

**A NEW CHRONOLOGY FOR
THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

**AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
BIBLICAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE**

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Wipf & Stock
PUBLISHERS
Eugene, Oregon

Biblical quotations are the authors' translations.

Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W 8th Ave, Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

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ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-485-4
ISBN 10: 1-55635-485-1
Publication date 5/15/2007
Previously published by Westminster John Knox, 1988

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Preface

Through the centuries of biblical study, people have been fascinated with biblical chronology and "the mysterious numbers of the Hebrew kings." No system for dating nor scheme of dates for the Israelite and Judean kings has achieved anything approaching universal acceptance. Contemporary histories of Israel and biblical commentaries currently employ a number of different chronologies.

The chronology for Israelite and Judean kings proposed in the present volume is based on two assumptions. First, an overall consistency must have characterized the calendar and regnal calculations in the two states; otherwise, such calculations would have had little or no value. To argue, as is often done, that the years of a king's reign were simply rounded off, that a single year was assigned to two kings, or that two persons ruled jointly in the same state is to assume that the ancients employed so inconsistent a system of reckoning as to constitute no system at all. For this reason, we also assume that all chronological data provided in 1-2 Kings must be given consideration regardless of whether the data are ultimately utilized in the reconstruction of the chronology or determined to be worthless. The principles involved in ancient Israelite and Judean reckoning of regnal years and dating and the principles we have used in interpreting the biblical data are discussed in the opening section of the book.

Frequently we have noted, in almost propositional form, what we consider the ramifications of and conclusions to be drawn from our chronological reconstructions. These have bearing on numerous historical issues, the dating of prophetic materials, and the literary history of the Old Testament. The conclusions have been stated wherever we considered them to be of interest and are summarized in the final chapter. Many of these will need further discussion and substantiation.

For suggestions and assistance on the present volume, we are indebted to graduate students at Emory University, especially Julie Galambush, Margaret Reeves, and Dean Reed, to Dorcas Doward for the typing, and to the staff of John Knox Press for agreeing to publish the present work without the normal typesetting and proofreading stages. The type was set with *Nota Bene*, the academic word processing program from Dragonfly Software.

Abbreviations

<i>ABC</i>	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles</i> , by A. K. Grayson. Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975
<i>AcOr</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
<i>AEL</i>	<i>Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings</i> , by Miriam Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1973-80
<i>Afo</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
<i>AGS</i>	<i>Assyrische Gebete an den Sonnengott für Stadt und königliches Haus aus der Zeit Asarhaddons und Assurbanipals</i> , by J. A. Knudtzon. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1893
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. by J. B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969
<i>Ant</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> , by Josephus
<i>AOAT</i>	<i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i>
<i>ARAB</i>	<i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> , by D. D. Luckenbill. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926-27
<i>AS</i>	<i>The Annals of Sennacherib</i> , by D. D. Luckenbill. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Reader</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BETL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CDP</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library</i> , ed. by F. L. Griffith. 3 vols. Manchester: University Press, 1909
<i>DZGW</i>	<i>Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>LAKA</i>	<i>Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien</i> , by R. Borger. Graz: Archiv für Orientforschung, 1956
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>

<i>IDBS</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JARCE</i>	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JDT</i>	<i>Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>SAK</i>	<i>Studien zur altägyptische Kultur</i>
<i>SDB</i>	<i>Supplements Dictionaire Biblique</i>
<i>SH</i>	<i>Scripta Hierosolymitana</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>SVT</i>	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
<i>TSBA</i>	<i>Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WHJP</i>	<i>World History of the Jewish People</i>
<i>WO</i>	<i>Welt des Orient</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

1. Chronological Reckoning in Israel and Judah and Principles of Interpretation

W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *BASOR* 100(1945)16-22; Albright, "Prolegomenon" to the reissue of C. F. Burney, *The Book of Judges with Introduction and Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (New York: Ktav, 1970)1-38; K. T. Andersen, "Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda," *ST* 23(1969)69-114; W. H. Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel* (dissertation, Harvard University, 1986); J. Begrich, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda und die Quellen des Rahmens der Königsbücher* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1929); V. Coucke, "Chronologie Biblique," *SDB* 1(1928)1244-79; S. J. De Vries, "Chronology of the OT," *IDB* 1(1962)580-99; De Vries, "Chronology, OT," *IDBS* (1976)161-66; J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); D. N. Freedman, "The Chronology of Israel and the Ancient Near East," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (ed. G. E. Wright; Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1961)203-14; A. Hellemann, *Chronologia probabiliter vera historiae Judaicae et Israeliticae gentis ab Abrahamo ad Christum computata* (Hafniae: Officina "Athene," 1925); F. A. Herzog, *Die Chronologie der beiden Königsbücher* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909); J. R. A. Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: The Chronology of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); A. Jepsen, "Ein neuer Fixpunkt für die Chronologie der israelitischen Könige?," *VT* 20(1970)359-61; A. Jepsen and R. Hanhart, *Untersuchungen zur israelitisch-jüdischen Chronologie* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1964); A. Kamphausen, *Die Chronologie der hebräischen Könige: Eine geschichtlich Untersuchung* (Bonn: Max Cohen & Sohn, 1883); F. X. Kugler, *Von Moses bis Paulus* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922)136-50; C. Lederer, *Die biblische Zeitrechnung vom Auszuge aus Ägypten bis zum Beginne der Babylonischen Gefangenschaft* (Speier: Ferd. Eleeberger, 1888); J. Lewy, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda* (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1927); J. M. Miller, "Another Look at the Chronology of the Early Divided Monarchy," *JBL* 86(1967)276-88; S. Mowinckel, "Die Chronologie der israelitischen und jüdischen Könige," *AcOr* 10(1932)161-277; A. Murtonen, "On the Chronology

of the Old Testament," *ST* 8(1954)133-37; V. Pavlovsky⁷ and E. Vogt, "Die Jahre der Könige von Juda und Israel," *Biblica* 45(1964)321-47; J. Reade, "Mesopotamian Guidelines for Biblical Chronology," *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 4/1(1981)1-9; R. Rühl, "Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda," *DZGW* 12(1894-95)44-76, 171; C. Shedl, "Textkritische Bemerkungen zu den Synchronismen der Könige von Israel und Juda," *VT* 12(1962)88-119; J. D. Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); M. Stiles, Shophar: *Synchronizing Hebrew Originals from Available Records* (Aptos, CA: Self-published, 1972-); H. Tadmor, "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources," *WHJP* 4/1(1979)44-60, 318-320 = J. A. Soggin, *A History of Ancient Israel* (London/Philadelphia: SCM Press/Westminster Press, 1984)368-83, 408-11; S. Talmon, "Divergencies in Calendar-Reckoning in Ephraim and Judah," *VT* 8(1958)48-74; E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); M. Vogelstein, *Fertile Soil: A Political History Under the Divided Monarchy* (New York: American Press, 1957); J. Wellhausen, "Die Zeitrechnung des Buchs der Könige seit der Theilung des Reichs," *JDT* 20(1875)607-40; W. R. Wifall, Jr., "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *ZAW* 80(1968)319-37.

The books of Kings provide three types of chronological information about Israelite and Judean kings. One form of information is provided by statements on the length of reigns of each individual Israelite and Judean ruler. Such information is supplied for every monarch except Queen Athaliah of Judah (2 Kings 11). A second type of information is contained in the synchronisms in which the beginning of a Judean ruler's reign is correlated with the year of an Israelite ruler's reign and vice versa. Such synchronisms are provided for all rulers except those who assumed the throne in the same year, namely Rehoboam and Jeroboam I and Athaliah and Jehu. A third type of information is provided in the occasional correlation of events in biblical history with the years of non-biblical monarchs.

As has long been noted, this chronological information is frequently problematic and even contradictory. Synchronisms some-

times clash with one another. Some synchronisms do not correlate with the data given about the length of reigns. The length of reigns supplied between two points common to the histories of both nations frequently do not total the same number of years.

Some scholars have assumed that the chronological information supplied for the Israelite and Judean kings forms part of a non-historical, schematic chronology extending from Genesis through Second Kings and as such has been adjusted or produced to fit this larger overarching scheme. Such an approach despairs of any attempt to establish dates and correlations for biblical rulers except in a very general sense.

Approaches which take the biblical data as reasonably reflective of actual chronological realities have attempted to solve the various problems involved in one of five different ways or through a combination of these. (1) Some scholars assume a number of errors and corruptions in the text and thus resort to various forms of textual corrections. The weakness of such an approach is its need to correct the Hebrew text often without any manuscript or versional support. (2) Another approach draws upon the evidence of ancient translations or recensions, especially the Lucianic (or proto-Lucianic) recension of the Greek translation, where these differ from the standard Hebrew text. Such utilization of evidence drawn from translations, however, is employed very selectively and only with regard to the reigns of certain kings. (3) Some scholars assume that the length of reigns assigned kings was rounded off so that the years are occasionally approximate rather than exact. A chronological reconstruction based on such an assumption could never be more than approximate. (4) Other approaches assume that different systems for counting a monarch's years were employed at different times in both Israel and Judah. Under such a system, the same year was frequently assigned to two different rulers, but at only times not. Recourse to such a diversity in reckoning is based on the need to make synchronisms work rather than on any substantial evidence indicating such shifts. (5) Most modern chronologies assume a number of co-regencies when two kings ruled jointly over the same kingdom with the years of a co-regency being assigned to both kings. The weakness of this assumption is the fact that the hypothesis of co-regencies is without biblical warrant.

No chronological system has or is able to accept as historically accurate all the chronological data in the books of Kings. Our pro-

posed chronology is based on a number of assumptions and conclusions about the nature of chronological reckoning in ancient Israel and Judah and about the nature of the biblical evidence. We have summarized these in the following fifteen paragraphs.

(1) The primary reason for numbering the years of a king's reign was dating contractual agreements and government business. In addition to governmental edicts and orders, time-conditioned private contracts, such as loans and leases and agreements of indentured servitude, would have been dated generally with reference to the day and month of a particular year of a king's reign although only year dates may have been used even without the king's name, as in the Samaria ostraca.

(2) There were no co-regencies, periods when two monarchs ruled jointly, in either Israel or Judah. The two cases in which there appears to have been joint rulership--Solomon with David (1 Kings 1:38-40; 2:10-12) and Jotham with Azariah (2 Kings 15:5)--were, in fact, not co-regencies. Solomon was apparently anointed and installed as king before the death of David and thus was monarch in his own right. David plays no significant role in the narratives after Solomon's assumption of power. Jotham is said to have functioned for a time in a prominent role as the one "over the household, governing the people of the land" (2 Kings 15:5) during the reign of Azariah, but his office during this brief period until he became king is clearly specified and did not constitute monarchical rule.

(3) Five kings--Baasha in Israel and Asa, Jehoash, Amaziah, and Azariah in Judah--either abdicated voluntarily because of illness and physical problems or were forced to give up the throne, and consequently were succeeded by new kings. Except in the case of Baasha, biblical evidence indicates the reason for the surrender or loss of the throne. Certain physical ailments would have rendered the king unclean and/or incompetent, thus making his participation in cultic affairs impossible and, in turn, his abdication mandatory.

(4) The numbering of the years of a king's reign, until the calendar change in the eighteenth year of Josiah (see 11 below), was always from the fall new year festival. Year 1 began with the anointment and coronation at the autumn celebration; year 2 at the second fall festival of a king's reign, and so on.

(5) The years assigned a king were counted from the first autumn festival of his reign until his death. Generally, a king ruled until his death, but in the case of abdications the years a king lived