

History, Harmony, The Exile & Return

E. W. FAULSTICH

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"Faulstich has used the computer to reconstruct the chronology of the difficult period of the exile and return. By synchronizing the chronologies of Babylonia and Persia with that of Israel, he has arrived at new and exciting conclusions which dovetail with astronomical data. I highly recommend this work; it provides valuable breakthroughs to many of the problems of this timeframe."

Dr. Oliver R. Blosser

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E.W. Faulstich

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PREFACE

Chronology is the science of measuring time and of dating events in their proper order. Without chronology, it would be impossible to understand the sequence of historical events-- Biblical or non-Biblical. Chronology is the framework of history, *i.e.*, the time structure of divine and human events.

In the Bible, time has significant value. The word 'time' occurs frequently in Scripture. The preacher of the book of Ecclesiastes indicates that there is a time for every purpose and that time is the essence of history--

To everything there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The preacher has recognized the importance and significance of time in relationship to the events of human life.

Time, of course, is the duration in which events happen in the past, present, and future. Time is the period between two events or during which something exists, happens, or acts. The events of history can only remain meaningful and accurate as long as they keep their proper time sequence. Once the time sequence is distorted, the interpretation of those events tends to become distorted. An anachronism is the representation of something as existing or occurring at other than its proper time. Synchronism, on the other hand, is the proper chronological listing of persons or events in history. It is the goal of the chronologist to strive for synchronism in history and to remove the anachronisms that others have placed there.

The Bible as a history book is remarkably unique because it provides a system of 'checks and balances' which help to maintain accuracy in chronology, *i.e.*, synchronism. It furnishes for the chronologist-- cross referencing, eclipses, cyclical phenomena, and time spans. Non-Biblical history provides references to solar and lunar eclipses, king lists, chronicles, dual dating, and 'points of contact', *i.e.*, synchronisms of the non-Biblical history with the Biblical history. The chronologist is to strive to find harmony not only between time and events, but also between non-Biblical happenings and Biblical events, if possible, in any given period of time.

It is possible today, more than in past centuries, to achieve chronological accuracy for several reasons. First, archaeological discoveries have brought to light important ancient chronological documents: the Assyrian King List, the Assyrian Eponym Canon, the Babylonian Chronicles, the Behistun Inscription, and the Elephantine

Papyri. These documents and inscriptions have helped the Biblical chronologist achieve greater chronological accuracy than was possible in past generations. Secondly, the use of the computer has made it possible for the chronologist, using an astronomical program, to reconstruct the Biblical lunar calendar and to synchronize it with other calendar schemes. For example, the Rosetta Stone represents synchronization between the Egyptian and the Macedonian calendars. The Elephantine Papyri provide numerous examples of dual dating between the Hebrew calendar and the Egyptian sliding calendar. Some Greek and Roman historians as well as Josephus, often use dual dating such as measuring time by both the Seleucid Era and the Olympiad Era. All of this available information helps the chronologist to be able to develop a computer calendar conversion program. Thus the use of archaeological data and computer programs are important viable tools in the hands of the chronologist as he works with the Biblical chronological data.

Certainly, the Lord regards chronology as important in history; that is why He has put so much chronological data into His Word. The Bible, as it relates historical events, contains a continuous outline of chronological facts from Genesis to Revelation. In order to properly understand the Bible, one must take its chronological statements as seriously as its historical statements. The Biblical chronologist seeks to establish and to arrange the dates of past events in their proper sequence. Therefore, chronology serves as a necessary framework upon which the events of Biblical history must be fitted.

The chronological references in the Biblical records are numerous but not always easy to understand correctly. In fact, some chronological statements have not properly been understood in the past; this, in turn, has affected the interpretation of the historical events connected with the chronological data.

It is the purpose of this volume to examine the chronological statements dealing with the exile and the return. Several chronological citations have been given a fresh interpretation. It is hoped that in such cases, the original meaning of Scripture has been completely restored. In order to verify an accurate timeframe, astronomical data has been used, such as eclipses and Israelite cyclical phenomena, which include Sabbath days and years, priestly cycles, and Jubilees. These have been used to establish major dates of the temporal reconstruction. Synchronization or 'points of contact' have been demonstrated between the Biblical records and the historical accounts of Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greco-Roman history.

The reader will find both the Biblical chronology and history of the period of the exile and return to be among the most exciting times of Biblical history to study. Remember that the chronological notes help one to understand why God said what He said, and why He did what He did at each particular time.

Viewing history without chronology is as impossible as conceiving historical events without characters. Chronology and its study are essential. The dates, in the reigns of Babylonian and Medo-Persian kings, mentioned in Biblical passages related to this time period can be determined accurately as the present volume will show. For more than a half century, opinions have been divided over the relative order of Ezra and Nehemiah at Jerusalem. The present study confirms the Biblical order of events.

As a reader, you are welcomed to join us in one of the most exciting chronological challenges in recent history-- to rediscover and to recover the comprehensive chronological system of the Biblical period of exile and return. Convincing evidence for harmonization will be provided by astronomical calculations and a number of synchronisms of Near Western with Biblical events.

CHAPTER I - OLD PROBLEMS AND NEW SOLUTIONS

Biblical chronology often presents a challenge to the chronologist and the period of the exile and return is no exception. This historical period, which includes the deportations of King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 52:28-30) and the devastation of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:4-27), continues through the Babylon, Medo-Persian and Greek times. It is believed by the present research that the history of this period in the past has not been clearly written in every detail and that the chronology has not always been properly identified. Therefore, there is a definite need to establish an absolute chronology for this period of the exile and return.

I. Archaeological Discoveries Illuminate The History Of The Exile And Return

The purpose of this present volume is to provide the reader with an absolute chronology of the exile and return. The reader should be aware that archaeological data has contributed immensely to the establishment of the present Biblical chronology. Archaeological excavations in recent years have brought to light important documents which can help to correct and clarify the history and chronology of the period. Several archaeological discoveries of historical documents and inscriptions are mentioned and their significance is also cited. Special questions are asked to challenge the thinking of the reader and perhaps, to direct it to some new and exciting ideas about the history and chronology of this timeframe.

The Babylonian Chronicles provide precise dates for the accession and death of several Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, along with the length of reign and usually a synopsis of a major event in each year of rule. Unfortunately, in regard to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Chronicles end by citing the eleventh year of the monarch in 'The Chronicle Concerning The Early Years Of Nebuchadnezzar II,' (Chronicle 5).¹

It is amazing how the historical information of the Babylonian Chronicles dovetails with the Biblical record for the first eleven years of the reign of Babylon's greatest king. Despite the discontinuation of the Babylonian Chronicles for the remaining reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the Bible, nevertheless, details important information regarding him. On the basis of the Bible literature, it is known that the king made incursions into Judah in his eighteenth and twenty-third years (Jeremiah 52:29-30; Babylonian reckoning). After Nebuchadnezzar's death, Jeconiah was released in the thirty-seventh year of the exile, in the accession year of Evil-Merodach (Babylonian reckoning) on Adar 25 (Jeremiah 52:31). This date, interestingly, coincides with the original Purim of Esther. Could there be a connection? Through the Babylonian Chronicles and the Bible (II Kings, II Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel), the reign of Nebuchadnezzar can be entirely reconstructed by the chronologist.

The Babylonian Chronicles have helped the chronologist establish Nebuchadnezzar's accession year with certainty and pinpoints the exact year when the king captured the city of Judah and seized her king.

The Cyrus Cylinder, a clay barrel inscription, contains the information of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon and justifies his policies of allowing captive peoples to return to their homelands and to rebuild their sacred shrines.² It is remarkably similar to the Biblical decree granting the Jews liberty to return to Jerusalem and encouraging them to rebuild their Temple (II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Which decree was issued first--

the decree of the Cyrus Cylinder or the Biblical mandate?

The Jehoiachin Tablets, found in the ruins of a vaulted building near the Ishtar Gate of Babylon, lists rations on three hundred tablets from the years 595-570 B.C.³ The tablets list rations such as barley and oil paid to captives who lived in or near Babylon. Along with five royal princes we read of Yahkin, king of Judah-- the same name as the Biblical Jehoiachin.

The tablets provide evidence that the Babylonians continued to regard Jehoiachin as the legitimate king of Judah, even after he was replaced by Zedekiah. Jehoiachin was the lawful, although exiled king. Biblical texts are dated in terms of the years of his exile (*cf.*, II Kings 25:27; Jeremiah 52:31).

The Biblical text of Jehoiachin's imprisonment speaks of his release from prison after thirty-seven years (Jeremiah 52:31-34). Biblical scholars have never offered a reason or a historical event which may have contributed to the monarch's release.

The Behistun Inscription, tri-lingual in nature and composed in Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian, has helped to clarify the regnal activities of Darius I in his early years.⁴ Not only was the famed bas-relief of Darius I carved into the mountainside rock near the village of Behistun, but also a copy of the Behistun Inscription was found on a black diorite at Babylon and in the Aramaic Papyri discovered among the Jews of Elephantine. Why is it that Darius evidently spared no effort to tell of his might in the most remote corners of his empire?

The Elephantine Papyri are another important archaeological discovery shedding light upon the history of this period.⁵ Through these letters it is possible to picture the letters reported in the Biblical book of Ezra. These letters open a small window into the affairs of the Persian administration. Also, they show what sort of letters were written in Babylonian and Persian times and what the Aramaic language spoken there was like. The reader of these texts will be surprised to learn that these Jews in the south of Egypt had a temple where they offered sacrifices, burnt offerings, flour offerings, and incense. This temple was a fine building with a cedar-wood roof, cut stone doorways, and gold and silver dishes, and they were proud of it.

Unfortunately, the Jewish worship annoyed local Egyptians, and the priests of the chief Egyptian god of Elephantine, Khnum, destroyed the Jewish shrine and stole its treasurers. This attack was made when the Persian governor was away with the king. The action, of course, was clearly against official policy; however, it took some years for the Jewish leaders in Elephantine to win permission to rebuild their temple. The Jews of Elephantine wrote the Persian governor of Jerusalem about it and to the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, as well as to the High Priest in Jerusalem. The papyrus letters and draft letters which supply this history make an instructive parallel case to the history in Ezra-Nehemiah.

The Jews who were trying to rebuild Jerusalem's Temple faced local hostility, and Sanballat of Samaria was the leading enemy. They had to petition the Great King of Persia, and he took the same attitude present in the Elephantine situation: local people should be allowed to worship peacefully as they wished, especially if they followed a good, well-established precedent. Ezra 5:6--6:7 cites the correspondence with the king.

These Elephantine documents provide scholars with a better understanding of the Aramaic language, the official language of the empire during the Persian period, and they form the largest number of Aramaic documents known to have survived from pre-Christian times.⁶

From the Elephantine papyri, it appears that for King Darius to write a letter about the Jerusalem Temple, with the details which Ezra 6 contains, was not out of keeping with Persian practice.

It is interesting that before the papyri were read, scholars had stated authoritatively that the documents quoted in Ezra were Jewish forgeries, or adaptations of Persian documents. There is also no reason to doubt that the Elephantine Papyri are copies of the official letters. Are some of the Elephantine papyri contemporary with the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah?

Both the Elephantine Papyri and the Rosetta Stone give dual dating, *i.e.*, offer dates from two different calendar systems. The Elephantine Papyri, using the Hebrew and Egyptian (sliding) calendars, and the Rosetta Stone, using the Egyptian (sliding) and Macedonian calendars,⁷ help to establish the accuracy of the chronology of the period via the computer. In Greek, Roman, and other historical writings, it is common after 312 B.C. to give the year in terms of the Seleucid Era and also in terms of the Olympiad Era which started in 776 B.C.⁸ Often, the archons of Athens are given and even consuls and military tribunes of Rome are listed.⁹ At times, solar and lunar eclipses are mentioned; all of this information is useful in order to establish an absolute chronology of the period.¹⁰

Thus archaeological discoveries have done much to illuminate the history of the exile and return. Dual dating in documents, astronomical observations, Israelite cyclical phenomena, time spans and synchronization coincide to establish an absolute chronology in harmony.

II. Chronological Problems Complicate The Period Of The Exile And Return

Having pointed out the tremendous advantage which the chronologist has by means of archaeological data, it is now necessary to call to the reader's attention certain problems which confront the chronologist working with the Biblical time span of the exile and return. The problems are not discussed in chronological order but in order of importance.

In order to understand properly the Hebrew chronology of the exile and return, one must keep in mind that the Hebrews counted the reign of their king and other rulers differently than Gentiles commonly reckoned their monarchs. For example, the year 599 B.C., when Jehoiachin was carried into captivity, is reckoned by the Hebrews to be the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule (II Kings 24:10-16); while in Babylonian counting, it is considered to be the seventh year of the monarch as indicated by the Babylonian Chronicles.¹¹ Dating the contemporary kings differently, the Hebrews viewed the accession year as the first year, while the nations counted the accession year as year zero. Therefore, chronologists must keep this factor in mind when establishing a chronology for the exile and return.

Originally, the book of Ezra-Nehemiah was one book in the Hebrew Bible.¹² As a result, one would think that the history and chronology would be continuous throughout the volume, indicating that it was accurately recording successive events in Hebrew history. In the current reconstruction of the history and chronology of the period, scholars do not interpret the work as continuous.¹³

There is disagreement among scholars as to when the ministry of Ezra actually took place. Most prefer Ezra's arrival to Jerusalem under Artaxerxes Longimanus in 458 B.C. and others have Ezra's return under Artaxerxes Mnemon in 398 B.C. These dates mark the seventh year of the Persian monarchs in Hebrew counting; it is stated in the Bible that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 'the seventh year of Artaxerxes,' Ezra 7:1, 7-8. William F. Albright, not only disregards the continuous harmony of the book of Ezra and Nehemiah, but also dismisses the chronological statement of Ezra 7:7-8 as erroneous; for he writes: "Unfortunately, ..., we are very unsatisfactorily informed about the date of Ezra. The most recent evidence favors a date for Ezra's mission in or

about the the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes, i.e., about 428 B.C."¹⁴

The priest, Ezra, is said to have returned to Jerusalem under a Persian ruler by the name of 'Artaxerxes' in his seventh year, Ezra 7:7-8. Nehemiah is said to have returned to the Holy City under the king with the same name in his twentieth year, Nehemiah 2:1-8. Yet some Biblical chronologists have reversed this traditional order and have placed Ezra's ministry after that of Nehemiah, resulting in the complete sundering of the careers of Ezra and Nehemiah. The sequence of Nehemiah-Ezra appears to be too drastic a solution to separate them entirely since the Biblical record explicitly couples them on more than one occasion, and otherwise links their ministries. This re-arrangement of chronological materials has also resulted in confusion for this period of time. Certainly, all the information must be analyzed before one can proceed with any degree of certainty.

The seventy year time span of exile has been variously placed at its starting point by Biblical chronologists, from the death of Josiah until the destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁵ No matter what the past opinions have been about the beginning of the seventy year exile, chronological problems have resulted. For scholars have failed to arrive at the total seventy years, and in some cases, calling into question the accuracy of the Bible. Yet, there are two chronological statements in the Bible which most scholars have overlooked as the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of the seventy year period and between these two dates are exactly seventy years. Hebrew prophets such as: Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah, define the arrangement of this time span in Hebrew chronology.

Bible-believing scholars have looked to and fro in non-Biblical histories and even historical documents recovered by archaeologists in an effort to discover the identity of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus (Daniel 5:31; 6:28; 9:1) and Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:1-30). Identifications have been made such as Gubaru, the governor of Babylon with Darius the Mede¹⁶ and Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, with Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus.¹⁷ While these interpretations are well intended, they do not provide a fool-proof Biblical solution. For example, Greek history records that Gobryas was an Assyrian, not a Mede. But the book of Daniel refers to a Median monarch named 'Darius', Daniel 5:31; 9:1. Extra-Biblical history knows nothing of the existence of this royal figure, Darius the Mede, who played a dominant role in the book of Daniel. If Darius the Mede is to be found, one must carefully examine Median monarchs. In contrast to the work of Bible-believing scholars, an eminent rationalistic German scholar wrote in his commentary on the book of Daniel that Belshazzar was simply a figment of the author's imagination. That commentary was published in 1850 and in 1854 a British consul explored ancient ruins in southern Iraq discovering several small clay cylinders buried in the brickwork of the Temple tower at Ur. The inscriptions deciphered by Sir Henry Rawlinson mentioned the name 'Belshazzar'. Unfortunately, he is 'the son of Nabonidus' rather than 'the son of Nebuchadnezzar'. At least, it is now known that Belshazzar is a royal dynastic name used in Babylon during this period of time. But Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:22) has not been successfully discovered in extra-Biblical history. Nabonidus or Nabonidus was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar, yet his son is considered by some scholars to be the son of Nebuchadnezzar by a remote connection in marriage.¹⁸

Esther's husband, Ahasuerus, has not been found in Medo-Persian records by that name. Traditionally, Esther has been placed at the time of Xerxes of Persia (485 B.C.-464 B.C.).¹⁹ According to this theory, Esther became queen in the seventh year of Ahasuerus (478 B.C.) and Haman's plot against the Jewish people occurred in the

twelfth year of Ahasuerus (473 B.C.). From Esther 2:5-7, it appears that Esther could have been deported at the time of Mordecai's deportation. If Esther was ten at the time of her deportation, then she would have been 131 years old at the time in which she became queen of the Persian empire. This time span simply makes Esther too old, the real Ahasuerus had to have ruled before Xerxes.

One of the greatest problems in standard Biblical chronologies of this period is the age factor of the Biblical chronologies involved such as: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai, Seraiah, Bigvai, and Baanah.

Ezra returned from Babylon to Jerusalem after having been deported by Nebuchadnezzar, Nehemiah 12:1, cf., Ezra 2:1-2. If he was a baby when he was deported in 588 B.C., then he would be ninety-nine in the thirty-second year of King Darius I, Nehemiah 12:26. He would have to be 156 by the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes I. It appears that he could only have been alive during the reign of Darius the Great.

According to Ezra 2:1-2, Nehemiah was deported by Nebuchadnezzar and then returned under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Josephus cites in Antiquities that Nehemiah died at a very old age, but a deportation in 588 B.C., the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, would make him 103 in 485 B.C., the death year of Darius I and the accession year of Xerxes. This is more logical than placing him in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes I which would make him 156 years old at that point in time.

Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was also deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 599 B.C. according to Esther 2:5-7. The book of Esther states that he is alive and active in the twelfth year of Ahasuerus, the king of the Medes and Persians, Esther 3:7; 4:1. If 'Ahasuerus' would be interpreted to be Darius I, then Mordecai, taken as a baby in the captivity, would be ninety years old in the twelfth year of Darius. But he would be a minimum of 126 years of age, if he is placed in the twelfth year of Xerxes as most chronologists would place him in history. Also, Mordecai was one of those who originally returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua as stated in Ezra 2:1-2, cf., Nehemiah 7:6-7.

From the story of Esther, it is known that she was beautiful and a relatively young woman when she became queen. According to Esther 2:7, she was the full cousin of Mordecai. Assuming that she was a generation younger than Mordecai, she would be approximately eighty-five years old during the seventh year of Darius the Great, Esther 2:16, assuming that he is the Ahasuerus of Scripture. However, most chronologists believe that Xerxes was the king husband of Queen Esther. This means that she was 121 in the seventh year of Xerxes. This reasoning appears to be rather unlikely in the case of both kings.

In the case of Seraiah, he was deported by the king of Babylon and returned with Zerubbabel, Ezra 2:1-2. Yet, he was also living and able to sign the covenant document of Nehemiah, Nehemiah 9:38-10:2, in the thirtieth year of Darius I. This means that if he was a baby in the deportation, then he would be ninety-seven years old at the signing of the covenant pact. It would seem unreasonable to insert this covenant-document into the reign of later Persian monarchs such as Xerxes or Artaxerxes I.

The same chronological data is true for both Bigvai and Baanah as for Seraiah. They were deported by the Babylonian king and returned under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Ezra 2:1-2, cf., Nehemiah 7:6-7, and also they signed Nehemiah's covenant-document, Nehemiah 10:16, 27.

The age factor of these Hebrew characters would lead one to believe that there must have been another Artaxerxes in Persian history before Artaxerxes I.²⁰

The chronology of the Biblical history of the exile and return has been confusing for most chronologists and historians. For example, the Hebrew Bible speaks of a king,

'Ahasuerus', the king of the Medes, Daniel 9:1, and also 'Ahasuerus', the king of the Persians, Esther 1:1-2. History, outside the Bible, knows the existence of no king(s) who have that name.

The high priests of Israel during the Persian period present a problem for most chronologists. There are six high priests listed from the time span in Nehemiah 12:10-11: Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, Joiada, Jonathan, and Jaddua. If Josephus is correct, these high priests covered a period of over 200 years from the time that the altar was erected in Jerusalem and the foundations of the Temple relaid to the time that Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem.²¹ Calculations would give each priest an average ministry of 33.3 years. For chronologists who would try to move the activities of the return to kings other than Darius I, this would require extremely long reigns for some priests and extremely short reigns for others. To illustrate standard chronology, if Eliashib became priest when the Jerusalem walls were first under construction, Nehemiah 3:1, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, then more than one hundred years would remain until the Persian kingdom would be overthrown by the Greeks. During this period, it would be necessary for four high priests to minister for more than twenty-five years each. However, from the return under Zerubbabel when Jeshua became high priest in 539 B.C. or 538 B.C. (standard chronology) to 444 B.C., the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, is ninety-five years for two high priests. In Ezra 2:1-2, it is stated that Jeshua was deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 599 B.C., his seventh year. Therefore, according to standard chronology, Jeshua would be at least sixty years old at the time of his return to Jerusalem. Jeshua was still serving as high priest in the second year of Darius I (519 B.C.), Haggai 1:1, Zechariah 1:1, 3:10. It appears that his length of service was approximately twenty years. This means that Jeshua's son, Joiakim, must have served as high priest for seventy-five years. This is highly unlikely.

Another chronological problem is created by the satrapies for standard chronologies. In light of Daniel 6:1, at the time of Darius the Mede and his reign over the city of Babylon, there were 120 satrapies. At the time of Esther, the empire of Medo-Persia included 127 satrapies under King Ahasuerus whose kingdom extended from India to Ethiopia, Esther 1:1. From the time of Cyrus and Cambyses, the Medo-Persian empire was extended to include Egypt. By the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, the Persian Empire began to lose satrapies; this information is recorded in Herodotus' *Histories* VII.1-4.²² Yet, standard chronologies would have Esther to be the wife of King Xerxes (485 B.C.- 464 B.C.). But only King Darius I or a king before him could have reigned from India to Ethiopia.²³ Therefore, the name 'Ahasuerus' must refer to a monarch from Darius the Mede to Darius the Great. Standard chronological schemes have completely ignored this problem.

Most scholars would put the Elephantine Papyri in the fifth century B.C. but several papyri belong to the sixth century B.C. In several letters, the Persian kings appear to be Darius I (521 B.C. -485 B.C.) rather than Darius II (423 B.C.-404 B.C.). For example, the Passover Papyrus from Elephantine was written by the Jewish leader, Hanani[ah], perhaps, the secretary for Jewish affairs, to the Jewish community at Elephantine. It is interesting to notice that he has the same Hebrew name as Hanani, the brother of Nehemiah, Nehemiah 1:1-3. The Nehemiah passage would give the impression that Nehemiah's brother could have also been the secretary of Jewish affairs.

In the letter, Hanani[ah] in Jerusalem gives Yedoniah in Egypt the commandment to celebrate the Passover on its proper dates. This authority comes from Darius I and the letter is similar in a number of ways to Darius' letter of Ezra 6. A. Cowley has acknowledged that the Passover Papyri is parallel to the royal letter of Artaxerxes

recorded in Ezra 7. He declares--

'In the month of Tybi (?) let there be a Passover for the Jewish garrison'. That is the whole of it-- from the king to Arsames the governor of the province. The details are added by the messenger, who was clearly a Jew-- 'your brother Hananiah'. Various reasons may have induced the Great King to intervene in the religious affairs of an obscure settlement, but whatever they were, the case is exactly parallel to that of the letter of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7, and shows that we need not doubt the authenticity of the latter document. The similarity of the style of the letter in Ezra to that of texts in this collection is striking.²⁴

The Elephantine papyrus requesting authorization to rebuild the temple of Yahu at Elephantine is also unique. It mentions contemporaries of Nehemiah such as: Bigvai, the governor of Judea (Ezra 2:1-2, 14; Nehemiah 7:19), Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria (Nehemiah 4:1-2), and Arsames, the highest official of the Persian district. According to Herodotus' *Histories* VII.69, Arsames was the son of Darius I and Artystone, the daughter of Cyrus.²⁵

According to the papyrus, Bigvai was the governor of Judaea during the fourteenth through the seventeenth years of Darius' rule. This Bigvai appears to be mentioned in Ezra 2:1-2, cf., Nehemiah 7:6-7, 10:16, where it is stated that he was deported by King Nebuchadnezzar and returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Jeshua and signed the covenant pact of Nehemiah 10. Assuming that he was an infant at the deportation of 588 B.C., then he would be eighty-four years old in the seventeenth year of Darius I (504 B.C.). If one would also equate the 'Artaxerxes' of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah with Darius I, then Nehemiah was probably the next governor over Judaea after Bigvai. Nehemiah 5:14 indicates that Nehemiah was governor in Jerusalem from the year twenty to the year thirty-two of the king's reign.

It is interesting to note that most of the texts of the Elephantine Papyri contain dual dating-- a Hebrew date and an Egyptian sliding calendar date-- after the reign of Darius I. From the Elephantine Papyri, it appears that Hanani[ah], Bigvai, Sanballat, and Delaiah are key individuals mentioned as leaders in the Palestinian community during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Also, it should be pointed out that the use of dual dating (the use of Hebrew and Egyptian dating) begins only in the Elephantine Papyri with the reign of Xerxes. At this time, Egypt had revolted against the Persian empire and perhaps, nationalism had caused the use of the Egyptian calendar together with the Hebrew calendar in these letters. All letters which have been assigned to the timeframe of Darius I omit double dating.

In standard chronologies, most chronologists place the six high priests cited in Nehemiah 12:10-11-- Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, Joiada, Jonathan (Johanan) and Jaddua-- between the years 538 B.C. and 334 B.C. Yet the book of Ezra-Nehemiah appears to indicate that they were contemporaries of Nehemiah. The last time that Jeshua is mentioned is in the second year of Darius I (520 B.C., Hebrew counting). Apparently, Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem in the time of Joiakim; the porters were collected at the first arrival of Nehemiah, when Jokim was the high priest (Nehemiah 12:25, LXX). Eliashib was the high priest in the thirty-first year of Darius when the wall was completed (Nehemiah 3:1). Ezra, in the seventh year of Darius I, according to the research in this volume, stayed in Johanan's room (Ezra 10:6). Johanan was already a grown married man in the time of Nehemiah, for he or his brother was married to Sanballat's daughter (Nehemiah 13:28). That Joiada and Jaddua were in the days of Nehemiah is confirmed by Nehemiah 12:22-- "The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to

[LXX, in] the reign of Darius the Persian." It is believed that Darius the Persian is Darius I²⁶ and Nehemiah lived through the entire reign of Darius the Great.

William F. Albright also viewed that these high priests did not live down to the time of Alexander the Great; for he wrote: "In Judah we lack even the names of the high priests after Jaddua, though we may suspect that the names of a Johanan and a second Jaddua have dropped out of the later lists."²⁷

According to Jeremiah's seventy years prophecy, the desolation of Babylon and the punishment for her king was a prerequisite for the termination of the seventy years captivity (Jeremiah 25:12-13). However, according to historical records, Babylon's desolation (Jeremiah 50:1-51:64) did not coincide with Cyrus' capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. as the current view would seem to imply. Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon (557 B.C.-540 B.C.), was not killed when Cyrus took command of Babylon. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle (Chronicle 7) of the Babylonian Chronicles, Nabonidus was only captured; it was no doubt Cyrus' policy to permit him to live elsewhere in peace.²⁸ This was Cyrus' policy with Astyages, the Median king.²⁹

The Lord's true prophets were to be silent during the seventy years of captivity as indicated by Jeremiah (29:8-19). If the seventy year time span began during the reign of Zedekiah of Judah (590 B.C.) and ends before the second year of Darius I (520 B.C.), then the Hebrew prophets were silent as required by Jeremiah.

The prophet Ezekiel states in Ezekiel 4:1-8 that Israel, the northern kingdom, would be without a sin offering for 390 years and that Judah, the southern kingdom, would be without a sin offering for forty years. This passage must synchronize with any valid chronological system dealing with the exile and return.

A valid chronology for this period of time must identify chronologically the time span of Nebuchadnezzar's madness; in addition to this, the king who ruled for Nebuchadnezzar during the monarch's illness has not been identified. Standard chronologies of this period ignore these issues. Nevertheless, if one would interpret the Bible literally, then this seven year time span of Nebuchadnezzar's reign must be dated and the sovereign ruler of Babylon for these seven years must be identified.

Since Belshazzar was only a co-regent or second in command, who was his superior (Daniel 5:16)? Some would suggest Nabonidus, but Daniel 5 would suggest Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar's thirty-seventh year (569 B.C.) has been in conflict with presently constructed Egyptian history and chronology. For a fragmentary historical text cites a confrontation between Pharaoh Amasis and Nebuchadnezzar in his thirty-seventh year. This text has been considered to be chronologically in error by some Egyptologists.³⁰

The fourth year of Jehoiakim (610 B.C.-599 B.C.) would be parallel to the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. In Jeremiah 25:1, the Biblical text equates the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, with the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (accession year); that would be 606 B.C. However, some scholars have found a problem with the chronology of Daniel 1-2. For it appears that Daniel 1:1 seems to place the deportation of Daniel in the third year of Jehoiakim. Then after 'three years', Daniel 1:5, Daniel is said to be the leading Magi in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar. This chronological interpretation can not be accurate-- even though it has been traditionally accepted.

Scholars have not properly identified the two Persian kings mentioned in the book of Ezra between Cyrus the Great and Darius the Great. In Ezra 4:4-8, these two Persian rulers are given the names: 'Ahasuerus' and 'Artaxerxes'. But Persian history knows of no Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes between Cyrus and Darius. Artaxerxes I, II, III

follow Darius the Great and none of these monarchs was king during this specified Biblical timeframe.

Most commentaries on the book of Nehemiah explain that it only took Nehemiah fifty-two days to re-construct the city walls of Jerusalem. Yet, the godly Nehemiah plainly asserts that he worked on the Jerusalem walls for twelve years and fifty-two days (cf., Nehemiah 5:14-16; 6:1, 15). The book of Nehemiah states several important proofs for a twelve year and fifty-two day re-construction project. For example, some were forced to mortgage their lands, vineyards, and houses in order to buy food and to pay the king's tribute (Nehemiah 5:1-5)-- this would not have been necessary if the wall project could have been completed in fifty-two days.

All standard chronologies calculate the edict of Cyrus to be in his first year over Babylon, *i.e.*, 539 B.C. or 538 B.C. Yet, the Biblical text states that the decree for religious liberty in behalf of the Jews was issued during his first year over Persia (II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4), *i.e.*, 551 B.C. The year 551 B.C., as the first year of Cyrus over Medo-Persia, is parallel to the sixth year of Nabonidus in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7).³¹

For many chronologists, Daniel's prophecies have been difficult to interpret and to date. But once the chronological key is found, the historical and prophetic dovetail with perfect harmony.

Most scholars have not found a reason in history for Jeconiah's (Jehoiachin) release from prison. Since the date of Jeconiah's release (II Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34) is similar to the date of Purim in the book of Esther, it is believed that a beautiful comparison can be made. It is possible that Purim had a tremendous effect on secular history. Thus some of the chronological problems have been identified for the historical period of the exile and return. These problems will be addressed and resolved in the various chapters of this volume on Biblical chronology.

The present research has taken the position that the return took place under the Persian monarch Darius I, also referred to by the Persian throne-title 'Artaxerxes' in Scripture.³² This work presents documentary evidence from the records of Babylon and Persia for this position. With this interpretation of history, the Biblical book of Ezra-Nehemiah flows as a continuous book without great gaps in history as presently required, and without confusion concerning the second return under Ezra. This is the way the book originally was written and was found in the books of the Hebrews.

The reader will also discover that the altar construction started under Cyrus in 549 B.C., but stopped until the second year of Darius' reign in 520 B.C., with some Jews returning to Babylon in the interim. However, the people were not released *en masse* from Babylon until Darius destroyed the walls of the city of Babylon in 520 B.C., thus fulfilling a prophecy made by Jeremiah (see Herodotus' *Histories* III.159).

III. Synchronous And Astronomical Data Establish An Absolute Chronology

The chronology presented in this volume is believed to be accurate because it is based on sound methods for determining accuracy.

The primary source for the total chronology in this work is the chronology found in the Biblical text of the Hebrew Bible. The Biblical chronology has built in synchronous points which help to verify the accuracy of the chronology. These points are called 'the Sabbath day', 'the Sabbatical year' and 'the Jubilee year'. These re-occurring cycles are repeated every seven days, every seven years and every forty-nine years respectively. These cycles are known today, among the Jews. Thus, a known Sabbath day must be separated from another known Sabbath day with a number that is divisible by seven. Similarly, each noted Sabbath year must be separated from a known

Sabbath year by a difference in years that is divisible by seven. And each Jubilee must be separated from another Jubilee by a difference of forty-nine or a multiple of forty-nine years. In many cases concerning ancient history, one can determine a date within a year or two. Then, through the correlation with Hebrew chronology, precise dates can be derived.

In establishing the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah, the chronologist should realize that Nehemiah and the placement of his activities must fall into a king's reign that allows for the reading of the Law when the dedication of these walls were complete. This reading of the Law was done by Ezra (Nehemiah 8:1-18) when the Jerusalem walls were completed in the thirty-first year of the king (Nehemiah 5:14-16). The Law was read every Sabbath year, at the Feast of Tabernacles. It is also obvious that a Sabbath took place when the wall was complete for the redemption of slaves took place (Nehemiah 5:8).

The Sabbatical years fell in the following years: 519 B.C., 512 B.C., 505 B.C., 498 B.C., 491 B.C., *etc.* These years were multiples of seven years from when the Law was originally read by Moses. The thirty-first year of Darius I (Hebrew counting) occurred in 491 B.C.; the thirty-first year of Xerxes is impossible since his reign only lasted for twenty-one years; the thirty-first of Artaxerxes I (Hebrew reckoning) occurred in 434 B.C. As can be seen, none of the kings qualify except for the thirty-first year of Darius I; for only this year is verified by the Sabbath year cycle. Only Darius the Great can meet the rigid Biblical time requirements for the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Another method used for determining accurate dates is through the use of astronomy. Many ancient documents (Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Jewish and even the Bible) refer to solar and lunar eclipses. These eclipses were very meaningful, especially to those civilizations whose worship involved the planets and stars. Most chronologists recognize that astronomical computation can fix dates. For an example, if a solar eclipse happened in the x year of the reign of a certain king, archon, consul, or military tribune, and if the length of rule is known for previous and successive leaders, then the year of every other name of the complete canon, register, or list can likewise be fixed by the established date of the eclipse.

Reliable dates can be determined accurately through the use of the seven day week cycle. The Biblical Hebrew calendar was re-constructed through the use of a computer which made possible a method of determining the day of the week that any specific year began. Once the first day was determined, the rest of the days of the year would fall into place, using a lunar calendar. Gregorian dates have been assigned to both the Biblical lunar calendar and to solar and lunar eclipses.

Dating accuracy has been maintained through cross references between civilizations. The 'cross references' are 'points of contact' or synchronization between kings and nations. Through the use of all the ancient inscriptions, monuments, and documents along with the writings of the Greeks and the Romans, the Bible has shown remarkable historical accuracy that one would only expect if the Book was written at the time of the event. Yet, the prophetic nature of the Bible indicates that some of its history has been recorded in a prophetic manner and that all of its historical and chronological data has been preserved through the centuries as miraculously accurate.

Another method of demonstrating chronological accuracy is through the use of fulfilled Biblical prophecy. Ancient histories clearly provide a witness, evidence, and details for the fulfillment of a prophetic Scripture. The present research can testify to the fact that fulfilled prophecies have the witness of history showing that they are fulfilled in every detail.

The present study will deal with the chronology in the prophetic books of

Jeremiah, portions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. It is believed that these prophetic books were written by the Hebrew prophets at the time the events were prophesied and not at a later date in history as rationalistic theologians have determined.

This volume will cover the chronology of the final days of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), the chronology of King Hezekiah through puppet king Zedekiah of the Southern Kingdom (Judah), and the chronology of Egypt where points of contact occur. The chronology of the first two kingdoms of Daniel's prophecies will be considered in detail in this volume: Babylon and Medo-Persia. The rise of Alexander the Great, the first king of Greece, will also be considered in this volume. As the chronology is developed in the following chapters, the reader will be able to grasp the important fact that the literal reading of Scripture (*literalis sensus*) provides a reliable chronology of the Bible.

The chronology as presented in this volume differs the most from standard chronologies in reference to the interpretation of Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius the Mede, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, the time of the Edict of Cyrus the Great, the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah and the chronology of the high priests during the Ezra-Nehemiah era.

Chapter I - NOTES

¹Cf., A. K. Grayson, "Assyrian And Babylonian Chronicles," (Hereafter cited as ABC) A. Leo Oppenheim, et al. (eds.) *Texts From Cuneiform Sources* Volume V (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1975), pp. 99-102.

²Cf., James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (Hereafter cited as ANET) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 315-316.

³*Ibid.*, p. 308.

⁴Francis R. B. Godolphin, *The Greek Historians* (New York: Random House, 1942), Vol. 2, pp. 623-632.

⁵A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri Of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967), pp. 1-271.

⁶The Elephantine Papyri provide the chronologist with innumerable references to dual dating. Several examples are now quoted. The chronological data in Aramaic Papyri 6 reads, "On the 18th of Chisleu, that is the 7th day of Thoth, in year 21, the beginning of the reign when King Artaxerxes sat on his throne" The computer calendar has dated this letter to have been written on December 18, 464 B.C., a Saturday (Gregorian calendar), in the twenty-first year of Xerxes and the accession year of Artaxerxes I (Babylonian reckoning). The chronology of Aramaic Papyri 28 states "On the 24th of Shebat, year 13, that is the 9th day of Athyr, year 14 of Darius the king in the fortress of Yeb" The computer calendar dates this letter as being written on February 5, 410 B.C., a Tuesday, (Gregorian calendar) in the fourteenth year of Darius II. These examples of dual dating give synchronization between two calendar schemes-- the Hebrew calendar and the Egyptian (Sliding) calendar. Cf., Cowley, *op.cit.*, p. 16 and p. 104.

⁷Jack Finegan, *Handbook Of Biblical Chronology: Principles Of Time Reckoning In The Ancient World And Problems Of Chronology In The Bible* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 70. Here, Finegan cites the chronological data from the Rosetta Stone: "... on the fourth day of the month Xandikos, which corresponds to the eighteenth day of the Egyptian month of Mecheir." This statement provides synchronism between two calendar schemes-- the Egyptian (Sliding) calendar and the Macedonian calendar. The Gregorian date of the Rosetta Stone is in the ninth year of Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

⁸Josephus, the Jewish historian, as well as some Greek and Roman historians use dual dating between two calendar systems-- the Seleucid Era and the Olympiad Era. Here is a statement of dual dating in Josephus: "Now it came to pass, after two years, in the hundred and forty-fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of that month which is by us called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Appelus, in hundred and fifty-third olympiad, that the king came up to Jerusalem, and, pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery," *Antiquities* XII.v.4.

⁹In *The Library Of History*, Diodorus Siculus gives the archons of Athens and the consuls or military tribunes of Rome for the years 480 B.C. 302 B.C. The information is found in books XI-XX. Cf., Diodorus Siculus, "The Library Of History," F. H. Warmington, ed. *The Loeb Classical Library*, 12 Volumes (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹⁰Solar eclipses are recorded in the Assyrian Eponym Canon and Herodotus, Pliny, and Diodorus while Ptolemy, Pliny, and Diodorus cite lunar eclipses. See Appendix F for complete listing of eclipses.

¹¹The Babylonian Chronicles state: "The seventh year: ... He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) seized (its) king." Grayson, ABC, p. 102. This affirmation is Babylonian counting while II Kings 24:12 is Hebrew reckoning.

¹²Originally, the book of Ezra-Nehemiah formed a single work in the Hebrew canon. This is affirmed by the fact that the final Massoretic notes are lacking at the end of Ezra and the total of characters given at the end of Nehemiah is that for both books, and the middle character given is that for the combined works. The contents also support this, for the 'memoirs' of Ezra, begun in Ezra 7-10, are completed in Nehemiah 8-10. The division into two books did not take place in the Hebrew Bible until the fifteenth century A.D., and apparently originated in Christian circles.

¹³Gleason L. Archer, Jr., would put a fifty year gap between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7. If the Temple restoration was completed "in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king," Ezra 6:15 (516 B.C.) and if Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem took place in 457 B.C., the seventh year of the king, Ezra 7:8, then that would create a fifty year gap in the chronology. Archer writes: "Thus Ezra's career at Jerusalem commenced twelve years before that of Nehemiah, who did not come until the twentieth year, or 445 B.C." *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 411.

William F. Albright dates Ezra's ministry at Jerusalem even later than Archer's date of 457 B.C. He writes: "The most recent evidence favors a date for Ezra's mission in or about the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes, i.e., about 428 B.C. It is not clear whether Nehemiah was in Jerusalem at the time; he is not specifically mentioned in the Ezra Memoirs proper, and the evidence is conflicting." *The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra: An Historical Survey* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 93.

It is interesting to note that Archer favors the Ezra-Nehemiah order while Albright prefers a Nehemiah-Ezra arrangement.

¹⁴Albright, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁵Most chronologists would either put the seventy years of captivity from 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's seizing of Judah, to 536 B.C., the edict of Cyrus, or from 586 B.C., the destruction of the first Temple, to 516 B.C., the completion of the second Temple. While these two suggestions may seem possible, there is, however, serious problems with 536 B.C. for the edict of Cyrus and 586 B.C. for the destruction of Jerusalem.

In light of II Chronicles 36:21, the seventy years of captivity as foretold by Jeremiah should start with a Sabbath year and end with a Sabbath year. Most chronologists have failed to sandwich the seventy years between Sabbatical years in their chronological systems.

¹⁶Cf., John C. Whitcomb, Jr., "Darius The Mede: The Historical Chronology Of Daniel," J. Marcellus Kik, ed. *International Library of Philosophy and Theology: Biblical And Theological Studies Series* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 1-67. Whitcomb writes: "... Darius the Mede ... appears under the name of Gubaru in the cuneiform documents that come down to us from the period immediately following the Fall of Babylon," *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷Alan Millard identifies Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, with Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus. He declares: "The inscriptions had been written at the command of Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, 555-539 B.C. The king had repaired the temple tower, and the clay cylinders commemorated the fact. The words they carried proved that the ruined tower was the Temple of the city of Ur. The words were a prayer for the long life and good health of Nabonidus-- and for his eldest son. The name of that son, clearly written, was Belshazzar." *Treasures From Bible Times* (Tring, Belleville, Sydney: Lion Publishing plc, 1985), p. 139.

¹⁸In this connection, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., affirms: "Moreover, it is a distinct possibility that in this case there was a genetic relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his usurpation of the throne back in 556 B.C., it would follow that his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. The word for 'father' ('ab or 'abba') could mean grandfather." *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 383.

¹⁹Joyce G. Baldwin equates Ahasuerus with the Persian King, Xerxes; she notes that "Ahasuerus represents the Hebrew transliteration of the Persian name Khshayarsha, better known to us in the Greek form Xerxes. He succeeded his father Darius and reigned 486-465/4 BC." "Esther," D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds. *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 415.

²⁰There were other rulers known by the title Artaxerxes before the reign of Artaxerxes I. For example, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther in the Septuagint is consistently referred to as 'Artaxerxes' (LXX, Esther 1:1-10:3). Also, the book of Ezra mentions an 'Artaxerxes' who ruled between Cyrus II, king of Persia, and Darius I, king of Persia, Ezra 4:4-8. In Ezra 6:14, it appears that 'Artaxerxes' is a throne title of Darius I. The clue is that the throne title 'Artaxerxes' is used as an appositive of Darius. The *waw explicativum* construction has long been recognized elsewhere in the Old Testament by Hebraists. The reference to Artaxerxes here is anachronistic unless it is understood as a throne title and appositional to Darius.

²¹Josephus' account of Jaddua (*Antiquities* XI.viii.1-7) may not be altogether trustworthy; for in the same chapter, Josephus speaks of the demonstrably fifth-century characters, Sanballat and Manasseh, as being with Jaddua, and this leads one to suspect that the Jewish historian somehow garbled his sources and involved himself in anachronisms. "It may therefore have been a descendant of Jaddua who actually greeted Alexander the Great when he entered Jerusalem," asserts Gleason L. Archer, Jr. Archer, *op. cit.*, pp. 414-415.

²²In this regard, Herodotus notes: "Having declared Xerxes king, Darius was intent on his expedition. But in the year after this, and the revolt of Egypt, death came upon him in the midst of his preparation, after a reign of six and thirty years in all; nor was it granted to him to punish either the revolted Egyptians, or the Athenians," *Histories* VII.4.

²³It is interesting that in I Esdras a king who had one hundred and twenty-seven satrapies is called 'Darius'-- "Now when Darius reigned, he made a great feast unto all his subjects, and unto all his household, and unto all the princes of Media and Persia, and to all the governors and captains and lieutenants that were under him from India unto Ethiopia, in the hundred and twenty and seven provinces," I Esdras 3:1-2. According to the context, this king is Darius I. Josephus, also, records the same information about Darius I having one hundred and twenty-seven satrapies, *Antiquities* XI.iii.2.

²⁴Cowley, *op.cit.*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

²⁵Herodotus states: "The Arabians, and the Ethiopians who dwell above Egypt, had for commander Arsames son of Darius and Artystone daughter of Cyrus, whom Darius loved best of his wives, and had an image made of her of hammered gold," *Histories* VII.69.

²⁶Archer writes concerning the identity of 'Darius the Persian'--"Some critics have pointed to another expression as a betrayal of a late date of composition: 'Darius the Persian' (Neh. 12:22). The argument runs that since Darius was described as a Persian, this would indicate an author living in the Greek period, after Alexander's conquest of Asia. This however is by no means a necessary conclusion. He may well have been so designated to distinguish him from the earlier Darius the Mede referred to in Daniel 6." *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 415.

²⁷Albright, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

²⁸The Babylonian Chronicles state that: "Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon," (Chronicle 7.iii.16). The Chronicle is silent about Nabonidus after his capture. Cf., Grayson, *ABC*, p. 110. But Josephus tells that Cyrus treated Nabonidus kindly after his capture:

"Hereupon Cyrus took Babylon, and gave order that the outer walls of the city should be demolished, because the city had proved very troublesome to him, and cost him a great deal of pains to take it. He then marched away to Borsippus, to besiege Nabonnedus; but as Nabonnedus did not sustain the siege, but delivered himself into his hands, he was first kindly used by Cyrus, who gave him Carmania, as a place for him to inhabit in, but sent him out of Babylonia. Accordingly Nabonnedus spent the rest of his time in that country, and there died." *Contra Apionem* I.21.

²⁹Herodotus notes that after Astyages, the Median monarch, was deposed from his sovereignty by Cyrus II, that "Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house till Astyages died," *Histories* I.130.

³⁰This text reads, "... [in] the 37th year, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Bab[ylon] mar[ched against] Egypt (Mi-sir) to deliver a battle. [Ama]sis (text: [...]-a(?)-su), of Egypt, [called up his a]rm[y]" *ANET*, p. 308.

³¹*Cf.*, Grayson, *ABC*, p. 106.

³²Traditionally, it has been accepted that the return took place under Ezra in Artaxerxes I Longimanus' seventh year (Ezra :8) which is 458 B.C. This is more than fifty years after the completion of the Temple. This dating by chronologists placed a gap into the chronology of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. Why would Ezra wait for more than fifty years after the completing of the Temple before returning from Babylon to Israel? Such chronological reckoning makes no sense without a reason for this delay. The Hebrew Bible gives no reason for a scribe or priest such as Ezra to delay his coming. The unity of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah in the Hebrew Bible would suggest a continuous chronological timeframe. When scholars leap from the sixth year of Darius I (516 B.C.) to the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (458 B.C.) in Ezra 6-7, it appears that their identification of Artaxerxes may be incorrect.

CHAPTER II - ISRAEL-- 833 YEARS IN THE LAND

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give the background information, both historical and chronological for the period of the Exodus, the Divided Kingdom, Babylonian Exile, the Return, and Restoration. This can best be done by examining the data relating to the two Hebrew Kingdoms-- Israel, the kingdom in the north, and Judah, the kingdom in the south-- in their final days of existence. This chapter will begin with the Assyrian attack against Samaria by Shalmaneser V and will conclude with the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem which eventually led to the desolation of the Holy City, Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar II. This chapter will also inform the reader about how the foes of the Assyrian Empire steadily rose to engulf her. A special section will tell how Babylon under Nabopolassar and his allies, the Medes, conquered Nineveh and, finally, the last Assyrian stronghold-- Haran.

This timeframe of Ancient Near Eastern history relates how three kingdoms struggled among themselves for world supremacy-- Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. Much of the information for this period is given in one way or another in the pages of the Bible. This is because Israel and Judah, the states of the Divided Kingdom, became caught in the cross-fire. A previous book was written on the subject of the divided kingdom which exhaustively details the chronology for that period in history.¹ This book found Edwin Thiele's work weak in spots, especially at the time of Hezekiah.

II. The Final Days Of Samaria, The Capital Of Israel

The Biblical books of I and II Kings (I Kings 12:1- II Kings 18:12) and II Chronicles (II Chronicles 10:1- 31:1) offer the history and chronology of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. There are, also, scattered historical and chronological references in the Hebrew prophets. The kingdom, whose capital was Samaria, lasted for a time span of 222 years bridging the years 945 B.C. (the year of the schism when the United Kingdom divided) through 723 B.C. (the year of Samaria's fall). Now it is time to turn one's attention to the events which lead to the fall of the Omride capital of Israel.

When Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria, died, Shalmaneser V succeeded to the Assyrian throne (727 B.C.). At that time, Hoshea, the king of Israel (732 B.C.- 723 B.C.), became Shalmaneser's servant and paid him tribute when the Assyrian came against him (II Kings 17:3). It appears that in the year 727 B.C., the sixth of Israel's last king, Hoshea withheld the payment of tribute from Shalmaneser and sought an alliance with Egypt.² This alliance was the result of Egypt's growing power in the region of Syro-Palestine.

A. 726 B.C.-- The Conspiracy Of Hoshea

The Hebrew text of II Kings 17:4 records the conspiracy of Hoshea-- "And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison." It was Tiglath-pileser who had placed Hoshea on Samaria's throne in 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser's annalistic texts confirm this: "The land of Bit-Humria [Omri's land, i.e., Israel] ... all of its people, together with their goods I carried off to Assyria. Pakaha, their king they deposed and I placed Ausi'

ILLUSTRATION I: Chronology Chart 761-521 B.C.

	SYRIA	ISRAEL	JUDAH	ASSYRIA	EGYPT	SYNCHRONISMS
761	BEN-HADAD III	JONAH ZECHARIAH SON OF JEROBOAM SHALTIM SON OF JARISH MENAHEN SON OF GADI	SON OF AMAZIAH HOSEA JOEL NAHUM MICA ISAIAH	ASHUR-DAN III SON OF ADAD-NIRARI III	PEDBAST BOCHORIS	JUBILEE 13, SABBATH 84 JAHADDAM - ASHUR-DAN III ECLIPSE, JONAH, JUNE 15, 763 B.C. EARTHQUAKE AND PLAGUE, UZZIAH SABBATH 85 PUL, MENEMEN, UZZIAH, TRIBUTE ISAIAH'S VISION OF THE LORD + 777
751	KINGS OF BABYLON	PEKAH SON OF REMALIAH	JOTHAM SON OF UZZIAH	ASHUR-NIRARI V SON OF ADAD-NIRARI III		
741	NABONASSAR		AHAZ SON OF JOTHAM	TIGLATH-PILESER III SON OF ADAD-NIRARI III		ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF VIRGIN + 730 AHAZ - TIGLATH-PILESER NAPHTALI DEPORTED, B.C. 15:20 PEKAH, REZON, TIGLATH-PILESER
731	NADUIS CHIZER PORUS/TIGLATH-PILESER SHALMANESER	HOSHEA SON OF ELAH END KINGS OF ISRAEL		SHALMANESER V SON OF TIGLATH-PILESER		P 2:3, 3273, JEHOIARIB HOSHEA, SHALMANESER, HEZEKIAH, SO SABBATH 100 + 380 380 TO GERIZIM
721	MERODACH-BALADAN SON OF YAKINU		HEZEKIAH SON OF AHAZ	SARGON II SON OF HARNAKE DYNASTY OF HARBAG	SABACOS ETHIOPIAN	JUBILEE 14, SABBATH 101 FIRST ASSAULT OF SENNACHERIB SARGON, ISAIAH SARGON, ISAIAH
711	SARGON				SABTECO SON OF SABACOS	SECOND ASSAULT OF SENNACHERIB 418 YEARS AFTER TIGLATH-PILESER
701	BEL-IBNI ASHUR-NADIN-SHUMI SON OF SENNACHERIB	KINGS OF MEDO-PERSIA		SENNACHERIB SON OF SARGON	TAHAROO NEPHEW OF SABACOS SON IN LAW OF SABACOS	520 YRS. ASSYRIA CONTROLLED UPPER ASIA
691	NERGAL-ISHEZIB MUSHEZIB MARDUK					YR 1 ESARHADDON, MAY 28, 688 10 TRIBES RETURN YR 3 ESARHADDON, AUG. 4, 678 YR 8 ESARHADDON, JAN. 9, 672 ESARHADDON CAPTURED MANASSEH ASSURBANIPAL RELEASED MANASSEH
681	VACANCY		MANASSEH SON OF HEZEKIAH	ESARHADDON SON OF SENNACHERIB	TANDANAVE - SON OF SABACOS	
671	ESARHADDON SON OF SENNACHERIB					
661	SHAMASH-SHUMA-UKIN SON OF ESARHADDON	DEIOCES		ASHURBANIPAL SON OF ESARHADDON		ELAM 1805 YEARS OLD
651			AMON SON OF MANASSEH		PSAMMETICHUS DECEADANT OF TEFNAGH-ITE	
641	KINELANADAN CHALDEAN NOBELMAN		JOSIAH SON OF AMON	ASSUR-ETIL-ILANI		13:24 3278, JEHOIARIB SABBATH 114
631	VACANCY	PHRAORTES SON OF DEIOCES		SIN-SHAR-ISHKUN	NECO SON OF PSAMMETICHUS	NINEVEH FELL HARAN FELL 24, +21, +43, +45, +48 +1290
621	NABOPOLASSAR	ALYATTES OF THE SCYTHIANS	JEHOIAH SON OF JOSIAH JEHOIAKIM SON OF JOSIAH JEHOIAKIN SON OF JEHOIAKIM ZEDEKIAH SON OF JOSIAH	ASHUR-UBALLIT II DEPORTATION OF EZEKIEL, DANIEL, JEHOIAKIM MORDECAI, ESTHER, JEHOIAKIM 70 YEARS OF JEREMIAH BEGIN SECOND DEPORTATION OF ISRAEL THIRD DEPORTATION OF ISRAEL DANIEL CHS. 2, 3, 4 DANIEL CH. 7 DANIEL CH. 8 DANIEL CHS. 5, 6, 11	PSAMMIS SON OF NECO	
611					HOPHRAH-APRIES SON OF PSAMMIS	+430, 835, +40 P 5:7-3413, JEHOIARIB 3:29-3418 8:29-3419 +408 DANIEL 4 +2520 4:15-3433 +37
601	NEBUCHADNEZZAR SON OF NABOPOLASSAR MARRIED AMYTIS AUNT OF MARDANE, MOTHER OF CYRUS	CYAXERES SON OF PHRAORTES	EGYPT CAPTURED NEBUCHADNEZZAR MARD AHASUERUS' FEAST NEBUCHADNEZZAR RETURNS NEBUCHADNEZZAR CAPTURES EGYPT ESTHER QUEEN FIRST PURIM - JEHOIAKIM FREED			
591	BELESHAZZAR SON OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR ASTYAGES	ASTYAGES SON OF CYAXERES ALIAS AHASUERUS ALIAS DARIUS THE MEDIAN GRANDFATHER OF CYRUS				
581	EVL MERODACH SON OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR NEBUCHADNEZZAR BRO IN LAW OF EVL MERODACH DARIUS THE MEDIAN					
571	NABUNAIID SON OF NABU-SALATSU-IBO A SYRIAN	CYRUS SON OF CAMBYSES ALIAS DARIUS	CYRUS EDICT ALTAR BUILT JESHAU RETURNS DANIEL CH. 8 DANIEL CH. 10		AMASIS RELATIVE OF APRIES USURPED	DANIEL 9 +49, +480, +40 P 7:1-3452, JEDAIIAH
561						
551						
541	CYRUS					
531	CAMBYSES	CAMBYSES SON OF CYRUS				
521					PSAMMETICHUS SON OF AMASIS CAMBYSES	OLYMPIAD 61, YEAR 3 DANIEL 4 +380, +2520

CONSTRUCTION DELAYED
CONSTRUCTION RESUMED, 70 YRS. OF JEREMIAH END

(Hoshea) over them as king. 10 talents of gold, X talents of silver, as their tribute I received from them and to Assyria I carried them."³ The revolt of Hoshea against Assyria was a fatal mistake because Egypt was in no position to offer effective aid against Assyria. The Assyrians occupied the land of Israel except for the city of Samaria which withstood siege for three years (725, 724, 723 B.C.).

B. 725 B.C.- 723 B.C.-- The Siege Of Samaria By Shalmaneser

The Hebrew Bible makes two references to Shalmaneser's siege of Samaria in the book of II Kings. The first reference, II Kings 17:5-6, dates Samaria's fall in Hoshea's ninth year:

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The second reference, II Kings 18:9-11, cross-references Samaria's fall to Hezekiah, and the Judean monarch's sixth year of reign:

And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The fourth year of Hezekiah and the seventh year of Hoshea were both 725 B.C. Since Samaria was under Assyrian attack for three years, the sixth year of Hezekiah and the ninth year of Hoshea were both 723 B.C. Therefore, the fall of Samaria occurred in the year 723 B.C.

The Assyrian Eponym Canon upholds the integrity of the Biblical Record in a remarkable way. The Assyrian Limmu Lists are quoted from the accession year of Shalmaneser V (727 B.C.) to the fall of Samaria in 723 B.C.--

727 Bel-haran-bel-usur (governor) of Guzana against Damascus Shalmaneser took his seat on the throne

726 Marduk-bel-usur (governor) of Amedi in the land

725 Mahde (governor) of Nineveh against [Samaria]

724 Assur-ishmeani (governor) of Kakzi against [Samaria]

723 Shalmaneser king of Assyria against [Samaria]⁴

As can be seen, the Eponym Chronicle records a campaign by Shalmaneser V 'against Damascus' in the king's accession year (727 B.C.). This is when Hoshea became his servant and paid tribute to Shalmaneser, but at the same time was negotiating with So, king of Egypt. No campaign is given for the year 726 B.C. because the Assyrian king remained in the land. In 725 B.C. Shalmaneser was engaged in a campaign against some city or kingdom the name of which has been lost. It appears that the same campaign continued for the years 724 B.C. and 723 B.C. What was the name of the place that Shalmaneser went against? It seems that both the Biblical text and the Babylonian Chronicles give the answer.

Since the word 'against' is written three times in the Assyrian Canon and since the

Bible gives a three year siege against Samaria, it seems that the word 'Samaria' should be supplied to the Assyrian Canon text. Scholars such as Daniel David Luckenbill,⁵ A. T. Olmstead,⁶ and Hayim Tadmor⁷ support the 'Samaria' restoration to the Assyrian Eponym Canon. Not only does the Hebrew text support the 'Samaria' restoration but also the Babylonian Chronicle does.

The reference to the kingship of Shalmaneser V, his siege of Samaria, and his death, along with Sargon's accession is found in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicles 1.i.27-31)--

27 On the twenty-fifth day of the month Tebet Shalmaneser (V)

28 ascended the throne

27 in Assyria <and Akkad>. He ravaged Samaria [Sa-ma ba-ra'-in].

29 The fifth year: Shalmaneser (V) died in the month Tebet.

30 For five years Shalmaneser (V) ruled Akkad and Assyria.

31 On the twelfth day of the month Tebet Sargon (II) ascended the throne in Assyria.⁸

The problem of whether or not this is a reference to Samaria has long been debated. Franz Delitzsch originally saw the Akkadian words as meaning 'Samaria'. Recently, Hayim Tadmor has come to the conclusion that it is Samaria.⁹ It is of interest to note in Ezra 4:10 that Samaria, normally spelled in Hebrew as Shomron is spelled Shamrayin, similar to that in the Babylonian Chronicle. It is, obviously, the word for Israel's capital. Therefore, both the Bible and the Babylonian Chronicles support the 'Samaria' reading in the Assyrian Eponym Canon.

C. 721 B.C.-- The Deportation Of Samaria By Sargon

It appears that after the fall of Samaria in 723 B.C., Shalmaneser died in the month of Tebet. At that time (the Hebrew month Tebet is equivalent to December-January in the Gregorian calendar), Sargon II (722 B.C.- 705 B.C.) ascended the throne (January 10, 722 B.C.; Gregorian calendar); he doubtless helped Shalmaneser with the capture of Samaria as his turtan (tartan) or 'supreme commander'. What remained after Shalmaneser's death was the deportation of the people, and that Sargon himself accomplished according to his own records.

The deportation of the Israelites appears to have taken place during the first year of Sargon's rule (722 B.C.). His annalistic texts report the deportation:

... [At the beginning of my rule, in my first year of reign] ... Samerinai (the people of Samaria) ... [of Shamash] who causes me to attain victory ... [27,290 people, who lived therein] I carried away; 50 chariots for my royal equipment, I selected from [among them] ... [The city I rebuilt], I made it greater than it was before; people of the lands [my hand had conquered, I settled therein. My official I placed over them as governor]. Tribute, tax, I imposed upon them as upon the Assyrians¹⁰

Later, in his Assyrian annals, 'The Khorsabad Texts', Sargon claims to have besieged and captured Samaria. In the following quote, Sargon suggests his capture of Samaria as well as the deportation of the people. He also relates his defeat of Sib'e (Sabacos), turtan of Egypt, whom Hoshea made an alliance with:

From the year of my accession to the fifteenth year of my reign, I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein. 50 chariots I gathered from among them, I caused others to take their (the deported inhabitants') portion, I set my officers over them and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king. Hanno, king of Gaza, with Sib'e, turtan of Egypt, who had come out against me at Rapihu to offer battle and fight, I

defeated. Sib'e became frightened at the clangor of my weapons and fled, to be seen no more. Hanno, king of Gaza, I seized with my own hand.¹¹

Sargon's defeat of Sib'e occurred during the Assyrian's second year of rule (720 B.C.) as stated in his annals. Sargon claims to have overthrown Samaria in 'The Bull Inscription'-- "... who overthrew Samaria, all of Bit-Humria"¹² and on 'The Display Inscription of Salon XIV', he claims to have plundered Samaria-- "... I plundered the city of Shinuhtu, Samirina (Samaria) and the whole land of Bit-Humria (Israel)."¹³ It appears that Sargon destroyed the records of Shalmaneser V when he usurped the throne in order to claim the victory of Samaria's fall totally for himself. None of Shalmaneser's Assyrian annals texts are extant; there remains only a small memorial cylinder placed in Ezida, Nabu's temple at Borsippa.

That Sargon was a usurper to the Assyrian throne is mentioned in his own annalistic texts, 'The Assur Charter'. The text gives Sargon's account of his accession to power. It is vague, of course, but enough is said to show that the Assur priesthood backed him against Shalmaneser. The text is the charter of the restored city of Assur:

... In the second year of my reign, when I had seated myself upon the royal throne and had been [crowned] with lordly tiara.... [The spoil] to my city Assur I brought. And, because [they listened to] the word of [my mouth] and came to my aid, Assur, the city (enjoying) the feudal protection of ancient dynasties, the noble metropolis, which Assur, its lord, had extolled to four quarters (of the earth), the bond [of empire] ... without a rival, whose people from days of old knew neither feudal dues nor service,-[Shalmaneser], who did not fear the king of the universe, raised (lit., brought) his hand to (do) evil against that city, and [imposed upon] its people feudal dues and service, harshly, [and] counted (them) as his camp-followers, whereupon the lord of the gods, in the anger of his heart, overthrew his rule (dynasty). Me, Sargon, [as king he designated], my head he raised on high, scepter and throne he intrusted to me; that my power might be established, my rule made secure, its (Assur's) freedom (from dues) I restored¹⁴

Sargon, apparently, became king of Assyria after the fall of Samaria in 723 B.C. He probably helped in the siege and capture of Samaria as Shalmaneser's turtan. It is clear that Sargon's records state that he carried out the deportation of the people of Samaria, in contradiction to the Biblical record which gave Shalmaneser the credit.

After Samaria's fall, the city and country-side were organized into an Assyrian province under an Assyrian governor. Sargon's inscriptions inform the reader of revolts that broke out in Hamath, Gaza, and other provinces, including Damascus and Samaria, but the Assyrians were in firm control and insurrections were quickly put down. In succeeding years, Samaria was re-populated by the Assyrian policy of transplanting peoples. The Hebrew Bible refers to the peoples transplanted into Samaria. "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylonian, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." II Kings 17:24 This agrees with Sargon's own annalistic texts where he writes:

The tribes of Tamud, Ibadid, Marsimanu and Haiapa, distant Arabs, who inhabit the desert, who know neither high nor low official (governors nor superintendents), and who had not brought their tribute to any king,-- with the weapon of Assur, my lord, I struck them down, the remnant of them I deported and settled them in Samaria.¹⁵

As a result of the transplanting of peoples from various nations into Samaria, the

transplants sought to learn 'the manner of the God of the land' (II Kings 17:27). The Assyrians permitted a priest to teach the Yahwistic faith of Israel to them (II Kings 17:34-41). In general, Israel disowned them. However, Jesus dared to speak of 'the Good Samaritan', and identified himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman.

The Israelites were deported to Halah, Habor by the river of Gozan and into cities of the Medes (II Kings 17:6, 18:11). They were deported in 722 B.C. and remained in upper Mesopotamia and Media until 'the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur' (681 B.C.-669 B.C.)--

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. Ezra 4:1-6

At least, for some of the Israelites the Assyrian Captivity lasted for about forty years (722 B.C. + 40 = 682 B.C.). However, the Samaritan temple was not rebuilt until the days of Alexander, the Great according to Josephus (Antiquities XI.viii.6-7). It should be remembered that there was always contention between the Samaritans and the Jews regarding the proper location of the Temple-- Mount Gerizim or Mount Moriah. In Deuteronomy, Moses referred to the Temple location 'as the place which the Lord has chosen', Deuteronomy 12:11.

The seventh chapter of II Kings reveals in unmistakable terms the reason for the captivity of the Northern Kingdom. From the time they had left Egypt until the present, they had refused to obey Moses and the prophets and had made a practice of breaking the gracious covenants of God. The Lord had pleaded with them over and over to repent and had sent His servants the prophets to admonish them for their evil, but to no avail. The only remedy was this final and harsh expediency: the nation must learn the meaning of obedience through captivity and chastisement.

D. 723 B.C.-- Samaria's Fall Fixed By Synchronization And Astronomy

The year 723 B.C. for the fall of Samaria is confirmed by the synchronization of the Assyrian King List and the Assyrian Eponym Canon.¹⁶ The date is also astronomically fixed by the eponymy of Bur-Sagale in which a solar eclipse took place over Nineveh in the month Simanu during the year 763 B.C. (June 15, 763 B.C.).¹⁷

III. The Final Days Of Nineveh, The Capital Of Assyria

Having examined the fall of Samaria accomplished through the military campaigns of Shalmaneser V and finally, the deportation of the people by Sargon II, it is, now, proper to examine the waning of the great Assyrian Empire and its eventual collapse with the fall of Nineveh in 613 B.C. and the fall of Haran in 611 B.C. The Assyrian Empire, ending with the fall of Nineveh, outlasted the Northern Kingdom of Israel by 110 years (723 B.C. + 110 = 613 B.C.). Before Samaria's fall, Nahum had predicted Nineveh's destruction.

A. 672 B.C.- 630 B.C.-- The Rule Of Ashurbanipal

During the reign of Ashurbanipal, trouble came to the Assyrian Empire. Ashurbanipal succeeded to the throne of Assyria at the death of his father, Esarhaddon. Early in his career, he conducted a campaign in Egypt, briefly occupying both Memphis and Thebes.¹⁸ His annals describe raids against Syrians, Phoenicians and Arabs who periodically rebelled against Assyrian rule.¹⁹ Ashurbanipal, whose annals depict him as a cruel conqueror, had to put down a rebellion in Babylon led by his own brother, Shamash-shum-ukin (672 B.C.- 649 B.C.).²⁰ The Chaldeans of Babylon were joined by Elamites and other peoples of the Iranian highlands in a bid for independence. The attempt failed when, after a two year siege, Babylon fell to Ashurbanipal in 649 B.C.²¹ Shamash-shum-ukin committed suicide, and Ashurbanipal marched his armies into Elam conquering and sacking Susa, the Elamite capital.²² Peoples deported from Babylon and Elam were settled in Samaria and in other western provinces where Ashurbanipal had effective control.

Ezra 4 quotes an Aramaic document which refers to the 'great and noble Asnapper' who settled various peoples in Samaria including men of Susa and Elam- -

And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side of the river, and at such a time. Ezra 4:7-10

It is probable that Ashurbanipal is the 'Asnapper' of Ezra 4 and that Elamites were transported to Samaria following his sack of Susa.

Probably, it was Ashurbanipal who freed the Judean king, Manasseh, from exile in Nineveh (II Chronicles 33:13). According to Esarhaddon's annals, he had brought the Judean ruler earlier to Nineveh to help to rebuild the royal palace--

And I summoned the kings of the Hittite-land (Syria) and (those) across the sea,-- Ba'lu, king of Tyre, Manasseh, king of Judah, Kaushgabri, king of Edom, Musurri, king of Moab, Sili-Bel, king of Gaza, Metinti, king of Ashkelon, Ikausu, king of Ekron, Milki-ashapa, king of Gebail (Byblos), Matan-ba'al, king of Arvad, Abi-baal, king of Samsi-muruna, Budu-il, king of Beth-Ammon, Ahi-milki, king of Ashdod,-- twelve kings of the seacoast; Ekishtura, king of Edi'al, Pilagura, king of Kitrusi, Kisu, king of Sillua, Itandar, king of Pappa, Eresu, king of Sillu, Damasu, king of Kuri, Atmesu, king of Tamesu, Damusi, king of Karti-hadasti, Unasagusu, king of Lidir, Bususu, king of Nure,-- ten kings of the land of Iatnana (Cyprus), of the midst of the sea: a grand total of 22 kings of the Hittite-land (Syria), the seacoast and the (islands) in the midst of the sea, all of them. I gave them their orders and great beams.²³

Manasseh, king of Judah, is mentioned in the annals of Assurbanipal as a vassal during his first campaign.²⁴ It is possible that Manasseh was released from exile during the accession year of Assurbanipal. Nevertheless, the Lord heard and answered the prayer of Manasseh according to II Chronicles 33:11-14, 18.

Ashurbanipal is best known for the excellent library which he assembled. In Nineveh, he gathered together a collection of cuneiform tablets containing the myths, legends, and annals of his predecessors-- the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. Ashurbanipal's library, probably the richest archaeological discovery of the nineteenth

century, contained copies of the epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*) and the flood story (the Gilgamesh Epic). These accounts have helped the western mind to understand the Biblical records in the light of their Near Eastern setting. Other epic literature from the king's library included the Descent of Ishtar into the Netherworld and the legend of Etana who flew to heaven on an eagle. A legend tells that Sargon of Akkad was saved at birth, like Moses, by being placed in a reed basket on the river Euphrates until rescued by the goddess Ishtar.

Among the cuneiform tablets is a large corpus of Wisdom Literature, including a poem of the righteous sufferer, often described as the Babylonian Job. Hymns, parables, proverbs, and popular tales are also written on the tablets.

The royal library of Ashurbanipal was found in the ruins of the royal palace and Nabu temple in Nineveh by Hormuzd Rassam in 1852-1853. The fragments of cuneiform tablets numbered about 26,000 representing some 10,000 different texts. The texts included historical, scientific and religious literature, official dispatches and archives, business documents and letters. Scientific texts dealt with medicine, botany, geology, chemistry and mathematics. Assyrian King Lists and astronomical data are helpful to scholars in establishing an accurate chronology of the ancient world. Ashurbanipal's library was to provide a key to the understanding of the whole Assyrio-Babylonian civilization. Ashurbanipal was both scholar and soldier.

B. 627- 610 B.C.-- The Collapse Of Assyria

After Ashurbanipal's death in 630 B.C., his son, Ashur-etil-ilani, ruled for a short time²⁵ (630 B.C.- 627 B.C.). At that time, a second son, Sin-shar-ishkun, came to the Assyrian throne (627 B.C.- 613 B.C.). The sons inherited the problems of their father, and they were less successful than Ashurbanipal in solving them. These weak rulers brought the fall of Nineveh and shortly thereafter the complete Assyrian Empire collapsed.

During the reigns of Ashurbanipal's two sons, a descendant of Merodach-baladan, Nabopolassar, a Chaldean, rose to power in Babylon (627 B.C.- 606 B.C.) and ruled for twenty-one years. Outside of Babylon's walls, Nabopolassar defeated the Assyrians in his first year. The Medes, under Cyaxares (615 B.C.- 575 B.C.) joined in the attack on Assyria.

The combined might of the Medes and the Babylonians hastened the end of the Assyrian Empire. Egypt, evidently fearing the consequences of a takeover by the Medes and Babylonians, decided to aid her former enemy, Assyria. By 617 B.C., Egyptian armies were in Mesopotamia, but it was too late to bring effective aid.²⁶ Cyaxares took Ashur, the old Assyrian capital, in 615 B.C. Two years later, Nabopolassar and Cyaxares joined forces in besieging Nineveh. The siege lasted three months (May to August). Then the city of Nineveh, 'an exceeding great city', fell in 613 B.C. According to 'The Fall Of Nineveh Chronicle' in the Babylonian Chronicles, known as B.M. 21901, Nineveh fell in Nabopolassar's fourteenth year. Here is the account of Nineveh's fall--

[Fourteenth year:] The king of Akkad call[ed up] his army and [Cyaxar]es, the king of the Mandahordes (Umman-manda) marched towards the king of Akkad, [in] ... they met each other. The king of Akkad ... and [Cyaxar]es ... [the ...]s he ferried across and they marched (upstream) on the embankment of the Tigris and ... [pitched camp] against Nineveh From the month Simanu till the month Abu, three ba[tt]les were fought, then] they made a great attack against the city. In the month Abu, [the ... th day, the city was seized and a great defeat] he inflicted [upon the] entire [population]. On that day, Sinsharishkun, king of Assy[ria fled to] ..., many prisoners of the city, beyond counting, they carried away. The city [they turned] into ruin-hills and hea[ps] (of debris). The king and the army of Assyria escaped

(however) before the king (of Akkad) and [the army] of the king of Akkad In the month Ululu, the 20th day, Cyaxares and his army returned to his country. Afterwards, the king of A[kkad] ... marched as far as Nisbis. Booty and *ga-lu-tu* of ... and (of) the country Rusapu they brought to the king of Akkad, to Nineveh. [In the month] ... Ashuruballit ... sat down in Harran upon the throne to become king of Assyria. Till the month ... [the king of Akkad stayed] in Nineveh From the 20th day of the month [Tashritu] the king [of Akkad] ... in the same month of Tashritu in the town....²⁷

When the city fell, the Medes and the Babylonians completely destroyed it. The Assyrians attempted to regroup under Ashur-uballit II (613 B.C. - 610 B.C.) at Haran, the ancient city of upper Mesopotamia at which Abraham and Terah had sojourned centuries before (Genesis 11:31-32). In 611 B.C., the sixteenth year of Nabopolassar, the Babylonians and their allies took Haran,²⁸ and Assyrian history was for all practical purposes over. An attempt to retake Haran in 610 B.C., the seventeenth year of Nabopolassar, failed,²⁹ and one hears no more of the might of Assyria. More details for the military activities of 611 B.C.- 610 B.C. are given in connection with the date of the death of King Josiah of Judah.

About a hundred and fifteen years before Nineveh's fall, the prophet Nahum spoke concerning Nineveh's overthrow. The prophet foretold these things concerning the Assyrians and Nineveh around 728 B.C. (728 B.C. + 115 = 613 B.C.). This is according to Josephus (*Antiquities* IX.xi.3).³⁰ It is ironic that Nineveh fell 150 years after Jonah preached to them in 763 B.C.

The Biblical prophet, Nahum, in the last two verses of his prophecy, expressed the feelings of the peoples (nations) who suffered the results of Assyrian tyranny:

O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber;
your nobles lie down to rest.
Your people scattered on the mountains
with no one to gather them.
Nothing can heal your wound;
your injury is fatal.
Everyone who hears the news about you
claps his hands at your fall,
for who has not felt
your endless cruelty?
Nahum 3:18-19; New International Version

IV. The Final Days Of Jerusalem, The Capital Of Judah

The Hebrew books of I and II Kings (I Kings 12:1- II Kings 25:30) and II Chronicles (II Chronicles 10:1-36:23) give the reader the history and chronology of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Of course, there are a number of references, historical and chronological, in the Hebrew prophets. With Jerusalem as its capital, the Divided Kingdom of Judah continued in existence for 357 years. It outlasted the rival kingdom to the north by 135 years and tiny Judah continued for twenty-five years beyond the fall of Nineveh in 613 B.C. The life span of Judah covered the period from 945 B.C. (the year of the schism when the United Kingdom divided) through 588 B.C. (the year of Jerusalem's fall). Now it is in order to examine the events which led to the Babylonian destruction of Judah.

A. 729 B.C.- 699 B.C.-- The Reign Of Hezekiah

Assyria was still the dominate world force during the kingship of Hezekiah and was proving that factor to the Northern Kingdom. Samaria fell in the sixth year of

Hezekiah (II Kings 18:10). This event dates Hezekiah's sixth year as 723 B.C. The time from the sixth year of Hezekiah to the fourteenth is eight years (715 B.C.). In that year, Sennacherib, as turtan for his father, Sargon, came against all the fenced cities of Judah, including Jerusalem (II Kings 18:13-17; II Chronicles 32:1-9; Isaiah 36:1 ff.). The purpose of the siege of Lachish was to cut off Jerusalem from any support from Egypt. From Lachish, the king of Assyria sent messengers to Hezekiah demanding surrender. The siege of Lachish was depicted on Sennacherib's palace walls at Nineveh. Discovered by Austin H. Layard in the campaign of 1849-51, now in the British Museum, it shows Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, sitting on his throne, while the spoil of Lachish passed before him. This was the first assault by Sennacherib against Hezekiah. It occurred during Hezekiah's fourteenth year (715 B.C.) while Sennacherib was supreme commander of the Assyrian army. The demand for the surrender of Jerusalem is thwarted by divine intervention (II Kings 19:35-36). Read the story in one of the three Biblical accounts (II Kings 18:13- 19:36; II Chronicles 32:1-23; Isaiah 36:11- 37:37). It should be noted that the Bible pictures this event as a demand for surrender, not a siege. The annals of Sargon for his seventh year (715 B.C.) show military activity in the region of Syro-Palestine, probably by Sennacherib-- "In my seventh year of reign, ... From Pir'u, king of Egypt, Samsi, queen of Arabia, It'amra, the Sabeen, the kings of the seacoast and the desert, I received gold, products of the mountain, precious stones, ivory, seed of the maple(?), all kinds of herbs, horses, and camels, as their tribute."³¹ Notice that Sargon received tribute from 'the kings of the seacoast' and II Kings 18:14b-16 indicates that Hezekiah paid tribute in the seventh year of Sargon.

It becomes evident that the fourteenth year of Hezekiah can not be the third year of Sennacherib (702 B.C.) because it is the seventh of Sargon.³²

In Hezekiah's twenty-seventh year (702 B.C.), the second Assyrian assault came against Hezekiah in Sennacherib's third year. It is clear that the Assyrian annals record a siege against Jerusalem in Sennacherib's third year which is different from his demand for Jerusalem's surrender in Hezekiah's fourteenth year.

Sennacherib marched westward in 702 B.C., besieged Sidon and marched down the Mediterranean coast as far as Ashkelon. It was later in this campaign that Sennacherib boasted in his annals--

In my third campaign I went against the Hittiteland (Syria). ... As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, 46 of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood, which were without number,

-- by escalade and by bringing up siege engines(?), by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels and breaches(?), I besieged and took (those cities). ... Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. Earthworks I threw up against him, And (thus) I diminished his land. I added to the former tribute, and laid upon him (var., them) as their yearly payment, a tax (in the form of) gifts for my majesty. As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him, ... his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians, (which) he had (them) bring after me to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute and to accept (lit., do) servitude he dispatched his messengers.³³

A siege of Jerusalem, earthworks, and the carrying away of Hezekiah's daughters are not mentioned in the Biblical text. Also the chronological framework makes this account different from the Hebrew record. By a thorough investigation of the Biblical text and the Assyrian records, all evidence makes it clear that the account of Sennacherib's invasion against Jerusalem in the Biblical text and in the Assyrian records are two separate events. An admission of a previous campaign are his words, "I added to my former tribute, and laid upon him ...," *etc.*

B. 699 B.C.- 642 B.C.-- The Reigns Of Manasseh And Amon

Assyria dominated the political scene down to 630 B.C., after which her foes steadily rose to engulf her. Manasseh (699 B.C. - 644 B.C.) and Amon (644 B.C.- 642 B.C.), Hezekiah's son and grandson, were vassals to the Assyrian kings, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. Manasseh evidently took part in a revolt against Assyria led by Babylon (II Chronicles 33:11-13), but he learned his lesson and, after a period of captivity, was permitted to return to Jerusalem.

C. 642 B.C.- 610 B.C.-- The Rule Of Josiah

It was Hezekiah's third successor, Josiah, who saw the hope of Judah escaping the Assyrian yoke. He was able briefly to reclaim a large measure of independence and to extend the area under his control. Josiah's religious reforms (II Kings 22-23; II Chronicles 34-35) removed the last vestige of subservience to Assyria, itself now hard-pressed to survive the attacks of Babylon under Nabopolassar and his allies, the Medes.

In 611 B.C., the sixteenth year of Nabopolassar, both Egypt, under the leadership of Pharaoh-necho, and Assyria, under Ashur-uballit, combined forces at Haran to stop the westward advancement of the Babylonian army under the direction of King Nabopolassar, the king of Akkad. Haran was the last stronghold of the Assyrian Empire. According to the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 3.58-65), Haran fell to the Babylonian armies--

- 58 The sixteenth year: In the month Iyyar the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched
to Assyria. From [the month ...] until the month Marchesvan
59 he marched about victoriously in Assyria. In the month Marchesvan the Ummanmanda,
[who] had come [to help] the king of Akkad,
60 to Haran [against Ashur-uballit (II) who had ascended the throne in Assyria.
60 put their armies together and
61 marched
61f. Fear of the enemy overcame Ashur-uballit (II) and the army of Egypt which] had come [to
help him] and they abandoned the city [...] they crossed.
63 The king of Akkad reached Harran and [...] he captured the city.
64 He carried off the vast booty of the city and the temple. In the month Adar the king of
Akkad left their [...]
65 He went home. The Ummanmanda, who had come to help the king of Akkad, withdrew.³⁴

This text makes it quite clear that the combined Egyptian and Assyrian forces lost the stronghold of Haran in 'the Battle for Haran' in 611 B.C.

The year 610 B.C., the seventeenth of Nabopolassar, is the year in which King Josiah of Judah tries to stop King Necho at Megiddo. The purpose of Necho of Egypt and Ashur-uballit of Assyria was to try to re-capture the city of Haran from the Babylonians. In the Biblical account, the chronicler relates an interesting statement of Necho through his ambassadors to Josiah. The statement indicates that Necho and Assyria had already been at war with the Babylonian army: "I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war" (II Chronicles 35:21). This fact demonstrates the remarkable accuracy of the Hebrew text.

Pharaoh-necho was marching his armies northward to join forces with the Assyrians at Haran. He wanted to control Syria and Palestine for Egypt. Babylonia was developing into a powerful empire. It was to Necho's advantage to keep a weak Assyria as a buffer state between Egyptian territory and Babylonia. Josiah was anti-Assyrian and knew that the state of Judah could not have survived if Necho's plans were to be successful.

Historians, at one time, were perplexed as to why Josiah advanced 'against' Necho when the Pharaoh was on his way to fight Assyria, the ancient enemy of the Hebrews. The Babylonian Chronicles published by C. J. Gadd entitled *The Newly Discovered Babylonian Chronicle* in 1923 has put the whole matter in a new light and shows that Pharaoh-necho did not advance against the Assyrians at all, but went to their aid. Alongside the Old Testament, the principal source of information on these stirring times is the Babylonian Chronicles, a compressed but relatively objective chronological summary of the principal historical events.

The occasion for the death of Josiah is cited in the words of the chronicler--

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. II Chronicles 35:20-24

Because of the righteous character of Josiah, the Bible records that the prophet Jeremiah "lamented for Josiah" upon hearing of the death of the king (II Chronicles 35:25).

The chronicler states that the Pharaoh is on his way to Carchemish (II Chronicles 35:20). The following account from the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicles 3.66-75) relates how Necho of Egypt and Ashur-uballit of Assyria tried to re-capture the city of Haran, a few miles east of Carchemish--

- 66 <The seventeenth year>: In the month Tammuz Ashur-uballit (II), king of Assyria, the large army of Egypt [...]
- 67 crossed the river (Euphrates) and marched against Harran to conquer (it) [...] they [capture]d (it).
- 68 They defeated the garrison which the king of Akkad had stationed inside. When they had defeated (it) they encamped against Harran.
- 69 Until the month Elul they did battle against the city but achieved nothing. (However) they did not withdraw.
- 70 The king of Akkad went to help his army and ... [...] he went up [to] Izalla and
- 71 the numerous cities in the mountains ... [...] he set fire to their [...]
- 72 At that time the army of [...]
- 73 [ma]rched
- 72 as far as the district of Urartu.
- 73 In the land ... [...] they plundered their [...]
- 74 The garrison which the king of [...] had stationed in it set] out.
- 75 They went up to [...] The king of Akkad went home.³⁵

While the text is badly damaged at several places, it appears that the second attempt of King Necho of Egypt together with King Ashur-uballit of Assyria to stop the westward advancement of the Babylonian forces failed. The re-capture of Haran failed. It is most unfortunate that good King Josiah tried to stop King Necho of Egypt during his trip through Palestine in the seventeenth year of the Babylonian monarch, Nabopolassar (610 B.C.).

D. 610 B.C.-- The Three Month Reign Of Jehoahaz

Following the death of Josiah, the people of the land anointed Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, king of Judah. The historical events that follow are summarized by the chronicler:

Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt. II Chronicles 36:1-4

The last text from the Babylonian Chronicles relates how these events would coincide for the seventeenth year of Nabopolassar. The Babylonian text states that the battle to recapture Haran lasted for three months from Tammuz (June-July) to Elul (August-September). When Nabopolassar came, the battle for the city of Haran quickly ended and Pharaoh-necho seems to have fled to Riblah in the land of Hamath. According to II Kings 23:33, Jehoahaz was brought to that location: "And Pharaoh-nechoh put him [Jehoahaz] in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold."

Arriving at Riblah on the Orontes, three months after the battle of Megiddo, he sent for Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, whom the Judeans had placed upon his father's throne, and threw him into chains. Necho, then, installed Eliakim, another son of Josiah, as king of Judah under the name Jehoiakim (610 B.C.- 599 B.C.) and imposed upon him a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and one of gold. The unfortunate Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt by Pharaoh-necho and died there (II Kings 23:34).³⁶ With the death of Josiah and deposition of Jehoahaz, the throne of Judah temporarily passed under the domination of Egypt.

E. 610 B.C.- 599 B.C.-- The Rule Of Jehoiakim

It is interesting to note that Pharaoh-necho at this time had recovered the whole of the old Egyptian conquests of the empire. Fragments of a stela, dating from Necho's supremacy in Syria and bearing his name in hieroglyphics, have been found at Sidon. The new vassal-king of Judah, Jehoiakim, wasted his threatened country's assets in short-sightedly building a lavish new palace with forced labor (Jeremiah 22:13-19). In a prophecy, Jeremiah, predicts the coming judgment upon Jehoiakim--

Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 22:13-19

The prophet Jeremiah's ministry had begun (629 B.C.) in the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2) and extended to the fall of Jerusalem in 588 B.C., for forty years.

In the gigantic three-nation contest for world supremacy between Assyria, Egypt and Babylon which characterized the latter part of the reign of Josiah and was coeval with the ministry of Jeremiah in Judah, Babylon won out as the great prophet of Judah had foretold (Jeremiah 44:30, 46:1-28).

During the year 606 B.C., Nabopolassar's son, the crown prince of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, heavily defeated Necho II of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish, and so claimed control of all Syria and Palestine. This battle took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah (Jeremiah 46:2). The Hebrew prophet's oracle against Egypt at Carchemish is given in Jeremiah 46:1-12--

The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the Lord. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof. Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow. For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.

Even the famous balm of Gilead would not be able to help Necho of Egypt; for his defeat and downfall is divinely decreed.

In the twenty-first year of Nabopolassar (606 B.C.), the ailing Babylonian monarch stayed home, while the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar mustered the army of Akkad for the battle of Carchemish. The battle and its results are stated in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 5.1-8, Obverse)--

- 1 [The twenty-first year]: The king of Akkad stayed home (while) Nebuchadnezzar (II), his eldest son (and) the crown prince,
- 2 mustered [the army of Akkad]. He took his army's lead and marched to Carchemish which is on the bank of the Euphrates.
- 3 He crossed the river [to encounter the army of Egypt] which was encamped at Carchemish.
- 4 [...] They did battle together. The army of Egypt retreated before him.
- 5 He inflicted a [defeat] upon them (and) finished them off completely.
- 6 In the district of Hamath
- 7 the army of Akkad overtook
- 5 the remainder of the army of [Egypt
- 6 which] managed to escape [from] the defeat and which was not overcome.
- 7 They (the army of Akkad) inflicted a defeat upon them (so that) a single (Egyptian) man [did not return] home.
- 8 At that time Nebuchadnezzar (II) conquered all of Ha[ma]th.³⁷

It should be noted that the synchronism between Jehoiakim's fourth year (Jeremiah 46:2) and the battle of Carchemish dated May-June in Nabopolassar's twenty-first year, Nebuchadnezzar's accession year (606 B.C.), confirms the accuracy of the chronological reconstruction of this period-- the last kings of Judah.³⁸

In 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar II became king of Babylon. His father, Nabopolassar, had died on July 20, 606 B.C. (Gregorian calendar) as stated in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 5:9-11, Obverse)--

9 For twenty-one years Nabopolassar ruled Babylon.

10 On the eighth day of the month Ab he died. In the month Elul Nebuchadnezzar (II) returned to Babylon and

11 on the first day of the month Elul he ascended the royal throne in Babylon.³⁹

By August 12, 606 B.C. (Gregorian calendar), Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon-- 'king of kings'.

Approximately four years after Nebuchadnezzar became master of Palestine, Jehoiakim in his eighth year (601 BC.), shifted his allegiance to him (II Kings 24:1). From that time until the end of the southern Hebrew kingdom, the kings of Judah were vassals of the Babylonian king, and paid dearly when they attempted to cast off their new yoke.

II Kings 24:1 indicates that Jehoiakim was Nebuchadnezzar's servant for three years. This time span would cover the ninth through the eleventh years of the Judean king; it would correspond to years five-six-seven of King Nebuchadnezzar (601-600-599 B.C.). This is confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 5.5-13, Reverse).⁴⁰ For this document speaks of Nebuchadnezzar marching victoriously in Hattu during the fifth, sixth and seventh years.

In the year 601 B.C., the first submission of Jehoiachin and the fifth year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon lead his army to Egypt as Jeremiah had prophesied, Jeremiah 46:13-26. At this time, Jehoiakim submitted to Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 24:1); and he did this despite the warnings of Jeremiah. In this regard, Josephus writes that "the prophet Jeremiah foretold every day how vainly they relied on their hopes from Egypt, and how the city would be overthrown by the king of Babylon, and Jehoiakim the king would be subdued by him," *Antiquities* X.vi.2.

The year 599 B.C. was also the eleventh year of Jehoiakim. The king of Akkad came to Jerusalem with the purpose of binding 'him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon' (II Chronicles 35:6). However, during the events which transpired, Jehoiakim was killed by the king of Akkad. Then he commanded Jehoiakim's body to be thrown before the walls without any burial;⁴¹ this information is given by Josephus (*Antiquities* X.vi.3). This occurred in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.⁴² It was at this time when Daniel was deported (Daniel 1:1).

F. 599 B.C.- 598 B.C.-- The Three Month Reign Of Jehoiachin

Upon the death of his father, Jehoiachin ruled in Jerusalem (II Kings 24:8). The eighteen year old monarch only ruled for three months and ten days. The account of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem is found not only in II Kings 24:10-16, but also it is found in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 5.11-13, Reverse)--

11 The seventh year: In the month Kislev the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu.

12 He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) seized (its) king.

- 13 A king of his own choice he appointed in the city (and) taking the vast tribute he brought it to Babylon.⁴³

According to II Chronicles 36:10, 'the year was expired' as the exiles departed Jerusalem on the trek for Babylon. Among the exiles were: Jehoiachin, his mother, his wives, his officers, men of might, craftsmen, smiths and the strong, apt for war (II Kings 24:15-16). Others that were exiled at this time were: Esther and Mordecai (Esther 2:5-7). These events occurred exactly as Jeremiah had predicted concerning the fate of Jehoiachin (Coniah) at the hand of the Chaldeans.⁴⁴ It is worthy of note, Jeconiah only reigned three months, yet he was given a 599-598 B.C. reign. The Biblical year is a lunar year which changes in the spring, a couple of months after January 1. The Babylonian year changes at the same time as the Biblical year. Jehoiachin was captured in the Biblical twelfth month and Jehoiakim in the Biblical ninth month, both in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar.

In Babylon, Jehoiachin was a political prisoner for thirty-seven years (Jeremiah 52:31-34). This factor contributed to the situation that he was to remain 'childless' (Jeremiah 22:24-30). He was finally released by Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Evil-merodach (563 B.C.- 561 B.C.). Jehoiachin's imprisonment of thirty-six years covers the time span from 599 B.C.- 563 B.C. Both of these years were at the turn of the year on the Gregorian calendar-- 599 B.C. was becoming 598 B.C. (cf., II Chronicles 36:9-10), and 563 B.C. was becoming 562 B.C., (cf., Esther 9:20-22). The Hebrew expression "in the thirty-seventh year" means thirty six years, i.e., thirty-seven years are not complete. The Gregorian date for the beginning of Jehoiachin's captivity is February 19, 598 B.C., a Sunday. This date is parallel to the Hebrew date of Adar 2 which is given in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 5.11-13, Reverse). The Gregorian date for the release of Jehoiachin from prison is March 7, 562 B.C., a Thursday. Therefore, 598 B.C. (the year of the deportation of Jehoiachin) minus thirty-six years equals 562 B.C. (the accession year of Evil-merodach and the year that King Jehoiachin was released from prison). Evil-merodach gave the king a daily allowance of food for the rest of his life (II Kings 25:27-30).

An interesting fact of Biblical history has been singularly confirmed by Babylonian records which list *Yaukin of the land of Yahud*, i.e., Jehoiachin of the land of Judah, as one of the recipients of the royal rations.

(text Babylon 28122, obverse 29-33)

... t[o?] Ia-'-u-kin, king ...
to the qiputu-house of ...
... for Shalamiamu, the ...
... for 126 men from Tyre ...
... for Zabiria, the Ly[dian] ...

(text Babylon 28178, obverse ii 38-40)

10 (sila of oil) to [Ia]-'-u-kin, king of Ia[...]
2 1/2 sila of (oil) to [...so]ns of the king of Judah
(Ia-a-hu-du)
4 sila to 8 men from Judah (Ia-a-hu-da-a-a) ...

(text Babylon 28186, reverse ii 13-18)

1 1/2 sila (oil) for 3 carpenters from Arvad, 1/2 sila each
11 1/2 sila for 8 ditto from Byblos, 1/2 sila each
3 1/2 sila for 7 ditto, Greeks, 1/2 sila each
1/2 sila to Nabuetir the carpenter

- 10 (sila) to Ia-ku-u-ki-nu, the son of the king of
Ia-ku-du (i.e. Judah)
2 1/2 sila for the 5 sons of the king of Judah (Ia-ku-du)
through Qana'a [...]⁴⁵

A collection of cuneiform tablets in a work entitled *Joiaichin, König von Juda, in Babylonischen Keilschrifttexten* was published by Ernst F. Weidner in 1939. These tablets contain lists of payments of rations in oil and grain to captives and skilled workmen living in Babylon between 595 B.C. and 570 B.C. Notice that Jehoiachin is called 'king' in these Babylonian texts.

Another archaeological discovery bears witness to the three month and ten day reign of Jehoiachin in Judah and his exile in Babylon. Three inscribed jar handles were found in Palestine which bear the inscription-- "Belonging to Eliakim, steward of Jehoiachin."⁴⁶ Two of these were found at Debir, in southern Judah, and the third at Beth-shemesh, fifteen miles west of Jerusalem. All were made from the original stamp seal. On the basis of this inscription one may conclude that a man named Eliakim was steward of Jehoiachin's crown property while the king was in captivity. It appears that Zedekiah did not appropriate Jehoiachin's property.

G. 598 B.C.- 588 B.C.-- The Reign Of Zedekiah

With Jehoiachin taken into exile during the seventh of Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian reckoning; cf., the Babylonian Chronicles) or his eighth year in Hebrew reckoning (cf., II Kings 24:12), the king of Babylon appointed over Jerusalem 'a king of his own choice'. That king was Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's father's brother, whose name was changed by the king of Babylon to Zedekiah. Zedekiah became king a few days before the Biblical year changes, hence his eleven year reign became ten years in our calendar reckoning. In contrast, Jeconiah was given a year, whereas Zedekiah lost a year.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (598 B.C.-588 B.C.), was a weak ruler because he occupied an ambiguous position. Many of the Judeans still regarded his nephew, Jehoiachin, as the legitimate ruler, even though he was in exile. Also, it appears that the Babylonians regarded Jehoiachin to be the true king of Judah. They held him in hostage in Babylon in order to guarantee the good behavior of the Judeans. The prophet Ezekiel, too, regarded Jehoiachin as king even while in exile. For the seer dates his vision as follows: "In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity." In fact, Ezekiel dates all of his visions from Jehoiachin's captivity. A king of the east remained king until his death as a result of the loyalty oaths of his subjects.

As a puppet of the king of Akkad, Zedekiah was continually under pressure from his advisors and subjects to seek the help of Egypt and to revolt against Babylon. By 589 B.C. the pro-Egyptian party had its way in Zedekiah's court. Despite Jeremiah's solemn warnings against this foolish course of action, Zedekiah turned to Pharaoh-hophra (Apries of the Greek historians) for aid and revolted against Nebuchadnezzar.

Although the prophet encouraged Zedekiah to exercise restraint and reject the advice of the pro-Egyptian counselors, the weak king allowed himself to be led on the path that brought destruction to Jerusalem, and exile to Judah. False prophets assured that exiles including king Jehoiachin would soon be back in Judah (Jeremiah 28:1-17), on the other hand, Jeremiah urged the exiles to make the best of their position in Babylon. The prophet, Jeremiah, knowing the impending doom awaiting Jerusalem, suggests that the exiles live in Babylon as though they would be there for a number of

The following is a quote from Jeremiah's letter which was sent to the exiles in Babylon:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. ..

For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. Jeremiah 29:4-7, 10

Thus, the exiles would be in Babylon for seventy years, not two years as the false prophet, Hananiah, had predicted (Jeremiah 28:3-4).

Before Jerusalem fell to the invading armies of the king of Akkad, one by one the Judean strongholds fell before Nebuchadnezzar's armies until only Azekah, Lachish and the golden city of Jerusalem remained.

The life and times of the prophet Jeremiah have been vividly illustrated through the archaeological discovery in 1935 by J. L. Starkey of eighteen ostraca inscribed in Hebrew in the ancient Phoenician script.⁴⁷ These priceless Hebrew documents were uncovered in the guard room adjoining the outer gate of the city of Lachish (Tell-ed-Duweir). Lachish was an ancient Judean fortress approximately twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Three additional ostraca were found in the last campaign at Lachish in 1938, and this discovery raised the total inscribed potsherds to twenty-one.⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that Jeremiah, in one of his prophecies addressed to King Zedekiah, makes a reference to Judah's fortified cities which is strikingly illuminated by the Lachish ostraca. The divine oracle uttered through the prophet is placed in the following chronological time frame: "Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah" (Jeremiah 34:6-7). Most of the Lachish Letters are notes addressed by a man named Hoshaiiah to Yaosh, commander of the Judean forces at Lachish. Hoshaiiah was evidently in charge of an outpost north of Lachish in a position where he could see the smoke signals from Azekah. The fourth letter says, "And let (my lord) know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given for we cannot see Azekah."⁴⁹ This is only the last portion of the letter; yet it sheds much light on the system of signaling used by the Jewish army in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. The Biblical site of Azekah (Tell Zakariya) in the Shepelah was excavated by Frederick J. Bliss of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1898. The city's strong fortifications were authenticated by the excavations there.

Perhaps, the most significant letter from the entire ostraca collection is the third letter. It gives the following information:

Thy servant Hoshaiiah hath sent to inform my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace! And now thou hast sent a letter, but my lord did not enlighten thy servant concerning the letter which thou didst send to thy servant yesterday evening, though the heart of thy servant hath been sick since thou didst write to thy servant. And as for what my lord said, "Dost thou not understand?-- call a scribe!" as Yahweh liveth no one hath ever undertaken to call a scribe for me; and as for any scribe who might have come to me, truly I did not call him nor would I give anything at all for him!

And it hath been reported to thy servant, saying, "The commander of the host, Coniah son of Elnathan, hath come down in order to go into Egypt; and unto Hodaviah son of Ahijah and his men hath he sent to obtain ... from him."

And as for the letter of Tobiah, servant of the king, which came to Shalum son of Jaddua through the prophet, saying, "Beware!", thy servant hath sent it to my lord.⁵⁰

Hoshaiah, like a number of names in the various ostraca, is Biblical and occurs in Jeremiah 42:1 and Nehemiah 12:32. Yaosh (Joash) is an abbreviated Hebrew name for Josiah. The divine Name is referred to by the use of the tetragrammaton YHWH which are the consonants of the name Yahweh or Jehovah. The ostraca use good Biblical compounds of the divine Name, *e.g.*, Hoshaiah, (Yaosh) Josiah, Coniah, Hadaviah, Ahijah and Tobiah. The iah or jah is the shortened form of Jehovah or Yahweh-- Yah.

H. 588 B.C.-- Gedaliah, Governor Of The Province Of Judah

The Lord had permitted Nebuchadnezzar to gain a temporary victory in order to chastise idolatrous Israel. The chronicler states that the king of the Chaldees carried them that had escaped from the sword to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia (II Chronicles 36:20). Jeremiah had previously predicted the seventy year Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 25:8-14). Because the Lord used Nebuchadnezzar to chastise Judah, He referred to the king of Babylon as 'my servant' (Jeremiah 25:9). In another prophecy regarding the seventy year exile, the weeping prophet assured that God would bring His people back to their own land: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place," Jeremiah 29:10. Jeremiah encouraged the people to settle permanently and profitably in Babylon and to long for the day of deliverance (Jeremiah 29:4-10).

The state of Judah remained in a ruined condition after the fall of Jerusalem. This is because the principal citizens were either killed or deported. The population that stayed in the land consisted largely of poor peasants who were regarded as too weak to cause trouble. The desolations of Judah remained "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 her sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years," II Chronicles 36:21.

The king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah to serve as governor of the province of Judah, with headquarters at Mizpah because Jerusalem was in ruins (II Kings 25:23). Gedaliah was a noble whose father had once saved Jeremiah's life (Jeremiah 26:24). His grandfather, Shaphan, was probably the Shaphan who was an official in Josiah's court at the time of the great reform (II Kings 22:3). A seal was found at Lachish which contains the Hebrew inscription, 'To Gedaliah, who is over the house'.⁵¹ The presence of this seal at Lachish suggests that Gedaliah served as one of the last prime ministers of Judah. The title 'who is over the house' was used of the highest official of the land next to the king.

The appointment of Gedaliah as governor of Judah may have been a conciliating gesture toward the remaining Judeans. The new governor sought to lead the people to a return to normalcy (Jeremiah 40:7-10). However, his efforts were thwarted when Ishmael and a band of conspirators killed Gedaliah, along with the Jews who were with him at the Babylonian garrison at Mizpah (Jeremiah 41:1-3). Ishmael escaped to Ammon, and the Judeans who remained feared the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar after this act of defiance in killing the appointed governor. Contrary to the advice of Jeremiah, they were determined to flee to Egypt, and the prophet was forced to accompany them (Jeremiah 42:1-- 44:30).

This time period is an interesting span of history because three empires are struggling for world supremacy-- Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. Unfortunately, the tiny kingdoms of Israel and Judah got caught in the cross-fire. Babylon became the head of the nations as Daniel predicted.

V. 588 B.C.-- Jerusalem's Fall Astronomically Fixed

A. A Sabbath Year

In 590 B.C., Jerusalem and Judah openly revolted against Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (II Kings 24:20). This was the sixteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and it was in the ninth year of Zedekiah (Kings 25:1). The siege of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem began on the Hebrew date of Tebet 10 (December 21, 590 B.C., a Sunday). Ezekiel's wife died and the Lord told the prophet to mark that day-- the same day that the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem (Ezekiel 24:1-18).⁵²

The writer of the book of II Kings gives the detail of the first part of the siege against Jerusalem:

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. II Kings 25:1-3

These events, doubtless, took place before Nebuchadnezzar was forced to withdraw his siege of Jerusalem so that he could fight the Egyptians upon whom Zedekiah had reliance. However, Jeremiah warned that Hophra's army, which was come to help, would return to Egypt again and that the Chaldeans would return to capture Jerusalem and burn it.⁵³

It is also note worthy that Ezekiel dated his prophecy against Egypt on the Hebrew date of Tebet 12, in the tenth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (Ezekiel 29:1-16), approximately one year after Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem (December 13, 589 B.C., Gregorian calendar). Perhaps, during this time when Ezekiel received his prophecy against Egypt, Babylonian and Egyptian armies were clashing.

Another chronological feature occurring during the year 589 B.C., while the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, and while Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the prison in the king of Judah's house, was that the Lord told Jeremiah to buy the field in Anathoth of Hanameel, the son of Shallum his uncle (Jeremiah 32:1-2, 6-15). The words of the Lord, "the right of redemption is thine to buy it," Jeremiah 32:7, would indicate that 589 B.C. was a Sabbatical year.⁵⁴ But a better proof that 589 B.C. was a Sabbath year is the release of the slaves mentioned in Jeremiah 34:8-10 (*cf.*, Deuteronomy 15:1-18). Later, when the Babylonians raised their siege, the slaves were brought back into subjection (Jeremiah 34:1-14).⁵⁵ The fact that Jerusalem fell the year after a Sabbath year is significant in dating the destruction year with absolute chronology.

The end came swiftly for the capital of Judah. After the Babylonian army had quickly driven the Egyptian forces back toward Egypt; they continued the siege of Jerusalem. On Tammuz 9, a Sabbath day, a breach was made in Jerusalem's walls by the king of Akkad (II Kings 25:3; Jeremiah 52:6).

All the men of war and King Zedekiah escaped Jerusalem by night (July 4, 588 B.C., II Kings 25:4; Jeremiah 52:7). The army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho while his army was scattered from him.

Later, King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was brought up to Riblah where the

king of Babylon was in order to bring judgment upon him. There, they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of King Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. These tragic events happened in order to fulfill the word which Jeremiah had previously spoken to the king: "Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out [from the prison]; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon," Jeremiah 37:17. The complete destruction of Jerusalem came a month later.

As Jerusalem was burning, the army of the Chaldees that came with Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Thus, Jerusalem was mercilessly sacked and razed to the ground.

B. A Sabbath Day

On Ab 7, a Sabbath day (July 31, 588 B.C., Gregorian calendar), the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of Nebuchadnezzar, came to Jerusalem and set on fire the Temple, the palace and all the houses of Jerusalem (II Kings 25:8-9). It should be noted that the Hebrew text of II Kings 25 is written from the chronological point of view as to the date when the fire was set which devastated the golden city, and that the nineteenth year of the king of Babylon is Hebrew reckoning. The text reads as follows:

And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. II Kings 25:8-9

The date of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, also happened on Ab 7, 657 years later.

The book of II Chronicles does not give the date when the city and its Temple were put to the flames. However, the latter appendix on Jeremiah 52:12 differs somewhat from II Kings 25:8-9 in its chronological arrangement. The text refers to Ab 10 (August 3, 588 B.C.) as the date for the destruction of the Solomonic Temple:

Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, And burned the house of the Lord, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire: Jeremiah 52:12-13

The difference between the two texts can be easily reconciled. The Temple was ignited on the evening of the seventh of Ab according to II Kings, which would be the eighth on the Hebrew calendar and the fire continued through the eighth and ninth of Ab and was completely burned out by the tenth of Ab. According to Josephus, it took two days for the Second Temple to burn.⁵⁶ Therefore, the chronological data of Jeremiah 52:12-13 gives the date when the Temple destruction was complete.

Many of the people of Jerusalem and Judah did not believe the prophecies of Jeremiah when he spoke of the complete destruction of the city. For they said, 'the Temple of the Lord', 'the Temple of the Lord' (Jeremiah 7:4), but when they saw the House of the Lord in flame, they knew that they had believed lying words. Jeremiah had prophesied correctly, but their repentance had come too late. According to II Chronicles 36:14, the Temple was destroyed because "all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted

the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."

The Babylonian Talmud gives a different date for the Temple destruction-- that date is Ab 9 (August 2, 588 B.C.; Gregorian calendar). The Talmud states:

The day on which the first Temple was destroyed was the ninth of Ab, and it was at the going out of the Sabbath [i.e., Sunday], and at the end of the seventh [Sabbatical] year. The [priestly] guard was that of Jehoiarib, the priests and Levites were standing on their platform singing the song. What song was it? *And he hath brought upon them their iniquity, and will cut them off in their evil.* They had no time to complete [the psalm with] 'The Lord our God will cut them off, before the enemies came and overwhelmed them. The same happened the second time [the second Sanctuary's destruction].⁵⁷ Mishnah Tract, 'Arakin 11b

It appears that the Talmudic date marks the final burning of the Temple, i.e., as the fire was burning itself out.

At this point, the computer calendar is of extreme value; for it provides the day of the week for each Jewish date in history. In the year 588 B.C., the seventh of Ab (II Kings 25:8-9) fell on Saturday; it occurred on Wednesday in 587 B.C.; and it was a Tuesday in 586 B.C. The Talmud (Mishna Tract, Ta'anith, 29a) states that the eve of the ninth was a Sunday, which in Hebrew calculations from sunset would also be described as the going out of the eighth-- a Sunday. This agrees with the computer calendar for 588 B.C. namely, that if the going out of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth was a Sunday, the seventh was a Saturday (Sabbath). The days of the week for the other years near 588 B.C. such as 587/586 B.C., dates suggested by scholars for the fall of Jerusalem, are impossible to reconcile.

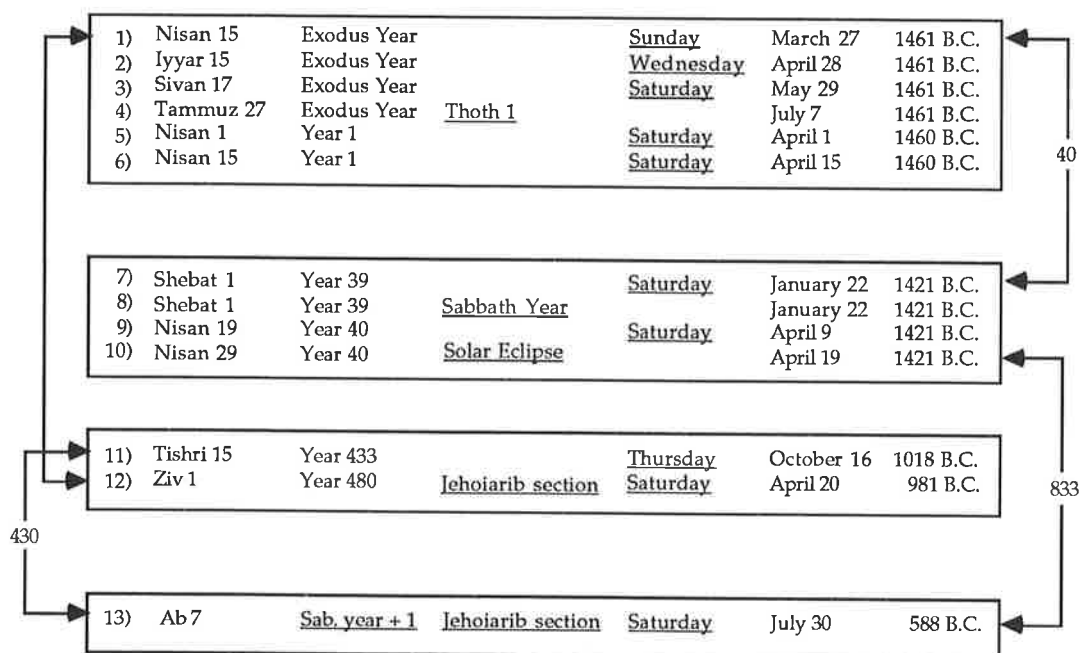
The Sabbath day cycle and days of the week in the above texts would suggest that 588 B.C. is the year of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. Other 'monitor cycles' pinpointing that date of Jerusalem's fall would be the Sabbath year cycles. It has already been confirmed from several texts in Jeremiah that the tenth year of Zedekiah was a Sabbatical year. That was the year before Jerusalem's desolation.

C. Priestly Cycle

The next witness to the exact date of the destruction is the reference to the priestly cycle. It was the Jehoiarib section that was ministering at the time of the Temple's burning. The rotation of the priests organized by David into twenty-four sections occurred every Sabbath for a new section (I Chronicles 24:3-19). It took 168 days (24 x 7) to complete the cycle.

The quote from the Talmud involves the cyclical phenomena of Israel (the Sabbath, the Sabbatical year, and the priestly cycle). Therefore, the destruction of Jerusalem came 'at the going out of the Sabbath', at the end of the seventh [Sabbatical] year and during the 'Jehoiarib section of the priests who were ministering in the Temple'. According to the computer calendar, these above conditions could only occur for the year 588 B.C. (see Illustration II).

ILLUSTRATION II: Astronomically Fixing The Dates Of Moses And Nebuchadnezzar



D. Seventeen Jubilees

Another means for verifying the date 588 B.C. for the destruction of Jerusalem is the following Talmudic reference: "Seventeen jubilee [cycles] did Israel count from the time they entered the Land [of Israel] until they left it."⁵⁸ Seventeen Jubilees would contain 833 years (49 years x 17 = 833 years). The time that Israel entered the Promised Land was forty years after the Exodus (1461 B.C. + 40 = 1421 B.C.). Simple mathematics demonstrate that there are exactly 833 years between the years 1421 B.C. the entrance into the land and 588 B.C., the departure from the land (1421 B.C. + 833 = 588 B.C.).

E. 430 Years Of Ezekiel

The total number of 430 years in Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezekiel 4:4-6) appears to be also the length of time from David's capture of Jerusalem in 1018 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. (1018 B.C. + 430 = 588 B.C.). This is the number of years that Jerusalem would be in existence and that the Ark of the Covenant rested there undisturbed.

F. Fourth Year Of Solomon

David captured Jerusalem and reigned there thirty-three years before he gave the throne to Solomon (II Chronicles 29:26). Solomon began the construction of his temple four years later, 480 years after the Exodus (I Kings 6:1).

G. Exodus Year

Moses returned to Sinai two months after the Exodus (Exodus 19:1) on Sivan 15, and two days later on a Saturday, the Revelation was read. He then went up the mountain for forty days, coming down to find Israel worshipping the golden calf on Thoth 1, New Year's Day, when the Egyptians worshipped the cow Apis.

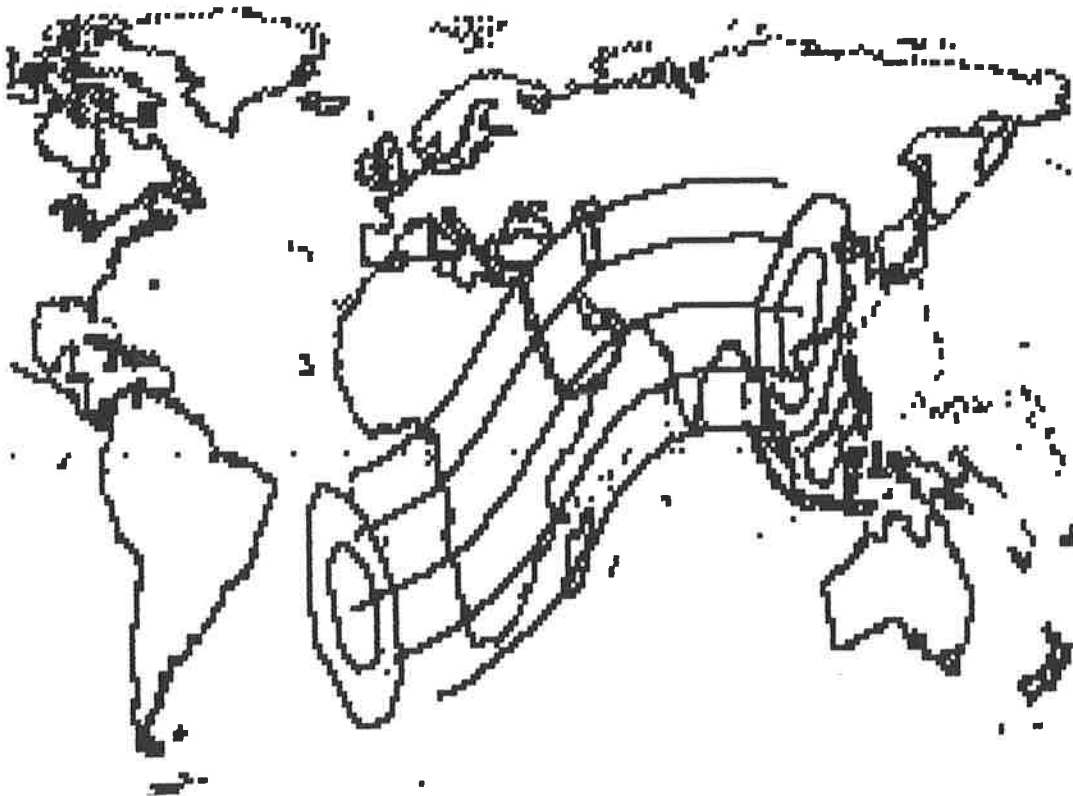
H. Second Law

Moses read the second Law thirty-nine years later, on Shebat 1, also a Saturday and a Sabbath year (Deuteronomy 1:3).

I. Joshua's Long Day

Joshua defeated the five kings on Nisan 29. Hail fell and the sun and moon stopped. A solar eclipse took place over Palestine on that date, April 19, 1421 B.C.

ILLUSTRATION III: Eclipse Map, April 19, 1421 BC, At 100%, 60,% & 30% of Total



Summary

The chronology of the rise of Babylon and the last years of Judea and Israel were important to a large extent for several reasons. The Biblical records have been examined and compared to Thiele's work, *The Mysterious Numbers Of The Hebrew Kings*, in a previous book entitled *History, Harmony and the Hebrew Kings*. The less absolute are the dates for given events, the more vague will be the associated events. The more absolute the dates, the greater will be the credibility of the text itself. Insignificant as one year error might seem, it can throw an entire chronology out of line. When astronomical and Sabbath cycles are used, there is no room for any deviation, not even one day. It was necessary to introduce the Exodus and the conquest date for several reasons. First, there are several dates at each of these events which are dated forty years apart. Once these two dates are validated, they are then connected to

which they contact the kings. There is no date more absolute in history than the date of the Exodus.

Chronology Recap

1) In 729 B.C., Hezekiah began to rule. He revolted in his first year, opened the Temple and repaired it in the first month (II Chronicles 29:3). The priests were placed in their proper order (29:25) and Temple services began in the second month (30:2). Ziv 2, 728 B.C., was a Saturday, and the first section of priests (Jehoiarib) was coming on duty. The revolt was in some way influenced by the sickness and ultimate death of Tiglath-pileser III.

2) In 727 B.C., Shalmaneser of Assyria began to rule. He went against Damascus. Hezekiah, Hoshea, and So of Egypt formed an alliance.

3) In 725 B.C., Shalmaneser came against Hoshea, and after three years, he defeated Samaria in 723 B.C., 700 years after Moses read the Law.

4) In 715 B.C., Sennacherib was ruling from Nineveh while his father Sargon was ruling from Khorsabad. During his fourteenth year, the Judean monarch, Hezekiah was trapped in Jerusalem. A miracle of God saved Hezekiah who had no children then, but was given an extended fifteen years of life. Tirhakah, king of Egypt, was trying to come to the rescue of Hezekiah but was defeated by Sennacherib who took tribute to his father Sargon. In the third year of Sennacherib (702 B.C.) the Assyrian king boasts that he took a smaller tribute from Hezekiah the first time than he did the second. This was a Jubilee year ordained of God (II Kings 19:29).

5) In 702 B.C. (year 27 of Hezekiah) Sennacherib made a second assault on Jerusalem. He humbled Hezekiah a second time (II Chronicles 32:25).

6) In 624 B.C., Josiah, like Hezekiah, had a reform in his eighteenth year (II Chronicles 34:8). The book of the Law was found and read, which required a Sabbath year (34:15). The priests were placed back in order (35:4), and on Veadar 24, 624 B.C., a Saturday, the first order, Jehoiarib, began.

7) In 610 B.C., Josiah was killed by Necho who was on his way to fight against Babylon in defense of Assyria. The country people made his son Jehoahaz king, but three months later, Necho replaced him with his brother Jehoiakim. The death of Josiah and Sin-shar-ishkun were concurrent.

8) Nebuchadnezzar took tribute from Jehoiakim in his eighth year (601 B.C.) and after three years, replaced him with his son, Jeconiah (599 B.C.). By 590 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, which was lifted in 589 B.C. to fight Egypt. This was the tenth year of Zedekiah and a Sabbath year (Jeremiah 34:8 ff.). Jerusalem was finally destroyed on Ab 7, 588 B.C. It was a Saturday and the Jehoiarib priests were on duty. These chronological requirements all fit. Five years later in 583 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt and took the last of the remaining Jews into captivity. In 577 B.C., he went mad for six years. During this period his kingdom was kept for him by his wife, and his son, Belshazzar, until 574 B.C.; then by his wife and brother-in-law, Astyages, until 571 B.C. when he returned. By 569 B.C., Esther is engaged to Astyages, and by 568 she is married. In 563 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar died, his grandson, Evil-Merodach is king, Jeconiah is released, and the first Purim takes place. This Purim was in year twelve of Astyages, on Adar 13, a Saturday.

Chapter II - NOTES

¹E. W. Faulstich, *History, Harmony and the Hebrew Kings* (Spencer, Iowa: Chronology Books, 1986).

²Hoshea made an alliance with So (II Kings 17:4). His Egyptian name is Osorkon, who died that year.

Six years later, Bocchoris' reign ended, and his predecessor, Sib'e, is finally defeated in Syria during the second year of Sargon (720 B.C.)--

"In my second year of reign, Illu-bi'di of Hamath] ... of the wide [land of Ammurru?] he gathered together at the city of Karkar and the oath ... [the cities of Arpad, Simirra], Damascus and Samaria [revolted against me] ... I established and Sib'u ordered his turtan to go to his (Hanno's) aid, and he came forth against me, offering battle and fight. At the command of Assur, my lord, I defeated them and Sib'u ran off alone like a shepherd whose sheep have been carried off, and he died. Hanuni (Hanno) I seized with my own hand and took him to my city, Assur, in chains. The city of Rapihu I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire; 9,033 people, together with their many possessions, I carried off." Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records Of Assyria And Babylonia* (Abbreviated ARAB) Volume II (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), sec. 5, p. 3.

³ARAB, Vol. I, sec. 816, p. 293. Compare II Kings 15:30. The Assyrian Eponym List shows three years of military activity by Tiglath-pileser III in Syro-Palestine. This military campaign occurred during the time of the Syro-Ephaimitish invasion of Jerusalem: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it" (Isaiah 7:1). Compare II Kings 16:5-10 where King Ahaz asks Tiglath-pileser for help against Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel. Notice how the Assyrian Canon parallels the Biblical account:

734 Bel-dan	(governor) of Calah	against Philistia
733 Assur-daninani	(governor) of Mezamua	against the land of Damascus
732 Nabu-bel-usur	(governor) of Si'me	against the land of Damascus

Arab, Vol. II, sec. 1198, p. 436.

It is, no doubt, 732 B.C. when Hoshea conspires against Pekah of Israel and when Tiglath-pileser deports the tribe of Naphtali according to II Kings 15:29-30--

"In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-machah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, [in his twentieth year].

⁴ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 1198, p. 437.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 205.

⁷Hayim Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Asshur: A Chronological Study," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 12 (1958) PP. 22-40, 77-100.

⁸A. K. Grayson, "Assyrian And Babylonian Chronicles," (abbreviated ABC) A. Leo Oppenheim, et al., eds., *Texts From Cuneiform Sources*, Volume V (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin, Publisher, 1975), p. 73.

⁹Hayim Tadmor, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 f.

¹⁰ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 4, p. 2.

¹¹ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 55, p. 26.

¹²ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 92, p. 46.

¹³ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 80, p. 40.

¹⁴ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 134, pp. 70-71.

¹⁵ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 17, p. 7.

¹⁶The synchronization of the Assyrian Eponym Canon with the Assyrian King List is given in the following chart:

<u>Assyrian king</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Year B.C.</u>	<u>Eponym</u>
Shalmaneser II	12 years	1030	
Ashur-nirari IV	6 years	1018	
Ashur-rabi II	41 years	1012	
Ashur-resh-ishi II	5 years	971	
Tiglath-pileser II	32 years	966	
Ashur-dan II	23 years	934	
Adad-nirari II	21 years	911	
Tukulti-urta II	7 years [6]	890	
Ashur-nasir-pal II	25 years	884	
Shalmaneser III	35 years	859	Tab-bel
Shamash-adad V	13 years	824	Iahallu
Adad-nirari III	28 years	811	Shamash-kumua
Shalmaneser IV	10 years	783	Urta-nasir
Ashur-dan III	18 years	773	Mannu-ki-adad
ECLIPSE of June 15th		763	Bur-Sagale
Ashur-nirari V	10 years	755	Ikishu
Tiglath-pileser III	18 years	745	Nabu-bel-user
Shalmaneser V	5 years	727	Bel-harran-bel-user
Sargon II	17 years	722	Urta-ilia
Sennacherib	24 years	705	Nashir-bel
Esarhaddon			

The duration of the reign of each Assyrian monarch from Shalmaneser II to Shalmaneser V is taken from the Assyrian King List [See *ANET* pp. 566]. The duration of the reigns of Sargon II and Sennacherib are known from the Assyrian Eponym Lists by the numbers of eponyms which occur during the rulership of each king. The length of Sargon's rule can also be known from the Babylonian Chronicles--Chronicle 1.ii.6.

While the Assyrian King List gives to Tukulti-urta II a length of seven years for his kingship, it is clear that the four Assyrian Eponym Lists only provide a six year reign. This is known by the number of eponyms between Tukulti-urta II and Ashur-nasir-pal II.

¹⁷The Assyrian Eponym Canon kept by the ancients record years and events. Each year was named after a key official in the government called an eponym. The eponym included the name of the Assyrian official and often a major event which took place during the year. The canon gives the following statement about the solar eclipse:

763 Bur(Ishdi)-Sagale (governor) of Guzana revolt in the city of Assur. In the month of Simanu an eclipse of the sun took place." Arab, Vol. II, sec. 1198, p. 435.

¹⁸ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 770-778, pp. 292-296.

¹⁹ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 779-785, pp. 296-298; sec. 817-834, pp. 313-321.

²⁰ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 787-790, pp. 299-302.

²¹ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 791-798, pp. 302-305.

²²ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 799-816, pp. 305-313.

²³ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 690, pp. 265-266.

²⁴The Cylinder C Inscription' gives the following data relating to Manasseh, king of Judah, during the first campaign of Asurbanipal:

"In the course of my campaign, Ba'alu, king of Tyre, Minse (Manasseh), king of Iaudi (Judah), Kaush-gabri, king of Edom, Musuri, king of Moab, Sil-bel, king of Gaza, Mitinti, king of Ashkelon, Ikausu, king of Ekron, Milki-ashapa, king of Gubla (Byblos), Iakinlu, king of Arvad, Abi-ba'al, king of Samsi-muruna, Ammi-nadbi, king of Beth-Ammon, Ahu-milki, king of Ashdod, Ekishtura, king of Edi'li, Pilagura, king of Kitrusi, Kisu, king of Silua, Ituandar, king of Pappa, Erisu, king of Sillu, Damasu, king of Kuri, Admesu, king of Tamesu, Damusu, king of Karti-hadasti, Unasagusu, king of Lidir, Bususu, king of Nure,-- in all 22 kings of the seacoast of the midst of the sea and of the dry land, vassals of mine, brought their rich (lit., heavy) gifts [before me] and kissed my feet. [Those kings], together with their forces ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 876, pp. 340-341.

²⁵On two stela inscriptions which appear as a tomb inscription of the mother of Nabonidus, she gives total years of Ashurbanipal (42) and his son, Ashur-etil-ilani (3)--

"From the 20th year of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, when I was born, until the 42nd year of Ashurbanipal, the 3rd year of his son Ashur-etil-ili, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar, the 2nd year of Awel-Merodach, the 4th year of Neriglissar, during (all) these 95 years in which I visited the temple of the great godhead of Sin, the king of all the gods in heaven and in the nether world, he looked with favor upon my pious good works and listened to my prayers, accepted my vows." James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (Abbreviated ANET) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 561.

²⁶The Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 3.10-12) reports that in his tenth year of reign, Nabopolassar fought with both Egypt and Assyria in a combined force--

- 10 "In the month Tishri the army of Egypt and the army of Assyria went after the king of Akkad as far as Gablini but
- 11 they did not overtake the king of Akkad (so) they withdrew. In the month Adar the army of Assyria and the army of Akkad
- 12 did battle against one another at Madanu, (a suburb) of Anaphu, and the army of Assyria"

Grayson, ABC, p. 91.

²⁷ANET, pp. 304-305.

²⁸Grayson, ABC, pp. 95-96.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁰Josephus relates the story of Nahum's prophecy against Nineveh--

"Now there was at that time a prophet, whose name was Nahum, who spake after this manner concerning the overthrow of the Assyrians and of Nineveh: 'Nineveh shall be a pool of water in motion; so shall all her people be troubled, and tossed, and go away by flight, while they say one to another, Stand, stand still, seize their gold and silver, for there shall be no one to wish them well, for they will rather save their lives than their money; for a terrible contention shall possess them one with another, and

lamentation, and loosing of the members, and their countenances shall be perfectly black with fear. And there will be the den of the lions, and the mother of the young lions! God says to thee, Nineveh, that they shall deface thee, and the lion shall no longer go out from thee to give laws to the world.' And, indeed, this prophet prophesied many other things besides these concerning Nineveh, which I do not think necessary to repeat, and I here omit them, that I may not appear troublesome to my readers; all which things happened about Nineveh a hundred and fifteen years afterward:-- so this may suffice to have spoken of these matters." *Antiquities* IX.xi.3.

³¹ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 12, 18, pp. 6-8.

³²Further proof that the fourteenth of Hezekiah is not the third of Sennacherib is events related to the life of Babylon's Merodoch-baladan. He disappeared into swamplands after his defeat in Sennacherib's first year (704 B.C.) although Sennacherib conducted an extensive search for him. Cf., ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 256-260, pp. 128-131. He never shows up again in any historical record. Scripture, however, describes him as quite well and alive sometime during Hezekiah's fourteenth year (II Kings 20:12-13). It is imperative, therefore, that the third year of Sennacherib be placed sometime later than Hezekiah's fourteenth year. Dr. Thiele's popular chronology equates Sennacherib's third year with Hezekiah's year fourteen.

³³ARAB, Vol. II, sec. 239-240, pp. 118-121.

³⁴Grayson, ABC, pp. 95-96.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁶The death of Jehoahaz or Shallum in a foreign land had been predicted earlier by Jeremiah-- "For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more: But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. Jeremiah 22:11-12"

³⁷Grayson, ABC, pp. 99-100.

³⁸At this point, the prophet Jeremiah makes several chronological statements. The first is given in Jeremiah 25:1--

"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon:"

Jeremiah states that the fourth of Jehoiakim (606 B.C.) is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. This is Hebrew reckoning which counts the accession year as year one. In Babylonian reckoning, the fourth year of Jehoiakim (606 B.C.) would be equal to the accession year of the king of Babylon.

Another chronological reference is given by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 25:3--

"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Ammon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened."

In this passage, the prophet is essentially saying, from the thirteenth year of Josiah (629 B.C.) unto the fourth year of Jehoiakin (606 B.C.) is twenty-three years (629 B.C. + 23 = 606 B.C.). It can be seen that the chronology is absolute.

³⁹Grayson, ABC, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁰See the Babylonian Chronicles in Grayson, ABC, pp. 100-101. During each year (601, 600, 599 B.C.), the king of Akkad mustered his troops and came to Hattu (Syro-Palestine).

⁴¹Here is Josephus' statement regarding Nebuchadnezzar's incursion against Jerusalem during Jehoiakim's eleventh year--

"Now a little time afterwards, the king of Babylon made an expedition against Jehoiakim, whom he received [into the city,] and this out of fear of the foregoing predictions of this prophet, as supposing that

he should suffer nothing that was terrible, because he neither shut the gates, nor fought against him; yet when he was come into the city, he did not observe the covenants he had made; but he slew such as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity, together with their king Jehoiakim, whom he commanded to be thrown before the walls, without any burial; and made his son Jehoiachin king of the country and of the city: he also took the principal persons in dignity for captives, three thousand in number, and led them away to Babylon; among whom was the prophet Ezekiel, who was then but young. And this was the end of king Jehoiakim, when he had lived thirty-six years, and of them reigned eleven." *Antiquities* X.vi.3.

⁴²Jeremiah foretells the unusual end of Jehoiakim and his disgrace in death- "Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." Jeremiah 22:18-19. No doubt, Jehoiakim was killed outside of the city walls. When the city came under siege by Nebuchadnezzar, it was impossible for the ruler of Judah to receive a proper burial.

⁴³Grayson, *ABC*, p. 102.

⁴⁴Jeremiah gives the following prophecy regarding the capture and captivity of Jehoiachin-- "As I live saith, the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Jeremiah 22:24-30.

⁴⁵*ANET*, p. 308. Cf., W. F. Albright, "King Jehoiachin in Exile," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 5 (1942), pp. 49 f.

⁴⁶Cf., Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology And The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 293. Also, see W. F. Albright, "The Seal of Eliakim and the Latest Pre-Exilic History of Judah," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 51 (1932), pp. 77-106.

⁴⁷These are pottery sherds, ostraca, on which messages were written in black ink in the cursive Phoenician script in the epistolary style of classical Hebrew prose, contemporary with the last years of the prophet Jeremiah. These ostraca are first hand documents of the political and military situation just prior to Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem. For more information on the Lachish Letters, see H. Torczyner, O. Tufnell, C. H. Inge, G. L. Harding, et al., Lachish, Vol. I, *The Lachish Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); Vol. II, *The Fosse Temple* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); Vol. III, *The Iron Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); Vol. IV, *The Bronze Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). Cf., Olga Tufnell, "Excavations at Tell ed-Duweir, Palestine, Directed by the Late J. L. Starkey, 1932-1938," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 80 (1950), pp. 65-80.

⁴⁸See the *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, 80 (1940), pp. 11-13 and 82 (1941), p. 24.

⁴⁹*ANET*, p. 322.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Cf., W. F. Albright, "The Old Testament and Archaeology," *The Old Testament Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), p. 164.

⁵²This day was important because the date began the period of seventy years-- a day when Judah would begin to suffer. Seventy years later God told Haggai to mark another day, for the period of persecution had ended (Haggai 2:10-15).

⁵³Jeremiah's prophecy gives the information of this event which the authors of II Kings and II Chronicles omitted in their account of Jerusalem's fall:

"Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus saith the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people." Jeremiah 37:5-12

⁵⁴The Bible contains references which give the concept of the Sabbath year-- Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-7, 20-22; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; 31:10-13.

⁵⁵When comparing Deuteronomy 15:1-18 with Jeremiah 34:8-14, it is clear that a Sabbath is referred to by the Hebrew text. Here is the portion of Jeremiah's prophecy mentioning a Sabbatical year:

"This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterwards they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and handmaids.

Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear." Jeremiah 34:8-14

⁵⁶The following is Josephus' account of the burning of the Second Temple by the Roman general, Titus, in A.D. 70--

"But when Titus perceived that his endeavours to spare a foreign temple turned to the damage of his soldiers and made them be killed, he gave orders to set the gates on fire. ... and now the soldiers had already put fire to the gates, and the silver that was over them quickly carried the flames to the wood that was within it, whence it spread itself all on the sudden, and caught hold of the cloisters. Upon the Jews seeing this fire all about them, their spirits sunk, together with their bodies, and they were under such astonishment that not one of them made any haste either to defend himself or to quench the fire, but they stood as mute spectators of it only. However, they did not so grieve at the loss of what was now burning as to grow wiser thereby for the time to come; but as though the holy house itself had been on fire already, they whetted their passions against the Romans. This fire prevailed during that day and the next also;" *Wars of the Jews* VI.iv.1-2.

⁵⁷Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: The Soncino Press, 1935) Mishnah Tract, Arakin 11b, p. 65. Note that the priests of the Jehoiarib section were singing Psalm 94:23.

⁵⁸*The Babylonian Talmud*, Mishnah Tract, 'Arakin 12b, p. 69.

CHAPTER III - DARIUS THE MEDE AND ESTHER

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify clearly the historical person, 'Darius the Mede', and his wife, Esther. Having identified these individuals in history, related Biblical data will be discussed concerning them.

The third year of Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, is established as 575 B.C. by a time span cited in Josephus. In relating the details of the purification of the Temple in Jerusalem by Judas Maccabeus, Josephus states that the Temple was desolated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes exactly three years before. Then he ties the dates of the Temple's desolation to a prophecy of Daniel with a 408 year time span. Josephus writes--

Now it so fell out, that these things were done on the very same day on which their divine worship had fallen off, and was reduced to a profane and common use, after three years time; for so it was, that the temple was made desolate by Antiochus, and so continued for three years. This desolation happened to the temple in the hundred forty and fifth year on the twenty-fifth day of the month Appelleus and on the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad. And this desolation came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel, which was given four hundred and eight years before; for he declared that the Macedonians would dissolve that worship [for some] time. *Antiquities* XII.vii.6

Also, I Maccabees 4:52-53 and II Maccabees 10:5 cite the same date for the cleansing of the Temple-- Kislev 25, in the Seleucid year 148. This is equivalent to December 9, 164 B.C., a Saturday (Gregorian calendar). Three years earlier the desolation took place on Kislev 25, in the Seleucid year 145 which is equivalent to December 13, 167 B.C., a Saturday.

Josephus notes that the Temple's desolation occurred 408 years after Daniel had uttered his prophecy related to it (167 B.C. + 408 = 575 B.C.). Daniel's main prophecy referring to this desolation is Daniel 8, the third year of Belshazzar. Therefore, the first year of Belshazzar should be 577 B.C.

Darius the Mede, who is referred to throughout the book of Daniel as the ruler of Babylon following the death of Belshazzar has become the main target of critical attacks upon the prophecy of Daniel. This is because the Biblical critics have not found this king in secular-- Medo-Persian-- history.¹ In his work, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires of the Book of Daniel*, H. H. Rowley expresses the prevailing attitude among scholars concerning Darius the Mede. He writes:

The references to Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem of the book.... The claim of the Book of Daniel to be a work of history, written by a well-informed contemporary, is shattered beyond repair by this fiction of Darius the Mede.... So far as Darius the Mede is concerned, we have seen that there is no way of reconciling the Book of Daniel with assured history, and all the efforts of the apologists, of whom the present century has seen a new and plentiful crop, definitely fail.²

Therefore, in the light of such confident assertions as these, on the part of representatives of the modern school of Biblical higher criticism, the defender of the historicity of Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel finds himself compelled to examine all the available evidence with the most painstaking scrutiny.

To see Darius the Mede in his proper perspective, therefore, one must weigh carefully all the pertinent Biblical and extra-Biblical information that parallels the period when Daniel was writing his prophecies.

With the proper historical data at one's fingertips, it will be demonstrated that Darius the Mede is not a fictitious character, spun out of the fertile but historically confused imagination of a second-century B.C. author, but Darius the Mede can be successfully identified with Astyages, the last king of Media.

II. The Biblical Data Regarding Darius The Mede

A full understanding of the problems involved in identifying Darius the Mede necessitates, first of all, a careful analysis of the Biblical information concerning him.

A. Analyzing The Expression 'Darius The Mede'

The name 'Darius' occurs in Hebrew, Daryawesh; in Akkadian and Elamite, Dariawus; in Old Persian, Darayavaus and also in Greek, Dareios. The word is derived from Zenddara and has the meaning 'king'.³ This can mean that the title 'Darius' is a Medo-Persian term similar to the Egyptian 'Pharaoh', the Roman 'Caesar' and the Russian 'Czar'-- just simply meaning 'king'.

Therefore, the expression 'Darius the Mede' probably is a title, simply referring to a 'Median king' and is not the exact name of the ruler who was a contemporary to the sixth century prophet, Daniel. An examination of Medo-Persian rulers will reveal that there were four kings who held the title 'Darius': 1) Darius the Mede (this title distinguished him from 'Darius the Persian');⁴ 2) Darius I or the Persian (also known as 'The Great King'; he was the son of Hystaspes); 3) Darius II (also known as Nothus) and 4) Darius III (also known as Codomanus). Several of the Achaemenid rulers, who used the title of Darius, also had proper names. It appears that the term 'Darius' is merely a royal title used by Medo-Persian monarchs and is not a proper name. Therefore, the title 'Darius the Mede' is not a proper personal name of a royal personage but rather it is just a reference to a Median king, who at that time in history became known as 'Darius the Mede'.

B. Understanding The Background Of Darius The Mede

Before this Median king is identified in the prophecies of Daniel, it would be proper to speak of the background of Media.

Ancient Media occupied the land west of the Caspian Sea and south of the Zagros Mountains, corresponding to western Iran and southern Azerbaijan, today. The Median capital was Ecbatana. An Indo-European people, the Medes spoke an Iranian language closely akin to old Persian. Since they left no written records, our knowledge of the Medes come largely from Assyrian and Greek sources. They are first mentioned in the annals of the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III who raided the Median plain in 887 B.C. and seized the fine horses for which the Medes were famous. Tiglath-pileser III claimed victories over the Medes but Media expanded until, by the time of Sargon they ruled all of Persia. From the time of Sargon until the middle of the seventh century B.C., the Medes were subject to the Assyrian kings. Among the places to which Sargon exiled the Israelites were 'the cities of the Medes' (II Kings 17:6; 18:11).

Although bound by treaty to Assyria, the Medes joined the Scythians and Cimmerians in besieging Nineveh, which fell in 613 B.C. With freedom restored, the Medes continued as an independent people until Astyages was defeated in 551 B.C. by Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire. The Medes were given positions of honour, and their customs and laws were joined with those of the Persians.

C. Examining Darius The Mede In The Prophecies Of Daniel

Darius, the king of Media, was the son of Ahasuerus, also a Median monarch. This information is given in the book of Daniel: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans," Daniel 9:1. Darius received the rulership over the government of Babylon upon the death of Belshazzar: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom being about threescore and two years old," Daniel 5:30-31. Darius the Mede was made king of the Chaldeans (Daniel 9:1) at the age of sixty-two years (Daniel 5:31). He bore the title of king-- 'King Darius'⁵ (Daniel 6:6, 9, 25), and periods of time were marked by the years of his reign, such as "in the first year of Darius," Daniel 11:1.

Darius the Mede appointed 120 subordinate governors under three presidents of whom one was Daniel--

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Daniel 6:1-3

From Daniel 6:28, it is known that "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." This passage would seem to indicate that Cyrus ruled after Darius the Mede. The double use of the Hebrew word 'reign' would clearly indicate this.

According to Josephus, Daniel was removed from Babylon by Darius to the land of Media: "Moreover he took Daniel the prophet, and carried him with him into Media, and honoured him very greatly, and kept him with him," *Antiquities* X.xi.4.

Since 'Darius the Mede' is not mentioned by this expression outside of the book of Daniel, and the contemporary cuneiform inscriptions refer to no king of Babylon between Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus by that title, his historicity has been denied and the Old Testament description of his reign has been considered a conflation of confused traditions. However, on the other hand, the narrative in Daniel has all the appearance of a genuine historical document. In the absence of many historical records of this time period, there is no reason why the history should not be accepted.

III. The Various Identifications Of Darius The Mede With Secular Kings

There have been many attempts to identify Darius the Mede with persons mentioned in Babylonian and Greek texts.

A. 540 B.C. -531 B.C.-- Cyrus The Great As Darius The Mede

Donald J. Wiseman has advanced the explanation that Darius the Mede was an alternative name for Cyrus the Persian as James VI of Scotland used the name James I in England.⁶ The hypothesis is obviously an intriguing suggestion. Biblical documents do not place Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian as contemporaries. However, in Theodotion's ancient text of Bel and the Dragon, the king who sends Daniel to the lion's den is Cyrus of Persia; in the Book of Daniel, the king is Darius the Mede (Daniel 6:1-27).

The book of Daniel has Darius the Mede as receiving without struggle, the kingdom of Babylon upon the death of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:30-31); while other historical documents speak of Cyrus' capture of the city of Babylon (*Herodotus* I.178-192;

Cyropaedia VII.v.1-37; Isaiah 44:24--45:4). Since present day scholarship identifies this as one event rather than two events, the argument that Darius the Mede is Cyrus the Persian seems feasible.

However, the hypothesis has problems with this identification such as Daniel 6:28: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," where the Aramaic conjunction "and" would seem to indicate two individuals in this Scripture.⁷ Also, there is nothing surprising about the fact that Nabonidus, on the Harran Inscription, would refer to Cyrus as 'the king of the Medes' instead of 'the king of the Persians' since Media had been the dominant power on the Iranian plateau for two centuries.⁸ Another problem with this identification is the Biblical reference to Darius the Mede 'of the seed of the Medes' (Daniel 9:1). The Medes and Persians were both Aryan peoples and it is true that Cyrus had a Median mother, Mandane, the daughter of Astyages,⁹ but, it appears that Cyrus and other Achaemenid kings were always careful to emphasize their distinctly Persian lineage back to Achaemenes, who led the armies of Parsumash and Anshan against Sennacherib of Assyria in 682 B.C. According to the inscription, Cyrus never refers to himself as 'the king of the Medes'; it is only through Greek sources that his Median mother is mentioned. (*Herodotus* I.107-108; *Cyropaedia* I.ii.1). In Daniel 9:1, the phrase 'the seed of the Medes' means that the paternal as opposed to the maternal ancestry of Darius was Median. Such a phrase could not be an accurate description of Cyrus the Persian.¹⁰ It is known that Cyrus the Persian was the son of Cambyses (Kanbujiya), not the son of Ahasuerus as Daniel 9:1 states regarding Darius the Mede. The identification of Darius the Mede = Cyrus the Persian does not have the full consent of the prophecies of Daniel.

If Darius and Cyrus are the same person, why are they distinctly called Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian within such a close space in the historical narrative (Daniel 5:31--6:28)?

B. 540 B.C.- 525 B.C.-- Gubaru, The Governor Of Babylon, As Darius The Mede

Another common view, today, is that Darius the Mede was Gubaru (Gobryas), the Governor of Babylon and the Region beyond the River. It is John C. Whitcomb, Jr. in the book *Darius the Mede: The Historical Chronology of Daniel* who promotes the Gubaru view. He gives an impressive presentation of the historical evidence for the career of Gubaru, the Governor of Babylon, as gathered from the Babylonian cuneiform documents of that era which follow the fall of Babylon.

Among the large number of Babylonian and Persian tablets, written in cuneiform script and dated from the last half of the sixth century B.C., there are references to the powerful governor named Gubaru, whom Cyrus the Great placed in charge of Babylonia after the collapse of Babylon in October, 539 B.C. Gubaru is mentioned in the Nabonidus Texts, the Dougherty Texts, the Keiser Text, the Nies and Keiser Text, the Strassmaier Text, the Clay text, the Pinches Text, the Scheil Text, and perhaps the Behistun Inscription. This position arranges these various cuneiform references in the following chronological order from October 29, 539 B.C., (the third day of Marcheswan, the accession year of Cyrus-- the Nabonidus Chronicle) to 525-524 B.C. (the fifth year of Cambyses-- Tremayne 177:9, 178:16; Contenau 168). Making a clear distinction between Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutuim, and Gubaru, the Governor of Babylon, in the Nabonidus Chronicle,¹¹ Whitcomb writes:

It is our conviction that Gubaru the Governor of Babylon and the Region beyond the River appears in the Book of Daniel as Darius the Mede, the monarch who took charge of the Chaldean kingdom immediately following the death of Belshazzar and who appointed satraps

and presidents (including Daniel) to assist him in the governing of this extensive territory with its many peoples. We believe that this identification is the only one that satisfactorily harmonizes the various lines of evidence which are found in the Book of Daniel and in the contemporary cuneiform records.¹²

There are several arguments against this view. The first objection is that there is no evidence that Gobryas was a Mede (*cf.*, Daniel 9:1). The Gobryas of the Behistun Inscription is stated to be the son of Mardonius, a Persian.¹³ However, Whitcomb does not identify the Gobryas of the Behistun Inscription to be Gubaru, the Governor of Babylon, *i.e.*, Darius the Mede. He declares:

This important inscription was made at the command of Darius Hystaspes in the fifth year of his reign, or 516 B.C. However, it is quite impossible to identify this 'Gobryas [Gaubaruva]... son of Mardonius, a Persian' with Gubaru the Governor of Babylon, for the Gaubariva of the Behistun Inscription comes too late.¹⁴

Therefore, if this Gobryas is not the same person, then there is no record of who his father was or that his nationality was Median in secular texts. In fact, Xenophon (c. 430 B.C. - c. 354 B.C.) speaks of Gobryas as an Assyrian prince who revolted against Cyrus with the district that he governed.¹⁵ Whitcomb suggests that Xenophon is alluding to Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutuim and conqueror of Babylon.¹⁶ However, the Greek text of Xenophon clearly gives the name 'Gobryas'.

A second objection is that there is no evidence that Gobryas bore the title of king (*cf.*, Daniel 6). The author of Daniel assumes that Darius in every sense of the word was a king; for he dates events by the years of his reign, and represents him as exercising sovereign prerogatives, and issuing royal edicts. This is perhaps the strongest argument against the identification of Darius the Mede with Gubaru (Gobryas), the Governor of Babylon. Obviously, Gubaru did not belong to the royal dynasty of the Achaemenids and was in subordination to Cyrus the Great.¹⁷ It will be recalled that the Nabonidus Chronicle (Chronicle 7) of the Babylonian Chronicles refers to Gubaru as a *pihatu* (district-governor), and says that he appointed *pihati* (district-governors) in Babylon. In contrast, the book of Daniel informs us that Darius the Mede, called 'king' (Aramaic-- *malka*) twenty-eight times in the sixth chapter, set over the kingdom 120 'satraps'. It appears that Gubaru can not be Darius the Mede since he is never called 'king' in secular texts.

Gubaru was the 'district-governor' of Babylon not the 'king'. It appears that Darius the Mede displays too much authority in Daniel 6:25 to be only a governor. Even though Whitcomb contends, yet Gubaru is no where given the title of king or has royal power--

The situation which prevailed in Babylon for a period of several months after the fall of the city to the Medo-Persian army permits us to assume that Gubaru was *de facto* king of Babylon. Cyrus did not remain long in Babylon after its capture in the fall of 539 B.C. 'Leaving the more prosaic details of satrapal organization to Gobryus, toward the end of his accession year Cyrus retired from Babylon and returned to Ecbatana ... But it was Gobryas the satrap who represented the royal authority after the king's departure.'¹⁸

Thus, the thesis that Gubaru, the Governor of Babylon and the Region beyond the River, is Darius the Mede can not be sustained in reference to Gubaru's nationality or kingship. A. K. Grayson, commenting on the names Ugbaru and Gubaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle, writes: "iii 15 [Ug]-ba-ru: The sign UG is faint but the reading is certain. The same name appears in iii 22. Whether Ugbaru is identical with the

Gubaru of iii 20 is uncertain. Certainly neither can be identical with Gobryas, governor of Babylonia."¹⁹ Therefore, it appears impossible to identify Darius the Mede with Gubaru, the governor of Babylon.

C. 531 B.C.- 523 B.C.-- Cambyses As Darius The Mede

Darius the Mede has been identified not only with Cyrus the Great, and Gubaru, but also with Cambyses (531 B.C.- 523 B.C.). This position has been advanced by such scholars as Winckler (1901) and Riessler (1902) and Charles Boutflower (1923). H. H. Rowley considered this view to be "the only effort to harmonize the book of Daniel here with known history that can claim the slightest plausibility."²⁰

That Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, was Darius the Mede has been proposed by Boutflower for several reasons. First, he was the successor of Belshazzar on the throne of Babylon for some nine months in the first year of Cyrus after the capture of Babylon and, secondly, he occupied the same position in relation to his father Cyrus, both in the empire and on the throne of Babylon, which Belshazzar had held under his father Nabonidus.²¹

While seeming plausible, the theory suffers from the lack of any positive evidence in its favor. For Boutflower's strongest argument, namely, that Cambyses was given the title 'King of Babylon' soon after the Fall of Babylon, has now been eliminated through the research of Waldo H. Dubberstein--

To postulate a dual reign at the beginning of Cyrus' reign instead of at the end has no support in the texts or in tradition, and is apparently opposed by the dual dating already quoted, *year one, accession year of Cambyses, King of Babylon and Lands*. This interpretation also makes impossible any identification of Cambyses with 'Darius the Mede' of the Book of Daniel which was based on the assumption that Cambyses was co-regent with Cyrus immediately after the capture of Babylon.²²

Also, it can not be proven that Cambyses was 'the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes' (Daniel 9:1). It is well known that the father of Cambyses, Cyrus the Great, was of a true Persian lineage. Herodotus asserts that Cambyses was the oldest son of Cyrus by Cassandane, daughter of Pharnaspes, a fellow-Achaemenid.²³ Therefore, both parents of Cambyses were true Persians.

Finally, it is known from Daniel's prophecies that Darius the Mede was sixty-two years old when he received the kingdom from Belshazzar (Daniel 5:31); Cambyses could not possibly have been that old in 540 B.C.²⁴ Thus, the theory fails to provide adequate proof.

D. 521 B.C.- 464 B.C.-- Darius Hystaspes As Darius The Mede

Another theory advanced by some scholars is that Darius the Mede is Darius I Hystaspes (521 B.C.- 485 B.C.). It is acknowledged that the Biblical reference to Darius the Mede succeeding Belshazzar as king of Babylon is historically possible since Cyrus the Great became king on the overthrow of Babylon. Therefore, scholars such as H. L. Ginsberg find a possible explanation in the re-capture of Babylon in 520 B.C. by Darius I and the loose use of the term Mede for Persian by the Greeks and Mineans.

This theory is often based on the concept that the book of Daniel posits an independent Median Empire between those of Neo-Babylonia and Persia in order to support the concept that the fourth empire of Daniel 2 and 7 must be Greece instead of Rome. The Chaldeans were assumed to be the founders of the first great empire; they were followed by the Medes and finally by the Persians. According to the theory, the Jews substituted the word 'Chaldeans' for the Assyrians and the Persians. Therefore,

Darius I the Persian, who conquered Babylon, was regarded by the Judean writer as Darius the Mede, successor to the Chaldean Belshazzar, and as the predecessor of Cyrus the Persian.

S. R. Driver evaluates Darius the Mede in this light--

Darius, son of Ahasuerus, a Mede, after the death of Belshazzar, is 'made king over the realm of the Chaldeans' (5,31.6,1ff. 9,1. 11,1). There seems to be no room for such a ruler. According to all other authorities, Cyrus is the immediate successor of Nabu-nahid, the ruler of the entire Persian empire. It has been conjectured that Darius may have been an under-king--perhaps either identical with the Cyaxeres II. of Xenophon, or a younger brother of Astyages--whom Cyrus may have made governor of Babylon. In 6,1, however, where he organizes the empire in 120 satrapies, and in 6,25, he seems to be represented as absolute ruler of the Babylonian empire, without any such limitation to his jurisdiction. And in 6,1 the temptation to suspect a confusion with Darius Hystaspis is strong.²⁵

The weakness of this thesis is that there is no evidence that the author of the book of Daniel confused the identity of 'Darius the Mede' with 'Darius the Persian'.²⁶ Although Daniel 6:28-- "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" appears to indicate that Darius the Mede was succeeded by Cyrus the Great, it does not have to be considered as evidence for a Median Empire between the Babylonian and the Persian. It appears that Daniel viewed Medo-Persia as a dual empire; this is shown by the two shoulders and arms of the colossal image in Daniel 2. Also, the dual nature is again demonstrated in Daniel 7 by the bear creature which had one side higher than the other showing the fact that Media was the greater of the two nations. In Daniel 8:20, the ram with two horns (Daniel 8:3-4) represents the Medo-Persian Empire. One of the horns-- apparently representing the Persians-- comes up last. The longer horn appears before the ram butts north, west and south to conquer.

IV. The Two Common Errors Of Scholars In Identifying Darius The Mede

There are several common errors made by the various scholars who have proposed the above theories concerning Darius the Mede.

A. Darius The Mede As Connected With Cyrus' Capture Of Babylon

First, they have assumed that Darius the Mede must be connected in time with the capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great.²⁷ The amazing fact is that no document, Biblical or secular, makes this connection. There is no mention of Cyrus the Great in Daniel 5 when Darius the Mede receives the kingdom from Babylon. Likewise, Darius the Mede is not mentioned in narratives describing Cyrus' capture of Babylon. To connect Darius the Mede's reception of the Chaldean kingdom with Cyrus' capture of Babylon is a fundamental error in the identification of Darius the Mede.

B. Darius The Mede As A Subordinate Under Cyrus The Great

Secondly, scholars have assumed that they must look for a subordinate under Cyrus after 540 B.C. when Babylon fell.²⁸ The amazing factor in the book of Daniel is that there is no reference to the fact that Darius the Mede was a subordinate under the Persian Cyrus. Therefore, through these two erroneous presuppositions, scholars have looked too late in history for the identification of Darius the Mede.

V. Darius The Mede As Preceding Cyrus The Great

In order to understand the prophecies of Daniel, it must be acknowledged that

Darius the Mede preceded Cyrus the Persian (*cf.*, Daniel 6:28). While the radical critics of Daniel's prophecies customarily proclaim that there is no evidence for Darius the Mede; there are external traces of Darius the Mede in secular history. This historical evidence confirms that he preceded Cyrus the Persian over Babylon.

A. The Extra-Biblical Witness

Joseph D. Wilson offers the following possible historical evidence for Darius the Mede--

But Darius the Mede is not so invisible among ancient writers as the critics would have us suppose. Xenophon says that a Mede succeeded to the throne of Babylon. He gives him the name of Cyaxeres. Xenophon's account is romantic and the name he gives cannot be reconciled with other statements. Still, he apparently sees no improbability in a Mede occupying the throne.

Aeschylus in his *Persae* mentions a Mede as the first leader followed by Cyrus.

Abydenus puts in the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar an oracular declaration-- 'O Babylonians, I, Nebuchadnezzar announce to you a future calamity. There shall come a Persian mule using our divinities as allies. He shall bring us into bondage; leagued with him shall be the Mede, the boast of Assyria.'

While these are but faint traces, there occurs in the scholiast upon Aristophanes this statement, 'The Daric (i.e. the coin) is not named for Darius (Hystaspis) the father of Xerxes, but for another preceding King.' This preceding King must be Darius the Mede.²⁹

1. The Witness Of Josephus

Realizing that Darius the Mede must precede Cyrus the Great, several scholars have identified Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares, the son of Astyages. At one time, this was a popular view that Darius the Mede should be identified with the Cyaxares whom Xenophon represented as the son of Astyages and the last king of Media. Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* writes concerning Cyaxares' background: "In the course of time Astyages died in Media, and Cyaxares, the son of Astyages and brother of Cyrus's mother, succeeded to the Median throne," *Cyropaedia* 1.5.2. Unfortunately, no other historian mentions Cyaxares II, not even Herodotus. Walter Miller, the translator of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, cites examples where Xenophon's historical data is questionable--

Actual violence to historical facts is sometimes committed. For example, Media was subdued by force (and treachery) in the lifetime of Astyages (550 B.C.), not voluntarily ceded to Cyrus by Cyaxares as the dowry of his daughter; Cyaxares himself, the son of Astyages, is unknown, save through Xenophon's story; it seems most probable that he is wholly unhistorical. The conquest of Egypt, ascribed to Cyrus, was in reality accomplished by his son and successor, Cambyses. The beautiful account of the peaceful passing of Cyrus is wholly out of accord with the well-established record of his violent death in the battle against the Massagetae (529 B.C.).³⁰

Nevertheless, Xenophon apparently saw no improbability in a Mede occupying the throne at this time. Both Josephus and Jerome interpreted Darius the Mede to be Cyaxares, the son of Astyages. Josephus states: "But when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsmen Cyrus, had put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians, he was sixty-two years old. He was the son of Astyages, and had another name among the Greeks," *Antiquities* X.xi.4.³¹

2. The Witness Of Jerome

Jerome identifies Darius the Mede with Cyaxares by quoting the above passage from Josephus. Then Jerome stresses that Darius the Mede preceded Cyrus the Great:

Hence we see that when Babylon was overthrown, Darius returned to his own kingdom in

Media, and brought Daniel along with him in the same honorable capacity to which he had been promoted by Belshazzar. There is no doubt but what Darius had heard of the sign and portent which had come to Belshazzar, and also of the interpretation which Daniel had set forth, and how he had foretold the rule of the Medes and the Persians. And so no one should be troubled by the fact that Daniel is said in one place to have lived in Darius' reign, and in another place in the reign of Cyrus. The Septuagint rendered Darius by the name Artaxerxes.³²

As can be seen, both Josephus and Jerome proposed that Darius the Mede was Cyaxares, the son of Astyages. However, the view seems no longer possible since it is questioned if Xenophon's Cyaxares ever really existed. Nevertheless, the view does present itself that older scholars considered Darius the Mede to precede Cyrus the Great in history.

3. The Witness Of Aeschylus

Aeschylus, the Greek dramatist, produced his play *The Persians* in the year of 474 B.C. The work mentions a Mede as ruling before Cyrus the Great. The ghost of Darius the Persian, the father of Xerxes, rises from his tomb and reviews the history of the Medo-Persian Empire--

Therefore a calamity most evil and past all forgetting has been wrought by him to its accomplishment; a calamity such as never yet befell this city of Susa to its desolation since our Lord Zeus first ordained this high estate that one ruler should bear sway over all Asia with its flocks and wield the scepter of its government. For Medus was first to be the leader of its host; and another, his son, completed his work since his soul obeyed the direction of wise thoughts. Third, after him, Cyrus, blest in his fortune, came to the throne and stablished peace for all his people. The Lydians and Phrygians he won to his rule, and the whole of Ionia he subdued by force; for the gods hated him not, since he was right-minded. Fourth in succession, the son of Cyrus ruled the host. Fifth in the list, Mardus came to power, a disgrace to his native land and to the ancient throne; but he was slain in his palace by the guile of gallant Artaphrenes, with the help of friends whose part this was. [Sixth came Maraphis, and seventh Artaphrenes.] And I in turn attained the lot I craved, and many a campaign I made with a goodly host: but disaster so dire as this I brought not upon the State. But Xerxes my son, youth that he is, has the mind of youth and remembers not my injunctions. Be very sure of this, ye compeers of my age: all of us who have held this sovereign power cannot be shown to have wrought ruin so great as this.³³

ILLUSTRATION IV: Aeschylus' Medo-Persian King List

1. Medus
2. Medus' son
3. Cyrus, the Great
4. Cyrus' son
5. Mardus
6. Maraphis
7. Artaphrenes
8. Darius (the son of Hystaspes and the father of Xerxes)
9. Xerxes (the present king of the Medo-Persian Empire)

C. F. Keil interprets Aeschylus' Medo-Persian King List as follows:

Also, the often-quoted lines of Aeschylus, Pers. 762-765, ... are in the simplest manner explained historically if by the work which the first Mede began and the second completed, and which yet brought all the glory to the third, viz. Cyrus, is understood the taking of Babylon; according to which Astyages is the first, Cyaxares II. the second and Cyrus the third, and Aeschylus agrees with Xenophon.³⁴

Again, there is historical evidence that Darius the Mede preceded Cyrus the Great.

4. The Witness Of Aristophanes

Aristophanes (c. 450-445 B.C. - 380-375 B.C.), the famous Greek writer of comedies, refers to the gold coin called 'the Daric' in his work, *The Ecclesiazusae* (lines 601-602) written in 393 B.C.--

With regard to the land, I can quite understand,
But how, if a man have his money in hand,
Not farms, which you see, and he cannot withhold,
But talents of silver and Darics of gold?³⁵

It is possible that the Darics were a coin issued during the reign of Darius the Mede or issued in honor of him. Keil comments regarding this coin--

Finally, the Darics also give evidence for Darius the Mede, since of all explanations of the name of this gold coin (the Daric) its derivation from a king Darius is the most probable; and so also do the statements of the rhetorician Harpocration, the scholiast to Aristophanis *Ecclesiaz.* 589, and of Suidas, that the Darics did not derive their name, as most suppose, from Darius the father of Xerxes, but from another and an older king (Darius), according to the declaration of Herodot. iv.166, that Darius first struck this coin, which is not outweighed by his scanty knowledge of the more ancient history of the Medes and Persians.³⁶

B. The Biblical Witness

There appears to be historical evidence that Darius the Mede must precede Cyrus the Great in his rule over Babylon. This evidence is found in secular as well as Biblical data. The traditional translation of Daniel 6:28 reads: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Thus, Darius the Mede appears to have been succeeded by Cyrus. The author of Daniel makes a Median ruler receive Babylon after the overthrow of the native dynasty, and then mentions later the historical Cyrus. It should be supposed that the Biblical writer believed that Cyrus succeeded to the empire of Babylon on the death of the Median Darius.

VI. 575 B.C.- 540 B.C.-- Astyages, The Last Median King, Is Darius The Mede

Because scholars have identified Darius the Mede with someone connected to Cyrus' capture of Babylon, it is believed that the real identity of Darius the Mede has been missed. It should be noted that the book of Daniel gives far more information concerning the personal background of Darius the Mede than of Belshazzar or even of Nebuchadnezzar. He is the only monarch in the work whose age, parentage, and nationality are recorded. These considerations serve to emphasize even more clearly the necessity of taking seriously the problem of the historicity of Darius the Mede and make certain his identification.

A. His Background Harmonizes With Median History

As already mentioned earlier, the term 'Darius' appears to be a word meaning simply 'king'. William F. Albright suggests that "the name 'Darius', [is] perhaps an old Iranian royal title."³⁷ Therefore, the expression 'Darius the Mede' refers to an outstanding Median king.

The nationality which the book of Daniel ascribes to Darius is definitely in full agreement with what is known of the early Medo-Persian history. It is Herodotus who records the kings in Media in his *Histories*. The Greek historian gives the kings of

Media and the length of their reigns as follows:

ILLUSTRATION V: The Monarchs Of Media And Their Reigns From Herodotus

Monarch	Total Reign	B.C. Dating
Deioces (Cyaxeres)	53 years	(690 B.C.-637 B.C.)
Phraortes, son of Deioces	22 years	(637 B.C.-615 B.C.)
Cyaxeres, son of Phaortes	40 years	(615 B.C.-575 B.C.)
Astyages, son of Cyaxeres	35 years	(575 B.C.-540 B.C.)

The total reigns of the monarchs sum to 150 years. Herodotus gives the sum as 128 years (*Herodotus* 1:130); however, it appears that he forgot to include Phaortes, the second king. The 150 years are recognized, though not itemized by Diodorus Siculus; however, Diodorus in *The Library Of History* would have each of the Median kings twenty years earlier.

The first king of Media was Deioces, who took control over Asia after the Assyrians had controlled it for 520 years (*Herodotus* I.95) or 500 years (Diodorus, *The Library Of History* II,32). He was the founder of a four-generation dynasty and ruled for fifty-three years (*Herodotus* I.102).

Phaortes, the second king of Media, was the son of Deioces and ruled for 22 years (*Herodotus* I.102).

The third king of Media was Cyaxares, the son of Phaortes, who ruled Media for forty years (*Herodotus* I.107). He is the Median king who helped in the conquest of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh (615 B.C.- 613 B.C.). During his reign, Alyattes of the Scythians held power over the Median Empire for twenty-eight years. This period ended at the time of a solar eclipse.³⁸ This solar eclipse (585 B.C.) will be discussed more fully later.

Astyages, the son of Cyaxares, was the last in the line of Median monarchs. His last eleven years of his thirty-five year rule, were spent as an old man in the house of Cyrus (*Herodotus* I.130).

According to the B.C. dating of the Median monarchs, it is Astyages who best fits into the chronology of the prophecies of Daniel. He is Darius the Mede. Since Herodotus states (I.109) that Astyages the last Median king, had no son, some scholars in the past have tried to identify him with Darius the Mede.³⁹ Thus, the background of Darius the Mede harmonizes with Median history.

B. His Reign Harmonizes With The Chronology Of Daniel

The following Illustration VI shows how there is perfect harmony between the reign of Darius the Mede as Astyages and the chronology of Daniel's prophecies--

ILLUSTRATION VI: Darius As Astyages In Daniel's Chronology

Chronological Statement	Reference	B.C. Dating
The third year of Jehoiakim ⁴⁰	Daniel 1:1	599 B.C.
The second year of Nebuchadnezzar ⁴¹	Daniel 2:1	581 B.C.
At the end of twelve months	Daniel 4:28-29	577 B.C.
Belshazzar slain/Darius king at 62	Daniel 5:30-6:3	574 B.C.
Daniel first president		
In the reign of Darius the Mede	Daniel 5:28	575 B.C.-540 B.C.
In the reign of Cyrus the Persian	Daniel 5:28	551 B.C.-522 B.C.
The first year of Belshazzar	Daniel 7:1	577 B.C.

The third year of Belshazzar	Daniel 8:1	575 B.C.
In the first year of Darius the Mede	Daniel 9:1	574 B.C.
In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia	Daniel 10:1	549 B.C.
The first year of Darius the Mede	Daniel 11:1	574 B.C.

The chronology of Darius' reign (Astyages 575 B.C. -541 B.C.) fits into perfect harmony with the chronology in Daniel's prophecies.

C. His Relationship To Cyrus Harmonizes With Daniel 6:28

The relationship between Astyages and Cyrus as grandfather and grandson harmonizes with the book of Daniel that Darius the Mede preceded Cyrus the Persian (Daniel 6:28). Herodotus describes the story of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus, and how he became king (*Herodotus* I.107-130). He also relates the relationship between Astyages and Cyrus--

Astyages had a daughter, whom he called Mandane ... [and] wedded her to a Persian called Cambyzes, a man whom he knew to be well born and of a quiet temper: for Astyages held Cambyzes to be much lower than a Mede of middle estate.

But in the first year of Mandane's marriage to Cambyzes ... [occurred] the birth of Cyrus⁴² *Herodotus* I.107-108.

Xenophon also gives the same relationship between Astyages and Cyrus--

The father of Cyrus is said to have been Cambyzes, king of the Persians: this Cambyzes belonged to the stock of the Persidae, and the Persidae derive their name from Perseus. His mother, it is generally agreed, was Mandane; and this Mandane was the daughter of Astyages, sometime king of the Medes. And even to this day the barbarians tell in story and in song that Cyrus was the most handsome in person, most generous of heart, most devoted to learning, and most ambitious, so that he endured all sorts of labour and faced all sorts of danger for the sake of praise. *Cyropaedia* I.ii.1.

The story of *Bel And The Dragon*, a Septuagint supplement to the book of Daniel, states: "When King Astyages joined his ancestors, Cyrus of Persia succeeded him," Daniel 14:1; The Jerusalem Bible. Therefore, according to Herodotus (*Histories* I.108) and Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* I.ii.1), Cyrus, whose paternal ancestry was Persian, on his maternal side was the grandson of the Median king Astyages. Cyrus succeeded Astyages to the throne.

Not only the chronology of Darius' reign (Astyages) harmonizes with the book of Daniel, but also the relationship between Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great. These factors would seem to indicate that there were thirty-five years between 575 B.C. when Darius the Mede received the kingdom and 540 B.C. when Astyages died. He lived in Cyrus' house for his final eleven years and was considered a king until his death. After Astyages' death, Cyrus captured Babylon. The total length of Astyages' reign according to Herodotus is: "Thus Astyages was deposed from his sovereignty after a reign of thirty-five years: and the Medians were made to bow down before the Persians by reason of Astyages' cruelty" (*Herodotus* I.130). The story of Cyrus deposing Astyages will be discussed in the following chapter. The actual deposing of Astyages occurred in 551 B.C.

D. His Relationship To Nebuchadnezzar Harmonizes With Daniel

There is another important relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede (Astyages). This came as a result of an alliance between Nabopolassar, the father

of Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyaxares, the father of Astyages. This alliance is found in both the writings of Abydenus and Eusebius. George Rawlinson gives the background to this alliance--

When the Medes first assumed an aggressive attitude towards Assyria, and threatened the capital with a siege, Babylonia apparently remained unshaken in her allegiance. ...

In this strait the Assyrian king deemed it necessary to divide his forces and to send a portion against the enemy which was advancing from the south, [a force which can only have consisted of Susianians, of Babylonians, or of both combined], while with the remainder he himself awaited the coming of the Medes. The troops detached for the former service he placed under the command of a certain Nabopolassar (Nabu-pal-uzur), who was probably an Assyrian nobleman of high rank and known capacity. Nabopolassar had orders to proceed to Babylon, of which he was probably made viceroy, and to defend the southern capital against the rebels. We may conclude that he obeyed these orders so far as to enter Babylon and install himself in office; but shortly afterwards he seems to have made up his mind to break faith with his sovereign, and aim at obtaining for himself an independent kingdom out of the ruins of the Assyrian power. Having formed this resolve, his first step was to send an embassy to Cyaxares, and to propose terms of alliance, while at the same time he arranged a marriage between his own son, Nebuchadnezzar, and Amuhia or Amyitis (for the name is written both ways), the daughter of the Median monarch. Cyaxares gladly accepted the terms offered; the young persons were betrothed; and Nabopolassar immediately led, or sent, a contingent of troops to join the Medes, who took an active part in the great siege which resulted in the capture and destruction of the Assyrian capital.⁴³

This marriage of Nebuchadnezzar and Amyitis made Astyages the brother-in-law to Nebuchadnezzar and vice versa. The following Illustration VII shows the family relationships between the Medes, Persians, Babylonians, Jews, And Assyrians.

Therefore, it appears that after Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was slain by his own palace guard in 574 B.C. (Midrash Rabbath, The Song Of Songs, III.4.2), that Darius (Astyages), "the Median (Dan. VI,1), who according to the Rabbis reigned before Cyrus," received the kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar's wife, Astyages' sister, Amyitis, and was asked to rule until Nebuchadnezzar returned from his madness. This seems to be what Daniel 5:30-31 has stated: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." Perhaps, Evil-merodach, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and Astyages' great-nephew, was too young to rule at this time. He does rule as king twelve years later upon the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 563 B.C.

E. His Personage Harmonizes With Daniel's Date Regarding Darius The Mede

Astyages was the likely candidate to rule Babylon at this time.

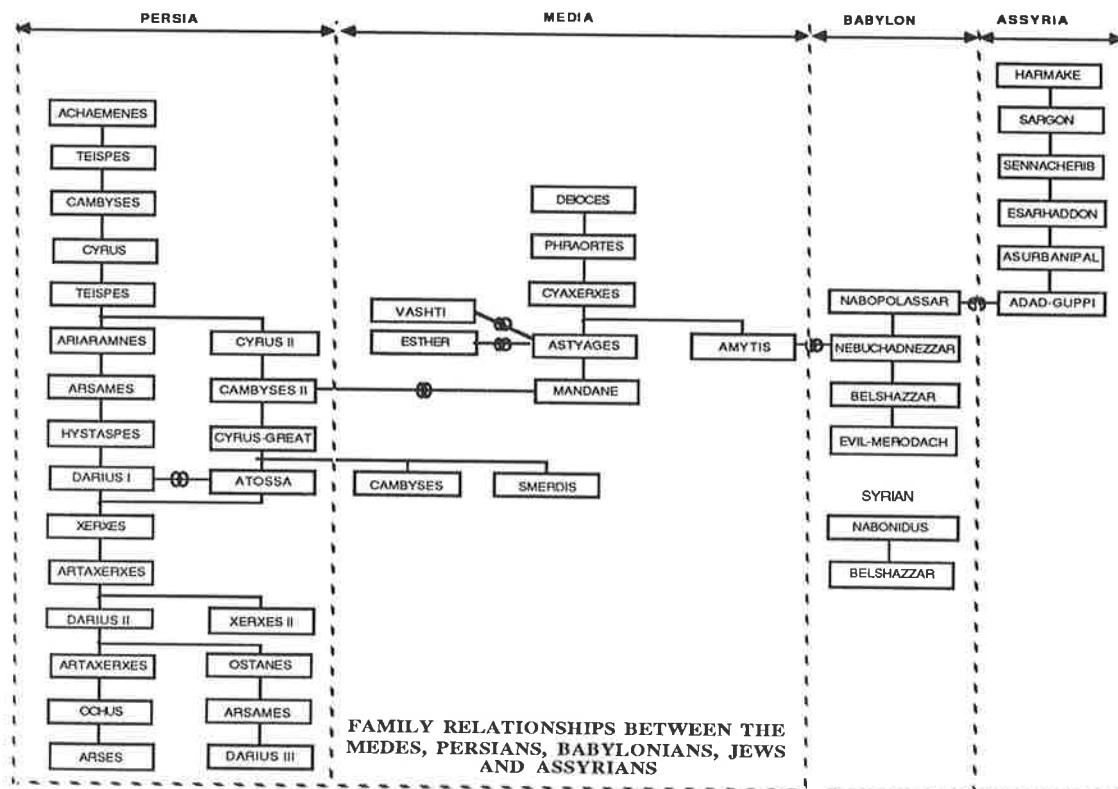
1. He Was Made King Over The Realm Of The Chaldeans (Daniel 9:1).

He was present the night Belshazzar died, according to Jewish tradition, as a door-keeper of Belshazzar. Notice that Astyages took Babylon peacefully; for the prophecies of Daniel proclaim that he *'was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.'* Daniel 9:1-- "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans." The year 575 B.C. is also the first year that Astyages ruled over Media.

In his *Commentary On Daniel*, Jerome writes about the identification of Darius: "Some authorities think that this Darius was the Astyages mentioned in the Greek writings, while others think it was Astyages' son, and that he was called by the other name among the barbarians."⁴⁴ It has already been shown that Xenophon's story of

Astyages's son, Cyaxares II, appears to be fictitious history since Xenophon was writing romantic history. Herodotus states that Astyages had no male heir (I.109).

ILLUSTRATION VII: Family Relationships Between The Medes, Persians, Babylonians, Jews, And Assyrians



2. He Was Sixty-two Years Old When He Received The Realm Of Babylon (Daniel 5:31).

Daniel also states that Darius (Astyages) was sixty-two years old when he received the realm of Babylon (Daniel 5:31). The age factor for Astyages seems quite possible. It should be remembered that his father, Cyaxares I, ruled over Media for forty years. Astyages was apparently twenty-two when his father ascended the throne of Media in 615 B.C. Astyages received the throne of Media in 575 B.C. at sixty-one years of age and the throne of Babylon in 574 B.C., when he was sixty-two years old. Therefore, his birth date occurred in the year 636 B.C. Having ruled for twenty-four years over Media (575 B.C. - 551 B.C.), Astyages was deposed at the age of eighty-five by Cyrus, but he appears to have lived with Cyrus and have had influence over Babylon for eleven more years until he was ninety-six years of age. Cyrus took Babylon in 540 B.C.

3. He Replaced Belshazzar, The Son Of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:1-31)

It was noted that Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar and not the son of Nabonidus. Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar four times in Daniel 5:2, 11, 13, and 18, with the different pronouns (his, your, my) attesting to the relationship. In Daniel 5:22, Belshazzar is called Nebuchadnezzar's son. Therefore, it appears that

there are two Belshazzars of Babylonian history-- only one Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus is attested to by archaeological discovery. It seems unusual that the author of Daniel would call Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, 'the son of Nebuchadnezzar' when Nabonidus was an usurper to the throne of Babylon. A basalt stela reports Nabonidus' rise to power in Babylon--

After (his) [Neriglissar] days had become full and he had started out on the journey of (human) destiny his son Labashi-Marduk, a minor (who) had not (yet) learned how to behave, sat down on the royal throne against the intentions of the gods and (three lines missing).

They carried me into the palace and all prostrated themselves to my feet, they kissed my feet greeting me again and again as king. (Thus) I was elevated to rule the country by the order of my lord Marduk and (therefore) I shall obtain whatever I desire-- there shall be no rival of mine!

I am the real executor of the wills of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, my royal predecessors! Their armies are entrusted to me, I shall not treat carelessly their orders and I am (anxious) to please them (*i.e.* to execute their plans).

Awel-Marduk, son of Nebuchadnezzar, and Labashi-Marduk, son of Neriglissar [called up] their [troops] and ... their ... they dispersed. Their orders (7-8 lines missing).⁴⁵

The lines which would actually prove that Nabonidus was an usurper have been deleted or destroyed probably by Nabonidus, himself. S. R. Driver asserts that Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, would not likely be called 'the son of Nebuchadnezzar', since Nabonidus was a usurper. Driver writes: "Belshazzar is represented as king of Babylon; and Nebuchadnezzar is spoken of throughout c.5 (v.v. 2.11. 13. 18. 22) as his father. In point of fact, Nabonidus (Nabu-nahid) was the last king of Babylon; he was a usurper, not related to Nebuchadnezzar, and one Belsharuzur is mentioned as his son."⁴⁶ The suggestion by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. that "by ancient usage the term son often referred to a successor in the same office whether or not there was a blood relationship"⁴⁷ appears to be a misuse of the semitic word 'son'. It is a general principle of Biblical interpretation that a word is to be taken in its everyday meaning unless there is compelling evidence that it must be taken in a different sense. Such compelling evidence does not exist in this case.

Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was in a co-regency with his father and ruled Babylon during the first three years of his father's insanity (577-574). This is why Daniel was offered the position of 'the third ruler' in the kingdom (Daniel 5:16,29).

Because the death of Belshazzar (Daniel 5) is often connected with Cyrus' capture of Babylon, it is supposed by scholars that Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon. However, the chronological data of the book of Daniel would seem to indicate that from the first year of Darius the Mede (574 B.C.; Daniel 6:1-3) to the third year of Cyrus (549 B.C.; Daniel 10:1) were twenty-five years (574 B.C. + 25 = 549 B.C.). This time span covered the last eleven years of Nebuchadnezzar, the two years of Evil-merodach, the four years of Neriglissar, the nine months of Labashi-Marduk and the ten years of Nabonidus (Nabonidus). This period of time is indicated in Daniel 6:28-- "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." The reign of Darius (Astyages) spanned the years 575 B.C.- 540 B.C. and the reign of Cyrus covered the years 551 B.C. - 531 B.C.

The last prophecy of Daniel is dated 'in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia' (Daniel 10:1), that is, the year 549 B.C. If Daniel was twenty years old, when he was taken in the captivity of Jehoiachin in 599 B.C., then he would have to be seventy years old when he received his last vision by the great river Hiddekel.

4. He Was The Son Of Ahasuerus Of The Seed Of The Medes (Daniel 9:1).

Daniel 9:1 affirms that Darius the Mede was 'the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes'. The father of Astyages was Cyaxares I who helped Nabopolassar overthrow Nineveh in 613 B.C. This King Cyaxares of the Medes is the 'Ahasuerus' mentioned in Daniel 9:1.

It is interesting to note that the term 'Ahasuerus' the Hebrew equivalent of the Persian *khshayarsha* means simply 'mighty man', i.e., 'king'. The Greek name *Assuerus* is preserved in the apocryphal book of Tobit. The name, as such, cannot be seen to positively identify the king; for it is possible that it was not used in the sense of a proper name, but merely represents a title for Median monarch(s). In the book of Tobit the title 'Ahasuerus' is found in the last paragraph of the book. In this passage, the title refers to Cyaxares I--

Then Tobias returned with his wife and his sons to Ecbatana, to Raguel his father-in-law. He grew old with honor, and he gave his father-in-law and mother-in-law magnificent funerals. He inherited their property and that of his father Tobit. He died in Ecbatana of Media at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven years. But before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, which Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus had captured. Before his death he rejoiced over Nineveh.⁴⁸

This Ahasuerus is Cyaxares I, the father of Astyages. It can be seen from this example in the book of Tobit that Ahasuerus is a title rather than the proper name of the king.

It seems logical that Darius the Mede or Astyages would use this same title as his father, Cyaxares I, had used. This will be shown below. A title used to refer to Cyaxares by both the author of Tobit (14:15) and the author of Daniel (9:1).

L. N. R. (Ellen Ranyard) in *Stones Crying Out* states that Cyaxares was the first Ahasuerus--

It was Cyaxares, a king of the Medes, who aided Nebuchadnezzar in the final destruction of Nineveh. He is the first Ahasuerus named in Scripture, the father of Darius the Mede (Dan. ix.1), otherwise called Astyages, and whose daughter Mandana, married to Cambyzes, a noble Persian, was the mother of Cyrus.⁴⁹

VII. Astyages Is The Ahasuerus Of The Book Of Esther

Astyages apparently is also called by the Median title 'Ahasuerus' by the author of the book of Esther.

A. The Word 'Ahasuerus' Is A Median Title

The title 'Ahasuerus' appears throughout the volume of Esther. The author seems well-aware of the fact that 'Ahasuerus' is merely a Median title. Therefore, he identifies the actual king by the following factual statement: "this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces," Esther 1:1.

B. The Number Of Satraps Agrees With The Book Of Daniel

According to Daniel 6:1-2, Astyages, Darius the Mede, appointed 120 satraps over his kingdom and Daniel was one of the presidents. The Biblical text reads as follows: "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage."

As can be seen, Astyages had 120 provinces in his first year over Babylon (Daniel 6:1). By his third year, 573 B.C., those provinces had increased by seven (Esther 1:1). It is possible that these seven provinces included Egypt and Ethiopia. Ahasuerus had both the Median and the Persian army at his 180 day banquet during his third year; this indicates that he was a Median king before the Persian takeover by Cyrus the Great. Notice Esther 1:3 in this matter: "In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of the provinces, being before him."

C. The Capital Of Media At This Time Was Shushan (Susa)

The book of Esther indicates that the events of Esther's life took place at Shushan (Susa)-- "That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace," Esther 1:2. The Biblical Shushan was located 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf in the steppe country east of the Tigris which is really a continuation of the southern Mesopotamian plain. The mountains of Luristan begin north of Susa, but the city itself is situated on a low spur of gravel and clay which is naturally raised above normal floods but conveniently situated for exploiting the alluvial plain of the Karum River (the Biblical Ulai, Daniel 8:2).

When Cyrus of Anshan began the series of conquests which were to produce the mighty Persian Empire, the position of Susa was radically altered. Under the successors of Cyrus, Susa shared with Persepolis, Ecbatana, and Ctesiphon the honors of being a royal city. Nehemiah was at Susa as a palace servant to Artaxerxes when he received the disturbing report concerning affairs in the holy city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1).

A tradition dating back to Benjamin of Tudela (A.D. 1170) places the tomb of Daniel in a mosque north of Susa. In Daniel 8:2, the prophet was there in vision-- "And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai."

The city is also mentioned by Herodotus as the location where Darius the Persian and the six Persians met to discuss the Magi Revolt⁵⁰ (*Herodotus* III.70-71).

D. The Details Of The Book Of Esther Coincide With Astyages' Rule

The amazing details of the book of Esther harmonize in a remarkable manner with what is known about Astyages through Greek history and about Darius the Mede in Hebrew literature.

1. The Third Year Of Astyages.

The banquet at Shushan lasted for 180 days and occurred during the third year of Ahasuerus (Astyages). This was the year 573 B.C. The feast may have been given in honor of his recently acquired world government (Esther 1:1).

2. The Law Of The Medes And Persians

During the course of events, Vashti, the queen, refused to obey the king's commandment-- "to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on" (Esther 1:11). Josephus gives the reason for Vashti's refusal and the reason why the king had to divorce her--

Now the king was desirous to shew her, who exceeded all other women in beauty, to those that feasted with him, and he sent some to command her to come to his feast. But she, out of regard to the laws of the Persians, which forbid the wives to be seen by strangers, did not go to

the king; and though he oftentimes sent the eunuchs to her, she did nevertheless stay away, and refused to come, till the king was so much irritated, that he brake up the entertainment, and rose up, and called for those seven who had the interpretation of the laws committed to them, and accused his wife, and said, that he had been affronted by her, because that when she was frequently called by him to his feast, she did not obey him once. He therefore gave order that they should inform him what could be done by the law against her. So one of them, whose name was Memucan, said that this affront was offered not to him alone, but to all the Persians, who were in danger of leading their lives very ill with their wives, if they must be thus despised by them; for that none of their wives would have any reverence for their husbands, if they had "such an example of arrogance in the queen towards thee, who rulest over all." Accordingly, he exhorted him to punish her, who had been guilty of so great an affront to him, after a severe manner; and when he had so done, to publish to the nations what had been decreed about the queen. So the resolution was to put Vashti away, and to give her dignity to another woman. *Antiquities* XI.vi.1.

It is interesting to note that the law of the Medes and Persians was irreversible--not even a king could change it, once it had become a decree. This can be seen from Daniel 6; for Darius the Mede could not reverse his decree which placed Daniel's life in danger.

3. The Seventh Year Of Astyages

Esther becomes Astyages' wife in the seventh year of his reign (568 B.C.). This is stated in Esther 2:15-16.⁵¹ Esther appears to have been deported by Nebuchadnezzar along with Mordecai at the time of Jeconiah in 599 B.C.⁵² (Esther 2:5-7). The information of these two statements is critical. If Esther was a baby at the time of the deportation (599 B.C.), then she would be around thirty years old in 568 B.C., the seventh year of Ahasuerus. If she was ten at the time of the deportation by Nebuchadnezzar, then she would be approximately forty years old at the time of her marriage to the king. If Darius the Mede, Astyages, or Ahasuerus of the book of Esther was sixty-two years old at the time he became king of Media and Babylon, then he would be sixty-nine years old when he took Esther as his new queen. Astyages was deposed by Cyrus the Great in 551 B.C. after he had ruled for twenty-four years over Media and Esther was about fifty years old. It is possible that Astyages had some influence over Babylon for the next eleven years until his death. Herodotus relates this information--

Thus Astyages was deposed from his sovereignty after a reign of thirty-five years: and the Medians were made to bow down before the Persians by reason of Astyages' cruelty. ... But now, in Astyages' time, Cyrus and the Persians rose in revolt against the Medes, and from this time ruled Asia. As for Astyages, Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house till Astyages died (*Herodotus* I.130).

It would seem that if Esther was assigned to any of the Persian kings (as most scholars do), she would be too old to be attractive. If she were the queen of Xerxes as is commonly thought, Esther would have to be at least 121 years old in the seventh year of Xerxes (478 B.C.) assuming that she was a baby at the time of the deportation.

There are two factors of evidence which seem to tie Esther into the reign of Astyages. These two factors are 1) her age, and 2) the date of Purim. Esther's age and the date of Purim will be compared to Persian monarchs. Therefore, Esther seems to fit best into the seventh year of Astyages (568 B.C.).

Scholars have suggested each of the following Persian monarchs as being the 'Ahasuerus' of the book of Esther-- 1) Cambyeses, 2) Darius the Persian, 3) Xerxes and 4) Artaxerxes Longimanus.

a. Compared To Cambyses As Ahasuerus (524 B.C.)

Older interpreters connected Cambyses with the 'Ahasuerus' of Ezra 4:6. This connection also suggested that he might be the king of the book of Esther.

Under Cambyses (531 B.C.-523 B.C.), the son and heir of Cyrus the Great, Persian rule reached Egypt. Cambyses took Memphis in 526 B.C., when neither Amasis nor his son, Psamtik II, could resist the Persian troops. This marked the start of Persian rule over Egypt. Following his victories in Egypt, Cambyses learned of revolts at home; he was told that Smerdis had seized rule of Persia. Cambyses knew it could not have been Smerdis, his half-brother (also known as Barfiya), because his aides had already killed Smerdis to prevent an uprising of this sort. Gaumate, a Median who claimed to be Smerdis (Pseudo-Smerdis), had really led the revolt. Cambyses did not live to deal with Gaumate. He died near Mount Carmel in 523 B.C., possibly by suicide as some scholars suggest or possibly by accident as Herodotus affirms (III.64).

His Egyptian campaign would rule out his marriage to Esther during his seventh year (524 B.C.). During Cambyses' seventh year, Esther's age would be seventy-five if she were a baby at the time of the deportation (599 B.C. + 75 = 524 B.C.). If Esther was ten at the deportation, then her age would be eighty-five. Obviously, Esther's age would be working against her at this time. Also, the date of Purim could not coincide with Cambyses' reign; for he did not rule for twelve years.

b. Compared To Darius the Persian As Ahasuerus (514 B.C.)

The period of confusion which marked the last days of Cambyses was ended when Darius Hystaspes (521 B.C. - 485 B.C.) put down all opposition and became one of the strongest of Persian monarchs. Cyrus had tried to rule with a policy of clemency, but Darius found it necessary to exert absolute power. In two years Darius was recognized as the great king over most of the empire.⁵³ He established Susa as the new capital of the kingdom, and built a palace there (521 B.C.). Next he created a code of law to be obeyed throughout his empire (ca. 520 B.C.).

During the winter of 519-518 B.C., Darius managed to regain control of Egypt; Egyptians accepted him as their ruler and gave him the title of Egyptian king.

He re-established the Persian Empire from Egypt to India, as far east as the Indus River. Darius undertook a European campaign and subdued Thrace and Macedonia north of Greece, but the defeat at Marathon (490 B.C.) proved a major setback and robbed Darius I of the prize he sought most.

If Darius the Persian were Ahasuerus, by his third year he would have united the empire and regained control of Egypt. However, Esther's age would be a factor which would demonstrate that Darius Hystaspes could not be her husband. The seventh year of Darius I is 514 B.C.; this date would make Esther eighty-five years old if she was a baby in the deportation of 599 B.C. Esther would not have won a beauty contest at this age.

c. Compared To Xerxes as Ahasuerus (478 B.C.)

Perhaps, the most commonly accepted interpretation today, is that Xerxes is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.

Xerxes I (485 B.C.- 464 B.C.) was the first son of Darius Hystaspes and Atossa, a daughter of Cyrus. Early in his reign, he put down a rebellion in Egypt, after which he prepared for the invasion of Greece. The campaign got off to a good start. The brave Spartans were defeated at Thermophylae (480 B.C.) and Athens itself was occupied, pillaged and burned. At Salamis, however, the Persian king lost his fleet and the tide of

the battle turned. Xerxes turned over the command of his army to a general, Mardonius, and returned to Asia. Mardonius was unable to recover the initiative in fighting the Greeks, and Xerxes was killed by one of his own guards. During his reign, Xerxes I made a number of mistakes.⁵⁴

There are several objections to Xerxes being the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. According to *Herodotus* VII.61, Xerxes' queen was named Amestris, the daughter of a Persian named Otanes.⁵⁵ The Greek historian states that she brutally mutilated the mother of Artaynta, a paramour of Xerxes⁵⁶ (*Herodotus* IX.112) and that on one occasion she had fourteen noble Persian youths buried alive as a thank offering to a god of the netherworld (*Herodotus* VIII.114).⁵⁷ Amestris' Persian origin and her sadistic brutality exclude any possibility of her being the Biblical character of Esther.

The banquet cited by *Herodotus*⁵⁸ can possibly be placed in Xerxes' third year (*Herodotus* VII.8), but it occurred after his conquest of Egypt, and before he began his expedition against Greece (*Herodotus* VII.20); this means that he would have been at Susa during his seventh year (478 B.C.). Thus, Xerxes was four years preparing for this war with the Greeks, and the half-year banquet took place for the purpose of such consultation.⁵⁹ Thus, the chronology of Xerxes' regal years could fit into the framework of the book of Esther.

However, the position is not without serious problems. There is the identification of Esther with *Herodotus*' Amestris, the queen of Xerxes. Amestris is merciless, and has a Persian name and nationality through her father Otanes.

Also, because of the age of both Mordecai and Esther, scholars who accept this position must re-interpret Esther 2:5-6--

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

Gleason L. Archer, Jr., relates how the above passage must be re-interpreted so that Mordecai and Esther can fit into the timeframe of Xerxes. Archer writes--

On the basis of Esther 2:5-6 some critics have alleged that the author must have regarded Xerxes as a near successor to King Nebuchadnezzar, since he implies that Mordecai was carried off in the deportation of Jehoiachin in 597 and yet was still very much alive in the reign of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.). But this deduction is founded upon a mistaken interpretation of the Hebrew text; the true antecedent of the relative pronoun who in verse 6 is not Mordecai but rather Kish, his great-grandfather. If it was Kish who was Jehoiachin's contemporary, as the author implies, three generations would have elapsed by the time of Mordecai-- a proper interval between 597 and 483.⁶⁰

Obviously, Archer is forcing the Hebrew text to say what he wants it to say. Any Hebraist knows that if the who of Esther 2:6 refers to Kish, then the he of Esther 2:7 must also refer to Kish-- "And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther." Thus, the story of Esther would have to be rewritten. The who of Esther 2:6 can only refer to Mordecai.

Without changing the Hebrew text, the age of Esther, as shown above, would be too far advanced for her to become Xerxes' queen. By the beginning of Xerxes' rule, the Persian Empire had begun to lose satrapies (*Herodotus* VII.1-2).

d. Compared To Artaxerxes As Ahasuerus (457 B.C.)

Artaxerxes Longimanus (464 B.C.- 423 B.C.), the younger son of Xerxes, ascended the Persian throne at the time of his father's bedroom murder. The empire was restive during the reign of Artaxerxes I. He was quite successful in putting down rebellion, but the concessions he had to make to the Greeks indicated a weakness which was to grow more pronounced among his successors. The decline in Persian power dates from his rule.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, interpreted Artaxerxes I to be the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther--

After the death of Xerxes, the kingdom came to be transferred to his son Cyrus, whom the Greeks called Artaxerxes. When this man had obtained the government over the Persians, the whole nation of the Jews, with their wives and children, were in danger of perishing; the occasion whereof we shall declare in a little time; for it is proper, in the first place, to explain somewhat relating to this king, and how he came to marry a Jewish wife, who was herself of the royal family also, and who is related to have saved our nation.... *Antiquities* XI.vi.1.

It appears that Josephus is following the Septuagint which reads 'Artaxerxes' rather than 'Ahasuerus' throughout the book of Esther. The word 'Artaxerxes', like Ahasuerus, seems to be used in the Septuagint with the meaning of 'king', similar in usage to the Egyptian word 'Pharaoh'. Artaxerxes in Persian *Artakhshathra* means 'Arta's kingdom'.

The seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes I (457 B.C.) would place Esther at the age of 142 years if she were a baby at the time of the deportation-- obviously too old for a beauty contest.

However, archaeological data has somewhat demonstrated the actual historicity of the book. Certainly the author of Esther (Mordecai, according to Jewish tradition) knows something of the administration of the Medo-Persian kingdom, the laws of the Medes and Persians, and especially of the construction of the palace at Shushan. It is now well-known from excavations that 'Shushan the Palace' (Esther 1:2) refers to the acropolis of the Elamite city of Susa, on which site the magnificent ruins remain of the splendor of the Median and Persian kings. Ira Price in his work, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, states that there is no event described in the Old Testament whose structural surroundings can be so vividly and accurately restored from actual excavations as 'Shushan the Palace'.⁶¹ Excavations of French archaeologists have uncovered the remains of this palace and show that it agrees perfectly in its ground plan with the structure presupposed in the book of Esther.

The names, Vashti and Esther (star, from *stareh* in Persian), have not been found in contemporary Medo-Persian sources, yet both names have satisfactory Persian etymologies.

The name Mordecai is the equivalent of the Babylonian Mardukai which occurs frequently in late Babylonian inscriptions and is derived from the name of the god Marduk. Mordecai probably had a name change like Daniel and three Hebrew children did. Also, this could be true of Hadassah, whose name was changed by the Babylonians to Esther; this name can be related to the Babylonian goddess 'Ishtar'. The Babylonian origin of the names would suggest an early date for Esther during the rise of Medo-Persia.

VIII. The Origin And Date Of The Feast Of Purim

A. The Origin Of Purim

Discoveries at Susa have illuminated Haman's method for fixing the date for the

destruction of the Jews by casting dice (Esther 3:7). The excavator of the Biblical Shushan, M. Dieulafoy, actually recovered one of these quadrangular prisms on which were engraved the numbers one, two, five and six. The word for 'die' at Susa at this time was *pur*; it is now known to be derived from Assyrian *puru*, with the same meaning. 'They cast Pur, that is, the lot' (Esther 3:7), is an explanation added for the Jews, to indicate that the ceremony at Susa answered to the same practice of 'casting the lot' among them.

The date of Purim in the book of Esther is very important for calculating the identity of the true Ahasuerus of history.

According to the Book of Esther, Ahasuerus divorced Vashti and married Esther (Esther 2:6). Since the present study considers Ahasuerus to be Astyages, it is possible that Vashti is the princess Aryenis mentioned by Herodotus.⁶²

Later, through her intercession (suggested by her cousin, Mordecai), Esther was responsible for saving many Jews from a massacre that had been plotted by Haman, the king's prime minister. When Haman's true character and plan were exposed to the king, Ahasuerus hanged him on the gallows that he (Haman) had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10) and gave Mordecai his position (Esther 10:3).

B. The Date Of Purim

Now, one must turn his attention to the date of Purim in Esther. In the first month, Nisan, lots were cast to see which day was to be the day that the Jews were to be exterminated (Esther 3:7-8). Haman's plot against Esther's people and the date set for their slaughter is recorded in the following passage from the book of Esther--

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. Esther 3:7-13

The extermination date for the Jews was to be Adar 13 in the twelfth year of Ahasuerus (Astyages). On the thirteenth day of the first month the edict was issued. Four days after the edict was issued, Haman's plot was exposed at Esther's banquet before the king and Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

King Ahasuerus could not reverse his edict and so he issued another edict written by Mordecai on Sivan 23. This decree of Ahasuerus gave the Jews permission to defend themselves--

Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred and twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. Esther 8:7-12

When Adar 13 arrived, a Sabbath day, the Jews throughout the provinces defended themselves causing a great loss to their enemies. The struggle continued through Adar 14 for the Jews of Shushan, while the other Jews rested and observed the Sabbath that they had missed, but Adar 15 brought rest (the observance of the missed Sabbath) to the Jews of Shushan, as well as a victory celebration.

The Feast of Purim was instituted according to the book of Esther by Mordecai to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's plot to kill them (Esther 9:20-28). The feast is called Purim in regards to the lots cast by Haman in order to determine the month in which the slaughter was to take place (Esther 3:7).

Purim is celebrated on Adar 14, and in Hasmonean times, it was known from II Maccabees 15:36 where the day of Purim is referred to as the 'Day of Mordecai'-- "They all passed a decree by unanimous vote never to let that day go by unobserved, but to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic, the eve of the day of Mordecai," The Jerusalem Bible.

The Jews of Shushan celebrated their deliverance on Adar 15 (Esther 9:18), and this day became known as 'Shushan Purim'.

Thus, in present-day Israel, Purim is celebrated in Jerusalem on Adar 15, but in Tel-Aviv it is observed on Adar 14. In leap years Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar, known as Veadar.

C. The Computer Analysis Of The Date Of Purim

The Feast of Purim falls before the turn of the Hebrew year, but after the turn of the Gregorian new year.

The computer calendar acknowledges that Adar 13 in the twelfth year of Astyages, 562 B.C., was a Saturday/Sabbath, a verification of a rest day. This agrees with the Biblical statement of Esther 9:16-18--

But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey, On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Since Adar 13 was a Sabbath according to the computer calendar, the Jews would only fight if they were attacked first. It should be noted that throughout the history of Israel they have often been attacked on their holy day(s) by their enemies. Because of the fighting in the provinces, these Jews kept their Sabbath on Adar 14 (Esther 9:16-17). While the Jews of Shushan continued the conflict for an extra day, Adar 14, they rested (kept their Sabbath) on Adar 15 (Esther 9:18).

ILLUSTRATION VIII: The Calendar Of Events For The Reign Of Astyages

			ca. 581 B.C.	Cyrus the Great is born
			577 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar goes mad
			575 B.C.	Astyages is king of Media
			574 B.C.	Astyages is king of Babylon, Belshazzar died
			573 B.C.	Astyages conquered Egypt and Ethiopia
Nisan 15	Wednesday	April 14	572 B.C.	6 month feast starts
Tishri 15	Friday	October 8	572 B.C.	6 month feast ends
Tishri 22	Friday	October 15	572 B.C.	Servant feast ends
			571 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar returns to throne
Tebet 10	Saturday	December 30	570 B.C.	Esther is engaged, Cyrus 11 years old
Tammuz 1	Monday	June 25	569 B.C.	Esther's six months with spices
Tebet 10	Wednesday	December 19	569 B.C.	Esther marries Astyages, Nebuch. defeats Egypt
Nisan 13	Wednesday	April 4	563 B.C.	Edict issued to exterminate Jews
Sivan 23	Tuesday	June 12	563 B.C.	Astyages learns of Mordecai's valour
				Mordecai is honored
				Esther's second banquet
				Haman's plot is exposed and he is hanged
				Decree for Jews to defend themselves
Adar 13	<u>Saturday</u>	February 23	562 B.C.	First Purim
Adar 14	Sunday	February 24	562 B.C.	Jews in king's provinces rested
Adar 15	Monday	February 25	562 B.C.	Jews in Susa rested
Adar 27	Saturday	March 9	562 B.C.	Jehoiakin released
			560 B.C.	Cyrus is married
			559 B.C.	Atossa born to Cyrus; Esther is 40; <i>Herod.</i> VII,1-5
			540 B.C.	Cyrus captures Babylon

Illustration IX shows that only Astyages (575 B.C.-540 B.C.), among all the Medo-Persian monarchs, can be the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. The computer calendar offers the day of the week for each Adar 13, on the twelfth year of each possible monarch.

ILLUSTRATION IX: Sampling The Date Of Purim For Medo-Persian Monarchs

Monarch	Reign Dates	Purim Date	Day Of Week	Esther's Age
Astyages	575-540 = 603	2-23-562	<u>Saturday</u>	29 years
Cyrus	551-522 = 539	2-27-538	Friday	53 years
Cambyses		No twelfth year		
Darius I	521-485 = 509	2-25-508	Saturday	83 years
Xerxes	485-464 = 473	2-18-472	Monday	119 years
Artaxerxes I	464-423 = 452	2-26-451	Sunday	140 years

Thus, the illustration clearly demonstrates that Astyages is the only king that meets all the criteria for the date of the first Purim.

The influence of Esther must have been felt in Babylon; for it was at this same time that Evil-merodach released Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) from prison thirty-seven years after his capture, on Adar 27, a Saturday, two weeks after the release of the Jews. The

Biblical information of this account is recorded in II Kings--

And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the seven and twentieth day of the month that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life. II Kings 25:27-30

D. The Relationship Of Jehoiachin's Release To Purim

It appears that King Nebuchadnezzar must have died at this time after forty-three years of rule (606 B.C. + 43 = 563 B.C.). Upon his death, Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-merodach, ascended the throne of Babylon. Since Ahasuerus (Astyages) was the brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar,⁶³ then Ahasuerus was an uncle to Evil-merodach (Mishna Tract, Megilah 11a). Also, Esther 10:3 speaks of the influence which Mordecai had upon Ahasuerus-- "For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." The chain-reaction-- Mordecai/ Ahasuerus/ Evil-merodach-- brought about the release of Judah's imprisoned monarch after thirty-seven years. Thus, one can see how these events were directly related one to another and how Astyages certainly must be Ahasuerus.

Josephus writes regarding Mordecai's influence upon the king-- "And Mordecai became a great and illustrious person with the king, and assisted him in the government of the people. He also lived with the queen; so that the affairs of the Jews were, by their means, better than they could ever have hoped for," *Antiquities* XI.vi.13.

Three Biblical dates are given for the release of Jehoiachin. II Kings 25:27-30 states that the day was Adar 27. Adar 25 is the date expressed in Jeremiah 52:31; while the Septuagint gives the date of Adar 24. Obviously, the release of Jehoiachin is viewed from three viewpoints. Perhaps, Adar 24 was the coronation day for Evil-merodach (563 B.C.- 561 B.C.) and Adar 25 was the 'official day' in which the decree of Jehoiachin's release was issued. Then Adar 27 became the actual day of the release of the Davidic monarch.

Adar 27 (II Kings 25:27) was March 9, 562 B.C. (Gregorian Calendar). At this point, the Hebrew Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar are overlapping in reference to years 563-562 B.C. Also, II Kings 25:27, containing Babylonian counting, reads "in the year that he (Evil-merodach) began to reign", *i.e.*, his accession year, but Jeremiah 52:31, containing Hebrew reckoning, states "in the first year of his (Evil-merodach) reign. However, modern translations render Jeremiah 52:31 as the accession year-- "in the year he came to the throne" (The Jerusalem Bible) and "in the year Evil-merodach became king of Babylon" (The New International Version). Nevertheless, in Hebrew time keeping, it would be the first year of Evil-merodach.

This chapter has reviewed past scholarship and its identity of Darius the Mede in history. It is believed that the present examination of the Biblical character, Darius the Mede, and his identification with Astyages, the last Median king, and his identification with Ahasuerus in the book of Esther harmonizes with both Biblical and secular historical documents. With this identification, the integrity of the Hebrew Text is upheld.

E. More Of Darius The Mede, Belshazzar And Esther In Summary

There is only one king of Media who fits all of the chronological needs of the Bible, that is, Astyages. He is the only king of the Medes who can fit the chronology required for the "Ahasuerus" of Esther, therefore, Astyages the Mede = Darius the Mede = Ahasuerus the Mede.

The astronomical proof for Astyages lies in two areas. First, Adar 13, year twelve of this king, should be a Saturday. He is the only Median or Persian king who's astronomical date fits. Secondly, the profaning of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes took place on Kislev 25, 145 Seleucid Era, on a Saturday. This astronomically checks to 167 B.C. This particular event was the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies in chapter 8, on the third year of Belshazzar, 575 B.C., therefore, Belshazzar died and Astyages ruled soon after. Astyages came to power over Media in 575 B.C., and by 573 B.C., Astyages was in control of the world - indicating that Belshazzar was dead.

The first Purim took place about two weeks before Jeconiah was released from prison when Evil-Merodach became king.

Esther was Astyages' wife, being about thirty years old when she married him.

The wife of Nebuchadnezzar was Astyages' sister. No doubt she cooperated with him after her son, Belshazzar was killed. He retained the kingdom for Nebuchadnezzar until he returned to his throne. Nebuchadnezzar was over his madness in 571 B.C., his thirty-fifth year. By his thirty-seventh year, he was actually engaged in a military excursion against Egypt.

No doubt, Evil-Merodach was a son of Belshazzar. He carried on the rebellious life of his father, and he also was killed in a similar fashion. His death ended Jeremiah's prediction that he (Nebuchadnezzar) would retain the government unto his son and his son's son, and then others would take it (Jeremiah 27:7).

Chapter III - NOTES

¹Perhaps, one factor which contributes to lack the of evidence concerning Darius the Mede is that there are limited extant Medo-Persian royal records today. Scholars must find references to Medo-Persian rulers in Assyrian, Babylonian and Greek writings.

²H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires of the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935), pp. 9, 59, 175.

³Cf., John D. Davis, *Davis Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 171.

⁴Darius the Persian is mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22-- "The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian." The present research has identified this monarch with Darius I Hystaspes.

⁵Darius the Mede is called 'king' twenty-eight times in Daniel 6. He also had the authority to establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not, cf., Daniel 6:7-9. This decree is defined as a royal statute, and a strong interdict, "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions," Daniel 6:7. Learning that the interdict was directed against Daniel, King Darius attempted in vain to annul the interdict that he signed, because it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king established may be changed (Daniel 6:12-16). King Darius encouraged Daniel as he was put in the den of lions to trust his God with the assertion: "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee," Daniel 6:16. Throughout the night when Daniel was in the lion's den, the king had concern for the well being of Daniel (Daniel 6:18-23). Then King Darius ordered the accusers of Daniel along with their children and their wives to be cast into the den of lions, Daniel 6:24. After Daniel's miraculous deliverance from the mouths of the lions, the king wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" Daniel 6:25-27.

⁶Donald J. Wiseman, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Last Days of Babylon," *Christianity Today* Volume II, No. 4 (Nov. 25, 1957), pp. 7-10.

Referring to the 'Nabonidus Chronicle' which mentions Nabonidus' reference to 'the kings of Egypt, of the Medes and of the Arabs', Wiseman writes:

"The king of Medes' in the tenth year of Nabonidus' reign [546 B.C.] can be no other than Cyrus the Persian, for he had incorporated the province of Media in what became the greater realm of Persia [550 B.C.] It now seems that in Babylonia Cyrus used the title 'King of the Medes' in addition to the more usual 'King of Persia, King of Babylonia, King of the lands' Is it too bold an hypothesis to suggest that the 'King of the Medes' of our Babylonian text may yet prove to be the 'Darius the Mede' of Daniel's day? Cyrus, at the age of 62, might well have taken another name as king of the Medes and even have been the son of Ahasuerus, as was the biblical 'Darius', so obscure is his ancestry. The biblical reference can as easily be translated 'Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.'" Wiseman, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁷It is highly perplexing to find the author of the book of Daniel referring to Darius the Mede in some passages (Daniel 5:31, 9:1, 11:1), and to Cyrus the Persian in others (Daniel 1:21, 10:1), if he intended us to understand these names as referring to the same person throughout.

⁸By Cyrus' conquest of the Median Empire, Media ceased to be an independent nation and became the first satrapy, Mada. A. T. Olmstead writes about the use of the term 'Mede'--

"Nevertheless, the close relationship between Persians and Medes was never forgotten. Plundered Ecbatana remained a favorite royal residence. Medes were honored equally with Persians; they were

employed in high office and were chosen to lead Persian armies. Foreigners spoke regularly of the Medes and Persians; when they used a single term, it was 'the Mede'." A. T. Olmstead, *History Of The Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 37.

⁹Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia* (The Education of Cyrus), which includes the whole life and career of the great conqueror, writes about Cyrus' parentage:

"The father of Cyrus is said to have been Cambyses, king of the Persians: this Cambyses belonged to the stock of the Persidae, and the Persidae derive their name from Perseus. His mother, it is generally agreed, was Mandane; and this Mandane was the daughter of Astyages, sometime king of the Medes." *Cyropaedia* I.ii.1. E. H. Warmington, ed., "Xenophon: Cyropaedia," *The Loeb Classical Library*, 2 Volumes, Trans. by Walter Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968).

¹⁰H. H. Rowley has pointed out that "if the mother of Cyrus were a Mede, that would hardly make her son a Mede. And since the Book of Daniel explicitly refers to Cyrus as 'the Persian,' we should need to have some clear proof that descent was reckoned through the female line before we could understand any reference to him as being 'the Mede'." Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹A. K. Grayson makes the distinction between Ugbaru, the governor of the Gutu, and Gubaru, the governor of Babylon, in his translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle (Chronicle 7):

- 12 In the month Tishri
- 13 when
- 12 Cyrus (II)
- 13 did
- 12 battle at Opis on the [bank of]
- 13 the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad
- 14 retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day Sippar was captured without a battle.
- 15 Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutu, and the army of Cyrus (II)
- 16 entered Babylon
- 15 without a battle.
- 16 Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month the shield-- (bearing troops)
- 17 of the Gutu surrounded the gates of Esagil. (But)
- 18 there was no
- 17 interruption (of rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples
- 18 and no date (for a performance) was missed. On the third day of the month Marchesvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon.
- 19 ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II)
- 20 spoke
- 19 (his) greeting to
- 20 all of
- 19 Babylon
- 20 Gubaru, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon.
- 21 From the month Kislev to the month Adar the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought down to Babylon
- 22 returned to their places. On the night of the eleventh of the month Marchesvan Ugbaru died. In the month [...]
- 23 the king's wife died. From the twenty-seventh of the month Adar to the third of the month Nisan [there was] (an official) mourning period in Akkad.
- 24 All of the people bared their heads. On the fourth day when Cambyses (II), son of C[yrus (II)],

A. K. Grayson, "Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles," A. Leo Oppenheim, ed. *Texts From Cuneiform Sources*, Volume V (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1975), pp. 109-111.

¹²John C. Whitcomb, Jr. *Darius the Mede: The Historical Chronology of Daniel* (Phillipsburg, New

Jersey: Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing Co., 1959), p. 24.

¹³The Behistun Inscription reads at this point regarding Gobryas (Gaubaruva) as follows:

"Saith Darius the King: these are the men who were there at the time when I slew Gaumata the Magian who called himself Smerdis; at that time these men cooperated as my followers: Intaphernes by name, son of Vayaspara, a Persian; Otanes by name, son of Thukhra, a Persian, Gobryas by name, son of Mardonius, a Persian (Gaubaruva: nama: Marduniyahya: punca: Parsa); Hydarnes by name" Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953), p. 132. The Behistun Inscription, Paragraph 68 (column 4, lines 80-86).

¹⁴John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁵Xenophon introduces Gobryas as follows:

"Thus, then they were occupied. Meanwhile Gobryas, an Assyrian, a man well advanced in years, came up on horseback with a cavalry escort; and they all carried cavalry weapons. And those who were assigned to the duty of receiving the weapons ordered them to surrender their spears, that they might burn them as they had done with the rest. But Gobryas said that he wished to see Cyrus first. Then the officers left the rest of the horsemen there, but Gobryas they conducted to Cyrus. And when he saw Cyrus, he spoke as follows:

'Sire, I am by birth an Assyrian; I have also a castle, and wide are the domains which I govern. I have also about a thousand horse which I used to put at the disposal of the Assyrian king, and I used to be his most devoted friend. But since he has been slain by you, excellent man that he was, and since his son, who is my worst enemy, has succeeded to his crown, I have come to you and fall a suppliant at your feet. I offer myself to be your vassal and ally and ask that you will be my avenger; and thus, in the only way I may, I make you my son, for I have no male child more'" *Cyropaedia* IV.vi.1-2.

Whitcomb maintains that the Gobryas of Xenophon is Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutuim and conqueror of Babylon. However, the Greek name which Xenophon uses is clearly the word 'Gobryas'.

¹⁶Whitcomb states that "Xenophon was alluding to Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutuim and conqueror of Babylon." Whitcomb, *op.cit.*, p. 23. He asserts that by making a clear distinction between Gubaru and Ugbaru, and identifying Darius the Mede with Gubaru, one can avoid the necessity of showing that the Governor of Gutuim could have been a Mede.

¹⁷Whitcomb points out that Hystapes, the father of Darius was a 'sub-king'. He writes, "Robert Dick Wilson points to Hystaspes himself, the father of Darius Hystaspes, as being such a sub-king. In the Behistun Inscription (Col. I,3-4), Darius counts his father as a king; and yet according to Col. II,16, and Col. III,1, he was apparently a governor of Parthia." Whitcomb, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 33. In the quote, Whitcomb cites A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 57,71.

¹⁹Grayson, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

²⁰Rowley, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

²²Waldo H. Dubberstein, "The Chronology of Cyrus and Cambyses," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages* 55 (1938), p. 419.

²³There are several passages in Herodotus which indicate the parents of Cambyses and their nationality--

"Then he gave Croesus to the care of his own son Cambyses, to whom he purposed to leave his sovereignty, charging Cambyses to honour Croesus and entreat him well, if the crossing of the river against the Massagetae should not prosper." *Herodotus* I. 208. G. P. Goold, ed., "Herodotus," *The Loeb Classical Library*, 4 Volumes, Translated by A. D. Godley (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,

1975).

"After the death of Cyrus Cambyses inherited his throne. He was the son of Cyrus and Cassandane daughter of Pharnaspes, for whom, when she died before him, Cyrus himself mourned deeply and bade all his subjects mourn also. Cambyses was the son of this woman and Cyrus." *Herodotus* II.1.

"This is the Persian story. But the Egyptians claim Cambyses for their own; they say that he was the son of this daughter of Apries, and that it was Cyrus, not Cambyses, who sent to Amasis for his daughter. But this tale is false. Nay, they are well aware (for the Egyptians have a truer knowledge than any man of the Persian laws) firstly, that no bastard may be king of Persia if there be a son born in lawful wedlock; and secondly, that Cambyses was born not of the Egyptian woman but of Cassandane, daughter of Pharnaspes, an Achaemenid. But they so twist the story because they would claim kinship with the house of Cyrus." *Herodotus* III.2.

²⁴Boutflower maintains that a copyist made a mistake in transcribing the original number-letters, and that Darius the Mede was not sixty-two in the year of Babylon's fall, but only twelve years old. Cf., Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1923), pp. 156-160.

²⁵S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898), pp. 468-469.

²⁶The history of Herodotus makes it clear that Darius I was a Persian--

"Now came to Susa Darius son of Hystaspes, from Persia, of which his father was vice-gerent; and on his coming the six Persians resolved to make Darius too their comrade. ... Then said Gobryas, "Friends, when shall we have a better occasion to win back the kingship, or, if we cannot so do, to die? seeing that we who are Persians are ruled by a Mede, a Magian, and he a man that has no ears. ... Now therefore my vote is that we follow Darius' plan, and not quit this council to do aught else but attack the Magian forthwith." *Herodotus* III.70,73.

²⁷John C. Whitcomb, Jr. has made this assumption in his work: *Darius the Mede: The Historical Chronology of Daniel*--

"The career of Darius the Mede is silhouetted against the fiery backdrop of the Fall of Babylon-- an event of surpassing importance from the historical point of view. Raymond P. Dougherty points out that during a period of nearly four hundred years the great city of Babylon fell more than once into the hands of its enemies, but that its capitulation to Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C. was so important in comparison to these other disasters, that it alone is called "The Fall of Babylon" in history. The explanation for this lies in the fact that 539 B.C. marked the collapse of Semitic hegemony in the ancient Orient, and the introduction of Aryan leadership which continued for at least a thousand years. This conquest of Babylon by Cyrus laid the foundation for all the later developments under Greek and Roman rule in the Mediterranean and the Near East." Whitcomb, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

²⁸Again, Whitcomb has made this assumption; he writes--

"To see Darius the Mede in his proper perspective, therefore, we must weigh carefully all the pertinent Biblical and extra-Biblical information concerning the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great and the early years of the Achaemenid Persian rule in Babylonia. With this historical data before us, we shall seek to demonstrate that Darius the Mede ... can be successfully identified with the famous governor of Babylon and the Region beyond the River, who appears under the name of Gubaru in the cuneiform documents that come down to us from the period immediately following the Fall of Babylon." *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁹Joseph D. Wilson, *Did Daniel Write Daniel?* (New York: Charles C. Cook, n.d.), p. 56.

³⁰Xenophon, "Cyropaedia," E. H. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, Volume V, Trans. by Walter Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. ix-x.

³¹The Greek name to which Josephus refers is probably 'Artaxerxes'.

³²Jerome, *Commentary On Daniel*. Trans. by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 63. Apparently, Jerome had a copy of the Septuagint which used 'Artaxerxes' in

place of Darius the Mede.

³³Aeschylus, "The Persians," E. W. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, Volume I, Trans. by Herbert Weir Smyth (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 175, 177.

³⁴C. F. Keil, "Biblical Commentary On The Book Of Daniel," *Biblical Commentary On The Old Testament*, Trans. by M. G. Easton (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 199-200, footnote.

³⁵Aristophanes, "The Ecclesiazusae," E. H. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, Volume III. Trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 301.

³⁶Keil, *op.cit.*, p. 200, footnote. The following quote is the reference which Keil mentions from Herodotus--

"This Arydanes had been appointed by Cambyses viceroy of Egypt; at a later day he was put to death for making himself equal to Darius. For learning and seeing that Darius desired to leave such a memorial himself as no king had ever wrought, Aryandes imitated him, till he got his reward; for Darius had coined money out of gold refined to an extreme purity, and Aryandes, then ruling Egypt, made a like silver coinage; and now there is no silver money so pure as is the Aryandic. But when Darius heard that Aryandes was so doing, he put him to death, not on this plea but as a rebel." *Herodotus* IV.166.

³⁷William F. Albright, "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XL (1921), p. 112, footnote.

³⁸Herodotus records this solar eclipse as follows: "This [Cyaxares] was the king who fought against the Lydians when the day was turned to night in the battle, and who united under his dominion all Asia that is beyond the river Halys." *Herodotus* I.103.

³⁹*Cf.*, John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *op.cit.*, p. 43.

⁴⁰This chronological statement was explained in chapter one.

⁴¹This chronological statement was explained in chapter two.

⁴²The reader should actually read the story of Cyrus' life until he became king in *Herodotus* I.107-130. Through several visions, Astyages learns that Mandane's son, Cyrus would replace him as king. At the child's birth, Astyages summons Harpagus to dispose of the child because Cyrus was destined to be king and by decent was a Persian. Through what appears to be divine intervention the life of the child was miraculously preserved by the circumstances of several events. At the age of ten, the child, who was raised by the cowherd servant of Astyages, was brought before the king and recognized by Astyages because the fashion of the boy's countenance was like to his own, and his manner of answering was freer than customary and the time of exposure seemed to agree with Cyrus' age. His conscience bothering him for ten years, Astyages, who had no male heir, was glad to return him to his parents. When Cyrus was a young man the Medes were easily persuaded to make Cyrus their leader and depose Astyages who had dealt harshly with the Medians. Herodotus ends the account of Cyrus' accession to the throne as follows: "But now, in Astyages' time, Cyrus and the Persians rose in revolt against the Medes, and from this time ruled Asia. As for Astyages, Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house till Astyages died." *Herodotus* I.130.

If the story of Cyrus' boyhood is true as reported by Herodotus, then it shows how the Lord safeguarded Cyrus' life in order to fulfill Isaiah's oracle concerning Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 44:24-45:4). If Astyages is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther as he seems to be, then this helps to explain why Astyages and Esther had no male heir-- so that Cyrus might be able to fulfill the Lord's will.

⁴³George Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies Of The Ancient Eastern World*, Volume III (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, Publishers, 1870), pp. 44-45.

⁴⁴Jerome, *Commentary On Daniel*, Translated by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 55.

⁴⁵James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 309.

⁴⁶S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898), p. 468.

⁴⁷Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), pp. 382-383.

⁴⁸Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: The Apocrypha Of The Old Testament (Revised Standard Version)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 75. It is interesting to note that *The Jerusalem Bible* interprets Ahasuerus to be Cyaxares.

⁴⁹L. N. R. (Ellen Ranyard), *Stones Crying Out* (London: The Book Society, 1880), p. 422.

⁵⁰Herodotus refers to Susa as follows: "Now came to Susa Darius son of Hystaspes, from Persia, of which his father was vice-gerent; and on his coming the six Persians resolved to make Darius too their comrade." *Herodotus* III.70-71.

⁵¹The following is the Biblical account of Ahasuerus' acceptance of Esther as his new queen:

"Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." *Esther* 2:15-16

⁵²*Esther* 2:5-7 is the Biblical passage describing the deportation of Mordecai and Esther and their relationship as cousins--

"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah the king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."

⁵³Darius the Persian first acted to unite the empire. It was crumbling on all sides because of separate patriotisms in the satrapies. Leaders of the provinces tried to grab power in Media, Elam, Babylon, Egypt, and even in Persia. Darius stemmed each revolt by sending loyal generals to subdue rebel forces.

⁵⁴Xerxes' empire was crumbling, largely because of new taxes. It appears that Xerxes did not have Darius' interest in holding the loyalty of his subjects. He made grave errors of judgment in his military actions. He angered the priests of Egypt by taking their temple treasures. He burned Athens, and lost any support he might have claimed in Greek cities. He destroyed Babylon's temples and ordered that Marduk's golden statue be melted down.

⁵⁵Herodotus gives the following factor regarding the queen of Xerxes: "Their commander was Otanes, father of Xerxes' wife and son of Amestris." *Herodotus* VII.61.

⁵⁶Herodotus reports the brutality of Amestris which would exclude any possibility of identifying her with Esther-- "But in the meantime, while Xerxes talked with his brother, Amestris sent for Xerxes' guards and used Masistes' wife very cruelly; she cut off the woman's breasts and threw them to dogs, and

her nose and ears and lips likewise, and cut out her tongue, and sent her home thus cruelly used." *Herodotus* IX.112.

⁵⁷Again, the brutality of Xerxes' wife, Amestris, is seen by the following statement from the pen of Herodotus: "To bury alive is a Persian custom; I have heard that when Xerxes' wife Amestris attained to old age she buried fourteen sons of notable Persians, as a thank offering on her own behalf to the fabled god of the nether world." *Herodotus* VII.114.

⁵⁸Xerxes' banquet cited by Herodotus (VII.8-11) assembled the noblest among the Persians. At the banquet, the king expresses his desire to conquer Greece and to punish the Athenians out of revenge for what they had done to Darius I, his father and the Persians--

"After the conquest of Egypt, purposing now to take in hand the expedition against Athens, Xerxes held an assembly of the noblest among the Persians, convened with special intent, that he might learn their opinions and himself declare his will before them all. When they were assembled, Xerxes spoke to them as follows: ... It is my intent to bridge the Hellespont and lead my army through Europe to Hellas, that I may punish the Athenians for what they have done to the Persians and to my father. ... For full four years from the conquest of Egypt he was equipping his host and preparing all that was needful therefor; and ere the fifth year was completed he set forth on his march with the might of a great multitude." *Herodotus* VII.8, 20.

⁵⁹Compare the statement of C. F. Keil who writes--

"The purpose for which the king assembled the grandees of his kingdom around him in Susa for a whole half-year is not stated, because this has no connection with the special design of the present book. If, however, we compare the statement of Herod. VII.8, that Xerxes, after the re-subjection of Egypt, summoned the chief men of his kingdom to Susa to take counsel with them concerning the campaign against Greece, it is obvious, that the assembly for 180 days in Susa, of the princes and nobles mentioned in the book of Esther, took place for the purpose of such consultation." C. F. Keil, "Biblical Commentary On Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther," *Commentary On The Old Testament*, Trans. by Sophia Taylor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 324-325.

⁶⁰Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), pp. 419-420.

⁶¹Ira Maurice Price, Ovid R. Sellers, and E. Leslie Carlson, *The Monuments and the Old Testament: Light from the Near East on the Scriptures*. (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1958), p. 408.

⁶²When Astyages' father, Cyaxares I, defeated Lydia, he made an agreement with its defeated king, Alyattes, that his son would marry the king's daughter, the princess Aryenis (*Herodotus* I.74). The daughter of this marriage, Mandane was given to a lower ranked Persian nobleman, Cambyses, as wife. To this union a son was born whose name was Cyrus; he became Cyrus the Great. Herodotus writes in this regard--

"So when the Lydians and Medes saw the day turned to night they ceased from fighting, and both were the more zealous to make peace. Those who reconciled them were Syennesis the Cilician and Labynetus the Babylonian; they it was who brought it about that there should be a sworn agreement and an exchange of wedlock between them: they adjudged that Alyattes should give his daughter Aryenis to Astyages, son of Cyaxares; for without a strong bond agreements will not keep their strength. These nations make sworn compacts as do the Greeks; moreover, they cut the skin of their arms and lick each other's blood."

This Astyages then was Cyrus' mother's father, ..." *Herodotus* I.74-75.

⁶³The Talmud states that Ahasuerus was the brother of Nebuchadnezzar. Probably, the idea of brother-in-law is what is meant by the Talmudic text--

"Ahasuerus: Rab said: He was [as his name implies], the brother of the head and the counterpart of the head. 'The brother of the head': the brother of Nebuchadnezzar the wicked who was called head, as it is written, *Thou art the head of gold*. 'The counterpart of the head': the one slew, the other sought to slay; the one laid waste, the other sought to lay waste, as it is written, *And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem*.

Samuel said that [as his name indicates], the face of Israel was blackened in his days like the sides of a pot. R. Johanan said that [his name indicates that] everyone who thought of him said 'alas for my head'. R. Hanina said, [it indicates that] all became poor in his days, as it says, *And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute.*" *The Babylonian Talmud*, Mishnah Tract, Megillah 11a.

Chapter IV - NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND HIS SON BELSHAZZAR

I. Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar, for all practical purposes, was Babylon. His rise to power in 606 B.C. and the subsequent subjection of most of the ancient Near East by 583 B.C. allowed him to boast, "Great Babylon! Imperial Palace! Was it not built by me alone, by my own might and power to the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:27, Jerusalem Bible). This was the first big mistake of his life. Kings do not have the liberty to offend God and get off with it. Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by a mental illness called lycanthropy. For seven years he remained among the animals, living and acting like one himself. The tradition brought by Daniel is not the only story of its kind. Arab sources have a very similar story about Nabunaid, a later king to rule over Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar returned to his former health, his kingdom which had been held for him was returned. Within a couple of years he even expanded the territories which had been lost during his illness. He finally died in his forty-third year, and Evil-Merodach, his son or grandson, followed him. Evil-Merodach was the fourth and last king of the Nabopolassar dynasty (assuming Belshazzar was the father of Evil-Merodach).

Neriglissar followed Evil-Merodach, and then a very brief reign of Labashi-Marduk concluded at the accession of Nabunaid in 557 B.C. This man was of Syrian extraction and worshipped the gods of Syria at the expense of the gods of Babylon. For many unexplained reasons, he left Babylon to reside in Arabia, during which time he left a son named Belshazzar in charge. It is this Belshazzar which many have come to believe is the same man who Daniel describes as the son of Nebuchadnezzar. The last twenty years of the life of Nebuchadnezzar will be detailed in this chapter, since they influenced the way the next great power moved. A correct understanding of this period opens the door to the great secrets: Who was Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar? Who was the husband of Esther? Who was Darius the Mede?

II. Nebuchadnezzar As World King

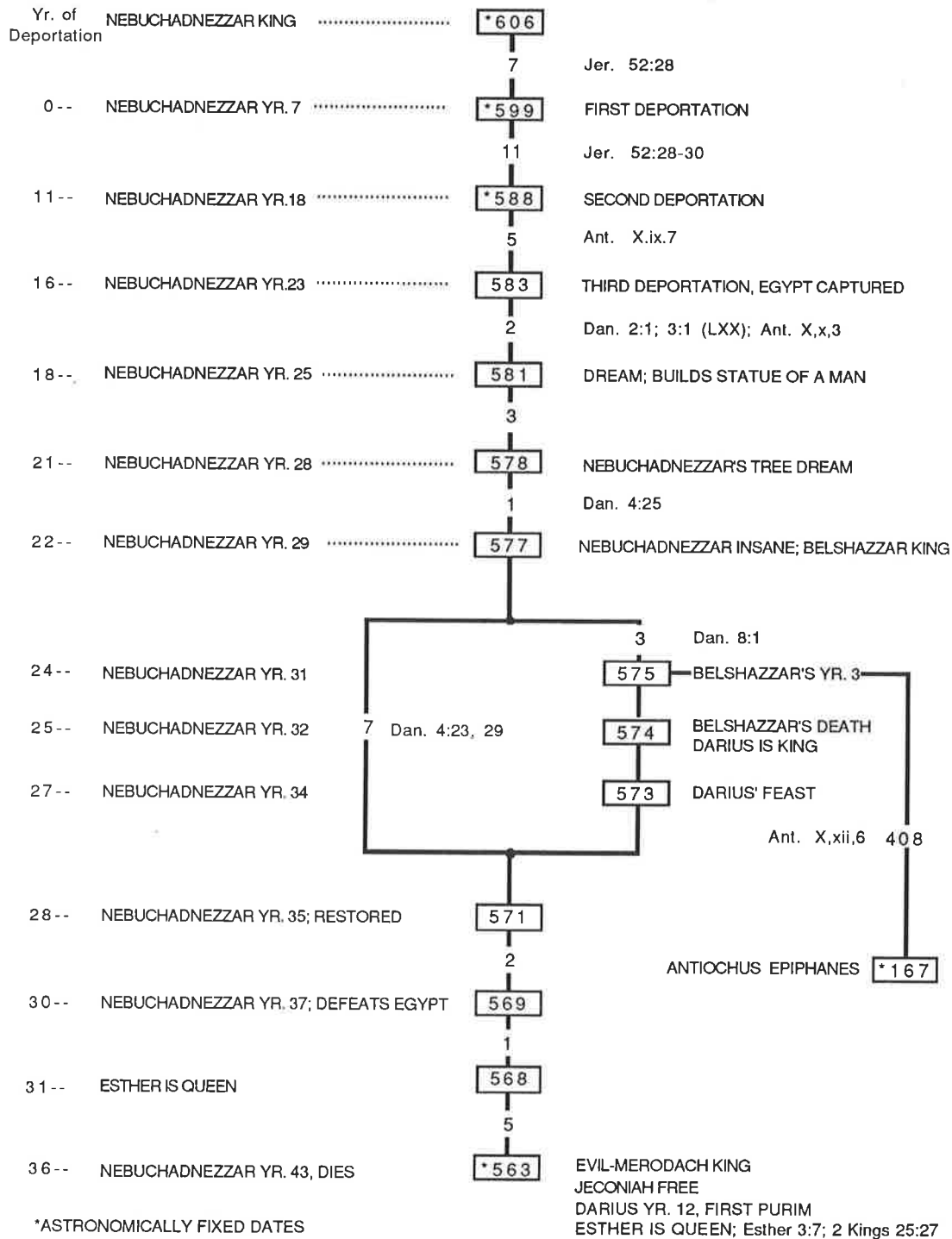
A. 583 B.C.-- Nebuchadnezzar's Twenty-third Year

In his twenty-third year (Babylonian reckoning) the king of Babylon made a campaign into Palestine and Egypt. This information is given by the Hebrew text in Jeremiah 52:30: "In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred." This is the last deportation of Hebrews by Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in any document. The prophet Ezekiel gives an amazing prophecy (Ezekiel 29:1-16) concerning the land of Egypt. The oracle is dated before the fall of Jerusalem while the holy city was still under siege, and this basic oracle continues through Ezekiel 30:19.

B. 581 B.C.-- Second Year As World King And Daniel 2:1

With the defeat of Egypt and Pharaoh-hophra in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year, 581 B.C. would be the second year of the Babylonian ruler as 'World King'. This idea appears to be implied in the chronological reference of Daniel 2:1-- "And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep broke from him."

ILLUSTRATION X: Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Rule



By this time in world history, the monarch had become 'the head of gold', *i.e.*, the world king. Notice what Daniel says in his interpretation of the colossal image dream concerning Nebuchadnezzar--

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. Daniel 2:37-38

Josephus helps us to identify which reference Daniel is using as he dates the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, "Now two years after the destruction of Egypt, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a wonderful dream..." (*Antiquities* X.x.3). Since he defeated Egypt more than once, we appeal again to Josephus to identify which occasion he was speaking about--

For on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Coelesyria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites and Moabites; and when he had brought all those nations under subjection, he fell upon Egypt in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned, and set up another: and he took those Jews that were captives, and led them away to Babylon; and such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews, as it hath been delivered down to us, it having twice gone beyond Euphrates; for the people of the ten tribes were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians in the days of king Hoshea; after which the people of the two tribes that remained after Jerusalem was taken [were carried away] by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and Chaldea. *Antiquities* X.ix.7

It appears that the prophecies of Daniel take on new meaning when interpreted in this chronological framework.¹

Daniel 3 (Nebuchadnezzar's colossal statue of gold)² and Daniel 4 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal tree)³ seem to have occurred three years apart, in 581 B.C. and 578 B.C.

The Septuagint (LXX) gives the following chronological reference for the construction of the colossal statue of gold mentioned in Daniel 3:1-- "In his eighteenth year Nebuchodonosor the king made a golden image, its height was sixty cubits, its breadth six cubits: and he set it up in the plain of Deira, in the province of Babylon." It appears that as soon as the dream of the colossal statue took place, Nebuchadnezzar was motivated to construct a colossal image. The eighteenth year certainly refers to the monarch's rule of the Hebrews from the first captivity in 599 B.C. (599 B.C. + 18 = 581 B.C.).

III. 577 B.C.- 571 B.C.-- Seven Years Of Lycanthropy

Nebuchadnezzar, as he was looking over Babylon, was boasting about his accomplishments as 'king of kings'. The monarch boasted: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Daniel 4:30. At that moment, Daniel's interpretation of the tree dream proved itself correct. For the king of Babylon became mad and "did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4:33). His insanity continued for seven years (Daniel 4:32) and then he ascribed glory to the Most High (Daniel 4:34-37). During three years of his father's madness, Belshazzar ruled over the kingdom, and for the balance, Darius, his brother-in-law ruled. The king returned from his insanity in

571 B.C.

A. Astronomy And Josephus

Locating the seven years in history has been a puzzle. The first missing part of the puzzle is a statement by Josephus which, according to him, requires 408 years between the prediction of Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel chapter 8 and the fulfillment. Antiochus Epiphanes profaned the Temple on Kislev 25, Saturday (*Antiquities* XII.v.5). This lunar date took place in 167 B.C. 408 years earlier is 575 B.C. (see Illustration XI). Daniel 8 is dated to the third year of Belshazzar which would make the first year 577, Hebrew counting. If the first year was 577, and Nebuchadnezzar spent seven years inclusive, he would return on 571. Astyages became king over Media in 575 B.C., hence Belshazzar must have died in 574 B.C., and Astyages the Mede must certainly have been Darius the Mede.

B. 577 B.C. - 574 B.C.-- Belshazzar's Reign Over Babylon

In the first year of Belshazzar, the prophet Daniel had his vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7:2-28).⁴ The prophet had another vision in the third year of Belshazzar; this vision of the ram and goat is recorded in Daniel 8:2-27.⁵

Then in the fourth year of Belshazzar Babylon fell to Darius the Median whom the present study identifies as Astyages. The account of the fall of Babylon is given in the Biblical text of Daniel 5:1-31.

In his impiety, the king of Babylon drank wine from the holy golden and silver vessels which had once been set aside for the Hebrew Temple-service in Jerusalem (Daniel 5:3). Suddenly, the God of the Hebrews spoke in judgment. In the banquet hall, the fingers of a hand were visible as they wrote an inscription on the white plaster.

This terrified Belshazzar. Calling the wise men of Babylon, they were unable to decipher the strange handwriting. Remembering that Daniel had supernatural wisdom, the queen mother, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, suggested that he be asked to read and interpret the mysterious writing.

Daniel, spurning any idea of reward, reminded Belshazzar of the present way in which Nebuchadnezzar was being humbled by the Lord (Daniel 5:17-21). However, Belshazzar had not profited by his knowledge of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, but instead had defied the Lord (Daniel 5:22-23).

The prophet read the words on the palace wall: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin (U-pharsin; the 'u' equals 'and')," Daniel 5:25. These Semitic words could represent weights such as 'a mana, a mana, a shekel and a half-shekel'. But Daniel interpreted the words to be verbs-- 'numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided.' Thus the interpretation of the inscription was that the days of Belshazzar's kingdom were numbered. The king was weighed in the balances and found wanting. His kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:25-28). It is interesting to note that the word Peres (the singular form of Parsin) would also bring to mind the Persians whose kingdom was to supplant the Babylonian Empire.

That very night the Median armies entered the city of Babylon. Belshazzar was slain and the Neo-Babylonian Empire came to an end (Daniel 5:30). However, the city of Babylon was not destroyed.

Notice that the queen mother is the wife of Nebuchadnezzar and the mother of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:10-11). Twice, the Biblical text in the Aramaic language informs the reader that Nebuchadnezzar is the father of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:11, 18), not 'grandfather' as some scholars suggest. It must be remembered that a word must be understood in its natural usage unless the content indicates otherwise.

Another insight from Daniel 5 is that Belshazzar offered the threefold reward-- a scarlet garment, a golden chain and the position of third ruler--for the man who deciphered the inscription (Daniel 5:29). Why was Daniel called the third ruler? The answer is that Nebuchadnezzar was still considered to be the first ruler of Babylon even though he was insane as Daniel had interpreted in the colossal tree dream: "And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule," Daniel 4:26. Therefore, Belshazzar was the second in command, a co-regent, while Daniel, upon his interpretation, became the third ruler of the Babylonian Empire.

C. Astyages' Reign Over Babylon

Astyages reigned from 574 B.C. until 571 B.C., for three years, or touching on four different years. He would be considered second in command over Babylon, but was assisting his sister, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar. He certainly must have enjoyed the prestige for he held a great 180 day banquet in the next year (Esther 1).

IV. Belshazzar vs. Belshazzar

The chronological details of this subject are covered in the Introduction to chapter II. The present study holds that there were two Belshazzars in Babylonian history-- the first was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian and the second was the son of Nabonaid (Nabonidus), a Syrian who was not related by Nebuchadnezzar.

ILLUSTRATION XI: The Two Belshazzar's Of Babylonian History

Belshazzar, The Son Of Nebuchadnezzar
Daniel 5
Baruch 1:11-12

Belshazzar, The Son Of Nabonidus
The Nabonidus Chronicle
The Verse Account Of Nabonidus

A. The Son Of Nebuchadnezzar

The son of Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned in the Biblical reference of Daniel 5:11, 8--

There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; ... O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor.

Also, he is mentioned in Baruch 1:11-12--

Pray for the long life of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and of his son Belshazzar, and that their days on earth may endure as the heavens; pray that the Lord may give us strength and clear understanding so that we may lead our lives under the protection of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and of his son Belshazzar, and by our long service win their favour. (The Jerusalem Bible)

The content of the book of Baruch clearly indicates not only that Belshazzar is Nebuchadnezzar's son but also that they were contemporaries ruling in a co-regency. The book of Baruch is dated by the chronological reference-- "in the fifth year, on the seventh day of the month, and at the time when the Chaldeans captured Jerusalem and burned it down," Baruch 1:2. That date would be the year 582 B.C., five years before Nebuchadnezzar's insanity.

The book of Baruch having an Hebrew origin was later translated into Greek and placed into the Septuagint. The book offers the reader valuable information about the Hebrew communities in the Dispersion and the ways by which their religious life was sustained: contact with Jerusalem, prayer, devotion to the Law, thirst for retribution, and Messianic hope. Thus, the work also implies a co-regency between Nebuchadnezzar and his son, Belshazzar.

Perhaps, another indication that Nebuchadnezzar had a son by the name of Belshazzar is implied in the monarch renaming Daniel, by the Babylonian name-Belteshazzar (Daniel 1:7; 2:26; 5:12).

Perhaps, the greatest cause for this confusion is the result of identifying the reception of the rule of Babylon by Darius the Median and the capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great as the same event. This is not the same event but two events--likewise, separated by thirty-five years.

The Midrash Rabbah (The Song of Songs III. 4,2) in relating the circumstances leading to the death of Belshazzar also informs that Darius would rule before Cyrus--

... Belshazzar the king made a great feast (Dan. V,1). ... The twilight that I longed for hath been turned for me into trembling (*ib.*): the twilight in which was to be deliverance and for which my soul yearned has been turned to trembling. They prepare the table (*ib.*5): they set the festive board. They light the lamps (*ib.*): they put up the lamp and kindle its branches. Rise up, ye princes (*ib.*): these are Cyrus and Darius. Anoint the shield (*ib.*): that is, take over the kingdom. Darius said to Cyrus "Reign thou before me." Said Cyrus to Darius, 'Did not Daniel state explicitly, "Peres; thy kingdom is divided, and given to Media and Persia"-to Media first and then to Persia? This means that you should reign before me.' When Belshazzar heard this, he sent to his armies, saying, 'Let us march against every nation and government that has rebelled against me.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'Wretch, hast thou sent to all the others or hast thou sent to Me? I swear that thy punishment shall be from no other source than from Me.' Hence it says, For neither from the east, nor from the west, ... for God is judge; He putteth down one, and lifteth up another (Ps. LXXV, 7f.); He putteth down Belshazzar and raiseth up Cyrus and Darius. Cyrus and Darius were door-keepers of Belshazzar. When he heard the writing he explained he said, 'Whoever shall present himself here to-night, even if he says to you, "I am the king," cut off his head.' Now it is the custom of kings to have their privy not inside their chamber but outside. All that night his bowels were loose. He went outside without their noticing, but when he wanted to re-enter they noticed him. 'Who are you,' they said. He replied, 'I am the king.' They said to him: 'Did not the king order that whoever should present himself to-night even if he should say, "I am the king," we should cut off his head?' So they went and took a branch of the candlestick and broke his head with it; and so it is written, In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain (Dan. V, 30).⁶

As can be seen, it is Hebrew tradition that Cyrus and Darius were door-keepers of Belshazzar in the night that "Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old," Daniel 5:31. It is also Hebrew tradition that Darius would reign before Cyrus⁷-- that Media would rule over Babylon before Persia.

The statements from The Midrash Rabbah agree with the reconstruction of Babylonian history in the present study. When the real identity of Darius the Mede will be made clear in chapter three, it will be pointed out that he is also 'the brother-in-law' of Nebuchadnezzar. According to Daniel 5, there is no power struggle between the Medes and Babylonians, no battle, no siege, no destruction of Babylon; just a change in the leadership of the government between Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius the Mede, the brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. If the tradition of The Midrash Rabbah is correct, then Belshazzar was killed at the hands of his own palace guard rather than at the hands of Darius the Mede.

Upon the death of Belshazzar, the queen mother, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar,

asked her brother to rule the kingdom of Babylon; for three more years of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity remained. The relationship of Darius the Mede and Nebuchadnezzar will be discussed fully in chapter three. Therefore, upon his return from the illness of lycanthropy, the rule of Babylon was handed over by Darius the Mede to his brother-in-law, Nebuchadnezzar. This point is also the thesis of Daniel's colossal tree prophecy--

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:24-28

The Biblical statement 'thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee' was certainly fulfilled with the rule of Darius the Median, the king's brother-in-law. However, such would not have been the case if Cyrus was the ruler at this time.

B. The Son Of Nabonidus

The second Belshazzar in Babylonian history is the son of Nabonidus. According to contemporary Babylonian records, Belshazzar was the eldest son and also a co-regent of Nabonidus, the last sovereign of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. This Belshazzar is named 'the crown prince' in the Nabonidus Chronicle of the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7). In the seventh, ninth, tenth and eleventh years of the reign of Nabonidus, the Babylonian texts state that the king was in Tema while the prince, the officers and the army were in Akkad.

Each of these initial statements for the seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh years of the king is supplemented by the following comment: 'The king did not come to Babylon for the ceremonies of the month Nisanu, Nabu did not come to Babylon, Bel did not go out from Esagila in procession, the festival of the New Year was omitted.' This means that during the years mentioned Nabonidus was in Tema and Belshazzar was in Babylon and that owing to the absence of Nabonidus the usual New Year's festival was not observed. Therefore, it appears that Belshazzar actually exercised a co-regency at Babylon. The following quote is taken from Nabonidus' ninth year--

- 10 The ninth year: Nabonidus, the king, (was) <in> Tema (while) the prince, the officers, (and) the army (were) in Akkad. The king
- 11 did not come
- 10 to Babylon in the month Nisan.
- 11 Nabu did not come to Babylon. Bel did not come out. The Akitu festival did not take place.
- 12 The offerings were presented (to) the gods of <Babylon> and Borsippa as in normal times in Esagil and Ezida.
- 13 On the fifth day of the month Nisan the queen mother
- 14 died
- 13 in Dur-karashu which (is on) the bank of the Euphrates upstream from Sippar.
- 14 The prince and his army were in mourning for three days (and) there was (an official) mourning period. In the month Sivan
- 15 there was (an official) mourning period for the queen mother
- 14 in Akkad.

- 15 In the month Nisan Cyrus (II), king of Parsu, mustered his army and
16 crossed the Tigris below Arbail. In the month Iyyar [he marched] to Ly[dia].
17 He defeated its king, took its possessions, (and) stationed his own garrison (there) [...]
18 Afterwards the king and his garrison was in it ([...])⁸

It is thus clear that Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, actually exercised a co-regency in Babylon.

Also the following text 'The Verse Account of Nabonidus', indicates that when Nabonidus started on his expedition to Tema, he entrusted actual kingship to Belshazzar--

--when the third year was about to begin--
He (Nabonidus) entrusted the "Camp" to his oldest (son), the firstborn,
The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command).
He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him
And, himself, he started out for a long journey,
The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;
He turned towards Tema (deep) in the west.
He started out the expedition on a path (leading) to a distant (region). When he arrived there,
He killed in battle the prince of Tema,
Slaughtered the flocks of those who dwell in the city (as well as) in the countryside,
And he, himself, took his residence in [Te]ma, the forces of Akkad [were also stationed] there.
He made the town beautiful, built (there) [his palace]
Like the palace in Su.an.na (Babylon), he (also) built [walls]
(For) the fortifications of the town and [...].
He surrounded the town with sentinels [...].⁹

This passage states plainly that before Nabonidus started on an expedition to Tema he divided the rule of the empire between himself and his son and entrusted actual kingship to Belshazzar. Then he undertook the distant campaign which was probably in Arabia, conquered Tema, established his residence there, and built that city with the glory of Babylon.

Certainly, scholars have presented an impressive case for Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, to be the Belshazzar of Daniel 5. However, they have overlooked the fact that the Biblical Belshazzar is called 'the son of Nebuchadnezzar' and that he also had a co-regency with his father during the king's insanity. Daniel 5:11, 18 and Baruch 1:11-12 clearly provide this information as shown above. Through the failure to recognize two Belshazzars, unwarranted chronological problems have been created for the book of Daniel. For Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was slain by the Medes in 574 B.C. (Daniel 5:30) while the co-regency of Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, ended in 540 B.C., a difference in time of thirty-five years.

The Babylonian Chronicles tell the capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus (540 B.C.). It is worthy to note that no document of Babylonian origin affirms that Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, was actually present at the fall of Babylon when Cyrus the Persian captured the great city. Note also that the death of no Babylonian king is recorded, but also note that after the capture of Babylon, the deaths of Ugbaru, the governor of Gutu, as well as the wife of Nabonidus are mentioned. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus is well preserved in the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7.iii.12-23)--

- 12 ... In the month Tishri
13 when
14 Cyrus (II)

- 13 did
12 battle at Opis on the [bank of]
13 the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad
14 retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day
Sippar was captured without a battle.
15 Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutu, and the army of Cyrus
(II)
16 entered Babylon
15 without a battle
16 Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the
month the shield- (bearing troops)
17 of the Gutu surrounded the gates of Esagil. (But)
18 there was no
17 interruption (of rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples
18 and no date (for a performance) was missed. On the third day of the month Marchesvan
Cyrus (II) entered Babylon.
19 ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II)
20 spoke
19 (his) greeting to
20 all of
19 Babylon.
20 Gubaru, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon.
21 From the month Kislev to the month Adar the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought
down to Babylon
22 returned to their places. On the night of the eleventh of the month Marchesvan Ugbaru died.
In the month [...]
23 the king's wife died. From the twenty-seventh of the month Adar to the third of the month
Nisan [there was] (an official) mourning period in Akkad.¹⁰

The Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7) makes no mention of Darius the Mede and Daniel 5 gives no reference to Cyrus the Great. It appears that one is dealing with two different events and two different Belshazzars; for the Biblical and Babylonian documents do not dovetail in their details. Neither the Bible nor the Greek Historians (Herodotus, Xenophon) record the fall of Babylon in such a way that the data becomes synchronistic without the possibility of recognizing two separate events and two separate Belshazzars. This is covered more completely in chapter three along with the identification of Darius the Mede.

C. Belshazzar Of Daniel Is Not Nabonidus' Son

- 1). He had first hand knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's madness.
- 2). The chronological time span of Josephus fits his reign.
- 3). His reign fits into the only seven year period of his father which is open.
- 4). His reign matches Astyages/Darius the Mede's.
- 5). He was a Babylonian, not a Syrian.
- 6). Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty was to continue through his son (Belshazzar) and grandson (Evil-Merodach).
- 7). The Medes were to rule before the Persians. There were no Medes ruling in 540 B.C.

V. Nebuchadnezzar's Remaining Reign

A. 571 B.C.-- Nebuchadnezzar Returns From Madness

The year 571 B.C. is the thirty-fifth year of King Nebuchadnezzar; this is also the year in which Nebuchadnezzar returns from his madness. Darius the Mede, the brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, returned the kingdom of Babylon to

Nebuchadnezzar after his recovery. This would comply with Daniel's interpretation of the colossal tree dream: "... thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee," Daniel 4:26. This occurred during the second year of Darius the Mede.

B. 569 B.C.-- Nebuchadnezzar Kills Hophra, King Of Egypt

Another important event of this year would be Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt and her Pharaoh, Apries (Hophra). This information is given by the prophet Ezekiel--

And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.

In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 29:17-21

The Lord would give the land of Egypt once again into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for his labour against the city of Tyre. Josephus placed Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Tyre as beginning in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (599 B.C.) and as lasting for thirteen years (586 B.C.)--

In them we have this enumeration of the times of their several kings: -- "Nabuchadonosor besieged Tyre for thirteen years in the days of Ithobal, their king; after him reigned Baal, ten years; after him were judges appointed, who judged the people: Ecnibalus, the son of Balsacus, two months; Chelbes, the son of Abdeus, ten months; Abhar, the high priest, three months; Mitgonus Gerastratus, the son of Abdelenus, were judges six years; after whom Balatorus reigned one year; after his death, they sent and fetched Merbalus from Babylon, who reigned four years; after his death, they sent for his brother Hirom, who reigned twenty years. Under his reign Cyrus became king of Persia." So that the whole interval is fifty-four years besides three months; for in the seventh year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he began to besiege Tyre; and Cyrus the Persian, took the kingdom in the fourteenth year of Hirom. *Contra Apionem* 1.21

Note the listing of the kings of Tyre; in fact, Josephus gives to the reader a list of the kings of Tyre from Abibalus, the father of Hiram I, the friend of Solomon, to Hiram II during his fourteenth year when Cyrus the Persian took the kingdom.¹¹

It appears according to Ezekiel's prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar and his army finally withdrew from their siege of Tyre as the prophet states, "yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it," Ezekiel 29:18. It seems that the Babylonians were not equipped to overthrow a seaport city such as Tyre where part of the city was on the mainland and the other part of the city was on an island in the sea. Nebuchadnezzar probably captured the mainland city but the island city remained to be captured by Alexander the Great, Ezekiel 26:7-14.

With his recovery from his illness and as a consolation for not being able to fully capture Tyre, the Lord permits Nebuchadnezzar to regain his control and even greater control over Egypt and Pharaoh-hophra which he had somewhat lost during the seven years of lycanthropy.

Jeremiah 46:13-26 is a prophecy speaking of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt. The slaying of Pharaoh-hophra (Apries) by the king of Babylon was to be a sign to the Hebrews, who had fled with the prophet Jeremiah to Egypt to escape the wrath of

Nebuchadnezzar, of their own divine judgment. The prophecy reads as follows:

And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life. Jeremiah 44:29-30

The Pharaoh, which was to be delivered into Nebuchadnezzar's hands, was named Hophra (Jeremiah 44:30). In the twenty-seventh year of the exile of Jeconiah (599 B.C. + 27 = 571 B.C.), Ezekiel prophesied the fall of Egypt (Ezekiel 29:17-21).

The account of the death of the king of Egypt (Hophra, or Apries) is given in a different manner by Herodotus who states that he was slain by Egyptians who were enemies of the king (*Herodotus*, II.169). The prophet Jeremiah merely foretold his slaughter by his enemies (Jeremiah 44:29-30) and states that this would be a sign of the destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. However, Josephus definitely acknowledges that Nebuchadnezzar slew Hophra (595 B.C. -569 B.C.) and placed Amasis (571 B.C. -528 B.C.) upon the throne of Egypt.

The kings of Egypt are recorded by Herodotus in his *Histories* (*Herodotus* II.1-III.15) along with their lengths of rule. The following chart gives the kings of Egypt, their length of rule and their B.C. dating for the time from the fall of Samaria in 723 B.C. to the fourth year of Cambyses (526 B.C.) when he was considered king of both upper and lower Egypt.

ILLUSTRATION XII: The Kings Of Egypt According To Herodotus

Egyptian Kings	Length of Rule	B.C. Dating
Sabacos	50	721 B.C. - 671 B.C.
Psammetichus	54	671 B.C. - 617 B.C.
Neko	16	617 B.C. - 601 B.C.
Psammis	6	601 B.C. - 595 B.C.
Hophra	25	595 B.C. - 569 B.C.
Amasis	44	571 B.C. - 527 B.C.
Psammenitus	6 mo.	527 B.C. - 526 B.C.

Thus, it can be seen how the reconstruction of Egyptian history dovetails with Biblical data and Babylonian sources.

Another interesting event occurring during the year 572 B.C. is the return of speech to Ezekiel's mouth. In a prophecy dated with the day that marked the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Jerusalem, Ezekiel not only lost his wife but also became dumb-- "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day," Ezekiel 24:1-2. This date is Tebet 10, 590 B.C.; the Gregorian date is December 21, 590 B.C. After the death of Ezekiel's wife (Ezekiel 24:18), the prophet's dumbness is foretold--

Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know

that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 24:25-27

According to Ezekiel 33:21-22, the prophet remained dumb until he received word from a refugee that Jerusalem had fallen--

And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

This passage gives the date of Tebet 5, the Gregorian date is December 13, 587 B.C. Therefore, it was approximately three years that the prophet remained dumb. However, the prophet remained silent in general during the years that followed. He uttered prophecies only against Pharaoh (Ezekiel 32:1-32) in 586 B.C. and described the latter day Temple, its priesthood and worship in 574 B.C. (Ezekiel 40:1 - 48:35).

As indicated in the earlier passage cited above (Ezekiel 29:17-21), in which the Lord says that he will give to Nebuchadnezzar the land of Egypt for the labor of Tyre, the opening of the prophet's mouth is once again mentioned: "In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the Lord," Ezekiel 29:21.

C. 569 B.C.-- Astronomically Determined Year Thirty-Seven Of Nebuchadnezzar

The thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (believed to be 568 B.C.) is firmly entrenched in the scholarly world. The date involved is largely dependent on a single astronomical text from Babylon. Contrariwise, quite a number of Jewish Sabbath cycles, time spans, and an eclipse demonstrate that this date should be 569 B.C. It will be necessary to discuss this text briefly as a part of the chronology for the period.

A group of astronomical texts from the Seleucid Era covering B.C. years 568, 454, 441, 419, 418, *etc.*, have been recovered. This study is concerned with only one of these texts, astronomical text VAT 4956, from 568 B.C., since it mentions Nebuchadnezzar's thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth years. The text has been translated into German by Neugebauer and Weidner, and was published in 1915. These ancient Babylonian astronomical texts come from a much later period in history, and were copied, collected, or excerpted from older texts by Seleucid astronomers. Their records should be used with a certain degree of caution, remembering that they were copied, and errors may have taken place. R. A. Parker had this in mind when he said--

Beginning with Seleucus I the Babylonian scribe, who still wrote cuneiform, made one further innovation. He not only had no 'accession years,' but he dated continuously after 311, according to the era of Seleucus. The beginnings and ends of reigns cannot always be determined with exactitude which was possible in earlier periods.¹²

Many texts have been found which extend from 385 B.C. down to the first century, and almost half of the years are represented. However, the 568 B.C. text is one of the first of the texts to be copied, and it probably was not collected until at least 250-300 years after its manufacture.

The astronomical data on this text proves to be that which matches 568 B.C. The historical information which has been added to the data can be looked upon with suspicion. The text begins, "Year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Nisan 1 (Veadar had 29 days)." The text then closes, "Year 38 of Nebuchadnezzar, Nisan 1,

(Adar had 29 days)." Veadar is a leap month. One needs to establish which years would have had a leap month first. Leap months were added when the twelfth lunar month had come too early for the spring harvest. One can examine the lunar and solar cycles astronomically and determine when leap months would have been needed.

The year 569 fits these requirements as shown on the illustration below. The opening year of the text shows a leap month preceding Nisan which fits 569 B.C. The year ends with a normal twelfth month before Nisan of the following year. This is the first evidence that there is a problem with the text.

Veadar 29	Tuesday	March 27, 569 B.C.
Nisan 1	Wednesday	March 28, 569 B.C.
Adar 29	Sunday	March 16, 568 B.C.
Nisan 1	Monday	March 17, 568 B.C.

The Babylonian astronomer reports, on the fifteenth of Simanu, "Eclipse of the moon, which failed to occur." An eclipse failed to occur; what does that mean? This has been interpreted to mean that the astronomer had miscalculated. One must remember that Babylonian astronomers were not able to calculate eclipses as astronomers would do so today. Their temple cult had observed the skies for millennia, and recorded everything they considered important to their worship of the sky. They were also concerned with those heavenly bodies which would help them to answer the questions put forth by their peers. The result of this was an accumulation of diaries which told them when the next eclipse was to take place. They called this cycle "saros," and they knew that it occurred every 223 moons. It is known that a lunar eclipse took place over Babylon on July 9, 569 B.C. This would seem to be a second evidence to discredit the document. A Babylonian astronomer would be an expert at his trade. He would have been counting lunar months, not solar years, since the last observed eclipse. This man predicted a lunar eclipse in the third month of Sivan, which did not happen. It did not happen, because the eclipse took place in the fourth month of Tammuz, 569 B.C. He therefore missed it, by one month, not one year. The tablet is giving astronomical data for 568 B.C., but all the notes are applicable to 569 B.C.

It seems that the astronomical text from 568 B.C. was copied, and the historical data from 569 B.C. was copied. This in reality, is the point Parker made. It seems that the accession year was not always recorded or understood correctly at the time of the Seleucid Era. Another example of the same error takes place when Xerxes died (see Chapter VI).

D. 571 B.C. - 563 B.C.-- The Final Years Of Nebuchadnezzar

These years parallel the thirty-fifth through the forty-third years of King Nebuchadnezzar. Little is known about the final years of the great king of Babylon.

There is one Babylonian fragmentary historical text which refers to the thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (569 B.C.) and has the king fighting with Amasis, the king of Egypt. The text reads as follows:

... [in] the 37th year, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Bab[yl]on mar[ched against] Egypt (Mi-sir) to deliver a battle. [Ama]sis (text: [...]-a(?) -su_, of Egypt, [called up his a]rm[y] ... [...] ku from the town Putu-Iaman ... distant regions which (are situated on islands) amidst the sea ... many ... which/who (are) in Egypt ... [car]rying weapons, horses and [chariot]s ... he called up to assist him and ... did [...] in front of him ... he put his trust ... (only the first signs at the beginning and the end of the following 7 or 8 lines are legible).¹³

The twenty-five years of Apries' rule cover the years from 595 B.C. - 569 B.C. The thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar was 569 B.C. when the king of Babylon marched to Egypt to fight Amasis in his third year. It appears that Amasis may have rebelled against Babylon soon after his appointment by Nebuchadnezzar, *Antiquities* X.ix.7.

There are several other Biblical events occurring during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. These events are about Esther. In 569 B.C., the thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar and the sixth year of Astyages, Esther was kept and groomed for one year, perhaps to make certain that she was not pregnant (Esther 2:12). Then, in the thirty-eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar and the seventh year of Astyages, Esther became the queen of Media (Esther 2:15-17).

E. 563 B.C.-- The Last Year Of Nebuchadnezzar

This year is the forty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar and the twelfth year of Astyages. The plot against the Jews by Haman is recorded as happening in the twelfth year of Astyages--

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. Esther 3:7-10

During the twelfth year of Astyages, in the month of Nisan, the future was determined by lots for that year. It was decided that the Jews were to be exterminated on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Adar), a Sabbath day. This month and day is demonstrated astronomically, thus providing two synchronistic links to Astyages' reign.

Because of the Jews' victory over their enemies, the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar were to be celebrated yearly by the Hebrews and known as the 'Feast of Purim' (Esther 9:15-32).¹⁴

It is also interesting to note that twelve days later-- Nebuchadnezzar dies and his son Evil-merodach (563 B.C. - 561 B.C.) begins to rule. At this time, Jehoiachin is released from captivity. These events are given in a Biblical text from II Kings 25:27-30 which is dated as the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (599 B.C. + 36 = 563 B.C.). The Hebrew expression 'in the seven and thirtieth year' means 'after thirty-six years'. The text relates how Jehoiachin was released from prison and kindly treated by Evil-merodach--

And it came to pass on the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life. II Kings 25:27-30

It seems that Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was released from a Babylonian prison because of

the influence of Esther and Mordecai (Esther 9:1-32). It should be pointed out that the date for the release of Jeconiah varies according to several different texts. Jeremiah 52:31 offers the date of Adar 25 for the release date of Jehoiachin. Jeremiah 52:31 in the Septuagint gives the date as Adar 24.¹⁵ The present research has chosen the date of II Kings 25:27 as the probable date for the release of the Hebrew monarch. The earlier dates may have been when the king ascended the throne (Adar 24) and he issued his decree for the release of the Hebrew king (Adar 25). Obviously, the Hebrew writers are looking at the release of Jehoiachin from several chronological points of reference. Adar 27 falls on a Friday when he would likely be released before the Sabbath. The king's imprisonment lasted for 13,522 days or thirty-seven years and eight days.

Chapter IV - NOTES

¹In Daniel's interpretation (Daniel 2:31-45) of the colossal image dream by King Nebuchadnezzar, the following kingdoms are represented--

Babylon-- the head of gold
Medo-Persia-- the breast and arms of silver
Greece-- the belly and thighs of brass
Rome-- the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay
The Kingdom of God-- the stone that smote the image.

²The monarch's building of the colossal golden statue of himself was probably motivated by the dream in Daniel 2 and by the colossal statues of Pharaoh which the king would have seen in his Egyptian campaigns.

³The colossal tree dream was also interpreted by Daniel. The tree that reached heaven was then cut down with only its stump remaining. This was bound with a band of iron and left with the grass of the field. Daniel's interpretation was that the great tree was Nebuchadnezzar himself. As the tree was cut down, so Daniel assured the king that he would be humbled. Daniel predicted that the king of Babylon would become insane and live like the beasts of the field until he would give due glory to God (Daniel 4:1-17). A year later, as Nebuchadnezzar was boasting about his accomplishments, Daniel's interpretation of the dream proved correct.

⁴In Daniel 7, the vision of the four beasts represents the following kingdoms--

Babylon-- the lion with the eagle's wings and human feet and heart
Medo-Persia-- the bear with one shoulder higher and three ribs in its mouth
Greece-- the leopard with four wings of a fowl and four heads
Rome-- the dreadful unnamed beast with iron teeth and a little horn among ten horns;
the little horn has eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things

⁵In Daniel's vision, the ram having the two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia; the higher horn representing Media; the rough goat is the king of Grecia and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king, *i.e.*, Alexander the Great (Daniel 8:20-21).

⁶H. Freedman & Maurice Simon, eds., *The Midrash Rabbah*, Volume 4 (London: The Soncino Press, 1977), pp. 147-148.

⁷A footnote in *The Midrash Rabbah* reads: "The Median (Dan. VI,1), who according to the Rabbis, reigned before Cyrus." *Ibid*, p. 148.

⁸A.K. Grayson, "Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles," (Abbreviated ABC), A. Leo Oppenheim, *et al.*, eds., *Texts From Cuneiform Sources*, Volume V (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1975), pp. 107-108.

⁹*ANET*, pp. 313-314.

¹⁰Grayson, *ABC*, pp. 109-111.

¹¹The following is a list of the kings of Tyre as taken from "Josephus: Complete Works," Trans. by William Whiston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1974), *Contra Apionem* 1.17-21:

1. Abibalus		
2. Hirom I, son of Abibalus	34 years	994-960
3. Beleazarus, son of Hirom	7 years	960-953
4. Abdastatus, son of Beleazarus	9 years	953-944
5. Methusasstartus, son of Delea	12 years	944-932
6. Astartus, son of Deleastartus	12 years	932-920
7. Aserymus, son of Deleastartus	9 years	920-911
8. Pheles, son of Deleastartus	9 months	911-911
9. Ithobol I, killed Pheles	32 years	911-879
10. Badezorus, son of Ithobolus	6 years	879-873
11. Metten, son of Balezor	29 years	873-844
12. Pygmalion	47 years	844-797
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.	197 years for these x kings	
17.		
18.		
19.		
20. Ithobol II	13 years+	600-588
21. Baal	10 years	578-578
23. Chelbes, son of Abdeus	10 months	578-577
24. Abhar, a high priest	3 months	577-577
25. Mitgonus, et. al. judges	6 years	577-571
26. Balatorus	1 year	571-570
27. Merbalus, sent from Babylon	4 years	570-566
28. Hirom II, brother of Merbalus	20 years	566-546

¹²R. A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. - A.D. 75* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1956), p. 20.

¹³ANET, p. 308.

¹⁴The first Feast of Purim was a Sabbath on the thirteenth day of the twelfth year of Astyages (Esther 9:17). All other kings of the Persian period fall on another day of the week for their twelfth year. One must, therefore, conclude that only king Astyages could be the husband of Esther. She must also be queen to a king who ruled soon after the fall of Judah; for Mordecai was her cousin who had been deported with Jeconiah in 599 B.C. (Esther 2:5-7).

¹⁵The Septuagint gives the date as Adar 24--

"And it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year after that Joakim king of Juda had been carried away captive, in the twelfth month, on the four and twentieth day of the month, that Ulaemadacher king of Babylon, in the year in which he began to reign, raised the head of Joakim king of Juda, and shaved him, and brought him out of the house where he was kept." Jeremiah 52:31

This quote is cited from *The Septuagint Version Of The Old Testament And Apocrypha: With An English Translation And With Various Readings And Critical Notes* by Charles Lee Brenton (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978).

CHAPTER V - CYRUS THE PERSIAN

I. Introduction

The king that followed Darius the Mede (Astyages) was Cyrus the Great (551 B.C. - 522 B.C.). He was a unique character; for Isaiah spoke of him by name about 177 years before he issued the famous edict (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5). Isaiah's prophecy foretold both his edict of religious liberty, which permitted the Jews to restore the Jerusalem Temple, and his capture of Babylon. The prophecy (Isaiah 44:24--45:4) not only names this special king as 'Cyrus' but also considered him a 'Messiah' and a 'Shepherd' to the people of Israel. Indeed, Cyrus would perform all of the Lord's pleasure. In the light of Biblical history; he accomplished that. In this chapter, Cyrus' background, his rule, his edict, his capture of Babylon, *etc.*, will be studied and how the life of this great Persian monarch affected the Hebrews in exile before his capture of Babylon. Cyrus became the head of the great Median-Persian Empire which Daniel the prophet had also foretold (Daniel 2:39; 7:5; 11:1-2).

The history of Cyrus outside of the Biblical text was recorded by two different Greek Historians-- Herodotus and Xenophon. Herodotus records Cyrus' life in his *Histories*, I.107-214. Xenophon has placed the story of Cyrus' life in his work entitled *Cyropaedia* (meaning, the education of Cyrus) I.i.1-- VIII.viii.27. Where variations occur in the two Greek accounts, Herodotus appears to be the more accurate. Herodotus states that he only wrote down what seemed credible to him regarding the life of Cyrus:

But it is next the business of my history to inquire who this Cyrus was who brought down the power of Croesus, and how the Persians came to be rulers of Asia. I mean then to be guided in what I write by some of the Persians who desire not to make a fine tale of the story of Cyrus but to tell the truth, though there are no less than three other accounts of Cyrus which I could give.
Herodotus I.95

He states this to be the case regarding the relating of Cyrus' death-- "Many stories are related of Cyrus' death; this, that I have told, is the worthiest of credence" (*Herodotus* I.214). In contrast to Herodotus, Xenophon seems to present an 'idealistic' history of Cyrus which at times departs from fact to fiction.

II. Cyrus' Background And Rise To Power

A. 675 B.C.-559 B.C.-- Cyrus' Persian Background

The first king to distinguish himself in Persia was Teispes, son of Achaemenes, who, during his rule (675 B.C.- 640 B.C.), not only annexed the Elamite territory of Anshan, but pushed farther to the southwest, conquering the territory of Parsumash. At Teispes' death, the kingdom was divided between his two sons, the older, Cyrus I (640 B.C.- 600 B.C.), inheriting Parsumash, and the younger, Ariaramnes, receiving Persia proper. As soon as Cyaxares I, Astyages' father, succeeded in defeating the Scythians, greatly strengthening the power of Media, the horizon darkened over the sons of Teispes. Whether Cyaxares annexed the realm of Ariaramnes to Media is uncertain. However, what is clear is that the sons of Ariaramnes no longer carried the title of kings. On the other hand, Cyaxares, the Median king, left Cyrus I in control of Parsumash as a vassal king.

Cambyes I (600 B.C.- 559 B.C.), the second son of Cyrus I, succeeded his father on

the throne, since his brother Arukku had been carried off to Nineveh as a hostage of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria.

Cambyzes I, the king of Anshan, a region of eastern Elam, became the father of Cyrus II or 'the Great'. His mother was Mandane, a daughter of Astyages, the king of Media. Herodotus,¹ and Xenophon,² the earliest of Greek historians, both agree with this.

The name 'Cyrus' in Hebrew/Aramaic is *koresh*; in Elam/Old Persian, it occurs as *kurush*, and in Akkadian, it is *kurash*. The name Cyrus may have been an early Achaemenid dynastic title. Cyrus the Great was both the grandson of Cyrus I of Persia and also the grandson of Astyages I of Media.

The historian, Herodotus, tells the following account of Cyrus' birth and early childhood. Herodotus acknowledges that Astyages had no sons or male heir to his throne. Astyages, now an old man, was afraid of any son which would be born to Mandane by reason of a terrifying dream he had had.³ After another dream, King Astyages plotted to take away any son that might be born, and he did this when his grandson Cyrus the Persian was born.⁴

Apparently two traditions were given for the early years of Cyrus before the age of 10 in 565 B.C. (*Cyropaedia* I.iii.1 and *Herodotus* I.114). Astyages was introduced to the boy at that time. Before that age, Cyrus carried a different name. We are not told just how or when he received Cyrus for a name. The chronology reveals some rather interesting correlation between Cyrus, Esther, Daniel and Darius the Mede.

Cyrus became king in 551 B.C., at the age of about 30 years, making his birth about 581 B.C. He then would be ten years old in 571 B.C., the date Astyages returned the throne to Nebuchadnezzar, just before Esther is engaged to Astyages. He then went to live in the house of Astyages, *i.e.*, he became a foster child of Esther. She probably was familiar with the prophet's writings. In fact, Daniel was in favor with Astyages at that time. The angel strengthened Daniel in Astyages' first year, and informed him that the next four kings would be Persian (Daniel 11:1-2). Perhaps Daniel also informed Esther that a Persian king named Cyrus was to issue the edict to return and rebuild Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:28). Isaiah calls him "my shepherd." Herodotus tells us that Cyrus was raised as a shepherd until he was ten (*Herodotus* I.110). He was to be the king who followed Astyages. The logical assumption was to name the lad Cyrus. He may have been "anointed" by Daniel himself for this job. Cyrus read the prophecies of Isaiah:

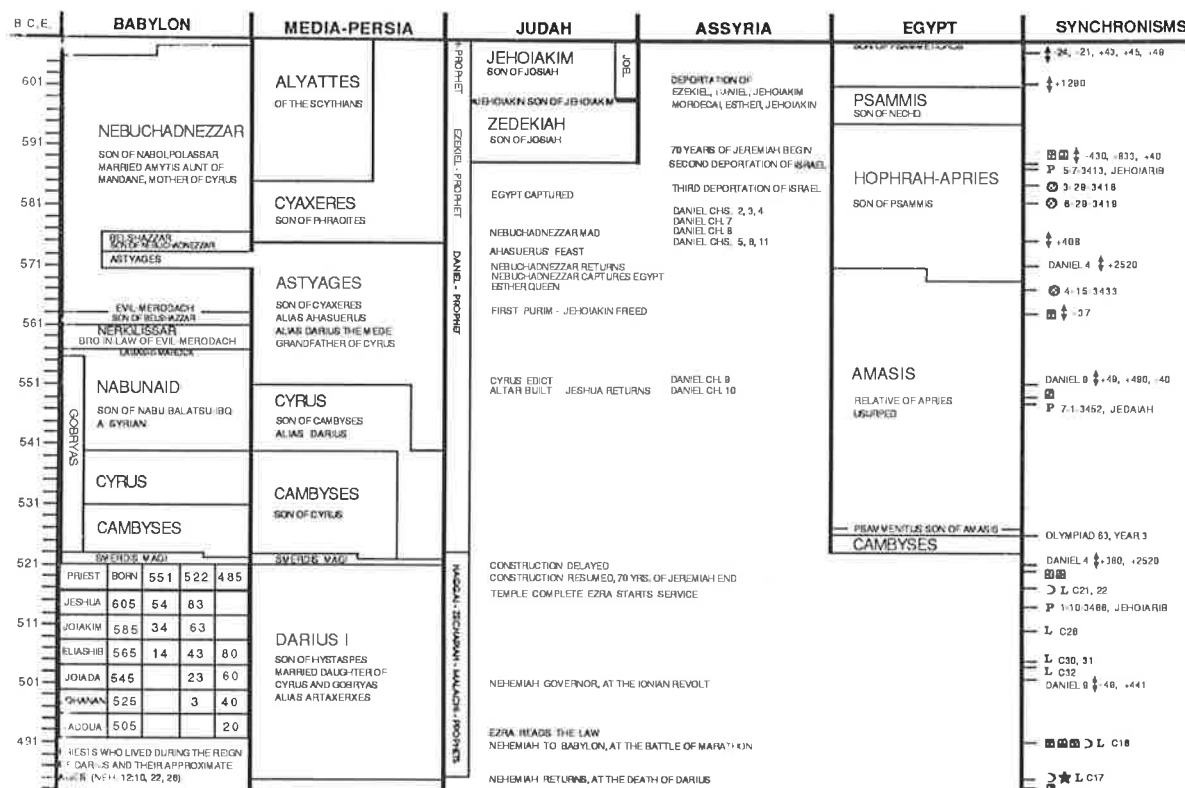
That saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.
Isaiah 44:26b-28

From these verses, Daniel, and Esther know what to name him, and they knew enough to anoint him. From reading this text, Cyrus know how to defeat Babylon by diverting the streams and he know that he was to issue the special edict to Jerusalem to be built (*Antiquities* XI.i.1).

Further evidence that this chronology is correct is correct, is that Cyrus named his daughter "Atossa," and he eventually gave his daughter to Darius I for his wife (*Herodotus* III.133). This was obviously a deliberate show of respect for Esther whose real name was "Hadassah" (Esther 2:7). Atossa was born when Esther was about 40 years old. She probably married Darius the Persian when she was about age 19 in 540 B.C., when Cyrus captured Babylon and Esther was about 60 years old. About this time, Astyages died. Twenty years passed before Darius became the fourth king predicted by

Daniel, the king who was to be the most wealthy of all Persian kings, and who was to stir up the Greeks (Daniel 11:2). Assuming that Darius was 25 when he married in 540 B.C. *ca.*, he would have been about 80 in 485 B.C. when he died.

ILLUSTRATION XIII: The Family Of Cyrus, 610-480 B.C.



- 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar is King
- 601 B.C. Jehoiakim's tribute
- 599 B.C. Daniel, Esther and others deported
- 590 B.C. Siege on Jerusalem
- 589 B.C. Siege lifted
- 588 B.C. Jerusalem defeated
- 583 B.C. Exiles in Egypt are captured
- 581 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the metal man
- 578 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree
- 577 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar goes mad, Belshazzar is made king
- 575 B.C. Astyages is king of Media, Cyrus is born and goes to shepherd's home
- 574 B.C. Belshazzar died, Astyages is king of Babylon, Daniel goes to Babylon
- 573 B.C. Astyages' feast
- 571 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's return from madness
- 569 B.C. Esther is engaged to Astyages, Nebuchadnezzar captures Egypt
- 568 B.C. Esther is married to Astyages
- 565 B.C. Cyrus moves to Astyages' palace, Esther is his foster mother and Darius is his mentor
- 563 B.C. Haman and Mordecai
- 562 B.C. First Purim, Jeconiah is released
- 555 B.C. Cyrus' daughter Atossa is named for Hadassah
- 551 B.C. Cyrus' edict for the Jewish return is issued, Ezra 1:1-4
- 540 B.C. Cyrus captures Babylon - Cyrus Cylinder

535 B.C.	Darius marries Atossa
523 B.C.	Cyrus dies
521 B.C.	Darius is king - Cyrus edict to build the temple is confirmed

B. 559 B.C.- 551 B.C.-- Cyrus' Rise To Power And Political Policy

Cyrus' rise to the Persian throne and his political policy will now be discussed in the various sources-- The Babylonian Chronicles, Herodotus, and the Hebrew Bible.

When Cambyses I, Cyrus' father, died in 560 B.C., Cyrus inherited the throne of Anshan; then he worked toward unifying the Persian people which he soon accomplished.

After this, Cyrus sought to gain control over the kingdom of Astyages, his grandfather. The Median general, Harpagus, whom Astyages had previously wronged as Herodotus relates, deserted the aged king, Astyages, and brought his army to the side of the young Cyrus. Astyages was soon captured and the Persians took the capital city of Ecbatana in 551 B.C. without a battle.

The Babylonian Chronicle 7, also known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, tells how Astyages was overcome by Cyrus through the revolt of the Median army--

- 1 (Astyages) mustered (his army) and marched against Cyrus (II), king of Anshan, for conquest [...]
- 2 The army rebelled against Astyages and he was taken prisoner. *Th [ey handed him over] to Cyrus (II). ([...])*
- 3 Cyrus (II) <marched> to Ecbatana, the royal city. The silver, gold, goods, property, [...]
- 4 which he carried off as booty (from) Ecbatana he took to Anshan. The goods (and) property of the army of [...] ⁵ Chronicle 7.ii.1-4.

According to the Babylonian Chronicles, the Persian rebellion against Astyages appears to have occurred during the sixth year of Nabonidus, 551 B.C.⁶

Apparently, Astyages recognized that revolt was intended by Cyrus, but the Median army rebelled and Cyrus was able to proceed to Ecbatana, the capital of his former master, in triumph. Thus, Parsa became the first ranking satrapy in the entire land, Media the second, and Elam the third. The sovereignty of the Persians was definitely established; although the Medes continued to have equal honor with the Persians, foreigners spoke of either 'the Persians and the Medes' (Esther 1:19) or 'the Medes and Persians' (Daniel 5:28). These phrases were used interchangeably even before Cyrus' rise to power during the years, 559 B.C.- 551 B.C.

Herodotus describes Cyrus' sympathetic political policy toward his grandfather after the Persian revolt: "But now, in Astyages' time, Cyrus and the Persians rose in revolt against the Medes, and from this time ruled Asia. As for Astyages, Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house till Astyages died," *Herodotus* I.130. As can be seen, Cyrus' lenient policy toward his grandfather was the beginning of political policies which showed concern, care and kindness toward others, including the people of Israel.

Since Herodotus assigns thirty-five years of rule for Astyages (*Herodotus* I.130), it appears that his regnal years covered the time-span from his accession year 575 B.C. to his death in 540 B.C. If Cyrus deposed Astyages in 551 B.C. as the Babylonian Chronicles indicate, then Astyages' actual rule as king of Media lasted for twenty-four years. His final eleven years of rule were probably considered to be advisory to Cyrus in his house, perhaps, even a dual reign.

III. Cyrus' Edict And The Jewish Temple

A. 551 B.C.-- His Famous Biblical Edict, The First Year Of Cyrus

It might seem strange to put Cyrus' famous Biblical edict of religious toleration at this point in Medo-Persian history; for most Biblical scholars place its decree after the fall of Babylon to Cyrus. However, there are several important factors to consider in placing the edict at this date, 551 B.C., the first year of Cyrus over the Medo-Persian Empire.

First, when the Median army deserted Astyages to follow Cyrus and the Persian army, they must have seen in Cyrus a charismatic leader, who gave to his own, the Persian people, a better way of life. They must have quickly recognized his lenient policies and his toleration of religious freedoms. Secondly, it should be called to the attention of the reader that where the actual edict of Cyrus is given in Scripture, it is never connected with the fall of Babylon. Examine the context of the four Biblical references concerning Cyrus' edict: II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4 and Ezra 6:3-5. Thirdly, Cyrus was able to increase quickly the size of his empire because of having issued his decree for religious toleration and permitting captives from various nations to return homeward. As a result, his sympathetic rule gave him both Media and the city of Babylon without battle. Fourthly, 'the first year of Cyrus' is never expressed in such a way as to mean his first year over Babylon. Fifthly, when the Hebrew Scripture refers to Cyrus, it never calls him 'king of Babylon' but always 'king of Persia'. Cyrus' very edict is dated according to Medo-Persian rule-- "Now in the first year of Cyrus *king of Persia* ...," II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4. Since the second kingdom in Daniel's prophecies is the Medo-Persian Empire (Daniel 2:39a; 7:5; 8:3-4; 11:2), it is reasonable that 'the first year of Cyrus' should refer to the time when he jointly ruled over them. Also, Daniel 10:1 dates Daniel's last vision as occurring "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia." Finally, the Hebrew text insists that the return and restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple were a direct result of Cyrus' commandment as given in II Chronicles 36, Ezra 1 and 6. According to Ezra 4:5, adversaries of the Jews troubled the building of the Temple "all the days of Cyrus *king of Persia*, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." Again, it is certain that the Hebrews are reckoning time according to Medo-Persian rule rather than Babylonian rule.

It is hoped that the reader will become convinced that 'the first year of Cyrus' refers to his Medo-Persian rule rather than his Babylonian sovereignty and that year 551 B.C., the first year of Cyrus, is the year in which he issued the famous edict mentioned in the Bible. The famous Cyrus Cylinder was written after Cyrus' capture of Babylon and is not directly related to the Biblical decree of II Chronicles 36, Ezra 1 and 6. However, similarities are apparent; this is because Cyrus had the same principle of religious toleration from the very beginning of his kingship.

B. Cyrus' Edict Regarding The Jews

In the first year of his reign over Medo-Persia (551 B.C.), Cyrus the Great issued a decree ordering the restoration of the Jewish people and their Temple in Palestine. The Bible gives two reports of Cyrus' famous edict in the book of Ezra.⁷ The first account is written in the Hebrew language. It takes the form of a royal proclamation as announced to the subjects by heralds. It states that Cyrus not only ordered the rebuilding of the Temple, but also permitted the Jews who wished to do so to return to their homeland. Jews in Babylon were invited to assist the venture with contributions. The Hebrew text of Cyrus' edict of restoration is now quoted--

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of

the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:2-4

Ezra 1:1 dates the decree as 'the first year of Cyrus king of Persia' which is Hebrew reckoning but Cyrus' accession year in Persian reckoning. This would put the issuing of the edict in 551 B.C., Cyrus' first year over the entire Medo-Persian Empire, *i.e.*, 'All the kingdoms of the earth' except Babylon and Egypt.

When Ezra 1:1 indicates that 'the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled', it means that this was the initial step toward the actual fulfillment of the seventy years captivity. Ezra 1:1 also states that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make this proclamation: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying," This stirring, of course, was directing Cyrus to fulfill completely the oracle uttered by Isaiah concerning him more than a century and three-quarters in advance (Isaiah 44:24-45:4, 12-13; 46:10-11).

The book of Ezra contains an alternative form of the above decree. This decree is a part of a collection of Aramaic documents (Ezra 4:8-6:18) written in the Aramaic language. The Aramaic version of Cyrus' edict is recorded in Ezra 6:3-4--

In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

A comparison of the decree in Ezra 1 with the copy which Darius I discovered thirty-two years later in Ecbatana in 519 B.C. (Ezra 6:2) suggests that whereas the former was a public proclamation, the latter was a more detailed official counterpart to be kept in the archives. Ezra also reports the return of the sacred vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar⁸ (Ezra 1:7-11), and tells that the project was placed in the charge of Sheshbazzar 'prince of Judah', *i.e.*, a member of the royal house. In all probability, Sheshbazzar was the same as the Shenazar who is listed in I Chronicles 3:18 as a son of Jehoiachin, both names are similar to the Babylonian name, Sin-ab-usur.⁹

As can be seen from the edict, Cyrus committed himself to a policy of restoration. Unlike the Assyrians and Babylonians, who uprooted and exiled conquered people from their countries, Cyrus believed that it was in his best interest to permit the people to return to their native countries and to rebuild their shrines. His was a policy of religious polytheism.

The new policy of Cyrus was welcomed by the Jewish communities in Babylonia, Media and Persia. The Israelites had been in exile from Israel since the fall of Samaria in 723 B.C.¹⁰ and from Judah since the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. The Israelites viewed the growing power of Persia as a God-sent sign of the end of their captivity. They comforted themselves with prophetic messages of Babylon's downfall such as Jeremiah 25:12-13; 50-51. Also Isaiah had assured them that Cyrus was the

anointed by God for a special mission even though he did not know God (Isaiah 45:14).

In his decree to the Jews (Ezra 1:2-4), Cyrus referred to 'Jehovah, the God of heaven' as the deity who had given him 'all the kingdoms of the earth', and who had charged him 'to build him a house in Jerusalem' (Ezra 1:2). How did Cyrus know this? Probably not through dreams and visions, but rather through confrontation with the prophecies of Isaiah written more than a century and three-quarters in advance. It seems highly probable that Daniel who lived at least until the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1), and who was greatly concerned about the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of the return of Israel to her land after seventy years (Daniel 9:2; cf., Jeremiah 25:11-12), was the one who perhaps presented a scroll of Isaiah's prophecies to the Persian monarch. Josephus, who had access to many historical records long since lost, states that "when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written," *Antiquities* XI.i.2. There is every reason to accept the witness of Josephus at this point, in spite of higher critical views of 'the Second Isaiah' and the supposed impossibility of predictive prophecy.

1. Cyrus' Contribution Toward Rebuilding The Temple

Cyrus' decree instructed the neighbors of the Jews to send them away with a personal travel gift as well as a free-will offering for the reconstruction of the Second Temple. Ezra writes that Cyrus also contributed to the reconstruction of the Hebrew Temple from the royal treasury. This contribution was later verified during the reign of Darius I when a memorandum in Aramaic was found in the fortress in Ecbatana. That memorandum is recorded in Ezra 6:3-5--

In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

It might seem surprising that so great a conqueror as Cyrus should interest himself in the affairs of a people as politically unimportant as the Jews. But his decree was only an illustration of his surprisingly moderate general policy, a policy followed by most of his successors. Cyrus was one of the truly enlightened rulers of ancient times. Instead of crushing national sentiment by brutality and deportation as the Assyrians and Babylonians had, it was his aim to allow subject peoples as far as possible to enjoy cultural autonomy within the framework of the empire.

The fact that Cyrus made a contribution toward the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem could have been a result of influence through one or more of the following persons--King Darius the Mede (Astyages) and Esther, Mordacai, Daniel and the Hebrew people in general. It could be that he was influenced by Isaiah's prophecy as Josephus relates, *Antiquities* XI.i.2. Also, Cyrus would have been aware of the first Purim which occurred only twelve years earlier (563 B.C. + 12 = 551 B.C.) and wanted to help a people who had faced the threat of annihilation.

Historians of a former day approached these simple Biblical edict statements with suspicion. Some writers argued that there was no evidence that Cyrus made a decree of this nature, much less that he paid any sort of honor to the God of Israel.¹¹ He was a Persian who worshipped the Persian god, the Ahura Mazda, and could hardly be

expected to pay honor to the God of the Jews.

Today, scholars no longer raise questions of this kind since the archaeological discovery of important documents from the days of Cyrus. These primary sources show that the Persian monarch was a master of propaganda and that he knew how to exploit every occasion to the best advantage for himself. Documents such as the *Nabonidus Chronicle*, the *Cyrus Cylinder* and 'The Verse Account of Nabonidus Inscription', help Biblical students a great deal in understanding Cyrus' policies of the time. They relate how the famous Biblical edict is similar to the decree issued in connection with Cyrus' capture of Babylon.

2. The Jewish Response Toward Cyrus' Royal Decree

The Jews responded with enthusiasm to the royal decree of Cyrus. The year following Astyages' overthrow (550 B.C.), many Jews prepared to return to Palestine. For some the long trek back to Jerusalem was not an easy decision to make.

Those who had followed Jeremiah's advice, had become rooted in Babylonia by building homes, planting orchards and establishing businesses in exile (Jeremiah 29:5ff). Babylonian business tablets reveal Jewish names and indicate that they had good standing in Babylonia at this time. As a result of this, there was no rush on the part of the majority of the Jews, now comfortably settled in prosperous professions and trade in Babylonia, to join a band of 'Zionists' to face the physical and economic rigors of rebuilding their desolated homeland. Those who made the decision to return, had to give up all that they had built in the exile to return to a poor homeland.

While Astyages, the ex-benefactor of Babylon, was still king, the Jews had been moving freely between Babylon and Media. Daniel left Babylon in 551 B.C., the first year of Cyrus, to serve in the Median court. Under Cyrus, a few Jews had even returned to Jerusalem with the temple utensils, but then there was a change of attitude between the Medes and the Babylonians. Nabonidus, king of Babylon, was threatened by someone and moved to Arabia for several years. Cyrus had become the dominant figure in the area, and is probably the individual who put this pressure on Nabonidus. These strained relationships between the Medes and Babylonians probably influenced the movement of the Jews back to Israel.

Despite substantial gifts to aid those who would return (Ezra 1:6) and even the restoration by Cyrus of the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7-8), a small band of less than fifty thousand was all that set out on the trek to the national homeland.

C. 550 B.C.-- The Return Under Zerubbabel, Jeshua, And The Chief Fathers

The Scripture of Ezra 2:64-65 gives the total number of those who returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the chief of the fathers of Israel: Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah-- "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, Beside their servants and their maids of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women." Those who returned from Babylon, Media and Persia are listed in Ezra 2:3-63.¹²

At the time of Cyrus' edict, the Hebrews were scattered throughout Media, Persia and Babylon; this seems to be clearly the case as portrayed in the book of Esther, where reference is made to 'all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus (Astyages)', Esther 9:20. The long and dangerous journey probably lasted about four months, cf., Ezra 7:8-9.

1. The Devastation Of Palestine By The Babylonians

When the exiles returned again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one came unto his own city (Ezra 2:1). In general, those who returned were shocked at the utter desolation of the cities of Judah. At the time of Nebuchadnezzar's final assault on Judah in the years 590 B.C.- 588 B.C., there was considerable destruction in all the cities of Judah. W. F. Albright shows that archaeological excavations affirm this--

A fair number of towns and fortresses of Judah have now been excavated in whole or in part; many sites have been carefully examined to determine the approximate date of their last destruction. The results are uniform and conclusive: many towns were destroyed at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. and never again occupied; others were destroyed at that time and partly reoccupied after a long period of abandonment, marked by a sharp change of stratum and by intervening indications of use for non-urban purposes. There is not a single case known where a town of Judah proper was continuously occupied through the exilic period.¹³

When some of the more prominent heads of families came to the Temple site in Jerusalem and saw the remains of the havoc wrought by King Nebuchadnezzar's army less than a half century before (588 B.C. + 38 = 550 B.C.), they gave to the treasury of the work 'sixty one thousand darics of gold and five thousand minas of silver' to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. This is stated in Ezra 2:68-69--

And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

The Hebrew word for the Greek coin, drachma, is 'daric' or 'dram' (K.J.V.). In the past, critical scholars, assuming that the use of this Greek coin would not have been current in Palestine and non-Greek lands until after the conquests of Alexander the Great (c. 330 B.C.), have employed this reference to the drachma and also that in Nehemiah 7:70 to support the theory that Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles were all written by one man, 'the chronicler' who did not live until 250 B.C.¹⁴

However, W. F. Albright has pointed out that archaeological evidence now substantiates that the Attic drachma was in use as a standard coin in Palestine before the middle of the fifth century B.C.¹⁵ In excavations at Beth-zur, several miles south of Jerusalem, six drachmas belonging to the Persian level were unearthed in 1931,¹⁶ and in the fourth century the Attic drachma became the official coinage of the Jewish state, now known from several recently discovered ancient imitations of Attic coins, inscribed with 'Yehud', the Aramaic name of Judah.¹⁷

2. Sheshbazzar, The First Governor Of Judah After The Return

Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, was the first governor of Judah after the return. The Akkadian word for Sheshbazzar is *Shamash-apal-usur* meaning 'Shamash has guarded the sonship'. He was responsible for the Temple treasures during the trek to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:11; 5:14) and he was possibly the son of Jehoiachin, Shenazzar, in I Chronicles 3:18.

Historians do not agree on the identity of Sheshbazzar. Some agree that Sheshbazzar named in Ezra 1:1 is identical with Zerubbabel of the family of David, who led the first return (Ezra 2:2). Zerubbabel was a leader next to Jeshua. But we are not told that Sheshbazzar was an active leader, while Ezra lays special emphasis on Zerubbabel's role as Davidic leader in the reconstruction period. In the Jewish response

to Cyrus, Sheshbazzar may have died soon after his return to Jerusalem, and perhaps his middle-aged relative, Zerubbabel, took over the governorship. The prophet Haggai refers to Zerubbabel as governor (Haggai 1:1, 14).

3. The Re-construction Of The Altar At Jerusalem

When the seventh month after the return to Palestine arrived (549 B.C.) the people of the cities of Judah came to Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1). Under the direction of Jeshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel of David's family, the people rebuilt the altar of the God of Israel and offered burnt offerings morning and evening (Ezra 3:2-3).

This completion of the altar construction at the Temple site ended with the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles. The priests and Levites were able to offer the daily burnt offerings by number according to the custom, as the duty of every day required' (Ezra 3:4). After the Feast of Tabernacles, they 'offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord' (Ezra 3:5). Therefore, it is stated in the book of Ezra that "from the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid," Ezra 3:6.

Arrangements to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa for the rebuilding of the Temple were made 'according to the grant that they had of Cyrus King of Persia' (Ezra 3:7).

It is not readily obvious, but the date of the first offering has two chronological benchmarks which confirm the year discussed. Dedication of the altar on Tishri 10 would naturally take place on a Saturday as was the Mosaic custom (Leviticus 8:32). The priestly order serving was Jedaiah (Ezra 1:36). The potential years are listed below, along with the days of the weeks and the priestly sections. These sample dates prove that the first return of exiles took place at the third year of Cyrus over Media, not the third year over Persia.

ILLUSTRATION XIV Priest Options Under Zerubbabel

If year one is counted from Media/Persia rule (Ezra 3:1)

Yr. 1	Tishri 1	(Oct. 3, 551 B.C.)	Thursday	#22	Jehezekel
Yr. 2	Tishri 1	(Sept. 22, 550 B.C.)	Monday	#23	Delaiah
Yr. 3	Tishri 1	(Sept. 11, 549 B.C.)	Saturday*	#2	Jedaiah*
Yr. 4	Tishri 1	(Sept. 28, 548 B.C.)	Thursday	#8	Abijah

If year one is counted from Babylonian rule

Yr. 1	Tishri 1	(Sept. 10, 538 B.C.)	Thursday	#23	Delaiah
Yr. 2	Tishri 1	(Sept. 28, 537 B.C.)	Wednesday	#6	Mijamim
Yr. 3	Tishri 1	(Sept. 16, 536 B.C.)	Sunday	#9	Jeshua
Yr. 4	Tishri 1	(Sept. 6, 535 B.C.)	Thursday	#11	Eliashib

Earlier that year, Daniel was doing a three week penance (Daniel 10:1) when he saw a vision similar to the disciple John's vision of Jesus (Revelation 1:14). It would seem that Cyrus was resisting the angel. His vision took place from:

Nisan 3 (Mar, 20, 549 B.C.) Saturday; to Nisan 24 (April 10, 549 B.C.) Saturday

Daniel was standing by the Tigris when he had his vision. It is possible that the exiles were with him. If so, and if they had received permission to return to Palestine at that time, we could expect their arrival about four months later. This is the time it took Ezra and his cohorts to travel that distance (Ezra 7:8-10). If they left about the end of the

first month, they would arrive about the end of the fifth month, leaving them about one month to get unpacked and build the altar.

D. 548 B.C. -- The Beginning Of The Re-construction Of The Temple

1. The Appointment Of Levites

The first responsibility of the returnees was the erection of a sanctuary and the renewal of the Levitical worship which had been held in abeyance since the destruction of the first Temple (Ezra 3:8-13). In the second year of their coming unto the House of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Ziv (548 B.C.), Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the House of the Lord (Ezra 3:8).

2. The Foundation Is Laid

A chronological reference to the completion of the foundation of the Temple is found in Ezra 3:8-- "Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month..." When the builders laid the foundation of the Temple of the Lord and brought the foundational construction to completion, this brought an occasion for praise and thanksgiving. Everyone participated in this great milestone from priests to people-- some with shouts of joy and some with the sound of weeping. There was mixed reaction among the people; this is how the author of the book of Ezra describes the human emotions which were present--

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But any of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. Ezra 3:10-13

This chronological notation makes reference to the third year of Cyrus (Hebrew counting), *i.e.*, the second year of their return (549 B.C.).

E. 548 B.C.- 520 B.C.-- The Adversaries Hinder The Rebuilding Of The Temple

With the completion of the Temple foundation, the prospects became fair for the rapid completion of the edifice (Ezra 3:8-13). However, unexpected events postponed the Temple, "all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia," Ezra 4:5. This time span covers the period from approximately the third year of Cyrus (549 B.C.)- Hebrew reckoning- to the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)- Hebrew counting. Therefore, the cessation of the Temple work lasted for twenty-nine years (549 B.C. + 30 = 520 B.C.). Ezra 4:24 states that "... the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ... ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia," *i.e.*, 519 B.C. in Persian reckoning.

The remnant of pilgrims returning to Zion were probably enthusiastic at first, but reasons for discouragement swiftly came. In general, those living in the land were hostile to those who had returned. The Temple stoppage occurred when trouble came

from the inhabitants of the land. Some of these adversaries were Israelites who were returned to their land by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. In the meantime, they had inter-married with the pagan peoples who were deported into Palestine from foreign countries by the Assyrian emperors, Esarhaddon (681 B.C.- 669 B.C.) and Ashurbanipal (668 B.C.- 626 B.C.). The country had been desolate, and squatters from among the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Samaritans had profited by the absence of the Jews by occupying the Judean countryside. The Samaritans, in particular, were openly hostile.

1. The Samaritan Opposition

After the commencement of corporate life around the rebuilt altar, the Jews had an important decision to make. A group of Samaritans approached Zerubbabel, and the chief fathers with the suggestion: "Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither," Ezra 4:2. Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the chief of the fathers of Israel were unwilling to form such a co-operative venture and responded: "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us," Ezra 4:3.

It seemed that Samaritan worship was syncretistic to the worshipping Jews. According to II Kings 17:29-34, the Samaritans had merely added the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel, to the gods they had brought with them when they entered the land--

Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; With whom the Lord had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them.

For this reason, the Jewish leadership declined the Samaritan offer of assistance, noting that Cyrus had given to them the responsibility for rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple (Ezra 4:3). To the tribes of the Southern Kingdom, the exile had been a bitter experience, and pious Jews were persuaded that the idolatry of their fathers had caused it. Therefore, the returnees were determined that the post-exilic nation would be uncorrupted by heathen practices.

As one might expect, the Samaritans were hostile after this rebuff. They used every means at their command to frustrate the Jews in their efforts to construct the Temple, and were successful in delaying the completion of the work until the reign of Darius, the Persian (Ezra 4:5).

2. The Prayers Of Daniel Influence Cyrus

It is of interest to note that in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, Daniel was mourning three full weeks (Daniel 10:2). Though the Hebrew text gives no reason for the prophet's mourning and fasting, it is here suggested that this was the result of

Daniel's hearing of the Temple's construction being stopped at Jerusalem in 549 B.C. Daniel's prayer and fasting lasted for 21 days from Nisan 4 through Nisan 24 in 549 B.C.. The angel was pleading with the kings of Persia, who at that time were Cyrus and his grandfather, Astyages. By the seventh month the altar had been finished and offerings were started. The journey took four months (Ezra 7:9-10). If the angel persuaded the king soon after Daniel's prayers and fasting, they probably made this journey in the second, third, fourth and fifth months, arriving in the sixth. This gave them one month to build their altar so to start the sacrifice. Daniel's fasting must have been noticed by Cyrus in whose eyes he was favored.

This chapter indicates that there were 'kings of Persia' at this time (Daniel 10:13). Perhaps some Biblical students would think that this was a reference to Cyrus and his son, Cambyses. However, there is no evidence, Biblical or extra-Biblical, which indicates that Cambyses was any more than king over Babylon. It seems that Cyrus lived until the time of the Magi revolt; his death and Cambyses' campaign in Egypt were the two outstanding reasons which precipitated the Magi revolt. Therefore, it is believed that the phrase 'kings of Persia' refers to both Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede, *i.e.*, Astyages, Cyrus' grandfather. According to Herodotus' Median chronology, Astyages remained in Cyrus' palace for ten years: "As for Astyages, Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house till Astyages died," *Herodotus* I.130. Cyrus probably had Astyages oversee the affairs of the empire while he was enlarging its borders. Since Daniel had worked extensively with Darius the Mede, it seems that Darius is included in the phrase 'the kings of Persia' as recorded in Daniel's prophecies, Daniel 10:13, *cf.*, Daniel 6:28.

When Cyrus the Great took over Astyages' kingdom, Daniel retired from the political arena. For Daniel 1:21 seems to imply that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus," *i.e.*, in political affairs as a statesman. As can be seen, the latter chronological statements in Daniel appear to dovetail with the reign of Cyrus and the progress of the Temple construction hindered. It is possible that Daniel remained in Babylon until the first year of Cyrus; then, he went to Ecbatana, Media, to live where he built an elegant tower according to Josephus, *Antiquities* X.xi.7.

3. Construction Terminated From Cyrus to Darius

The author of the book of Ezra gives the length of time for the Temple stoppage-- "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius King of Persia," Ezra 4:4-5. This would cover all the days of Cyrus' rule from the time the building process began (548 B.C.) until the second year of Darius I (520 B.C.). According to the Behistun Inscription, Babylon fell to Darius I, the Persian, in the autumn of 520 B.C. Therefore, it was in the spring of 519 B.C. that Darius issued the edict to resume the Temple program, which was both a Sabbatical year and a Jubilee year. It was God's Law to return the land on a Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:28).

Cambyses had helped his father to govern Babylon and became an experienced ruler. During his short reign, Cambyses was able to conquer Egypt, and by 526 B.C., Memphis, the capital of Egypt, was in his hands. Cambyses is especially remembered in Jewish history because of his kindness to the Jewish settlement located on an island at the first cataract of the Nile River, called Elephantine. Located here, was a military post manned by Jews to protect the southern borders of the land. Scholars have no idea of the origin of the Jews here. But it is known that they had a temple erected for the worship of the God of Israel. From the Aramaic Papyri of Elephantine, it is implied

that Cambyses spared the temple of the Jews while he destroyed the local temples of the Egyptians. A letter containing the petition for the authorization to rebuild the temple of Yaho (Yahweh) dated in 'the month of Tammuz in the fourteenth year of King Darius' refers to Cambyses' favorable action toward the Jews-- "Now, our forefathers built this temple in the fortress of Elephantine back in the days of the kingdom of Egypt, and when Cambyses came to Egypt he found it built. They knocked down all the temples of the gods of Egypt, but no one did any damage to this temple."¹⁸

When all of Egypt was conquered by the Persian army, Cambyses set out on the return journey to Babylon. As he reached Mount Carmel in Palestine, he heard that a usurper had risen up in the city of Susa and claimed the throne of the empire. Whether due to shock or, as some claim, by his own hand, he died there. Herodotus informs his readers that Cambyses' death came through an accident. Thus the life of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, came to an end.

IV. Cyrus Captures Babylon

Having deposed the Median king, Cyrus the Great succeeded in harmonizing the Medes and Persians in a unified nation. Then, moving swiftly toward the west, he was able to absorb all of the Median territories into his dominion as far as the River Halys in Asia Minor.

Thus, all of the Median Empire fell to Cyrus. This great conqueror marched westward and claimed Armenia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Lydia, Greek city-states in Asia Minor, and Greek islands. Eastward his conquests included all of Persia.

When Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, refused to recognize the sovereignty of the Medo-Persian Empire, Cyrus defeated him in battle and took over his empire (547 B.C.).

This is confirmed by Herodotus, who writes: "This is the story of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus, and thus he became king; and afterwards, as I have already related, he subdued Croesus in punishment for the unprovoked wrong done him; and after this victory he became sovereign of all Asia," *Herodotus* I.130.

Cyrus' defeat of Croesus gave to him the title of 'king of Asia'. The Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7.ii.15-18) record the defeat of Croesus, the king of Lydia, by Cyrus during the ninth year of Nabonidus, 547 B.C.--

15 In the month Nisan Cyrus (II), king of Parsu, mustered his army and

16 crossed the Tigris below Arbail. In the month Iyyar [he marched] to Ly[dia].

17 He defeated its king, took its possessions, (and) stationed his own garrison (there) [...]

18 Afterwards the king and his garrison was in it ([...])¹⁹

Seven years later (540 B.C.), Cyrus was ready to launch the great assault against Babylon itself. Having conquered most of the known world, there were still two powerful rivals, however: Babylon and Egypt. Before a march against Egypt could be made, Babylon had to come under Persian rule.

A. 540 B.C.-- Conditions In Babylon In The Seventeenth Year Of Nabonidus

The Neo-Babylonian Empire was in no condition to resist the Medo-Persian invasion in the year 540 B.C. During the preceding eleven years, Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, had not so much as visited the capital city, leaving the administration of that metropolis to his profligate son Belshazzar, to whom he also appears to have entrusted kingship.²⁰ (Notice that this is not Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, as mentioned in Daniel 5.)

1. Nabonidus' Absence From Babylon

'The Verse Account Of Nabonidus Inscription' expresses Nabonidus' absence from Babylon during his third year and the kingship being placed into the hand of his oldest son, not named in the text--

-- when the third year was about to begin--
He entrusted the 'Camp' to his oldest (son), the first-born,
The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command).

He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him
And, himself, he started out for a long journey,
The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;
He turned toward Tema (deep) in the west.

He started out the expedition on a path (leading) to a distant (region). When he arrived there,
He killed in battle the prince of Tema
Slaughtered the flocks of those who dwell in the city (as well as) in the countryside,
And he, himself, took his residence in [Te]ma, the forces of Akkad [were also stationed] there.

He made the town beautiful, built (there) [his palace]
Like the palace in Su.an.na (Babylon), he (also) built [walls]
(For) the fortifications of the town and [...].
He surrounded the town with sentinels [...].²¹

It appears that Nabonidus developed a policy of ignoring Babylon and also of ignoring Cyrus the Great in his world conquest. The 'Verse Account of Nabonidus' affirms Nabonidus' attitude of neglecting to meet the challenge of Cyrus--

(While) Cyrus (is) the king of the world whose tri[umph(s)] are true]
And [whose yoke] the kings of all the countries are pulli[ng,]
He (Nabonidus) has written upon his stone tablets: 'I have made ... bow] to my feet
I personally have conquered his countries, his possessions I took to my residence.'²²

2. Nabonidus' Worship Of Sin, Deity Of Haran

Nabonidus further weakened the Babylonian Empire not only by his absence from the capital city, but also by concentrating his favors upon the cult of the god Sin at Haran at the expense of Babylonian deities, thus incurring the displeasure of the priesthood in Babylon.

The mother of Nabonidus was a great worshipper of the Haran deity-- Sin. Nabonidus followed in her footsteps. Two stele were found in Haran which appear, stylistically, as a tomb inscription of the mother of Nabonidus. In the document, the mother of Nabonidus states that Sin called Nabonidus to kingship over Babylon-- "Sin, the king of all the gods, looked with favor upon me and called Nabonidus, my only son, whom I bore, to kingship and entrusted him with the kingship of Sumer and Akkad, (also of) all the countries from the border of Egypt, on the Upper Sea, to the Lower Sea."²³ Since Sin raised up Nabonidus to kingship over Babylon, the king was determined to do the will of Sin--

Nabonidus, the only son, whom I bore, performed indeed all the forgotten rites of Sin, Ningal, Nusku and Sadarnunna, he completed the rebuilding of the temple Ehulhul, led Sin, Ningal, Nusku and Sadarnunna in procession from Babylon (Shuanna), his royal city, installed (them again) in gladness and happiness into Haran, the seat which pleases them.²⁴

In the ruins of the Great Mosque in Haran, two stelae of Nabonidus were used there secondarily as paving stones. These inscriptions are known as 'the Haran Inscriptions of Nabonidus'. Again, the document states Sin's call of Nabonidus to kingship over Babylon. Because of Sin's rejection by the citizens of Babylon and the surrounding area, the deity asked the king to leave the city of Babylon--

For me, Nabonidus, the lonely one who has nobody, in whose (text: my) heart was no thought of kingship, the gods and goddesses prayed (to Sin) and Sin called me to kingship. At midnight he (Sin) made me have a dream and said (in the dream) as follows: 'Rebuild speedily Ehulhul, the temple of Sin in Harran, and I will hand over to you all the countries.'

But the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Ur, Uruk (and) Larsa, the administrators (and) the inhabitants of the urban centers of Babylonia acted evil, careless and even sinned against his great divine power, having not (yet) experienced the awfulness of the wrath of the Divine Crescent, the king of all gods; they disregarded his (text: their) rites and there was much irreligious and disloyal talk. They devoured one another like dogs, caused disease and hunger to appear among them. He (Sin) decimated the inhabitants of the country, but he made me leave my city Babylon on the road to Tema, Dadanu, Padakku, Hibra, Jadihu even as far as Jatribu. For ten years I was moving around among these (cities) and did not enter my own city Babylon.²⁵

This situation in Babylon, where Nabonidus neglected the worship of Marduk, the city's chief deity, was advantageous to Cyrus II in the world conquest.

While the Babylonian monarch was absent from Babylon, the Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7.ii.5-7) repeatedly state that the Akitu festival did not occur because of the absence of the monarch. This happened during the seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh years of Nabonidus' rule according to the Nabonidus Chronicle. Since a number of the regnal years of Nabonidus are missing from the Nabonidus Chronicle, it appears that he was away from Babylon for ten years-- from his third year (554 B.C.) to his thirteenth year (544 B.C.) when he was present (554 B.C. + 10 = 544 B.C.). He was home once for his mother's funeral in year nine, 548 B.C. Notice how the Chronicle states Nabonidus' absence from Babylon and neglect of Babylonian religious festivals--

- 5 ... The king (was) in Tema (while) the prince, his officers, (and) his army (were) in Akkad.
[The king]
- 6 did not come to Babylon
- 5 [in the month Nisan]
- 6 Nabu did not come to Babylon. Bel did not come out. The [Akitu festiv]al [did not take place].
- 7 The offerings
- 8 were presented
- 7 (to) the gods of Babylon and Borsippa a [s in normal times] in Esagil and Ezida.²⁶

It appears by comparing Babylonian documents that Nabonidus' neglect of the Akitu festival and Babylon's deities occurred for a period of ten years.

When Nabonidus realized the importance of this matter, it was too late for the situation to be corrected. Nabonidus was present on his seventeenth regnal year probably because of the threat of Cyrus the Great to the city of Babylon. The Chronicle (Chronicle 7.iii.5-12) records Nabonidus' presence in the city during the king's seventeenth year (540 B.C.)--

- 5 [The seventeenth year: ... N]abu [came] from Borsippa for the procession of [Bel. Bel came out].
- 6 [... In the month] Tebet the king entered Eturkalamma. In the temple [...]

- 7 [...] ... He made a libation of wine ... [...]
8 [...] Bēl came out. They performed the Akitu festival *as in normal times*. In the month [...]
9 [...] the gods] of Marad, Zababa and the gods of Kish, Ninlil [*and the gods of*]
10 Harsagkamma entered Babylon. Until the end of the month Elul the gods of Akkad [...]
11 which are above the ... and below the ... were entering Babylon. The gods of Borsippa,
Cuthah,
12 and Sippar did not enter (Babylon).²⁷

Realizing that the Medo-Persian threat was near, King Nabonidus came to Babylon for the Akitu festival on Nisan 1, the Babylonian New Year, in 540 B.C. He brought the images of Babylonian divinities into the city from the surrounding areas, but it was all to no avail.

B. Historical Accounts Of Babylon's Fall To Cyrus

Toward the end of September, the Medo-Persian army of Cyrus under the command of Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, attacked Opis on the Tigris, and defeated the Babylonians. On October 10, 540 B.C. (Gregorian calendar), Sippar was taken without a battle and Nabonidus fled. Two days later, Ugbaru's troops were able to enter Babylon. October 12, 540 B.C. (Gregorian calendar) became Babylon's fateful day. On the Hebrew calendar, these two dates are Tishri 14 and 16, in the year of Babylon's fall.

1. According To The Babylonian Chronicles

The Babylonian Chronicles (Chronicle 7.iii.12-18) tell the story of Babylon's fall to Cyrus in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus--

- 12 ... In the month Tishri
13 when
14 Cyrus (II)
15 did
16 battle at Opis on the [*bank of*]
17 the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad
18 retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day
Sippar was captured without a battle.
15 Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutti, and the army of Cyrus
(II)
16 entered Babylon
17 without a battle
18 Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the
month the shield-bearing troops)
17 of the Gutti surrounded the gates of Esagil. (But)
18 there was no
19 interruption (of rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples
20 and no date (for a performance) was missed.²⁸

Thus, Babylon fell to the army of Cyrus II without a battle and Nabonidus was captured in Babylon. Notice that the Babylonian Chronicles as well as the writings of Herodotus do not mention the death of the Babylonian monarch.

2. According To Herodotus

In describing how Cyrus entered Babylon, Herodotus states that the river was the key to the great city's capture and provided a way to get through the walls of Babylon. Herodotus writes--

... the city is divided into two parts; for it is cut in half by a river named Euphrates, a wide, deep, and swift river, flowing from Armenia and issuing into the Red Sea. The ends of the wall, then, on either side are built quite down to the river; here they turn, and hence a fence of baked bricks runs along each bank of the stream. *Herodotus* I.180.

The river was the Achilles' heel of the magnificent walled-fortress of Babylon which eventually brought about its capture. Herodotus relates how Cyrus used the river to enter the city--

Then ... Cyrus ... marched at last against Babylon. The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when in his march he came near to their city, they joined battle, but they were worsted and driven within the city. There, because they knew already that Cyrus was no man of peace, and saw that he attacked all nations alike, they had stored provisions enough for very many years; so now they cared nothing for the siege; and Cyrus knew not what to do, being so long delayed and gaining no advantage.

Whether, then, someone advised him in his difficulty, or he perceived for himself what to do, I know not, but this he did: he posted his army at the place where the river enters the city, and another part of it where the stream issues from the city, and bade his men enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they should see it to be fordable. Having so arrayed them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; and when he came to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen: drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was till now a marsh, he made the stream to sink till its former channel could be forded. When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this intent made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk about to the height of the middle of a man's thigh. Now if the Babylonians had known beforehand or learnt what Cyrus was planning, they would have suffered the Persians to enter the city and brought them to a miserable end; for then they would have shut all the gates that opened on the river and themselves mounted up on to the walls that ran along the river banks, and so caught their enemies as in a trap. But as it was, the Persians were upon them unawares, and by reason of the great size of the city-- so say those who dwell there-- those in the outer parts of it were overcome, yet the dwellers in the middle part knew nothing of it; all this time they were dancing and making merry at a festival which chanced to be toward, till they learnt the truth but too well.

Thus was Babylon then for the first time taken. *Herodotus* I.190-192.

The only reference to the king of Babylon is found in the following statement by Herodotus: "Cyrus, then, marched against Nitocris' son who inherited the name of his father Labynetos and the sovereignty of Assyria," *Herodotus* I.188. Nitocris seems to be the mother of Nabonidus, 'the Haran Tomb Inscription of the Mother of Nabonidus' gives her the name of 'Adad-guppi'.²⁹ Her son is, obviously, Nabonidus whom Cyrus marched against. Again, neither the Babylonian Chronicles nor the history of Herodotus speak of the death of the Babylonian king (Nabonidus or his son, Belshazzar) during Cyrus' capture of the capital city of the Babylonians.

3. According To Xenophon

It is only through Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* that a connection between Daniel 5 and the capture of Babylon by Cyrus could be drawn. For Xenophon does refer to the slaughter of the Babylonian king in the account of Babylon's fall to the Persian army--

When these words were spoken they advanced. And of those they met on the way, some fell by their swords, some fled back into their houses, some shouted to them; and Gobryas and his men shouted back to them, as if they were fellow-revellers. They advanced as fast as they could and were soon at the palace. And Gobryas and Gadatas and their troops found the gates leading to the palace locked, and those who had been appointed to attack the guard fell upon them as they were drinking by a blazing fire, and without waiting they dealt with them as with foes.

But, as a noise and tumult ensued, those within heard the uproar, and at the king's command to see what the matter was, some of them ran out. And when Gadatas and his men saw the gates open they dashed in in pursuit of the others as they fled back into the palace, and dealing blows right and left they came into the presence of the king; and they found him already risen with his dagger in his hand. And Gadatas and Gobryas and their followers overpowered him; and those about the king perished also, one where he sought some shelter, another while running away, another while actually trying to defend himself with whatever he could. ...

While they were thus occupied, Gadatas and Gobryas came up; and first of all they did homage to the gods, seeing that they had avenged themselves upon the wicked king, and then they kissed Cyrus's hands and his feet with many tears of joy.

And when day dawned and those in possession of the citadels discovered that the city was taken and the king slain, they surrendered the citadels, too. *Cyropaedia* VII.v. 26-33.

While Xenophon does not name the king of Babylon that was slain as being Belshazzar or Nabonidus, his narrative does require the death of a monarch.

This becomes certain when Gobryas, an Assyrian, a man well advanced in years, first meets Cyrus the Great. The old man related to Cyrus how the present ruler of Babylon had killed his son.³⁰ He promises to help Cyrus in the overthrow of Babylon if in return Cyrus would promise to avenge the murder for the death of Gobryas' son. This Cyrus does promise, *cf.*, *Cyropaedia* IV.vi.1-8.

Scholars, who have accepted the history of Xenophon's account of Cyrus' life, have, therefore, identified the murdered king with Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 5. Today, with the archaeological discovery of Babylonian texts referring to a Belshazzar as a co-regent with Nabonidus, they have connected him with the slain monarch of Daniel 5. Here is another example where the *Cyropaedia* is historical, but not history. For neither the Babylonian Chronicles, Herodotus nor Isaiah's great prophecy regarding Cyrus require the death of the sovereign of Babylon. At this point, the evidence is against Xenophon's account and against paralleling Xenophon's narrative with Daniel 5. So, Cyrus had a sympathetic policy toward Nabonidus just as he had had for Astyages, his grandfather. Since no historical text, secular or sacred, mentions the presence of Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, when Cyrus took Babylon, it seems unwise to associate this event with Daniel 5. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus and the Belshazzar story of Daniel 5 appear clearly to be two separate events. Therefore, no document of Babylonian origin affirms that Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was actually present at the fall of Babylon.³¹

4. According To Berosus

In contrast to Xenophon's narrative, which speaks of the death of the king of Babylon during the overthrow of the city, Berosus, the Babylonian priest and historian, is cited by Josephus in which he tells of Babylon's capture and Cyrus' kind treatment of Nabonidus--

... when he was come to the seventeenth year of his reign, Cyrus came out of Persia with a great army; and having already conquered all the rest of Asia, he came hastily to Babylonia. When Nabonnedus perceived he was coming to attack him, he met him with his forces, and joining battle with him, was beaten; and fled away with a few of his troops with him, and was shut up within the city Borsippus. Hereupon Cyrus took Babylon, and gave order that the outer walls of the city should be demolished, because the city had proved very troublesome to him, and cost him a great deal of pains to take it. He then marched away to Borsippus to besiege Nabonnedus; but as Nabonnedus did not sustain the siege, but delivered himself into his hands, he was at first kindly used by Cyrus, who gave him Carmania, as a place for him to inhabit in but sent him out of Babylonia. Accordingly Nabonnedus spent the rest of his time in that country, and there died. *Contra Apionem* 1.20

C. 540 B.C.-- Cyrus Entered Babylon As A Hero

The Babylonian Chronicles state that on Marchesvan 3 (November 1, 540 B.C.) Cyrus entered Babylon. Cyrus received a hero's welcome and the text affirms that there was peace in the city while Cyrus spoke his greeting to all of Babylon. Notice that the text records the death of Ugbaru in the evening of Marchesvan 11 (November 9, 540 B.C.); in addition to his death, the king's wife died, but again, there is no reference to the death of the king or his son. The Nabonidus Chronicle (Chronicle 7.iii.18-28) concludes the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus as follows--

- 18 ... On the third day of the month Marchesvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon
- 19 ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II)
- 20 spoke
- 19 (his) greeting to
- 20 all of
- 19 Babylon.
- 20 Gubaru, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon.
- 21 From the month Kislev to the month Adar the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought down to Babylon
- 22 returned to their places. On the night of the eleventh of the month Marchesvan Ugbaru died. In the month [...]
- 23 the king's wife died. From the twenty-seventh of the month Adar to the third of the month Nisan [there was] (an official) mourning period in Akkad.
- 24 All of the people bared their heads. On the fourth day when Cambyases (II), son of C[yrus (II)],
- 25 went to Egidrikalammasummu the ... official of Nabu who ... [...]
- 26 When he came, because of the Elamite ... the hand of Nabu [...] ... [...]
- 27 [sp]ears and quivers from [...] ... *crown* prince to the *wo* [rk...]
- 28 [...] Nabu to Esagil ... before Bel and the son of B[el...].³²

The main reason that Cyrus was welcomed as a hero in Babylon by the citizens is that they recognized his sympathetic religious policies in his dealings with conquered nations. The citizens of Babylon were irritated that their king stayed away from Babylon and was more interested in the gods of Haran than in the gods of Babylon.³³ Nabonidus' own daughter was dedicated to the great temple of Sin at Ur, and the king's devotion to the moon god to the neglect of Marduk evidently aroused the priests against his religious program. This situation aided Cyrus in his capture of Babylon for there was little or no resistance. Thus, Cyrus was able to present himself to the priests and people as a gracious liberator and benefactor of Babylon.

According to the above Babylonian text, Cyrus himself entered Babylon on Marchesvan 3, his governor Ugbaru proclaimed peace to the province, governors were appointed, and an order issued for the restoration of many captive foreign idols to their several native sanctuaries. When Babylonia was threatened by Cyrus' invasion, Nabonidus collected the various gods at Babylon for safekeeping, but these were subsequently restored to their native shrines by the conqueror. About the twenty-seventh of Adar the king's wife died. A public mourning for her was observed for a week, followed by religious services conducted by Cambyases, son of Cyrus.

D. 540 B.C.-- Cyrus' Religious Policies For Babylon, Similar To The Biblical Edict

Cyrus allowed the same religious freedoms for Babylon in 540 B.C. which he had allowed eleven years earlier for the Jews and other nations in 551 B.C. The science of archaeology has brought to light several Babylonian documents dealing with the

religious freedom which Cyrus brought to his subjects in Babylon. Throughout Cyrus' whole career his sympathetic religious policies remained consistent. This was his pattern and his secret for world conquest; it was quite a change from the policies of Nineveh and Babylon. He was the right man at the right time who caused oppression and intolerance to cease.

A study of the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Cyrus Cylinder, and 'The verse Account Of Nabonidus Inscription' helps Biblical students a great deal in understanding the true state of affairs at the time of Cyrus the Great.

1. According To The Nabonidus Chronicle

The Nabonidus Chronicle document gives evidence that Cyrus the Persian had a policy of returning foreign gods, temple vessels, and cultic worship objects to their homelands just as his edict for the Jews had previously stated--

- 18 ... On the third day of the month Marchesvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon.
- 19 ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II)
- 20 spoke
- 19 (his) greeting to
- 20 all of
- 19 Babylon.
- 20 Gubaru, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon.
- 21 From the month Kislev to the month Adar the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought down to Babylon
- 22 returned to their places.³⁴

2. According To The Cyrus Cylinder

This fact of returning cultic worship objects is also borne out by a study of the important Cyrus Cylinder which was especially prepared for the occasion.

In Babylon a baked clay cylinder of about nine inches long was found that dates from the early part of Cyrus' reign over Babylon. This document is now known as the Cylinder of Cyrus. On it is recorded his capture of Babylon without a battle, his return of prisoners to their own countries, and his restoration of treasures to the native temples. The famous cylinder of Cyrus, discovered by Hormuzd Rassam in the nineteenth century, is also in full agreement with the royal edict as recorded in the Bible and shows that Cyrus reversed the inhuman policy of deporting whole populations practiced by Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors--

All the kings of the entire world from the Upper to the Lower Sea, those who were seated in throne rooms, (those who) live in other [types of buildings as well as] all the kings of the West land living in tents, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet in Babylon (Su.an.na). (As to the region) from ... as far as Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon (Su.an.na) to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their (former) chapels, the places which make them happy.³⁵

From a reading of the famous Cyrus Cylinder, it is clearly seen that Nabonidus did evil against the city of Babylon and turned the worship of Marduk, the king of gods, into an abomination. This is why Marduk, the chief deity of Babylon 'scanned and looked through all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him,

i.e., Marduk in the annual procession.³⁶ Of course, Marduk's choice of a man was Cyrus, king of Anshan, who became ruler of all the world. It was Marduk who ordered Cyrus to march against the city of Babylon. Marduk helped Cyrus enter Babylon without battle; thus, sparing the city any calamity. When Marduk delivered Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, in Cyrus' hands, the inhabitants of the city as well as the countryside became jubilant, and viewed Cyrus as a liberator and made him their ruler.

Now, as the legitimate king of Babylon, Cyrus brought peace and harmony to the city; also he restored the worship of Marduk there. Cyrus permitted all the captives of the city of Babylon from the various nations to return home from their Babylonian captivity. He also established permanent sanctuaries after their Chaldean destructions and returned images to their proper temples. Obviously, this is precisely what Cyrus had done for the other nations for eleven years. However, the Jews had no images to return to their homeland; for this was forbidden by the decalogue.

3. According To The Verse Account Of Nabonidus

This cylinder must have been of tremendous value in establishing the prestige of Cyrus in the eyes of the Babylonians. It was clear that he was the legitimate king of the region, who had the approval of the gods. In the light of these documents along with 'The Verse Account Of Nabonidus', it becomes apparent that the Biblical account of how Cyrus had granted to the Jews privileges similar to those that were allowed to other people is accurate--

[... for] the inhabitants of Babylon he (i.e. Cyrus) declared a state of 'peace,'
 [...] ... (the troops) he kept away from Ekur.
 [Big cattle he slaughtered with the axe, he slaughtered many *aslu* -sheep
 [Incense he put] on the censer, the regular offerings for the Lord of Lords he ordered increased,
 [He constantly prayed to] the gods, prostrated on his face,
 [To be/do ...] is dear to his heart.

[To build up/repair the town of Babylon] he conceived the idea
 [And he himself took up hoe, spade and] earth basket and began to complete the wall of Babylon!
 [The original plan of] Nebuchadnezzar they (the inhabitants) executed with a willing heart.
 [...] ... he built fortifications on the *Imgur-Enlil* - wall

[The images of Babylon(ia), male and female, he returned to their cellas,
 [The ... who] had abandoned their [chapels] he returned to their mansions,
 [Their wrath] he appeased, their mind he put at rest,
 [... those whose power was] at a low he brought back to life
 [Because] their food is served (to them) [regular]ly.

[...] (these) deeds he effaced,
 [...] which] he has constructed, all the sanctuaries
 [...] of his [royal rule] ... he has eradicated,
 [...] of his [...] the wind carried away.

[...] his picture/symbol he effaced,
 [...] in all] the sanctuaries the inscriptions of his name are erased,
 [...] whatever he (Nabonidus) had created, he (Cyrus) let fire burn up
 [...] what he (Nabonidus) had created, he (Cyrus) fed to the flames!

[To the inhabitants of] Babylon a (joyful) heart is given now
 [They are like prisoners when] the prisons are opened
 [Liberty is restored to] those who were surrounded by oppression

[All rejoice] to look upon him as king!
(broken)³⁷

J. A. Thompson arrives at the same conclusion, namely, that Cyrus' edict for the Jews is historically accurate--

There can be no doubt that Cyrus showed a great deal of tolerance towards the various religious sections in the community. It is against the background of these facts that we must read the decrees of Cyrus found in the Bible. Quite clearly there is every reason to regard the Biblical accounts as authentic.³⁸

The substantial historicity of the edict of Cyrus to the Jewish communities has been confirmed by modern archaeological discoveries.

That Cyrus did in fact restore temples is borne out by some of the inscriptions found in excavations. Archaeology has demonstrated that Cyrus' concession to the Jewish exiles was not an isolated act, but the general policy of a remarkably humane leader of conciliating his new subjects by showing favor to their religions and supporting human rights.

After Cyrus had taken Babylon, one of his first acts was to restore all the gods to their native cities. Among these was the moon god of Ur. At that site, a gate of the sacred enclosure was found to have been repaired by bricks bearing Cyrus' name and on a broken inscription the conqueror says: "Sin [the moon-god], the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favorable sign delivered into my hands the four quarters of the world, and I returned the gods to their shrines."³⁹ And on the bricks of the repaired gateway he says, "The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hand; the land I have caused to dwell in a peaceful habitation."⁴⁰

It is interesting to note that many of Cyrus' accomplishments were predicted more than a century and three-quarters in advance by the Hebrew prophet, Isaiah. Babylonian documents are written in such a way as though the authors were aware of the prophet's oracle. Where the name of Yahweh occurred, pagan deities were named. The reader will notice these similarities as the Hebrew oracle is discussed.

4. According To Isaiah's Oracle

In the prophecy of Isaiah, Cyrus the Persian king is named as the anointed of God. It is stated in the prediction that he was predestined to conquer kings and fortified places including Babylon. Isaiah's prophecy implies that Cyrus would reverse the cruel policies of the Assyrians and Babylonians by permitting transplanted populations, including the Jews, to return to their homelands. The Jews were not only permitted but were actually encouraged by Cyrus to return to Palestine and to rebuild their Temple.

Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; the spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make

the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. Isaiah 44:24--45:4

This is an amazing Biblical prediction; even Josephus dates the composition by Isaiah as occurring 140 years before the temple destruction, which would be 177 years before the actual fulfillment.⁴¹

The oracle relates seven predictions which can be demonstrated to have actually occurred during Cyrus' lifetime: 1) the holy city, Jerusalem, as well as the cities of Judah are to be rebuilt and re-inhabited, 2) the Euphrates River and its canals are to be dried up, 3) Cyrus would decree Jerusalem to be re-built and the foundations of the Temple to be relaid, 4) the Lord would help Cyrus to subdue nations, 5) the Lord would loose the loins of kings, *i.e.*, to deprive a king of strength, 6) the Lord would cause the gates of Babylon to be open before Cyrus, and 7) the Lord would give to Cyrus the treasures of darkness, *i.e.*, the pagan idols. Herodotus, Xenophon, and the Babylonian Chronicles verify the historical accuracy of Isaiah's oracle pertaining to Cyrus.

It speaks well of Cyrus that he should be called by the Lord 'my shepherd', Isaiah 44:28. Obviously, Cyrus is to round up the scattered sheep of Israel and Judah, and by the royal decree is to permit them to return home. The God of the Israelite calls Cyrus 'His anointed', Isaiah 45:1. Cyrus the Great is chosen and anointed by the Lord for the special mission which he is destined to accomplish. Cyrus was destined to perform all the Lord's pleasure; certainly, that included his capture of Babylon and his edict concerning religious freedom and reform. The God of Israel, who created all things, also created Cyrus for his pleasure--

I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts. Isaiah 45:12-13

It is known that the Persians worshipped a bird-type deity, called Ahura-Mazda. Cyrus is also presented in the symbol of a bird so that later readers of the oracle could make the association--

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. Isaiah 46:10-11

Because of the divine calling of Cyrus, the golden head kingdom of Babylon would no more be called, 'the lady of kingdoms', Isaiah 47:5.

Isaiah's oracles regarding Cyrus the Great begin with Isaiah 41:2, 25 and end with Isaiah 46:11 and Isaiah 48:15. The critical view that these prophecies were written after the time of the Persian monarch is untenable. These Cyrus' prophecies set forth as final proof-- Jehovah's unique ability to predict future events, (*cf.*, Isaiah 41:4, 21-26; 44:25-26; 45:11, 21; 48:14). The climax comes in Isaiah 44:28--45:7, where Cyrus is actually named and his special mission is given. Note that I Kings 13:2 is a similar case for advanced naming.

E. 540 B.C.- 539 B.C.-- Jeremiah's Seventy Years Oracle Not Completed By Cyrus

In issuing an edict for the Jews and then conquering Babylonia, Cyrus II the Aryan, enters into the arena of Biblical history.⁴² The Hebrew exiles, who wept 'by the rivers of Babylon', when they remembered Zion, kept their eyes toward the east, looking for the rise of Messiah-- Cyrus (Psalm 137:1; Isaiah 44:28; 45:1, 4). This ruler would say to Jerusalem-- be rebuilt and to the foundations of the Temple-- be relaid, Isaiah 44:28. The Hebrew prophet had ecstatically envisioned this glad restoration. And the exiles waited for the great conqueror anointed by Jehovah for the special task of releasing the Jewish captives and restoring them to their homeland.

The Jewish exiles knew that the prophet Jeremiah had predicted the length of the Babylonian captivity. It was to last for seventy years. The chronicler summarizes a part of the seventy years time span from Jerusalem's siege in Nebuchadnezzar's sixteenth year to the reign of the kingdom of Persia, the first year of Cyrus over Babylon--

Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young men or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil 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 fulfil threescore and ten years.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given to me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up. II Chronicles 36:17-23

Notice that simple mathematics reveal that from 590 B.C., the sixteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, the date which the Lord instructed Ezekiel to mark⁴³ (Ezekiel 24:1-2) to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus (540 B.C.) is not seventy years. It is only fifty years (590 B.C. + 50 = 540 B.C.). Some Biblical scholars have concluded that the seventy years of exile ended with Cyrus' famous edict in his first year over Babylon. However, this reasoning would put the beginning of the exile near the death of good King Josiah, but there is nothing in the Hebrew text to indicate that the starting point of the seventy years be placed at that time in history. Judah's enemy was to be the king of the north, according to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11), not the king of the south as Pharaoh-necho was.

Other scholars put the starting date of the captivity in 606 B.C., the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (Hebrew reckoning). It was his accession year in Babylonian reckoning. However, there is no evidence that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem in his first year; in fact, Josephus states otherwise: "Now in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, one whose name was Nebuchadnezzar took the government over the Babylonians So the king of Babylon passed over Euphrates, and took all Syria, as far as Pelusium, excepting Judea," *Antiquities* X.vi.1.

This problem of finding the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* for the seventy years exile will be discussed in detail in chapter six. It seems that Cyrus' edict appears to be the initial step toward the fulfillment of the seventy years prophecy.

However, it should be pointed out that Cyrus' capture of Babylon does not seem to fulfill all the stipulations of the seventy years oracle. For Jeremiah's prophecy requires both the apparent death of the king as well as the destruction of the city. This is the requirement of Jeremiah 25:12-13--

And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

Cyrus' capture of Babylon did not fulfill the above predictions. First, Cyrus does not kill the Babylonian monarch; this is confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicles, the history of Herodotus, and the quote from Berossus in Josephus' *Contra Apionem* where Cyrus permitted Nabonidus to rule over the province of Carmania for the remainder of his life, *Contra Apionem* I.20. Only Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* records the death of the king of Babylon; Xenophon's narrative requires this. For it is his purpose to show the outstanding character of Cyrus who is just by punishing evil, even in kings. It is believed that Xenophon is not historically reliable at this point.

Secondly, none of the above records speak of the destruction of Babylon. Only the Babylonian history of Berossus as quoted by Josephus would indicate any destruction to Babylon and this was just the demolishing of the outer walls of the citadel: "Hereupon Cyrus took Babylon, and gave order that the outer walls of the city should be demolished, because the city had proved very troublesome to him, and cost him a great deal of pains to take it," *Contra Apionem* I.20. The stipulations of Jeremiah's oracle against Babylon was not fulfilled in Cyrus' capture of the city. This becomes quite clear when one reads the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:1--51:64.

Another proof that Cyrus' capture of the Babylonian citadel and his edict for religious toleration did not end the captivity of the seventy years is that II Chronicles 36:21 suggests that the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* must be Sabbatical years: "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 threescore and ten years." Remember that the year 589 B.C. is a Sabbatical year, it is the year before Jerusalem's fall and it is the year which the Lord told Ezekiel to mark (Ezekiel 24:1-2).

In summary, Ezekiel 24:1-2 contains a date which the Lord asked the Hebrew prophet to mark. The date seems to be the starting point for the seventy years of exile which Jeremiah had predicted (Jeremiah 25:12-14, 29:10). The Biblical text from Ezekiel's pen reads as follows: "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day," Ezekiel 24:1-2. This date (December 21, 590 B.C., Gregorian Calendar) to Cyrus' capture of Babylon (540 B.C., Gregorian Calendar) does not give a time span of seventy years but only fifty years. Therefore, Cyrus' capture of Babylon and his edict must be viewed as the first step toward the fulfillment of the seventy years, but not the end of the seventy years.

V. 538 B.C.- 522 B.C.-- Cyrus' Final Years Of Reign

A. Cyrus' Control Over His Empire

Cyrus reached his goal of building a Persian Empire greater than Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar II. Cyrus organized his empire into twenty satrapies (provinces). A satrap (governor) ruled each province, and was checked by officers who also answered

directly to the great king. The officers were the king's 'eyes' in each province. Any attempt to go against the king's interests was reported to Cyrus.⁴⁴

Cyrus built a great palace at Pasargadae in the land of Persia near the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf. There, he also created a large park with his palace, shrines, and other structures. Throughout his palace, the repeated inscription was inscribed: "I, Cyrus, the king, the Achaemenid."⁴⁵

Throughout Cyrus' extensive campaigns, and in contrast with other ancient oriental conquerors, Cyrus was humane. For an example, the lives of Astyages, Croesus, and Nabonidus were spared and each was allotted a royal train. Babylon was not destroyed but her people were won over by the sympathetic policies of the Persian king. The Jews, as well as all deported peoples, were re-established in their homeland and granted religious freedom.

While Cyrus lived at Pasargadae, his son, Cambyses, lived in Sippar and represented his father at the New Year's festivals (Akitu Feast) in Babylon as 'the king's son'. In the year 531 B.C., Cyrus finally appointed his son to be his co-regent and successor over Babylon.

At the New Year's festival in 531 B.C., Cambyses assumed the title 'King of Babylon' for the first time, while Cyrus retained the broader title 'King of the Lands', referring to his rule over the vast Medo-Persian Empire.

With the conquest of Babylon as past history, Cyrus gave to his son the task of preparing for an expedition against Egypt, the last kingdom for the Persians to conquer. In 526 B.C. Cambyses conquered Egypt and became the first Persian king over Egypt. This marked the start of Persian rule over Egypt.⁴⁶

B. 522 B.C.-- Cyrus' Death

The Biblical passage of Ezra 4:4-5 would seem to imply that Cyrus lived unto the reign of Darius I, the king of Persia: "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius the king of Persia."

1. As Told By Xenophon

The death of Cyrus is interesting to note as recorded by the Greek historians. Both Xenophon and Herodotus give different accounts of the Persian's death. Xenophon presents the passing of Cyrus as a very old man--

When his life was far spent amid such achievements and Cyrus was now a very old man, he came back for the seventh time in his reign to Persia. His father and his mother were in the course of nature long since dead so Cyrus performed the customary sacrifice and led the Persians in their national dance and distributed presents among them all, as had been his custom.

As he slept in the palace, he saw a vision: a figure of more than human majesty appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Make ready, Cyrus; for thou shalt soon depart to the gods.' ... he summoned his sons; for they had accompanied him, as it chanced, and were still in Persia. He summoned also his friends and the Persian magistrates; when they were all come, he began to speak as follows:

'My sons, and all you my friends about me, the end of my life is now at hand; I am quite sure of this for many reasons; and when I am dead, you must always speak and act in regard to me as of one blessed of fortune. For when I was a boy, I think I plucked all the fruits that among boys count for the best; when I became a youth, I enjoyed what is accounted best among young men; and when I became a mature man, I had the best that men can have. And as time went on, it seemed to me that I recognized that my own strength was always increasing with my years, so that I never found my old age growing any more feeble than my youth had been; and, so far as I know, there is

nothing that I ever attempted or desired and yet failed to secure. ...

So you, Cambyzes, shall have the throne, the gift of the gods and of myself, in so far as it is mine to give.' ...

'Remember also this last word of mine,' he said: 'if you do good to your friends, you will also be able to punish your enemies. And now farewell, my children, and say farewell to your mother as from me. And to all my friends, both present and absent, I bid farewell.'

After these words, he shook hands with them all, covered himself over, and so died. *Cyropaedia* VIII.vii.1-2, 6, 11, 28.

An appendix to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was later added to the work. It speaks of the disintegration of the empire after Cyrus' death which seems to be somewhat accurate. The following quote is from the introduction of the appendix which relates the size of the Medo-Persian Empire and gives the initial cause for the disintegration--

That Cyrus' empire was the greatest and most glorious of all the kingdoms in Asia-- of that it may be its own witness. For it was bounded on the east by the Indian Ocean, on the north by the Black Sea, on the west by Cyprus and Egypt, and on the south by Ethiopia. And although it was of such magnitude, it was governed by the single will of Cyrus; and he honoured his subjects and cared for them as if they were his own children; and they, on their part, revered Cyrus as a father. Still, as soon as Cyrus was dead, his children at once fell into dissension, states and nations began to revolt, and everything began to deteriorate. *Cyropaedia* VIII.viii.1-2.

2. As Told By Herodotus

In contrast to Xenophon's account of Cyrus dying in peace, Herodotus presents Cyrus as being killed in battle in the land of the Massagetae. The dreadful account is given as follows by the Greek historian--

... Tomyris, when Cyrus would not listen to her, collected all her power and joined battle with him. This fight I judge to have been the stubbornest of all fights that were ever fought by men that were not Greek; and indeed I have learnt that this was so. For first (it is said) they shot at each other from a distance with arrows; presently, their arrows being all shot away, they rushed upon each other and fought at grips with their spears and their daggers; and for a long time they battled foot to foot and neither would give ground; but at last the Massagetae had the mastery. There perished the greater part of the Persian army, and there fell Cyrus himself, having reigned thirty years in all save one. Cf., *Herodotus* I.201, 205, 206, 209, 210, 214.⁴⁷

From Herodotus' statement, it appears that Darius, son of Hystaspes, was a threat to Cyrus' throne even within Cyrus' lifetime. There is no evidence that Cambyzes II ever ruled over the entire Medo-Persian Empire. He was king of Babylon while Cyrus was king of the lands. While Cambyzes was capturing Memphis and the nation of Egypt, Cyrus probably oversaw the empire completely. If Cyrus was still alive when Cambyzes captured Egypt, he could legitimately be credited with the capture of Egypt.

Before Cambyzes left for Egypt, he had his aides secretly kill Smerdis, his half-brother, also known as Barfiya, in order to prevent an uprising during his campaign into the Nile Valley. However, while Cambyzes gained victories in Egypt, Gaumate, a Median, knowing Cambyzes plot against Smerdis, claimed to be Smerdis (Pseudo-Smerdis) and seized the rule of Persia through a revolt. Perhaps, shortly before this Magi revolt, Cyrus died (either according to Xenophon or Herodotus' accounts--perhaps Herodotus is the more credible).

Cyrus' death and Cambyzes' Egyptian incursion would have provided a fitting occasion for Gaumate to impersonate Smerdis, Cyrus' son, and thus usurp the throne of the Persian government.

On his way back to Babylon in 523 B.C., Cambyzes received news that Gaumate had

usurped the throne and had been widely accepted in the eastern provinces. He died near Mount Carmel in Palestine, probably by accident or suicide, leaving no heirs. Within a few months, Darius Hystaspes, a Persian officer of a collateral royal line, succeeded in killing the Pseudo-Smerdis and consolidated the empire.

This history is consistent with the author of the book of Ezra who states that the adversaries troubled the building of the Temple "all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia," Ezra 4:5. The passage seems to indicate that Cyrus ruled until the reign of Darius I. Because of the aging of Cyrus, the Egyptian incursion of Cambyses, and the revolt of Gaumate, the Temple problem in Jerusalem was not resolved until the second year of Darius I (520 B.C.; Hebrew counting).

The Temple stoppage during the reigns of Cambyses II and Gaumate will be discussed in detail in chapter six along with the help of Darius Hystaspes. It will be shown how the work of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Hebrew prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi coincide with this period of Persian history.

C. 522 B.C.-- Cyrus' Tomb, Its Description And Inscription

If Herodotus' account of Cyrus' death be the acceptable version, then his body was brought back to Pasargadae and buried in a tomb which still exists and which consists of only a single small room on a foundation of six steps. The tomb itself measures 10.7 m. (35 ft.) high and the actual chamber of the tomb is only 3.2 X 2.2 m. (10.5 X 7.5 ft.). Guards stood near the tomb to protect the body of the dead King Cyrus. His corpse was placed inside the tomb in a limestone sarcophagus, which was placed on a funeral couch. The beloved Cyrus was buried with swords, earrings, fine clothing, and tapestry



ILLUSTRATION XV- Cyrus' Tomb

According to the Greek historian, Plutarch (c. A.D. 45-120), Alexander the Great, in his world conquests, discovered the tomb of Cyrus and paused to read the inscription on this tomb-- "O man, whosoever thou art and whencesoever thou comest, for I know that thou wilt come, I am Cyrus, and I won for the Persians their empire. Do not,

therefore, begrudge me this little earth which covers my body."⁴⁸ After reading the inscription upon this tomb, he ordered it to be repeated below in Greek letters. Then Plutarch writes that "these words, then, deeply affected Alexander, who was reminded of the uncertainty and mutability of life."⁴⁹ Some scholars have suggested that Cyrus, knowing the prophecies of Daniel, had the inscription written with the first ruler of the Greeks in mind who would some day conquer the Medo-Persian Empire--

And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven, and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. Daniel 11:3-4

Thus, the mission of the Lord's anointed, Cyrus, came to an end. The compassionate king had accomplished the Lord's pleasure. His edict of 551 B.C., when he had conquered the Median Empire, liberated the Jewish exiles granting them permission to return to Palestine, to rebuild their Temple, and to restore the Temple vessels to the sacred Shrine. The first return occurred in 550 B.C.; at that time, the altar of burnt offerings was established and the reconstruction of the Temple started in 549 B.C. In 540, Cyrus liberated the citizens of Babylon and decreed his famous edict of religious toleration for that community. All of this was to happen in fulfillment of Isaiah's oracle. Under Cyrus, the Persian Empire was the greatest kingdom which the world had seen up to that time.

Chapter V- NOTES

¹Herodotus gives the following information regarding the parents of Cyrus--

"Astyages had a daughter, whom he called Mandane: ... [and he] wedded her to a Persian called Cambyses, a man whom he knew to be well born and of a quiet temper: for Astyages held Cambyses to be much lower than a Mede of middle estate."

"But in the first year of Mandane's marriage to Cambyses ... the birth of Cyrus [occurred] ...," *Herodotus* I.107-108.

Herodotus "Histories," G. P. Goold, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, 4 Volumes, Trans. by A. D. Godley (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

²Xenophon states Cyrus parentage as follows:

"The father of Cyrus is said to have been Cambyses, king of the Persians: this Cambyses belonged to the stock of Persidae, and the Persidae derive their name from Perseus. His mother, it is generally agreed, was Mandane; and this Mandane was the daughter of Astyages, sometime king of the Medes." *Cyropaedia* I.ii.1-3.

Xenophon, "Cyropaedia," G. P. Goold, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, 2 Volumes, Trans. by Walter Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

³Astyages' terrible dream, recorded by Herodotus, concerning Mandane was obviously about a Persian son to be born to her-- "Mandane: concerning whom he had a dream, that enough water flowed from her to fill his city and overflow all Asia," *Herodotus* I.107.

⁴Astyages' second dream, recorded by Herodotus, states: "He dreamt that there grew from his daughter a vine, which covered the whole of Asia," *Herodotus* I.108.

⁵A. K. Grayson, "Assyrian And Babylonian Chronicles," A. Leo Oppenheim, et. al., eds., *Texts From Cuneiform Sources*, Volume 5 (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1975), p. 106.

⁶It seems reasonable to put the fall of Astyages' government in 551 B.C., the sixth year of Nabonidus, on the basis of the Babylonian Chronicles. Chronicle 7 reports the activities of the third year of Nabonidus; then there follows a large lacuna in which the fourth and fifth years are entirely missing. When the account is again preserved, it appears that the author is describing events in the sixth year. This is also the opinion of A. K. Grayson who writes: "When the text is again preserved, the author is describing events of the sixth year. The battle between Astyages and Cyrus II, which resulted in the latter's victory, is recorded. The looting of Ecbatana, the capital of Astyages, is mentioned at the end of the segment." *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷In addition to the book of Ezra where the decree is recorded in Ezra 1:1-4 and Ezra 6:3-5, it is also given in II Chronicles 36:22-23. This decree is identical with Ezra 1:1-3a; however, verses 3b-4 make the decree in Ezra 1 longer and are additional. Ezra 6:3-5 seems to be the same edict, but written in Aramaic, the official international language at that time.

⁸Cyrus even returned those valuable articles which had been taken out of Solomon's Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 599 B.C.- 588 B.C. Ezra, the scribe, reports this return of the holy vessels by Cyrus for use in the rebuilt Temple--

"Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, Thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem." *Ezra* 1:7-11

⁹The name appears as 'Sanabassar' in I Esdras and in Josephus.

¹⁰It appears that some of the Israelites from the Northern Kingdom returned home during the reign of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who returned them to Samaria. Ezra implies this factor in Ezra 4:1-3--

"Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us."

¹¹W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson had questioned the edicts of Cyrus as given in the Bible. However, no one would question the Biblical data, today, because of the Nabonidus Chronicle, a part of the Babylonian Chronicles, the famous Cyrus Cylinder, and 'The Verse Account Of Nabonidus Inscription'. The suspicion of Oesterley and Robinson is found in their work-- *A History Of Israel* (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 75, 81.

¹²The names of Ezra 2 should be compared with Nehemiah 6.

¹³William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Inc., 1949), pp. 141f.

¹⁴Compare Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1941), pp. 812f., 830. It is possible that I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah were written by the same author; however, a late date is not necessary for this work. In fact, archaeological discovery suggests just the opposite.

¹⁵William F. Albright, "The Old Testament and Archaeology," in *The Old Testament Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1948), p. 154.

¹⁶Albright, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁷Albright, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁸James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating To The Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 492.

¹⁹Grayson, *ABC*, p. 107-108.

²⁰A. T. Clay has translated a small Babylonian Tablet which refers to Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, as crown prince--

"In the month of Tebitu, the 15th day, of the 7th year of (the rule of) Nabonidus, king of Babylon, Shumukin reported (text: present tense) as follows: 'In a dream I saw the Great Star, Venus (i.e. Dilbat), Sirius, the moon and the sun and I shall (now) study this (constellation) with regard to a favorable interpretation for my lord Nabonidus, king of Babylon, as well as to a favorable interpretation for my lord Belshazzar, the crown-prince!' The 17th of the month Tebitu of the 7th year of (the reign of) Nabonidus, king of Babylon, Shumukin reported (text: present tense) as follows: 'I have observed the Great Star and I shall study (this) with regard to a favorable interpretation for my lord Nabonidus, king of Babylon, as well as to my lord Belshazzar, the crown-prince!'"

A.T. Clay, *Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915) Volume I, p. 55.

²¹ANET, pp. 313-314.

²²ANET, p. 314.

²³ANET, p. 561.

²⁴ANET, p. 561.

²⁵ANET, p. 562.

²⁶Grayson, ABC, p. 106.

²⁷Ibid., p. 109.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 109-110.

²⁹ANET, p. 560. The entire inscription is found in ANET, pp. 560-562. She died a natural death at the age of 107 in the ninth year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon. Compare a similar inscription in ANET, pp. 311-312.

³⁰Gobryas gives to Cyrus the following information on how the king of Babylon killed his son--
"Then that villain no longer restrained his jealous wrath but, snatching a spear from one of the attendants, smote him in the breast-- my son, my only, well-loved son-- and took away his life. And I, unhappy I, received back a corpse instead of a bridegroom, and, old man that I am, I buried with the first down upon his cheeks my best, my well-beloved son. But the murderer, as if he had slain an enemy, has never shown any repentance, nor has he, to make amends for his wicked deed, ever deigned to show any honour to him beneath the earth. His father, however, expressed his sorrow for me and showed that he sympathized with me in my affliction." *Cyropaedia* IV.vi.2-5.

³¹Merrill F. Unger, associating the fall of Babylon in 540 B.C. with Daniel 5, is willing to state this fact, namely, that there is no evidence that Belshazzar was present when Cyrus took the city without resistance. He writes, "Although no document of Babylonian origin affirms that Belshazzar was actually present at the fall of Babylon, there is, on the other hand, no positive evidence against his participation in the events of 539 B.C." Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology And The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 300.

³²Grayson, ABC, pp. 110-111.

³³In the year 1956, D. S. Rice discovered in the ruins of the Great Mosque in Haran two stelae of Nabonidus used there, secondarily, as paving stones. Both are in typical stela form ending in a semicircle which contains in bas-relief the figure of the king in adoration before the symbols of the Sun, Ishtar, and the Moon. This inscription about 'Nabonidus and His God' speaks of religious conflict because of his absence from Babylon and because of his exaltation of Sin over the gods of Babylon. This text explains why the citizens of Babylon did not resist Cyrus in his capture; they knew that he would bring religious reform to them. ANET, p. 562.

³⁴Grayson, ABC, p. 110.

³⁵ANET, p. 316.

³⁶Notice that in Isaiah's oracle, the Lord views Cyrus the Persian as a righteous individual--
"I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts," Isaiah 45:12-13.

The Cyrus Cylinder not only states that Cyrus was a righteous ruler but also that he had an upright heart. It is possible that the author of the Cyrus Cylinder was aware of Isaiah's oracle.

³⁷ANET, pp. 314-315.

³⁸J. A. Thompson, *The Bible And Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 178.

³⁹Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible And Archaeology* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1940), p. 141.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹It is interesting to note that Josephus states that Cyrus read about himself in Isaiah's prophecies which the Hebrew prophet foretold 140 years before the temple destruction, which is 177 years before Cyrus' fulfillment. Josephus relates how the prophecy seized and stirred Cyrus' heart to earnestly accomplish the divine design--

"This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision:-- 'My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.' This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighbourhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and, besides that, beasts for their sacrifices." *Antiquities* XI.i.2.

⁴²Cyrus is mentioned in the Bible at the following locations: Isaiah 44:24--45:4, 12-13; 46:10-11; II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4, 7-8; 3:7; 4:3, 5; 5:13-17; Daniel 1:21, 6:28 and 10:1.

⁴³Ezekiel was instructed to mark the following date; it is believed that this is the date which marks the seventy years period--

"Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day." Ezekiel 24:1-2

⁴⁴Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* writes regarding 'the king's eyes and ears'--

"Moreover, we have discovered that he acquired the so-called 'king's eyes' and 'king's ears' in no other way than by bestowing presents and honours; for by rewarding liberally those who reported to him whatever it was to his interest to hear, he prompted many men to make it their business to use their eyes and ears to spy out what they could report to the king to his advantage. As a natural result of this, many 'eyes' and many 'ears' were ascribed to the king. But if any one thinks that the king selected one man to be his 'eye', he is wrong; for one only would see and one would hear but little; and it would have amounted to ordering all the rest to pay no attention, if one only had been appointed to see and hear. Besides, if people knew that a certain man was the 'eye', they would know that they must beware of him. But such is not the case; for the king listens to anybody who may claim to have heard or seen anything worthy of attention. And thus the saying comes about, 'The king has many ears and many eyes'; and the people are everywhere afraid to say anything to the discredit of the king, just as if he himself were listening; or to do anything to harm him, just as if he were present. Not only, therefore, would no one have ventured to say anything derogatory of Cyrus to any one else, but every one conducted himself at all times just as if those who were within hearing were so many eyes and ears of the king. I do not know what better reason any one could assign for this attitude toward him on the part of the people generally than that it was his policy to do large favours in return for small ones." *Cyropaedia* VIII.ii.10-12

⁴⁵Jack Finegan, *Light From The Ancient Past* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 232.

⁴⁶Egypt had escaped foreign rule until this time. Pharaoh Amasis, who was disliked by his people,

ruled Egypt with the aid of hired Greek soldiers. Cambyses took Memphis in 526 B.C., when neither the Egyptian Pharaoh nor his son, Psamtik II, could resist the Persian troops.

⁴⁷It is unfortunate to read in Herodotus the fate of the compassionate Cyrus and the awful account of Tomyris' reaction to Cyrus' death--

"Tomyris filled a skin with human blood, and sought for Cyrus' body among the Persian dead; when she found it, she put his head into the skin, and spoke these words of insult to the dead man: 'Though I live and conquer thee, thou hast undone me, overcoming my son by guile; but even as I threatened, so will I do, and give thee thy fill of blood.'" *Herodotus* I.214

⁴⁸Plutarch, "Plutarch Lives: Alexander," E. H. Warmington ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, 11 Volumes (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol. 7, p. 417.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

CHAPTER VI - DARIUS THE PERSIAN

I. Introduction

At the death of Cyrus (522 B.C.), a struggle for power took place. His son Cambyses was in Egypt when he heard the news of his father's death, and proceeded to return and regain control of the kingdom. However, he died before reaching home. Darius Hystaspes was with him on the return trip, and continued on to make an attempt at gaining the kingdom. A two year revolt followed, which finally was overcome by Darius. Once established, he became alternately known by a common Persian throne title, Artaxerxes. It follows that the return of Ezra-Nehemiah took place in his time- rather than during Artaxerxes I. When these arguments are made, the chronology of the book 'Ezra-Nehemiah' becomes entirely manageable. The letters from Elephantine Egypt support this hypothesis as well. Also, the priestly cycles and Sabbath cycles in the Hebrew text are astronomically correct.

II. 523 B.C. - 521 B.C. - The Magi Revolt

The Magi were a group of Medes, probably priests. With Cambyses' death, one pretended to be Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, and reigned without fear for the seven months lacking to Cambyses' full eight years of kingship (*cf.*, *Herodotus* III.67). But in the eighth month, it became known who the Persian monarch was. Otanes, the son of Pharnaspes, was a well-born and rich Persian. He was the first to suspect that the Magian was not Cyrus' son Smerdis, but his true self. His first reason for suspicion was that the Magian never left the citadel nor summoned any notable Persian into his presence. The second reason for suspicion was that Otanes' daughter, Phaedyne, whom the Magian had now wedded with all the rest of Cambyses wives, had never seen Cyrus' son, Smerdis, nor knew who her bedfellow was. In addition to this, when the Magian became king, he made women of his harem live apart, each in her appointed place so that communication was impossible.

With these suspicions, Otanes believed that Cyrus' son was 'Smerdis' the Magian. It was known that during his reign, Cyrus the Great had cut off the ears of this Magian, Smerdis, for some grave reason. Therefore, Otanes instructed Phaedyne, his daughter, that when it was her turn to visit the Magian's bedchamber (for a Persian's wives come in regular order to their lord), she was to feel for the Magian's ears while he slumbered deeply. Her actions revealed that the Persian monarch was earless.

Therefore, Otanes took to himself two Persians of the highest rank whom he thought worthiest of trust, Aspathines and Gobryas, and told them the whole story. Likewise, they had suspected that it was so. They resolved that each should take in their fellowship that Persian whom he most trusted. Otanes brought in Intaphrenes, Gobryas brought Megabyzus and Aspathines Hydarnes; thus they became six in number. Finally, Darius, the son of Hystaspes, came to Susa from Persia where his father was a vice-regent. Upon his coming, these six Persians resolved to make Darius their comrade also.¹ Thus, this group became 'the seven counselors', *cf.*, *Ezra* 7:14. They revealed to him that the Persians were ruled by a Mede, a Magian, and an earless man at that. This is recorded in *Herodotus* III.70.

Darius revealed to them that he knew that the Magian was king and that Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, was dead. Then he gave a course of action for them to follow, *i.e.*, to quickly enter the palace, and to kill the Magians. Meanwhile, the Magians had

commissioned Prexaspes, who had killed Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, to declare that it was Smerdis son of Cyrus and no other who was king of Persia. Prexaspes, who was greatly esteemed by the Persians, spoke to the Persians who had been summoned by the Magi. He spoke from the palace tower and traced the lineage of Cyrus from Achaemenes downwards. When he came to Cyrus, he recounted all the good which that king had done to Persia. Then, according to Herodotus, Prexaspes stated, "I ... was compelled by Cambyses to kill Smerdis son of Cyrus; it is the Magians who now rule you," *Herodotus* III.75. Invoking a terrible curse on the Persians if they failed to win back the throne and take vengeance on the Magians, he threw himself headlong from the tower-- ending his own life.

The counsel of the seven Persians, purposing to attack the Magians, knew nothing of Prexaspes' speech. However, hearing the story on the way to the palace, they became more determined to fulfill their mission quickly.

Being permitted by the guard to enter the palace, they quickly entered the chamber where the two Magians were consulting together on the outcome of Prexaspes' action. In the struggle that followed, Aspathines received a mortal wound in the thigh and Intaphrenes was wounded in the eye losing his eye but not his life. With Intaphrenes injured, the other six Persians killed the Magians and cut off their heads. The Persians, when they heard from the seven what had been done and how the Magians had tricked them, resolved to slay all the Magians they could find. Thus ended the Magi revolt. That day became the greatest holy day which all Persians kept. Annually, they celebrated a great festival on it which they called 'the Massacre of the Magians' (cf., *Herodotus* III.76-79).

Herodotus of Halicarnassus states that, after the death of Cambyses, seven Persian nobles, under the leadership of Darius, conspired against the false Bardiya (pseudo-Smerdis). Legend says that they agreed to choose as king the one whose horse neighed first after sunrise. Through the ruse of his groom, the throne was won for Darius. In this regard, Herodotus writes about one of Darius' first acts as king: "First he made and set up a carved stone, whereon was graven the figure of a horseman, with this inscription: 'Darius son of Hystaspes, aided by the excellence of his horse' (here followed the horse's name) 'and of Oebares his groom, won the kingdom of Persia,'" *Herodotus* III.88.

III. 521 B.C. - Darius Gains The Throne

A period of rebellion ensued, and all parts of the Empire were affected. For two years (I Esdras 5:73) Darius had to quell opposition in Babylon, Asia Minor, Egypt, and his eastern provinces-- Media, Elam, Parsa, and Iran. This period of time has been assigned to the Magi Revolt in the present chronology. Herodotus gives eight to nine months for the Magi rule in Persia (*Herodotus* III.66-70). However, Josephus dates the rule as lasting a year-- "After the slaughter of the magi, who, upon the death of Cambyses, attained the government of the Persians for a year, those families who were called the seven families of the Persians, appointed Darius, the son of Hystaspes, to be their king," *Antiquities* XI.iii.1.

A. T. Olmstead states that "after two years of hard fighting, Darius was finally recognized as king over most of western Asia."² Darius claimed to be the legitimate heir to the throne.³

Herodotus writes about Darius and his power--

So Darius son of Hystaspes was made king, and the whole of Asia, which Cyrus first and Cambyses after him had subdued, was made subject to him, except the Arabians; these did not

yield the obedience of slaves to the Persians, but were united to them by friendship, as having given Cambyses passage into Egypt, which the Persians could not enter without the consent of the Arabians. Darius took wives from the noblest houses of Persia, marrying Cyrus' daughters Atossa and Artystone; Atossa had been wife of her brother Cambyses and afterwards of the Magian, Artystone was a virgin. He married also Parmys, daughter of Cyrus' son Smerdis, and that daughter of Otanes who had discovered the truth about the Magian; and the whole land was full of his power, *Herodotus* III.88.

The Greek historian, Herodotus, tells how the Babylonians revolted against Darius and then how the city evidently was captured by Darius. He writes--

When the fleet had gone to Samos, the Babylonians revolted; for which they had made very good preparation; for during the reign of the Magian, and the rebellion of the seven, they had taken advantage of the time and disorders to prepare themselves against the siege; and (I cannot tell how) this was unknown. ...

When Darius heard of this he mustered all his power and led it against Babylon, and he marched to the town and laid siege to it; but the townsmen cared nothing for what he did. They came up on to the bastions of the wall, and mocked Darius and his army with gesture and word. ...

A year and seven months passed and Darius and all his army were vexed by ever failing to take Babylon. Yet Darius had used every trick and every device against it. He essayed the stratagem whereby Cyrus took the city, and every other stratagem and device, yet with no success; for the Babylonians kept a marvellous strict watch and he could not take them. *Herodotus* III.150-159

Eventually, however, through a conspiracy and trickery, Darius was successful in capturing the city.

According to the course of Herodotus' narrative, this revolt seems to have taken place some considerable time after Darius' accession. But the Behistun Inscription apparently makes it one of the earliest events of his reign, placing it within his first years of rule.⁴ Herodotus also says that "the Persians called Darius the huckster,⁵ Cambyses the master, and Cyrus the father; for Darius made petty profit out of everything, Cambyses was harsh and arrogant, Cyrus was merciful and ever wrought for their well-being," *Herodotus* III.89.

IV. Identifying Ahasuerus And Artaxerxes

A. 523 B.C. - Ahasuerus (Smerdis) Of Ezra 4:6

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bilsham, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. *Ezra* 4:6-7

With the death of both Cyrus and Cambyses, the political situation had changed. At this point in time, it appears that the people of the land wrote a letter to 'Ahasuerus', whom they believed to be Smerdis, Cyrus' son. In their letter, they explained how the Jews were rebuilding their wicked city and working on their Temple and that when they had finished, they would not pay tribute or submit to the king's commands, but rather desired to rule over others.

As pointed out in the chapter concerning Darius the Mede (Astyages), the word 'Ahasuerus' is merely a Median throne title. It is used of Cyaxares I, Darius the Mede, and Smerdis (Gaumate, the Magian); see Illustration XV. All of these monarchs were of Median decent. Therefore, 'Ahasuerus' is clearly a Median throne title.

Students of the Bible have found this period of Biblical chronology very confusing.

This situation has resulted from the failure of scholars to recognize the use of 'Ahasuerus' as only a Median throne title.

ILLUSTRATION XVI: The Title 'Ahasuerus' In Perspective

Title	King's Name	Reference	B.C. Dating
Ahasuerus	Cyaxares I	Tobit 14:15; Daniel 9:1	615-575
Ahasuerus	Darius the Mede (Astyages)	Esther 1:2, 19; 2:16, 17 <i>etc.</i>	575-540
Ahasuerus	Smerdis (Gaumate, the Magian)	Ezra 4:6	523-522

It has been unfortunate that Biblical scholars have identified the 'Ahasuerus' of Ezra 4:6 with the 'Ahasuerus' of the book of Esther. They have felt that the same name implies the same person. Scholars are so certain that this 'Ahasuerus' is the Persian monarch, Xerxes, that they have taken the liberty to insert the name 'Xerxes' into the Biblical text where the original Massoretic text and the Septuagint (LXX) read 'Ahasuerus', for Ezra 4:6. Scholars have also inserted the name 'Xerxes' into the book of Esther while the Massoretic text reads 'Ahasuerus' and the LXX reads 'Artaxerxes'. This seems quite unusual when there appears to be no linguistic connection between 'Ahasuerus' and Xerxes. Both the translators of the New International Version (N.I.V.) and the Jerusalem Bible have taken this liberty in reference to Ezra 4:6. However, the translators of the Jerusalem Bible have realized that the 'Ahasuerus' of Ezra 4:6 could not possibly be the king in the story of Esther. Therefore, they have preserved the Median throne title 'Ahasuerus' in the text of Esther. It is interesting that the N.I.V. has a note at Ezra 4:6 and Esther 1:1 which reads "Hebrew Ahasuerus, a variant of Xerxes' name."⁶

Of course, the equation of Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6) with the Persian monarch, Xerxes, presupposes that verses 6-23 of Ezra 4 are somewhat parenthetical, providing further information on the topic of opposition from a later period. This seems contrary to the entire framework of Ezra-Nehemiah which places the sequence of events in chronological order as will be shown below. The following statement by John Bright shows how the 'Ahasuerus equals Xerxes interpretation' is understood in history--

The position of the community through these years was most insecure. There was probably no native governor in Judah after Zerubbabel, the district apparently being administered from Samaria, with local affairs under the supervision of the high priests: Joshua, then Joiakim, then Eliashib (Neh. 12:10, 26). Friction with the provincial officials seems to have been constant. These both made heavy exactions and permitted their agents to behave with domineering insolence (Neh. 5:4, 14f.). Resenting any attempt at abridgement of their prerogatives in Judah, they wasted no opportunity to get the Jews into trouble with the Persian government. We are told (Ezra 4:6) that early in Xerxes' reign-- possibly in 486/5 as Xerxes was dealing with revolt in Egypt-- they accused the Jews of sedition. We know nothing either of the grounds for these charges or of their outcome. But we may assume that through these years the Jews, without military protection or means of defense, were subjected to repeated raids, reprisals, and bullying, and made to feel keenly their helpless position.⁷

In the light of the context of Ezra 4:6, Ahasuerus appears to be a king who ruled between Cyrus the Persian and Darius Hystaspes. This is known from the statement that the adversaries troubled the Jews, "all the days of Cyrus king of Persia," Ezra 4:5. Between Cyrus and Darius were two rulers: Cambyses II and Smerdis. The letter was written in the beginning of the monarch's reign (*cf.*, Ezra 4:6). This means that the adversaries wrote a letter against the Jews when a new ruler came to the throne. It is

unlikely that Cambyses was that king; for Cyrus was still alive when Cambyses became king of Babylon. Also, it is known from the Elephantine Papyri that Cambyses, like Cyrus, had a favorable policy toward the Jews.⁸ Also, Cambyses, would not have used the Median throne title, Ahasuerus. Therefore, the evidence points to Smerdis, the Magian, as the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6. Herodotus explains, "... we who are Persians ruled by a Mede, a Magian, and he a man that has no ears," (*Herodotus* III.73). Note that nothing is stated concerning the monarch's response to the letter. Such is not the case with Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7-23). If Smerdis, the Magian, is the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6, then, perhaps there was not enough time to write back due to his overthrow by the council of the seven.

B. 521 B.C. - Artaxerxes (Darius) Of Ezra 4:7-23

The title 'Artaxerxes' is a Persian throne title just as 'Ahasuerus' is a Median throne title. The Persian word is *Artakhshathra* meaning 'Arta's Kingdom' or 'kingdom of righteousness'. In Ezra 4:7-23, the title 'Artaxerxes' is used throughout the passage. There were four Persian kings who used this throne title in Persian history. The illustration below substantiates this factor.

ILLUSTRATION XVII: The Title Artaxerxes In Perspective

Title	King's Name	Reference	B.C. Dating
Artaxerxes	Darius I	Ezra 4:7-8, 11, 23;	521-519
		6:14	519
		7:1, 7:7; 8:1	514
		Nehemiah 2:1	501
		5:14; 13:6	489
Artaxerxes I	Longimanus		464-423
Artaxerxes II	Mnemon		404-358
Artaxerxes III	Ochus		358-337

Assuming that the work of Ezra-Nehemiah is in chronological order, then the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7-23 would be Darius I Hystaspes. Notice that Artaxerxes is called king of Persia while Ahasuerus was not called by that title in Ezra 4:6.

V. The First Two Years Of Darius And The Babylonian Revolt

A. 520 B.C. - The Temple Building And Samaritan Opposition

In Ezra 4:11-16, the adversaries of the Jews wrote a letter to the king requesting opposition to the Jewish building projects--

This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonor, therefore have we sent and certified the king: That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

The request made to Artaxerxes contains some interesting dialogue which helps us to see more clearly the political climate at that time. Obviously, it was in the first year of Artaxerxes, and the Samaritans were directing the king's thoughts to those things which were his greatest worry. Babylon had revolted and taken extensive territories with them. The Samaritans made it look like a fortified Jerusalem meant another lost country. It is also curious that the Samaritans said, "The Jews who have come up from your country..." etc. If the Jews came up from the country of Artaxerxes, they came up from Persia. The strategy of the Samaritans succeeded, and the Jews were stopped until the second year of Darius/Artaxerxes.

The prophet Haggai began to prophecy. On August 22, 520 B.C., he encouraged the Jews to build, and by September 14, 520 B.C., they were back to work. Darius was gaining the advantage in his military activities, and as a result, the Samaritans were forced to use a different strategy.

This time they wrote a letter to Darius, but they allowed the Jews the right to continue their work, for the Jews appealed to the original edict made by a Persian king named Cyrus. This appeal would have been of no avail when the throne was usurped by the pseudo-Smerdis called Ahasuerus.

Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build the house of God. And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; And said unto him, Take these vessels, go carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in this place. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. Ezra 5:8-16

The search was first made in the archives of Babylon. This might have been a diversionary tactic in itself. Not being found there, the search continued until it was found in the records of Ecbatana, Media. The location of the edict gives support to the concept that the Jews were in Media when the first year of Cyrus took place. Acquiring the Temple utensils from Babylon would verify the close relationship of Astyages, Cyrus, and the Babylonian officials in the sixth year of Nabonidus. When Darius found the edict, he was very angry. It is possible that Nehemiah was already in his service as a cupbearer. It is clear that the edict of Cyrus to the Jews is not identical word for word with the Cyrus cylinder. Darius' edict was very firm and probably did not arrive in Judea until the summer of his third year (519 B.C.)

Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith

expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed. Ezra 6:6-12

B. The End Of Jeremiah's Seventy Years

1. The King Is Dead

The judgment of Babylon by Darius the Persian fulfilled the 'signs' of the ending of the seventy years prophecy by Jeremiah. Darius slew the Babylonian king. In addition to this, he destroyed the walls and gates of Babylon and he impaled about three thousand men that were chief Babylonians. Herodotus writes of the destruction of the city in the following manner: "Having mastered the Babylonians, Darius destroyed their walls and reft away all their gates, neither of which things Cyrus had done at the first taking of Babylon; moreover he impaled about three thousand men that were chief among them; as for the rest, he gave them back their city to dwell in," *Herodotus* III.159.

Darius' slaughter of the king of Babylon as related in the Behistun Inscription and his destruction of Babylon as related by Herodotus appear to fulfill the requirements of Jeremiah's seventy weeks prophecy--

And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands. Jeremiah 25:12-14

2. The Land Will Be Blessed

In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, ... And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: Since those days were, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressvat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you. Haggai 2:10, 15-19

On that same day, Kislew 24, Haggai received a second prophecy (Haggai 2:20) from the Lord which was to be addressed to the prince, Zerubbabel, who would continue the Davidic line as a new, independent, and authoritative leader-- a type of the Messiah--

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts. Haggai 2:21-23

Some scholars have criticized this section because it bears the same date as Haggai 2:10-19, it repeats Haggai 2:6-7 and does not seem to correspond to Zechariah 6:11 which describes the coronation of Joshua the high priest as 'Messiah'. However, such criticism assumes that not more than one prophetic message could be given in a single day or a phrase be used by more than one prophet (Isaiah 13:13; Joel 3:16; cf., Hebrews 12:26). The re-clothing or coronation of Joshua is a separate incident emphasizing the priestly function of the Messiah which in Christ was to be combined with the royal powers vested in Zerubbabel.⁹

What is so interesting about the above date of Haggai 2:10-19 is that it is *terminus ad quem* to Jeremiah's seventy years prophecy. The *terminus a quo* has already been pointed out as occurring in Ezekiel 24:1-2-- "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day." In Gregorian dating, Ezekiel's date, December 21, 590 B.C. is exactly seventy years to Haggai's date, December 11, 520 B.C. (590 B.C. + 70 = 520 B.C., Hebrew reckoning). The time between these two dates is 25,556 days. This number divided by the number of days in a solar year is equal to 69 solar years (365.25 days) plus 354 days (12 lunar months). Ezekiel's date is marked by the death of his wife. Also, between both Ezekiel's and Haggai's date, the Hebrew prophets remained silent.

It is believed that this date ends the seventy years prophecy of Jeremiah because in Darius' letter of reply, permission for the Jews to continue to build their Temple and city is granted. According to Ezra 6:1-5, the original Cyrus edict was located in the palace at Ecbatana (Achmetha; K.J.V.) in the province of Medes. Ecbatana was a pleasantly-situated fortress which was used as a summer residence by the Persian kings. After reading the original copy, Darius chose to continue the liberal policy of Cyrus. The decree of Cyrus is somewhat different from II Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4. It contains information not contained elsewhere such as the dimensions of the Temple.¹²

3. A Jubilee Year

Zechariah 1:12 relates that the seventy years have ended. That time span ended on the date that Haggai was told to 'consider' (Haggai 2:10, 15, 18) and it started on the date that Ezekiel was told to 'mark' (Ezekiel 24:1-2). According to II Chronicles 36:21, the seventy years period should begin and end with a Sabbatical year-- "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 threescore and ten years." It should end on a Jubilee, for God mandates control of the land and takes or gives it when he pleases. It must be returned on a Jubilee (Leviticus 25:23). The building was prompted by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in the second year of Darius (Artaxerxes) in 520 B.C., and was halted for the balance of the year while two memorandums were sent to Persia. By harvest time of 519 B.C., a Jubilee year, God promised to bless them.

The decree of Darius was a big help to the Jews of Jerusalem. It was the result of God's influence.

4. The Prophets Spoke

There were to be no prophetic utterances until the end of the seventy years (Jeremiah 27:14, 29:8-9). The Hebrew prophet, Haggai, spoke during the four month time span from Elul 1 to Kislev 24 in the second year of Darius. Zechariah started his prophetic ministry in the eighth month (Marcheswan), during the second year of

Darius (520 B.C.). This was thirty years after the return of the first contingent of exiles from Babylon (549 B.C.). Illustration XVIII gives a bird's eye view of the chronology of Haggai and Zechariah, mostly occurring in the second year of Darius (Hebrew reckoning) or in the first year of Darius (Persian reckoning).

ILLUSTRATION XVIII: The Chronology Of Haggai And Zechariah

Hebrew Reckoning	Event	Reference	B.C. Gregorian Date
Second Year Of Darius The King			
--Elul 1	Time not ready	Hag. 1:1	Monday, Aug. 22, 520
--Elul 24	Begin Temple construction	Hag. 1:15	Wednesday, Sept. 14, 520
--Tishri 21	Treasures of the nations come	Hag. 2:1	
--Marcheswan	Zechariah's first message	Zech. 1:1	
--Marcheswan 22	Babylon falls	Behistun Inscription	
--Kislew 24	The important date to mark	Hag. 2:10,15,18	Sunday, Dec. 11, 520
--Kislew 24	A Prophecy For Zerubbabel	Hag. 2:20	Sunday, Dec. 11, 520
--Shebat 24	Zechariah's vision	Zech. 1:7	Jubilee Yr., Wednesday, Feb. 8, 519
--Kislew (9) 4	Israel's refusal to hear	Zech. 7:1	Thursday, Nov. 29, 518

It seems that Zechariah began his ministry at the exact time of Babylon's fall during its second revolt under Darius I according to the Behistun Inscription.

The following quote is from the Behistun Inscription and is not parallel to Herodotus' account--

I said to him: 'Go forth! Fight this Babylonian army which does not declare itself for me!' Vindafarna marched against Babylon with the (Persian) army. Ahuramazda lent me his assistance. By the will of Ahuramazda, Vindafarna fought the Babylonians and took them captive. Twenty-two days of the month Margazana had elapsed when he captured Arakha and the nobles, his main followers. Whereupon, I gave an order: 'This Arakha and the nobles, his main followers, shall be impaled in Babylon!'¹⁰

Note that the Behistun Inscription speaks of the capture of Arakha and Babylon's fall during the month of Margazana (Hebrew, Marcheswan), the same month in which Zechariah began his ministry. Obviously, this was a signal according to Jeremiah 25:12-13 that the seventy years were ended¹¹ (cf., Zechariah 1:12).

C. Summary

The history of the first two years of Darius reveals that he was also called Artaxerxes. It proves that it was the termination of the seventy year exile predicted by Jeremiah. Babylon was destroyed and the king was killed, also in harmony with Jeremiah. The chronology shows that Cyrus died near the end of the life of his son, Cambyses. The prophets encouraged the people to return to their duty after thirty long years of frustration. In short, the end of the seventy years, and the free flow of exiles back to Judea took place in the second year of Darius, even though the edict of Cyrus and the return of a few exiles occurred thirty years earlier.

VI. 516 B.C. - Temple Construction Completed

In the sixth year of Darius (516 B.C.), the Temple construction was completed.¹² The Hebrew prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, had accomplished their mission as had Zerubbabel, the governor, and Jeshua, the high priest.¹³ Ezra 6:14-15 tells how and when the Temple became finished--

And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

A clue is given in Ezra 6:14 which is a key to the understanding of the remainder of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. The clue is that the throne title 'Artaxerxes' is used as an appositive of Darius in Ezra 6:14 which can be translated as follows: "And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, even (namely, or *i.e.*,) Artaxerxes, king of Persia." Such a use of the oppositional or explicative Hebrew *waw* (*waw explicativum*) construction has long been recognized elsewhere in the Old Testament by Hebraists. The mention of Artaxerxes here is anachronistic unless it is understood as a throne title and appositive to Darius.¹⁴

A. 515 B.C. - The Great Passover

1. Passover Of Ezra

Then in the next year, on the fourteenth of Nisan, the seventh year of Darius, the Jews of Jerusalem and the children of the captivity celebrated the Passover (Ezra 6:19-21).¹⁵ It occurred on April 14, 515 B.C., a Wednesday, according to the Gregorian calendar. Along with the Passover celebration, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was also observed: "And [they] kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel," Ezra 6:22. The king of Assyria is, of course, a reference to Darius I, who reigned over the territory formerly held by the Assyrians and who had to re-conquer it during the period of revolt at the beginning of his reign.

2. Passover Of Elephantine Egypt

It is noteworthy that among the Elephantine Papyri is found 'The Passover Papyrus' in which King Darius, in his fifth year (516 B.C.) ordered the Jews of Elephantine, an island at the first cataract of the Nile opposite Aswan, to celebrate the Passover. The fifth year of King Darius is Persian reckoning; in Hebrew counting, it is the sixth year of Darius I. An edict was issued in the sixth of Darius for the Jews in Elephantine to celebrate their next Passover, which would take place in the seventh of Darius. The two festivals would be in synchronism, which would prove that the document from Elephantine was not from Darius II at all. Also, this is the year in which the king had the Behistun Inscription made. The Passover Papyrus reads:

[To] my [brethren Yedo]niah and his colleagues the [J]ewish gar[rison], your brother Hanan[ia]. The welfare of my brothers may God [seek at all times]. Now, this year, the fifth year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsa[m]es saying, "Authorize a festival of unleavened bread for the Jew[ish] [garrison]." So do you count fou[r]teen days of the month of Nisan and] obs[erve the passover], and from the 15th to the 21st day of [Nisan observe the festival of

unleavened bread]. Be (ritually) clean and take heed. [Do n]o work [on the 15th or the 21st day, no]r drink [beer, nor eat] anything [in] which the[re is] leaven [from the 14th at] sundown until the 21st Nis[an. Br]ing into your closets [anything leavened that you may have on hand] and seal it up between those date[s. *By order of King Darius.*

To] my brethren Yedoniah and the Jewish garrison, your brother Hanani[ah].¹⁶

Some scholars have suggested that this text refers to Darius II rather than Darius I on the basis that Yedoniah, who is addressed evidently as head of the community, holds the same position in the papyrus containing 'The Petition For The Authorization To Rebuild The Temple Of Yaho'. In this papyrus, the high priest Johanan is mentioned, but the present research will show that he is a contemporary with Nehemiah. It appears that Hanani[ah] is the same Hanani of Nehemiah 1:2 whose mission in both cases is official and important, "That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah."

In Ezra 7, with the coming of Ezra to Jerusalem, the author of Ezra switches to the use of the Persian throne title, Artaxerxes, and discontinues his use of the Persian word 'Darius'. However, he has already given to the reader the clue in Ezra 6:14. Another proof that Artaxerxes is Darius I, is that Ezra came to Jerusalem 'in the seventh year of the king' (Ezra 7:8). There is no gap in the chronology but the chronology is continuous. This is significant for the dating of Ezra.¹⁷

3. Priestly Orders Began

The orders of the priests were established and the first Passover began in the seventh year of Darius (Ezra 6:18-19). Jehoiarib, the first section, began on Nisan 10, 3486 (515 B.C.). This rare synchronism confirms the chronology.

B. 515 B.C.— Ezra's Return

Ezra was granted permission by Darius I in his seventh year (514 B.C.) to come to Jerusalem. Also with him came some of the children of Israel, priests, Levites, singers, porters, and the Nethinim (Temple servants). The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem would have been approximately 900 miles.

The chronological references in Ezra 7:8-9 indicate that the trip lasted for four months from Nisan 1 to Ab 1 in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Darius the Great). On the Gregorian calendar that would be from April 1, 515 B.C., a Thursday, to July 28, 515 B.C., a Wednesday.

Hearing that the Temple had been dedicated, numerous Jews in Babylon and other parts of the Persian Empire longed to see Jerusalem, the center of their religious life and spiritual hopes. Ezra, a leader and a lover of Zion, appealed to Darius I for help in making it possible for exiles to return to Palestine. The king granted Ezra's request. The Aramaic letter of Artaxerxes (Darius I) is recorded in Ezra 7:11-26; it not only grants Ezra's request but also offers generous support for the Temple.¹⁸

Notice the reference to the king's 'seven counselors' in Artaxerxes' letter to Ezra (Ezra 7:14). This reference adds support that the king is Darius; his counselors are mentioned again in Ezra 8:25.

C. Ezra's Use Of The Royal Treasury

Ezra was authorized to take with him offerings for the Jerusalem Temple sent both by Artaxerxes (Darius I) and by the Jewish community. Ezra was directed to use it to purchase sacrificial animals while the remainder could be spent as Ezra and his brethren desired to use it (Ezra 7:17-18). Darius also gave to Ezra authority to draw

upon the royal treasury of the province of Syria if it was necessary (Ezra 7:20).

In Ezra 7:27-28, the character of Ezra, though not as clearly delineated as Nehemiah's, is revealed in the following outburst of praise to God--

Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

These verses demonstrate the autobiographical nature of the last portion of Ezra.

D. Ezra-Nehemiah In Harmony

1. The Harmony Of The Chronology Of Ezra-Nehemiah

The chronology of Ezra 6 continues in Ezra 7 with the title interchange for the monarch. If Artaxerxes is understood to be Darius I, then the chronology is continuous and dovetails in a beautiful manner throughout the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.

The following account speaks of Ezra's coming to Jerusalem--

Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah. The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, The son of Zerahiah, the son of Bukki, The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Ezra 7:1-10

Among the Biblical characters of the post-exilic period none assumes a greater historical importance than Ezra. As can be seen, he has the genealogy of the Hebrew priests coming from the lineage of Aaron, the high priest.¹⁹ He was also a scribe who not only made copies of the Mosaic Law in order to preserve it, but was able to interpret the Law. After the exile, prophecy seemed to decline and the authority of the Law became paramount. According to Ezra 7:10, three things were in Ezra's heart: 1) to seek the Law of the Lord, 2) to do the Law of the Lord, and 3) to teach the Law of the Lord to Israel.

2. The Reign Of Darius And The Unity Of Ezra-Nehemiah

In the Hebrew canon, Ezra-Nehemiah is part of the third division, the Writings,²⁰ and is placed before I and II Chronicles, even though the contents of Ezra-Nehemiah chronologically follow those books. Furthermore, it is known that Ezra-Nehemiah forms a single volume in the Hebrew Bible; for the final Massoretic notes are lacking at the end of Ezra, but the total number of verses is given at the end of Nehemiah for both works, and the middle verse given is that for the combined volumes. The contents also support this; for Ezra's memoirs begun in Ezra 7 - 10 are completed in Nehemiah 8 - 10.²¹

The Ezra-Nehemiah volume sets forth several major events in Israel's history during the period of the restoration-- the return of the exiles and the rebuilding of the

Temple, *cf.*, Ezra 1 - 6; and the work of the leaders in establishing the community religiously (Ezra) and physically (Nehemiah), *cf.*, Ezra 7 - Nehemiah 13. The reign of Artaxerxes (Darius I) is the key to understanding the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah.

3. Suggested Solutions To The Chronology Of Ezra-Nehemiah

In the past, the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah has been a problem for Biblical students. Scholars have provided possible solutions, but unfortunately, most solutions do not solve all the problems. The present situation in Biblical chronology regarding Ezra-Nehemiah has led David Noel Freedman to write: "The chronological problems connected with the era of Ezra-Nehemiah remain unsolved"²²

Scholars have suggested several solutions. First, H. H. Rowley has favored the reversing of the traditional order which has placed Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (457 B.C.) and Nehemiah in the twentieth year (444 B.C.).²³ Secondly, A. Van Hoonacker is the chief exponent of the view that Ezra followed Nehemiah. He proposes that Ezra be dated in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes II (397 B.C.).²⁴ This view has resulted in the complete sundering of the careers of Ezra and Nehemiah. Thirdly, William F. Albright attempted to do justice both to the persuasive arguments in favor of the sequence Nehemiah-Ezra, and to the Biblical tradition that their ministries overlapped.²⁵ Albright's date for the commencement of Ezra's work is the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes I (427 B.C.). He considered the seventh year in the Massoretic text as a scribal error for the larger number (Ezra 7:7). David Noel Freedman writes about this third thesis concerning the chronological framework of Ezra: "A date for Ezra about this time fits best with all the available evidence in the Biblical sources, as well as the collateral evidence about the Jerusalem situation toward the end of the fifth century in the Elephantine Papyri. Nevertheless, the number itself has no textual warrant and ought not to be pressed."²⁶

It is assumed, therefore, by traditional scholars that the book of Ezra traces the history of the post-exilic community up to the completion of the Second Temple (515 B.C.). Then, the book of Ezra passes over more than a half century in silence. Finally, the sequence of events is resumed in chapter seven with the account of the arrival of Ezra and his company from Babylon (457 B.C.) in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. At this point, scholars are divided. Some define 'Artaxerxes' as Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464 B.C. - 423 B.C.). While some scholars refer to his seventh year for Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem (457 B.C.),²⁷ others prefer his thirty-seventh year of which there is no textual evidence (427 B.C.).²⁸ Others insist that 'Artaxerxes' is Artaxerxes II Memnon (404 B.C. - 358 B.C.).²⁹ The seventh year of his reign (397 B.C.) would place Ezra after Nehemiah.

The present research believes that scholars have failed to recognize that 'Artaxerxes' is merely a Persian royal throne title for Darius I. An understanding of this concept, provides a solution to the Ezra-Nehemiah chronology. This solution does not require the reversal of the traditional order of Ezra-Nehemiah nor reject the overlapping careers of Ezra and Nehemiah.

4. Elephantine Letters Written To Nehemiah's Contemporaries

Several letters written from a colony of Jews on an island named Elephantine in Egypt weigh heavily on the chronology for all of the Persian kings as well as Ezra-Nehemiah. These letters are immensely valuable because they are dated in two calendar systems, the Jewish and the Egyptian. The characteristic of a double dating is that only one possible date will fit. An analogy is the Gregorian calendar date for the Jewish lunar calendar Passover. The Jewish calendar is based on lunar phases, and so

Passover is always transitory within the Gregorian year.

There are about twenty-five Elephantine letters. All but five are double dated, and cover dates from 471 to 351 B.C. For all practical purposes, they include dating for all the kings except Darius I. There are also letters preserved which are directed to Darius but they are not double dated. The men who correspond in the early letters to Darius I, are ancestors of the writers of later letters, and they are the same men who play key roles in the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Aramaic Papyri Nos. 30-32 in A. Cowley's *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth years of Darius (505-504 B.C.). This letter is one of several that will be introduced as evidence to support the idea that Artaxerxes is Darius. The people who are mentioned from Palestine and Egypt follow:

<u>Judea</u>	<u>Elephantine Egypt</u>
Bigvai, governor of Judea	Yedoniah
Johanan, the high priest	Waidrang a reprobate
Hanani	Nephayan his son
Ostanes	
Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria	

a) Bigvai was one of the leading men who returned with the first group (Ezra 2:2) and by the thirteenth year of Artaxerxes was head of a large family (Nehemiah 7:19).

b) Johanan was the high priest during the reign of Darius the Persian, along with Eliashib, Joiada, and Jaddua. If this is true, he could not have been the high priest at the time of a later Darius (Nehemiah 12:22). What is even more significant, it was during the life of Ezra and Nehemiah (*Ibid.*, v. 26).

c) Hanani was the brother of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:2) who went to make an appeal, perhaps for this very reason, in 503 B.C. His appeal was, "Those who have escaped from captivity," they replied, 'who are back there in the province, are in great trouble and humiliation: the walls of Jerusalem are in ruins and its gates are burned down'" (Nehemiah 1:3). Compare his words to the request which came from Egypt, "The temple which is in Yeb the fortress let them destroy. Then Nephayan led out the Egyptians with the other forces. They came to the fortress of Yeb with their weapons, they entered that temple, they destroyed it to the ground, and the pillars of stone which were there they broke" (Aramaic Papyri No. 30).

d) Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, was a contemporary of the high priest Eliashib, and was opposed to the building of the wall of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:1, 4:7). A grandson of the high priest Eliashib married Sanballat's daughter, and for this offense Nehemiah expelled him (Nehemiah 13:4, 28).

In summary, this letter offers conclusive evidence that the priests of Ezra-Nehemiah all served at the time of Darius. It demonstrates conclusively that Darius is Artaxerxes. The Egyptian men who played a role in the correspondence from Egypt, are ancestors of the writers of all the letters which follow.

One letter of response which is not dated, but comes from Bigvai and Delaiah, authorizes the building of the temple in Egypt which had been destroyed. It was probably written in the same year as the previous letter.

VII. The Ionian Revolt Brings Nehemiah To Judea

A. The Sythian Expedition-- The Backdoor To Greece, 516 B.C.

Between Darius' decree in 520 B.C. and the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem

in 516 B.C., Darius began his Sythian expedition.

In 516 B.C., Darius I decided to attack the Sythians, who as a nomadic people had come southward and westward from the steppes of Russia and had settled north of the Black Sea, and west and south as far as the Danube.

The Persian monarch knew little about the Sythians but thought it best to directly attack Balkan hinterland first rather than to direct his march upon Greece. Here, his mission would accomplish several purposes: to deprive Greece of timber for its naval fleet, to cut off the wheat supply from Greece, and to fill the royal treasury with Sythian gold.

The Sythian expedition is described in skeleton outline by Herodotus (*Histories* IV.1-144). Darius himself led his army against the Scythians. Greek sources suggest that the army raised by Darius for his Scythian campaign numbered 700,000 soldiers and 600 ships.

Democedes, Darius' Greek physician, was sent with a fleet to reconnoiter the Greek coast and is thought to have reached Tarentum. Another fleet of ships explored the western waters of the Black Sea. Byzantium accepted Persian rule. The beginnings of the campaign appeared auspicious.

Darius' army passed over the Straits on a bridge of boats and conquered eastern Thrace with little resistance. They followed the Danube west to the head of the Danube Delta where a bridge was built by the Ionians of Darius' army. It was Darius' hope to carry out his land operations in conjunction with the fleet which was to follow along the coast, but the navy and the army soon lost contact and Darius had to plunge into the interior of the country.

So as not to engage battle, the Sythians withdrew before the Persians, forcing the Persians to enter an unknown country. The Scythians drove off their herds and left their primitive timber shacks to be fired by the Persians. The Scythians 'scorched earth' policy soon produced real suffering in an army expected to find its support from the land. By this elusive strategy, the Sythians won the campaign. Therefore, after a protracted but ineffectual pursuit of fleeing nomads, the Persian monarch was forced to turn back by the failure of his supplies. Then, as the Scythians doubled back upon the Persian army, Darius had to race for the Danube, abandoning his transport and sick soldiers.

Meanwhile, the Greeks whom Darius had left in sole charge of the Danube passage were being incited by Miltiades, tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese, to unmoor their ships and sail home. But a fellow tyrant, Histiaeus of Miletus, pointed out that a Persian catastrophe in Sythia would be followed by domestic revolutions in the Greek cities, in which the rule of the despots would be swept away. This warning, which subsequent events proved true, was not lost upon the Greek commanders, who were, for the most part, tyrants themselves. Consequently, the bridge was preserved until Darius had re-crossed it, and a Persian disaster was averted.

While the Greeks in the field safeguarded the Persian line of communication at its most vital point, their compatriots at the base misled perhaps by exaggerated reports of Darius' misadventure, rose in revolt and destroyed the Bosphorus bridge. This forced Darius to prolong his retreat through Thrace and to seek a new return road to Asia. Thus, the complete conquest of Thrace was successfully carried out. The Persian boundaries were now in contact with the northern Greeks. Even Macedonia recognized the suzerainty of Darius. Having found a crossing point at Sestos, Darius I retired to Sardis and took no further personal part in European warfare.

In Asia Minor, the Greek coastal cities successively fell into the hands of Darius. The centers of the Black Sea wheat trade were all in his hands. Except for Greece itself,

Darius I was sovereign of the Greek world.

All this, Darius accomplished for Atossa, Cyrus' daughter and Darius' wife, who had challenged the king by the following words:

Sire, you are a mighty ruler; why sit you idle, winning neither new dominions nor new power for your Persians? If you would have them know that they have a man for their king, it is right and fitting for one of your youth and your wealth to let them see you achieving some great enterprise. Thereby will you gain a double advantage: the Persians will know that their king is truly a man; and in the stress of war they will have no leisure for conspiring against you. Now is your time for achieving great deeds, while you are still young; for as a man's mind grows with his body's growth, so as the body ages the mind too grows older and duller for all uses. *Herodotus* III.134

The new advance into Europe alarmed the Greeks; it looked as if Darius would move south against European Greece from his new base in the northern Balkans.

B. The Ionian Revolt-- The Asian Greeks In Revolt, 501 B.C.-495 B.C.³⁰

Darius' successes in Thrace and Macedonia served to put the democratically minded Greek city states on guard. The courage of the European Greeks in daring to defy Darius sparked a revolt of the Ionians who had been Persian subjects.

Around 501 B.C., the twenty-first year of Darius (Persian reckoning), approximately two years after Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, a Persian attack upon Greece appeared imminent. In fact, Persians and Greeks came to blows at this very time. The Greeks became the aggressors, and for the first time in their history made an anabasis into Asia. This revolt is known as the Ionian revolt. It is related in *Herodotus* V.28-38; 98-vi.32.

The Ionian league was re-established, and the aid promised by European Greece was proclaimed. The Greeks seized Sardis but had to retreat before Persian reinforcements. Meanwhile, the European Greeks withdrew because of war between Athens and Aegina. The area suffered at the hands of the Persians to such an extent that the consequences were felt for two centuries.

The Ionian revolt lasted during the years 501 B.C.- 495 B.C., from the twentieth to the twenty-sixth years of Darius I. During this time, Nehemiah was in Jerusalem working on the walls. The Ionian revolt ended with the Battle of Lade and the fall of Miletus in 494 B.C. For the next several years, the Persians extended their authority along the northern coasts of Greece proper, directly threatening Athens. The Ionian Revolt naturally led to further conflict with mainland Greece. This was to fulfill the words of Daniel, "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia" (Daniel 11:1-2). Darius had set the machinery in motion which was eventually to destroy the mighty Persian empire.

C. Nehemiah As A Reconstructionist

Nehemiah came back to Judea for more reasons than the struggles between the Samaritans and the Jews. The whole civilized world was in a state of political unrest. Darius was greedily looking west to increase his influence. The Greeks were not anxious to cooperate.

There seems to be a chronological conflict between Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1. The Jewish year changes as the first day of Nisan is passed.

Nehemiah may be referring to the twentieth year *after his return* to Persia in

Nehemiah 1:1-- "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace." It should be noted that Nehemiah 1:1 does not make reference to the rule of Artaxerxes (Darius I) as Nehemiah 2:1 does-- "And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence." Nehemiah has in mind a different point of reference in Nehemiah 1:1-- that point of reference may be his return from Jerusalem to Persia. Some scholars have not noticed this and have proposed an error in the chronology of Nehemiah by assuming that both chronological statements make reference to the reign of Artaxerxes. A. E. Cundall notes:

This introduces the 'Nehemiah memoirs', one of the outstanding autobiographical masterpieces of the ancient world. *The month Chisleu* was the ninth month. *The twentieth year*; archaeological evidence makes it certain that this was in the reign of Artaxerxes I But there is a copyist's error either here or in 2:1, where the date is Nisan, the first month. Probably 1:1 should be emended to 'the nineteenth year'.³¹

Since Nehemiah 1 and 2 follow in chronological order, it appears that the event of Nehemiah 1 took place in the last part of 503 B.C. and the event of Nehemiah 2 in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king (Darius I)-- 502 B.C.

If the assumption is correct, this means that twenty years before 503 B.C. would give the date of Nehemiah's return from Jerusalem to Persia (503 B.C. + 20 = 523 B.C.). The year 523 B.C. was the first year of the Magi Revolt (Hebrew reckoning). It was probably in this year that Ahasuerus (the pseudo-Smerdis) received a written accusation from the people of the land against the Jews as Ezra 4:6 states: "And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." It is possible that Nehemiah was sent by the Jewish community to present the Jewish point of view before the monarch--Ahasuerus. While in Persia, Ahasuerus was killed by the council of the seven and replaced by Artaxerxes, *i.e.*, Darius I. With the rise of Darius the Persian, Nehemiah remained in Persia to help to settle the Jewish Temple problem. Since Darius I spent the years 521 B.C. - 520 B.C. in various conflicts trying to hold the empire together, the Temple problem was not solved until 520 B.C., the second year of Darius I (Hebrew reckoning) or the first year of Darius (Persian reckoning). At that time, Nehemiah, probably became the cupbearer to the king. This was a position of honor; for it involved an intimate relationship with the king.³²

Therefore, it is the conclusion of the present research that the chronological reference in Nehemiah 1:1 does not decisively demand or necessarily have anything to do with the reign of Artaxerxes.

When Nehemiah's brother, Hanani (Nehemiah 7:2) and others from Judah came to visit him at the Persian court in Shushan, the winter palace, they related the current difficulties of the Jews in Palestine (Nehemiah 1:2-3). The great trouble was that Jerusalem had no walls nor gates to protect it from its many enemies.

The present plight of Jerusalem brought grief to Nehemiah's heart when he heard the report of the suffering of his brethren in Palestine (Nehemiah 1:4). Then Nehemiah prayed for guidance and sought an opportunity to present this situation before King Darius (Nehemiah 1:5-11).

VIII. 502 B.C.-- The Twentieth Year Of Darius

Four months went by before Nehemiah was able to present the Jerusalem

situation before the king (*cf.*, Nehemiah 1:1 and Nehemiah 2:1). Perhaps, the king was away on a military adventure and when he returned, he recognized the sadness on Nehemiah's face and asked his cupbearer to explain his problem (Nehemiah 2:1-2). Nehemiah told of his sorrow of heart as follows: "Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nehemiah 2:3.

Hearing the situation of Jerusalem, Artaxerxes (Darius I) readily granted Nehemiah a leave of absence to visit the Holy City and to accomplish the work that was on his heart (Nehemiah 2:4-6). The length of time that Nehemiah was to be in Jerusalem was mutually established, and the king issued a royal rescript authorizing the building of Jerusalem's walls and gates. Then the king wrote letters to the governors beyond the river³³ and to Asaph, the keeper of the royal forest, directing that Nehemiah be provided with materials he would need for the gates of the citadel, for the wall of the city and for the Temple itself (Nehemiah 2:7-8). This occurred in 502 B.C., the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Darius I).

A. Nehemiah Confronts The Governors Beyond The River

When Nehemiah came to the governors beyond the river and presented them with the king's letter, he was confronted with two of his enemies as Nehemiah 2:10 affirms: "When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel."

The name, Sanballat, is derived from the Babylonian Sin-uballit, meaning, 'May Sin (the moon god) give him life'. He is called a Horonite (Nehemiah 2:10), probably indicating that he was born in Beth-horon in Ephraim (Joshua 10:10 and II Chronicles 8:5). He is joined by Tobiah and Geshem as opponents of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:10, 19; 4:1-9; 6:1-14). According to Nehemiah 13:28, Sanballat's daughter was married to a grandson of Eliashib, the high priest.

It is interesting to discover that, despite his Assyrian-Babylonian name, Sanballat was a Jew by religion, known now from the fact that two of his sons, who aided their father in government administration, were given such good Jewish names as Delaiah and Shelemiah (the *iah* stands for *Yah*, the shortened form of *Yahweh*). It is conceivable that he originally had a Jewish name, but it was changed after the capture of Jerusalem, as was the case with Daniel, and the three Hebrew young men mentioned in Daniel 1.

Most scholars of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Elephantine Papyri have failed to realize that both Ezra and Nehemiah and the high priest Johanan were contemporaries. It is known that Johanan was already a grown married man in the time of Nehemiah; for he or his brother was married to Sanballat's daughter (Nehemiah 13:28). Ezra, in the seventh year of Darius I, stayed in Johanan's room (Ezra 10:6). According to Nehemiah 12:22-23, quoted above, Johanan, the son of Eliashib, was a contemporary of 'Darius the Persian', who appears to be Darius I, the Great.

The Bible names of 'Tobiah, the Ammonite' and 'Geshem, the Arabian' were among other prominent leaders of the opposition to Nehemiah's restoration of the walls and gates of Jerusalem. These names have also been authenticated by archaeological discovery. Merrill F. Unger refers to the Zeno Papyri which mentions a descendant of 'Tobiah, the Ammonite'--

One of the so-called Zeno Papyri found at Gerza in the Faiyum, coming from the archives of an Egyptian official named Zeno of the era of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), and

frequently dealing with Palestinian affairs, is a letter from 'Tobias, the governor of Ammon, doubtless a descendant of Nehemiah's foe.³⁴

Evidence for the family of 'Tobiah, the Ammonite' has been found in Trans-jordania. At Araq el emir, near present day Amman, the ruins of the palace of this prominent Ammonite dynasty and the ancestral tombs of the Tobiads have been found. Unger mentions that "the name of Tobiah is cut deep in the rock and written in an archaic Aramaic script, ... which Albright points out may date as early as 400 B.C. and be actually identified with Tobiah I."³⁵

Both Tobiah and his son, Jehohanan, were married to Jewish women. He was in high favor with the high priest, Eliashib, who gave him a guest room in the Temple compound. He tried to frighten Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:17-19), who regarded him as his chief enemy and cast him and his household goods out of the Temple guest chamber (Nehemiah 13:4-9). Some scholars think that the house of Tobiah, which in the the third century B.C. vied with the house of Onias for the high priesthood, was descended from Tobiah (*cf.*, II Maccabees 3:11, *Antiquities* XII.iv).

The name of 'Geshem, the Arabian', the third prominent opponent of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:1), called 'Gashmu' (Nehemiah 6:6), is also authenticated extra-Biblically. Unger writes: "It is now known from a recently interpreted Lihyanic inscription that Geshem the Arabian was Persian governor of northwest Arabia."³⁶ At this time, the province of Arabia included both Edom and Southern Judah.

Once again, archaeological data has helped to verify the remarkable accuracy of the Hebrew Bible and in many cases against the skeptic's theories.

B. 502 B.C.- 491 B.C.-- The Jerusalem Wall Project

When Sanballat and the other governors of the region perceived that mockery did not deter Nehemiah from the repair work, they became determined to take further action, since the Jews had 'a mind to work' (Nehemiah 4:1-6). When the wall had reached half its desired height (Nehemiah 4:6), Sanballat was determined to stop the work by the threat of armed intervention.

1. Opposition Of Neighbors Frustrates Restoration

Jerusalem was completely surrounded by hostile factions: Samaria to the north, Ammon on the east, Geshem and his Arabs to the south, and Ashdod (a former Philistine city, now the center of another Persian administration unit), to the west (Nehemiah 4:7). A direct confrontation with the Jews was out of the question, since Artaxerxes (Darius I) had authorized the building. A policy of infiltration and terrorist activity was planned instead (Nehemiah 4:8).

The Samaritans, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites planned a sneak attack, but Nehemiah was ready for them (Nehemiah 4:9-14). When the enemy learned that the Jews were both armed and working, they abandoned their plan to make an attack (Nehemiah 4:15-23). A trumpeter stood beside Nehemiah, ready to give warning in the event of attack. There is no record of an actual battle. However, the Samaritans and their allies did pose a constant threat, hinder the progress, and work serious hardships on the Jews.

Nehemiah was able to stand up under pressures from without, but his greatest threat came as a result of internal problems which threatened the collapse of the restoration (Nehemiah 5:1-5). The Jews, working on the walls, had no source of income. Some had left houses and fields, only to have them looted by the enemy.

taxes. To make things even worse, drought had hit Palestine. Some were forced to pledge their children for debt, and they were sold into slavery (Nehemiah 5:5).³⁷

Nehemiah was angry with the way in which the wealthy class had taken advantage of the poor in a time of national crisis, and spoke to them (Nehemiah 5:6-13). According to Nehemiah 5:14-19, he reviewed his own financial record.³⁸ Nehemiah had refused to accept the payment to which he was entitled as governor and had actually supported one hundred and fifty Jews at his own expense. Those who had exploited the poor, responded to Nehemiah's plea and vowed to restore that which they had taken (Nehemiah 5:12). Nehemiah had appealed to the national conscience and testimony to other nations.

Next, Nehemiah's enemies attempted to defeat him by intrigue. On four occasions, Nehemiah was invited to confer with the governors in the valley of Ono in Benjamin. However, Nehemiah insisted that he could not leave his work of restoration. Their aim was to lure Nehemiah away from his supporters in Jerusalem, to make his assassination easier, or to facilitate an attack upon Jerusalem in his absence. Ono was neutrally situated between the provinces of Ashdod and Samaria, but it was nineteen miles from Jerusalem (*cf.*, Nehemiah 6:1-4).

Now, Sanballat and his accomplices attacked Nehemiah himself; for the servant of Sanballat came the fifth time with the following letter in his hand--

Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us make counsel together. Nehemiah 6:6-7

This open letter from Sanballat accused Judah's governor of a conspiracy to rebel against Persia and establish himself as king in Judah. Nehemiah refused to even discuss the charge, bluntly declaring that such a charge was a fabrication of Sanballat's evil heart (Nehemiah 6:8).

Sanballat and Tobiah continued their efforts to stop Nehemiah's success. They went so far as to hire prophets such as Shemaiah³⁹ to induce Nehemiah to lock himself in the Temple to avoid assassination. However, Nehemiah quickly recognized this as a plot and refused to go (Nehemiah 6:9-14).

2. The Wall Project Is Completed After Twelve Years And Fifty-Two Days

Despite Sanballat's mischief to keep Nehemiah from reaching his goals,⁴⁰ Nehemiah pressed toward the completion of his work. It took twelve years and fifty two days to completely restore the wall and gates of Jerusalem. The figure of twelve years is derived from the chronological note of Nehemiah 5:14-16--

Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.

The complete restoration of the walls took twelve years from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Darius I) (502 B.C.; Hebrew reckoning), unto the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (490 B.C.; Hebrew reckoning). That is why the laborers had to mortgage their

houses, vineyards, and fields and even sell their children into slavery in order to provide food and to pay taxes (Nehemiah 5:1-5).

Notice that Nehemiah 6:1 indicates that after twelve years there was no breach left in the wall but the gates were not hung-- "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)...." It appears from the chronological note of Nehemiah 6:15 that the doors were set upon the gates in fifty-two days-- "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." The Gregorian Date for the completion of the wall is September 24, 491 B.C., a Sunday. This is a Sabbatical year-- with the Sabbath year beginning on Tishri 15 at the Feast of Tabernacles (*cf.*, Leviticus 23:34 ff.). As will be shown, this Sabbatical year implied in Nehemiah 8 only fits the thirty-first year of Darius I (Hebrew reckoning); it does not fit the thirty-first year of Artaxerxes I (Hebrew reckoning) nor the thirty-first year of Artaxerxes II (Hebrew reckoning).

With the work on Jerusalem's walls and gates accomplished, the enemies of the Jews perceived that this work was wrought of God (Nehemiah 6:16).

Nehemiah faced a well-organized fifth column amongst his own leading citizens but there is no suggestions that he took any reprisals against its members. It is interesting to note that Meshullam, one of the leading wall-builders (Nehemiah 3:4, 30) had given his daughter in marriage to Tobiah's son (Nehemiah 6:17-19). Also, Tobiah was the son-in-law of Shechaniah, the son of Arah.

Then, Nehemiah appointed his brother, Hanani, and a man named Hananiah, the governor of the castle, to assume responsibility for the welfare of Jerusalem. He charged them to keep the city gates closed until the sun was well up in the heavens, and to keep a guard posted (Nehemiah 7:1-3).

IX. 491 B.C.-- Ezra And Nehemiah In The Thirty-first Year Of Darius

There were several factors which forced Nehemiah to finish the gates in fifty-two days: 1) the approaching Sabbatical year which began in two months, and 2) the news regarding the Battle of Marathon in which the Persians were defeated by the Greeks.

A. Their Ministries Synchronized By A Sabbatical Year

After Nehemiah's completion of the walls on Elul 25 (September 25) in a Sabbatical year, Ezra, the priest (in observance of the Sabbatical year) gathered together all the people for the reading of the Law upon the first day of the seventh month, *i.e.*, Tishri 1 (Nehemiah 8:1-2). Since the first day of the month was a new moon; it was also considered a holy day by the Jews (*cf.*, Nehemiah 8:11). The Gregorian date is September 29, 491 B.C., a Friday, in a Sabbath year, in the thirty-first year of Darius I (Hebrew reckoning).

On the basis of this information, it becomes clear that the Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah could not be Xerxes (485 B.C. - 464 B.C.) as Josephus states; for he did not rule for thirty-one years, *Antiquities* XI.v.8. The Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah can not be Artaxerxes I (464 B.C. - 423 B.C.), for his thirty-first year does not occur in a Hebrew Sabbatical year according to the computer calendar. Tishri 1 would be September 30, 434 B.C., a Sunday (Gregorian calendar). It is one year past the Sabbath year. Again, the Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah can not be Artaxerxes II (404 B.C. - 358 B.C.); for his thirty-first year does not occur in a Hebrew Sabbatical year according to the computer calendar. Tishri 1 would be September 27, 374 B.C., a Monday (Gregorian calendar). It is five years past a Sabbath year. Also, Darius II could not be the Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah for

he did not rule for thirty-one years. It is unfortunate that Biblical scholars have failed to recognize the usage of Artaxerxes in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Persian throne title for King Darius I. This factor makes the chronological data of Ezra-Nehemiah continuous as has been shown-- a gapless timeframe with the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah overlapping and with Ezra preceding Nehemiah.

B. Their Ministries Overlapping

Ezra read the Torah in the street before the Water Gate from the morning until midday.⁴¹ He stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose. The people, men, women, and all those that could understand, listened while Ezra read the Law in Hebrew. The Levites gave an explanation, probably in the Aramaic language which had become the popular language of the Jews during the time of their exile (Nehemiah 8:1-8).

According to Nehemiah 8:9, Nehemiah was present with Ezra for this occasion-- "And Nehemiah, which is Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God" While the people wept when they heard the Law, Ezra tried to encourage them by affirming that the joy of the Lord was their strength (Nehemiah 8:10). The Levites also encouraged the crowd of Jews and sent them away (Nehemiah 8:11-12).

It should be pointed out that in I Esdras the account of Ezra's reading of the Law follows Ezra 10 and the name of Nehemiah is missing (*cf.*, Nehemiah 8:9). Indeed, it is questionable whether such a ceremony as this could have been arranged before Nehemiah brought security to Jerusalem, and order out of the heaps of rubble. It seems that Nehemiah 8 is best located at its present position. Possibly, the omission in I Esdras was deliberate, since the writer was concerned solely with Ezra, not Nehemiah.

At this point, the Septuagint (LXX) reading confirms the overlapping nature of Ezra's and Nehemiah's ministries. The Nehemiah 8:9 reading states: "And Neemias, (Nehemiah) and Esdras (Ezra) the priest and scribe, and the Levites, and they that instructed the people, spoke and said to all the people, It is a holy day to the Lord our God; do not mourn, nor weep."

The book of the Law of Moses (Nehemiah 8:1) has been commonly supposed by critical scholars to be the priestly code, brought by Ezra from Babylon, and which subsequently became the framework of the completed Pentateuch. Such a view is merely assumption with no positive evidence. It is unlikely that the Samaritans, who hated the Jews, would have accepted a completed Pentateuch about this time in history. It is more plausible to believe that the Pentateuch was written by Moses-- as its archaic Hebrew would imply, and that the people's reaction to Ezra's reading of the Pentateuch was due to their ignorance of its provisions.

On the second day, the chief fathers, the priests and the Levites assembled further to ask Ezra regarding the Feast of Tabernacles; for they found this in the Mosaic Law--

And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. Nehemiah 8:14-15

When the people understood about the Feast of Tabernacles, they made booths-- "every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim" (Nehemiah 8:16). In Nehemiah 8:17-18, the author of Nehemiah describes

this celebration of the Feast of Booths:⁴²

And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days: and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

According to Deuteronomy 31:9-13, the reading of the Law was one of the prescribed features of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Booths was followed by a solemn fast during which the Jews separated themselves from all foreigners and confessed their sin (Nehemiah 9:1-2). Tishri 24 can be dated as October 22, 491 B.C., a Saturday (Gregorian calendar). Israel's confession of sin came as a result of the reading of the Law during the Feast of Tabernacles and its current reading (Nehemiah 9:3-4). Then the Levites uttered a remarkable testimony of all that God had done for Israel in which they traced the mercies of God to Israel and deplored their people's unfaithfulness (Nehemiah 9:5-37). With the conclusion of this testimony to divine grace and mercy, the princes, Levites, and priests solemnly covenanted before all the people to be faithful to God's Law (Nehemiah 9:38).

Nehemiah 10:1-27 gives the names of those leaders who participated in this covenant renewal. It appears that Nehemiah also played a large role in the covenant renewal since his name occurs first in the list.⁴³ The entire Mosaic Law appears to have been received by the Palestinian Jewish community in solemn covenant before their God. Perhaps, this was the first completed reading of the Law to the remnant that had returned from exile. While the Jews lacked political independence, they nevertheless became a religious community, subject to religious Law. This covenant renewal would establish the future of Judaism for centuries to come.

Ezra's reading of the Law played a significant part in the covenant renewal that followed on Tishri 24. In Jewish tradition, the priest and scribe, Ezra, has become known as 'the second giver of the Law'.⁴⁴ Josephus states that "... after he had obtained this reputation among the people, he died an old man, and was buried in a magnificent manner at Jerusalem," *Antiquities* XI.v.5. The present research has shown that Ezra was a contemporary of Darius I. His age, his work with Nehemiah, and his synchronization with Joiakim the high priest would not permit Ezra to be a contemporary with Artaxerxes I.

Consider the evidence of Nehemiah 12:26-- "These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe." This passage seems to imply that Joiakim, Nehemiah, and Ezra were contemporaries. In Ezra 10:6, it is stated that Ezra stayed in Johanan's room-- "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib" In the light of the context, this occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, *i.e.*, Darius I. There is a 57 year difference between the seventh year of Darius I (515 B.C.; Hebrew counting) and the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (458 B.C.; Hebrew reckoning). Since it is clearly stated that Joiakim the son of Jeshua was synchronous with Ezra, the age factor would not be in favor of the Artaxerxes I assumption.

The stipulations of the covenant renewal, once the people had understanding (Nehemiah 10:28-29), were the forbidding of mixed marriages (Nehemiah 10:30), the details of the Sabbath day observance and the Sabbatical year (Nehemiah 10:31), and the provision for an adequate income for the maintenance of the service of the House of God (Nehemiah 10:32-39).⁴⁵

Although Ezra is not named in Nehemiah 10 and 11, it appears that he had an overlapping role with the governor Nehemiah at this point.

In Nehemiah 12:27-43, the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah are once again overlapping. This time, the connection is with the celebration and dedication of Jerusalem's walls and gates. After ceremonies of purification (Nehemiah 12:30), two processions were formed to move around the walls in opposite directions. Ezra was at the head of one company, and Nehemiah of the other. They met near the Temple area where the people gave expression to their joy and offered appropriate sacrifices. The two groups appear to have started at a point on the south wall, possibly at the Valley Gate. The first processed in an counter-clockwise movement and the second company in a clockwise direction. The meeting-point apparently became the Temple area. Each group was led by a choir (Nehemiah 12:31, 38). This was a great milestone for the ministries of both Ezra and Nehemiah. No wonder the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

It is interesting to note that archaeologists have recently discovered a portion of Nehemiah's wall, found in the the Jewish quarter of the present old city of Jerusalem. The wall is 'a broad wall' as described in Nehemiah 12:38.

The last section (Nehemiah 12:44-47) deals with the care of the Temple personnel. While Nehemiah 12 gives no date for the dedication of Jerusalem's walls and gates, some scholars infer from II Maccabees 1:18 that the date was the twenty-fifth of the ninth month, *i.e.*, three months after the completion of the walls.⁴⁶

C. The Ministry Of Nehemiah Terminated By His Return To Persia

With the walls and gates of Jerusalem dedicated, Nehemiah's mission was over. The covenant renewed and the various aspects of Judaism put into practice--Nehemiah was free to end his leave of absence and to return to the Persian court of Darius I in the thirty-first year of Artaxerxes (Hebrew reckoning, *i.e.*, 491 B.C.), *cf.*, Nehemiah 5:14; 13:6. When winter was over in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah arrived at the Persian court (Gregorian calendar). Also, wintertime may have prohibited Nehemiah's return to Shushan until the arrival of spring.

An interesting civil action is recorded in Elephantine letter No. 16. In the thirty-first year of some king, Nephayan plays a key role. The document describes a man who had ploughed his field over a seven year period from the twenty-fourth to the thirty-first year, but the judges had taken his crop. Nephayan is also an important individual in letter No. 30, dated the seventeenth year of Darius. The connection with Darius is important, and equally important is the fact that year thirty-one of Darius is a Sabbath year.

There are several important dates during the reign of Darius, 1) the first Passover (year seven, 515), 2) the building of the wall and the Ionian revolt (year twenty, 502), 3) the completion of the walls and the Battle of Marathon (year thirty-one, 491), and 4) the death of Darius, and Nehemiah's return to Babylon (year thirty-seven, 485). Each of these dates has a corresponding letter from Elephantine Egypt.

X. 490 B.C.- 485 B.C.-- Darius Calls Nehemiah Back To Babylon

Nehemiah's return to the Persian court saw problems arise both in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:1-3) and on the western front of the Persian Empire.

A. The Battle Of Marathon- The Persians In Retreat, 491 B.C.

Since the revolt of the Ionians had been encouraged by European Greeks, Persia decided it must take action against the mainland. A fleet of 600 ships left Asia Minor

with the avowed purpose of strengthening the pro-Persian elements in Greece by a show of force. Half the ships and about 20,000 men were lost in a severe storm off Mt. Athos.

The second attempt was more successful. Datis, the Median admiral, besieged the Greek city of Eretria. When it was betrayed into his hands, Datis made the mistake of burning the temples, destroying the town, and selling its inhabitants as slaves to Susa. This served to unite the various factions of Greeks against Persia. They saw clearly that the Persians would show no mercy toward the conquered Greeks.

When the Persian commander landed at Marathon, about twenty-five miles north of Athens, they were met by the Athenian army of 10,000. Before reinforcements could arrive from Sparta,⁴⁷ the Athenians met the Persians and led by Miltiades won a resounding victory. Seven Persian ships were captured by the Greeks, and the remainder withdrew. 441 B.C. is the thirty-first year of Darius. The Battle of Marathon was also an important reason Darius called his important people back to Persia. Remember, Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king.

B. Darius Died, Nehemiah Returns From Babylon

At the dedication of Jerusalem's walls, it was learned that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever--

On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

This reference to the Ammonite and the Moabite is found in Deuteronomy 23:3-6. Unfortunately, Eliashib, the high priest, had befriended Nehemiah's enemy Tobiah, the Ammonite, and housed him in one of the Temple chambers (Nehemiah 13:4-5). This, of course, was contrary to Mosaic Law.

In addition to this problem, the situation in Jerusalem quickly deteriorated with other problems arising. The Levites in the Temple were not given their designated provisions with the result that they had to find other work to do in order to support their families (Nehemiah 13:10-14). Many had to return to their fields and earn their living as farmers. This was contrary to Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 18:1 where the priests and Levites were not allowed to own land. The legislation of Nehemiah 10:35-39 had been neglected. Certainly the neglect of the Levites inevitably affected the standard of the religious life in the Temple. It appears that Eliashib, the high priest, was obviously blameworthy and must have been a party to the dishonest practices.

Another problem was the violation of the Sabbath Law (Nehemiah 13:15-22). Winepresses were in operation on the Sabbath; also, the Jews were transporting grain, figs, and grapes to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:15). The Tyrian merchants bought and sold their fish and other merchandise in Jerusalem contrary to Sabbath Law (Nehemiah 13:16). How Nehemiah dealt with this problem is related in verses 17-22.

A final problem was mixed marriages. Ezra had dealt with this same problem earlier, but it continued to be a thorny issue in Jerusalem. Now, during Nehemiah's absence, it had arisen again, doubtless encouraged by an example within the high priestly family (Nehemiah 13:23-29). Jewish men had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. The effect was evident even in the speech of the people, for the

language of these wives was spoken by their children in the very streets of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:24). A grandson of Eliashib, the high priest, had married a daughter of Nehemiah's inveterate enemy, Sanballat (Nehemiah 13:28).

1. Nehemiah's Solution To The Problems In Jerusalem

These were difficult problems which Nehemiah faced upon his return to Jerusalem in 485 B.C. after the death of Darius I. With the death of Artaxerxes (Darius I), Nehemiah was released from his position as cupbearer. As can be clearly seen, Nehemiah was a wall-builder, not a bridge-builder; by building walls, Judaism proclaimed separation from the world. Through this separation, the Lord would ultimately accomplish His purposes for Israel. Without the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah, it is difficult to see how Judaism could have survived, as A. E. Cundall asserts--

Nehemiah's achievements were considerable. The building of the wall, together with his other economic, social and religious measures, set the Jerusalem community, which had been in a desperate plight for almost a century on a secure foundation. With Ezra's great contribution centering upon the law, the two men made it possible for Judaism to survive in the succeeding centuries. Had the liberal opposition party, led by the high priest Eliashib, succeeded in blunting their sharply-defined policy, it is difficult to conceive how the Jewish faith could have survived.⁴⁸

Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem for a second term as governor in 484 B.C., a Sabbatical year and the first year of Xerxes (Persian reckoning). Upon his return to the Holy City, Nehemiah attacked the current policies of the family of Eliashib, the high priest by appointing four reliable treasurers to solve the financial problems of the Levites.

He then solved the scandal connected with Tobiah, the Ammonite. Determined to set things right, and understanding Eliashib's evil, Nehemiah took the following course of action--

And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. Nehemiah 13:7-9

Tobiah's belongings were cast out of the Temple and the chamber was restored to its sacred use where tithes of corn, wine, and oil were collected so that provision could be made for the Levites to give their time to the Temple ministrations.

Eliashib's grandson, Manasseh, was the son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite, the governor of Samaria. Sanballat had been the most prominent antagonist of the work of Nehemiah. According to Nehemiah, this was a defilement of the priesthood (Nehemiah 13:29-31). Therefore, the Biblical text declares that Nehemiah expelled the offender. This is stated by the following words of Nehemiah: "Therefore I chased him from me," Nehemiah 13:28. According to Josephus, this led to the final rupture between the Jews and Samaritans.

An important sequel to this episode is recorded by Josephus who tells of the marriage between Manasseh, the grandson of Eliashib, and Sanballat's daughter, Nicaso. When Nehemiah offered to Manasseh the choice between abdicating his priestly office or divorcing his wife, he went to Sanballat for advice. His father-in-law

promised to make Manasseh the high priest in Samaria and promised to build him a temple on Mount Gerizim as soon as the permission of the Persian king could be obtained (for Josephus, this was Darius III at the time of Alexander the Great). Furthermore, he promised to make Manasseh his successor as governor of Samaria. Josephus related that Manasseh was elevated with these promises and stayed with Sanballat. Other priests and Levites went to Samaria with Manasseh and they were given lands in Samaria by Sanballat. At this time, Manasseh took with him a copy of the Torah when he fled to Samaria.⁴⁹

The chief objection to Josephus' account is the chronological discrepancy which puts Sanballat in the era of the Persian king, Darius III, and the Greek conqueror, Alexander the Great. However, chronological discrepancy need not disprove historicity. It is now generally agreed by scholars that this final incident in Nehemiah's ministry furnishes the historical background of the Samaritan schism. The discovery of the Samaritan Papyri has aided in establishing the sequence of Samaria's governors and in dating the expulsion of Eliashib's grandson as William Sanford La Sor declares--

Archaeological evidence now exists which, fragmentary and partial though it may be, speaks to the reliability of Ezra-Nehemiah. The Samaritan papyri from the Wadi Daliyeh have made it possible to establish the sequence of governors of Samaria from Sanballat the Horonite in the time of Nehemiah to Alexander the Great in 332. The papyri also distinguish the biblical account of Nehemiah's expulsion of the son of Jehoiada the high priest (Neh. 13:28) from the very similar story by Josephus set in the period of Sanballat III, a contemporary of Alexander the Great.⁵⁰

Having corrected social, economic, and religious abuse in Jerusalem, Nehemiah's career came to an end. He is best remembered for his work on the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus Ben Sirach in his work on wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, writes the following tribute to Nehemiah--

Great too is the memory of Nehemiah,
who rebuilt our walls which lay in ruins,
erected the gates and bars
And rebuilt our houses.
Ecclesiasticus 49:13 (The Jerusalem Bible)

Similarly, Josephus writes:

So when Nehemiah had done many other excellent things, and things worthy of commendation, in a glorious manner, he came to a great age, and then died. He was a man of a good and righteous disposition, and very ambitious to make his own nation happy; and he hath left the walls of Jerusalem as an eternal monument for himself. *Antiquities* XI.v.8.

Josephus mentions the 'great age' of Nehemiah at his death. This is undoubtedly an accurate statement. The present study would estimate the course of Nehemiah's life in the following illustration:

ILLUSTRATION XIX: The Life Span Of Nehemiah

B.C. DATING	EVENT	ESTIMATED AGE
590-588 B.C.	Nehemiah born and taken into Babylonian Captivity (assuming he was an infant at Jerusalem's fall)	1
550 B.C.	Nehemiah returns to Palestine under Zerubbabel	40
521-523 B.C.	Nehemiah returns to Persia to influence Ahasuerus	67
502 B.C.	Nehemiah requests leave for wall building	88
502-490 B.C.	Nehemiah directs walls and gate project	88-100
490-485 B.C.	Nehemiah returns to position in Persian court	100-105
484 B.C.	Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to address problems	105
-?- B.C.	Nehemiah dies in Jerusalem at a great age	-?-

2. Malachi Spoke Against The Problems In Jerusalem

Traditionally, Malachi has been considered the last of the Hebrew prophets. In the days of the Maccabees, it was written that prophetic activity in Israel had ceased-- "A terrible oppression began in Israel; there had been nothing like it since the disappearance of prophecy among them," I Maccabees 9:27 (The Jerusalem Bible). According to the Talmud, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel with the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (*The Babylonian Talmud*, Mishnah Tract, Sanhedrin 11a.).⁵¹

The Hebrew word, 'Malachi' means 'my messenger'; it occurs in Malachi 1:1 and 3:1. In general, scholarship supports the view that Malachi is not a proper name. This idea is based on several factors: first, the Aramaic Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel adds a phrase to the statement of Malachi 1:1-- "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of my messenger (Malachi) whose name is called Ezra the scribe;" secondly, the Septuagint renders Malachi 1:1-- "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of his messenger. Lay it, I pray you, to heart;" thirdly, Talmudic tradition taught: "It has been taught: R. Joshua b. Korha said: Malachi is the same as Ezra, and the Sages say that Malachi was his proper name. R. Nahman said: There is good ground for accepting the view that Malachi was the same as Ezra,"⁵² *The Babylonian Talmud*, Mishnah Tract, Megillah 15a. These are three factors which scholars have used to acclaim the anonymous nature of the prophecy.

However, it is not necessary to assume that the Hebrew word 'Malachi' in 1:1 is based upon 3:1, where the word is translated my 'messenger'; for concrete proof that this is the case is lacking. It is quite reasonable to explain the meaning of Malachi as a hypocoristic form of malak-Yah, i.e., Messenger of Jehovah. It should be noted that the LXX entitles the prophecy as Malakhias or Malachi. Also, it should be observed that every other prophetic book in the Old Testament bears the name of its author. It would be strange if this one were left anonymous.

What is important to see in Malachi's ministry is that he is contemporary with Nehemiah, probably prophesying between 490 B.C., the thirty-second year of Darius I, and the year of Nehemiah's return to Persia in 485 B.C., the death year of Darius I, the year of Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem.

From Malachi's prophecy, it is known that the Temple was completed and sacrifices offered (Malachi 1:7-10; 3:8), but enough time had elapsed for abuses and laxities to develop. In his prophecy, Malachi unscathingly condemns the sins of priest and people. He attacks the same problem which Nehemiah deals with upon his return to Jerusalem: the problem of mixed marriages (Malachi 2:10-12), the neglect of payment of tithes (Malachi 3:8-10), and related problems. Malachi 1:8 seems to be a reference to a Persian governor other than Nehemiah. So, it appears that Malachi's prophecies were

made during the period of Nehemiah's absence, 490 B.C.- 485 B.C.

Unique to Malachi is his prophecy regarding Elijah the prophet [Malachi 4:5-6 (Massoretic text 3:23-24)]-- "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Similarly, the prophet Isaiah spoke:

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Isaiah 40:3-5

That the Messiah would have a forerunner, who would prepare the Messiah's way, is stressed both at Qumran and in New Testament literature. Malachi names this forerunner 'my messenger' in Malachi 3:1 and then, more specifically, 'Elijah', an idea embraced by Judaism. In the New Testament, John the Baptist is recognized as the forerunner. The term forerunner is not used of him but the name 'Elijah' is (*cf.*, John 1:21; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 7:27 f.; and Matthew 11:14).

This means that the time period from Malachi's prophecy unto the beginning of John's ministry was more than 500 years (485 B.C.- 24 A.D.) of prophetic silence.

Merrill F. Unger has pointed out that "the concluding book of the Old Testament in our English order fits into the period of Nehemiah"⁵³

3. The Final Proof - Darius = Artaxerxes

One more single-dated letter from Elephantine is applicable to Darius I. This letter (C17) is dated to the thirty-seventh year of King Artaxerxes, but it cannot apply to Artaxerxes I because the people involved are identical to those in the other letters already discussed. Secondly, it is the last of the letters which were not double dated. After the first year of Xerxes, every letter is dated in both the Egyptian and the Jewish calendar. This demonstrates conclusively that: 1) Darius is also called Artaxerxes by the Jews, and 2) the Jews called year thirty-six of Darius, year thirty-seven. This concludes the commentary on Darius who was also Artaxerxes. It is hoped that the "mistaken identity" will now be understood so that research in this very important part of Biblical and Near Eastern chronology can be resumed.

ILLUSTRATION XX:

The Chronology Of Ezra-Nehemiah: Showing Artaxerxes To Be Darius The Persian

HEBREW RECKONING	EVENT	REFERENCE	B.C. DATE
Cyrus 1	Edict	Ezra 1:1; 5:13; 6:3	551
Cyrus 3	Altar construction	Ezra 3:1, 6	Tishri 1 = Jedaiah = 549
Cyrus 4, Ziv (2nd Yr. after return)	Foundation of Temple laid	Ezra 3:8	Iyyar = Thursday = 548
Cyrus 4	Construction hindered	Ezra 4:5	548
Ahasuerus 1 (Gaumata, Magian)	Jews accused of insurrection	Ezra 4:6	523
Artaxerxes 1, Darius the Persian	Jews accused of insurrection	Ezra 4:7	521

Darius 2 (Artaxerxes 2)	Building ceased to this yr.	Ezra 4:24	520
Darius 3 (Artaxerxes 3)	Commandment of Darius	Ezra 6:14	519
Darius 6 (Artaxerxes 6)	Temple completed	Ezra 6:15	Adar 3 =Wed, Feb. 3, 515
Darius 7 (Artaxerxes 7)	Passover in Elephantine 40 days after Temple finished	Ezra 6:19	Nisan 10, Jehoiarib, 515
Darius 7 (Artaxerxes 7)	Ezra comes to Jerusalem	Ezra 7:1	Left: Nisan 1, Thurs., April 1, 515
Darius 7 (Artaxerxes 7)	Others return with Ezra	Ezra 7:7	Arrived: Ab 5, Wed., July 28, 515
Darius 20 (Artaxerxes 20)	Ionian Revolt, Necho comes	Neh. 5:14	501
Darius 32 (Artaxerxes 32)	Battle of Marathon Necho Returns	Neh. 5:14	490

XI. The High Priests Of Ezra-Nehemiah Were Contemporary

The high priest, Johanan, is mentioned in the Elephantine texts thirty and thirty-one (A. Cowley's edition) which places him in the seventeenth year of Darius I (505 B.C., Hebrew counting). Also the letter speaks of a previous letter sent to Johanan at the time of the Temple destruction in the year fourteen of Darius I (508 B.C., Hebrew reckoning). This extra-Biblical reference gives a date which helps to pinpoint an exact date for the high priests in Ezra-Nehemiah.

Six high priests are mentioned by Nehemiah in the text of Nehemiah 12:10-12-- Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, Joiada, Jonathan (Johanan), and Jaddua. The Biblical text and the Elephantine Papyri appear to dovetail, for it is known that Johanan was already a grown married man in the time of Nehemiah. The Hebrew text indicates that either Johanan or his brother was married to Sanballat's daughter-- "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I chased him from me," Nehemiah 13:28. The Hebrew Bible states that Ezra in the seventh year of Darius (515 B.C., Hebrew counting) stayed in Johanan's room-- "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, no drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away," Ezra 10:6. Eliashib, the grandson of Jeshua, was listed as the high priest at the reconstruction of the wall in 502 B.C., the twentieth year of Darius I (Hebrew counting).

The last time that the Bible mentions Jeshua, the high priest, is in the second year of Darius I, which in Hebrew reckoning is 520 B.C. Jeshua is mentioned by the prophet Zechariah on an important occasion-- "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying and he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him," Zechariah 1:7, 3:1.

Apparently, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem at the time of Joiakim, the high priest; for Nehemiah 12:25-26 states-- "Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe." According to Nehemiah

3:1, it appears that Eliashib was working on the gate project after the completion of the walls occurred; if this is the case, then it occurred in the thirty-first year of Darius (491 B.C., Hebrew counting)-- "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it, even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel."

In Numbers 4:3, it is implied that the high priest must be at least thirty years of age before he could serve in the Temple. Since Johanan was already the high priest in the seventeenth year of Darius, he would be thirty years old in that year (505 B.C.). If one takes Nehemiah 12:22 literally, then Darius the Persian appears to be Darius I--"The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to [in, LXX] the reign of Darius the Persian." From this statement, it appears that all the priests and chief of the fathers ruled during the reign of Darius the Persian who ruled for thirty-six years.

In addition, it seems that Eliashib had been living at the time of Nehemiah's return to Babylon in 490 B.C. However, this high priest appears to be dead when the governor reappears in Jerusalem and the Scripture only refers to Eliashib, as caretaker of the treasury, before Nehemiah's final return--

And before this, Eliashib the priest, have the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king. And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. Nehemiah 12:4-9

ILLUSTRATION XXI: High Priests From The Ezra-Nehemiah Era

PRIEST	BORN	551	522	485
JESHUA	605	54	83	
JOIAKIM	585	34	63	
ELIASHIB	565	14	43	80
JOIADA	545		23	60
JOHANAN	525		3	40
JADDUA	505			20

PRIESTS WHO LIVED DURING THE REIGN OF DARIUS
AND THEIR APPROXIMATE AGES (NEH. 12:10, 22, 26)

This list of high priests was certainly noted by Nehemiah. It is not an appendix as some scholars would suggest. The appendix hypothesis is based on the interpretation of the identity of Darius the Persian as Darius III. It appears that these high priests could not have lived to the end of the Persian kingdom as Josephus indicated in *Antiquities* XI.viii.4-5.

If Eliashib is placed under Artaxerxes I, there is too much time for the priests before him, and if he is placed during the reign of Darius, everything works well and harmonizes.

Similarly, Albright, accepting a late date for Nehemiah and Ezra, has demonstrated that it is impossible to carry these high priests beyond 400 B.C.

Chapter VI - NOTES

¹The six names on the Behistun Inscription, the trilingual inscription set up by Darius at Behistun, after he had crushed the revolts in his empire, are: Vindapana, Utana, Gaubaruwa, Vidarna, Bagabukhsa, and Ardumanis. As can be seen, all but the last name corresponds to Herodotus' list.

The Behistun Inscription is a great document of Darius, in three dialects (Persian, Susian, and Babylonian), carved on the face of a mountain, on a smoothed surface more than 200 feet above the level of the ground and barely accessible by a skilled mountaineer.

²A. T. Olmstead, *History Of The Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 119.

³The Persian Darius claimed to be the legitimate successor of Cambyses. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries he was a usurper. However, the Behistun Inscription shows that Darius tried to prove that he was the scion of the house of Achemenes. Thus, he gives his pedigree:

"Says Darius the king-- My father (was) Hystaspes; the father of Hystaspes (was) Arsames; the father of Arsames (was) Ariaramnes; the father of Ariaramnes was Teispes; the father (of Teispes) was Achaemenes ... on that account we have been called Achaemenians; from antiquity we have descended; from antiquity our family have been kings. ... (There are) eight of my race who have been kings before (me); I (am) the ninth." The Behistun Inscription, col. 1, lines 2-4 in Frances R. B. Godolphin, ed., *The Greek Historians*, Vol. 2 (New York: The Random House, 1942), pp. 623-632.

⁴Compare the Behistun Inscription in Francis R. B. Godolphin ed., *The Greek Historians*, pp. 623-632. Further quotations in the text are cited from this translation of the Behistun Inscription.

⁵Darius the Persian adopted a policy of firmness reminiscent of the cruelty of Assyrians such as Ashurbanipal. More than once Darius boasts about his treatment of a rebel, 'cutting off his nose and his ears and his tongue and putting out his eyes,' and casting him in fetters at the royal court to be gazed at by the people as a warning that rebellion does not pay.

⁶Cf., *New International Version Pictorial Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1981), pp. 498 and 520.

⁷John Bright, *A History Of Israel* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 360-361.

⁸The Jewish colony at Elephantine seems to have been composed largely of mercenary soldiers, although the papyri indicate that some members engaged in trade. They evidently settled in Egypt during the reign of Pharaoh Hophra (595 B.C. - 570 B.C.). The Elephantine colony had built a temple to Yahweh, whom they called Yahu, which was standing when Cambyses took Egypt in 526 B.C. When Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar (588 B.C.) and the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, Egypt seemed a suitable haven for those Jews who had been pro-Egyptian and anti-Babylonian. Although Jeremiah had counseled the Jews not to go to Egypt (Jeremiah 42:18-22), many rejected his prophetic advice, and even the prophet himself was forced to go to Egypt. The Egyptians evidently welcomed the Jews during the years immediately following their defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. But God said they would be captured there by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah 44:12.

When Cambyses captured Egypt, the Elephantine Papyri indicates that he did not destroy the Jewish temple at Elephantine. As Darius I came to power, the fortunes of the Jews changed greatly. The Persians favored the Jews and used them as mercenary soldiers, a fact which the native Egyptians resented.

The papyri state that the priest of Khnum, an Egyptian god, had the Yahu temple at Elephantine destroyed around 410 B.C. In 408 B.C. the Egyptian Jews addressed letters to the land of Palestine requesting the officials there for help in rebuilding their temple. Papyri #12 dated in November 26, 401 B.C., records that the temple was rebuilt and that 'Yahu dwells in Yeb, the fortress, in his sanctuary.'

⁹Zerubbabel's rule was real though little is known about it, as is the case of others in the Messianic

line. Zerubbabel was closely associated with Joshua (Haggai 1:1, 12 2:4). Both men were a type of the Hebrew Messiah (cf., Zechariah 3:8; Haggai 2:21-23).

¹⁰This quote of the Behistun Inscription is taken from Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1977), p. 371.

¹¹Jeremiah 25:12-13 indicates that there were several requirements before the seventy years prophecy could come to an end: 1) the punishment of the king of Babylon, 2) the punishment of that nation, 3) the punishment of the land of the Chaldeans, and 4) all to become perpetual desolations.

¹²On February 3, 515 B.C. (Gregorian calendar), the second Temple was finished and dedicated a little over seventy years after its destruction in 588 B.C., amid scenes of great rejoicing (Ezra 6:13-18). The new Temple was small in comparison with that built by King Solomon. Israel was no longer a prosperous, sovereign state with kings who received tribute from distant lands. Instead, she was paying tribute to gentile kings as a part of the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, the Second Temple was to become a rallying point for post-exilic Israel.

¹³Quietly, Zerubbabel passes from the political scene; he was over ninety years old! Perhaps, the Persians feared his political goals and removed him as a potential rebel. It seems that the Persians chose to rule the Jews through their high priests-- Jeshua and his successors. Hearing of the Messianic hopes of the Jews, the Persians felt that it would be safer to work through the priests rather than the secular princes who traced their lineage to King David.

¹⁴Scholars who do not see Artaxerxes as appositional to Darius must admit an anachronism in Ezra 6:14 and suggest that the king was included because at a later date, he possibly contributed to the beautifying of the Temple.

¹⁵Once more, the Passover was celebrated after another outstanding event in Israelite history (Numbers 9:5; Joshua 5:10; II Kings 23:21 ff.; II Chronicles 30). The Passover marked the beginning of the year in the Mosaic legislation (Exodus 12:2). Therefore, according to the Hebrew calendar, the Temple Dedication occurred in the sixth year of Darius, and Passover Feast fell in the seventh year of Darius.

¹⁶James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating To The Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 491. Cf., A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri Of The Fifth Century B.C.* (Osnabruch, Germany: Otto Zeller, 1967), pp. 60-65.

¹⁷There has been considerable disagreement concerning the date of Ezra; for some very able scholars feel that the texts have been dislocated and that Nehemiah should be placed before Ezra. This is the view of H. H. Rowley, "The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Servant of the Lord and other Essays on the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 131-159. However, the present research follows the traditional order as maintained in the Massoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. The traditional view fits well with the chronological order of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.

At this point in the book of Ezra (chapter 7) most scholars would assume that over fifty years have passed in silence between the dedication of the Second Temple (515 B.C.) and the arrival of Ezra in Palestine in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (457 B.C.). Assuming this, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. writes:

"On the assumption that Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra 7:1 was Artaxerxes I Longimanus, Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem must have occurred in 457 B.C. (the seventh year of the king, Ezra 7:8). Thus Ezra's career at Jerusalem commenced twelve years before that of Nehemiah, who did not come until the twentieth year, or 445 B.C. Ezra himself undoubtedly wrote most of the book named after him." *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 411.

Also, William F. Albright formerly placed Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404 B.C.- 359 B.C.). However, this theory would render passages like Nehemiah 8:2 quite spurious, since these references place Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries. Later, Albright receded from this earlier position. He wrote--

"We are very unsatisfactorily informed about the date of Ezra. The most recent evidence favors a date for Ezra's mission in or about the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes; that is, about 428 B.C.E. It is not clear whether Nehemiah was in Jerusalem at the time; he is not specifically mentioned in the Ezra

memoirs proper; the evidence is conflicting. There can, however, be little doubt that his influence was directly responsible for the royal rescript giving Ezra extensive powers in connection with his plan to reform the religious organization at Jerusalem."

Albright is quoted in L. Finkelstein, *The Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1955), p. 53.

¹⁸The following is the letter of the king granting permission for the return under Ezra. At one time, doubts were cast upon the authenticity of this letter because of its markedly Jewish tone and the extremely generous support which is promised. However, it is very likely that Ezra in his official position as 'Secretary of State for Jewish Religious Affairs' drew up the letter. Documents of the period show the generosity of other Persian monarchs, for an example, Cyrus. Such generosity was a small price to pay for peace and stability in the empire. Darius the Great tried to maintain the policies of Cyrus and this can be seen by the Aramaic letter--

"Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." Ezra 7:12-26

¹⁹Ezra's genealogy can be compared with the data of I Chronicles 6:3-15.

²⁰The threefold division of the Hebrew canon is: 1) the Torah, 2) the Prophets, and 3) the Writings.

²¹It should be remembered that the division of Ezra-Nehemiah into two books did not take place in the Hebrew Bible until the fifteenth century A.D., and apparently originated in Christian circles with Origin in the third century.

²²David Noel Freedman, "The Chronology Of Israel And The Ancient Near East," G. Ernest Wright, ed., *The Bible And The Ancient Near East* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 279.

²³H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), pp. 131-159.

²⁴A. van Hoonacker, "La succession chronologique Nehemie-Esdras," *Revue Biblique* XXXII (1923), pp. 481-494; XXXIII (1924), pp. 33-64.

²⁵Albright, *The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra*, pp. 90-96.

²⁶Freedman, *op.cit.*, pp. 279-280.

²⁷Gleason L. Archer, Jr. summarizes the traditional view of the chronology of Ezra--

"On the assumption that Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra 7:1 was Artaxerxes I Longimanus, Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem must have occurred in 457 B.C. (the seventh year of the king, Ezra 7:8). Thus Ezra's career at Jerusalem commenced twelve years before that of Nehemiah, who did not come until the twentieth year, or 445 B.C. Ezra himself undoubtedly wrote most of the book named after him. (Note the use of I in Ezra 7:10.) But he evidently incorporated into the final edition the personal memoirs of Nehemiah (i.e., the book of Nehemiah) including even his form of the list of returnees. Using Nehemiah's library facilities, Ezra probably composed Chronicles during this same period." *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 411.

²⁸John Bright assumes that the 'seventh year' (Ezra 7:7 f.) is an error for some other number, most plausibly the 'thirty-seventh year'. He writes--

"We take the view, then, that Nehemiah was governor from 445 until 433, when (Neh. 13:6) he returned to the Persian court for an unspecified length of time. Circa 428, Ezra arrived by which time Nehemiah was almost certainly back in Jerusalem colliding, as he probably already had done before, with apostates and backsliders. Ezra's work was thus done during Nehemiah's second term of office. This view, which is developed in the text, allows us to resolve the perennial problem of the relationship of Ezra's reforms to Nehemiah's in a manner which is, I believe, both plausible and faithful to the evidence. The reforms of the two men ran, in part, concurrently and converged at the same point. Nehemiah tells his own side of it and claims the credit; the Chronicler, as one would expect, gives the credit to Ezra." *A History Of Israel*, p. 386.

²⁹Cf., W. O. E. Oesterly, and Theodore Robinson, *A History Of Israel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932) Vol. II, pp. 114-118.

³⁰When the Persians had vanquished the Ionians by sea, they laid siege to Miletus by sea and land, mining the walls and using every device against it, till the sixth year after the revolt of Aristagoras they took the city high and low and enslaved it (*Herodotus* VI.18) Loeb page 165. The revolt lasted from 501 B.C. - 495 B.C.

³¹A. E. Cundall, "Nehemiah," D. Guthrie, et al., eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 404.

³²Nehemiah was possibly a eunuch. This would account for the fact that he had access to the king when the queen also was present (cf., Nehemiah 2:6). Also, there is no indication that Nehemiah was married. As a cupbearer, his main duty was to taste the wine in the presence of the king to ensure that it was not poisoned. There would have been other cupbearers besides Nehemiah.

³³The expression, 'beyond the river' literally means 'the other side of the river', i.e., the Euphrates. This is a technical term for that province of the Persian Empire that stretched from the Euphrates down the Syrian and Palestinian littoral to the borders of Egypt.

³⁴Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology And The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 311.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 312. The name Geshem is now known from two sources, one being a contemporary inscription found at Hegra in Arabia, and the other found in a temple on the borders of Egypt, belonging probably to Arabs who worshipped there at a time when their influence extended to this point.

The first inscription reads as follows: "Niran, son of Hadiru, inscribed his name in the days of Gasham, son of Shahr, and Abd, governor of Dedan." A.T. Olmstead affirms that "this is the Arab

Geshm, opponent of Nehemiah." *History Of The Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 295.

During Nehemiah's time, the kings of Dedan were rulers of a vast area to the east of the Jordan and extending away to the south and although naturally under Persian domination they had some sort of control over a wide area.

The phrase 'Abd [servant], governor of Dedan' is reminiscent of the one in the Bible, 'Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite' (Nehemiah 2:10, 19). Tobiah is described as 'the servant' and the governor of Dedan is also 'servant'. Another feature about the inscription is the use of the word PHT for 'governor'. This same word occurs in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as an element in a proper name, Pahat-Moab. W. F. Albright has suggested that the name, which means 'governor of Moab', may well have come from such a governor who gave his name to the family. Compare Albright, *The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 92, note 191.

The second inscription was found in a temple on the Egyptian border. On the outskirts of the area, controlled by the kings of Dedan, there was a temple where offerings were made to the North Arabian goddess Han-'Allot, and in which worshippers had deposited long ago a number of silver vessels, three of which bore inscriptions in Aramaic. The proper names on these are, with one exception, all north Arabic. One of them is of special interest to us because it carries the words 'Qainu son of Geshem [Gusham] king of Kedar'. Cf., Frank M. Cross, "Geshem the Arab, Enemy of Nehemiah," *Biblical Archaeologist* (May, 1955), p. 47.

These inscriptions are securely dated to the end of the fifth century B.C. by converging lines of evidence. I. Rabinowitz, who published the material, traces the objects to the Arab shrine at Tell el-Maskhutah (ancient Succoth) in the Wadi Tumilat on the eastern part of the Nile delta. It is probable that this 'Qainu son of Geshem king of Kedar' was, in fact, the son of Nehemiah's opponent, since the style of Aramaic points to a date about 400 B.C.

³⁷Isaac Mendelson comments on the situation: "Nehemiah 5:1-5 proves that in Palestine loans were obtained, as in Assyria, on security. Horses, fields, vineyards, olive groves, and children were pledged, and if the debts were not repaid, the creditors would retain the land as their property and the children as slaves." *Legal Aspects of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria and Palestine. A Comparative Study*, (3000-500 B.C.) (Williamsport, Pennsylvania: The Bayard Press, 1932), p. 19. Slavery within Israel was permitted, within well-defined limits (cf., Exodus 21:2-11; Leviticus 25:39-43; Deuteronomy 15:12-18), but interest was not to be charged on loans to poor fellow-Israelites (cf., Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35 ff.; Deuteronomy 23:19 f.).

³⁸Normally the people would be taxed for the support of the governor's establishment. Nehemiah's reference to 'the former governors who were before me', probably did not include Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel, but to those immediately preceding Nehemiah, either the governor of Samaria or a subordinate official at Jerusalem.

³⁹Shemaiah, a prophet (Nehemiah 6:12), is unknown apart from this passage. The inference is that he claimed to have a special revelation for Nehemiah concerning a plot on his life.

⁴⁰Josephus records some of the great problems which Nehemiah encountered with his wall restoration--

"But now when the Ammonites, and Moabites, and Samaritans, and all that inhabited Coelesyria, heard that the building went on apace, they took it heinously, and proceeded to lay snares for them, and to hinder their intentions. They also slew many of the Jews, and sought how they might destroy Nehemiah himself, by hiring some of the foreigners to kill him. They also put the Jews in fear, and disturbed them, and spread abroad rumours, as if many nations were ready to make an expedition against them, by which means they were harassed, and had almost left off the building. But none of these things could deter Nehemiah from being diligent about the work; he only set a number of men about him as a guard to his body, and so unweariedly persevered therein, and was insensible of any trouble, out of his desire to perfect this work. And thus did he attentively, and with great forecast, take care of his own safety; not that he feared death, but of this persuasion, that is he were dead, the walls for his citizens would never be raised. He also gave orders that the builders should keep their ranks, and have their armour on while they were building. Accordingly, the mason had his sword on, as well as he that brought the materials for building. He also appointed that their shields should lie very near them; and he placed trumpeters at every five hundred feet, and charged them, that if their enemies appeared, they should give notice of it to the

people, that they might fight in their armour, and their enemies might not fall upon them naked. He also went about the compass of the city by night, being never discouraged, neither about the work itself, nor about his own diet and sleep, for he made no use of those things for his pleasure, but of necessity." *Antiquities* XI.v.8

It is unfortunate that Josephus places the wall restoration by Nehemiah in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Xerxes, in the ninth month. However, it is interesting to note that Josephus places the adversity caused by the Jew's enemies as lasting more than fifty-two days.

⁴¹Josephus refers to this great event of Ezra's reading of the Law at the Feast of Tabernacles--

"Now when they kept the feast of tabernacles in the seventh month, and almost all the people were come together to it, they went up to the open part of the temple, to the gate which looked eastward, and desired Esdras that the laws of Moses might be read to them. Accordingly, he stood in the midst of the multitude and read to them; and this he did from morning to noon. Now, by hearing the laws read to them, they were instructed to be righteous men for the present and for the future; but as for their past offences, they were displeased at themselves, and proceeded to shed tears on their account, as considering with themselves, that if they had kept the law, they had endured none of these miseries which they had experienced; but when Esdras saw them in that disposition, he bade them go home and not weep, for that it was a festival, and they ought not to weep thereon, for that it was not lawful so to do." *Antiquities* XI.v.5

⁴²The essential character of this festival was thanksgiving (*cf.*, Deuteronomy 16:13 ff.; Leviticus 23:33-43). The feast was known in Solomon's time (I Kings 8:2) and by Hosea in the Northern Kingdom (Hosea 12:9). Also, it was observed by Zerubbabel and his company (Ezra 3:4). Yet its detailed provisions were unknown even among the religious leadership (Nehemiah 8:13-15).

In Nehemiah 8, no mention is made of the Day of Atonement, held on the tenth day of the seventh month, just before the Feast of Tabernacles (the fifteenth to twenty-second day of the month).

⁴³Most of the names occurring in Nehemiah 10:2-8 recur in chapter 12:1-7. As only four priestly families arrived with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:36-39), others may have developed from them or arrived subsequently. All but four of the Levites mentioned in Nehemiah 10:9-13 are named again in Nehemiah 8:7; 9:4; 12:8. Variations in the list of the leading secular families when compared with Ezra 2 may be due to such variable factors as movements, subdivisions or even the extinction of families.

⁴⁴Jewish tradition about Ezra as a second Law-giver is well established. He is also known as the refounder of Palestinian Jewry and a reformer of Jewish life. A second century Jewish scholar, Rabbi Jose of Palestine gave him the highest compliment: "Ezra was worthy of having the Law given through him to Israel, had not Moses preceded him." Harry M. Orlinsky, *Ancient Israel* (Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 136.

⁴⁵The third part of a shekel was less than the recognized amount of a half shekel mentioned in Exodus 30:13. This was probably due to the impoverished economic situation.

⁴⁶The passage reads: "As we shall be celebrating the purification of the Temple on the twenty-fifth of Chislev, we consider it proper to notify you, so that you may celebrate the feast of Tabernacles and of the fire that appeared when Nehemiah, the builder of the Temple and the altar, offered sacrifice," II Maccabees 1:18. Also, Appendix N shows that there is no problem in the reference to Jonathan as the high priest and as a contemporary with Nehemiah.

⁴⁷The Spartans had been celebrating a religious festival during which military operations were taboo; therefore, they had been unable to participate in the fighting. Only, the very small polis of Plataea had sent a thousand troops to join the ten thousand Athenians. The credit for driving off the Persians for ten years went primarily to Athens.

⁴⁸Cundall, *op.cit.*, p. 411.

⁴⁹Josephus' story undoubtedly reflects a correct tradition, which is based on Samaritan sources. It provides the basis for the religious aspect of the Jewish-Samaritan hostility-- so prominent in the New Testament times (John 4:9, 20). Also, it explains the origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the almost

incredible fact that this independent text of the five books of Moses had its own distinct transmission by scribes from the fifth century B.C. until its discovery in modern times without any known contact with the transmitted Hebrew text.

⁵⁰William Sanford La Sor, et al., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 652.

In a footnote on the same page, La Sor gives the background information on the Samaritan Papyri--

"Found in a cave in the wadi about nine miles north of Jericho and some 1470 feet above the Jordan, twenty legal and administrative documents were uncovered along with the skeletons of some two hundred people. The documents and the jewelry, seals, and rings found with them indicate that these people were influential and wealthy. References to Antiochus II (404 - 359) and Darius III (335 - 330) and the coins found date the texts to ca. 375 - 335. The circumstances and date suggest that the find documents the sad conclusion to an event recorded by Josephus. Samaria, at first favorable to Alexander the Great, later burned alive Andromachus, Alexander's prefect over Syria. Alexander returned to Samaria and destroyed the city. The leaders of the revolt apparently fled to the cave where they were discovered and killed."

The reader should compare Frank M. Cross, Jr., "Papyri of the Fourth Century B.C. from Daliyeh," in Freedman and J. C. Greenfield, eds., *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 41-62.

⁵¹The Talmud reads: "Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit [of prophetic inspiration] departed from Israel; yet they were still able to avail themselves of the Bath-kol." I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: The Soncino Press, 1935), Mishna Tract, Sanhedrin 11a.

⁵²I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: The Soncino Press, 1938), Mishna Tract, Megillah 15a. R. Nahman continues:

"For it is written in the prophecy of Malachi, *Judah hath dealt treacherously and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loveth and hath married the daughter of a strange God.* And who was it that put away the strange women? Ezra, as it is written, *And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam answered and said unto Ezra: We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women.*"

⁵³Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology And The Old Testament*, p. 314.

CHAPTER VII: THE DECLINE AND FALL OF PERSIA

I. Introduction

In the twentieth year of Darius, the Greeks defeated the Persians in the Battle of Marathon (August 15, 491 B.C.; Gregorian calendar). Greek power increased and Persia faced trouble in just keeping her wide empire in submission. Fortunately for Persian rulers, the Greek city states never formed a united government and the Persian kings were able to play one city state against the other. It was this battle which forced Darius back to Persia in his third year.

The real union of Greek city states was achieved through the genius of Phillip of Macedon, who was not a Greek. By means of the Hellenic League, comprising all the Greek states except Sparta, a death blow was dealt to the Persian Empire.

When Phillip was murdered in 336 B.C., he was unable to complete his plans and his mantle fell upon his young son, Alexander the Great.

As a young man, Alexander was a Macedonian by nationality, and he dreamed of natural glory as the heir of Phillip. Culturally, he was a Greek who was educated by Aristotle, the philosopher. He carried the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer, 'the Greek Bible', with him on his campaigns. While Alexander was thoroughly sold on the excellence of the Greek 'way of life', the Greeks gave him little support.

As the 'apostle of Hellenism', Alexander had a humble beginning. With a small army, largely of native Macedonians, and a staff of historians, geographers, and botanists, Alexander crossed the Dardanelles in 334 B.C. to challenge the Persian sovereign, Darius III, who did not take this expedition seriously. The outcome of various Greek-Persian battles would change the history of the world, especially for the Jewish people who would find themselves under the dominion of Greece. The strict Judaism, which Ezra and Nehemiah established, would clash repeatedly with the humanistic philosophy of Hellenism.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the reigns of the Persian kings after Darius I, and to introduce Alexander, the Macedonian who overthrew the last Persian king. The ultimate purpose is to fine tune the chronology from the period through the use of computer programs and astronomy.

II. 485 B.C.- 330 B.C.-- The Decline Of The Persian Empire

Darius I ruled the Persian Empire at the peak of her glory. He was very successful in putting down revolt until he tackled the Ionian Revolt which eventually culminated in the Battle of Marathon which became disastrous for the Persians. Before Darius could reorganize, he died. This was unfortunate for the Persians as history reveals.

A. 485 B.C.-464 B.C.-- Xerxes

Xerxes had been chosen by Darius as his successor to the Persian throne (*Herodotus* VII.2-4). He was the son of Darius by Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus. Xerxes served under Darius I for twelve years as the viceroy of Babylon before his father's death.

The Persian form of his name is *Khshayarsha* which some scholars have identified with the Hebrew word- Ahasuerus. This word, as it is supposed, is related to Xerxes. By making this linguistic connection, Xerxes has often been diagnosed as the

Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6 and the Book of Esther. The presupposition is so popular that a number of Biblical translators have substituted the name 'Xerxes' into the Bible text for the Hebrew word Ahasuerus, and notes that the Hebrew Ahasuerus is a variant of Xerxes' name.¹

As shown, if the chronological note to the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6 is a reference to Xerxes, then this passage is inconsistent with the rest of the chronological order and data of Ezra-Nehemiah. For the chronology of Ezra-Nehemiah begins with the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia in 551 B.C. (Ezra 1:1) and ends, most probably, in the last year of Darius in 485 B.C. (Nehemiah 5:14-16).

1. The Attempted Conquest Of Greece

At the age of thirty-five, Xerxes succeeded his father to the Persian throne. During this time the land of Egypt was in rebellion and the Greek problem had not been resolved.

Promptly, Xerxes made Egypt submissive to the Persian crown and he placed his younger brother, Achemenes, in charge of Egypt (*Herodotus* VII.7).

Meanwhile, as the king was preparing for an invasion against Greece, Babylon rebelled. King Xerxes appointed Zopyrus as satrap over Babylon. The rebellious Babylonians killed Zopyrus. Then Megalysos, the son of Zopyrus, was appointed satrap.

Xerxes was determined to thoroughly punish the defiant Babylonians. He had the Persians raze the walls of the city and destroy the ornate temples of Babylon. Esagila, the famous temple, was demolished and the golden statue of Bel-Marduk was melted down.

In destroying the statue, Xerxes attempted to end the very concept of a continuing Babylonian Empire. For it was the custom that each king, who claimed to be the legitimate ruler of Babylon, was required to take the hands of this statue of the god of Babylon every New Year's Day. Also, Xerxes dropped the title, 'King of Babylon', which had been part of the royal title of the Persian kings since Cyrus' conquest of the city. Xerxes simply called himself 'King of Persia and Media'.

After successfully resolving the problems within the empire, the Persian monarch turned his attention toward the Greek problem. Herodotus (484 B.C.-425 B.C.) and Diodorus Siculus (80 B.C. - 20 B.C.),² the Greek historians, have much to say about Xerxes' endeavors to resolve the Greek problem (*Herodotus* VII.8-IX.122; *The Library of History* XI.1-69). Herodotus was a contemporary with Xerxes who ruled from 485 B.C. to 464 B.C. Herodotus places the Persian campaign against Greece in 480 B.C., the fifth year after the conquest of Egypt--

For full four years from the conquest of Egypt he was equipping his host and preparing all that was needful therefor; and the fifth year was completed he set forth on his march with the might of a great multitude. Of all armaments whereof we have knowledge this was by much the greatest, insomuch that none were aught in comparison of it. *Herodotus* VII.20

The campaign started in May or June 480 B.C., and got off to a good start. The early battles were disastrous for the Greeks. When Xerxes and his army crossed over the Hellespont, they conquered Thessaly in spite of the valiant fighting of ten thousand Greek heavily armed infantry who had been sent to guard the vale of Tempe.

Next the middle of Greece was under attack by the Persians. The Greeks were determined to hold Mt. Oeta, which was flanked on the right by the Euboean Straits and the Gulf of Malis. Under the leadership of the Spartan, Leonidas, ten thousand

Greeks were resolved to defend the only road through the pass at Thermopylae.

A Greek fleet was sent to meet the Persian navy at Artemisium, but the Persians lost, according to Greek figures, four hundred ships of war, and a larger number of transports off the Artemisium promontory. Fifteen Persian ships seeking refuge from the storm were captured by the Greeks.

The Spartans, under Leonidas, at Thermopylae were prepared to stop the advancement of the Persians into central Greece until they were betrayed by a Malian named Ephialtes who showed the Persians a path over the mountain to the rear of the Greeks. The brave Spartans fought to the end and Leonidas became the hero by dying at his post. The victory at Thermopylae opened up central Greece for the Persians.

By August of 480 B.C., Xerxes occupied and pillaged Athens.³ He burned the temples on the acropolis, allegedly in revenge for the burning of Sardis by the Greeks at the time of the Ionian revolt.

It appeared that Xerxes' goals for Greece were about to be realized. He hoped to complete the conquest of Greece by engaging the Greek fleet which was concentrated at Salamis. The Greeks had about 380 ships, only half the number the Persians could use in battle. Herodotus records the Battle of Salamis occurring in September, 480 B.C. (*Herodotus* VIII.83-96). This battle became one of the decisive battles of history.

The destruction of Athens had shown the Greeks that their culture and civilization would not be respected by a conqueror like Xerxes. Fighting for their homes and their lives, the Greeks so thoroughly defeated the Persians at Salamis that the Persian fleet, with Xerxes, was forced to flee.

The battle happened as follows. The fleet in the narrow waters of the harbor of Salamis off Athens awaited the Persian attack, despite fierce debate and disagreement among the Greeks. Themistocles eventually sent a misleading message to the Persians pretending that he would betray the Greeks, and so persuaded them that it was safe to attack. The Greek fleet-- helped by deserters from the Persians who revealed Xerxes' battle plans-- won a smashing victory, which Xerxes himself watched from a great throne set up on shore. The Persians lost much of their fleet and the tide of battle turned to the Greeks.

Xerxes turned the command of his large land army over to a general, Mardonius, and returned to Asia. Next, Mardonius fought a series of battles designed to bring Greece finally to her knees before Persia. Much of Attica was despoiled and Mardonius moved on to Boetia. The Greeks of the Peloponnesus took the offensive and Mardonius was defeated at Meggara. Between Plataea and the river Asopus, Mardonius took a defensive position. With 50,000 Asiatic troops and 10,000 Greek allies he awaited attack. Twelve thousand Spartans, heavily armed, joined other Greeks to make a comparable army of 50,000 poised against the Persians. In the cavalry, Mardonius had an advantage; otherwise, the armies were of comparable strength.

After ten days of waiting for favorable omens, Mardonius used his cavalry to attack the Greeks. Being warned of the impending attack, the Greeks were able to make the best use of their forces and decisively defeated the Persians. Mardonius was slain and his army fled, leaving immense stores of provisions and booty in the field. According to Herodotus, approximately 3,000 Persians remained alive.

Because of what Xerxes did to the city of Athens, the Athenians succeeded in conquering Persia's Greek allies. By Autumn of 480 B.C., the entire Hellespont area was in Greek hands. The following spring, Byzantium, the last Persian stronghold in the Greek world, fell, and the bitter struggle between the Persians and the Greeks came to an end. All of this paved the pathway for the conquests of Alexander the Great in Asia in the next century and half.

After the Greek debacle, Xerxes was not to distinguish himself again on the battlefield. The Persian Empire was crumbling because of Xerxes' new taxes, his failure to hold the loyalty of his subjects, and his grave errors of judgment in military actions. He angered the priests of Egypt by taking their temple treasures. He irritated the Athenians and loyal Greek allies when he burned Athens. Alexander the Great and the Greeks would not forget when they in turn burned Persepolis in revenge. Also, the Babylonians were infuriated when Xerxes destroyed Babylon's temple and ordered that Marduk's golden statue be melted down.

The Persian monarch lived for fourteen years after the loss of Greece, but there is little known about those years. Herodotus records the story of Xerxes' adultery and cruelty in *Histories* IX.108-113. A reading of this account will convince the critic that this is not the king whom the godly Esther would have married. In the account, Xerxes' wife, Amestris, thought by some Biblical students to be Esther, controlled by jealousy and cruelty, had Xerxes' guards cut off the supposed paramour's breasts, tongue, nose, ears and lips (*Herodotus* IX.112). This is not the Biblical Esther whom every Jewish mother wishes her daughter to be like. Yet, according to Herodotus, Amestris was Xerxes' wife from his seventh year forward.

Xerxes was murdered in 464 B.C. by a usurper, Artabanus, who is said to have reigned seven months before being slain by Artaxerxes I, the third son and legitimate heir of the king. Under Persian custom, the first son born after the king's accession to the throne was regarded as the legitimate successor. Xerxes' reign lasted for twenty-one years (485 B.C.- 464 B.C.).

Diodorus Siculus gives the following account of the death of Xerxes in his bedchamber--

During this year, in Asia Artabanus, an Hyrcanian by birth, who enjoyed the greatest influence at the court of King Xerxes and was captain of the royal body-guard, decided to slay Xerxes and transfer the kingship to himself. He communicated the plot to Mithridates the eunuch, who was the king's chamberlain and enjoyed his supreme confidence, and he, since he was also a relative of Artabanus as well as his friend, agreed to the plot. And Artabanus, being led at night by Mithridates into the king's bedchamber, slew Xerxes and then set out after the king's sons. These were three in number, Darius the eldest and Artaxerxes, who were both living in the palace, and the third, Hystaspes, who happened to be away from home at the time, since he was administering the satrapy of Bactria. Now Artabanus, coming while it was yet night to Artaxerxes, told him that his brother Darius had murdered his father and was shifting the kingship to himself. He counselled him, therefore, before Darius should seize the throne, to see to it that he should not become a slave through sheer indifference but that he should ascend the throne after punishing the murderer of his father; and he promised to get the body-guard of the king to support him in the undertaking. Artaxerxes fell in with the advice and at once, with the help of the bodyguard, slew his brother Darius. And when Artabanus saw how his plan was prospering, he called his own sons to his side and crying out that now was his time to win the kingship he strikes Artaxerxes with his sword. Artaxerxes, being wounded merely and seriously hurt by the blow, held off Artabanus and dealing him a fatal blow killed him. Thus Artaxerxes, after being saved in this unexpected fashion and having taken vengeance upon the slayer of his father, took over the kingship of the Persians. So Xerxes died in the manner we have described, after having been king of the Persians for more than twenty years, and Artaxerxes succeeded to the kingship and ruled for forty years. *Library of History* XI.69

If Esther was the queen of Xerxes, it seems reasonable that she would have been warned of the death threat against her husband just as she was warned of the death threat against her own Jewish people.

Religiously, Xerxes, like his father-- Darius I, was a Zoroastrian. This may account, in part, for his willingness to destroy the Bel-Marduk temple and other temples in the

city of Babylon. If he is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, it appears that Esther's Judaism had no influence on him.

2. Two Sources Astronomically Dating The Reign And Death Of Xerxes

a. Seleucid Text

A broken tablet from ancient Babylon is now located in the British Museum. It gives a list of lunar eclipses at eighteen year intervals- a lunar period well known to the Babylonians. This was compiled by Babylonian astronomers from observations made between 609 and 465 B.C. Near the end of this list, between two eclipses reported in the same year, we find the following statement, "[Lunar] month V, day 14 [?], Xerxes was murdered by his son." The sign for the day of the month is unfortunately damaged and could be anything from fourteen to eighteen; the year is not given at all. Nevertheless, using the lunar eclipse observations, one can establish the date with considerable confidence. Although the year is not provided, it can be readily deduced from the eighteen-year Babylonian sequence of lunar eclipses as 465 B.C. However, even if the year had only been known approximately, it could still have been dated by the two eclipses that were reported at about the same time. The first of these occurred when the moon was in the constellation of Sagittarius and the second on the fourteenth day of the eighth lunar month. For many years both before and after 465 B.C., one finds no such combination of eclipses; it can be found only in 465 itself. The calculated dates of the two eclipses are thus June 5 and November 30 in that year. These dates enable one to determine that the fifth lunar month began on July 22 in 465 B.C. Hence it would seem that Xerxes was murdered sometime between August 4 and 8 in 465 B.C., however, letters from Elephantine prove 464 B.C.

A very important thing to remember is that this text comes from ancient Seleucid archives. The Seleucid astronomers collected, copied or excerpted those of the ancient observations that were important to them, and thus insured their preservation. Anytime a tablet has been duplicated, it is subject to copy errors like posting the historical data on the wrong astronomical text. We may have data recorded on the end of a year, whereas we feel it should be on the beginning. As an example, another Seleucid compiled text, VAT 4956, records the astronomical events for 568 B.C. which had been credited to Nebuchadnezzar's thirty-seventh year, yet the astronomical data fits year thirty-eight of Nebuchadnezzar. The closing of the text also reads year thirty-seven of Nebuchadnezzar.

b. Elephantine Texts

It is important to remember that the Elephantine letters are not copies, they are originals. It is also important to remember that there are more than thirty of them, and they all agree. Every one has an astronomical date, coupled to a 365 day Egyptian calendar. If all these letters and their dates match the years for the Persian kings, they must take priority over fragments of copies which have come down. Aramaic papyri No. 5 in Cowley's *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* reads, "on the 18th of Elul, that is the 28th of Pachon, year 15 of King Xerxes ..." This date converts to September 7, 471 B.C., a Sunday. The fifteenth year in Hebrew counting is year fourteen, which would make 485 B.C. his accession year. Aramaic papyri No. 6 is dated the year Artaxerxes took the throne. It would also be the year his father, Xerxes, died, and would return one to the astronomical death date for him. The heading of the letter is dated the "18th of Chisleu, that is the 7th day of Thoth, in year 21." This date converts to December 18, 464 B.C., a Saturday. If Xerxes died in 464 B.C., he could not have been dead in 465 B.C. The astronomical text from Babylon must be rejected as unreliable.

ILLUSTRATION XXII: Egyptian Letters Dating Xerxes

C5	18 Elul = 28 Pachons	Sept. 7, 471 B.C., Sunday	Year 15
C6	19 Kislev = 7 Thoth	Dec. 18, 464 B.C., Saturday	Year 21/22

B. 464 B.C.- 423 B.C.-- Artaxerxes I

During the reign of Artaxerxes I, Herodotus, 'the father of history', was traveling throughout the world and writing his famous histories. Pericles was in power in Athens and the Parthenon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was under construction on the acropolis. The city of Athens reached her zenith of culture and influence during the fifth century B.C. The age of Artaxerxes I for the Greeks was the dawn of the sun rise of Greece over the world.

1. The Loss Of Persian Prestige

Artaxerxes Longimanus, *i.e.*, 'the long handed' because his right hand was reputedly longer than his left hand, had the usual problem of putting down rebellions in the various parts of his realm when he ascended the throne. The efficient governmental system of Darius had been weakened during the reign of Xerxes, with the result that rebellion was more likely to succeed.

Artaxerxes I tried to hold the empire together with many battles in Bactria, Egypt, and Greece.

Hystaspes, Artaxerxes' brother, attempted to assert independent rule in Bactria. Quickly and forcefully, Artaxerxes acted to re-establish his own royal authority there.

Meanwhile, disturbances in Egypt gave Artaxerxes more cause for concern. (Compare Diodorus' *The Library of History* XI.71, 74-75, 77). Many in Egypt hoped for independence by defying Persia as Greece had done. Inaros, Pharaoh Psammeticus' son, was recognized as king by a group of eastern delta nomes. While Artaxerxes I was squelching the Bactrian revolt, Achemenes went to Persia to gain help to force Egypt into submission. Achemenes, the son of Darius I and the brother of Xerxes I, represented the Persian interests in Egypt. Raising an army in Persia, he returned to Egypt.

In the initial battle, Achemenes defeated Inaros. Subsequently, a Greek fleet of two hundred vessels came to aid the rebellious Egyptians. As a result, most of the city of Memphis was lost to the Persians. Artaxerxes raised a new army under the leadership of Megabyzos and enlisted the Phoenician navy under Artabazos. In the Delta, a decisive battle was fought and Inaros was wounded. In Prosopitis, the Egyptians and their Greek allies barricaded themselves for eighteen months. Unable to dislodge them by military attack, the Persians diverted the branch of the Nile in which the Greeks had anchored their fleet. Before surrendering to the Persians, the desperate crew burned their ships. The Phoenicians sank a fleet of fifty Greek triremes which had been sent to reinforce the rebels. The Egyptian rebellion was put down; however, Persia had to pay a high price to retain her control over Egypt.

During his regnal years Artaxerxes I was quite successful in putting down rebellion, but the concessions he had to make to the Greeks indicated a weakness which was to grow more pronounced among his successors. He accepted the peace formula known as the treaty of Callias in 449 B.C., his fifteenth year (Persian reckoning), which postponed a full-fledged war with Greece.

Artaxerxes I was not in the position to strengthen his hold in the west, and the decline of the Persian Empire began with the loss of territory. Egypt and Cyprus were still subject to Persia, but most of the rest of the west was gone. The Greek Athenian

fleet dominated the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Thrace was self-governing. The conquests of Cyrus the Great in Ionia were in Greek hands.

Like other great powers of the past, Persia eventually passed her peak of influence and began a long period of decay. Military defeat, political intrigue, and economic blunders contributed to the empire's failure. Scholars, generally, put the decline of Persia's power as dating from the reign of Artaxerxes I (464 B.C.- 423 B.C.) who ruled for forty-one years. Diodorus of Sicily writes: "Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, died after a reign of forty years, and Xerxes succeeded to the throne and ruled for a year" (*The Library of History*) XII.64.

It has already been pointed out as to the great age that Nehemiah would have been if Artaxerxes I was the Biblical Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah. According to Ezra 2:1-2, Nehemiah was one of the chief fathers who returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, but who also Nebuchadnezzar had carried away into captivity in 599 B.C. Assuming that Nehemiah was ten years old at this time, then how old would he be in the thirty second year of Artaxerxes I (433 B.C.), the year of the completion of the construction of Jerusalem's walls and gates, a year accepted by a number of Biblical students? (599 B.C. + 433 B.C. = 166 plus 10 = 167 years). Therefore, if one interprets Ezra 2:1-2 literally, Nehemiah could not have ministered during the reign of Artaxerxes I for his age would deter this.

2. Astronomically Validating The Reign Of Artaxerxes I

The accession year of Artaxerxes has already been shown to fit the death year of Xerxes by letter Nos. 5 and 6. The following letters from Cowley's *Aramaic Papyri* were written during his reign. All of them fit perfectly into the years he has been given.

ILLUSTRATION XXIII: Elephantine Letters Dating Artaxerxes I

C6	18 Kislev = 7 Thoth	Dec. 18, 464 B.C., Saturday	Accession Year
C8	21 Kislev = 1 Mesore	Nov. 6, 460 B.C., Thursday	Year 6
K1	20 Sivan = 25 Phanemoth	July 1, 451 B.C., Saturday	Year 14
K2	18 [Tammuz] = [3] Pharmouthi	July 6, 449 B.C., Sunday	Year 16
C13	3 Kislev = 10 Mesore	Dec. 2, 446 B.C., Saturday	Year 19
C14	14 Ab [Elul] = 19 Pachons	Aug. 21, 440 B.C., Monday	Year 26
K3	7 Elul = 9 Paoni	Sept. 10, 437 B.C., Thursday	Year 28
K4	25 Tishri = 25 Epiphi	Oct. 25, 434 B.C., Wednesday	Year 31
K5	20 Sivan = 7 Phanemoth	June 6, 427 B.C., Thursday	Year 38

3. Astronomically Validating The Death Of Artaxerxes I

Thucydides records the death of Artaxerxes as happening during the winter before a solar eclipse:

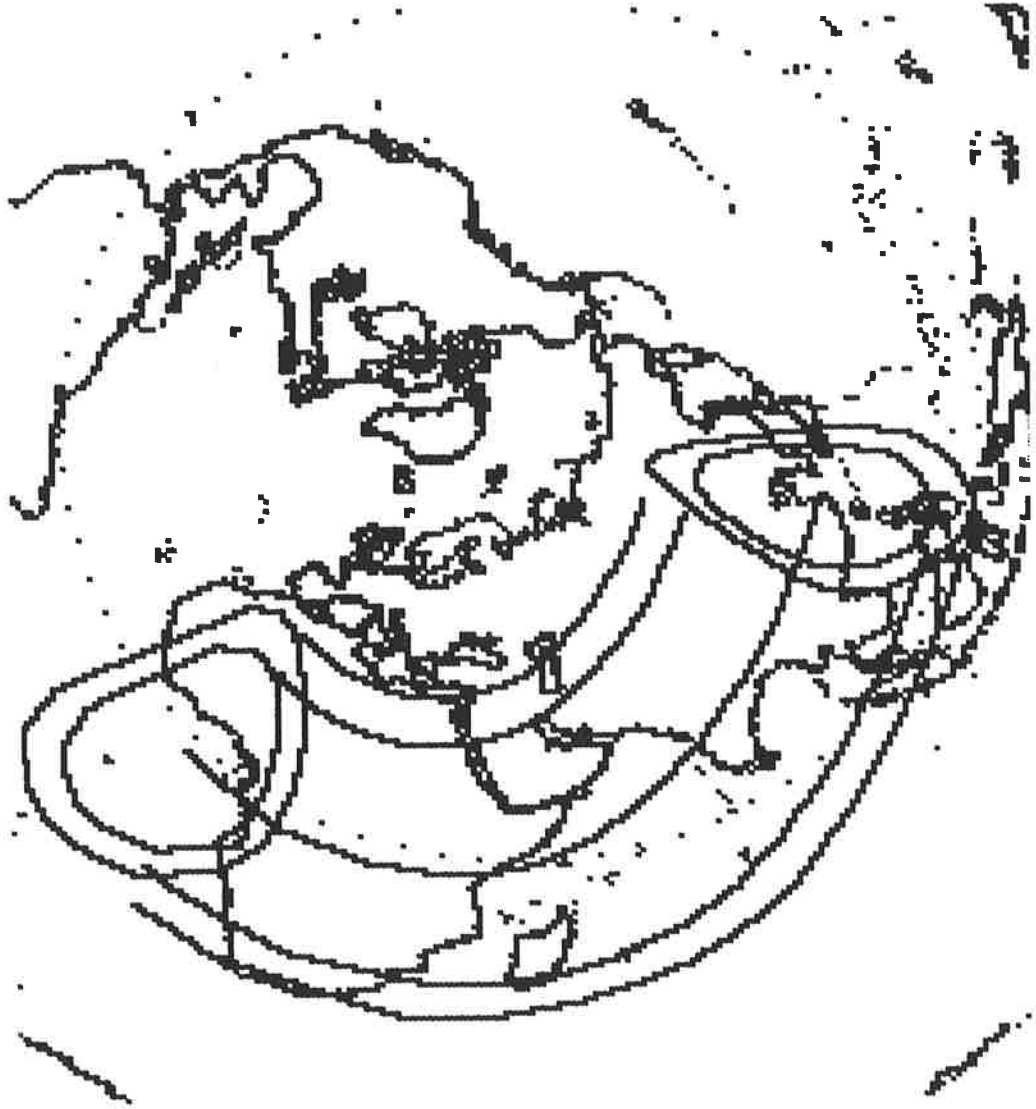
...hearing there of the recent death of King Artaxerxes son of Xerxes-- for he died about that time-- returned to Athens.

The same winter the Chians demolished their new wall at the bidding of the Athenians, who suspected them of planning an insurrection against themselves; they, however, obtained from the Athenians pledges and such security as they could that they would adopt no harsh measures against them. And the winter ended, and with it the seventh year of this war of which Thucydides composed the history.

At the very beginning of the next summer a partial eclipse of the sun took place at new moon, and in the early part of the same month an earthquake. *Thucydides*, IV:L.3-Lii.2.

This solar eclipse is dated to March 5, 423 B.C., the forty-second year of Artaxerxes I.

ILLUSTRATION XXIV: Solar Eclipse Of March 5, 423 B.C., At 100%, 30%, And 10%



C. 423 B.C.- 404 B.C.— Darius II

1. A Reign Of Intrigue And Corruption

The death of Artaxerxes I in 423 B.C. opened a new era of secret plotting in the royal courts of Persia. Xerxes II was killed while intoxicated. His assassin, a son of Artaxerxes' concubine, was killed by Ochus, the son of another concubine. Ochus, who already had support from the Babylonian army, found Susa's army unsympathetic to its new ruler, Darius II. Being forced to deal with Ochus and other pretenders to the throne, Darius II had them cruelly executed.

Darius II Nothus maintained Persian interests in Greece with Sparta's help. Although no battles were fought with the Greeks, Persian gold was used to incite Athens against Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. Persian influence over the Greek cities of Asia Minor was thus strengthened.

Minor success did not change the ultimate pattern of history for the Persian Empire. Revolts continued throughout the empire. This time from the Medes. Egypt remained peaceful except for Elephantine. When tension arose between the Jews in the Elephantine region of Egypt and the local Egyptians, Darius II and the Persians did not intervene.

The Samaritan Papyri help in establishing the chronology of the governors of Samaria. In 1962, the Samaritan Papyri came to light. The documents were discovered by the Ta'amireh Bedouin in a cave of a desolate area north of Jericho in Wadi Daliyeh. The papyri are documents from the close of the Persian period in Palestine and range in date from 375 B.C. to 335 B.C., a period of forty years.

The papyri are legal and administrative in character. One document carries the words: "...iah, son of (San)ballat governor of Samaria." Another states: "... this document was written in Samaria," along with the names of officials before whom the document was written, "(before) Jesus son of Sanballat (and) Hanan, the prefect." It appears interesting that a papyrus refers to a slave named 'Nehemiah' who was either bought or sold for thirty pieces of silver.

This group of papyrus rolls, rolled up and sealed, were written in Aramaic script. This script is still used in present day Hebrew Bibles and in Modern Hebrew.

Wherever the opening or closing formulae of the documents are preserved, it is stated that they were written in Samaria. The names in the papyri suggest a mixed population in the Samaria area. The majority of them preserve the element Yah or Yahu, but others carry names that include pagan divine elements: Qos (Edomite), Sahar (Arabic), Kemosh (Moabite), Ba'al (Canaanite), and Nabu (Babylonian).

Darius II ruled the Persian Empire for nineteen years, during the years 423 B.C.-404 B.C. as Diodorus concludes: "In Asia King Xerxes died after a reign of one year, or, as some record, two months; and his brother Sogdiahus succeeded to the throne and ruled for seven months. He was slain by Darius, who reigned nineteen years" (*The Library of History* XII.71).

2. Astronomically Validating The Reign Of Darius II

A series of five letters from Elephantine also validate the reign of Darius II. They serve to confirm the Persian chronology as well.

ILLUSTRATION XXV: Elephantine Letters Dating Darius II

K6	8 Tammuz = 8 Pharmouthi	July 6, 420 B.C., Monday	Year 4
C20	Elul [Payni]	Sept., 420 B.C.	Year 4
K8	6 Tishri = 22 Payoni	Sept. 17, 416 B.C., Tuesday	Year 8
C25	3 Kislev [Tebeth] = 12 Thoth	Dec. 11, 416 B.C., Wednesday	Year 8/9 (double dated)
C28	24 Shebat = 9 Athyr	Feb. 5, 410 B.C., Tuesday	Year 13/14 (double dated)

D. 404 B.C.- 358 B.C.-- Artaxerxes II

Artaxerxes II Mnemon barely missed assassination by his brother, Cyrus the Younger, during his coronation ceremony at Persepolis. Through his mother's entreaty, Artaxerxes pardoned Cyrus. Returning to his satrapy, Cyrus the Younger plotted rebellion again. This became the most celebrated dynastic quarrel of the period.

1. The Celebrated Dynastic Quarrel

The Persian prince, Cyrus the Younger, hired an army of Greek mercenaries--The Ten Thousand--to support his opposition to Artaxerxes II. Having raised his army, he came close to winning a decisive battle near Babylon. Cyrus was a man of courage, and

might have arrested the decline of the dynasty had he been able to occupy the throne. However, Cyrus died in the battle of Cunaxa in 402 B.C. and the dreams of his followers were dissipated.

The Greek contingent in Cyrus' army was immortalized by Xenophon. After the disastrous battle of Cunaxa, the Ten Thousand, as the Greek soldiers were called, fought their way back home, passing through hostile territory and harried by the Persians under Tissaphernes. Xenophon, himself, was chosen as one of the leaders of the retreat when the Greek generals were killed by the Persians. Xenophon led the Ten Thousand up the Tigris River, past the ruins of Nineveh to the Black Sea and Byzantium. His account of this famous retreat in *The Anabasis* has become one of the great books of military science in the ancient world.⁴

Artaxerxes II was able to maintain some prestige at home and abroad by the use of Persian gold. In Greece, Athens and Sparta were played off against each other to the benefit of Persia.⁵ The Greek cities of Asia Minor were subject to Artaxerxes, and opposition found a quick response. Persian land and sea forces were able to maintain control over the Ionian Greeks.

Within Persia herself, several new problems arose such as: 1) the powerful, hereditary offices in a number of satrapies; 2) the high taxes resulting in revolt; 3) Egypt, Cyprus, Phoenicia and Syria revolting at the accession of Artaxerxes II; 4) one by one the western satrapies all fell away from the empire.

When Egypt, allied with Sparta and the rebel satraps, marched against Artaxerxes II, the Persian Empire seemed doomed, Diodorus (*The Library of History* XV.90-92). Yet, a reprieve came, when a revolt against Pharaoh Takhos made it necessary for Egypt to abandon its plans and surrender. Thus, the threat against Persia was relieved for the time being, but disturbances continued until the death of Artaxerxes II. The glory of Persia was a thing of the past and the disintegration of the empire was accelerated. He ruled for forty-six years from 404 B.C.- 358 B.C. Diodorus gives Artaxerxes II a reign of 'forty-three' years (*The Library of History* XIII.108; XV.93).

2. Astronomically Validating The Reign Of Artaxerxes II

There are three letters from Elephantine which can be used to fix the dates of Artaxerxes II.

ILLUSTRATION XXVI: Elephantine Letters Dating Artaxerxes II

K9	24 Marcheswan = 29 Mesore	Nov. 19, 404 B.C., Wednesday	Year 1
K10	20 Adar = 8 Koihak	March 4, 402 B.C., Thursday	Year 3
K12	[Kislev 4] = 12 Thoth	Nov. 26, 401 B.C., Sunday	Year 4

E. 358 B.C.- 337 B.C.-- Ochus

1. Persia's Last Show Of Strength

Before the Persian Empire's downfall, the Achaemenian kingdom was to enjoy one more surge of power. Artaxerxes III Ochus was determined to rule with the strength of Darius the Great. After murdering several dozen of his brothers and sisters, he began his rule. Sidon, having sympathized with rebellious Egypt, was burnt and left in ruins (*The Library of History* XVI. 40-45). Then, Egypt was reconquered, her cities taken, and walls of Egyptian cities razed (*The Library of History* XVI.46-51). Thus, Persia was in a position to menace the Greeks again. Mainland Greece lacked unity in order to withstand a Persian threat.

Prodged by Demosthenes' oratory, Athens concluded an alliance with Persia. This was interpreted by Phillip of Macedon as an unfriendly gesture. Phillip Macedon

became an energetic leader and the dominant personality among the Greeks.

In 337 B.C., Phillip and his son Alexander won a decisive victory over Athens. Thus, the Persian threat was removed, but Greek independence was also destroyed. The destiny of Greece was now held in the power of Phillip of Macedon and his son, Alexander, later known as 'the Great'. In this same year, Artaxerxes III Ochus was poisoned, having ruled twenty-one years. While Diodorus shortened the rule of Artaxerxes II, he lengthened that of Ochus-- "Shortly after, the King of Persia died, having ruled forty-three years, and Ochus, who now assumed a new name, Artaxerxes, succeeded to the kingdom and ruled twenty-three years" (*The Library of History* XV.93).

2. Astronomically Validating The Reign Of Artaxerxes III (Ochus)

The last letter from Egypt comes to establish the reign of Ochus, whose end came just before Alexander's incursion into Asia. This letter establishes a complete chronology for the Persian period.

ILLUSTRATION XXVII: Elephantine Letters Dating Ochus

C10 7 Kislev = 4 Thoth

Nov. 18, 351 B.C., Friday

Year 9

F. 337 B.C.- 335 B.C.-- Arogus, The Puppet King Of Persia

Bagoas, a eunuch, who had political ambitions of his own, had murdered Ochus. This Bagoas had spared the life of Arogus, the youngest son of Artaxerxes, expecting to use him as a puppet ruler. When Bagoas saw that Arogus had a mind of his own, he poisoned him also.

In looking for someone whom he might trust, Bagoas chose a cousin of Artaxerxes III who had distinguished himself in battle and had become satrap of Armenia. Bagoas had chosen unwisely again, however. This new monarch had taken the name of Darius III. Fearing the power and treachery of Bagoas, Darius had him poisoned.

G. 335 B.C.- 330 B.C.-- Darius III, And The Collapse Of The Persian Empire

The last Persian monarch, Darius III, became the king in 335 B.C. During the same year, the twenty year old Alexander ascended the Macedonian throne (*The Library of History* XVII.2). At that time, he received the commission from his father to make war upon Persia.

While Darius III appeared to be a capable ruler, he faced the impossible task of uniting a splintering empire in addition to trying to withstand the onslaught of the great general of Macedonia, Alexander the Great. The tide of the empire moved toward Alexander and away from Darius.

Through a series of victories at Granicus [(334 B.C.) *The Library of History* XVII.17-21], Issus [(333 B.C.) *The Library of History* XVII.30-39], and Gaugemela (Gaugamela), near Arbela [(331 B.C.) *The Library of History* XVII.53-61], Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire. After Alexander's victory at Gaugemela or Arbela, Darius III fled to Ecbatana, and then on to Bactria where he was assassinated by his own cousin, Bessus. With Alexander's victory at Gaugemela in Mesopotamia in 331 B.C., the Persian Empire came to an end.

With Alexander's crossing of the Granicus River, the second empire foretold by the Hebrew prophet, Daniel, came to an end.⁶ The empire founded by Cyrus the Great and the dynasty named after Achemenes, a minor ruler of a mountainous district in southwestern Iran, had run its course of events. Ancient Persia's greatness, now overcome by the third kingdom foretold by Daniel, had extended from 551 B.C.- 334 B.C. Thus Greece had arisen to a dominion of world power.

III. 336 B.C.- 323 B.C.-- The Rise Of Alexander The Great To World Power

Just as Daniel had prophesied that the Babylonian kingdom would be overcome by the Medo-Persian kingdom, so he announced that the Medo-Persian kingdom would be overcome by the Grecian kingdom of Alexander the Great (cf., Daniel 2:39b; 7:6; 8:4-8; 11:3-4). Under Persian rule, the Jews were able to return from their exile to Palestine. They were able to eventually rebuild their Temple and to restore Jerusalem. Also, the future course of Judaism was established during this period of time. Persian rule had brought peace and prosperity to the Jews in Palestine. But Jewish life in Palestine under the Greeks would change for the worse.

By tracing Alexander's rise to power, it will be possible to show how Daniel envisioned the rise of Greece and her first king.

A. 359 B.C.- 336 B.C.-- The Policies Of Phillip II Of Macedon

Phillip II, a young man, became the new king of Macedonia in 359 B.C. Before his accession to the throne, he had been captured in a battle with the city state of Thebes. While a prisoner, he learned war tactics from Epaminondas of Thebes and planned his own variation of the oblique order of battle-- a variation now known as the phalanx.

A powerful new Macedonian army was created by Phillip. His cavalry consisted of about 2,000 horsemen in eight squadrons. He established the king's bodyguard of both cavalry and foot soldiers and six infantry battalions of 1,536 men each. Phillip also invented an impressive array of siege engines for storming city walls.

The Macedonian soldiers were heavily armed. In addition to small shields, helmets, and breastplates, the front line infantry who led the wedge-shaped phalanx carried 4-m (13 ft.) spears. The cavalry and other infantrymen carried larger shields, plus short thrusting swords and spears. Thus, Phillip had the best trained and equipped military available.

He also was to unify all of Greece through conquest. Before his death, he established Macedonian control over much of the Hellenic peninsula. Macedonia, a nation viewed by the Hellenes as barbaric, would soon spread Greek culture across many lands.

Another policy of Phillip II was to work toward the defeat of Persia. When Macedonia rose to power, the golden age of Greek culture had ended. One of the last great political figures was Isocrates (436 B.C.- 338 B.C.). He was an outstanding orator, and his public speaking swayed political thought in Athens. Isocrates saw the eastern power of Persia as a menace to Hellenic society. His passion was Persia's defeat. He viewed the Persians as vile and disgusting. As a result, he spent his life arousing hatred and hostility toward them. Isocrates' most notable follower was none other than Phillip II of Macedon.

It did not take long for the Hellenic city states to mobilize against the Macedonians. The Athenians and Thebans unified to face them, and in 338 B.C. the two forces engaged in battle. The Macedonians soundly defeated the Hellenic units at Chaeronea and took control of Greece. At this battle a young Macedonian cavalry officer appeared for the first time on the battlefield (*The Library of History* XVI.86). He was Alexander, Phillip's son.

Phillip called a meeting at Corinth of representatives from all the Greek city-states, except Sparta. Delegates to this League of Corinth sat on a council, the Synhedrion (cf., Jewish Sanhedrin). Representation was based on the population of the districts in city states. Phillip was elected as the hegemon (ruler) of the Hellenic League. Thus, the Hellenic cities were unified under one powerful ruler- Phillip- for the first time since

the Persian Wars.

The conquered Greeks still considered the Macedonians to be foreigners, largely because the Macedonians did not speak one of the Hellenic dialects. But the Macedonians quickly absorbed the Hellenic culture and dialects. Then Phillip adopted as the official language of state- Attic Greek- the language spoken in Athens. It was Phillip's policy to have all the people of the Hellenic peninsula begin to speak a common language for the first time. That language became koine (common) Greek. Wherever Alexander marched, he brought this language to the communities which he had conquered. Later, the New Testament was written in this language.

Diodorus of Sicily describes the fame of Phillip after relating his assassination--

Such was the end of Philip, who had made himself the greatest of the kings in Europe in his time, and because of the extent of his kingdom had made himself a throned companion of the twelve gods. [The implication of this claim on Philip's part was that he was in some fashion the equal of the Twelve and entitled like them to worship.] He had ruled twenty-four years. He is known to fame as one who with but the slenderest resources to support his claim to a throne won for himself the greatest empire in the Greek world, while the growth of his position was not due so much to his prowess in arms as to his adroitness and cordiality in diplomacy. Philip himself is said to have been prouder of his grasp of strategy and his diplomatic successes than of his valour in actual battle. Every member of his army shared in the successes which were won in the field but he alone got credit for victories won through negotiation. *The Library of History* XVI.95

B. 336 B.C.-- 330 B.C.-- Alexander's Conquest Of The Persian Empire

Alexander was born around 356 B.C. to parents of royal lineage. At the age of fourteen, he studied under the Athenian philosopher, Aristotle.⁷ Through Aristotle, Alexander acquired a deep love for Hellenistic culture.

In 336 B.C., Alexander's father was assassinated under mysterious circumstances. At the age of twenty, Alexander became the new king of Macedonia. Since Alexander's rivals spread rumors of his own death, he spent much of the following year in quelling revolts that these rumors inspired (*The Library of History* XVII.1-8.2). Destroying Thebes in the process, this gave him undisputed control over the Hellenic peninsula (*The Library of History* VII.8-16).

By the spring of 334 B.C., Alexander led his army of 40,000 men across the Dardanelles into Asia Minor. Alexander captured Troy and sacrificed to the manes of the Greek heroes, thereby proclaiming the fact that a new war had begun.

Diodorus relates Alexander's crossing of the Hellespont--

Alexander advanced with his army to the Hellespont and transported it from Europe to Asia. He personally sailed with sixty fighting ships to the Troad, where he flung his spear from the ship and fixed it in the ground, and then leapt ashore himself the first of the Macedonians, signifying that he received Asia from the gods as a spear-won prize. He visited the tombs of the heroes Achilles, Ajax, and the rest and honoured them with offerings and other appropriate marks of respect, and then proceeded to make an accurate count of his accompanying forces. *The Library of History* XVII.17.1-3 Compare Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* I.11.3-6.

Arrian dates the crossing of the Hellespont and tells the size of Alexander's army-- "In early spring he marched to the Hellespont, leaving Macedonian and Greek affairs in charge of Antipater. His infantry including light troops and archers numbered not much above thirty thousand, his cavalry over five thousand."

Darius III did not take this expedition seriously. He ordered that Alexander be seized and brought to Susa. An army of Persian cavalry, Greek mercenaries, and native troops was sent by Darius III to stop the advancement of Alexander. The Persian army

was more than several times larger than Alexander's army. Expecting an easy victory, the Persians clashed with Alexander at the Granicus River. The Persian advance guard, lightly armed and unaccustomed to Macedonian tactics, were defeated. Alexander ordered the Greek mercenaries to be massacred as traitors to the Greek cause rather than pursuing the retreating Persian cavalry. The Granicus victory prepared Alexander's way into Asia Minor. Originally, Alexander had planned only to free the Ionian Greek cities then under Persian control,⁸ but the resounding victory spurred him to strike at the heart of the empire itself.

1. 334 B.C.-- The Battle Of Granicus

The Battle of Granicus fought at the Granicus River near ancient Troy has special significance. Arrian in the *Anabasis Of Alexander* gives a detailed account of this battle (I.13-16);⁹ the battle is particularized by Diodorus Siculus in *The Library of History* XVII.19-21.

A clue for the date of this battle is furnished by the statement of Plutarch (*Alexander* XVI.2). The battle would have taken place on the last day of the month Daesius, but for the Macedonians this was an unlucky month. Therefore, Alexander ordered the intercalation of a second Artemisius. The Macedonian Calendar in Babylonia indicates that Artemisius (Artemisios) was parallel to the Hebrew, Nisan, and Babylonian, Nisanu. Daisios was parallel to Iyyar (Iyyar) in Hebrew.¹⁰

Plutarch recounts Alexander's changing the months--

Meanwhile the generals of Dareius had assembled a large force and set it in array at the crossing of the river Granicus, so that it was practically necessary to fight, as it were at the gates of Asia, for entrance and dominion there. But most of the Macedonian officers were afraid of the depth of the river, and of the roughness and unevenness of the farther banks, up which they would have to climb while fighting. Some, too, thought they ought to observe carefully the customary practice in regard to the month (for in the month of Daesius the kings of Macedonia were not wont to take the field with an army). This objection Alexander removed by bidding them call the month of second Artemisus *Alexander* XVI.1-2¹¹

The entire account of this battle of Granicus is found in *Alexander* XVI.1-19.

In the various accounts, there are several differences. In Arrian, the attack takes place in the late afternoon and in the lower course of the Granicus River, where the water flows through relatively flat country but in a deep and muddy bed (I.13). Also, Plutarch (*Alexander* XVI) describes the action as taking place between Macedonians trying to cross and Persians holding the river bank. In contrast, Diodorus places the battle at dawn, and lets the Macedonians cross without difficulty and engage the Persians on the far bank. Probably, he located the battle further upstream in the foothills.

Assuming that it was the last day of Daesius, Alexander wanted to fight the battle that day after realizing that they had come upon the Persian army. Plutarch states that Parmenio, on the ground that it was too late in the day, objected to their crossing of the river on that day, still the last day of Daesius. But Alexander removed the objection by bidding them to call that month a second Artemisius. So the battle occurred that day (*Alexander* XVI.2-3).

Arrian in the *Anabasis of Alexander* gives the conversation between Parmenio and Alexander after it was known that the Persians were waiting at the eastern bank of the river--

My view, sir, is that we should encamp at once on the river bank, as we are; the enemy

outnumbered in infantry will, I believe, not dare to bivouac near us; and this will make it easy for the army to cross at dawn; we shall be across ourselves before they get into order. As things are, I feel that we should run great risk in taking action, since we cannot take the army across the river on a wide front, for one can see that many parts of it are deep; its banks, as you see, are very high, sometimes like cliffs. As we emerge in disorder and in column, the weakest of formations, the enemy cavalry in good solid will charge: the initial disaster would be damaging at present, and most harmful for the general result of the war.'

Alexander, however, replied: 'All this I know, Parmenio, but I should feel ashamed if after crossing the Hellespont easily, this petty stream (by this epithet did he belittle the Granicus) hinders us from crossing just as we are. I consider this unworthy either of the prestige of the Macedonians or of my own celerity in dealing with dangers; I believe it would encourage the Persians to think themselves equal to fighting the Macedonians, since they have not experienced any immediate disaster to justify their alarm.' (I.13.3-7)

As can be seen, the battle was fought the same day, but as Plutarch states with a month change.

Diodorus of Sicily, not stating a month change, places the battle as starting at dawn, probably in a new month--

When Alexander learned of the concentration of the Persian forces, he advanced rapidly and encamped opposite the enemy, so that the Granicus flowed between the encampments. The Persians, resting on high ground, made no move, intending to fall upon the foe as he crossed the river, for they supposed they could easily carry the day when the Macedonian phalanx was divided. But Alexander at dawn boldly brought his army across the river and deployed in good order before they could stop him. ...

But the Persians resisted bravely and opposed their spirit to the Macedonian valour, as Fortune brought together in one and the same place the finest fighters to dispute the victory. *The Library of History* XVII 19.1-20.1

Thus Diodorus posits the beginning of the Battle of Granicus at dawn. His account, therefore, would avoid battle during the month of Daesius; that is why no intercalation of a second Artemisius is mentioned.

With Alexander's intercalation of a second Artemisius, the battle would have been actually fought on Sivan 29 (Hebrew reckoning) according to Arrian and Plutarch. The computer calendar places Sivan 29 of the year 334 B.C. to be equal to June 7, 334 B.C. (Gregorian calendar).

Daniel's vision of chapter 8 begins with Alexander confronting Darius at Hellespont. The period of Gentile domination was to be 2300 days, which is on occasion interpreted as years by the prophets. If this is a correct application, the remote fulfillment took place when Alexander the Great fought against the last Persian king Darius at Hellespont. The Jews regained their Temple site during the Six Day War of June 7, A.D. 1967.

2. 333 B.C.-- The Battle Of Issus

In 333 B.C., Alexander moved on Gordium, the capital of Phrygia. The goal of this offensive was the Cilician Gates, a narrow mountain pass to Syria and Palestine. At Issus, Darius III advanced with his Persian army to stop the Macedonian. The leader of Darius' Greek mercenaries advised the Persian king to keep his forces on the open plain. But Darius established a defensive position on the Pniaurus River. The Battle of Issus would be the first encounter between the Macedonians and the Persian royal units. The phalanxes of the Macedonians again proved too powerful for the Persian army. Darius swiftly retreated, relinquishing Asia Minor to the Macedonian conqueror.

The Battle of Issus is given in detail by Arrian (*Anabasis Of Alexander* II.6.1-11.10). Arrian dates the battle by the following description-- "So ended this battle, fought in the archonship at Athens of Nicocrates and in the month Maimacterion," (II.11.10). This Attic month corresponds to November, 333 B.C.¹² Plutarch records the Battle of Issus (*Alexander* XIX-XXI). Diodorus of Sicily records the Battle of Issus along with related information (*The Library Of History* XVII.31.2-39.4) .

This battle is portrayed on the famous Alexander Mosaic. This mosaic represents Darius' horses as rearing, tossing, and shaking their heads, making their control almost impossible. The Alexander Mosaic shows Darius III about to mount a horse to make his escape, as in Curtius (III.11.11) and Arrian (II.11.5). Diodorus states that the Persian made his escape on horseback (XVII.37.1).

Alexander captured Damascus by surprise taking the family of Darius III, the immense stores of booty, and the ambassadors from Sparta, Athens and Thebes.

Again, Alexander decided not to pursue Darius. Military tactics demanded that Alexander secure his rear.

On two occasions, King Darius offered to negotiate with Alexander, offering him territory, a large sum of money, and the hand of his daughter in marriage in return for the recovery of his family (*The Library Of History* XVII.39; 54.1-55.1). Darius' offer went unheeded; for Alexander had made a decision for world conquest.

Therefore, during 332 B.C., Alexander swept through Syria, Palestine and Egypt (*The Library of History* XVII.40-52). The Phoenician cities, except Tyre, surrendered and were occupied.

3. The Conquest Of Syria, Palestine, And Egypt

The resistance of Tyre occupied Alexander for seven months.¹³ The persistence of Alexander is seen in the causeway which he built from the mainland city to the island city of Tyre, in order to force the Tyrians into submission. The causeway which Alexander cast into the sea came from the ruins of the mainland city which Nebuchadnezzar burnt and destroyed. In building this causeway, Alexander helped to fulfill Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre- making the mainland site bare as the top of a rock--

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 26:1-6

The very map of Phoenicia was changed during this siege of Tyre.¹⁴ With the fall of Tyre the maritime and commercial predominance of the Phoenicians came to an end. The fall of Tyre is found in *The Library Of History* XVII.40-47; *Anabasis Of Alexander* II.15.6-24.5; and *Alexander* XXIV.4-XXV.3.

During the two month siege of Gaza,¹⁵ Alexander was wounded. The punishment visited on Gaza was greater than that on Tyre. The prophecy was fulfilled: "Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, ... and the king shall perish from Gaza," Zechariah 9:5. With the fall of Gaza, the victorious Macedonians pressed on to Egypt.

The Egyptians hated the Persians and welcomed Alexander as their deliverer. At the temple of Ammon in Egypt, the oracle announced that Alexander was the son of Ammon and that he would conquer the world.¹⁶ The hellenism of Alexander must have worn thin when he accepted the role of a son of Ammon. Nevertheless, Alexander gladly did so, being recognized as a legitimate Pharaoh with a chapel in the temple of Karnak. Reorganizing the government of Egypt, Alexander gave a large share of the control of their country to the people but he placed Macedonians in charge of the army.

While wintering in the Nile valley, Alexander chose the site of Tyre in the eastern Mediterranean. This new city would be called Alexandria. As a result of Alexander's conquests, the center of western civilization was shifting-- culturally and economically. Alexandria replaced the cities of Greece as the focus of Greek intellectual and artistic life. It is interesting that Jewish colonists were encouraged to settle in Alexandria, and their presence there had an important bearing on the subsequent history of Judaism and Christianity.¹⁷

4. The Battle Of Gaugemela

In 331 B.C., Alexander retraced his steps northward through Palestine and Syria. He crossed the Syrian desert to confront the Persians in one final epic battle on their home front. At the battle of Gaugemela or Arbela, in the Mesopotamian plain, Alexander outmaneuvered and defeated the 'Grand Army' of Darius III and his line of battle elephants. Alexander's troops were at first startled by the appearance of the beasts-- but not startled enough for this to be of help to Darius III. The Macedonians achieved the victory through the tactics of the phalanx and cavalry. After the battle, Alexander was crowned king of Asia, *Alexander XXXIV.1*. With no army to impede his progress, Alexander controlled the entire territory of Persia.

The information related to the Battle of Gaugemela is given by Diodorus of Sicily in *The Library of History XVII.53.1-64.4*. Plutarch's information regarding the Battle of Gaugemela is found in *Alexander XXXI-XXXIV*. Arrian tells of the Battle of Gaugemela in the *Anabasis of Alexander III.7-15*.

It is interesting to note that Plutarch mentions a lunar eclipse as occurring eleven nights before the Battle of Gaugemela. He writes as follows--

Now, the great battle against Dareius was not fought at Arbela, as most writers state, but at Gaugamela. The word signifies, we are told, 'camel's house', since one of the ancient kings of the country, after escaping on a swift camel, gave the animal a home here, assigning certain villages and revenues for its maintenance. It so happened that in the month Boedromion the moon suffered an eclipse, about the beginning of the Mysteries at Athens, and on the eleventh night after the eclipse, the armies being now in sight of one another, Dareius kept his forces under arms, and held a review of them by torch-light; but Alexander, while his Macedonians slept, himself passed the night in front of his tent with his seer Aristander, celebrating certain mysterious sacred rites and sacrificing to the god Fear. *Alexander XXXI.6-9*

The month Boedromion is parallel to September on the Greek calendar at Athens.¹⁸ Arrian mentions the same eclipse as occurring before the battle--

There was an almost total eclipse of the moon, and Alexander sacrificed to the Moon, Sun, and Earth, who are all said to cause an eclipse. Aristander thought that the eclipse was favorable to the Macedonians and Alexander, that the battle would take place that month, and that the sacrifices portended victory to Alexander. ... so ended this battle in the month Pyanespion of the archonship at Athens of Aristophanes. Aristander's prophecy came true, that Alexander's battle and victory would occur in the same month in which the moon was partially

eclipsed. *Anabasis Of Alexander* III.7.6, 15.7

The month Pyanepsion on the Greek calendar at Athens is parallel to October.¹⁹ The month Pyanepsion on the Greek calendar at Athens follows the month Boedromion. Plutarch places the lunar eclipse as occurring eleven days before the battle. Arrian speaks of the eclipse as being almost total and as happening in the same month as the battle. While the aftermath of the battle was concluded in Pyanepsion, the eclipse and battle itself must have coincided in the month Boedromion. Pliny the Elder, who authored *Naturalis Historia*, a Roman historian, refers to this lunar eclipse in the following statement: "This victory of Alexander the Great is said to have caused an eclipse of the moon at Arbela at 8 p.m. while the same eclipse in Sicily was when the moon was just rising," *Natural History* II. lxxii.180.

Astronomers date this lunar eclipse as taking place on September 20, 331 B.C. (Julian calendar). That date is September 16, 331 B.C. on the Gregorian calendar, and Boedromion 15 on the Greek calendar at Athens. Since the eclipse occurred eleven days before the battle, the Battle of Gaugemela must have begun on Boedromion 26--near the end of the month.

The seats of power of the Persian Empire-- Babylon, Susa, Persepolis and Ecbatana--were successively occupied.

It appears that Jewish traditions show Alexander in a friendly light, although Hellenism was to become the great enemy of Judaism. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, tells the story of Alexander's arrival to Jerusalem. Greek historians do not record Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. It seems that while Alexander was besieging the island city of Tyre he sent an epistle to the Jewish high priest, to send him some auxiliaries, and to supply his army with provisions. However, Jaddua, the high priest refused any assistance, pledging allegiance to Darius III. When Alexander received the answer, he was very angry. So when he had, with a good deal of pains during the siege, taken Tyre, and had settled its affairs, he besieged the city of Gaza.

With this background information, Josephus relates the events leading to Alexander's arrival in Jerusalem--

Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifices to God, whom he sought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced; and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king.

And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession, with the priests, and the multitude of citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. It reached to a place called Sapha; which name, translated into Greek, signifies a prospect for you have thence a prospect both of Jerusalem and of the temple; and when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him, thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, the very reverse happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name,

and first saluted the high priest. The Jews also did all together, with one voice salute Alexander, and encompass him about; whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio alone went to him, and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, "I did not adore him, but that God who hath honoured him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind. And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifices to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favours they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired; and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired: and when he said to the multitude, that if any of them would enlist themselves in his army on this condition, that they should continue under the laws of their forefathers, and live according to them, he was willing to take them with him, many were ready to accompany him in his wars. *Antiquities* XI.viii.4-5

What were the prophecies in the book of Daniel which Jaddua, the high priest, pointed out to Alexander? In Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal image, dated 581 B.C.,²⁰ the third kingdom of brass which would bear rule over all the earth was a reference to Greece (Daniel 2:39b). Then, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the four beasts, dated 577 B.C.,²¹ the leopard which had upon its back four wings of a fowl and had also four heads was a citation to the dominion of Greece (Daniel 7:6). The four wings speak of the swiftness by which Alexander moved his army while the four heads speak of his four generals who divided Alexander's kingdom among themselves after Alexander's death.

Daniel's vision of the ram and he goat, dated 575 B.C.,²² clearly shows Alexander's victory over Persia--

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was in Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. And I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the he goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of

heaven. Daniel 8:1-8

Daniel gives the interpretation of this vision in verses 20-22 where he states that the ram having two horns alludes to the kings of Media and Persia and the rough goat applies to the king of Greece while the great horn concerns the first king of Greece. When the horn (king) was broken (dead) four stood up for his kingdom. These were Alexander's four generals, but their four kingdoms did not have his power.

A final prophetic reference to Alexander the Great occurs in Daniel 11:2-4, a section dated 575 B.C.--

And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

According to Daniel 1:1, this prophecy was given in the first year of Darius the Mede, i.e., 575 B.C.²³ The three Persian kings to stand up after Darius the Mede were: 1) Cyrus the Great, 2) Cambyses, and 3) the pseudo-Smerdis. The fourth Persian king was Darius I (the Biblical Artaxerxes); he was far richer than the previous Persian monarchs and by his strength through his riches he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. The mighty king who would stand up against Persia, have great dominion, and do according to his will was Alexander the Great. After his death, his kingdom would go to his four generals rather than to his heir.

5. 331 B.C.-- The Spoils Of War-- Babylon, Susa, And Persepolis

Alexander's conquest of the city of Babylon was reminiscent of the days of Cyrus. Alexander was welcomed as a liberator.²⁴ The city's priests of Marduk and the nobles brought gifts and promised the treasures of Babylon to the Greek ruler. Moved by the celebration, Alexander was determined to make Babylon the greatest city of his realm. He ordered the restoration of temples destroyed in the days of Xerxes. Alexander planned to make the temple of Marduk Babylon's glory.

Entering Susa, Alexander was offered the treasures of the palace of Darius I.²⁵ Here, he found enough booty to finance all of his later expeditions (cf., Daniel 11:3). According to Diodorus, Alexander left Darius' mother, his daughters, and his son in Susa; [Darius' wife had previously died in childbirth after her capture (*The Library Of History* XVII.54.7)]. Alexander provided Darius' children with persons to teach them the Greek language.

From there, he went to Persepolis which was the richest Persian city in the world.²⁶ Here, Alexander received revenge for the Persian destruction of Athens under Xerxes I. He ordered the city burned, the men slain and the women enslaved. By 330 B.C., Darius III was dead, the Persian Empire was in the hands of Alexander, and the sack of Persepolis was probably designed to mark the end of the Persian monarchy. Then, Alexander assumed the Greek title Basileus (Great King).

6. 330 B.C.-324 B.C.-- Alexander's Conquest And Exploration Of The Orient

While in Ecbatana, Alexander made plans to explore the Orient. This plan of conquest and exploration was the first known instance of a European's venturing into the mysterious East.

In 330 B.C., Alexander began his eastern conquests. By 329 B.C., his forces had crossed the Hindu Kush mountains, threading their way through Afghanistan and overrunning the provinces of Bactria and Sogdiana. It took two years to pacify the area. While there, Alexander married Roxana, a Bactrian princess of noted beauty.

Moving eastward, the Greek monarch underwent some deep personal changes. He adopted Persian and Oriental costumes for his dress. Also, he introduced the Oriental custom of *proskynesis* (Greek, worship), requiring his troops to make a display of worship by lying on the ground before him in the Oriental fashion. Though the Macedonian soldiers respected Alexander as their king, they could not regard him as a 'god'. Callisthenes, the historian for Alexander's campaigns and a nephew of Aristotle, opposed Alexander's wish to be treated as a god. He was arrested, tried, and executed under Alexander's orders. After beginning to rule as an Oriental despot, a conspiracy against Alexander was said to implicate the son of one of his most notable generals, Parmenio. Alexander had both father and son put to death.

In the latter part of 327 B.C., Alexander began to move his units south, again crossing the Hindu Kush mountains. As Alexander approached the Indus River, the people of the village, Taxila, met his army with a massive assault of battle elephants. Alexander's beloved horse, Bucephalus, died during the conflict. Though the Macedonians won the battle, they became exhausted and frightened at the prospect of fighting more elephant armies. The army mutinied and refused to go any further east. Alexander had no choice but to return half of his army across the terrible desert of Gedrosia in present-day Pakistan and Iran. The other half of his army took the return trip from India in a navy of newly built ships. From the Indus Delta, the fleet successfully made the voyage to the Persian gulf.

C. 323 B.C.-- The Death Of Alexander In Babylon

Returning to Susa, Alexander found misrule on the part of the officials which he left in charge of the city.

On his way to Babylon, Alexander was warned by Chaldean seers not to enter the city. Arrian records their prophecy regarding Alexander's fate if he entered Babylon--

Crossing the Tigris with his army, Alexander marched towards Babylon, and there met him Chaldaean seers, who drew him aside from the Companions and begged him to stop the advance towards Babylon; for they said, they had an oracle from their god Belus that his approach to Babylon at that time would mean disaster. He, however, answered them with a verse of Euripides the dramatist-- it runs thus:

'Prophets, who prophecy the best, are best.' 'But, O King,' said the Chaldaeans, 'look not towards the west, nor lead your army westward, but rather wheel your face and lead it eastward.' But this, by reason of the difficulty of the road, he could not do; but fate led him the way on which he was doomed to die. And possibly it was better from him to die in the height of his fame and of the general regard of mankind before any ordinary disaster befell him....
Anabasis Of Alexander VII.16.5-7

In his capital city of Babylon, Alexander began preparations for his conquest of Arabia and the organizing of his Grecian Empire.

There are several different accounts regarding the death of Alexander in Babylon. Plutarch indicates that while Alexander was weakened by heavy drinking, he was unable to survive a bout with malaria (a high fever) (*Alexander* LXXV-LXXVI). Plutarch thinks that the story of the poisoning is altogether a fabrication (LXXVII). Arrian also recapitulates Alexander's death as being caused by drunkenness and fever (*Anabasis Of Alexander* VII.xxiv.1-XXVIII.1). Arrian disregards accounts of Alexander

being drugged (XXVII.1-3).

Historians have stated June 10, 323 B.C. as the death date of Alexander the Great. It seems that he died on Daesius 28 according to Plutarch's *Alexander* LXXVI.9, but Aristobulus states that Pharmouthi 4 (June 8, 323 B.C.) was the date of Alexander's death. This is quoted in Plutarch's *Alexander* LXXV.6. Daesius was a hollow month without a twenty-ninth day and Alexander died about sundown. Therefore, his death date is June 10, 323 B.C.

Some chronologists have argued that the assassination of Phillip and the accession of Alexander must have taken place in the month of Daesius. If this is the case, then this would give Alexander thirteen years of reign; this figure is actually given by the Oxyrhynchus Chronologer.

Arrian places Alexander's death in 323 B.C. according to the following data: "Alexander died in the hundred and fourteenth Olympiad, in the archonship at Athens of Hegesias. He lived thirty-two years and eight months, as Aristobulus says; "he reigned twelve years and the aforesaid eight months" (*Anabasis Of Alexander* VII.xxviii.1).

Arrian concludes the *Anabasis Of Alexander* with a special tribute to Alexander regarding his character and nature--

In body he was very handsome, a great lover of hardships; of much shrewdness, most courageous, most zealous for honour and danger, and most careful of religion; most temperate in bodily pleasure, but as for pleasures of the mind, insatiable of glory alone; most brilliant to seize on the right course of action, even where all was obscure; and where all was clear, most happy in his conjectures of likelihood; most masterly in marshalling an army, arming and equipping it; and in uplifting his soldier's spirits and filling them with good hopes, and brushing away anything fearful in dangers by his own want of fear-- in all this most noble. And all that had to be done in uncertainty he did with the utmost daring; he was most skilled in swift anticipation and gripping of his enemy before anyone had time to fear the event; he was most reliable in keeping promises or agreements; most guarded in not being trapped by the fraudulent; very sparing of money for his own pleasure, but most generous in benefits of others. *Anabasis Of Alexander* VII.xxviii.1-3

Arrian's final account of Alexander's tribute is somewhat humanistic; for he even excuses Alexander's drunkenness as follows: "And his carousings, as Aristobulus says, were prolonged not for the wine, for Alexander was no winebibber, but from a spirit of comradeship" (*Anabasis Of Alexander* VII.xxix.4).

It has been suggested by Bible students that Jesus may have been referring to Alexander the Great when He states: "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matthew 16:26. Up to Jesus' day, Alexander was the only man who had conquered the known world of that day.

Raymond F. Surburg summarizes both the benefits and evils which resulted from Alexander's world conquests--

The chief beneficial effects were the following:

11. Hellenic civilization spread over Egypt and western Asia.
12. The distinction between Greek and barbarian was broken down to some degree and constituted an aid in preparing the minds of men for the Christian Gospel.
13. The Greek language became the universal language, spoken and written by the cultured.
14. A sea route from Europe to India was discovered.

Among evil effects was demoralization of the Greeks after coming into possession of the great riches of the Persian Empire. Another was effeminization of the Greeks through contact with oriental vices and luxuries. ...

One of the important consequences of the conquest of Alexander was the widespread

dispersion of the Jews, who helped prepare the way for Christianity. Alexander was favorably disposed toward the Jews, permitting them to settle in many cities he founded. Already in the time of Darius, three million Jews are reputed to have been scattered throughout the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire.²⁷

Diodorus summarizes the events leading up to Alexander's death as follows:

They bade him sacrifice to the gods on a grand scale and with all speed, but he was then called away by Medius, the Thessalian, one his Friends to take part in a comus. There he drank much unmixed wine in commemoration of the death of Heracles, and finally, filling a huge beaker, downed it at a gulp. Instantly he shrieked aloud as if smitten by a violent blow and was conducted by his Friends, who led him by the hand back to his apartments. His chamberlains put him to bed and attended him closely, but the pain increased and the physicians were summoned. No one was able to do anything helpful and Alexander continued in great discomfort and acute suffering. When he, at length, despaired of life, he took off his ring and handed it to Perdikkas. His Friends asked: 'To whom do you leave the kingdom?' and he replied: 'To the strongest'. He added, and these were his last words, that all of his leading Friends would stage a vast contest in honor of his funeral. This was how he died after a reign of twelve years and seven months. He accomplished greater deeds than any, not only of the kings who had lived before him but also of those who were to come later down to our time. *The Library Of History* XVII.117.1-5

He died in 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-three. His body was placed in a beautiful tomb in Alexandria.

His only son was born to Roxana after Alexander's death. In a very short life span, Alexander had conquered more territory than any of his predecessors. The eleven years from the time that Alexander crossed the Dardanelles (334 B.C.) until his death in Babylon (323 B.C.) changed the course of history. Hellenism was to outlive its militant apostle.

D. 323 B.C.-315 B.C.-- Alexander's Generals Struggle For His Kingdom

A son was posthumously born in 323 B.C. to Roxana, Alexander's Bactrian wife, but the diadochoi, or 'successors' of the king, seized power before he could reach maturity. Cassander, one of the generals, murdered Roxana and her son.²⁸

By 315 B.C., after seven years of struggle among Alexander's generals, four outstanding leaders appeared: 1) Antigonus, who controlled the country from the Mediterranean to central Asia; 2) Cassander, who ruled Macedonia; 3) Ptolemy Lagus, who reigned over Egypt and Southern Syria; and 4) Lysimachus, who directed a prevalent role in the subsequent history of Palestine.

The prophet Daniel had predicted that Alexander's kingdom would be divided--not given to his posterity but tossed to the four winds. The sixth century prophet asserted--

And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those. Daniel 11:3-4

Alexander the Great was the 'mighty king that shall rule with great dominion'. He obviously did 'according to his will'. After his death, his four generals contested for his empire. The struggle was severe.

The battle of Granicus is astronomically fixed by a solar eclipse recorded by Diodorus of Siculus. The solar eclipse is placed within the year that Hieromnemon was archon in Athens (310 B.C.)-- "When Hieromnemon was archon in Athens, the

was archon in Athens (310 B.C.)-- "When Hieromnemon was archon in Athens, the Romans elected to the consulship Gaius Julius and Quintus Aemilius" (*The Library of History* XX.2.3).

The eclipse is in the context of how Agathocles crossed into Libya, defeated the Carthaginians in a battle, and became master of many cities. Diodorus records the eclipse as follows--

When everything was ready, Agathocles manned sixty ships and awaited a suitable time for the voyage. ... all despaired of the safety of those who were about to sail away and condemned the prince for his mad folly. But since the enemy was blockading the port with triremes many times more numerous than his own, Agathocles at first for some days was compelled to detain his soldiers in the ships since they could not sail out; but later, when some grain ships were putting into the city, the Carthaginians with their whole fleet made for these ships, and Agathocles, who already despaired of his enterprise, as he saw the mouth of the harbour freed of the blockading ships, sailed out, his men rowing at top speed. Then when the Carthaginians, who were already close to the cargo vessels, saw the enemy sailing with their ships in close order, assuming at first that Agathocles was hastening to the rescue of the grain ships, they turned and made their fleet ready for battle; but when they saw the ships sailing straight past and getting a long start of them, they began to pursue. Thereupon, while these were contending with each other, the ships that were bringing grain, unexpectedly escaping the danger, brought about a great abundance of provisions in Syracuse, when a scarcity of food was already gripping the city; and Agathocles, who was already at a point of being overtaken and surrounded, gained unhoped for safety as night closed in. On the next day there occurred such an eclipse of the sun that utter darkness set in and the stars were seen everywhere; wherefore Agathocles' men, believing that the prodigy portended misfortune for them, fell into even greater anxiety about the future. *The Library Of History* XX.5.1-5

This solar eclipse astronomically fixes the archons of Athens and reigns of Alexander the Great and those who followed him in power in Egypt and Syria. The eclipse is dated as occurring on August 10, 310 B.C. (Gregorian calendar) by astronomers.²⁹ Similarly, it establishes the date for the battle of Granicus in the second year of the reign of Alexander the Great (334 B.C.).

ILLUSTRATION XXVIII: Solar Eclipse Of August 10, 310 B.C., At 100%



Chapter VII - NOTES

¹*New International Version Pictorial Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978), pp. 498-520.

²Compare Diodorus Siculus, "The Library Of History," E. H. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, 12 Volumes, Trans. by C. H. Oldfather, et al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968).

³Herodotus gives the account of Xerxes' capture of Athens and the date of the Persian arrival--

"Now after the crossing of the Hellespont whence they began their march, the foreigners had spent one month in their passage into Europe, and in three more months they arrived in Attica, Calliades being then archon at Athens. There they took the city, then left desolate; but they found in the temple some Athenians, temple-stewards and needy men, who defended themselves against the assault by fencing the acropolis with doors and logs; these had not withdrawn to Salamis, partly by reason of poverty, and also because they supposed themselves to have found out the meaning of the Delphic oracle that the wooden wall should be impregnable, and believed that this, and not the ships, was the refuge signified by the prophecy.

The Persians sat down on the hill over against the acropolis, which is called by the Athenians the Hill of Ares, and besieged them by shooting arrows wrapped in lighted tow at the barricade. There the Athenians defended themselves against their besiegers, albeit they were in extremity and their barricade had failed them; nor would they listen to the terms of surrender proposed to them by Pisistratis but defended themselves by counter-devices, chiefly by rolling great stones down on the foreigners when they assaulted the gates; insomuch that for a long while Xerxes could not take the place, and knew not what to do.

But at the last in their quandary the foreigners found an entrance for the oracle must needs be fulfilled, and all the mainland of Attica be made subject to the Persians. In front of the acropolis, and behind the gates and the ascent thereto, there was a place where none was on guard and none would have thought that any man would ascend that way; here certain men mounted near the shrine of Cecrops' daughter Aglaurus, though the way led up a sheer cliff. When the Athenians saw that they had ascended to the acropolis, some of them cast themselves down from the wall and so perished, and others fled into the inner chamber. Those Persians who had come up first betook themselves to the gates, which they opened, and slew the suppliants; and when they had laid all the Athenians low, they plundered the temple and burnt the whole of the acropolis." *Herodotus VIII.51-53*

⁴*Cf.*, Xenophon, "Anabasis," E. H. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, Trans. by Carelton L. Brownson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), Volume III, pp. 3-625.

⁵When Artaxerxes II was ascending Persia's throne, the Peloponnesian Wars (459 B.C.- 446 B.C. and 431 B.C.- 404 B.C.), where Spartans and Athenians fought one another, were coming to a conclusion.

⁶*Cf.*, Daniel 2:39a; 7:5; 8:3; 11:1-2.

⁷It appears that no Gentile culture has ever produced a greater mind than Aristotle's. His work was so searching and profound that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. much of the Christian church regarded his teachings as being divinely inspired. No subject was untouched by his contemplation. Such subjects of concern were philosophy, botany, geography, zoology, astronomy, and art. Aristotle was the student of Plato and the teacher of Alexander the Great. Probably, Aristotle instructed Alexander by reading and discussing Homer and the Greek tragedies. Aristotle would have trained Alexander in politics and Hellenistic culture.

⁸The Greek cities of Asia Minor were taken and 'liberated', in many instances, against their will.

⁹Arrian (Flavius Arrianus), "Anabasis Of Alexander And Indica," G. P. Goold, ed., *The Loeb*

Classical Library, 2 Volumes, Trans. by P. A. Brunt (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976).

¹⁰Cf., Jack Finegan, *Handbook Of Biblical Chronology: Principles Of Time Reckoning In The Ancient World And Problems Of Chronology In The Bible* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 63.

¹¹Plutarch (Plutarchus) "Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes And Cicero Alexander And Caesar," E. H. Warmington, ed., *The Loeb Classical Library*, Volume 7, Trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹²Cf., Finegan, op. cit., p. 58.

¹³The siege of Tyre lasted from January through August, 332 B.C.

¹⁴Alexander captured the Phoenician naval base of Tyre, thought to be invulnerable to attack from the land. Tyre in Alexander's day was an island city and it became necessary for Alexander to build a causeway in order to reach the city. Some scholars consider this to be Alexander's greatest victory.

¹⁵The siege of Gaza lasted through September and October, 332 B.C.

¹⁶The story of this event is detailed by Plutarch as follows:

"When Alexander had passed through the desert and was come to the place of the oracle, the prophet of Ammon gave him salutation from the god as from a father; whereupon Alexander asked him whether any of the murderers of his father had escaped him. To this the prophet answered by bidding him be guarded in his speech, since his was not a mortal father. Alexander therefore changed the form of his question, and asked whether the murderers of Philip had all been punished; and then regarding his own empire he asked whether it was given to him to become lord and master of all mankind. The god gave answer that this was given to him, and that Philip was fully avenged. Then Alexander made splendid offerings to the god and gave his priests large gifts of money.

This is what most writers state regarding the oracular responses; but Alexander himself, in a letter to his mother, says that he received certain secret responses, which he would tell to her, and to her alone, on his return. And some say that the prophet, wishing to show his friendliness by addressing him with 'Opaidion', or O my son, in his foreign pronunciation ended the words with 's' instead of 'n', and said, 'Opaidios', and that Alexander was pleased at the slip in pronunciation, and a story became current that the god had addressed him with 'O pai Dios', or O son of Zeus. We are told, also, that he listened to the teachings of Psammon the philosopher in Egypt, and accepted most readily this utterance of his, namely, that all mankind are under the kingship of God, since in every case that which gets the mastery and rules is divine." *Alexander* XXVII.5-10

¹⁷From an early date, there were Jewish settlements in Egypt. Alexandria soon won for herself an honoured name, particularly as a literary center. Here the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language emerged for the use of Greek speaking Jews in Egypt who were no longer able to read Hebrew. The translation was made during the reign of Ptolemy II. It is most likely, however, that the Septuagint came into existence as a Greek Targum just as in Palestine there came into existence an Aramaic Targum for the help of those who were unable to understand the Hebrew Scriptures. The influence of the Septuagint upon the Jews of the Dispersion and even more upon the young Christian Church cannot be over-estimated. This translation in some ways became a vehicle of Hellenization.

Philo, the Jewish writer, lived in Alexandria. He was a contemporary of Jesus and St. Paul. The aim of his writings was to demonstrate the relation between the religion of the Scriptures and the truth of the Greek philosophies. He gave to the Jewish community--Hellenistic Judaism. He made free use of the common Alexandrian practice of allegorism and by this means demonstrated that Moses was one with the Greek philosophers. His position was not accepted by the orthodox Judaism of his day, but his approach to religion and philosophy and the relation between them had a very considerable influence on the development of Christian theology.

¹⁸Finegan, op.cit., p. 58.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰The colossal image of Nebuchadnezzar in the second year of his reign over Egypt is dated 581 B.C.

²¹Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the four beasts in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon is dated 577 B.C.

²²Daniel's vision of the ram and he goat occurring in the third year of Belshazzar is dated 575 B.C.

²³The Septuagint departs from the Massoretic text at this point and has 'the first year of Cyrus' as its chronological reference.

²⁴Arrian tells of Alexander's reception as he entered Babylon--

"Darius was not mistaken, for on leaving Arbela Alexander at once advanced on the road to Babylon. He was already near Babylon, and was leading his force in battle order, when the Babylonians came to meet him in mass, with their priests and rulers, each section of the inhabitants bringing gifts and offering surrender of the city, the citadel and the treasure. On entering Babylon Alexander directed the Babylonians to rebuild the temples Xerxes destroyed, and especially the temple of Baal, whom the Babylonians honour more than any other god. He appointed Mazaeus satrap of Babylon and Apollodorus of Amphipolis general of the troops left behind with Mazaeus and Asclepiodorus son of Philo to collect the taxes. ... At Babylon too he met the Chaldeans, and carried out all their recommendations on the Babylonian temples, and in particular sacrificed to Baal, according to their instructions." *Anabasis Of Alexander* III.16.3-5

²⁵Arrian relates Alexander's entrance into Susa (the Biblical Shushan) and tells of the booty which he received--

"He himself [Alexander] set out for Susa. On the way he was met by the son of the satrap of Susa and a letter-carrier from Philoxenus, whom Alexander had sent to Susa directly after the battle. In Philoxenus' letter it was stated that the people of Susa had handed over the city and that all the treasure was in safekeeping for Alexander. Alexander reached Susa in twenty days from Babylon; he entered the city and took over the treasure, up to fifty thousand Talents of silver, and all the rest of the royal belongings. A good deal was captured there in addition, all that Xerxes brought back from Greece, notably bronze statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, which Alexander sent back to the Athenians; they are now set up at Athens in the Cerameicus, on the way by which we ascend the Acropolis, just opposite the Metroon, not far from the altar of the Eudaimones. Anyone who has been initiated into the mysteries of the Two Goddesses at Eleusis is aware that the altar of Eudaimones is in the plain.

There Alexander sacrificed in accordance with ancestral custom, and held a relay torch race and athletic contest. He left behind Abulites, a Persian, as satrap of Susiana, Mazarus one of the Companions as garrison commandant in the citadel of Susa and Archelaus son of Theodorus as general; and then he advanced against the Persians. *Anabasis Of Alexander* III.16.6-9.

²⁶Diodorus of Sicily tells of Alexander's actions when he and his Macedonian army came to the Persian capital of Persepolis. Alexander's destruction of the Persian capital is unusual because it was not his policy to destroy that which he had conquered. Since the Persian king, Xerxes had burned Athens, the actions of Alexander seem to be in revenge--

"Persepolis was the capital of the Persian kingdom. Alexander described it to the Macedonians as the most hateful of the cities of Asia, and gave it over to his soldiers to plunder, all but the palaces. It was the richest city under the sun and the private houses had been furnished with every sort of wealth over the years. The Macedonians raced into it slaughtering all the men whom they met and plundering the residences; many of the houses belonged to the common people and were abundantly supplied with furniture and wearing apparel of every kind. Here much silver was carried off and no little gold, and many rich dresses gay with sea purple or with gold embroidery became the prize of the victors. The enormous palaces, famed throughout the whole civilized world, fell victim to insult and utter destruction." Cf., *The Library Of History* XVII.70.1 - 72.6

²⁷Raymond F. Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing

House, 1975), pp. 20-21.

²⁸For a while Perdiccas, one of Alexander's generals, endeavored to keep the empire together for Alexander's unborn son. Philip Arridaeus, the demented half brother of Alexander, was proclaimed titular king until Alexander's son would be of age to rule. However, there were a number of relatives of Alexander, either by blood or marriage, who hoped to be the successor to rule his empire. Even before the burial of Alexander the Great, the battle for his kingdom began.

²⁹*Cf.*, Theodore Von Oppoloser, *op.cit.*, pp. 86-87.

CHAPTER VIII: THE ORIGIN OF ISRAEL TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Jacob, the father of Israel, was born in 1891 B.C., during the twelfth dynasty of Egypt. He was the nation of Israel, born in one day. His birth date was the point of reference for the chronology of the nation. 130 years after his birth, he and his children moved to Egypt. The first seventy years were spent in the delta of Egypt where the land was more fertile than in any other part of Egypt. During that time, Israel controlled Egypt, and were the "Great Houses" or "great shepherd" kings. When Joseph died, the "late Hyksos" came to power and Israel lost their prestigious position. The wisdom of Joseph had been forgotten, and the surrounding Amorites resented paying tribute for seventy years. These Hyksos were bent on the destruction of Egypt, and they controlled Egypt for about one and a half centuries. Then the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt gained enough strength to force the Amorite Hyksos out of their land. At this time (1541 B.C.), Moses was born. The "new dynasty" did not trust the "Hyksos" who remained in their land, so they tried to exterminate their male population. Thutmose I was an officer in the army which ousted the Hyksos and he soon became pharaoh himself. His daughter, Hatshepsut, had no sons, and may have adopted Moses as her own. She became queen, and her illegitimate half brother, Thutmose III, was in charge of the military. When Hatshepsut died, he wasted no time in defacing her inscriptions from the monuments. If Moses spent forty years in Midian, he probably escaped from Egypt about the fifteenth year of her reign, just before Thutmose III began his military activity in Palestine. He married a Midianite girl and they had two children. God called Moses from Mount Sinai at about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in 1462 B.C. This date is established by several methods, first, Moses would only graze sheep on the top of the mountain at that time of the year, second, each of the plagues seem to have lasted a week, and third, the distance required to return to Egypt from Midian would seem to mandate this amount of time. Moses returned to Egypt and stood before Thutmose III. The king was not impressed and persecution became even more harsh. Moses waited for some time and then he again appeared before the king of Egypt. The plagues were finally over, except one on Nisan 10. At that time, Moses took Israel out of the Egyptian religious calendar system which was based on the star Sirius, and put them into the calendar system based on the sun and the moon. The most important day to the Egyptians was Near Year's Day. On that day, they worshipped the cow-god Apis.

Nisan was the first month. Day 15 was the full moon. That's when Israel left Egypt, and the first born of each family died. The firstborn of Thutmose III was probably not Amenhotep II who followed him. It is certain that Amenhotep II's firstborn son was not Thutmose IV. A week later Israel crossed the sea with the Egyptian armies on their heels. Thutmose III died, but his second son, Amenhotep II survived the ordeal. Egyptian records date the death of Thutmose III exactly one month to the day before the Hebrew date for the Exodus crossing. Either their records were corrupted, or they were falsified so that the shame of the Exodus would not appear on the head of Thutmose III. A month later, Israel grumbled and God caused manna to flow. Three days later, on Iyyar 18, a Saturday rest is recorded. Another month passed, and on Sivan 14, they arrived back at Sinai where Moses had seen the bush on fire. Three days later, on Sivan 17, 1461 B.C., the Ten Commandments were given. The "Old Covenant" was agreed upon, and Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days. Moses came down from the mountain on the Egyptian Near Year's Day, and found that Israel had reverted back to

Egyptian worship practices. He destroyed the calf, admonished the people, and re-established their covenant with God on the seventh of Ab. This date was to be the nemesis for Israel, for they lost their first and second Temples, both on Ab 7.

Moses returned to the mountain for a new set of laws. He came down forty days later, and by the first day of the following year, they had completed the building of the tabernacle and had its dedication ceremony. By the Feast of Tabernacles of the same year, twelve spies were sent out to reconnoiter the land which they were about to enter. After forty days they returned, filled with fright. Only Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim, and Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, were willing to proceed. Their lack of faith proved to be to their detriment; for they were forced to spend the rest of their adult lives in the desert where they would die. This included all those who were over twenty years of age. The fate of the ten who did not have faith to enter was even more tragic. They incited the congregation to unbelief, so there were killed on the spot.

Thirty-eight years later they arrived at Moab, looking west to the promised land. Moses expounded the Law on Shebat 1, 1421 B.C. Aaron had died six months earlier, and Moses was to be taken to his death after God had shown him the promised land from Mount Nebo. He and Aaron were also denied entrance because of a moment of weakness in their faith. Joshua was given command of the people.

The Jordan was crossed in a spectacular way, similar to the crossing of the Red Sea, ten days short of forty years earlier. On Nisan 10, they crossed the river and were circumcised. Three days later, they marched around Jericho the first time. On the seventh day of marching around Jericho, the walls fell down. This was Nisan 19. The town of Ai was seized without success on Nisan 20, but on Nisan 22, after the punishment of Achan, it was defeated. The next day, the Gibeonites tricked Israel into a league of defense. A couple of days later, the five Amorite kings heard about the treaty and by Nisan 27 they came against Gibeon. Joshua heard about it and marched all night, arriving on Nisan 29. During his battle, Joshua prayed that God would work a miracle with the sun and moon so as to make possible the total destruction of the Amorites on that day. A solar eclipse took place. The sun and moon stood over each other for almost a full time -- a full period, *i.e.*, it was not a total eclipse. These Amorites who worshipped the sun and moon were startled and fled from fright. The eclipse caused hail which killed many of these people resulting in a total victory for Joshua.

The land was slowly dominated by Israel and was ruled by Judges for the next 400 years until Samuel. Israel was not a dominant force all of that time. After about 100 years in Palestine, Egypt was again traveling the high roads and Israel occupied the lowlands. The nineteenth dynasty of Egypt suddenly ended in 1225 B.C. For seventy years, the land was ruled by outsiders of uncertain origin. Perhaps they were Syrians or Assyrians. During that time, Debora, Barak, Gideon, Abimelech and Tola were judges.

The people asked Samuel for a king like other men had, a king who would be a physical leader. They no longer approved of the theocratic relationship which they had earlier wanted. Saul became their king in 1031 B.C. David was anointed in 1026 B.C., and at the death of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, David became king of all Israel. His territory extended from the Euphrates to Egypt. For thirty-three years he ruled over Israel with Jerusalem as his capital. David's son, Solomon, ruled the nation for forty years in a peaceful relationship with his neighbors. He married into their royal families, and in the process, accumulated 1000 wives and concubines. He was harsh on his own people, and his death in 945 B.C. brought a division in the land. Ten tribes in northern Israel formed one nation and two in southern Israel formed another. These nations were at times rivals, and at other times allies. During this period, God sent prophets to warn

and predict. The rising power of Assyria at the time of Tiglath-pileser forced a change in the political nature of things in Palestine. Ahaz of Judah, in 734 B.C., was forced to beg the assistance of Tiglath-pileser III against rivals from the north, Pekah of Israel and Resin of Aram. This alliance also resulted in Ahaz' rejection of his religion as well. The Temple was closed, and the gods of Assyria were brought into the land. When Tiglath-pileser died, Shalmaneser V, his son, ruled. Hezekiah became king at this time (728 B.C.) and immediately re-opened the Temple. He began to prepare for war. Hoshea had been appointed to office by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, and was expected to remain loyal to his son. He did not, and was playing a double game, building an alliance with So of Egypt while playing the part of loyalty to Shalmaneser. He was found out, and Shalmaneser, after a three year siege, captured Samaria in 723 B.C. This was the sixth year of Hezekiah. Then for some reason, still unknown, Shalmaneser was overthrown by Sargon, of the dynasty Habigal. Sargon sent his son, Sennacherib, against Judea in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (715 B.C.). Taharqo interrupted the siege and Sennacherib's army met with a violent end as a result of the arrogance of Sennacherib. Hezekiah was given another fifteen years of life. Just before the end of his life, Hezekiah himself became arrogant again, and God brought Sennacherib back to plague him once more. This was 702 B.C., just three years before he died.

In its turn, the great Assyrian war machine was defeated by two new rising powers, Babylon and Media. Cyaxares of Media and Nabopolassar of Babylon defeated Nineveh in 613 B.C. An alliance was formed through the daughter of Cyaxares and the son of Nabopolassar whose name was Nebuchadnezzar. Her name was Amyitis, and her brother's name was Astyages whom the Bible calls "Darius the Mede" in some instances, and in others they refer to him by a throne title, "Ahasuerus."

Nebuchadnezzar became king in 606 B.C., and Judah became his subject in the ninth year of Jehoiakim (601 B.C.). In the fall of 600 B.C. and in the early spring of 599 B.C., large numbers of Jews were taken captive to Babylon. Among them were Daniel and Esther. In 588 B.C., Jerusalem was captured and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Some Jews were left in the land, but out of fear, they fled to Egypt. In 583 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt and took the Jews that were there back to Babylon.

Two years later, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a man comprised of four metals, and he was the gold head. He proceeded to construct the statue of pure gold so as to make the kingdom of Babylon eternal. In 578 B.C., his twenty-eighth year, he had a second dream of a tree. One year later he became like a wild animal for seven years. His wife and his son Belshazzar kept the kingdom for him until 575 B.C. when Belshazzar was killed and Astyages, the brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, held the kingdom of Babylon. He must have taken the utensils from Babylon which were being abused by Belshazzar. He then had a great feast for 180 days, celebrating his new empire.

The very next year, Nebuchadnezzar returned from his madness and the kingdom was given back by Astyages. Cyrus was born about this time. His father was Cambyses and his mother was Mandane, the daughter of Astyages. Herodotus tells us that Astyages wanted Cyrus killed at birth because of a dream he had. A series of circumstances resulted in Astyages being deceived by a shepherd who exposed his dead baby to the wild animals and kept Cyrus as his own (*Herodotus* I.114). At about ten years of age (565 B.C.), Astyages recognized him by his facial features and brought him into his own house. He was not yet named Cyrus.

Daniel was one of Astyages' counsellors, and Esther had just married Astyages. Cyrus then became the foster son of Esther, and no doubt the friend and confidant of Daniel. Daniel was familiar with the writings of the prophets and no doubt had a copy

Daniel. Daniel was familiar with the writings of the prophets and no doubt had a copy in his possession. According to Josephus, Cyrus read Isaiah's prophecies (*Antiquities* XI.i.2), which named him, identified him as a shepherd, called him anointed, and even told him how to defeat Babylon! Daniel had received a visitation in Astyages' first year which said that there would be four Persian kings to follow Astyages (Daniel 11:1-2). He also was familiar with Isaiah's prophecy which stated that the king who was to issue the edict was named Cyrus. He was to be anointed and was to be a shepherd. The shepherd was Cyrus. He was the first Persian to follow Astyages by the dream of Astyages. There seems to be little reason to doubt that Daniel was compelled to anoint and commission the lad "Cyrus" (Isaiah 44:28; *Herodotus* I.110).

A couple of years later, in 563 B.C., the first feast of Purim took place. The Jews, by defending themselves, won respect from Babylon to Elam. Nebuchanezzar died and Evil-Merodach became king. The news of the success of the Jews in defending themselves reached Babylon, and Jeconiah was immediately released from prison, whereupon he spent the balance of his life at the king's table.

In 555 B.C. (ca.), Cyrus fathered his first daughter and named her "Atossa" after "Hadassah" his foster mother, who also was called Esther (*Herodotus* III.133). Esther was about forty-five years old, and Cyrus was about twenty years old at this time. Cyrus' father had died not long before, and he was made king of Anshan.

Cyrus' compassionate nature won over the Medes. By 551 B.C., they revolted from Astyages and came over to Cyrus. Astyages was already eighty-six years old. Esther was about fifty, and Daniel about sixty-five. There would be no reason to doubt that Cyrus read Isaiah's prophecy "I am he who says of Cyrus, 'My shepherd'- he will fulfill my whole purpose, saying to Jerusalem, 'Let her be rebuilt,' and of the Temple, 'Let your foundations be laid'" (Isaiah 44:28, The Jerusalem Bible). Cyrus may have had access to Babylon at this time. Nabonidus was off to Tema, and was not popular with the Babylonians. He took their god from them and replaced it with a Syrian god, since he was a Syrian. Cyrus made a special edict which is quoted in Ezra 1. The Jews returned and laid the foundation to the Temple, forty years after they were exiled. Their building continued, but with a great amount of opposition from the Samaritans.

Babylon was finally taken by Cyrus in 540 B.C. He may have known how to capture it from the prophet Isaiah who said, "I am he who says to the ocean, 'Be dry. I will dry up your rivers.' I am he who says of Cyrus, etc." (Isaiah 44:27, The Jerusalem Bible). Cyrus captured Babylon by diverting the river which went through it into a lake. It is this Isaiah's text translated ocean. At this same time, Astyages died at ninety-seven years of age. He had been living with Cyrus for eleven years. Esther was about fifty-nine years old. About five years after this, Atossa, the namesake of Esther, married Darius, the father of Xerxes. This would make Xerxes about seventy years old at his death in 464 B.C.

Cyrus died in 522 B.C.; Cambyses his son was in Egypt, and the government was usurped by a Median imposter who Ezra called "Ahasuerus," the throne title for a king of the Medes. At that time, the Jewish opposition succeeded in getting the Temple work stopped after a frustrating quarter of a century. Smerdis, the imposter, was soon overthrown by Darius. By his second year, the opposition again appealed to the new king in order that the Jewish construction remain stopped. Their appeal was based on the history of the past military might of Israel, and it was not the Temple but the walls of the city that now was first priority in their opinion to remain unfinished. This appeal was acceptable to Darius, and he ordered an immediate stoppage to any construction. The Jews had another idea. They were familiar with the laws of the Medes and Persians. They appealed to the original edict of Cyrus, which they knew was

by the Samaritans, and Cyrus was his wife's father. He retaliated with the statement, "If anyone disobeys this edict, a beam is to be torn from his house, he is to be pilloried upright on it and his house is to be made into a dung heap for his crime" (Ezra 6:11). So the Temple construction resumed. The walls were no longer needed since the opposition was no longer there. They were placed on the back burner. Haggai and Malachi began to prophesy. The seventy years ended, and the return of the people took place without opposition on a Jubilee year, in accordance with Leviticus 25:28.

By the end of the sixth year of Darius, the Temple was complete and the first Passover took place in 515 B.C. The Jews in Elephantine were also instructed to observe Passover. Ezra came by the fall of the year, and began to organize the Temple cult. At that time, Darius became Artaxerxes, the throne name for a Persian king.

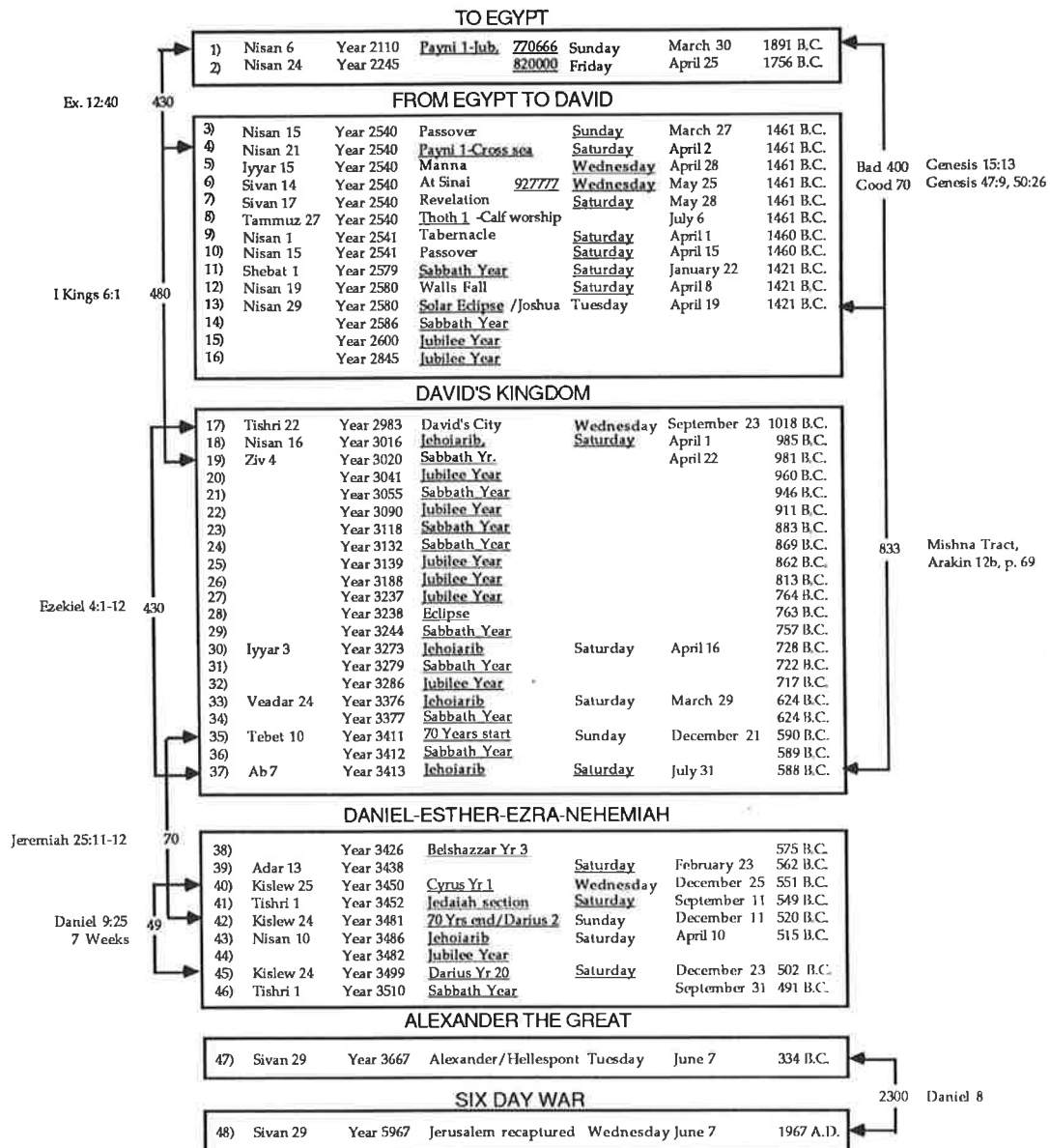
Things did not remain quiet for long. By 501 B.C., the Ionians revolted. Hananiah came to plead with Nehemiah who was serving as the cupbearer to King Darius. Daniel predicted that an anointed one would come seven weeks (forty-nine years) after the edict to return was given (Daniel 9:25). Hananiah and Nehemiah were both "anointed" and they came forty-nine years after 551 B.C. when Cyrus gave the edict. The Jews needed to rebuild their walls since the city's well being was at stake. Darius granted Nehemiah the authority to return and help see to it that the walls were finished. It took twelve years. This lasted from the twentieth to the thirty-first year of Darius. All through the reign of Darius, undated letters were sent to and from Elephantine Egypt and Judea.

The walls were finished late in the thirty-first year of Darius, barely in time for the Feast of Tabernacles and the reading of the Law on the Sabbath year. This was 491 B.C., and another political disaster was on the horizon. Darius had just fought the battle of Marathon, and he called all his governors in to discuss the next strategy. The Jewish people confirmed their unity in writing.

No doubt Nehemiah stayed with Darius until he died, which was only four years later. He returned on the thirty-seventh year of Darius (Jewish reckoning). At this time he received the last undated letter from Egypt, written in the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes, proving that Artaxerxes was a Persian throne title.

Darius died and his power and wealth followed. Daniel accurately predicted the events which would lead up to him as the fourth king who would stir up the Greeks (Daniel 11:2). The empire continued to diminish as his dynasty grew weaker and the Greek/Macedonian Empire grew stronger. After Darius, correspondence between Elephantine Egypt and Palestine continued in double dated letters, one system of dating was Jewish and a second was Egyptian. These letters made the chronology of the Persian kings astronomically absolute. Finally, in 334 B.C., Alexander the Great crossed Hellespont, and for all practical purposes, he was on his way to complete control of Asia. In accord with Daniel 8, this historical crossing was 2300 years before the Jewish Six Day War when the completion of the prophecy took place.

ILLUSTRATION XIX: Chronology From Jacob To Alexander The Great



Ancient Near Eastern Chronology From The Accession Of Nabopolassar (627 B.C.) To The Death Of Alexander The Great (323 B.C.)

206

489		32	433	31	376	28
488		33	432	32	375	29
487		34	431	33	374	30
486		35	430	34	373	31
485	0 Xerxes	36	429	35	372	32
484	1		428	36	371	33
483	2		427	37	370	34
482	3		426	38	369	35
481	4		425	39	368	36
480	5		424	40	367	37
479	6		423	41	366	38
478	7		422		365	39
477	8		421		364	40
476	9		420		363	41
475	10		419		362	42
474	11		418		361	43
473	12		417		360	44
472	13		416		359	45
471	14		415		358	46
470	15		414		357	
469	16		413		356	
468	17		412		355	
467	18		411		354	
466	19		410		353	
465	20		409		352	
464	21 Artaxerxes I	0	408		351	
463		1	407		350	
462		2	406		349	
461		3	405		348	
460		4	404	19 Artaxerxes II	0	
459		5	403		347	
458		6	402		346	
457		7	401		345	
456		8	400		344	
455		9	399		343	
454		10	398		342	
453		11	397		341	
452		12	396		340	
451		13	395		339	
450		14	394		338	
449		15	393		337	21 Argos
448		16	392		336	
447		17	391		335	0 Darius III
446		18	390		334	1
445		19	389		333	2
444		20	388		332	
443		21	387		331	
442		22	386		330	5 Alexander the Great
441		23	385		329	0
440		24	384		328	
439		25	383		327	
438		26	382		326	
437		27	381		325	
436		28	380		324	
435		29	379		323	
434		30	378			
433		31	377			

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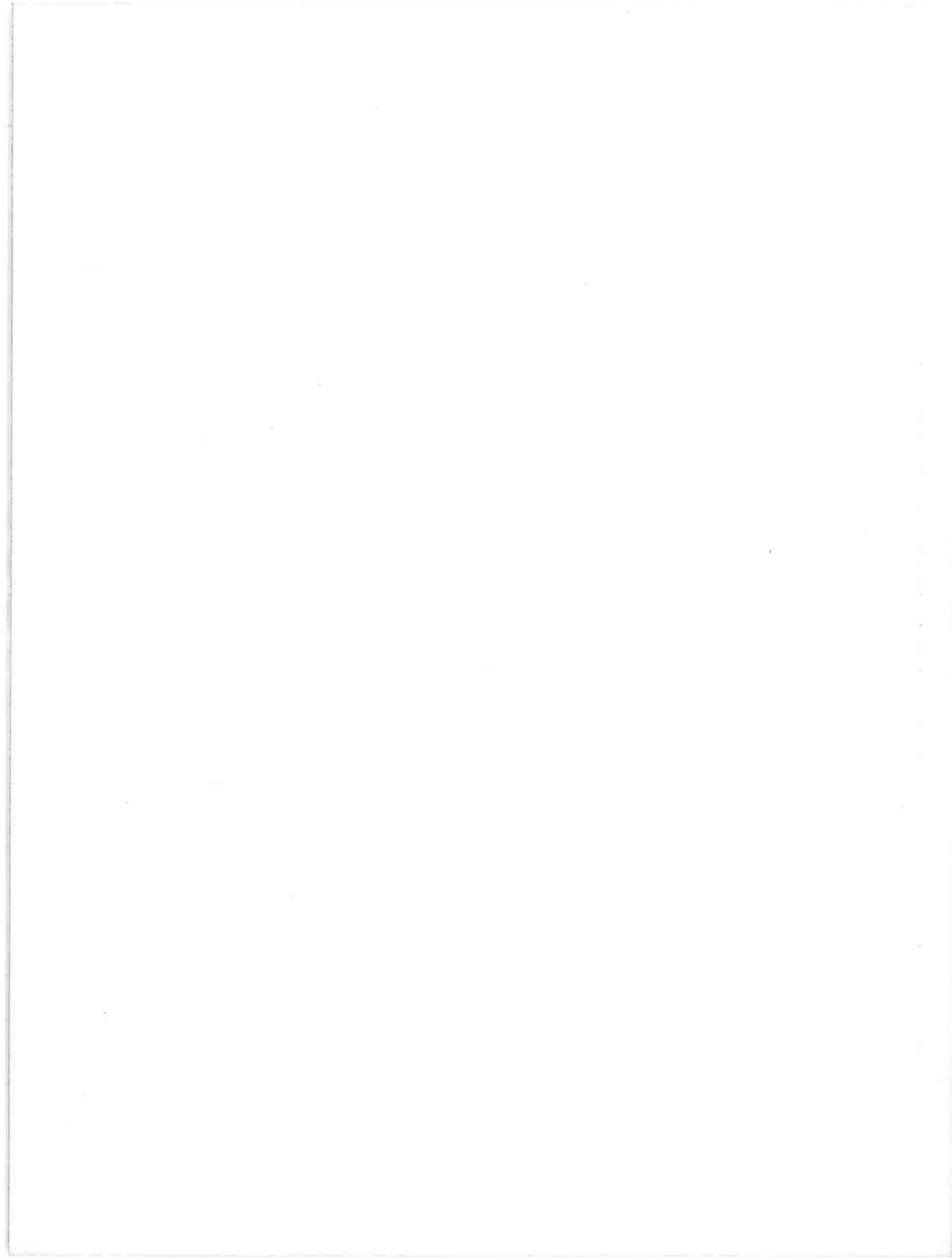
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NEBUCHADNEZZAR — CO — AMYTIS SISTER OF — DARIUS THE GREAT — VASHTI
 BELSHAZZAR — CAMBYSES — CO — MANDANE — ASTAGES THE KING
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CHRONOLOGICAL AND CELESTIAL MECHANICS: A DIFFERENCE...

The chronology extending from the rise of the Babylonian empire through the Persian empire has been problematic, especially in regards to the dating of Ezra. The chronology of this period is very important for determining the validity of 1) the historical critical conclusions, 2) the foundational dates for some churches, 3) the accurate understanding of the book of Daniel, and 4) eschatology & date setting. Some problems encountered by the chronologist are:

- 1). How Daniel, in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, was captive three years.
- 2). Who Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar was, and when he ruled.
- 3). Who Darius the Mede was.
- 4). Who Astages, the husband of Esther was.
- 5). How to find the date of the first Purim feast.
- 6). Why the Temple remained vacant for sixty years before Ezra.
- 7). Why the book Ezra/Nehemiah does not contain a continuous chronology.
- 8). Why Daniel's chronology and the leading characters were unknown.
- 9). How men who had been deported in 599 B.C. could have been alive and active in the reign of Artaxerxes, 130 years later.
- 10). Why the seventy year exile predicted by Jeremiah lasted only fifty years.
- 11). Why the first year of Cyrus (539 B.C.), is said to be 539 B.C.
- 12). Why Nehemiah lists all the high priests as serving under Darius I.
- 13). How Esther could be the wife of Xerxes, 120 years after her deportation.
- 14). Why various expositions count the twentieth year of Artaxerxes as the date of the edict of Daniel 9, when Ezra 1 states it took place in the first year of Cyrus.
- 15). When Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of insanity took place, and what the disposition of his kingdom was during that period.
- 16). Why scholars accept Hezekiah's death year is 728 B.C., and his fourteenth year as 701 B.C. when they are twenty-two years apart.

These and more chronological problems have been resolved through the use of computers and astronomical dating when they are applied to the Bible and the letters from Elephantine, Egypt.

In addition, other new and exciting historical facts were found:

- 1). The return of Ezra-Nehemiah took place under Darius, the father of Xerxes.
- 2). Esther was the foster mother of Cyrus.
- 3). Cyrus read Isaiah, and knew Daniel.
- 4). Astages was a brother-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 5). Esther was involved in Hezekiah's release, after the first Purim festival.
- 6). All the priests of Ezra-Nehemiah served under Darius, father of Xerxes.
- 7). All popular interpretations of Daniel's seventy weeks are incorrect.

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BABYLONIAN EXILE
 70 YEARS

