and seeking to bring them into relation with one another, hence they were putting forward hypotheses to account for known facts; they were not conjuring up facts.

Some errors of fact occur in the work. For instance, Galil claims that “In Babylon (after 609 BCE), 1 Nisan never occurred after April 26” (p. 115 n 33). This is incorrect. It occurs in 590 on 27th April, and in 384 on 29th April (cf. Parker & Dubberstein’s tables). Secondly, in Table 31 (p. 122) he has inadvertently supplied the dates for Aiaru (Iyyar), the second month, in place of Nisan, for the years 624-607 BC. Consult Parker & Dubberstein for the correct dates. Thirdly, the information given by Galil (App. E and its footnotes) should be checked for errors. In note 2 Jehoram’s age is incorrectly given as 9 years of age in MS N [the MS actually has 8 years], or 10 years in Proto-Lucian. These figures relate to the length of time he reigned (see 2 Kgs 8:17). In note 3 he incorrectly gives 11 years for Rehoboam’s rule. The figure relates to his age (1 Kgs 14:21). In note 5 he incorrectly gives 31 years for Asa’s rule in MSS Abc_2 . The figure should be 41 (and the MS is e_2 not c_2). His note 6 is misleading giving only two Greek MSS for 8 years. He has ignored the fact that a reign of 40 years is a glaring error in 2 Kgs 8:17, because the Greek cipher H [=8] was misread as M [=40]. The overwhelming manuscript evidence is that OG has 8 years which fits all the surrounding Greek synchronisms which 40 years does not. PL has 10 years and this fits into its modified version of OG. Proto-Lucian (MSS boc_2e_2) is an eclectic chronological scheme based on the Old Greek (MSS $ABNghijnuv$) and a Revised Old Greek (MSS $dpqstzwmwxy$).

Although Galil’s dates differ from Thiele’s in the middle sections of the Hebrew kings he is in agreement with his starting and concluding dates. But more importantly his work is the first full-scale attempt to build on Thiele’s foundation, and modify his dates in the light of his own researches. To that extent it must be taken seriously in any future work on the chronology of the Hebrew kings.

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